Middle East – Topics & Arguments

#14–2020

Gender

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EDITORIAL

Gender in Crisis

Ines Braune, Saliha Engler, Patricia Jannack, Angela Krewani

The protests and upheavals that erupted in the Arab world since 2010 were the starting point in 2019 to look at issues of gender in political and social crises. At the moment, since the beginning of 2020, we are facing the global coronavirus pandemic and witnessing gender imbalances in this crisis, imbalances that turn against wo*men and their role in contemporary societies. This goes for Europe as well as the Middle East and North and South America. Wo*men bear and will bear a disproportionate burden of the measures taken against the coronavirus. Mostly wo*men have been working in the nursing sector in general and with Covid-19 patients in particular. Wo*men did more unpaid work before Corona, and do so even more during the Corona epidemic. Mostly wo*men have seen their working hours reduced, stay at home, and take care of the children due to the closed childcare facilities and schools. In addition, more jobs in which predominantly wo*men work are being cut, explains the ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) study on the impact of Covid-19 on gender equality in the Arab region.

What does the lockdown mean for gender relations? What is being locked down and to what places? A conservative understanding of the family seems to be the

support of the society in these times. But what about the family as the site of the reproduction of patriarchal structures and the family as the site of domestic violence? Asma Shiri, Tunisian Wo*men's Affairs Minister, sounds the alarm about increased domestic violence because of the curfew (Shahatit, "Rise in Domestic Violence"). Domestic violence has risen in Germany, as well (Steinert and Evert, "The Impact of Covid-19"). The lockdown prevents access to spaces outside the family, access to educational and health services, and access to places where one can experience a social setting different from the family. Any places for non-normative bodies and sexualities are locked down, too.

Moreover, how often in crisis situations are the most vulnerable people hit the hardest. The most precarious jobs are often dropped first. Parents with a low educational background can offer their children less help in homeschooling. And how should you keep your distance in a refugee camp? The authors Larbi Sadiki and Layla Saleh write: "Coronavirus additionally highlights issues of national, regional, and global inequality" ("The Arab World"). They refer to conflict hotspots in regions like Syria, Libya, and Yemen, as well as to refugees and internally displaced people. These aspects do not have to do directly with gender, but with how crucial intersectional aspects are in the crisis in general and with regard to gender relations in particular.

Gender and Intersectional Factors in Times of Crises

Just as Covid-19 is not only a health but also a socio-economic crisis, wars, political unrest, and other crises are also multifaceted and therefore require intersectional approaches. Kimberlé Crenshaw is one of the first scholars to identify the crucial need to include the intersection of race and sex in feminist theory and antiracist politics. In her influential work for the University of Chicago, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,* Crenshaw proposes intersectionality as follows:

> I want to suggest further that this single-axis framework erases Black wo*men in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group (140).

Thus, intersectionality enables a move beyond dominant approaches and a rethinking of current crises for several reasons. First, intersectionality questions a hierarchical arrangement of vulnerable groups by showing their different degrees of exposures to threats. Second, while many assume that experiences are universalistic within vulnerable groups, intersectionality reveals diverse experiences of individuals. Third, intersectionality exposes that the risks and consequences of a crisis are embodied in a multifaceted entanglement of interplaying factors such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity. Fourth, an intersectional approach includes the influence of power and resource structures (e.g. patriarchy, nationalism, post-colonialism, capitalism) on a crisis and on its victims and winners.

With regard to gender in times of crisis, in times of war and conflict, wo*men have always been victims of rape, kidnapping, and extreme violence due to their sex.

This becomes more than evident in this issue, which covers issues of gender in the MENA region. Although the collected essays cover a wide range of events and crises, wo*men obviously are the first to fall prey to gender-related violence. As Abouelnaga explains in this issue, however, Yazidi wo*men are oppressed and victimized additionally because they belong to a religious minority. Moreover, their bodies have become an emblem of ISIS ideology, identity, and power. So once

again, the female body is burdened with symbolic functions.

In the case of Syrian wo*men working in civil society organizations (CSOs) in Lebanon and Turkey, Al-Munajed has analyzed the social markers affecting the displaced wo*men's participation. She concluded that not only gender, but also ethnic identity and socio-economic status have a tremendous impact on wo*men's participation in CSOs. In fact, focusing only on gender skews the results, as the other factors have been proven even more responsible for discrimination and social grievances. Using an intersectional approach of African-American feminist studies, Al-Munajed convinces the reader of the multiple advantages of intersectionality.

These interdisciplinary advantages have also been recognized by the Universities of Manouba and Sousse in Tunisia, as Jamie Woitynek points out in the Anti/Thesis. Accordingly, the master programs offer perspectives of gender intersecting with history, socio-economic status, administration, law, literature, language, and identity.

As the aforementioned examples show, applying intersectionality assures a deeper understanding of and more effective solutions to any crisis, but specifically to marginalized approaches to international security such as gender. This issue of META uses an intersectional approach not only by publishing articles using intersectional theoretical and methodological concepts, but also by choosing scholars with various degrees, of various nationalities and genders, and from various academic disciplines. However, some aspects of gender in crisis have been left unsaid and require further attention. The Egyptian actor Hashem Selim's son Nour Selim, who underwent surgery to become a man, is an interesting case of transgenderism in an Arab country. His high socio-economic status and the fact that he changed from being a woman to a man provide rough starting points for further intersectional analysis. While Nour Selim's coming out has received mostly positive reactions on social media, Sarah Hegazi's suicide as a consequence of her LGTBQ* activism has met with mixed responses. We hope that, by highlighting the importance of gendered approaches and intersectionality, we can motivate further studies to follow.

Wom*en's Representations

Since 2011, wom*en's representations in various media formats of and about the Middle East and North Africa have emerged as a unique discursive and performative subject – often (co-)produced by Western agents. While Western mainstream media have praised the radical changes of wom*en too hastily, there has also been a smaller number of alternative media formats that added an activist documentary character to conflicting contexts. They range from linking footage of wom*en's engagement on the streets – shouting the Arabic word for *revolution*, thawra, which is a female noun (just like *freedom* is ḥurriya and *equality* is musāwāa) – to the movie *Commander Arian* that accompanies a female Kurdish freedom fighter in Rojava/North and East Syria against religious fundamentalist terrorism and patriarchy, and to the viral musical irony of Hwāgīs by young anonymous Saudi female artists jumping on skateboards in colored pants under their black-veiled clothes – to name just a few examples. Khadijah Hamouchi notes that this wave of feminism in Middle Eastern and North African countries is moving into a more implementational practical direction ("New Arab Feminism"). However, regarding contemporary feminist media formats, Patrice Petro draws on tensions between theory and practice, as well as activism and academia related to the marginalized role of wom*en (16-22). Moreover, due to our present *white* and often (heteronormative) male-dominated globalized media culture, wom*en's issues and repre-

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sentations of the Middle East and North Africa are still at risk of being exploited socio-economically, as Orientalist and Islamophobic narratives may be produced and reproduced by powerful agents.
Moving to an intersectional perspective, gender and race (among other oppressive factors) can affect *agency* antagonistically and erode *allyship*, as the examples of gendered migration in our contributions show. Moreover, the reluctance of Amazigh activists to march with secular wom*en in the *20FM* protests in Morocco (Willis 89) and the silencing of Black Saudi female rapper Asayel Slay, who faced arrest and racist backlash for her *Bint Mecca* (Mecca Girl) YouTube video, show power and sub-hierarchical relations within the aforementioned categories. These forms of *in/visibilities* are also related to queer (and non-binary identities), as they remain systematically at risk (Atia 59). Finally, Haideh Moghissi critically compares the outcome of the 2010/11 uprisings with the disappointing aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, in which revolutionary men prevented wom*en's post-order participation, and asks: *Will gender-conscious issues remain open?* ("Arab Uprisings and Wo*men's Rights"). However, this can only be achieved if marginalized issues will be heard and implemented democratically and sustainably after the replacement of the contemporary regimes.
Comparing different transitional regimes like the one in Egypt, Nermin Allam concludes that state-sponsored feminism "does not fundamentally change deeply rooted gendered norms (…) and rights" (375). Indeed, "the authoritarian state kills two birds with one woman", as Madawi Al-Rasheed points to regimes, "which contrast [themselves] with the radical backward and conservative elements in society while appealing to dissenting liberal voices" ("Wo*men in an Authoritarian State" 11). So far, state-neoliberal reforms concerning wom*en's demands have served only the ones* who obey and help to normalize inequalities and make opponents invisible. Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, wom*en who had to flee their homes and are being forced to stay in camps in Greece remain the group most vulnerable to traffickers, smugglers, prostitution, and undignified health conditions. The political juxtaposition of the preexisting structural discrimination of marginalized groups and the ignorance of powerful political actors exacerbate inequalities and life-threatening conditions. Additionally, patriarchal gender norms at home will hinder wom*en's online transformation and representation. All in all, this edition is dedicated to enhancing the capacity of authors writing about *Critical Middle East and Gender* issues.

Femininity and Masculinity

The study of gender understands *femininity* and *masculinity* as socially constructed and performative categories that bring about gender relations and gender divisions. Being a theoretical field, issues of gender have been analyzed over recent decades. Since it figures as a performative category, the construction of gender is also brought about in social relations and actions and in the multifarious communications of (audio)visual media. The editors of this issue understand gender as a dynamic concept establishing new political and discursive regimes in various historical periods. Contrary to essentialist notions of femininity and masculinity, gender is brought about by social and cultural norms that sometimes need to be deconstructed to be understood. To this effect, the sign and media systems of a specific culture create and circulate complex and sometimes conflicting images of gender.
From this vantage point, the deconstructive category of gender interferes with aspects of political feminism and the general wish for female participation in social and political realms. The dis-

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courses of gender also include the constructions of masculinity, which usually mirror femininity.

Facing recent events and upheavals in the Arab World, this issue of META intends to understand the meaning of gender in the context of changing social, political, and ideological configurations. The recent collective protests from 2010 on, the second wave in Sudan, Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon in 2019, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis of refugees from war and persecution brought about a new visibility of wo*men in public spaces and new negotiations of femininity in general and wo*men's place in the public sphere. These events rekindled the ambiguous relation between feminism, patriarchy, and nationalism and at the same time hybridize boundaries, undermining traditional concepts of bodies and voices and their respective spaces. The stage is set for political discourses imagining new and diverse arrangements. In the context of these upheavals, violence is an important aspect to consider, as some of the contributions document. Regardless of the revolt's peaceful intentions, violence seems to have dominated a variety of situations in diverse cultures: this points to a systematized use of violence based on gender vulnerabilities. Governmental violence is not only thought to control protesting bodies in public spaces, it also controls bodies' sexualities and sex orientations using accusations of *public indecency* and *inciting immorality*. Contrasting with the forms of state violence, we can observe the emergence of female militias and fundamentalist extremists. The victims of the abuse of wo*men include the Yazidi wo*men and children. At the same time, the masculinity of soldiers and the emerging images of patriarchal nationalism have to be considered.

The essays show a broad range of discursive, symbolic, and violent strategies to control wo*men's issues and subsume them within the patriarchal order. The extent of these actions obviously displays the contextual field of the symbolic configurations of gender and their transformation into sexualized practices. In this regard, the analytical power of the category of gender is easily communicated with practices of sexualized violence. The range of the essays presented here makes this connection visible. The essays refrain from theoretical concerns in favor of pointing to the gendered and sexualized forms of violence against wo*men.

This Issue's Articles and its Entanglements

A section of META focuses on the abuse of Yazidi wo*men, referring to Arjun Appadurai's concept of their *minoritized* body, taking their reports of their enslavement as one of the few visible signs of the genocide. The essay traces the transformation of the *minoritized* body into a political body or a *body politics*. This mode of argument once again underlines the close connection between the gendered and the political body – and points to the inherent dynamics of this connection: gender is a means of isolating and politicizing the female body – as we can conclude from both the symbols and songs of popular culture and the revolutionary events in Egypt and the war against the Yazidi people.

The focus section starts an inspection of the historic aspects of masculinity within the *Great Eastern Crisis* of 1875-1878 by examining the Ottoman and British correspondence and the satirical press. Taking into account the Turkish-British political exchanges, the article summarizes the shifting concepts of hegemonic masculinity according to their cultural positions. The conflict between the nations lay in the understanding of masculinity within the European nations as a basis for their imperialist adventures. Interestingly enough, the gendering of national hierarchies and political structures is also a very common trait in the Arab nations. Rim Naguib traces the gendered discourses of nationalism between the Egyptian presidents Nasser and Sisi,

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who both formulated the relationship between ruler and nation in accordance with gender relation. In this context, Egypt turned from the *humiliated nation* into the *happy bride*, a relationship that was communicated in a variety of popular songs in Nasser's time. Sisi adapts this gendered relation and uses it as a tool against the rebellious Egyptians and their wish for democratic politics. Here, Egypt figures as a *failing, shameful and lowly feminized people* that regains strength through military discipline. This contradiction parallels Klaus Theweleit's landmark research into the gendered images of the right-wing German militia fighting against the Weimar republic, who associated the democratic powers with a low, sexualized, and corporeal femininity that should be conquered by the disciplined, male soldier.

Dina Wahba's contribution deals with the negotiation of masculinity in post-revolutionary Egypt. She focuses on the reinstatement of fear by establishing the narration of the dangerous and criminal male body of the *Baltagi* (thug) in order to justify mass violence. Agosti goes on to argue that affective economies of fear and shame were responsible for the rejection of female revolutionaries, since the normative gendered framing defines these economies. Agosti's article clearly demonstrates how the analytic concept of gender and well-formulated insights into framing curtail female participation in revolutionary activities. Her example was the photographs of El Mahdy's naked body, which were a "direct contestation of the fragmentation that the state wanted for revolutionaries" (Agosti 102). It furthermore demonstrates the complexity of gender politics, which sometimes is closely linked to power structures and social hierarchies. The next essay furthers the idea of a gendered body that is surrendered to dictatorial and military power in the Moroccan prison memoir, Hadith al-Atama. This contribution focuses on the gendered violence against wo*men in the Years of Lead from 1965-1999, in which members of left-wing groups were illegally imprisoned and tortured. Referring to the prison narratives, in Hadith al-Atama, Biondi demonstrates the transmission of bodily violence into self-inflicted violence in terms of hunger. Both forms of violence follow a highly gendered model. This contribution demonstrates how easily external violence can be internalized and acted out through the body. Affective structure and violence thus enter into a close relationship, affecting individual self-perception. Sylvia Riewendt's and Dimitra Dermitzaki's considerations of the Kafāla system further explore these divisions. The Kafāla system is an exploitative legal system that functions to suppress immigrant workers and deprive them of their legal rights. This system undercuts divisions of gender in favor of the exploitation of young wo*men in Lebanese households, and it is *interlocking migration and labour law systems*. As the Kafāla system demonstrates the blurring divisions between aspects of gender and social stratification, Dima Al Munajed's intersectional analysis of Syrian Wo*men in civil society in Turkey and Lebanon shows the methodological advantages of an intersectional approach: crossing gender with class, nationality, and socioeconomic status paints a better picture of the situation of wo*men in foreign civil societies. This approach clearly demonstrates the degree to which the category of gender has to be stretched to explain social developments. Additionally, the category displays great flexibility to be combined with diverse issues.

Finally, Radwa Elsaman turns to wo*men's rights in Egyptian law. She paints a bleak picture of a political culture in which social norms and societal practices undermine relevant laws and legislative policies. This goes especially for Islamic laws that are not understood in their historical complexity, but taken literally as contemporary legal form. Islamic law and its consequences for daily life are also addressed

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in Julia Nauth's analysis of Mehdi Ben Attia's film L'amour des hommes, which recounts a young photographer's experience with Tunisia's contemporary patriarchal culture. Although wo*men are granted equal rights, the female artist's creativity is restricted by patriarchal norms and sexual violence. Thus, in the context of this issue, the film underlines the theoretical aspects of gender in the form of an aesthetic commentary. Originally, an article on Kahina and her relevance to today's Amazigh movement by Cynthia Becker, an associate Professor of African art history at Boston University was planned for the close up section. Due to the constraints associated with the Corona epidemic, this article could not be published.

Finally, the institutionalization of gender studies is taken into closer consideration in Jamie Woitynek's essay on two master programs at Tunisian universities. The article uncovers the political and economic entanglements that shape the production of knowledge and conditions in gender studies.

As it has become obvious by now, this issue does not deal with the global corona epidemic, but rather with how gender and gender relations are affected in times of crisis and upheaval. However, there seem to be some constant patterns: first, the strengthening of and the return to a conservative and highly essentialist understanding of family, accompanied by stable delineations of masculinity and femininity. Second, the negotiation of uncertainty about the female body; and third, the high relevance of intersectional expulsions. Although governments led by wo*men seem to be better at mastering the crisis, as The International Guardian proposed a few weeks ago, gender relations are prone to a fundamental rollback worldwide: the corona crisis has proved once again that, also when we are all facing the same virus, we are not all sitting in the same boat. Some sail on luxury cruises while others must conquer the storm in an inflatable boat.

Notes

[1] The * refers to the constructedness of an engendered category. It enables identities and self-positioning to be included in a train of thought that goes beyond the traditional, historical attributions that are still frequently made even today.

[2] The word *white* is written in italics and lower case to refer to the concept of *critical whiteness* to reveal the invisible structures that (re-) produce *white supremacy* and *privilege*.

[3] The word *Black* is capitalized as part of the strategy of self-empowerment. It is used to indicate the symbolic capital of resistance to racism that racialized people and groups have collectively fought for and obtained.

[4] Here you can find the previous article about Kahina from Cynthia Becker www.mizanproject.org/the-kahina-the-female-face-of-berber-history/.

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META

The Minoritized Yazidi Body as a Signifier

Shereen Abouelnaga

This paper reads the testimonies of Yazidi women who survived their slavery at the hands of ISIS (DAESH) to understand how this *minoritized* body, a term coined by Arjun Appadurai, has become a worldwide signifier. These testimonies have become the only means that allows visibility; yet, the visibility of the violated minoritized body is a fact that still signifies power and instils worldwide horror. The paper attempts to understand how the minoritized violated female body has become a body politic, onto which power relations are played out and where several discourses intersect.

Key words: Sex slaves, Minoritized body, Yazidi women, Testimony, Voice, Identity politics.

Rape as a Signifier

Raping women has always been a part and parcel of wars and conflicts. Systematic rape is often overlooked and regarded as an inevitable consequence faction of warfare, even normalized on the pretext of soldiers satisfying their sexual appetites. However, raping women has a very specific purpose; that of humiliating the body of the other opponent to whom the women belong. Anne McClintock has explained that usually women are "excluded from direct action as national citizens," and so they are "subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit" (90). Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nations – not to mention a minority – "but are denied any direct relation to national agency" (McClintock 90). Perceived as the cultural markers of national identities and boundaries, women are highly liable to experience physically, discursively, and symbolically all forms of violence related to the denial of agency and subjectivity. It is then understandable how women, in conflict zones, turn into not only a commoditised body but also a tool of retaliation and a means of achieving victory (on their bodies). This othered body has a highly peculiar utility during conflicts and wars, since it becomes the site of conflicting claims.

Deblina Hazra states that it is "a site where the symbolic extermination of an entire community or race can be carried out; it is also a site which bears the burden of honour" (112). The honour of the family, community and the whole race is subsumed in the individual honour of the woman. This is how victory in wars is always written on, and through, women's bodies. Put differently, raping women becomes a signifier of victory.

On the other hand, wars and conflicts provide a space where the imbalance of gender relations appears starkly. Inger Skjelsbaek explains that, "The war-zone is a place where pre-existing gender relations become accentuated so that if women are perceived as men's possession in times of peace, they will be perceived as such even more so in times of war" (217). In other words, wars and conflicts usually augment the paradigm of power, especially in instances where women's positions are already fragile. In *Experiencing War*, Christine Sylvester argues that documenting individual experiences in war is essential for those who want to understand the core of the conflict, and so she calls for taking into consideration all those who "experience war in a myriad of ways possible (…). What unites them all is the human body, a sensing physical entity that can touch war, and an emotional and thinking body that is touched by it in innumerable ways (1). Sylvester's entreaty highlights the importance of listening to the voices of people who usually pay a dear price, and yet, unfortunately, typically go unnoticed. In this context, women's voices and experiences are equally important as men's in conflicts – since their bodies are targeted – to the extent that one can say that the rise of the Islamic State (Daesh) is synonymous with the waging of war on women, even if we are witnessing the demise of ISIS power.

The emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and more recently, the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL and IS respectively) in the 21st century is a product of ISIS members' absolute belief in the necessity of founding a *State* on a radical right-wing discourse. This discourse privileges sameness – of religion and ideology – over difference. Strangely enough, the global narrative around ISIS primarily revolved around its military powers and its appeal to huge numbers of men and women around the world, while no attention was directed to the atrocities being committed against women.

Hence, in this paper I argue that the emergence of the violated/raped/incarcerated female Yazidi body is the signified of the Islamic State's discourse. If the Islamic State is a sign of the failure of globalization (as will be explained below) then the Yazidi female body has come to signify the terror this *State* could inflict upon the body, which in turn has become a marketing tool of the Islamic State, to terrorize, demoralize, humiliate, and dehumanize *a minority*. The brutality which Yazidi people had to endure became a signifier of ISIS's *majoritarian* identity, its ruthless power, and its position vis-à-vis the other. It should be mentioned that the use of the terms signifier and *signified* in this context does not correspond to the *Saussurean* meaning, but rather to what Roland Barthes has formulated. According to Barthes, the signifier is a mediator to handle the words, images, and objects in the sign equation (42). Therefore, the rape enacted upon the Yazidi body becomes a signifier that denotes a crime. Such an abhorrent act requires an interpretation and a meaning, i.e., the signified. The latter is not a thing, but rather "the mental representation of a thing (…) a concept" (42-3). The violated Yazidi body becomes the emblem of a brutal power, it becomes a metalanguage, a discourse that highlights another discourse.

While the violated minoritised body stands as a signifier of ruthless uninhibited power, the signified even implies more

power; that is, the whole paradigm of signification is self-referential. That the signifier and signified are identical in this case is an indicator that the gendered Yazidi body is a space of performing identity politics, a space onto which ideologies – those of ISIS and its adversaries – are inscribed. The small population of Yazidi people were seen by ISIS as synecdochic of all the other groups of those whom they perceive to be heretics.

Yet, the specificity of the situation cannot be understood without contextualizing the history of Yazidis and their culture. The Yazidis are an ethnically Kurdish religious group, and the bulk of their population lives in Iraq, where they make up an important minority community. While Yazidis form one of the oldest minorities in Iraq, they have been the target of persecution for centuries for their beliefs. Their numbers were reduced by massacres and conversions, both voluntary and forced (Schmermund 5). Arjun Appadurai confirms that ethnic violence "is partly a product of propaganda, rumor, prejudice, and memory – all forms of knowledge and all usually associated with heightened conviction, conviction capable of producing inhumane degrees of violence" ("Dead Certainty" 225). With the rise of the Islamic State, many Yazidi villages were captured in August 2014, and their inhabitants had to flee to Mount Sinjar, where they were besieged. From that point onwards, the tragedy of Yazidis started, and they became a prey for ISIS to prove its power and establish its authority.

By the end of 2014, the Yazidi female body started to be visible internationally, yet only as a mere physical body that is either abducted, maimed or raped. Reports issued about the suffering of Yazidis attracted the attention of numerous international organizations, after which the suffering of this ethnicity made its way to the news. As became apparent, the Yazidi female body has become a contested ground on which ISIS has inscribed its discourse. Hence, it exists within a constant state of precarity. While all "lives are by definition precarious," Judith Butler argues that the term precarity specifically "designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (25). Sadly enough, the Yazidi minority exemplifies this failure par excellence.

This paper will explore the precarious position of the female Yazidi body through Appadurai's concept of the minoritized body. Minorities always remind the majorities of "the small gap which lies between their condition as majorities and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethos" (Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers* 8). The presence of the minoritised body tarnishes the homogenous nature of the majority. I argue that the minoritised female Yazidi body has simultaneously been a mirror of the terrors of Daesh, and a tool employed by Daesh as well to heal "the anxiety of incompleteness" (Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers* 8). While the argument aims to understand the logic of violence that the Yazidi body has to suffer, it will also read the intersectional discourses of identity that the Yazidi body exhibits to a world that had not previously heard about it. The minoritized body engages three actors: the victim, the perpetrators and the global audience who consume media.

The problem with minorities is that their presence blurs the boundary between an imaginary pure self and the rest of the world. Appadurai has tried to solve the puzzle of why minorities are necessary but unwelcomed, by proposing that "we need the minor groups in our national spaces- if nothing else to clean our latrines and fight our wars" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 44). It is obvious that the ambiguous relation with minorities echoes the ambiguous relation with globalization. Appadurai concludes that globalization "being a force without a face, cannot be the object of ethnocide.

But minorities can" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 44).

Although ISIS violence towards the Yazidis, and in particular the women, is extreme and bloody, it is a justified violence from the perspective of its adherents. ISIS will accept any member provided that they adhere to the principles of the organization. In this sense, ISIS is an Islamic International that has many of the same characteristics of the global transnational corporations which prompted its rise. And, just as the trade of trafficking human beings targets the weakest, poorest and most marginalized, ISIS targets the Yazidi minority, not only as a source of financial profit, but also as a tool of propaganda and a method of spreading panic. The discourse of ISIS confirms the enslavement of Yazidi women, "while defending the practice of 'saby': taking women captured in war, including married women, as sex slaves, often after their husbands have been executed" (Moran 26). The latter objective in particular is a cornerstone in the organisation's ideology – which helps explain the title of the Islamic strategist Abu Bakr Naji's book, *Management of Savagery* (Idārat at-Tawaḥḥuš), which can be considered the marker that governs the mindset of ISIS. The Yazidi female body therefore functions as a signifier of the Islamic State's horrific and hostile ideologies towards those adopt different religious beliefs or ideologies.

While this paper intends to explore the position of the female Yazidi body as a minoritised body, it also gives voice to selected testimonies of surviving Yazidi women. This should also highlight the intersectional discourses of identity that such a minoritised body exhibits amid a bloody conflict.

A Minoritized Body

Because the Yazidis are a minority, then the female Yazidi body doubly belongs to a minority as well. Being a minority is the denominator which defines the Yazidi body politic when the women are taken as spoils in the possession of ISIS. However, the term *minority* has multifarious meanings, and so this argument adopts the concept of *minority* as advanced by Appadurai who confirms that it is not only a matter of small numbers that can generate a minority. Accordingly:

> Minorities do not come preformed. They are produced in the specific circumstances of every nation and every nationalism. They are often the carriers of the unwanted memories of the acts of violence that produced existing states, of forced conscription or of violent extrusion as new states were formed. And, in addition, as weak claimants on state entitlements or drains on the resources of highly contested national resources, they are also reminders of the failures of various state projects (socialist, developmentalist and capitalist). They are marks of failure and coercion. They are embarrassments to any state-sponsored image of national purity and state fairness. They are thus scapegoats in the classical sense. (Appadurai, Fear of Small Numbers 45)

Appadurai's discussion of minoritisation provides a salient lens through which an outsider can begin to understand the position of the Yazidi women who became spoils of war towards the end of 2014. Ironically enough, because Yazidi people are a minority on the pretext of their religion, until 2014 they were invisible to the extent that they were almost entirely unheard of beyond the region of the Levant and Turkey. Yet following the first testimony of a Yazidi woman, it seemed that the whole world was suddenly eager to try to find out who the Yazidis were. The question remains therefore: how can we interpret the persecution of the female Yazidi body? We need to engage with a rigorous theoretical framework that can explain the fear of small numbers facing minoritisation that nonetheless creates the geography of anger.

Foucault's theory of discipline and punishment has always provided the most convenient approach to examining power relations, whether physical or discursive. It lends itself adroitly to this framework. However, although it is of great use to post-structuralist feminist theory since it considers the body as the main target of power, to do so is not without its problems. In daily life in countries where the rule of law is not the norm, it has become almost normal to torture a man until death, or to sexually abuse a woman in order to humiliate her. Therefore, the imbalance of power relations should be taken into consideration. According to Foucault, in premodern societies the body lay completely under the ruthless mercy of disciplinary power, whereas in modern societies it has become docile, and is subsequently able to produce knowledge and subjectivity (138). In modern societies, the law is replaced by the norm, and thus any deviation from the norm is an exception. Whilst the Foucauldian theory vis-à-vis modern power is largely convincing, it fails to explain the savage mindset of ISIS. Rather, ISIS exerts a variety of ideological power that stands as an exception to the normative *modern* notion of Foucauldian power, and whose practices cannot possibly produce any subject.

On the other hand, the feminist critique of the normalising relation between the body and matrices of power is essential. If individuals are simply the products of power, or mere *docile bodies* shaped by power, then it becomes difficult to explain who resists power and why. Thus, Nancy Fraser finds Foucault's assertion that power always generates resistance incoherent (Fraser 29). Supporting Fraser's position, the testimonies of the surviving Yazidi women prove that, for those women at least, their bodies resisted docility, and refused the paradigm of ISIS's disciplinary power, despite the enslaved women having been beaten, whipped, threatened, attacked, raped and incarcerated because they resisted. It must also be noted that some of these women took their own lives to protect their bodies from ISIS brutality and in other cases to elude facing the *shame* rape has wrought (Bahun and Rajan 87). An excerpt of one Yazidi woman's testimony throws light on the validity of the feminist critique of Foucault's claim. Rooba, who was at the time 28 years old, was enslaved by ISIS for 10 months. She says:

> They brought us to Raqqa, Syria. One night nine girls tried to flee. They tied their clothes together and made a rope with them and fled from the window but then ISIS fighters found them and brought them back. They hit all of us because we did not say anything to them about their escape. I was asleep when they came in and punished all of us, whipping us with a big scourge. There were about 70 of us. They put us all in a big room, locked the door and did not give us any water until the next day. Then one day they brought us to another building. On the front it was written something like 'selling place', and there I was sold to a 40-year-old man from Saudi Arabia. He asked me to marry him, and when I refused he said that he would punish me with the objects I saw on the table: a knife, a gun, a rope. But If I married him I would be treated with more respect, as far as I would sleep with him. I refused over and over again. I was sold again. They told me that I better commit suicide. They beat me. They beat my niece, who is only 3 years old. I was then sold again, to a man, a single man, who wanted to marry me and who wanted to sleep with me: I refused with all my energies, and again I was beaten, and so was my little niece. He tried to rape me, and when he couldn't he sold me again. (Catholic)

What we witness in the above testimony, along with those of many of Rooba's fellows, is resistance. Rooba's body and sub-

jectivity are adamant not to give in to the disciplinary practices of ISIS, resulting in her body being far from being *docile* in its enslavement under the organisation. Rooba's body becomes a site of power drainage. Foucault's theorization of the body as a product of power relations is proven invalid.

Another popular interpretation of what is happening to the Yazidi women is that such acts of violence are licensed by the patriarchal character of Islamic fundamentalist beliefs. This interpretation is evidenced by material published by the female media wing of ISIS, *Khansaa Brigade*, where the fact that a woman's role is limited to being a wife is emphasized (Winter). It is rather unconvincing to attribute these ideas merely to patriarchy, a term that requires unpacking to understand its workings in material reality (Kandiyoti 274). Similarly, concepts such as fundamentalism and extremism are abstract notions, incapable of sufficiently theorizing a convincing material explanation of why the Yazidi women were subjected to this ordeal.

As stated earlier, the organisation of ISIS represents an International whose global existence proves the failure of manifestations of globalisation that take pride in diversity and rapidity, and which is itself a reaction to globalisation. By examining globalisation, we can understand the reasons behind the recentralization of the minoritised body. Appadurai invites us to consider the possibility that "part of the effort to slow down the whirl of the global and its seeming largeness of reach is by holding it still, and making it small, in the body of the violated minor" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 47). That Appadurai takes his examples from liberal democracies is proof of the pressure the minoritized body exerts upon the majority. The minoritised body is a body that must be extinct in order to cure the "anxiety of incompleteness" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 53) of the majority. Appadurai explains that incompleteness in this sense "is not only about effective control or practical sovereignty but more importantly about purity and its relationship to identity" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 53). As for the great capacity of the contrastingly minute Yazidi civilization's persecution to excite international rage, Appadurai offers a convincing answer:

> Small numbers represent a tiny obstacle between majority and totality or total purity. In a sense, the smaller the number and the weaker the minority, the deeper the rage about its capacity to make a majority feel like a mere majority rather than like a whole and uncontested ethnos. (Fear of Small Numbers 53)

The tension between majoritarian identity and national purity augments the anxiety of incompleteness, and hence ISIS's predation on minoritized identities such as the Yazidi is proven effective. Predatory identities "claim to require the extinction of another collectivity for their own survival" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 51), and most importantly, they are mostly majoritarian identities. That is:

> They are based on claims about, and on behalf of, a threatened majority. In fact, in many instances, they are claims about cultural majorities that seek to be exclusively or exhaustively linked with the identity of the nation. (Fear of Small Numbers 51)

The dynamics of violence practiced against Yazidi women then, were necessary for ISIS's formation of a collective and monolithic identity of *we*, their subjection being the final step to the movement achieving national/Islamic purity. Appadurai details that the process of forming a collective *we* happens through specific choices and strategies, often carried out by state elites or political leaders, and thus, "particular groups, who have stayed invisible, are rendered visible as minorities against whom campaigns of calumny can be unleashed, leading to explosions of ethnocide" (*Fear of Small Numbers* 45). The campaign that ISIS lev-

eled at Yazidi people was based on religious calumny and deviancy and, since its larger objective was to mobilize (or rather seduce) the members of the Islamic International, the capture of Yazidi women was a form of loud propaganda for such marketing. Sa'd Saloum, an Iraqi researcher, echoes Appadurai's opinion in an article published in an Arabic newspaper, when he questions in a denunciatory tone:

> Yazidi men and women pose a worrying image that attracts several accusations, and implies an uneasy ambiguity about a group that lives outside history or in a world of superstition. Does this explain the avoidance of Iraqi intellectuals and researchers to condemn the repeated and opportunistic targeting of Yazidis? And does it explain the reluctance of authorities to initiate a serious investigation about who the perpetrators are? And does it explain also the utter silence of the religious institution? These are perplexing questions that condemn our acceptance of the different other. (Saloum)

Saloum's questions become even more pertinent in light of the testimonies of the Yazidi women, who were not only enslaved, but were also forced to conform to the principles of ISIS. One seventeen year old girl, who did not want to reveal her identity, recalls that her worst nightmare is that "while raping me they used to force me to recite verses from the Quran or they would whip me" (Testimonies). Furthermore, she asserts that "one time I resisted and one of the guards poured boiling water on my thighs" (Testimonies). As brutal as it sounds, the aim of such torture was to force the women to capitulate, and so to become part of the collective; i.e., to erase their difference. The Yazidi minoritized body has served the purpose ISIS intended: purity. The organisation needed to enact violence to declare its own identity – one based on fixity and timelessness – and the Yazidi minority provided the body politic to enact such violence upon. In an era in which digital technologies are ubiquitous and the circulation of information through internet platforms is commonplace, the testimonies of the Yazidi women who survived their slavery serve, ironically enough, the same purpose as those widely-circulated videos depicting the brutality with which ISIS tortures and kills its victims, which were frequently released in the organisation's earlier years. We can begin to understand that, like the viral videos, these testimonies simply reciprocate and consolidate our fear. They unravel our horror at the worldwide growth of a *predatory* identity, by displaying identity and its discontents par excellence. While the testimonies endow the invisible with visibility and give the Yazidi women a voice, they unfortunately simultaneously serve the purposes of the organisation by spreading a vision of the insidious practices of ISIS towards minoritised women. Additionally, in the eyes of the international community, they summate to become a prominent article of evidence that ISIS is a terrorist organisation, and they thus help to rationalize military interventions in the Middle East. Although the invisible has been rendered visible, the unvoiced has been voiced, the marginal has briefly moved to the centre, and the voiceless have been given voice, the Yazidi female body remains a site upon which several discourses are inscribed with the exception of its value.

The Yazidi body as an intersectional site

The crux of the Yazidi women's plight can therefore be seen to be much more complicated than the physical violation they underwent. By emphasising physical violence as the only factor that marks the violation of the Yazidi body, it is implied that the Yazidi identity is fixed and unchangeable, and that their oppression takes only one form. In truth however, and as this chapter has demonstrated, the manifestations of oppression are various, and become visible according to the fore-

grounded constituents of identity. Positionality became an important concept in identity studies towards the end of the 1980s, emerging out of the fields of post-structural and post-colonial studies. Susan Friedman defines the conception of identity in the discourse of positionality as "the site of multiple subject positions, as the intersection of different and often competing cultural formations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, and national origin, et cetera, and so forth" (21). The constituents of the Yazidi identity, similarly, emerge in a succession of categories that could be competing, conflicting, or even contradictory. In the Yazidi positionality, "the definitional focus is not so exclusively on oppression and victimization but rather on various combinations of difference that may or may not be tied to oppression" (Friedman 21). Put differently, the Yazidi identity is not structured only around the fact that they are a minoritised body predated upon, there are other intersecting elements that further complicate their position.

To clarify, from the outset of the victimisation process, the Yazidi women's identity has been reduced to that of their bodies. Their bodies have accordingly become the carrier of multiple transversal discourses: ethnic, religious, gendered, political, national and international. Accordingly, we must ask once more: who are the Yazidis? They are not quite Kurds, because they follow a different religion which is Yazidism, which they themselves consider a religious and ethnic identity. Hence they are a religious minority inside a Sunni majority. Yet, the Kurds themselves are not a majority, but an ethnic minority from the point of view of official regimes. In this way, the Yazidis are a religious minority within another ethnic minority. Thus, the factors of ethnicity, language and religion inflect the Yazidi identity, and when it comes to women, the factor of gender is added to the paradigm.

When the first Yazidi women were captured by ISIS in 2014, the factor of gender was foregrounded in news reports, yet they were captured primarily because of their religion. This explains the logic behind the slave market; when gender became the main marker of these women, they were turned into a commodity. In 2014, an October edition of *Dabiq* claimed that "Enslaving the families of the kuffar [non-believers] and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the Sharia [Islamic Law]" (Boren).

The commodification and reification of the female Yazidi body frames and circumscribes all the other constituents of Yazidi identity. The families of the women who have survived their slavery centralise the importance of the crime of rape, or to be more accurate, the tarnished honour. Khalida Khalid, adviser to the speaker of parliament in Kurdistan, argues that "We're more concerned about what will happen later to these women, will they face discrimination or violence from their families" (Fadel). Dealing with the issue of rape by ISIS is quite complicated and, if it is mishandled, holds the potential to re-traumatize the victims (Fadel). The international community perceives the Yazidi women as the living proof of ISIS's savagery; international non-governmental organisations condemn the crimes of war perpetrated upon them; and Muslim scholars never stop emphasizing the tolerant character of Islamic doctrine by explicating the position of minorities vis-à-vis the principle of shari'a [Islamic Law]. Yazidi women's identity is accordingly inflected at the crossroads of many different formations of power and powerlessness. Likewise, the discourse of multiple positionality – whereby sexuality stands right at its centre – yields an interactional analysis of identity as the product of interdependent systems of alterity, imbalanced power relations and power interests.

How could the precarity that encompasses the Yazidi women be eliminated? What guarantees the rights of a minority caught in a conflict zone? Apparently nothing.

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Conflicts and wars appear to mean precarity by default.
Additionally, and taking into consideration Fraser's concept of redistribution, while social justice should eliminate precarity, the drifting apart of gender justice and social justice goals have generated grave consequences, including: the utter misrecognition of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Female bodies remain a battlefield.

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FOCUS

Ottoman Diplomacy and Hegemonic Masculinity during the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875–78

Kyle Clark

This article will examine Ottoman and British diplomatic correspondence and the satirical press and argue that during the Eastern Crisis of 1875-78, representatives of the Great Powers conceived of a hierarchy of masculinities that became a major part of their diplomatic rhetoric. At the top of this order was the masculinity that European statesmen saw in themselves and legitimized their imperialist projects; they particularly emphasized honor, and ascribed what they viewed as positive governmental traits – such as safety, order, rational thinking, and secularism – as masculine and civilized and their opposites as feminine and barbarous. Until the end of this crisis, Ottoman officials sought to convince their European counterparts that they should accept them with honor and dignity, and therefore a qualified equality. Thus, Ottomans did not challenge the European belief in a hierarchy of masculinities but sought instead to prove that the new Ottoman statesman was himself properly masculine and had the moral imperative to rule over the lesser peoples of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, Ottoman officials depicted Christian separatists as cruel, savage, and too ignorant for independence, mirroring the gendered arguments that anti-Ottoman Europeans made about the Ottomans.

Keywords: Ottoman diplomacy, Eastern Question, masculinity

In the historiography of *The Great Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878*, both gender and the Ottoman perspective in diplomatic histories are underdeveloped. Most older works do not even problematize the centering of the Great Powers (Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia). Instead, despite the *Eastern Question* directly concerning Ottoman lands and peoples, these historians ignored Ottoman concerns and reduced Ottoman officials to mere partisans of a Great Power (see Harris, Marriott, Millman), rather than statesmen with competing beliefs on the best diplomatic alliances for safeguarding Ottoman independence.

There are exceptions to this within the Ottoman field, such as the edited volumes on the Ottoman-Russian war (Yavuz and Sluglett, Turan), F.A.K. Yasamee's book, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers 1878-1888*, and Roderic H. Davison's works, particularly *Nineteenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms*. However, these books all ignore how gender, in this case hegemonic masculinity, affected nineteenth-century diplomacy. This article adopts R.W. Connell's argument for multiple simultaneously existing masculinities, with a hegemonic masculinity (Connell 77). Few men will ever achieve this status, but because of their influence,

it determines the most honored way of being a man within its historical context (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Unlike the above-mentioned books, Ali Bilgiç's *Power and the West: Gendered International Relations and Foreign Policy* examines gender, interrogating how Great Powers have feminized or hypermasculinized Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, prompting Turkish and Ottoman leaders to embrace Westernization programs and promote their state as properly civilized and masculine (Bilgiç, "Introduction" 73); however, Bilgiç's research begins in 1895 and does not discuss the time period of this article.

This article, in addition to analyzing the diplomatic correspondence of the Ottoman and British foreign ministries, will examine satirical journals published in Istanbul and London. These journals will demonstrate that the satirical press in both empires had a shared conception of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, examining these journals is critical because this was the first major European war where the public received daily updates of the war (İşçi 188; Davison, "Advent" 155). This is necessary as both Ottoman and British officials regularly cited public opinion in defense of their actions. The importance of masculinity during this time might not be readily apparent, as officially recognized diplomacy was nearly the exclusive purview of men. But how masculinity was manifested in Ottoman and Great Power diplomacy during this specific time period had a direct influence on decision-makers' policies.

From 1875-1878, the dominant concerns of the international system were the maintenance of the balance of power and the spread of *civilization*. While the Great Powers had agreed following the Crimean War that the survival of the Ottoman Empire was necessary to maintain the balance, it was conditional on the Ottomans instituting administrative reforms to ameliorate its military, finances, and the rights of its Christian subjects. The crisis threatened to alienate the Ottoman Empire from the Great Powers, including its closest ally, England. Consequently, throughout the crisis Ottoman officials sought to convince the cabinets of the Great Powers that the Ottoman Empire was still essential to the balance of power and that the Ottomans were civilized. The latter was especially important, as barbarous powers could be a legitimate target for Great Power intervention or imperialism. Because European conceptions of civilization and barbarity were heavily gendered – traits associated with civilization were gendered as masculine and those of barbarity as feminine – Ottoman diplomacy was also gendered, seeking to show that the Ottoman state and its officials were properly masculine and civilized.

The individuals who made up the governments of the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire desired the survival of their states, but above all, they desired the maintenance of their honor, independence, and sovereignty, which necessitated positioning the state as properly masculine. In Europe, this construction utilized hierarchies of race, religion, class, and states, all of which they viewed as proof of their *civilized* nature and thus the right and obligation to rule lesser men and all women of the world (Parpart and Zalewski, "Introduction" 11). Ottoman officials did not challenge the European hierarchical view of masculinity. Instead, they argued that Ottoman elites as well as the Ottoman Empire belonged to the premier class of men and states. Throughout the crisis, Ottoman and Great Power officials used masculinity to explain and defend their actions, appealing to honor and dignity and claiming an ability to rationally direct or restrain the violence of men underneath their rule.

Honor among Ottomans

In Stanley Lane-Poole's biography of Stratford Canning, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1842-58, he

quoted a conversation between Canning and Mustafa Reşid Pasha in London while Reşid was the Ottoman ambassador to England. Reşid asked Canning where the Ottoman Empire should start its reforms, to which Canning replied:

'At the beginning.' 'What do you mean by *the beginning*?' he said. 'Security of life and property, of course,' I rejoined. 'Would not you add the protection of honour?' he asked. 'No doubt,' I said. But in truth I wondered what he meant by honour among Turks, until I recollected their practice of applying the bastinado without discrimination to persons of any class or rank whatever.' (Lane-Poole 105).

The meaning of honor can be nebulous and changed over time within the Ottoman world. Examining honor in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Leslie Pierce argues that Ottoman sultans abducting the dependents of political rivals improved the reputation of the state while also serving as the strongest attack on the honor of their enemies, but by the seventeenth century Ottomans viewed abductions as a potential threat to the state (Pierce 313). This shift coincided with Ottoman sultans no longer going out on campaign, risking defeat and loss of honor. Instead, they would command one of their pashas to lead in their place, as they could be publicly humiliated for any defeats without threatening the Sultan's honor (Pierce 320, 324). Başak Tuğ argues that by the eighteenth century, both the Ottoman state and its subjects viewed upholding Ottomans' honor as a central duty of the government in providing justice and a key legitimating factor for the Sultan, shown by the frequent references to honor in correspondence between the government and Ottoman subjects (Tuğ 2). In 1839, at the behest of Reşid – who was now Grand Vizier – Sultan Abdülmecid promulgated the Tanzimat Reform Edict, which called for the protection of all subjects' life, liberty, honor, and property, codifying the state's duty to protect its subjects' honor. Importantly for elite men like Reşid, this would also require the Sultan to respect their honor as well as their lives and property, rather than be valid scapegoats or subject to the Sultan's whims (Hanioğlu 73).

Ottoman reformers, like Reşid, believed in the necessity of these reforms to strengthen the Empire, but Ottoman reforms cannot be entirely separated from Ottoman diplomacy. Ottoman diplomats promised that these reforms would improve the condition of Ottoman Christians in hopes of gaining European alliances against external threats, entangling Ottoman domestic and foreign policy. Likewise, upholding honor became not only a domestic concern but a foreign one as well. In Europe, modern notions of new political rights and civic honor greatly influenced the European diplomatic norms the Ottomans accepted. Personal honor retained value, but equal dignity had replaced positional honor, as men were now citizens with a theoretically equal status (LaVaque-Manty 715). Similarly, European states were acknowledging one another's sovereignty, accepting parity between European states, and viewing diplomatic practices – such as kneeling – that implied subservience as feminine and thus undignified, dishonorable, and barbarous (Frevert 141).

Just as not all men (and no women) yet had equal status despite the rhetoric, the same was true of states. To be accorded equal dignity and honor, the state had to also be viewed in Europe as a civilized power and thus worthy of international legal and Westphalian sovereignty, which granted international recognition of their territory and the exclusion of external actors in their internal affairs (Krasner 3-4, 16-20). In practice, few non-European states ever attained this recognition and were instead characterized as barbarous or uncivilized (Keene 5-7). These labels were gendered, with civilization being associated with *masculine* virtues such as safe, rational, orderly, modern, and secu-

lar, while barbaric states were connected to *feminine* vices such as dangerous, reactionary, chaotic, backwards, and fanatical (Bilgiç "Reproduction of Power Hierarchies" 607, 888). Ottoman foreign policy was thus designed to construct an image of the Ottoman Empire as a civilized and properly masculine state, whose international and Westphalian sovereignty would be recognized.

The *Great Eastern Crisis* of 1875-78 started in the town of Nevesinje in Herzegovina in the summer of 1875 and the rebellion quickly spread to neighboring Bosnia. Although the Porte argued that the rebellion was strictly an internal Ottoman affair, Austria-Hungary and Russia developed a plan to submit to the Porte for pacification of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sultan Abdülaziz replied that he wished to introduce governmental reforms which were compatible with his sovereignty, but he could not accept any foreign proposals, as "this would be committing suicide, and I prefer to die on my throne" (Foreign Office, 424:39, 327). Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador to London, made a similar argument to Lord Derby, the British Foreign Secretary. Speaking of Gyula Andrássy, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Musurus told Derby that Mehmed Raşid Pasha, the Ottoman Foreign Minister, was concerned that Andrássy's proposal would not conform to the Great Powers' treaties respecting the independence of the Ottoman Empire nor the Sultan's dignity.

The Porte would accept friendly advice from the Great Powers but argued that they should give their advice to the Porte in an unofficial manner so that it would not imply the Porte was subservient (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" VII, 183-4). Mahmud Nedim Pasha, the Grand Vizier, informed Sir Henry Elliot, the British ambassador, that if the ambassadors of the Great Powers insisted on presenting the Andrássy Note in an official manner, "he would not be the medium of laying upon His Majesty the affront which would be implied by the communication of a concerted official note" (Foreign Office, 424:40, 49).

All of the Great Powers save for Great Britain agreed to the terms of the Andrássy Note, however, and the Porte signaled that it would not make any more objections to the plan so long as it did not contain anything prejudicial to Ottoman sovereignty or "calculated to wound the national feeling" (Foreign Office, 424:40, 54-5). Finally, on January 31, 1876, the ambassadors of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia presented the Andrássy Note to the Porte, and on February 13th Abdülaziz issued a *ferman* (edict) accepting four of the note's five points (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" VII, 275). The Porte's primary concern had not been the terms of the note, but how the Great Powers intended to present it. To meekly accept an official note of proposed reforms from foreign governments, no matter how friendly, would broadcast submissiveness and a lack of manliness, inviting further European interventions and abrogating Ottoman sovereignty.

During the crisis, Ottoman elites demonstrated their belief that they were honorable, civilized, masculine, and had the right to sovereignty (Hooper 65; Kent 238). Ottoman diplomatic rhetoric during this stage of the crisis is illustrative of what they meant by honor. They were not opposed to advice from representatives of the Great Powers; in fact, they welcomed it, seeking to create a modern empire with a strong government modeled on the Great Powers, though adapted for Ottoman specificities. But they saw it as contradictory to modern diplomatic norms to accept official notes castigating Ottoman governance and demands of specific reforms – they viewed this as a denial of their status as an independent state. This was also recognition of their own relative weakness compared to the Great Powers. As Scott Taylor argues, "honor creates the polite fiction of auton-

omy for those who are, in truth, subordinate, and allows both the dominant and subordinate to accept that this state of affairs is just" (306). The Porte could accept their lesser status so long as the other powers acknowledged them as a civilized and masculine state, ineligible for their imperialism.

The Rational Use of Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity

Despite accepting the Andrássy Note, the rebellion in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued and spread to the *vilâyets* (provinces) of Edirne and the Danube (often referred to collectively as Bulgaria). Local Ottoman leaders enrolled *başıbozuks* (irregular soldiers) to put down the rebellion. British newspapers focused on sensationalized (and often fictional) reports of başıbozuks killing women and children or seizing them for their harems. The British public believed that only the most barbarous of peoples mistreated women (Kent 164), and these reports were proof that Ottomans were not civilized. The Ottomans thus feared the reaction of the British public meant that the English government would not come to their aid if Russia declared war.

Ottoman officials and satirists would go on the offensive, accusing their enemies of being barbarians and child-like; they were not proper men. Ali Bilgiç's classification is useful here, dividing this into three major groups: hypermasculine, masculine, and feminine. If they were brave and fighters, they were hypermasculinized and thus barbarous; if they were cowards, they were feminine, who needed Ottoman protection. But either way, they were not the right kind of masculine: that is brave, rational, strong, and honorable. The Porte was also defensive, denying the truth of European reports on the massacres. Seeking recognition as a civilized power, the Porte could no longer condone the mistreatment of its Christian subjects. Thus, during the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, an Ottoman irregular, Deli Mustafa, could boast of beheading infidels, pillaging Greek villages, and seizing Greek women and children to rape and enslave, all with the knowledge and participation of the Ottoman imperial army (Esmer 3-5). In 1876, however, the Porte could not allow such hypermasculine and barbarous acts while also defending itself as a civilized power.

Alexander Gorchakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, informed the Ottoman ambassador, Kabulî Pasha, that because Russia's honor was engaged, it could not ignore further Ottoman Christian deaths (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern

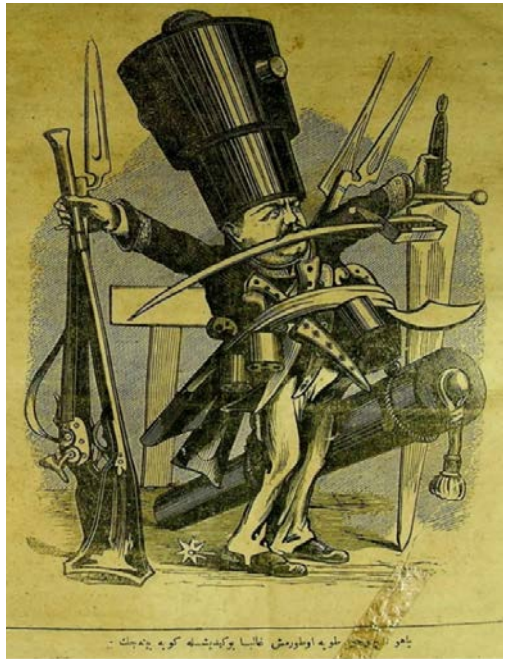

Fig. 1: Prince Milan of Serbia on a Cannon.
Source: Hayâl.
Caption: "Oh God, the Tsarist is sitting on the cannon, he will probably fly off the handle at this rate." [Yâhû Çarcı ṭopa oṭurmuş galiba bu gidişle küpe binecek.][1]

Question" VII, 344-346). Nor would the principalities of Serbia and Montenegro – both nominally Ottoman provinces – who declared war on the Ottomans on July 2nd. Although Montenegro fared well in its battles, Serbia did not. The difference in how Ottomans depicted the two principalities is telling. Ottoman diplomats complained about Montenegrins mutilating

Fig. 2: Prince Milan on His Trone. Source: Hayâl.
Caption: "Is it not the desired kingdom? If it is not Serbia, let it be a graveyard." [Murâd ḳrallık değil mi? Ṣırbistan olmaz ise ḳabristân olsun.]

captured and wounded Ottoman soldiers, cutting off their noses and part of their upper lips. They did not discredit their martial abilities or bravery – both typically markers of masculinity – but instead depicted them as hypermasculine savages, who were not civilized enough to rule themselves. Although at times Ottomans also depicted Serbia as out of control and bloodthirsty (figures 1 and 2), it was more common for them to show Prince Milan and Serbia as a feminized child, essentially playing at war (figure 3). Therefore, neither Montenegrins nor Serbians combined the bravery, martial abilities, and the rational deployment of violence of civilized men who culd rule themselves.

By August, the Great Powers were asking the Porte to agree to peace with the principalities based on the status quo ante. The new Grand Vizier, Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, argued that despite greatly desiring peace, the Porte could not agree to it before Ottoman forces had won a large enough victory to satisfy the nation's desire to see Serbia punished, alluding to Serbia as a wayward child in need of discipline. Safvet Pasha, again the Foreign Minister, argued that the request for peace should come directly from Milan in order to flatter the *amour-propre* of Ottomans (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" VIII, 146).
In September, the Great Powers insisted on an armistice with the principalities as well as elaborating new administrative reforms for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria. Safvet complained bitterly about this, stating that, "if the Sublime Porte could forget that it is an independent State that has been victorious…it would not forget that it is still an independent state and that it must prefer an honorable death to dismemberment" (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" VIII, 272-273). Mehmed Rüşdi also argued that an international conference discussing internal

Fig. 3: A Serbian Child Wants to Fight the Ottomans. Source: Çaylaḳ.
Caption: "Child: 'Granny, can I also go out with my sword like my father Milan?'
Grandmother: 'You will go out, my child, but you are too young. You need to grow up a little bit; your father also was only 15-years old when he had gone out.'"
[Çocuḳ – Nine ben de babam Milan gibi Türklerin ḳarşısında ḳılıç ile çıḳarabiliyor muyum?
Validesi – Çıḳarsıñ evlâdım ama daha küçüğüñ. Biraz büyümesiñ babañ da on beş yaşında çıḳmış idi.]

Ottoman affairs would diminish the Sultan's prestige in his European provinces (Foreign Office, 424:45, 160). On October 21st, *Punch* succinctly depicted the attitude of the Great Powers. The Ottoman Empire, depicted as a sick and feeble old man, is propped up in a chair holding a large pill labeled *Armistice* while men representing each of the Great Powers tell him that he must take it at once or they are not sure what will happen (figure 4). With all the Great Powers in agreement on holding a conference to discuss reestablishment of peace and new reforms, the Porte acquiesced in hopes it could preserve all its sovereign rights (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" VIII, 408-409).

At the same time, Midhat Pasha's committee was seeking to complete its draft of an Ottoman constitution, hoping its proposed reforms would satisfy the Great

Fig. 4: The Great Powers Attempt to Force an Armistice on the Ottoman Empire. Source: Punch.
Caption: "A Pill in Time!"

Fig. 5: The Great Powers Rebuke the Ottomans for Disturbing Europe. Source: Punch.
Caption: "Dame Europa's Christmas Pudding."

Powers before the Constantinople Conference began in Istanbul. Nevertheless, Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev, the Russian ambassador, warned Safvet not only that they would not accept the Constitution in lieu of their proposals, the plenipotentiaries of the Great Powers would consider its promulgation an insult (Foreign Office, 424:46, 200). However, at the start of the first meeting on December 23rd, Safvet announced that Sultan Abdülhamid II had just promulgated the Constitution. The plenipotentiaries of the Great Powers ignored this proclamation and asked for a response to their proposals at the next session. While Ottoman officials felt that they were elite men with the same status as statesmen of the other great and civilized European empires, the latter viewed the Ottomans as children, in need of their supervision, much as the Ottomans viewed Serbians and Bulgarians (figures 5, 6, and 7). The Porte did not challenge the legitimacy of imperialism or colonialism, only what position they held within this hierarchy. So while they were not yet as explicitly colonialist in seeking to *civilize* Ottoman subjects as they would be in following decades (Deringil 312), they used gendered colonialist tropes – such as Midhat arguing that Bulgarians were not intelligent enough to rule themselves (Midhat 990) – to justify their imperialism over peoples they viewed as hypermasculine (Montenegrins and Circassians) or too feminine and in need of their protection (Bulgarians and Serbian).

At the final meeting of the Constantinople Conference on January 20, 1877, the Ottoman plenipotentiaries – Safvet and Edhem Pasha – rejected two of the proposals as incompatible with Ottoman honor and sovereignty: that the Porte obtain prior approval before appointing *vâlîs* (governors) for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria and the formation of an international commission to oversee execution of reforms. Gorchakov took the Ottomans' refusal as an affront to Europe, telling the British ambassador, Lord Augustus Loftus, that "he had a very red [mark] on him, for we all have received a snub" and Europe

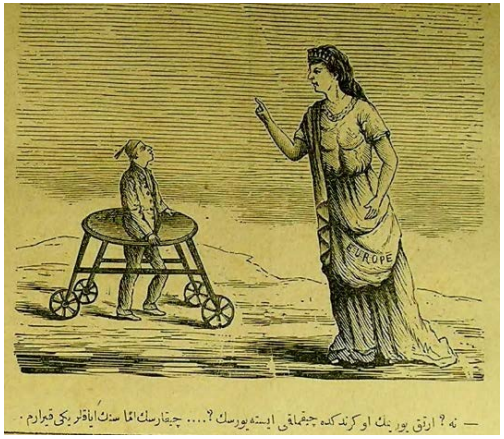

Fig. 6: Europe Admonishes the Ottomans. Source: Hayâl.
Caption: "What? Now that you learned to walk too, you want to go out…? But if you go out, I will break your legs." [Ne? Artıḳ yürümek öğrendiñ de çıḳmaḳ mı istiyorsuñ? ...Çıkarsıñ ama seniñ ayaḳlarıñı ḳırarım.]

Fig. 7: The Ottomans Reject Europe's Tutelage. Sourc: Hayâl.
Caption: "Do you really want to find out that I have learned to walk?..." [Yürümek öğreñmiş olduğumu añlamaḳ istersiñ öyle mi?...]

needed to defend its honor (Foreign Office, 424:48, 213). Conversely, Lord Odo Russell, the British ambassador to Germany, told Otto von Bismarck that he believed the Porte's refusal showed the strength of the Ottomans and the weakness of Russia. Bismarck agreed, but warned that Russia's failure would humiliate it and drive it to restore its honor in a war that could engulf much of Europe (Foreign Office, 424:48, 17-173).

Before Russia declared war, Count Pyotr Andreyevich Shuvalov, the Russian ambassador to London, informed Musurus that if the Porte concluded peace with Montenegro, showed serious progress in instituting reforms, and sent a special ambassador to meet with Czar Alexander II to discuss simultaneous demobilization, the Czar would accept this overture as he could then do so honorably (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" IX, 100-102). Nevertheless, the Porte refused to send any ambassador (Foreign Office, 424:51, 121). Moreover, although it was not required to sign the London Protocol as the Great Powers had, on April 9th the Porte publicly rejected its terms as a humiliating demand of an independent and civilized power "without example in history" (Kuneralp and Tokay, "The Eastern Question" IX, 188-193). Musurus informed Derby that the contents were so derogatory to the Sultan's honor and independence that it would be better for the Ottoman Empire to face the consequences of an unsuccessful war against Russia than quietly acquiescing to this protocol (Foreign Office, 424:51, 65). The Porte would not even condescend to sending a special ambassador to the Czar, believing it would be undignified and unmanly of the Sultan to make the first overture for peace.

Austen Henry Layard, the new British ambassador to the Porte, arrived in Istanbul with the goal of maintaining peace between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Both the Sultan and the new Grand Vizier, Edhem, assured the ambassador of their desire for peace. Edhem promised that, "I would do my utmost to preserve the lives of the tens of thousands of inoffensive, innocent Mussulmans… It could only be a profound conviction that the honour and independence of my country are at stake which could make me hesitate" (Foreign Office, 424:53, 72-75). In a private meeting, Abdülhamid made a similar argument to Layard, who responded that Ottoman diplomacy had

Fig. 8: Circassians Beat Russian Soldiers. Source: Çaylaḳ.
Caption: "A type of game of strength of the brave Circassians." [Çerkes dilâverlerinin bir nevʿ ḳuvvet oyuncağı]

already demonstrated ample proofs of the government's courage, and it could no longer claim that assenting to Great Power demands now would damage its dignity or independence (Foreign Office, 424:53, 76-78).

Before the Ottoman government suspended the satirical press, Ottoman diplomatic rhetoric and satire on Russia mirrored that on Serbia and Montenegro previously. Ottoman officials focused on Russian war crimes, particularly against Ottoman women and children, and accused Russia of being driven by religious zealotry. Similarly, Ottoman political cartoons typically depicted Russia as a savage bear, or a wild-looking soldier covered in weapons, while Ottomans were shown as easily defeating Russians and protecting cowardly and child-like Ottoman Christians (figures 8 and 9). In short, Ottomans reversed the gendered anti-Ottoman attacks that accused them of being barbarous, religious fanatics and redirected these charges against Russia.

Despite a stronger-than-expected resistance at Pleven in Bulgaria, on December 10th, Ottoman forces led by Osman Pasha capitulated to the Russian siege. After signing the Treaty of San Stefano in March, the other Great Powers insisted on a congress to reach a new agreement, which would replace the terms of San Stefano. In July, they and the Ottoman Empire agreed to the Treaty of Berlin. As Ottoman officials had promised throughout the crisis, they accepted a disastrous war and the loss of great swaths of territory in both Europe and Asia. Ottoman officials had not deluded themselves on their chances of victory before the war; they accepted war because they would not accept the humiliation of submitting to foreign interference without a fight, thereby impugning their dignity and right to sovereignty.

Conclusion

Throughout the crisis, Ottoman officials argued that foreign intervention in Ottoman affairs was a direct violation of the Treaty of Paris and quiet acceptance of this would be acquiescence to the abrogation of the treaty and their indepen-

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dence and autonomy. Consequently, they rejected any Great Power proposals that even implied European supervision or intervention in internal Ottoman affairs. In Ottoman diplomacy and satirical journals, Ottomans depicted themselves as civilized and masculine, deserving of their independence. Furthermore, they portrayed their rebellious Christian subjects as hypermasculinized or feminized, and so barbarous and still in need of Ottoman tutelage. This rhetoric mirrored that of Europe's, particularly Russia's, regarding the Ottomans themselves. Thus, the Ottomans, like the governments and public of the Great Powers, saw masculinity as both a marker of civilized status and legitimation for imperialism.

Finally, the Ottomans encouraged a war they knew they could not win rather than accept European arguments that they were neither civilized nor masculine enough to rule the Empire unsupervised. Similarly, Russia risked provoking Great Britain to war over perceived insults to its honor – a war it promised the Ottomans they could avoid if they humbled themselves to satisfy the Czar's honor. The primary difference, therefore, between the Ottomans and Great Powers was not the importance the former attached to honor or even its definition of honor; nor was it that Ottoman officials disputed a hierarchy

Fig. 9: An Ottoman Man Unafraid of the Unleashed Russian Bear. Source: Hayâl.
Caption: "Do not be afraid children…! As he sees the bayonet, he will be foxlike, you will see!
[Ḳorḳmayañız çocuḳlar!… Süngüyü gördüğü gibi tilkileşir açılıñız da görsün!]

of masculinities. The difference was that Ottomans believed that the Ottoman Empire was civilized, and they therefore had the right to rule over barbaric peoples of their Empire. Great Powers officials, however, viewed the Ottomans as semi-barbarous at best; they could retain what remained of their Empire only so long as they accepted European tutelage and because the balance of power still demanded it.

Notes

[1] All translations are the work of the author. For full bibliographical information of the figures in this article, contact the author.

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The Leader as Groom, the Nation as Bride: Patriarchal Nationalism under Nasser and Sisi

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This article surveys and analyzes the gendered symbols and imageries in the hegemonic nationalist discourse in Egypt under Nasser and under Sisi. It asserts that gender binaries are projected onto the relation between ruler and ruled, state and nation, military and civilian, as a means to demobilize and subordinate *the people* following coups d'état. The article also analyzes the negative feminization of the Egyptian populace under Sisi, which serves to discredit demands for political participation and social justice and to legitimate their suppression, especially following the mass mobilizations of January 25, 2011.

Keywords: Nationalism; Gender; Nasser; Sisi; Coup d'état; 25th January Revolution

In the aftermath of the mass mobilizations of January 25, 2011, a notable surge in nationalist discourse took place in Egypt. The media, the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces,[1] the military-appointed interim government, and various public figures all engaged in producing a discourse that defined what is good for Egypt, who is a real patriot, and who is an enemy of Egypt. This discourse intensified around June 30, 2013, when state institutions and the military, through the mainstream media, urged people to go to the streets to topple the elected President Mohamed Morsi and to mandate the military to carry out this purpose.[2] The nationalist narrative that ensued—and continued after the military coup on July 3, 2013—was based on a highly gendered conception of patriotism and the nation. In this discourse, the military epitomized masculinist, patriotic self-sacrifice and contrasted with a feminized people. A cult of the military leader—the then-Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah al-Sisi—emerged, and several commentators noted its likeness to that cultivated around the figure of President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970)—who had also been among a group of officers staging a military coup in 1952.[3] This article analyzes Egyptian hegemonic nationalist discourses under Nasser and under Sisi in their commonality and differ-

ence, using a selection of Nasser-era films and songs and, for the contemporary period, a selection of songs, cartoons, newspaper columns, and public statements that circulated before and following the military coup of July 3, 2013. The choice of different forms of cultural products to analyze the hegemonic nationalist discourse in the two eras is dictated by transformations both in the social context and in state propaganda strategies; under Nasser, low literacy rates and the state's policy of using mass media to carry out *citizen education* meant that radio and TV played a central role in producing a popular political narrative by broadcasting Nasser's speeches, as well as nationalist songs and operettas (Abu-Lughod 10). The film industry also became an important tool of political propaganda and ideological production. Contemporary political culture, on the other hand, is produced in a context where the mass media are relatively less centralized and largely Internet-based, thus the use of online newspaper pieces, social-media-circulated cartoons and posters, and YouTube-broadcasted songs and talk shows.

I argue that highly gendered imageries and symbols have legitimized and reinforced autocratic military rule. I outline, however, an important difference in Sisi-era nationalist discourse: that is the negative, misogynist, feminization of the people, as a means to justify further political and economic exclusion. This study thus places itself in the Gramscian and Althusserian traditions, treating culture and ideology as important sites for creating consent, legitimizing repressive rule, and establishing hegemony.

Gendered Post-Military-Coup Nationalisms

The gendered character of nationalism has drawn the attention of historians and gender and post-colonial scholars since the 1980s.[4] A substantial corpus of literature treating cases from various geographic and historical contexts has gone to show that "all nationalisms are gendered" (McClintock 61). On the one hand, nationalism invokes existing forms of gender power relations, which become its most powerful symbols, and, on the other hand, it creates and reinforces gender difference in the social realm.

Imagining and constructing the Egyptian nation as a woman and the use of family metaphors in Egyptian nationalist discourse are not new. Beth Baron shows that it began with the first manifestations of an Egyptian territorial sense of nationhood in the late nineteenth century. Nor is it unique to Egypt. However, as Baron remarks, "the prevalence of familial metaphors in

Fig. 1: Sisi has been likened to Nasser as the savior of the Egyptian nation, through his military coup. Source: Al-Akhbar.

nationalist rhetoric inside and outside Egypt should not obscure their different uses, particular resonances, and varied receptions" (Baron 6) and thus our need to explore the various ways in which nationalism invokes gender difference and to what ends.

The mobilizing functions of highly gendered and sexual nationalist metaphors—especially activated in time of war—have been noted in the literature. Men have been mobilized for fighting and self-sacrifice, to fulfill their masculine role as protectors, and to defend their honor, embodied in (female) national integrity. This article, however, suggests that highly gendered

nationalist repertoires may be employed for an opposite end: as a means to demobilize a population and to subordinate it to autocratic rule, especially in cases where a military regime succeeds in a moment of revolutionary mass mobilization, through the projection of gender binaries onto the relation between state and society.

Post-colonial scholarship has analyzed gendered nationalism as a hegemonic project by the colonized intelligentsia, aimed at subordinating the local masses (Chatterjee 36). As colonial domination was legitimated by orientalism's set of gender binaries, which contrasted a masculine virile West with a degenerate and feminine East (Said 206-208) and a manly Englishman with an effeminate colonized man (Sinha 1-25), so has the colonized intelligentsia projected such paternalist binaries onto their relation to the local masses as they sought to prove that they were masculine enough to be the ideal modern national subjects and, thus, fit for self-government (Jacob 46).

Anti-colonial formulations of Egyptian nationhood were indeed marked by masculinist imageries and values. Throughout the interwar and postwar years, the educated male youth were depicted as the masculine, initiative-taking patriotic agents, as opposed to the vain (feminine) partisanship of the older generation and the *servility* of the destitute uneducated population.[5] Masculinist formulations of patriotism went hand in hand with the patriarchal imagining of the nation as a family, as a biological unit in which gender difference functioned to advance the interests of the whole. This meant that speaking of internal forms of exploitation was naturally perceived as divisive and unpatriotic: the young nationalist intelligentsia of the era expressed aversion to parliamentary politics and the multi-party system and favor for militarism as the true form of patriotism[6] (Gershoni and Jankowski 4; Younis, *Nidā' al-Shaʿb* 679-681).

The roots of Nasser-era state ideology have been traced back to the ethos and worldview of the pre-1952 *effendiyya*[7] (Shechter 574; Younis, *Nidā' al-Shaʿb* 667).[8] But the particularly gendered nature of the nationalist narrative under the Free Officers and its political implications in terms of legitimating power hierarchies[9] remain unexplored,[10] despite renewed interest in analyzing the ideological foundations of the Nasserist regime and the cult of Nasser.[11] To a certain extent, we may treat the gendered nature of Nasser-era nationalism, in its paternalism towards both women and subaltern men, as a continuation of the socio-political ethos of the liberal-nationalist political order (Bier 30). Nevertheless, I assert that the specifics of the gendered discourse of Nasser-era nationalism should be analyzed in their own right, as a repertoire of images and symbols that legitimated the eradication of political pluralism and reinforced autocratic rule by the post-colonial regime, while it fostered a cult of the military leader, which was so powerful and left such long-lasting effects on collective memory and the national imagination that it could be reinvoked six decades later, under Sisi (Mostafa 23).

In both periods, highly gendered nationalist narratives—depicting the military leader as masculine and virile and, antithetically, the nation as feminine and dependent, as the passive object of the masculine patriotic act of salvation and leadership—served to subordinate the local population, putting an end to various forms of socio-political mobilizations and muting demands for political participation and social justice that preceded military coups d'état.

I suggest that, furthermore, post-2011 nationalist discourse was based on additional patriarchal binaries, namely those juxtaposing a pure, loyal, feminine, abstract nation with a selfish, infertile, untamed, and degenerate feminine populace. On the one hand, the feminization of the nation is intrinsic to nationalism's logic

of masculinist protection,[12] and, I contend, becomes accentuated in the attempt to legitimate military dictatorships; the nation is depicted *positively* as a generous, wise, and self-sacrificing mother and a chaste beloved. On the other hand, the enemy is also feminized, albeit in a negative, misogynist sense; insubordinate women and men are debased, depicted as promiscuous sexual objects or, in the case of enemy men, as incompetent in the protection of their women's honor.[13]

In the interregnum of both post-military-coup regimes, masculinist nationalist discourse subsided, and instead, post-1973 Sadat- and Mubarak-era nationalisms centered on issues of authenticity, modernity, and national culture. Economic liberalization *(infitāh)* and its adverse effect on the relative status of the intelligentsia led the latter to highlight its exclusive cultural capital and to disapprove of various models of upward mobility among the poor and the *uneducated*. The latter came to be perceived as a threat to Egyptian nationhood, both to its *traditions* and to its prospects for modernization (Abu-Lughod 60; Armbrust 21-34; Saad 407; Shechter 572). Thus, the process of divorcing Egypt from the Egyptians, which will be manifested in gendered misogynous terms around the military coup of July 2013, may be said to have originated in the cultural nationalism of the *infitāh* era.

From Humiliated Nation to Happy Bride

As a group of army officers, self-named the Free Officers, established a new regime following their coup d'état in 1952, they moved to eradicate political pluralism; they abrogated the multi-party system, cracked down on the Muslim Brothers and the communists, and suppressed independent student and labor organizations. The practice of stripping the people of its agency was legitimated by the discursive projection of positive femininity onto *the people*, in contrast to the masculine agency of the military leadership; only the latter was entitled to interpret and practice the agency and will of the people. Any attempt to exercise the new *revolutionary*[14] agency from outside the military leadership was portrayed as treason against the people, which was assumed to have entrusted the leader to act on its behalf. The people were reduced to loving supporters in a monogamous relationship. They came to be defined in opposition to the masculinist military leadership, i.e., feminized, not just in regime discourse and propaganda, but also in mass culture and public discourse.

Popular songs and films of the era reveal the conception of the nation as wholly dependent on the military and having no agency except through it. One of the early songs was *ʿal-Dawār (To the Dawār*[15]) (1952), sung by popular singer Mohamed Qandil; it celebrated the Free Officers' assumption of power as good news coming through the radio, indicating that the event became known to people, the subject of this *blessed movement*, in their total absence. The words depict this event as good fortune for the nation and as the work of the military, the agent. The military saves the nation, moves her from an era of *darkness*, *slavery*, and *humiliation* to an era of *freedom*, *independence*, and *dignity*. The nation is the object of salvation and may only express her gratefulness to the military leadership.

Another song by the prominent singer and composer Mohamed ʿAbd al-Wahhab, *Ya Maṣr Tamm al-Hanā (O Egypt, Everlasting Happiness is Reached)* (1954) likens the Free Officers' rise to power to a marriage concluded between the military leadership and Egypt, which will bring about everlasting happiness to the latter. The words depict the people as having *waited long nights* for the savior/groom, who finally came in the form of the Free Officers and whose initiative and agency are contrasted with the passive state of the object of salvation: the *fortunate* people.

In the discursive performance of this masculinist nationalism, the language of honor, shame, rape, and revenge is central. The integrity of the nation is designated as ʿ*irḍ*: literally, body; in common usage, it means the physical (sexual) integrity of a woman, on whom the honor of the community's males depends. ʿAbd al-Wahhab's song, *Nashīd al-Ḥurriyya (Hymn to Freedom)* (1952), which was the national anthem from 1952 to 1960, is filled with these sexual metaphors, as it narrates the shame and humiliation in which the nation had existed before the military patriot redeemed her. The song addresses the male whose honor lies in the complete possession of Egypt and the safeguarding of her physical/sexual integrity: "Your precious ʿ*irḍ* was violated by the unjust, and shame was brought to you and to your ʿ*irḍ*." (ʿAbd al-Wahhab, "Nashīd al-Ḥurriyya").

Many Nasser-era movies, such as *La Waqt Li-l Ḥubb (No Time for Love)* (1963), *Fī Baytinā Rajul (A Man in our House)* (1961), and *Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ (The Open Door)* (1963) associate militarism with masculinity and construct the figure of the military patriot as the desired male. In these films, the female protagonist falls in love with a *fidāʾī* (freedom fighter in the popular armed resistance movement of the late '40s early '50s), who is contrasted with other men, those who are not ready to take up arms against the British occupation. The *fidāʾī* is always depicted as young and educated and usually organizes and guides patriots from among the poorer classes. Most importantly, militarism and patriotic self-sacrifice are constitutive of his masculinity and sex appeal. In *No Time for Love*, the *fidāʾī*, Hamza, is an attractive man with whom the female protagonist, Fawziyya, falls in love, although he does not try to obtain her love, because he is too busy with the patriotic cause, as stated in the film's title. The *fidāʾī* is contrasted, both physically and morally, with other males who are not willing to fight or sacrifice their comfort and *selfish* interests. Hamza's friend, Bedeir, is a homey, chubby man, preoccupied with household chores, who even likes to bake cookies. He is shown to be selfish, unable to appreciate the importance of the *fidāʾī's* self-sacrifice. But most importantly, he is depicted as lacking in masculinity. His love for the

Fig. 2: A scene from *No Time For Love*: Bedeir unable to obtain Fawziyya's love. Source: Youtube.

Fig. 3: A scene from *No Time For Love*: Fawziyya promises Hamza that their eventual marriage will help him fulfill, rather than hinder, his patriotic duties. Source: Youtube.

female protagonist is not reciprocated. Bedeir embodies the non-masculine man, while Hamza, the *fidāʾī*, is the ideal masculine patriot, and these contrasts are made to stand out throughout the film. On the other hand, Fawziyya discovers the meaning of patriotism by falling in love with Hamza and in her determination to support him in his militarist plans, which, significantly, are kept secret from her. Her patriotism is manifested only through her unconditional support for the proactive military patriot, who is also evidently her groom.

These gendered constructions produce a fetish of the military leader. He personifies masculinity; he is the real and only initiative-taker, and, most importantly, he is desired by the female nation; hence the emergence of the cult of Nasser, who was depicted as the ultimate *fidāʾī*. His charisma and qualities were constructed through the ideal-type of the masculine self-sacrificing patriot, to whom the feminized people owe their love and support. The assassination attempt against Nasser in 1954—known as the Manshiyya incident—gave rise to a series of songs cultivating this cult of the leader as the savior who sacrificed his personal life and comfort for the sake of the nation. One of these was ʿAbd al-Wahhab's song *Tislam ya Ghālī (God Bless You Dear)* (1954):

You have awakened your nation from a long sleep,
and your fight was unprecedented
You longed to see none humiliated
Our hearts will protect you, as you are our beloved…
You have endured infinite pains and did not complain…
The entire valley is happy with the military,
after it had been humiliated…[16]

The relationship between the ruler and ruled is constructed as an organic relation of protection and loyalty. In his song *Iḥna al-Shaʿb (We are the People)* (1956), the popular singer ʿAbd al-Halim Hafiz describes this relation in terms of conjugal love, "Congratulations, O people, happiness will be your lot", and he thanks Nasser for "staying awake so that the sun of our happiness

rises". The love and marriage metaphor is taken further in ʿAbd al-Wahhab's 1966 song *Wāllā w ʿirifnā al-ḥubb (We have truly known love)*, as he sings:

A bigger love does not exist, except,
the love of God and his prophet…
With you, we have learned the revolution of love…
a love for the military that watches over us…
This is a new meaning of love, O my country,
that we have long striven to find…

The nation's existence becomes dependent on that of the leader, as expressed in the verses addressing Nasser, "we have no existence if you had not existed" and "O you whose life is our life", in ʿAbd al-Wahhab's songs, demonstrating that the leader embodies the nation; without him, it is devoid of agency and even of existence.

The 1967 defeat in the war against Israel also reinforced the metaphors that feminized the people and depicted Nasser as the wanted groom, which served to reaffirm that this conjugal loyalty was *for better or for worse* in the context of the defeat. ʿAbd al-Halim Hafiz sang in his famous song after the defeat, "our country is standing by the canal, washing her hair. As morning came as groom, he could not pay her dowry" (Hafiz, "ʿAdda al-Nahār"). This feminization again reduced the role of the people to that of supporting the leader, like a woman who loves a man and yearns for him to take her as a bride, even as he is incapacitated by a temporary difficulty. When Nasser announced his decision to step down following the military defeat, thousands of people went out to the streets to press him to reverse this decision. The prominent singer Umm Kulthūm sang, addressing Nasser in protest,

I am the people saying, stay! …
You are the remaining hope for the people's tomorrow…
You are the people's beloved, and the people's blood…

The mass protests against Nasser's resignation, according to Sherif Younis, demonstrate the extent to which the existence of the Egyptian nation was imagined as dependent on the leader, and its dignity and well-being as a gift from the leader (*Al-Zaḥf al-Muqaddas*). I argue, furthermore, that it is the gendered ways in which the relation of the feminine nation to its masculine leader has been imagined that normalized the imperative of loyalty to and love for the patriarch/leader, regardless of failures. The novelist Latifa al-Zayyat would write in her memoir that, at the sight of Nasser's funeral, she wept and cried: "No one has the right to turn a nation into an orphan" (68). The nation felt like an orphan without its patriarch, and perhaps it also felt like a *widow* without Nasser.

Sisi-era Nationalism: A Nation Too Good For its People

Following the military coup against elected President Mohamed Morsi, the military leadership posed as the savior of Egypt against a global conspiracy and called on all Egyptians to unite under its leadership. Political opposition and criticism came to be considered unpatriotic, irresponsible, and selfish, considering the magnitude of the world conspiracy against Egypt and the importance of the efforts undertaken by the military to abort the plan *to make Egypt kneel*.[17] The military is again depicted as the only patriotic, selfless, and apolitical entity, in contrast to unpatriotic and opportunistic civilian political forces, which are likened to a woman who jeopardizes her integrity and needs constant guardianship and disciplining.

Once again, gender binaries served to maintain and reinforce power relations between military and civilian, and the imperative of total subordination of the latter to the former: the military is the only way the feminized civilian nation can have an agency and its only barrier against internal and external enemies. Songs and press columns described the toppling of

Fig. 4: Five years since Sisi's statement on July 3. Source: Al-Yawm al-Sabiʿ.

President Morsi as a courageous military achievement to save the nation from chaos induced by self-interested civilians. The nationalist operetta that has been most widely played following the coup, *Tislam el-Ayādī, Tislam ya Geish Bilady (Bless the Hands of my Nation's Army)*, sung collectively by several well-known singers, puts "the great Egyptian military" at the center of the definition of patriotism and nationhood. It thanks the military for having come to the aid of the nation and for having "brought dignity back" to the Egyptians (Kamel, "Tislam el-Ayādī"). In contrast, the mainstream media and official discourse gradually came to depict the uprising of January 2011 as a moment of chaos and lawlessness that jeopardized national security and sovereignty. Its actors and supporters would gradually personify negative femininity.

The cult/fetish of the military leader of Nasser's era was conjured up, more or less successfully. In the aforementioned song, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is referred to as "the hero who sacrificed himself" to save the nation; he "carried her (Egypt)", he "knew her real value and paid a high price for her", again likening the act of saving the nation and ruling it to the one-sided decision of a man to take a spouse, to pay a high dowry, and to make her happy (Kamel, "Tislam el-Ayādī"). The song describes him as "a man and son of a man" (Kamel, "Tislam el-Ayādī").[18]

Sisi's patriotic masculine act is juxtaposed with Egypt's femininity, which is described as "the mother of all" (*sitt al-kull*), "the sister", "the womb that carried a heart stronger than iron", "the pure heart", and "the weeping mother of the martyr" (Kamel, "Tislam el-Ayādī"). The nation becomes the feminine object of political agency, whose highest value lies in her role as the biological reproducer of the patriotic Egyptian man and in her unconditional loyalty to the patriarch.

Mostafa Hussein's cartoons, published in the widely read governmental *al-Akhbar* newspaper, demonstrate these gendered perceptions. In one cartoon, Sisi is

Fig. 5: Mostafa Hussein's cartoon in *al-Akhbar*. The caption reads, "Don't be surprised. This is not an American movie. It's Sisiman saving Egypt before she falls."

depicted as Superman with a military cap, carrying a laughing woman in a green rural outfit, who represents Egypt (see fig. 5). Other cartoons depict Egypt as a woman in love with Sisi; in one of them, she is sitting and waiting for the ballot boxes so she can vote for Sisi; in another, she is recounting to a TV presenter that she could not bear living with her former husband, Morsi, and was able to divorce him on 30 June 2013, while seeming proud and happy that she was now chosen by a more worthy spouse (see fig. 6).

Outside of the official press and mainstream media, Sisi is also spoken of in the vocabulary of manliness and physical attraction, and the nation is depicted as a bride, as a woman in love. Various poorly photoshopped posters, which could be seen hung by shopkeepers or circulated on social media platforms, reproduce these gendered metaphors and the cult of Sisi as the masculine leader. On one of them, Sisi is portrayed riding a horse and holding a woman, dressed as a bride in white, with a Tut Ankh Amun head. The caption reads "A manly president" (*rayyis dakar*) and "A moon-like bride" (*ʿarūsa amar*).[19]

But the Sisi-era post-coup nationalist narrative differs from its Nasser-era predecessor in one important way; having forcefully replaced the first democratically elected president, two years after the largest mass mobilizations for democracy in the country's history, the military-backed regime has sought legitimacy by portraying its opponents as the enemies of the nation, as the agents of an outside conspiracy against Egypt. Moreover, the regime's adoption of economic policies that have exacerbated social inequalities and impoverished much of the population[20] has induced it to also vilify demands for social justice that were at the heart of the January 25 mobilizations. Critics of the

Fig. 6: Mostafa Hussein's cartoon in *al-Akhbar*. Egypt: "I could not stand living with him […] on June 30 I got a divorce […]"

regime and its economic policies would gradually be depicted as unpatriotic, greedy, and ungrateful, using misogynist metaphors of femininity.

Egypt, the good mother and wife of the patriarch, becomes an abstract entity devoid of people; an ancient, glorious, and unique nation whose current state is deplorable, mainly because of the greed and foolishness of *the Egyptians* (Sisi's frequent use of the latter term replaces Nasser's favorite *al-shaʿb (the people)* with its socialist undertones); Sisi would state on several occasions that Egyptians are making too many demands on Egypt, urging them *to give to Egypt* instead, thereby

Fig. 7: "Al-maṭālib al-fiʾawiyya" *(sectoral demands)*. Source: Al-Akhbar.

constructing a personified depiction of Egypt, in which Egyptians exist outside it and abuse it. Speaking on TV as a presidential nominee in 2014, responding to a question about difficult economic conditions, he asked the Egyptians in reproach, "Are you going to eat Egypt? Do you want to kill her?" (Al-Hadidi and 'Issa, 00:48-00:54). When the state engaged in 2017 in a campaign of confiscating land deemed to be the land of the state unlawfully occupied by individuals, Sisi proclaimed, "this [land] does not belong to you. It belongs to Egypt. It is not ours. I am not authorized to give it to you" (dmc, 0:43-0:51). *Egypt* becomes divorced from its current population, and Sisi's love for her becomes a private matter, in which unsupportive Egyptians figure as greedy and ungrateful and as draining their mother Egypt's resources. One of Mostafa Hussein's cartoons expressed this perception of the people as a burden on Egypt; in it, Egypt was depicted as an emaciated weeping cow and the people as hands holding bowls, greedily demanding more of her milk (see fig. 7).

Gender and sexual metaphors contrasted a good military with a bad people. Those who refused to unquestionably support the military and the leader were denigrated and portrayed either as unmasculine men, unable and unwilling to protect their women, or as a dishonorable woman: untamed, disgraceful, and infertile. One poem by the poet Mokhtar 'Issa addressing Sisi included the following verses: "Our women are impregnated by your rising star/their men have menstruated, but failed to deliver/their politicians engaged in politics but failed to achieve." ("Nisaʾuna ḥubla bi-najmik") The poem juxtaposes a manly savior against a failing, shameful, and lowly feminized people, who not only are so effeminate as to menstruate, but even fail at being a fertile female. The poet then apologetically addresses Sisi, "Don't be sad, if you called out to them and found them to be rags with which they wipe the faces of their failures" ('Issa, "Nisaʾuna ḥubla bi-najmik").

Newspaper columns and op-eds praising Sisi's manly act of toppling the civilian president simultaneously vilified a passive, ungrateful, feminized people. The writer Mahmud al-Kerdosi's columns in *al-Watan* newspaper asserted that the Egyptian people were not worthy of Sisi's self-sacrifice; the Egyptian people were not just an unacceptable people to rule over; to make things worse, they also are not grateful enough to the savior. Al-Kerdosi accused *January 25* of exposing the genitals (*al-ʿawra*) of the Egyptian citizen, which consist of all the shameful traits of this people, making the people undeserving of the rule of a patriotic man such as Sisi, that is, "the chaos (*al-fawḍa*), the disorderliness (*al-infilāt*), the laziness (*al-tanbala*), and the impoliteness (*qellat al-adab*)" ("Al-Sisi Mgawwaʿak?"). Al-Kerdosi states in one of his columns that he does not trust "the people" anymore and expresses his puzzle over "why the elite turns this mysterious, wild, unleashed entity into an absolute entity whose will should not be violated!" ("Koll '25 Yanāyir'") He concludes, "The people will always be a ride for the ruler, a business for the elite, and the enemy of itself" ("Koll '25 Yanāyir'").

While Egyptians are depicted as the reason behind Egypt's malaise, the abstract

Fig. 8: Cartoon by Mostafa Hussein commenting on clashes between protesters and the police in 2012. Egypt to protester: "You are not a revolutionary. What takes you there, you coward! You deserve to be shot." Source: Akhbar al-Yawm.

mother Egypt is glorified as a superior unique nation, the best that ever existed. The preamble to the 2014 constitution, drafted soon after the July 2013 coup, described Egypt as "the gift of Egyptians to humanity", "the heart of the whole world […] the meeting point of world civilizations and cultures", "the most amazing wonder of civilization" (3), etc. This national self-glorification is coupled with a disdain for lay Egyptians, particularly towards insubordinate civilians, who now have all the traits of a woman degenerating into resisting her patriarch's authority. A statement by Sisi in a speech addressing the military on the anniversary of the October War epitomizes this negative feminization; commenting on the difficulties Egypt was now facing in reaching an agreement with Ethiopia on building a dam that could compromise Egypt's water supply, he blamed the uprising of January 25, proclaiming that, "in 2011 […] because the country revealed her back and stripped her shoulders, anything could now be done to her" (eXtra news, 0:51-1:13), portraying the revolutionary movement for democracy and social justice as an invitation by a promiscuous woman to be penetrated by outsiders. Similarly, one cartoon by Mostafa Hussein depicted the street rallies (*al-waqafāt al-iḥtijājiyya)* as a

Fig. 9: Man: "Oh no! Too many 'rallies' these days." Source: Al-Akhbar

Fig. 10: "The Scandal": sectoral demands stripping "Egypt's economy" of her clothes. Source: Al-Akhbar.

woman protesting to her sleeping husband, while her appearance insinuates that she is demanding sexual intercourse (see fig. 9). On the other hand, those men making what came to be termed *sectoral demands* on Egypt, i.e., demands for economic rights, are depicted as stripping Egypt of her clothes, exposing her and making her vulnerable to rape, rather than fulfilling their masculine role of defending and protecting her *ʿirḍ*, as depicted in one of Mostafa Hussein's cartoons (see fig. 10).

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It remains to explore how the gendered and patriarchal framework through which Egyptian nationhood has been repeatedly imagined, and especially as it has been particularly narrated under Sisi, has nurtured household patriarchy and everyday masculinism. It is no surprise that with the increasing defeat and silencing of the revolutionary tide of January 2011 in favor of a hegemonic patriarchal nationalism, sexual harassment peaked and became particularly violent against activist women on Tahrir Square.[21] Significantly, the military also conducted *virginity* tests on female activists detained at a protest in March 2011.[22] The targets of this masculine violence were the very women who claimed political agency and presence in public space, challenging both the premises of patriarchal nationalism and the everyday exercise of patriarchy.[23]

Conclusion

Nationalist narratives under Nasser and under Sisi have been highly gendered; the nation is modeled after the family, and the masculine qualities of the military leader are contrasted with the femininity of a dependent nation, imagined as the passive object of the masculine patriotic act of salvation and protection. Patriarchal binaries are projected onto the relation between state and nation, military and civilian, thereby demobilizing and subordinating the people to autocratic military rule.

Despite similarities between the two nationalist narratives, I have highlighted an important transformation in the depiction of *the people*, which comes to be negatively feminized under Sisi: it is depicted as opportunistic, ungrateful, and irresponsible, in contrast with the positive representation of a courageous, self-sacrificing, and achieving military leader. I have argued that this negative feminization stems from the regime's need to discredit its opponents. A new dualism is thus constructed between the abstract nation as a mother, as a pure female figure that naturally obeys and loves the patriarch, and the protesting people as an untamed, infertile, dishonorable, and oversexed woman, as an enemy of itself.

Notes

[1] The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power in the period that began when President Hosni Mubarak stepped down on February 11, 2011 and ended on June 30, 2012 upon the start of Mohamed Morsi's term as president.

[2] I refer to this discourse as *Sisi-era* and *post-2011* nationalism, interchangeably. It emerged with SCAF rule on February 11, 2011, peaked around the large state-backed demonstrations of June 30 2013 and the toppling of President Mohamed Morsi by the military on July 3, 2013, and continued to be hegemonic into Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's presidency. During the period in question, it was adopted by the official and mainstream media, the military leadership, and state institutions and officials.

[3] See, for example, Dunne, Michele. "Egypt's Nationalists Dominate in a Politics-Free Zone." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, www.carnegieendowment.org/2015/04/15/egypt-s-nationalists-dominate-in-politics-free-zone-pub-59764. Accessed 8 Oct. 2019.

[4] Founding works include Yuval-Davis, Nira and Floya Anthias. *Woman, Nation, State*. Macmillan, 1989; Nagel, Joane. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, Jan. 1998, pp. 242-69; Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Howard Fertig Pub, 1985; Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. University of California Press, 2000.

[5] See, as an example, *al-Risal's* issue on "The Homeland's Economic Day" (*al-Risāla*, Nov. 15, 1933).

[6] The formation of militia groups spanned the different *effendi* groups: from the *Wafd* (the Blue Shirts) to Young Egypt (the Green Shirts) and the Muslim Brothers Society (the Battalions and the Secret Apparatus), fashioned after the Fascist Italian Blackshirts.

[7] The term *effendi* (plural *effendiyya*), is originally an Ottoman honorific title. In the 19th century, it was increasingly associated with Western education. By the interwar period, it referred to the educated middle-class youth and came to connote a distinctly modern identity. See Ryzova, Lucie. *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt*. First edition, Oxford University Press, 2014.

[8] Most of the Free Officers came from the ranks of the *effendiyya*. The pre-1952 *effendiyya's* economic nationalism and aversion to political pluralism dictated the Free Officers regime's import-substitution and industrialization policies and the eradication of political pluralism and parliamentary democracy.

[9] For one of the few explorations of the legitimating function of gendered nationalist symbols, see Riabov, Oleg and Tatiana Riabova. "The Remasculinization of Russia?: Gender, Nationalism, and the Legitimation of Power Under Vladimir Putin." *Problems of Post-Communism,* vol. 61, no. 2, Mar. 2014, pp. 23-35.

[10] Nasser era nationalism, as an *engendering* force, in its attempt to transform *the Egyptian woman* into a national subject, has been the focus of several studies looking at the intersection of gender and nationalism in Egyptian history. See Bier, Laura. *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt.* Stanford University Press, 2011 and Botman, Selma. *Engendering Citizenship in Egypt*. Columbia University Press, 1999.

[11] See the two in-depth analyses by Sherif Younis: *Al-Zaḥf al Muqaddas: Moẓāharāt al-Tanaḥḥī wa Tashakkul ʿibādat Nasser*. Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī al Hadīth, 2005 and *Nidāʾ al-Shaʿb: Tārīkh Naqdī lil-Aydiūlūjīyā al-Nāṣirīyah*. Al-Ṭabʿah 1, Dār al-Shurūq, 2012.

[12] See for example Nagel, Joane. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, Jan. 1998, pp. 242-69 and Young, Iris Marion. "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, Sept. 2003, pp. 1–25.

[13] See for example Corcoran, Erin. "The Construction of the Ultimate Other: Nationalism and Manifestations of Misogyny and Patriarchy in U.S Immigration Law and Policy." *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, vol. 20, no. 3, Spring 2019, pp. 541-77 and Ng, Jason Q. and Eileen Le Han. "Slogans and Slurs, Misogyny and Nationalism: A Case Study of Anti-Japanese Sentiment by Chinese Netizens in Contentious Social Media Comments." *International Journal of Communication*, May 2018.

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→ [14] A few months after their coup, the Free Officers began to describe their assumption of power as a "revolution", after it had initially been referred to as "the blessed movement" (Younis, *Nidāʾ al-Shaʿb* 124). Note that the coup of July 3, 2013 is also officially referred to as the revolution of June 30.

[15] Literal meaning: *to the village head's house*; where the only radio in a village was usually found.

[16] All translations of song lyrics, poetry, cartoon captions, and newspaper columns from Arabic are the author's.

[17] The expression was repeatedly used by various state and media figures since 2013. For a survey of the different occasions on which it was used, see Nadi, Moataz. "'Masr lan tarqaʿ. ʿafrīt lafẓī yaḥdar baʿd thawratayn" ("Egypt will not kneel", an expression invoked following two revolutions). *Al-Masry al-Yawm*, 16 Oct. 2016. *almasryalyoum.com*, www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1025184. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019. Also, on October 14, 2016, almost all newspapers' headlines quoted Sisi: "Egypt will not kneel to anyone but God."

[18] Several other songs reiterated this characterization of Sisi, such as pop singer Shaʿbān ʿAbd al-Rihīm's song "Sisi ragil dakar" (Sisi is a manly man) (2013).

[19] A picture of this poster was circulated on social media and blogs. See Kolb, Justin. "Sovereign Creature." *Justin Kolb*, 12 Nov. 2013, justinbkolb.com/2013/11/12/sovereign/.

[20] State economic policy under Sisi has led to a rapid increase in poverty and inequality rates. See The World Bank. *Egypt, Arab Republic of – Performance and Learning Review of the Country Partnership Framework for the Period of FY15-FY19*. 135709, The World Bank, 3 Apr. 2019, pp. 1-75. *documents.worldbank.org*, www.documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/631951556806695755/Egypt-Arab-Republic-of-Performance-and-Learning-Review-of-the-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-of-FY15-FY19.

[21] Violent group harassment of women protesters in 2011 has been covered by the international press and was described as *epidemic* in Egypt. See Eltahawy, Mona. "Opinion | Egypt Has a Sexual Violence Problem." *The New York Times*, 20 June 2014. *NYTimes.com*, www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/opinion/mona-eltahawy-egypts-sexual-violence.html and "Egypt's Sexual Harassment 'Epidemic'." *BBC News*, 3 Sept. 2012. *www.bbc.com*, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19440656. For reports that have linked the phenomenon to state patriarchy, see "The Common Factor: Sexual Violence and the Egyptian State, 2011-2014." *OpenDemocracy*, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/common-factor-sexual-violence-and-egyptian-state-20112014/. Accessed 11 Oct. 2019; and "Patriarchy and Militarism in Egypt: From the Street to the Government." *OpenDemocracy*, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/patriarchy-and-militarism-in-egypt-from-street-to-government/. Accessed 11 Oct. 2019.

[22] Sisi was then the head of Military Intelligence; see Shafy, Samiha. "'Horribly Humiliating': Egyptian Woman Tells of 'Virginity Tests'." *Spiegel Online*, 10 June 2011. *Spiegel Online*, www.spiegel.de/international/world/horribly-humiliating-egyptian-woman-tells-of-virginity-tests-a-767365.html.

[23] See Deniz Kandiyoti's reading of post-revolutionary violence against women as an example of "masculinist restoration": Kandiyoti, Deniz. "*Fear and fury: Women and post-revolutionary violence*." OpenDemocracy. Jan. 10, 2013, OpenDemocracy, www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/fear-and-fury-women-and-post-revolutionary-violence/. Accessed 3 Febr. 2020.

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A Thug, a Revolutionary or Both? Negotiating Masculinity in Post-Revolutionary Egypt

Dina Wahba

During the eighteen days of the Egyptian revolution, some hundred police stations in popular quarters in Cairo were burned down. Official accounts reported this as the work of *baltagiya* (thugs). The question of who burned the police stations serves as an entry point to problematizing the identity of *baltagiya*. Thus, examining the gendered affective registers linked to the *baltagi* (thug) is essential in understanding the potential of the revolutionary moment and the urgency with which the state had to reinstate the narrative of the *baltagi* as a dangerous criminal to justify mass violence and speed urban transformation projects.

Keywords: Affect, Emotions, Egypt, Masculinity, Gender, Egyptian Revolution, Urban Poor, Politics from Below

Introduction

Scholars such as Diane Singerman (*Avenues of Participation*), Farha Ghannam (*Live and Die Like a Man*), Paul Amar (*Turning the Gendered Politics of the Security State Inside Out?*) and Salwa Ismail *(Youth, Gender and the State in Cairo*), who have made substantial contributions in the study of the life and politics of the urban poor in Cairo, had at the heart of their projects local constructions of gender relations. Amar, Ismail and Ghannam have focused on the construction of urban-poor masculinity. Ghannam argues that masculinity in the Middle East is still "under-studied, and under-theorized." (5) Ghannam notes that the absence of serious scholarly engagement on Middle East masculinity has been coupled with an antagonistic public discourse on Arab and Muslim men (4-5). In this vein, men in the Middle East "are portrayed either as a threat to be crushed or enemies to be subjugated and controlled" (Ghannam 5) Ghannam and Amar among other scholars have identified a gap in critical Middle East masculinity studies. In affect studies a similar gap exists. "While feminist and queer theory were in on the ground floor of developments in affect studies, masculinity studies has been much slower to develop relations to affect" (Reeser and Gottzén 149). Yet scholars

acknowledge that "affect is a key element of subjectivity and should be factored in to all wings of gender studies" (Reeser and Gottzén 151). According to philosopher Brian Massumi, affect is a nonconscious, pre-lingual bodily intensity that is distinct from emotions, while emotions is what gets verbalized from affect and captured in language. In this paper I subscribe largely to the definitions of affect and emotions developed by Deborah Gould who bases her definitions on the work of Massumi:

> I use the term affect to indicate nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body (...). As a body's registered sensation of a moment existing relationally, interactively, in the world, affect is an effect of being affected, and an effect that is itself a preparation to act in response, but in no preset or determined way. An affective state is, in other words, unfixed and polygenerative (26).

Gould further explains, "I use the idea of an emotion or emotions to describe what from the potential of bodily intensities gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living" (26).

Western philosophy has an inherit binary that equates men with reason and women with emotions. Reeser and Gottzén have identified a "Cartesian split between body and mind, in which men are inherently associated with reason" (147). Ghannam recognizes this binary and argues against what she calls the "over-embodiment" of women in Western media and academia and the "disembodiment" of men: "By 'disembodiment' I mean the tendency to equate men with mind' ('aql), culture, reason, honor, and public life, while offering little (if any) discussion of emotions, feelings, or bodily matters" (4). It is essential to adopt an intersectional approach when studying urban- poor masculinity. According to Ghannam (8) intersectionality can help us understand how male subjectivities are created in intersection with patriarchy and capitalism. The urban poor have been at the heart of what constitutes "the people" in the infamous slogan "the people demand the downfall of the regime". During the eighteen days, some hundred police stations in popular quarters in Cairo were burned down. Salwa Ismail contests official accounts which reported that this was the work of *baltagiya* (thugs). The question of who burned the police stations during the eighteen days could serve as an entry point into problematizing the identity of *baltagiya* rather than simply positing them in opposition to the revolutionaries. The revolutionary moment blurred the lines between who was a thug and who was a revolutionary; since all protestors were outlaws, everyone became a thug. My empirical work has shown that this was moment of subversion and renegotiation of the urban poor's affective dispositions. Hemmings (564) argues that bodies are captured and held by affective structures, but this revolutionary moment presented an opportunity for an aggressive demarcation of bodies as embedded in disruptions to the gender order. Building on the above accounts and my empirical research, I do not argue for a radical change in the gender order nor for a redefinition of masculinity. Instead I propose an examinination of the gendered narratives linked to the *baltagi*, as these are essential in understanding local politics, the potential of the revolutionary moment and the urgency with which the state had to quickly reinstate the historical narrative of the baltagi as a dangerous criminal in order to justify mass violence, shift blame and speed urban- transformation projects.

The main research questions explored in this paper are how can we understand urban-poor masculinity in the wake of the Arab Spring? How does the Egyptian state demonize the urban subaltern, how do state strategies circulate, and how are they

reinforced in an affective economy (Ahmed 64) of fear?

This paper[1] is based on ethnographic fieldwork. The data in this paper was collected over two years between 2016 and 2018 during work on my PhD thesis. I used ethnographic methods such as participatory observation of the activities of the Maspero youth alliance, and I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with activists and community leaders of several popular committees in Cairo and Giza.

A Brief History of Maspero Triangle

Maspero Triangle is located in the south of the Bulaq abu al-Ila district in downtown Cairo adjacent to Tahrir square and the Egyptian Radio and Television Union headquarters and the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Over the years the neighborhood expanded to house around 14,000 inhabitants (Madd Platform). The earthquake in 1992 affected Maspero Triangle as well as most historical areas in Cairo. Several houses needed repairs, however, and the government refused to grant maintenance licenses to the owners and tenants. Prohibiting renovation and restoration was a state strategy to expedite the slow death of the neighborhood; as old buildings collapsed, the government was able to seize the land (Madd Platform 143, [Amnesty International 19]). This continued until 2008 when two things happened that had important consequences for the area under study. The first is that the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) released a project for changing the urban landscape of Cairo called *Cairo 2050*. The plan envisioned the future Cairo with high-rise buildings, luxury hotels, tourist areas and office towers. The main idea was to *modernize* Cairo and what this would have meant for the urban poor living in historical areas or downtown Cairo was relocation so as to allow space for foreign investors to develop their mega- projects. Urban scholars heavily criticized the plan (Madd Platform). According to Omnia Khalil, the second incident that happened in 2008 was the collapse of a massive rock on the residents' of one of Cairo's informal settlements (*Deweqa*) leaving at least 119 dead. The devastation was massive and the incident opened a public discussion on the hazardous situation of Cairo's slums and put pressure on the government to do something about this problem. Thus, the Informal Settlements Development Fund was established in 2008 (ISDF). ISDF classified 4,004 areas, where 85,000 people live, as unsafe based on international criteria set by UN-Habitat (Khalil). The people in these areas have been slated for relocation. According to ISDF, the neighborhood of Maspero Triangle is considered an unsafe area due to unsuitable living conditions. As a result, the Cairo governorate intensified its forced evacuations. In an attempt to organize themselves and coordinate a response, the youth of the Maspero Triangle established the *The Voluntary Alliance of the Youth and People of Maspero in Defense of the Land and Housing Rights*. Despite community organizing and local activism, the Cairo governorate continued evictions while aided by a legal framework that gives the state the power to evict residents without necessarily providing compensation or alternative housing (Amnesty International 29).

Policing Youth

Evictions, possible evictions, and encounters with the police feature prominently in all of my interlocutors' narratives. Evictions intensified clashes with the police in an already highly securitized area. Mohamed, a resident of Maspero Triangle told me about one of those encounters.

> In 2010 they called me at my work and told me that the police were in the neighborhood evacuating some of the buildings. It was a strange rainy day. I went to the area and found that the police had created a security cordon around the alley where I lived. I had been working against evictions since 2001; I had been following this dream

for nine years and abandoned all my personal goals. Suddenly I felt that all my efforts had disappeared into thin air because of their laws. They threw people's stuff on the streets. I pushed against the officers to break the cordon, I did not care, the dream was over so why should I live. They kept pushing me back until the sheriff saw me. This was the second confrontation between us. The sheriff came and asked who I was and what did I want? I told him I lived here and I worked as a teacher so that they would not then put their security on to me. I asked him if he had notified the residents that he would be coming here today to throw their stuff in the streets. His deputy replied by saying that they had notified the people three days before. I gathered the people around and asked them if anyone had received a notice that the police would come in three days to throw their stuff in the street. They all said no. I contacted human rights organizations and told them that the police were here and had created a security cordon and were throwing people's stuff in the street and that they might arrest some of the residents. They said that they would come right away. When they arrived I asked them to take pictures and document what was happening. The sheriff gave an order to prohibit journalists from coming into the area and taking any pictures (Mohamed Interview, 2016[2]). This is only one encounter of many that the residents of the neighborhood had to endure and that structured their relationship with the state. The police specifically targeted active male youth such as Mohamed because they were outspoken and able to contact the media and human rights organizations and mobilize people. Targeting young urban-poor men was not specific to the Maspero neighborhood; however, the threat of evictions intensified the scrutiny. Ismail (224) analyzes the changes in state-society relations in Egypt as the role of the state changes from welfare provision to securitization. According to Ismail "Youths in the Middle East, especially young men, have been important actors in oppositional movements in the region" (224). This made them prone to being targeted by the state. Laws such as the law on thuggery (Qanun al-Baltaga) that was passed in 1998 enabled the state to police young urban men in poor neighborhoods and conduct police raids in these areas or undertake arrest campaigns. Ismail argues that understanding young men's oppositional relation to the state is essential in the construction of their masculinity: "The management of young men's public presence is a particular preoccupation of state authorities, especially the police" (235). The young men from Bulaq abu al-Ila and the Maspero Triangle recounted numerous stories about their encounters with the police. Mahmoud told me about one of his experiences that resonated with all the other young men and they all said that they had had a similar experience. Mahmoud, who is from Bulaq abu al-Ila and in his mid-twenties, was one day walking around downtown when a police officer stopped him and asked him to present his ID card, a practice that is followed by the police and called *suspicion and investigation* (ishtibah wa tahari). Mahmoud presented his ID card to the officer, when the officer saw the address on his ID card he asked him if he was from Bulaq and what was he doing downtown. Mahmoud told me the story laughingly because the question was absurd, Bulaq *is* downtown and in fact he was very close to his neighborhood – just not in it. Ismail notes that these everyday confrontations are over "territorial markings" (225), and based on her fieldwork in a neighborhood similar to Maspero Triangle she argues, "For young men, urban space is map-

ped out in terms of zones of relative safety or danger" (236). The everyday encounters of young men from popular areas with the state has pushed them into developing spatial identities related to where they live: "The issue of the territorial identity of youth deserves closer attention when examining questions of activism and youth relations with the state. Territorial markings are lines drawn in contest. Thus, to produce a territorial identity is to establish spatial title in relation to others, including the state" (Ismail 225). These territorial identities can help explain the affective attachments that the people from popular quarters develop to their neighborhoods as well as the difficulty of eviction and relocation policies. Ismail notes that state strategies to control young men from urban-poor areas are imbedded in the anti-terrorism narrative, which draws a link between the state configuration of the *balatgi* and the terrorist (236).

Ismail emphasizes that the problem of thuggery has been associated in official and media discourses with informal housing and urban-poor neighborhoods (Ismail, "The Egyptian Revolution against the Police" 451). Ismail builds on Connell's (80-81) notion of "marginalized masculinities" to explain how the antagonistic relation between the state and the urban-poor youth serves to structure their masculinity. "Marginalized masculinities are inflicted with the humiliation experienced at the hands of agents of the state and with the absence of any shield from state repression such as higher class status" (Ismail, "Youth, Gender and the State in Cairo" 231). Consequently, Ismail argues that men negotiate their "injured masculinity" (223) by attempting to dominate women through the policing of their public and private behavior. I contest Ismail's argument based on my fieldwork. But the concept of marginalized masculinity can be helpful in capturing the experience of urban-poor male youth; and in spite of my male interlocutors' conservative narratives on gender norms, what I observed in the field is young men negotiating their marginalized masculinity by building alliances with women who are also oppressed by local patriarchal structures. This is attributed to the Egyptian revolution that revamped local politics and opened up more space for youth and women to play a bigger role in their community. I attended some of the meetings organized by the Maspero youth alliance that aimed at discussing possible ways to resist evictions. One of the things that I observed was the alliance and coordination between women and youth of the neighborhood, especially within the framework of the Maspero youth alliance. The fact that women played an important role in local activism was not itself a surprise, what was interesting was how this contradicted the narrative of young male activists when I asked them about the role of women in the Maspero youth alliance. Ismail encountered the same phenomenon during her fieldwork. In discussing the role of women as mediators with the state, she says, "The role of women in mediating this experience of state domination is pushed out of men's narratives. Rather, male youths insist that women are idle gossipers, doing little but displaying their feminine wiles" ("Youth, Gender and the State in Cairo" 231). Similarly, whenever I asked young male activists about the role of their female counterparts, they usually downplayed women's role as merely auxiliary to their own efforts. Contrary to this narrative, in practice young male activists and women in the Maspero Triangle seemed to coordinate and collaborate in pushing their agenda forward. Young male activists relied heavily on women's community outreach, organization skills, and negotiation abilities. What was obvious from this meeting as well as others was that young male activists worked closely with women in Maspero and Bulaq. Even when their male counterparts did not acknowledge this

role, young women played an integral part in local activism and popular committees. Women engaged in building a local alliance with young male activists in their neighborhoods that enabled them albeit temporarily to disrupt old networks of power. In Bulaq a woman named abu al-Ila Salma, in her early thirties and a member of the Bulaq abu al-Ila popular committee, decided to run for parliamentary elections in 2014. Local young male and female activists who saw in her the possibility of representing their voice in the parliament ran Salma's election campaign. Salma and her campaign knew that they had small chance of winning but they wanted to make a point that a female candidate can run in their neighborhood. Salma was not the only one; Nazra for Feminist Studies published a report in 2012 profiling sixteen female candidates who ran in the parliamentary elections after the revolution.[3] Women were empowered after the revolution to join formal politics and seek representation. This was also reflected in local politics through the alliance between women and youth in popular committees[4] that could have led to a change in the gender dynamic had it been able to continue. Escalating violence, political polarization and security threats have led to the disbanding of most of the popular committees.

Reinstating Fear: The Making of the baltagi and the Terrorist

In the Maspero massacre,[5] people from the Bulaq abu al-Ila and Maspero neighborhoods were implicated as perpetrators of violence. According to a press release from EIPR following the incident, "people in civilian clothes joined the army's assault on protesters. A large number of witnesses stated that these were Muslims from the areas of Bulaq abu al-Ila and Ghamra."[6] In the Maspero neighborhood the question as to any involvement of the residents in the Maspero massacre was a controversial one. Residents had different accounts of the night and their involvement in it. Abdou's account, one of my main interlocutors in the Maspero Triangle, shows a certain awareness, political intent and engagement with the incident.

> The stance of the alliance (Maspero youth alliance) throughout the past few years has always been revolutionary (...) . State media outlets claimed that people from the Bulaq abu al-Ila and Maspero Triangle neighborhoods were the ones who killed the Coptic protestors. In response, a large march was organized from Bulaq abu al-Ila to express solidarity with Coptic protestors and protest SCAF and to accuse SCAF of spreading lies and deluding the people. The protestors in the march announced officially that Copts are a part of us and we would never hurt them. We announced officially that the military was the one who attacked Coptic protestors and we were the ones who were treating the injured in our neighborhood. There are things that happened in Bulaq abu al-Ila that are central to the history of the revolution and its truth and the reality of the role of people from popular neighborhoods in the revolution and Bulaq was at the forefront. Specifically because this neighborhood and its people lived the revolution, so they always took a stance and were always accused of being thugs and having killed the Copts. The reaction was two thousand people from the popular committee and the alliance marching from Bulaq abu al-Ila to protest SCAF and Tantawy and say that they were the ones who killed the Copts (...). Two weeks after we announced the solidarity of the people of Bulaq abu al-Ila with Coptic protestors – that we supported their sit-in, that the neighborhood was open to them to counter the rumors that were circulating, and we published the statements on Facebook and other websi-

> tes – the army broke up the sit-in. The Coptic sit-in was dispersed, some died, some were injured but we protested. The media claimed that the people of Bulaq abu al-Ila beat the Copts, so we organized marches to protest SCAF and called for the downfall of the military regime. The Copts joined this protest and we announced to all the media outlets that the army was responsible and that we as the people of Bulaq abu al-Ila were here protesting this. We chanted this in front of everyone. Bulaq had clear stances and opposed all regimes, the Muslim Brotherhood, SCAF and Mubarak (Abdou Interview, 2016[7]).

As evinced in Abdou's narrative, in 2011 Maspero was one of the most militant neighborhoods – along with many in downtown and old Cairo – in defending the occupation of Tahrir square. As Maspero was adjacent to Tahrir, it played a crucial role in sustaining the square during the eighteen days. However, the *thuggery* narratives were used to vilify the urban poor and undermine their politics. According to Amar (308), these orientalist tropes of thuggery are not new; they are in fact imbedded in a historical colonial tradition. Sara Ahmed reminds us that "fear opens up past histories of association" (63) which distinguishes bodies from each other in the present. Ahmed argues that

> fear works to contain some bodies such that they take up less space. In this way, emotions work to align bodily space with social space (...). In other words, fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others (69).

According to Ahmed, "fear may also work as an affective economy" (64). In this vein, racialized fear of Middle East maleness circulates in a global affective economy governed by tropes of thuggery and terrorism. Amar argues:

> Of course, 'time bomb masculinity' is also just a dumbed-down or depoliticized version of the 'suicide bomber' trope, which has become the justification for ratcheting up surveillance and undercutting civil liberties in the Middle East, as well as in European cities. In this sense, it represents the ultimate militarization of the respectability discourse of urban modernity (316).

The Arab Spring defied the exceptionalism of the Arab region and produced images that contradicted the traditional tropes of the Arab street and the discourses of masculinity in crisis. In this sense, it disrupted the global affective economy of fear surrounding the unruly Arab masses. These problematic notions were used to justify the war on terror, occupations, and the policing of certain bodies dating back to colonial rule. This disruption caused a crisis of legitimacy for the Egyptian regime that legitimizes its dictatorial rule internationally based on control of the uncivilized mob. Moreover, it opened up a space for the renegotiation of the depiction of the *Arab street*. This challenge was unwelcomed by not only domestic forces but also international ones. Two main tropes, the *baltagi* and the terrorist, have been masterfully used by the Egyptian state in a manner that feeds into and is in synchronization with a global affective economy of fear. These narratives culminated in General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi declaring a war on terror in 2013.

> I have a request for Egyptians, next Friday all honorable and honest Egyptians should go on the streets to give me a mandate and an order to fight the *potential* violence and terrorism.

On the 24th of July 2013, General Abd El Fattah al-Sisi declared war on terror and he demanded that honorable Egyptians take to the streets to sanction his fight against any impending terrorism. The key word here is *potential*. Brian Massumi explains the futurity of threat and the role of feelings in creating and sustaining a threat.

> What is not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat has an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affective. Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future. It is the felt reality of the nonexistent, loomingly present as the affective fact of the matter (Massumi 53-54).

Thus, the felt reality can supersede the actual reality and the affective fact of the matter can replace the actual facts: "If we feel a threat, there was a threat. Threat is affectively self-causing" (Massumi 54). The threat is real as long as it feels real; consequently, the decision to act upon that feeling is justified. The felt reality of the threat of violence became the deciding factor that mobilized thousands on the day of the mandate for al-Sisi to commit one of the most horrendous massacres in Egypt's modern history: the Rabaa massacre. And it did not end here. Massumi argues that the fact that a threat has been actualized does not mean that it is not real but rather that it will remain real forever: "The future threat is forever" (53). The threat remains ready to be utilized whenever necessary. By declaring the war on terror, al-Sisi created a threat that legitimized preemptive action against a threat he had called into being. During the summer of 2013, General Abd El Fattah al-Sisi managed to create an "atmosphere of fear" (Massumi 61) that subsumed every felt problem in Egypt under the rubric of terrorism. Massumi suggests an ecological approach in understanding how different regimes of power interact and develop together. He claims,

> To understand the political power of threat and the preemptive politics availing itself of threat-potential, it is necessary to situate preemptive power in a field of interaction with other regimes of power (Massumi 62).

The main argument is that fear resonates and gains momentum through its circulation internationally. These regimes of power not only interact with but are largely dependent on each other. These narratives are interdependent and feed into a global atmosphere of fear (Massumi 61) or an affective economy of fear (Ahmed 64). Sara Ahmed argues that (79) the function of the *terrorist* narrative is to expand the power to detain and control certain bodies. Fear could be associated with some bodies but the sliding of fear justifies the expansion of power as needed. And the threat is always present and real because the figure of the terrorist is always shifting. Fear is associated with certain bodies but does not reside in a single figure, the terrorist, the protestor, the *baltagi*; these categories can all collapse into one another and therefore justify state control of these bodies.

Conclusion

After years of confusion and uncertainty, amid rumors of imminent forced evictions, the deputy minister of housing held a meeting with Maspero residents in 2017 and announced three alternatives. The first was monetary compensation for the demolition of their properties, amounting to $5,000 (U.S.); the second was relocation to Asmarat (a social housing project for people removed from informal areas); and the third was taking apartments in the Maspero Triangle after the development project had been completed. Uncertainty and a lack of faith in the government's plan led many to choose monetary compensation or relocation to Asmarat. This ended residents' dreams of staying in Maspero after its development, leaving only some 900 families who chose to remain in the neighborhood. Whether or not the government will give residents their promised housing units remains to be seen. There were some gains from the process however – residents benefited from interaction with architects, urban researchers and civil society activists, and were able to negotiate some possible gains from the governorate, such as the

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promise that 900 families would have a place in Maspero after development of the area, although this remains to be seen. Geographer Nigel Thrift argues that interaction between space, bodies and affect is linked to political consequences. He suggests that affect is politically engineered and restructured in urban everyday life with varying political motivations. This can include the erasure of emotional histories, creating new affective registers, or mobilizing old ones (Thrift 172). Thus, it is not farfetched to argue that the urban restructuring of cities can elicit or inhibit political responses. The wider plan of the Egyptian government to drastically change downtown Cairo, a space that witnessed a revolution, has interlinked political and affective goals. It aims to expunge the affective register of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and impede the politics of the urban poor.

The narratives around thuggery were used to vilify the urban poor and undermine their politics. The protestor became a terrorist or a *baltagi* or both depending on their political affiliation and social class. Fear contains certain bodies and expands others. Fear sticks to the bodies of protestors and defines them as possible thugs or terrorists. We live in a global economy of fear built around the fear of Middle East bodies denoted as terrorists. The early days of the Arab revolutions opened up a space to radically distinguish these bodies from terrorists and to label them as protestors calling for democracy. It was a moment that challenged a global order and questioned the legitimacy of an international security regime that targets Arab, Muslim or Middle East bodies. Thus, invoking the terrorist trope was not only an easy way to attack political Islam but also a trope that echoes international security paradigms and relegates Middle East bodies to their preassigned place.

Notes

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[2] All the names of the research interlocutors have been changed into pseudonyms. Mohamed. Personal Interview. 27 Apr. 2016.

[3] See Nazra report for more information: www.nazra.org/en/2012/09/profile-16-female-candidates-people%E2%80%99s-assembly-elections-20112012.

[4] For an overview of the role of popular committee see Cilja Harders and Dina Wahba "New Neighborhood Power: Informal Popular Committees and Changing Local Governance in Egypt". www.tcf.org/content/report/new-neighborhood-power/.

[5] Maspero Massacre started as a peaceful demonstration mainly by Coptic citizens protesting against discrimination on Oct. 9, 2011. It was violently dispersed, 28 people were killed and more than 300 were injured.

[6] EIPR press release: www.eipr.org/en/press/2011/10/maspero-state-incitement-sectarian-violence-and-policy-extrajudicial-killings

[7]Abdou. Personal Interview. 25 Sept. 2016.

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Shame as a Litmus Test for Revolutionary Affects: The Female Protestor and the Reconfiguration of Gender Normativity

Marta Agosti

Tahrir Square was the critical event that prompted a new generation of Egyptian feminist and human rights activists to join citizens in the streets to claim a new social and gender contract. While female protestors were an essential part of the revolution, their bodies powerfully triggered the economy of shame to ostracize some activists and to underpin, as Williams explains *structures of feeling* that sidelined the need to address rape in the square. This paper argues that the female protestor is a focus of political violence whose experiences illuminate the matrix that sustains and normalizes sexual violence in a society. This allows us to connect female body politics with broader socio-economic and political conflicts and with processes of state reconfiguration in marginal/liminal spaces.

Keywords: **Egypt, Sexual violence, Rape, Gender, Affects, Social movements**

Introduction

As 2020 begins, the protests that started in 2010 in Tunisia are far from being extinguished. From December 2018 on, the Middle East and North Africa have witnessed a new wave of uprisings that has taken the citizens of Algeria, Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran to the streets to demand social change. Yet, these countries are not isolated cases; Palestine and Morocco are also witnessing important civic manifestations. In the midst of these new revolutions, episodes dating back to 2011 become highly relevant once again.

A dramatic feature that marked the January 25 revolution in Egypt was the widespread epidemic of sexual violence. In just a short period – from late 2011 to the end of 2012 – independent organizations documented more than 500 cases of sexual harassment, abuse, rape, and gang rape during protests (Nazra et al. 7). In such proportions, sexual violence soon gained the epithet of *epidemic*. If anything, this epidemic was yet another proof of the central role of gender and body politics in the political process. Hafez, in this line, has made women's corporeality central to the study of the Egyptian revolution, thus expanding on a body of literature that includes the scholarly work of Al-Ali and Pratt and of El Said that reclaims the key role of gender in the analysis of

broader socio-economic and political crises. Media outlets have also reversed their first analysis of the essential role of women and gender in these protests; while in 2011, academics like Abouelnaga and Al-Ali questioned international media when they asked *Where are the women?*, in 2019, the media clearly recognize the invaluable contribution of women and feminism to protests, as journalists like Hall, Nicholas Nassar, Mustafa, Marshood and others have noticed.

A less-explored aspect of the social and political unrest, however, is how affects are involved in the reconfiguration of the pre-established gender normativity, hence being part and parcel of the bio-power that reframes protestors in the matrix that responds to the status quo that protestors themselves try to overthrow. This text, therefore, addresses the question of affects as Ahmed reframed it. Rather than asking what emotions are, it analyses what emotions *do* (Ahmed 4, emphasis added) and how they "operate to 'make' and 'shape' bodies as forms of action, which also involves orientations towards others" (Ahmed 4). Bodies, however, cannot be detached from identification with sex and gender in ways that articulate power relations. Affects, therefore, are a highly gendered enterprise that weaves the formation of masculine and feminine identities in a relation of power. They are involved in the organization of the social space, sustaining a given structure of governance that is able to effectively determine who is *in* and who is *out*. Yet, revolutionaries in Egypt did not consider that affects should be part of their political contestation. In this regard, I made the link between affects and Williams' use of the concept *structures of feeling* emerging from Tahrir. If Tahrir represented the making of new articulations of thought that challenged popularly accepted political and social conventions, the female body drew one of the boundaries to this emerging structure of feeling. This partially explains why independent feminist groups emerging from the square, like Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH), first had to conquer a space among their peers to claim the need to combat sexual violence in protests as an important part of the revolution. Narratives that argued that women's presence in the square – together with the acknowledgment that episodes of sexual abuse would tarnish the reputation of the revolution – came not only from its opponents, but also from peer revolutionaries who in the beginning fiercely opposed the work of these anti-sexual harassment interventions. This article argues that the failure to inscribe female protestors' experiences of violence into the overarching narrative of the revolution's contestation of the state's nationalist project was key to rearticulating the private-public segregation, itself the cornerstone of that same nationalist project that protestors sought to change. By denying the political aspect of the affects involved in shame, honor, and disgust that surrounded violence against women, protestors were undermining their own potential for change. In this regard, the female body was not only the battleground of contesting hegemonic narratives, but also the limit of the revolution itself, which few dared to trespass. Shame and disgust operated to effectively disable solidarity and empathy, which would have prompted an economy of affects more in line with the social justice principles emerging from Tahrir. The plight and tribulations of women's bodily emancipation hence exposes the tension between the unity and the fragmentation of Tahrir and the revolutionary narrative, and affective economies are crucial to understanding how this is so.

Drawing on ethnography collected during fieldwork from 2011 and 2012 and from 2014 to 2016, this article explores the role of the affects' economy of *shame* as a pillar that reconfigured the division of social space as needed for the state to deal with social unrest. The article thereby also con-

tributes to the literature of *Anthropology in the margins of the State* (Das and Poole), which has paid attention to processes of state reconfiguration in liminal/marginal spaces. Das and Poole point out that key to the discussion of margins is the relationship they have with violence and the ordering functions of the state. This relationship highlights three aspects: margins as natural containers for people insufficiently localized within the law (such as activists and protestors); legibility and illegibility (which refers to the illegibility of females' bodies present in protests); and the space between bodies, law, and discipline (which refers to the state's tactics to regain order) (Das and Poole). Because of these features, the state's margin reverts to its necessary role of sustaining a liminal space, where the state is able to maneuver to mantain itself. Navaro-Yashin also explores the idea of the complicity of those on the margins "in the activity of reifying the state" (132), arguing that it is on these margins that the state is reproduced through everyday life practices, which also include social constructions of emotions. With this, she builds on Taussig's contention that situates the art of state building in the margins (Taussig). Thus, the liminal space that emerged during protests was a space of resistance and creativity, yet also a space for statecraft. The denial of the gendered role of affects in this liminal space therefore contributed to tip the scales toward the state's reconfiguration of power, rather than enabling creative radical change. In what follows, I elaborate on the nuances of this reconfiguration.

The dystopian body

Female bodies are certainly objects that take different forms in Middle Eastern societies. Their images, often voided of voice and agency, circulate in the media and popular culture to nourish a certain utopia of power and sexuality or the opposite: pity, authenticity, and tradition. In both senses, the female body is codified to contribute to a utopian idea of womanhood and its opposite. Yet, the revolution provided images of bodies that escaped this binary, thus to become bodies out of place, as Ahmed would say or, so to speak, dystopian because they interrupted consolidated ideals of the female body. Moreover, as a space of contestation, Tahrir was able to produce its own narrative; thus, women's images and voices escaped pre-established convention and gained their own place and voice. In November 2011, months after the famous uprising of January 25 and in the midst of the revolutionary battle, the blogger and activist Alia ElMahdy posted a picture of herself nude in her blog to denounce a society of "violence, racism, sexism, sexual harassment and hypocrisy" (ElMahdy, "Nude Art"). The picture got 1.5 million hits in its first week and the blogger was seriously attacked in the Internet, criminalized, and even pathologized. She was called a prostitute and mentally ill, and many demanded her arrest. Even among supposedly open-minded liberal secular activists, her nudity provoked feelings of aversion, discomfort, disgust, and shame. In the context of the parliamentary elections of November 28, 2011, in which the liberal front was trying to defeat the Islamists, ElMahdy was under the fire of Islamists, pro-regime supporters, and revolutionaries alike. Her nudity posed a fundamental question: when, where, how, and why is the female body accepted? Referring to the economic industry surrounding the female body predominant in many societies of the Middle East and North Africa, Mikdashi rightly pointed that

> it is quite easy to see a woman naked. In fact, naked women are always only an Internet search, an art gallery, a television show or a film away. These images stare at us from billboards, music videos and TV advertisement[s] asking us with their flesh and their "'fuck me' expressions to buy more and more things ("Waiting for Alia").

This is to say that the naked young female body was not a strange or unknown thing in Egyptian society. But in the context of the revolution, the political expression of nudity stood out as a completely intolerable and unpalatable image. ElMahdy's reverse and defiant gaze in red shoes and hair adornment in a black and white format and, I would add, a puerile gaze, could not be codified within the paradigms of virtue, honor, and purity that swung between liberal and Islamist forces. While the [self-defined] people *(al-sha'b)* in the protests were claiming a new paradigm of rights against the old paradigm of paternalistic protection typical of Mubarak (and the many former regimes), the picture of ElMahdy clearly identified the litmus test for the radical change that they were demanding in the streets. Far from wanting to delve into the ethics or morality of ElMahdy's action, my interest here is to explore how this reaction helped recodify the state's presence in the street, thus damaging the claims that revolutionaries themselves were making against the system *(al-nizām)*. Thus, the article adds to the discussion already triggered by Al-Najjar and Abusalim (135) and by El Said (109), who have also written interesting pieces on this episode. To delve into this question, one has to ask what the affective economy that the picture of ElMahdy triggered was and what role it played in the revolutionary narrative.

Fig. 1: Samira Ibrahim, also called "daughter of the Nile" is praised for her bravery in defending her dignity. Alia ElMahdy is accused of exposing her body of her own free will (see the full translation of the text: Jsuzdak, "This is not Grafitti"). Source: suzeeinthecity.wordpress.co. Accessed 26 April 2020.

Battles that put the female body at the center of the revolution were not new to the Egyptian revolution. Particularly the echoes of the virginity tests carried out on 18 women protestors only a few weeks after the ousting of Mubarak had triggered memories of the horrors and were denounced by many parts of civil society, including the activists who now rejected ElMahdy's picture. Samira Ibrahim had

stood up back then as the figure that made the Army apologize for humiliating women. In this context, the revolutionaries acclaimed Samira Ibrahim for her bravery, while ElMahdy provoked shame and disgust in a manner that effectively justified her being an outcast (she later went into exile in France and joined the controversial group *Femen*).

November 2011, however, was also when many cases of mob assaults happening in the square in the middle of protests were going unheard or ignored by these same revolutionaries who praised Samira, because they thought discussing the attacks would undermine the revolution. Comparing the stories of Samira Ibrahim and Alia ElMahdy, I noted in many of my interlocutors that a main affect that ElMahdy's picture had triggered was disgust and shame. Body language expressing these feelings was very noticeable; the expression on their faces when talking about ElMahdy's political act was followed by an often rationalizing argument that justified her being an outcast. At this point, I linked the episodes of sexual violence that were occurring in the square with the reactions of shame and disgust triggered by ElMahdy's defiant act. During fieldwork, I focused on how the economy of shame operated in survivors, including how they received their male peers' reactions; I paid attention to "how it [shame] works on and through bodies (…) deforming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies 'turn away' from others who witness the shame" (Ahmed 109). My observations, localized in Egyptian culture, expanded Ahmed's reflections on shame. Embedded in a revolutionary context that was supposed to challenge the origins of social injustice, activists' reactions of shame revealed the emotions that rearticulated the gender normativity necessary to re-establish the status quo that preceded the revolution. This article does not cover interviews with male activists.

The female body and the affects of shame

Multiple accounts from the first eighteen days of the revolution describe Tahrir Square as the site of a cathartic experience. Years down the line, activists like Toma continue to reflect on the memory and value of the shared identity that the cathartic process of Tahrir enabled (Toma, "The Shared Identity of Tahrir"). People entering Tahrir as one thing and then transformed into a better version of themselves; thus, Tahrir – in the absence of the state – was often referred to as pure, harmonious, and full of joy and hope.

Yet, the utopia of Tahrir was difficult to maintain after President Mubarak stepped down and the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) led the transitional process. As protests in Tahrir continued month after month, independent feminist human rights groups increasingly paid attention to two emerging concerns: one was the representation and political participation of women in the revolution; the other was the sexual violence that was reaching *epidemic* levels. This violence was defined as a pathology that did not distinguish much between who was in power: the SCAF or the Muslim Brotherhood. Episodes of sexual violence increased from the very first day President Mubarak was ousted. While Tahrir had been free of harassment during the eighteen days, this ended when CBS correspondent Lara Logan was brutally assaulted and gang raped (Adams, "CBS News's Lara Logan Suffered 'brutal' Attack"). The public sexual violence that emerged from then on reflects the challenge that female protestors posed to the nationalist project and revolutionaries alike, and episodes multiplied exponentially in the following months. The activist Yasmine El Baramawy went to Tahrir on November 22, 2012 to protest against President Morsi's constitutional decree. In her words, the "constitutional declaration made all kinds of Egyptians people again together against the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists" (El Baramawy, "'I Felt

Betrayed by the Revolution Itself'"). That day, El Baramawy was brutally assaulted and raped with knives for more than an hour, amid violent clashes and in the presence of security forces. At one point, her assailants drove her away on top of a car, trying to take her to an isolated place, saying that she had a bomb attached to her stomach (Langohr 19). After the assault, El Baramawy spent two months trying to make her voice heard by her comrades, who dissuaded her from publicly denouncing her assault and rape. The revolution was more important. She was told, "You are not injured, you are not dead, so it is OK" (El Baramawy, "'I Felt Betrayed by the Revolution Itself'"). El Baramawy recovered from her physical injures, but felt betrayed by the revolution. In our conversations, she made clear that hired thugs were behind the assault, which relates directly to the security apparatus because, in her words, "They had to be thugs paid by the army or by the Muslim Brotherhood, it is all the same" (El Baramawy, Personal interview). But there is another fact she cannot forget: how men present in the square joined in the attack on her. She still remembers how some people climbed to elevated positions so they could better *enjoy* the scene, and the mass of men surrounding her clearly exceeded the possible number of thugs paid to commit the sexual assault. To explain this duality, we need to frame her assault as the consequence of the use of gender and female sexuality as part of the disciplinary techniques of the state. The female body, as an out-of-place object, was disrupting the regulation of life as prescribed by the authority; thus, the male presence in the square was allowed to extend the arm of the state to discipline, defame, denigrate, and abuse women. Therefore, while men violently disciplining women is often explained as a cultural norm, here it was clearly a tool of political repression. Female bodies in public political spaces were revolutionary, because their active presence in the public sphere was tearing down the division of the social space necessary to sustain the power of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the army. That explains why most of the sexual abuse and gang rapes occurring during protests happened under the eyes of security forces that did nothing to stop them. Yet, one needs to delve deeper to understand why other male protestors present in the Square joined the assault or why other revolutionaries told El Baramawy to be quiet when she tried to raise her case. She expressed how her peers' response profoundly changed her relationship with the revolution. Her story shows the disruption that the female body brought to the revolutionary narrative. After months of trying to gain support to denounce sexual violence during the protests, El Baramawy publicly narrated her attack on national TV in February 2013 (MediaMasrTv14, „A Courageous Girl Explains the Details of her Rape in Tahrir Square"), gaining wide public endorsement. Since then, women in the Square, when they saw her, would come up to hug her and thank her, saying that with her act she was protecting other women's dignity. This was an aspect she had not foreseen. In parallel to these signs of affection, however, she received specific threats on several occasions, precisely because she was a woman who had been raped. During our interviews El Baramawy explained that, since the assault, she felt more vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment because she was no longer considered a repository of male honor. She has indeed endured additional attempts at rape and abuse since then that she relates to public knowledge of her first attack. In her narration, after explaining how she was received in the Square after the public testimony, El Baramawy remarked, "But we all know that a raped woman is *shame* [first mentioned in English with subsequent mentions in Arabic as 'Ār], so how come you say this is dignity?"

Survivors' endurance of shame ('ār) in relation to their capacity to remain pure and worthy of honor in the eyes of a society whose norms are dictated by patriarchy was a very important aspect of their strategies to deal with the memory of the attack. Reference to shame over sexual violence is often mentioned by survivors, public opinion, or state politicians; indeed, *'ār* (shame) was an expression that pointed to the moral degradation that victims of sexual violence are subjected to. Yet, that was not the only *kind* of shame at play, particularly if we pay attention to activists/comrades that El Baramawy turned to for support or ElMahdy's community, also secular activists.

While the word *'ār* in Arabic or shame in English was used very frequently, other kinds of affects were less often or never mentioned; thus, body language was essential to articulate other people's reactions to accounts of rape or to the nudity of ElMahdy. The picture of ElMahdy provoked expressions of aversion, embarrassment, and discomfort. While conducting fieldwork, as well as while living my ordinary life among secular leftist friends (activists and non-activists), the mere allusion to this episode often provoked physical signs of disgust in my interlocutors' faces. Thus, terms other than ār need to be considered to expand the economy of shame that circulated among female bodies, survivors of sexual violence, and secular leftist activists. *Khajal* (also translated as shame, but closer in meaning to *cringe*) could be a useful term in Arabic that, in my opinion, operated to disable the necessary empathy that would have brought revolutionaries to sustain El Baramawy's claims. *Nufūr* (usually translated as aversion) would be another term to consider. What is important, however, is to retain the individual relational aspect that *khajal* does. *'Ār*, *ʿayb*, and *khajal* are all commonly translated as *shame*, yet with nuances that deserve deeper analysis. Whereas *khajal* commonly translates as shame in the sense of embarrassment (or *maksūfa* in the Egyptian dialect), it differs from *ʿayb* or *'ār* in that it refers to the individual feeling of embarrassment towards something external. In contrast, *ʿayb* and *'ār* are different levels of a moral sentiment rooted in a collective. While *'ār* is clearly linked to male honor, *khajal* pertains more closely to the capacity to feel ashamed or embarrassed by other people's actions, manners, or aesthetics; and in this sense the body reactions could be similar to those triggered by affects of disgust. It is in this conundrum that the stories of ElMahdy and el Baramawy interlinked. Tahrir Square, as a movement, was a collective enterprise that, while assembling all the *others* disenfranchised by state/neoliberal processes of marginalization, also challenged the practices by which the nation-state built unity. Yet, emotions became "attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is 'lower' or 'higher' into bodily traits" (Ahmed 4), thus creating the ground to absorb or reject what would be part of the revolutionary narrative and what would not. Ahmed treats shame as an emotion that arises in oneself and resides in one's body, to which others are witnesses. In El Baramawy's story, though, and within in the particularities of the Egyptian context, shame is collective and circulates in different forms in dissonances with each other. While women protestors praised her because she had transformed their shame into dignity, male colleagues suffered that same shame and used it to denigrate her.

The female body as the battleground of politics

The link between the emotions that were provoked by ElMahdy's picture and the reactions that underpinned the discourse of her marginalization may seem clearer than the same logic when applied in the case of El Baramawy, yet they are very similar. ElMahdy produced an image that in a different context – e.g. art – could have been absorbed and defended, but that

generated repulsion in the political context of the revolution. Livingston explains that

> (…) disgust helps us to think about how individuals work out tensions between different registers of sociality, and the role of space in mediating emotional life (…) disgust can be embodied in a relational sense as well. It often emerges in one person in response to the bodily aesthetics of another (290).

This relational aspect brings together disgust and shame *('ār and khajal)*, which explains how affective economies played a key role in the isolation of the cases of sexual violence that were happening in the square at the same time that ElMahdy decided to post her picture. It is in this specific kind of shame, which combines the reaction to and the mediation of others' perceptions of shame with dark objects of desire, where I find the link with disgust, because it is precisely the sexual connotations of ElMahdy's picture that the revolutionary audience found repulsive. In the case of El Baramawy, we can now see how *'ār* played a key role in legitimizing her sexual assault to effectively turn female protestors into outcasts; *khajal*, moreover, blocked her comrades' empathy behind a wall of disgust or aversion. The combination of shame and disgust, hence, refer to

> a moral sentiment of extraordinary inclusiveness and does more than register a simple aversion towards the object of its focus. It degrades them in a moral way (…) when it wars against the intrusively annoying, or the deformed and the ugly it may clash with other moral sentiments, like guilt and benevolence [and I may add desire], that push us in another direction (qtd. in Livingston 21).

Thus, Livingston's reflections on disgust are also applicable to shame. El Baramawy's account shows that – to build on Ahmed's terminology – shame and dignity do not coexist in the affective economy, and that both these affects can nonetheless legitimate actions of abuse and rejection. Hence, mobilizing the "affective economy" behind shame and disgust, "emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments" (Ahmed 119), which creates inclusion and belonging, or in the case of ElMahdy and el Baramawy, exclusion and disaffection.

I believe that it was the complexity of the industry of shame that was at work behind the *structures of feeling* of some of El Baramawy's peers when they did not support her in asserting her rights or acknowledging her pain when she was raped in Tahrir. The affective economy behind the industry of dignity linked to honor was still stronger in the revolutionaries than the affective economy of dignity linked to social justice that had started to take root in the imagined and utopian space of Tahrir.

I argue that the inability to debunk the affective economies behind the gendered experiences of shame and disgust was linked to fear of losing one's identity as crafted by and for the nation. Butler suggests that one is a woman (or a man) in response to a normative framework, "to the extent that it functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame and to call the frame into question is perhaps to lose something of one's sense of place in gender" (Butler xi). This reveals the difficult task that ending the dominance of masculinity, thereby opening the path for new forms of gender normativities, entailed among the male protestors in Tahrir.

Honor and nation become subjects intimately woven together to secure the subsistence of the gender-normative framework needed to secure the nation. The nation is able to provoke fear that questioning its affective economies could lead

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to losing one's place in society. Thus, El Baramawy's peers treated gender norms as if they were a private matter to deal with, out of the revolution's reach, as if no revolution was needed in that field. ElMahdy's body presented as naked, under her control, and complete was a direct contestation of the fragmentation that the state wanted for revolutionaries who were united in the utopia of Tahrir. Revolutionaries were fighting nationalism outside their skins; they were working themselves into the ground, while it was taking root again inside their bodies. In this maneuver, one can see clearly how the state uses individuals in the margins to reproduce its own preconditions for survival. In this sense, my contribution to other analyses that delve into the relationship between nation building and the margins is the particular role that affective economies play in maintaining substantial divisions that guarantee the continuation of the existing order. Protestors' failure to see affective economies' links with the nationalistic project that they were trying to tear down was the weak point that allowed the state to penetrate the Square. Even during revolutionary times, women's rights provided "a conduit for (…) government involvement in ordering the daily lives of both the middle classes and those at the margins" (Abu-Lughod 33).

While protestors contested the state on the frontlines of Mohamed Mahmoud Street, the state, by allowing and inducing men to molest women's bodies, was able to fragment Tahrir's wholeness and reproduce the state's preconditions for survival inside the Square.

Notes

[1] Social media were particularly important in documenting this increase: survivors' testimonies grew in number and frequency, and sexual violence soon became a daily topic on the Internet.

[2] President Morsi had issued a decree granting himself powers to override any court decision, among other measures, provoking the reaction of the constituent assembly and protesters alike (for details see Kirkpatrick and Sheikh 2012).

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Body, Gender and Pain in Moroccan Prison Memoir *Ḥadīth al-'Atama*.

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The article explores the themes of body, physical pain, and corporeal memory as framed by Fatna El Bouih's and Latifa Jbabdi's prison narratives contained in *Ḥadīth al-'Atama (Tale from the Dark)*. Members of the Marxist-Leninist movement, El Bouih and Jbabdi were subjected to sensory annihilation, brutal tortures, practices of gender erosion, and sexual abuses during the Moroccan *Years of Lead* (1965 – 1999). The article provides a critical reading of the memoirs by identifying a trajectory from a gendered inflicted suffering (abuses and tortures) to an agentive self-inflicted pain (hunger strike). Drawing on Banu Bargu's perspective on the manipulative use of corporeality in the carceral framework, the article emphasizes the weaponization of women's bodies in undertaking a hunger strike which ultimately improves the inmates' conditions of detention. Furthermore, the body is defined as a crucial *medium* of memory as the two women approach the recollection of violent past experiences to restore historical truth about Moroccan state violence of the *Years of Lead.*

Keywords: Prison Memoirs, Morocco, Years of Lead, Hunger Strike, Corporeal Memory

"Il y a un lien intime entre le corps écrivant et l'objet de l'écriture"
(Zekri, "Le sujet et son corps" 46).

Introduction

Few years after Moroccan independence from the French protectorate, occurred in 1956, king Hassan II imposed a long-term period of massive repression against the parliamentary opposition, students' unions and revolutionary leftist groups, as well as against military coup leaders and soldiers, Islamists, Berber and Sahrawi protesters (Abitbol 669-680; Daoud 9-340; Miller 162-220; Perrault 59-367; Saoudi "Il Marocco degli Anni di piombo" 263-287, *Voyage au-delà des nuits de plomb* 13-219; Vermeren, Histoire du Maroc 20-98). They were the so-called Moroccan *Years of Lead, Sanawāt al-Raṣāṣ* in Arabic, *années de plomb* in French, whose beginning is marked by the state of emergency following Casablanca's riots and massacre (1965) and their conclusion corresponds with Hassan II's death (1999). Criticizing a weak reformism, foot-dragging and the *wait-and-see* approach of the left-wing political parties *Union National des Forces Populaire* (UNFP) and *Parti de la Libération et du Socialisme* (PLS), the Marxist-Leninist Movement (MMLM) arose with three clandestine organizations. *23 Mars* (named after the

Casablanca riots), *Ilā al-Amām (Forward)*, and, later, *Li-nakhduma al-sh'b (To Serve People)* sought to overthrow the monarchical regime and support a national democratic revolution. Their members were soon placed under arrest and subjected to arbitrary detentions and torture. As the *Group of 139*, a large part of them received a mock mass trial in Casablanca in January 1977, which accused the militants of "plotting against the State", imposing them long-term judgments (Saoudi, *Voyage* 14).

During the *Years of Lead*, numerous were also the female militants who underwent forcible disappearances, arbitrary detentions, mock trials, tortures, and death (Saoudi, *Femmes-prison* 31-80; Slyomovics, "The Argument from the Silence" 73-95). As Nadia Guessous illustrates, commenting on the work of IER *(Instance Equité et Réconciliation)*, a reparative commission established in 2004 to restore the truth on the numerous human rights violations during the *Years of Lead*: "While we may never know the exact number of women who were affected by political violence in Morocco between 1965 and 1999, it is nevertheless noteworthy that women constitute 15% of the dossiers received by the IER from 'direct victims' and 46% of those filed by 'indirect victims'" (15).

The so-called "Meknès group" (Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights* 137) included six women who did not know each other before. Khadija Boukhari, Boudda Nguia, Maria Ezzaouini, Widad Bouab, Latifa Jbabdi, Fatna El Bouih found themselves sharing the same destiny of carceral coercion for their political beliefs, being incarcerated from 1977 to 1982.

Born in 1956, Fatna El Bouih has been affiliated to the clandestine Marxist group *23 Mars* based in Casablanca, where she had moved to attend the Lycée Chawqi thanks to a scholarship (Slyomovics "Fatna El Bouih and the Work of Memory" 41-44). Due to her initial involvement in the *Syndacat Nationaldes lycéens* and the coordination of a students' strike to protest against the closure of *Union Nationale des Étudiants Marocains* (ANEM), she was briefly arrested for the first time in 1974. In Maarif police station, she was raped by a guard (Slyomovics, "Reparations in Morocco" 89-93). In 1977, as a university student and a Marxist-Leninist militant, she was abducted and has been arbitrarily imprisoned for three years, serving, after a sham trial, other two years of detention. Initially detained in the secret prison of Derb Moulay Chérif (Casablanca), she has been blindfolded for six months, undergoing brutal tortures for the entire period. Then El Bouih was transferred in the civil prisons of Casablanca (Ghbiyla) and Meknès, where she and her comrades decided to undertake a hunger strike in order to improve their conditions and be recognized as political prisoners.

Sharing the same prison cell with Fatna, Latifa Jbabdi was another female member of the *23 Mars* movement. After her release, she founded and have been directing from 1983 to 1994 the newspaper *Thamaniyyah Mars (8th March)*. Named after International Women's Day, it spread Moroccan and transnational feminist ideals. Jbabdi was one of the founders, in 1987, of the feminist organization UAF, *Union de l'Action Féminine*. Fatna El Bouih adhered to UAF as well, engaging in the feminist mobilization for the revision of the *Mudawwana (Personal and Family Code)* with the aim of improving women's civil rights. The two women were among the founding members, in 1999, of the *Observatoire Marocain des Prisons*. Moreover, Latifa Jbabdi was the only female member in the *Équité et reconciliation commission* (IER), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in 2004 to shed light on the atrocities of the regime during the *Years of Lead* (Benadada and El Bouhsini 62-86).

Moroccan authorities have a long story of denied human rights violations in the prison environment. However, in the last decade of Hassan II's long reign (1961-1999) and especially with his son Muhammad VI's ascent to the throne (1999), Morocco has attenuated the most restrictive censorship on the state violence.[1]

Following the release of prisoners in the nineties, a proliferation of historical and memorial writings shedding light on the inhumane conditions of detention have been recorded (El Guabli "The 'Hidden Transcript' of Resistance" 170-207, El Yasami and Zekri 25-34; Elinson 289-303; Fouet-Fauvernier 23-288; Moukhlis 347-376; Zekri "Écrire le carcéral au Maroc" 59-79). The *adab al-sujūn (carceral literature)* appears to be a remarkable literary trend and testimonial *medium* of the recent Moroccan history. It illustrates conditions of detention and countless violation of Moroccan political prisoners' human rights, also conveying anti-regime political instances both in Arabic and French.[2]

Narrative and autobiographical accounts ascribable to *adab al-sujūn* present a diffusion among women who suffered the repressive grip of the regime either against themselves or, as indirect victims, on their relatives.[3]

With her prison memoir entitled *Ḥadīth al-'Atama (Tale from the Dark)*[4] published in 2001, Fatna El Bouih gives a detailed account of her life in prison. Her voice speaks between tortures and material deprivations, but also testifies negotiations with the authorities, collective resilience, and active practices of resistance, in a pervasive sense of solidarity shared with her comrades. The text is a hymn of attachment to life that emerges among the wounds inflicted by physical and psychological tortures.

As one of the most compelling examples and well-received testimonies about the treatments of the Moroccan regime on female opponents, several scholars have scrutinized the text. *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* has been analysed as a gendered memory from a literary theory perspective (Diaconoff 105-149; Hachad, *Revisionary Narratives* 27-59; Orlando 273-288) and by utilising historical/anthropological approaches (Menin "Rewriting the World" 45-60; Slyomovics "The Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission" 10-41). As it has been underlined, El Bouih's authorial voice expresses a female *collective self* (Orlando 283; Menin, "Rewriting the World" 54-6), namely a shared and gendered point of view on the brutalities imposed by the regime in the seventies and eighties on female dissidents. Significantly, the same text composition contributes to convey a sense of multi-authorial inclusivity since *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* incorporates, in its final pages, shorter memorial accounts by comrades Latifa Jbabdi and Widad Bouab, who shared much of their ideological path and repressive experience with El Bouih.[5]

By reading *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* as a historical-literary source, this article aims to add further understanding of the text seeking to adopt a specific gaze on the physical aspects emerging from the narration. Tracing the articulation of the pain in the female bodies, both inflicted and self-inflicted, corporal and psychological, this article is going to show how suffering can strengthen political beliefs and become a source for female agency within the prison. In this perspective, the hunger strike finds a new, pivotal dimension that reconfigures the significance of the women's struggle in the carceral framework during the *Years of Lead*. Furthermore, the article examines how in *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* the suffering body shapes the prison experience's cognition, contributing to define Fatna El Bouih's and Latifa Jbabdi's memorialist voices. In that respect, it is interesting to investigate how body structures remembrances, arguing for a *corporeal memory* as a crucial aspect of the

gendered historization of Moroccan *Years of Lead*.

The article is composed of three paragraphs: "From Inflicted-Pain to Bodily Reactions", "The Self-Inflicted Pain: Agency in Hunger Strike" and "Corporeal Memory". It is a preliminary result of an ongoing Ph.D. research focusing on female political activism in Morocco during the *Years of Lead* and about Moroccan women's collective memory and public history of the last two decades. This research will hopefully explore more in depth the chosen themes, also engaging in a wider reading of the Moroccan female memoirs related to the *Years of Lead*.

From Inflicted Pain to Bodily Reactions

The exercise of violence against women in the prison framework assumes various forms. As *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* shows, a combined mix of physical deprivation and emotional displacement is added to specific psychological kinds of abuse damaging personal intimacy and gender identity of female prisoners.

The very first form of mental abuse perpetrated against female detainees in Derb Mulay Chérif appears to be the masculinization of their personalities.[6] The jailers carry out a psychological erosion of gender identity which primarily derives from the imposition of male names on women. As Fatna El Bouih recalls: "They give me a number and a name: 'From now on, your name is Rachid. Don't move and don't talk unless you hear your name, that is Rachid!'" (15)[7]

The punishment for women who escape the confined space of domesticity and enter the male sphere of politics and militancy consists of being treated as men in detention. Consequently, female prisoners renamed with male names are subjected to standard treatments in the torture sessions aiming to extract information. For their sadistic pleasure, the torturers take on the name of *hajj*, a term that in the Islamic tradition indicates a man of faith who has carried out the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, and, conversely, in the context of carceral violence, denotes the person who has the task of inflicting a *journey* into physical suffering.[8] Torture practices include the *falaqa* method, that involves electroshocking in an airplane position, crucifixion *à la sauce marocaine*, beatings upside down, rapes, and threats of gang rapes.[9]

Latifa Jbabdi narrates how a specialized torturer nicknamed Camel used to ruthlessly inflict her the *falaqa*/air travel method. As a rite tested many times, a "cérémoine de la souffrance" in Foucauldian terms (Foucault 308), this torture is evoked by Jbabdi in the following graphic description:

> There were different degrees of 'air travel' and they made me try them all, from first to last. The 'Camel' put the stick between my knees and arms grouping them together. It was just like putting a chicken on a spit. He pulled me downward with a system of knotted ropes, until my feet were upward and my head downward. I stayed in this position while the interrogation continued in the same way as the previous one, until I felt dizzy. I could stay in that position for hours, while they violently beat my feet with a thick lash made of wet ox nerves. At that point, they made me regain consciousness as the interrogation had to continue (El Bouih 127).

Physical violence includes massive and frequent doses of kicking, slapping, and punching, causing Jbabdi's deafness (El Bouih 126) and facial disfigurement, that is part of the erosion of personal identity operated by carceral violence. The sense of discomfort deriving from the inability to recognize her own facial appearance is also evoked by Fatna El Bouih when she recalls the impossibility of seeing her face through a mirror for the entire period of imprisonment (42). Besides, as part of

gender removal's project and total negation of female needs, Marxist-Leninist prisoners in Derb Moulay Chérif are not given sanitary napkins during their menstrual cycles, being forced for days into bloody clothing (Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights* 135).

Thereby, Fatna and her comrades undergo both, a gender erosion deriving from the abusive masculinization under which the jailers torture them, and a typically gender-based violence consisting of the rapes, threats of gang rape and dogs' rapes, and virginity testing.

In addition to these practices, female bodies are subjected to an annihilation of sensory perception. For the first months of their arbitrary detention, female political prisoners are not allowed to speak at all, lying on the ground in the narrow space without the possibility of getting up. El Bouih, Jbabdi and their companions are force to live in a state of complete blindness with permanent eye bandages for six months in order to prevent the captors' recognition, especially during the torture sessions. The negation of sight provoked a global decompensation of their senses, worsened by the inability of moving and speaking. At this respect, Suellen Diaconoff notices that: "In prison, the physical senses, like the body, are alienated, distorted, deprived, and assaulted" (123). Speaking about being assaulted, even the insects can attack female bodies running through them, as Latifa Jbabdi testifies (126). Indeed, forced immobility and bodily privations are aggravated by the imposition of not moving even to drive out fleas or cockroaches. This represents a transparent image of the authorities' desire to remove any residue of human dignity in the political detainees, in a never-ending time.

Nevertheless, the sensory disintegration imposed as part of neutralization and dehumanization of female prisoners soon becomes one of the women's political detainees' fields of manipulation and resistance. Strategies of adaptation, minimization, and acceptance of the privations of the senses are tools of resilience in the carceral framework. In this regard, Latifa Jbabdi affirms how she got accustomed to the bandage, to identify it as an extension of her body and occasionally forgetting of removing it in the unique possible moment, at the toilet (El Bouih 124). Moreover, the privation of sight strengthens prisoners' faculties of hearing and touch. This condition helps to identify each torturer beyond the generic name of *hajj*. The process worked via particular traits: the walk, the force of the blows, the tone of voice, the grip on their flesh.

Interestingly, if their voice is silenced and the sight nullified, female detainees refine some communication strategies to convey their feelings. They are able to communicate with each other by drawing out letter profiles on the inmates' skin to form words and sentences. This tactile Arabic in "corporeal transmission" (*The Performance of Human Rights* 138), as Susan Slyomovics defines it, is allowed by the inmates' physical proximity and has the result of creating a mute friendship particularly charged from an emotional point of view. With this human alphabet, women in prison realize an agentive exit strategy from solitude, individual suffering, and alienation of bodies, performing, at the same time, subversive gestures of communication in their physical closeness.

The Self-Inflicted Pain: Agency in Hunger Strike

Notwithstanding the end of strictest prison regime and the relocation at civil prison of Ghbiyla (Casablanca), Fatna's group is far from normalization in the carceral environment.

On the one hand, the inmates have removed the bandages and they can look at each other, experiencing a renewed sense of personal integrity and gender identity. On the other, the duration of their imprisonment is still indefinite, and their

rights of political prisoners are far from being recognized.

In Ghbiyla, El Bouih and Jbabdi occupy the cell which was of the Marxist-Leninist movement member Saida Menhebi. Former student union's fellow and active member of the clandestine group *Ilā al-Amām (Forward),* Saida worked as an English teacher when she was arrested in 1977 and subjected to tortures. Following a hunger strike that lasted 34 days, undergone to protest against the conditions of political prisoners, she was hospitalized and died at twenty-five.[10] The news of her death profoundly shocks the inmates, and El Bouih and Jbabdi's group is soon transferred to Meknès to avoid contamination from the so-called *45-day* strike. Nevertheless, Fatna and her comrades decide to proclaim a hunger strike in order to have their rights as political prisoners fully recognized.

That would mean for them to be able to read and study in a cell, to continue university and give exams, to enjoy more hours of daylight in the courtyard and more visits by family members. Also, the chance to have the right of medical care and, most importantly, to obtain a trial after three years of arbitrary detention. For these reasons, they utilize the only effective weapon of protest at their disposal, the refusal of food, even at the cost of endangering their own lives. As El Bouih affirms: "We had no choice but to practice violence against ourselves. We had no choice but to consider death easier than our current condition" (38).

Not being an inflicted form of pain but consisting of the self-infliction of suffering, hunger strike is an extreme choice by vulnerable subjects in detention. In undergoing a hunger strike, mental strength is closely related to physical endurance, and collective political convictions to physical resilience.

According to Machin, hunger strike entails three major aspects. It is a strategy of effectively communicating political intents, a tool to reproduce a collective identity, and a way to disrupt the structure of the carceral institution (160). The first aspect is related to the urgency of raising voice and being heard in prison. To the second point, hunger strike is intended as a shared dispositive that rehabilitates the sense of political belonging and restores a common identity. A vision that is in contrast with the Foucauldian assumption that in prison pain is not just individualized but also individualizing (Foucault 239). Finally, in collectively incorporating a typically male fighting tool such as hunger strike, women exercise a gender provocation. As Machin argues: "The protesting body - in particular, the female/feminine protesting body - can disrupt the dominant order of the political sphere through the use of self-directed violence" (160).

Fatna's account of hunger strike reports that the hardest days are precisely the initial ones, which see a drastic change in the inmates' already poor food routine. The hunger strike brings about headache, blurred vision, stomach cramps, heaviness in the limbs. Soon, the women decide to drastically reduce to speak and move, staying for a long time in a state of semi-immobility. Still, the temporary privation of voice and mobility is instrumental in gaining a significant impact on the carceral system, spreading a message of protest to the entire *makhzen*, the Moroccan political apparatus itself.

As Banu Bargu highlights in her *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* the weaponization of life is a "tactic of resorting to corporeal and existential practices of struggle, based on the technique of self-destruction, in order to make a political statement or advance political goals" (14). Forms of self-destruction, such as hunger strike and self-immolation in prison, relate to the nature of sovereign power and prison politics in the modern world themselves. According to Bargu, radical forms of struggle and militant martyrdom specifically arise from the asymmetric antagonism between the

modern state and its contestants (23). Showing a deep political awareness regarding the value of hunger strike in the abusive and coercive context of prison, Fatna El Bouih argues: "The hunger strike shakes the foundations of a State that claims to be grounded on the rule of law, a State that affirms to recognize human life as sacred" (38). This affirmation is also consistent with Padraic Kenney's point that the modern prisoner of conscience, with his or her reluctance to submit to the rules of the prison, is aimed at sparking off a crisis on the modern state and its coercive apparatus.

As the days of hunger strike go on, Fatna manages to maintain a strenuous strength of mind in the solid conviction to either overcome or to die. After twenty days of hunger strike, the carceral authorities break the silence. Representing all the other strikers, El Bouih is called to directly negotiate the terms of their final recognition as political prisoners. The negotiating table is a symbolic and factual place of reconfiguration of female subalternity towards male carceral authorities. Fatna, disfigured by the prolonged food deprivation and at the very limit of her physical strength, deftly confronts the prison director, demonstrating an extreme mental endurance and exemplary political conduct. The compromise obtained consists of the effective recognition of the status of political detainees without a formal act. It will allow political prisoners to study and to enjoy more hours of light a day, and to receive a judgment in a courtroom. The hunger strike is over, and it has produced a significant impact in the carceral environment.

Corporeal Memory

In her study on the suffering body through history entitled *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry affirms the inexpressibility of physical pain, arguing that the inflicted pain deriving from torture experiences is for its very nature unspeakable. According to the American scholar, pain nullifies the personal subjectivity and annihilates the capacity of individual agency (161-180). To Scarry, pain is a "supreme extra-linguistic event" (Fifield 119) which also isolates the individual from the others, preventing people any valid form of communication. Distancing herself from this position, historian Lisa Silverman argues that the author does not consider the forms of self-inflicted pain, stating that: "For Scarry, the pain has a primary meaning, and that meaning is the negation of the essence of humanity in its suppression of imagination" (21). Drawing on Silverman's perspective, it is possible to comment on Fatna El Bouih's case of hunger strike, which entails the development of a fervid imagination as a strategy to endure pain and physical privations. During the hunger strike, water, drunk and passed over wrists and face, is the only form of physical relief to her. In addition, her thoughts dive into watery scenarios as Fatna projects herself into the waves of the sea and her sight looking at a river (El Bouih 43). Indeed, imagination plays a significant role for Fatna since the aquatic imaginary contributes to keep alive also her mind.

Moving away from a certain monolithic vision of the suffering subject as mute and impotent, Stephen Milich and Lamia Moghnieh state that the concept of unnarratability of a traumatic experience has given way to a more complex and contextual apparatus of readings (9). Likewise, Lisa Silverman encourages a reconceptualization of the connection between pain and truth, body, and language (22).

In this perspective, it is possible to argue that *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* draws a trajectory from physical violence to an effective communication in and from the prison, describing a transformation of the suffering body into a voice, and of voice into memory source. Still, the process is not entirely linear and direct. Despite the high level of historical consciousness and political commitment, Fatna El Bouih's and Latifa Jbabdi's literary accounts are not

exempt from space-time leaps, selective memory and removal mechanisms typical of the traumatized recollection. For instance, as Fatna El Bouih omits to speak about information told under torture, Latifa Jbabdi underlines her strenuous resistance in not pronouncing anything under torture. Or, while Jbabdi overlooks the hunger strike event, El Bouih puts great emphasis on her account about that experience. Occasionally, in *Ḥadīth al-'Atama*, mostly narrated in the first person, there is a narrative shift towards the external focus of the third-person narrative, establishing a "floating pronoun perspective" to Suellen Diaconoff's reading (118). This mode works as an expedient which allows El Bouih to distance herself as the protagonist of her memories. Realistically, to diminish the effect of past tribulations on her.

On the other hand, the passage to the civil prison, which means the possibility to study, meet relatives and have more hours in the daylight, marks Fatna's decision to note down memories of her carceral experience during her imprisonment. Fatna El Bouih starts to produce her prison account as an inmate, to prevent the facts, also the cruellest ones endured in jail, to be obliterated by the passing of time and the psychological rejection of painful memories. In completing her memoirs once released from prison, El Bouih likely had access to her recollections through a re-actualization of physical pain and sensory deprivation, as suggested by Diaconoff: "It is reasonable that when a writer endeavours to re-access the mental/emotional texture of her prison experience through memory, her attention will be strongly focused on her physical body and the senses, and how they were both assaulted and reshaped" (122). Still, the defence mechanisms of the wounded memory in remembering the past violence must be considered. The bodily consciousness which emerges from Latifa Jbabdi's and Fatna El Bouih's traumatic experiences marks a type of memory which challenges the natural rejection, refusal, and obliteration of physical pain. The memorial voice and the ensuing restoration of the truth about the brutalities experienced arise precisely from the effort to overcome psychological barriers and removal necessities. In that vein, the act of memorial activism, fully ascribable to El Bouih's and Jbabdi's memoirs, entails a personal struggle in the political conviction of the necessity to testimony against oblivion and censorship. If, as Naima Hachad claims, "agony can be a revolt" ("Monstrous Offspring" 128) - and the Meknès group's hunger strike would confirm it - spreading the suffering through memories represents a form of profound transgression of the *status quo*. As long as the remembering process poses, in the first place, a personal, intimate challenge.

Conclusion

Drawing conclusions, this article has discussed the topics of body and physical reactions to carceral coercion as shaped by the collective memoir *Ḥadīth al-'Atama*, that sheds light on the Moroccan state violence against female members of the Marxist-Leninist Movement (MMLM) during the seventies and eighties. It has analysed the bodily transformation in prison, from gendered violence to a corporeal weaponization, also commenting on the memory implications of the process.

Fatna El Bouih's and Latifa Jbabdi's memory accounts illustrate the systematic practices of violence inflicted on female dissidents. The repressive paradigm implies a doubled kind of suffering inflicted on women, as they undergo strategies of gender erosion and conformity to the male sphere combined with the most typical forms of sexual violence.

Although being arbitrary deprived of freedom and forced in inhumane prison conditions in a state of complete blindness and immobility, the violated female bodies are field of passive resilience and active resistance against the carceral

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repression. Thereby, Fatna's group uses imagination and creativity, staging communication sessions. They utilise their *bodies as books*, tracing letters' outlines to form sentences in order to convey sense, contrast their alienation, and reinforcing their collective sisterhood.

Subsequently, to achieve the substantial status of political prisoners which would guarantee an improvement of their prison conditions, they decide to impress an utter wound on their already fragile bodies. In this sense, it has been observed and described an overarching trajectory proceeding from an inflicted pain (torture and gender violence) to an agentic self-inflicted pain (hunger strike).

If the inflicted pain and the objectification of political prisoners are "insignia of power" (Scarry 51), the self-inflicted pain can be seen, according to Banu Bargu's perspective, as the ultimate pro-active path of re-appropriation of dignity within the carceral framework for women. In undergoing the hunger strike, El Bouih's and her comrades' political sisterhood produces an agentive gesture and a gender resistance giving rise to a real improvement in their conditions as political prisoners. Therefore, *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* shows the plasticity of pain and its contagious and manipulative nature.

Finally, in exploring the mutual relationship between corporeality and pain, memory and language, the suffering body has been defined as the *medium* of memorial recollecting. Pain frames events, and the memory of these events is impressed in the body. Still, the process of remembering stemming from the wounded bodies is not exempted from mechanisms of self-protection, distancing, and removals. In *Ḥadīth al-'Atama* the painful access to the past wounds, which is the basis of the idea of corporeal memory this article conveys, is fulfilled by El Bouih and Jbabdi thanks to their strenuous political commitment and their willing to make their stories publicly known. As their personal accounts testifies, making their voices heard in the public space becomes *de facto* a political matter. It concerns the issue of the public restoration of historical truth about the massive suspension of human rights during *Years of Lead* and, lastly, the possibility of rising a gendered memory in Morocco.

Notes

[1] On the commission IER *(Instance Equité et Réconciliation)*, established in 2004 in a transitional justice framework in order to create reparative paths both individual and communal, see: Vermeren, *Le Maroc en transition*, Slyomovics, "Reparations in Morocco", Loudiy; Hegasy; Menin "A Life of Waiting". Criticism of the effectiveness of Moroccan community reparations and the real political will of the regime to resolve all the cases of disappearances have also been expressed (see for example: Vairel; Menin, "Descending Into Hell" and "Scomparsi (mukhtafyin)"; Hachad, "Narrating Tazmamart"). Besides, while Dennerlein points out the attempt by the commission to comply with international standards on women's rights in transitional justice (10), El Guabli has argued that the IER failed in specifically focusing on state violence against women, contributing to conversely producing an "unaware-gender history" of the *Years of Lead* ("Gender-Unaware History" 59).

[2] Among the former political prisoners who published their prison narratives in Arabic: Abdalqadir al-Shawi (*Kāna wa-Akhawātihā*, Kana and her Sisters; *Al-Sāhat al-Sharafiya*, Honorary Square), Saʿid Haji (*Dhākiratu al-Finiq: Sīratun Dhātiyatun li-Wajhin min Sanawāt al-Raṣāṣ*, Memories of Phoenix: a Biography of a Man from the Years of Lead), Salah Ouadie (al-'Aris, The Groom). In general, more numerous are the autobiographical accounts on the *Years of Lead* in French. See for instance: *Dans les Jardins Secrets du Roi* du Maroc by Ali Bourequat, *Tazmamart. Une prison de la mort au Maroc* by Christine Daure-Serfaty, *La chambre noire ou Derb Moulay Chérif* by Jaouad Mdidech, *Tazmamart Cellule 10* by Ahmed Merkouzi, *Le chemin des ordalies* by Abdellatif Laabi, *A l'ombre de Lalla Chafia* and *La tyrannie ordinaire: lettres de prison* by Driss Rekab.

[3] See for example: *Tazmamart. Une prison de la mort au Maroc* by Christine Daure-Serfaty, *La prisonnière* by Malika Oufkir and *Tazmamart côté femme: Témoignage* by Rabea Bennouna. In wider terms, *Arabic prison memoirs* by Egyptian feminists Nawal El Saadawi (*Mudhakkirātī fī Sijn al-Nisā'*, Memoirs from a Women's Prison) and Latifa Al-Zayyat (*Ḥamlat Taftīsh: 'awrāq Shakhṣiyya*, Inspection. A Private Diary) had a greater diffusion in the MENA region. For a comparative perspective on female prison memoirs from Egypt to Palestine, from South Africa to El Salvador and United States, see Barbara Harlow's *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention*.

[4] Mustafa Kamala and Susan Slyomovics translated the text into English as *Talk of Darkness*.

[5] Bouab's and Jbabdi's testimonials were first published in 1994 in the Moroccan newspaper *al-Ittiḥād al-Ishtiraki* (Slyomovics, "Reparations in Morocco" 144).

[6] In comparing Fatna El Bouih's and former Marxist-Leninist prisoner Nour-eddine Saoudi's memory accounts, Laura Menin ("Rewriting the World" 58) notices how women were subjected to masculinization and, likewise, men were feminized and addressed with homophobic insults.

[7] Translations from Arabic are all mine.

[8] In disregard of religion, tortures were also inflicted during the holy month of Ramadan.

[9] The word *falaqa* indicates the wooden stick to which the victim's feet are tied and raised to expose them to the blows better. This torture is known in Europe as *bastinado*, from Spanish *bastón*, stick.

[10] A year after her death, in 1978, Saida Menebhi's *Poèmes, Lettres, Écrits de prison* were published in Rabat. This poetry collection represents her legacy as a human and militant. From the prison's deprivations, her look embraces the entire suffering humanity, strengthening the ecumenism of the global struggle against injustices around the world. For a comparative reading of El Bouih's and Menebhi's literary production, see Valerie Orlando ("Feminine Spaces and Places in the Dark Recesses of Morocco's Past: the Prison Testimonials in Poetry and Prose of Saïda Menebhi and Fatna El Bouih").

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The Kafāla System: Gender and Migration in Contemporary Lebanon

Dimitra Dermitzaki, Sylvia Riewendt

With an estimated 250,000 migrant domestic workers (MDW), migrant women perform household chores normally assigned to Lebanese women in their own households. Since labor laws do not apply to MDWs, MDW from the Global South in particular are affected by exploitative regulations under the Kafāla system. Due to gender-specific aspects of migration and asylum and gendered and racialized labor division, they inevitably become a focus of public interest. This paper conducts an overview of Lebanese gendered and racialized labor laws under Kafāla based on a materialist theory, analyzing a range of local NGOs that address MDW's rights.

Keywords: **Lebanon, Labor Law, Slavery, Kafala, Migration, Gender**

"Najwa and Raymond Tawk Tortured, Starved, and Left Ethiopian Teenager for Dead" (This is Lebanon)

Such headlines on the working conditions of young female migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Lebanon are frequently featured in national and international media. According to various media reports, migrant organizations and statistics obtained from the Lebanese intelligence agency, an average of two DWs die every week (Su, "Slave Labour?"). In most cases, the circumstances of their deaths remain unexplained; this is often due to the refusal of Lebanese host families to provide information. The case of the young Filipino worker Halima made national and international headlines. Her hosts, the Lebanese politician and women's rights advocate Ibtissam Saade and her family, locked her up for 10 years and only through the help and public pressure of various women's and migrant's rights organizations was she able to return home (This is Lebanon "Halima").

Research on MDWs focuses on topics like the racialization of MDWs and the relational aspects of the employment.[1] Complex social issues, in which a variety of economic, political and social aspects come into play, must also be comprehensively examined. The legal component plays a central role, but so do the percep-

tion of and discourse on social aspects of living together, such as migration, work, and women's rights. To understand the circumstances of people living under and strongly influenced by the Kafāla, the legal perspective is not the only relevant one; so are civil society associations promoting certain rights and concessions. In this context, migrant self-organizations and the way they campaign, their objectives, and their scope play a central role. To analyze the Kafāla system in Lebanon, a review of existing self-organizations will be used in addition to a review of the legal aspects; however, this paper does not provide qualitative data collected in personal interviews, but rather a sound foundation of contemporary literature and concept analysis, with a potential for further qualitative research. This paper focuses on legal aspects and the work of organizations like This is Lebanon (TIL), KAFA, and Anti-Racism Movement (ARM). The theory and method, based on post-colonial and materialist approaches to migration and self-organization, provide the framework for this paper.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This article builds on the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches of historical materialism and post-colonial theory. Historical materialism is a theoretical approach and research method that seeks the causes of societal change in the mode of production, i.e., the system of labor usage and the production of goods. This ranges from observations of the epoch-specific emergence of economic systems and their transition into each other, to observations on the ownership and domination of the means of production and the control of labor and labor regulations in pre-industrial societies and industrialized as well as contemporary capitalist orders. A materialist analysis, thus, is one that primarily looks into socio-economic preconditions, social struggle and prevailing circumstances when analyzing certain aspects of social life (Kannankulam 200, Robinson 27).

Thus, based on socio-economic contexts, social heritage and classes matter when looking at historical developments and modern *globalization*. *Class* can be seen as identity as well as a social relationship; however, Marx interpreted class as the latter rather than as a specific nascent social rank, assuming all social relations are based on a socio-economic foundation such as capitalism, in which the capitalist class can not exist, let alone survive, without the proletariat and vice versa.[2] Further, the socio-economic aspect of analysis is intertwined with a solid framework of post-colonial premises. Lebanon is a post-colonial state; in accordance with Wallerstein's materialist conceptualization of the division of the persisting world order between capitalist core centers, the semi-periphery, and the periphery, Lebanon is categorized as the latter (Wallerstein 49); the continuities of former colonial patterns and rule still persist in many respects. In themselves and in academic scholarship, the terms post-coloniality and post-colonial thought address political, economic, and social structures, especially aspects of colonial legacies and continuities between the *Global North* and the *Global South*. Identifying and thus deconstructing these is a basic element of post-colonial theory (Dhawan; do Mar Castro Varela 15).

The post-colonial theorists Nikita Dhawan and María do Mar Castro Varela outline the transformation of the term *post-colonial* itself since its use and scholarship in the 1970s. At that time, it focused on the situation of former colonies, although a decade later it addressed all colonized regions and communities and their history of colonization up to the present, including the recognition of the histories and traditions of colonized regions before their conquest. In this article, post-colonial consciousness plays a central role when looking at Lebanon as a post-colonial state, still influenced by former colonial

ideas and social orders (Dhawan and do Mar Castro Varela 15). Lebanon's formal independence as a nation-state followed a 23-year rule by the French Mandate, which was one part of the historic violent Western European conquest and rule over various regions worldwide. Consequently, this article's analysis of legal and social aspects of migration in Lebanon is based on the premise of (post-) colonial continuity in a post-colonial state.

Nevertheless, post-colonialism and its philosophical concept are disputed in academia and in activism. Aspects of the practicability of post-colonialism for current and targeted anti-colonial struggles and protest movements with a clear aim to achieve a concrete different and new anti-colonial societal structure are being questioned (Dhawan, do mar Castro Varela 339-341). However, the valid question of post-colonialism's usefulness as a historical and analytical tool to describe societal orders, leaving aside practically solving them generally or in Lebanon, cannot be answered in the framework of this paper (Dhawan, do mar Castro Varela 286-288).

However, a materialist analysis of society also considers various categories that exist under (pre-) capitalist orders, including remuneration, labor, and people's material conditions. Those categories – not to be mistaken as identity – famously include *women* vs. *men* in a binary gender code, *white* vs. *non-white*, *citizen* vs. *non-citizen*, and many more.[3, 4]

Materialist perspectives on the role of the modern (nation) state, which enforces different social, political, and legal accesses and *rights* on its own citizens and on non-citizens, thus enabling greater and unprotected exploitation of non-citizens and often racialized people by the local ruling and political class, but also by the local and citizen workforce (Zeiler 10, Kannankulam 50), as is also thoroughly exemplified by the colonial European border, migration, and labor regime (Kasparek 170, Kannankulam, Georgi 49, Buckel 88, Rodriguez Gutierrez 19). In the current world order, migration regulations and the protection of (work) migrants differ under international, national, and often regional law and jurisdiction. The following chapter examines the legal perspectives of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon under special consideration of the migration and labor nexus provided by Kafala.

Legal Perspectives and the Status of Migrant Domestic Workers

Domestic work is not defined by Lebanese national law, but the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) by the International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes domestic work under two classifications, including housekeepers, personal care workers, DWs, and other related helpers in commercial spaces, private households, and other establishments (ILO 29-30). A study from 2011 reported that around 65% of MDWs have experienced a situation of exploitation such as forced labor, servitude, or slavery during their time in Lebanon (Hamill 5). Legally, the terms forced labor, servitude, slavery, and practices similar to slavery are different, but they have similarities and are often conflated. Each involves a different type of exploitation or control.[5] The ILO Convention on Forced or Compulsory Labour outlines several criteria indicating forced labor, such as restriction of movement and/or confinement to a limited area, the retention of official identity documents, the withholding or nonpayment of wages, debt bondage or bonded labor, and last, threats of denunciation to the authorities (11-14). As international treaty law does not offer an explicit definition of the term servitude; the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) Model Law defines it as a labor condition from which a person cannot escape.[6] The Slavery Convention and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery define slavery as "the status or condition of a person over whom

any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (16).[7] Slavery is the term with the fuzziest definition regarding these types of exploitation, leaving a wide scope for interpretation. Debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage, and child servitude are regarded as practices similar to slavery under the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery. Some legal experts regard all these forms of labor as modern-day slavery, whereas others don't. From a legal perspective, there are no clear boundaries (16).

Lebanon has ratified a number of international conventions through which human rights principles have been introduced into Lebanese law. Furthermore, in the '90s after the civil war, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was included in the preamble of the Lebanese Constitution. Article 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure states that international conventions supersede ordinary law based on the principle of the "hierarchy of rules" (Leaders 5-6). Even though not all international conventions address workers' rights and labor in particular, most of the international treaties provide social protection that affects workers' rights indirectly. The Constitution, including the Declaration of Human Rights, ensures the right to security, equality, freedom from slavery and forced labor, safe and fair working hours, adequate standards of living, etc. Furthermore, international treaties[8] like ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD, and the Convention against Torture (CAT) cover the right to safe working and living conditions and freedom of movement, banning torture and inhumane treatment. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) enshrines in Article 11 the right to work, maternity leave, and equality in working hours and payment. And finally, Lebanon ratified a protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (Leaders 6-8). Besides ratifying international conventions, Lebanon joined the ILO in 1948 and has ratified several ILO conventions.[9] Most international labor conventions apply to DWs as well (ILO 20). Even though Lebanon did not ratify all the ILO conventions, it still has to respect the fundamental rights that are stated in them as long as they are a member of the ILO (Leaders 8). In 1976, the ILO established the Regional Office for Arab States[10] in Beirut, where you can file complaints with the organization, which can conduct investigations and make final recommendations (Leaders 8). It should be taken into consideration that the ILO is an organization within a broader global capitalist system that, though trying to make the conditions for workers more bearable, still does not tackle the problem of exploitation at its roots, as it does not consider capitalist structures and employers to be part of the problem that makes exploitation inevitable.

The Lebanese labor law was enacted in 1946 and most recently amended in 2000 (Lebanese Ministry of Labour "Lebanese Labour Law"). Article 7 of the Lebanese labor law explicitly excludes DWs not only from its protection, but also from guarantees like minimum wage, annual leave, number of working hours, etc.[11] (Leaders 10). Furthermore, the labor law lacks special regulations for refugees, economic migrants, and other non-Lebanese persons, with the exception of Palestinian refugees, who are registered with the Ministry of the Interior. Under the Foreigners Law, every person who does not hold Lebanese citizenship is considered a foreigner. DWs are subject to a special legal system called Kafāla. Most regulations are passed by the Directorate of General Security in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Labour (Hamill 25), because Lebanese law lacks any comprehensive regulation[12] on these matters (Leaders 32, 36). The majority of MDWs in Lebanon are from Africa or Asia, and since one quarter of the Lebanese population employs a

MDW, which is seen as a sign of status and class, they play a central role in the population's self-perception. According to Nisreen Kaj, an important aspect of the Lebanese collective identity is self-perception as a white nation[13] and the othering of MDWs who are mostly non-white. This makes citizenship and the identification with the Lebanese state more important than another basis of identification (Ringrose and Stubberud 408-410). In his paper, Ray Jureidini states that the hierarchy of female WDMs throughout West Asia is reflected by their salaries, with Filipino women being paid the highest, Ethiopian women in between, and Sri Lankan women the lowest – agents and employers claim this is based on the workers' education, skills, language, and physical attractiveness (Jureidini 145).

According to the labor law, neither a migrant nor a non-migrant domestic worker can form a trade union (Human Rights Watch). In some cases, there are exceptions for foreigners who have a work permit and meet certain requirements, but this does not apply to MDWs. This matter is considered to be a violation of the ICCPR ratified in 1972, whose article 22 states that everyone has the right to form and join a trade union for the protection of their interests (Human Rights Watch). Also, requiring Lebanese citizenship to form a trade union makes it impossible for stateless persons to establish or join one (Leaders 11-12). DWs frequently report excessive working hours and delayed or withheld payment of wages. Regarding domestic work and therefore the abuse of a woman by another woman as an individual problem shifts responsibility from the state to the private households (Ringrose and Stubberud 410). But the vulnerability of MDWs is linked to several structural factors, such as the Kafāla system itself, the recruitment process, and the lack of legal protection. The Kafāla fosters conditions under which MDWs can become subject to trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. Their immigration status is linked to a single employer, who under the Kafāla can legally prevent the MDW from leaving the house, even for years. A 2010 Human Rights Watch report revealed that in over 100 cases employers did not face a single legal consequence for locking workers inside homes, confiscating their passports, or denying them food (Ringrose and Stubberud 407). The Kafāla prevents MDWs from seeking help without jeopardizing their legal immigration status. During the recruitment process, MDWs often may be deceived or not informed about the working conditions, hours, wages, contract duration, restrictions on freedom of movement and communications, and limited access to legal help. In addition, the Lebanese government issues work and entry visas to workers from countries that have a deployment ban against Lebanon. In this case, the recruitment often involves illicit routes and bribes. The Lebanese government drafted a law on DWs, which is not in force, and the establishment of an emergency hotline in the Ministry of Labour. The proposed draft still lacks legal protection, because it is possible, for example, to restrict the MDWs' movement (Hamill 5-6). Since 2009, MDWs sign a unified compulsory standard labor employment contract issued by the Ministry of Labour, which, however, is available only in Arabic and does not guarantee the DWs' rights to keep their passports (Leaders 32, 36). As basic rights, the contract restricts the working hours to a maximum of 10 hours a day with at least 8 consecutive hours of rest at night. The worker is entitled to paid sick leave, 6 days of annual leave, and the right to receive phone calls. The employer has to purchase health insurance for the worker and cover the costs of a monthly phone call to the worker's parents. The salary has to be paid at the end of each month with receipts that are signed by both parties (Amnesty International). The contract can be terminated by either the worker or the employer, with two sets of

grounds that leave wide scope for interpretation. According to article 14, the worker can terminate the contract if the employer fails to pay wages for three consecutive months, if the worker has to work in another capacity without her or his consent, or if the worker is being assaulted, abused, harassed, or sexually assaulted by one of the occupants of the houses. However, this applies only if the worker can provide proof, for example with medical or police reports. This makes unproven assault, refusal of legal leave, or refusal of access to appropriate sustenance and accommodation insufficient grounds to terminate the contract. On the other side, article 13 states that the employer can terminate the contract if the worker commits an *error* or *negligence* or violates Lebanese law. These terms leave wide scope for interpretation, because they are unspecific, which gives the stronger party, the employer, more opportunity to act in an arbitrary manner. The Directorate of General Security prohibits migrant DWs from changing their sponsorship without prior approval from the relevant authorities, without specifying which authorities decide this matter. In addition, foreign workers can transfer their sponsorship only twice during their employment period (Leaders 36). Summarizing, the lack of protection for DWs under the labor law leaves them vulnerable with almost no legal safeguards and a high risk of being subject to abuse and exploitation.

Analysis

Civil society organizations provide a platform for mass mobilization and influencing public opinion, thus creating pressure on local politics and law. Following a thorough investigation of the legal aspects of Kafāla as applied specifically in Lebanon and information from various self-organizations, an overall analysis informed by a materialistic approach illuminates the living and working situations of women under Kafāla in Lebanese society. The mostly migrant-led self-organizations KAFA Violence and Exploitation, TIL, and ARM are examined based on these concrete criteria: 1.) Range/Outreach, 2.) Objectives, 3.) Forms of Representation.

KAFA – Enough Violence and Exploitation

KAFA, represented online in English and Arabic along with a help line, was established in 2005 and seeks to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. The organization defines itself as a feminist, secular, non-profit, and non-governmental civil society organization. Its aim is to create a society that is based on gender equality and is free of social, economic, and legal patriarchal structures. Advocating legal reforms, influencing public opinion, conducting research and trainings, and providing social, legal, and psychological support for victims of violence, it takes various approaches to change current social structures. It focuses on three areas: family violence, exploitation, and the trafficking of women, especially MDWs and sex workers. In cooperation with the Civil Society Knowledge Center and Lebanon Support, KAFA maps cases of MDWs' deaths. The map collects cases and information and aims to stress the ties between the Kafāla system and the high rates of abuse and deaths of MDWs (Civil Society Center).

Starting with outreach, KAFA has great national and international influence through its international campaigns. Offered in fluent English and Arabic, campaigns are mainly conducted online and made public. Thus, the power of social media is used, which becomes particularly relevant for social associations, protests, and entire movements. As the campaigns focus on different aspects of social life and thus different forms of oppression, divided among *Domestic Violence*, *Domestic Workers*, *Personal Status*, *Sexual Violence*, and *Women in Prostitution*,[14] it is worthwhile to take a closer look at these forms of oppression and exploitation that are particularly relevant for women. In addi-

tion to a special telephone hotline, there is also a nationwide campaign to protect people from domestic violence. News and statements about ongoing campaigns are updated in this context. In addition, a subcategory, *Personal Status*, has been established, which deals with questions and challenges about women's personal affairs that are regularly dealt with in the respective religious courts in accordance with women's religious affiliation and within which women often experience discrimination. Other campaigns are dedicated to the topic of sexualized violence, such as harassment, assault, and rape. The forms in which KAFA has represented DWs include launching a campaign targeting Lebanese employers. KAFA publishes booklets clarifying legal contexts, accompanied by certain demands for changes. Further, it provides annual reports, studies of domestic violence in Lebanon, and studies of the power relationship between employers and employees. A large part of KAFA's work consists of campaigning, publishing cases especially on social media, in videos, and in reports, with the aim of spreading and generating social pressure. In addition, a support center is also provided where, according to KAFA, women and children in particular can receive help and advice, regardless of their religion and nationality. This is linked to the support hotline, which can be reached by telephone (KAFA). Through its social media platforms, KAFA reaches around 145,183 people on Facebook and has over 4,515,000 views on YouTube.

KAFA uses three main strategies: an individual approach, in which it provides help in specific situations; second, addressing private employers; and third a broader approach focusing on legal, state, and social structures. As important as the first and second approaches are, they are only short-term or one-off solutions. With its third approach, KAFA recognizes that exploitative working conditions are not an individual, but a systematic problem, in which legal structures and social and economic patterns foster the conditions for exploitative and abusive working relationships; KAFA seeks to shift the problem and the responsibility from private households to the state.

This is Lebanon

TIL emerged in 2017 and is run by a coalition of former DWs and activists. Since 2019, TIL has been a non-profit organization in registered Canada under the name Domestic Workers Unite. In 2014, the founders Dipendra Uprety and Priya Subedi, who were former migrant workers in Lebanon, immigrated to Canada, but continue helping MDWs in Lebanon. TIL is the first organization to publish the names of the abusers, thus making the cases public, which influences public opinion and puts pressure on politicians and state institutions to act against the abusers. The organization provides legal support, translations, rescues, and medical referrals and emergency protective support, making the abolition of the Kafāla system and reformation of the labor law its main aim. TIL is not only familiar with the problems and obstacles DWs face in Lebanon, it also has direct access due to its language skills. TIL's aim is to empower DWs by informing them of their rights and to provide them access to information and legal and medical support. The website started by exposing abuses and grew into a platform for abused DWs. TIL's publicity work includes campaigns, testimonies, and activist actions to mobilize and publicize specific cases. In addition, community work, networking, and the groundwork done by volunteers are making further progress. In the past, TIL has been frequently treated in the media. Like the other two organizations, TIL depends on donations.

As with KAFA, a major cornerstone of TIL's work is campaigning and raising awareness of cases in which DWs experience forms of violence and exploitation. The organization goes one step further and publishes not only the actual facts and

experiences of the young women, but also the Lebanese employers' real names and contact details –telephone or mobile numbers, email addresses, and Facebook or Instagram profiles – thereby causing public embarrassment of and public pressure on employers but also politics. In addition, various opportunities for collaboration and donations are provided to support the work of the organization. Its social media platforms (Facebook: 79,090; Instagram: 4,581; Twitter: 2,603 subscribers) give its information and campaigns a wide reach. When contacted by a DW, the organization contacts the employer and asks them to pay the DW's salary, or in cases of forced labor, asks to release the DW and send them home, if requested. Most cases are resolved peacefully, but in cases of refusal to pay the salaries or cases of torture, sexual violence, slavery, or slavery-like conditions, the abusers are exposed on social media. Each case is addressed by a different approach, for example naming and shaming abusers in public so that local authorities step in. Halima's high-profile case is one of many that show the extent of exploitation and the intersection of several aspects of discrimination against women as migrants and workers. That her *host mother* and thus her employer coerced Halima, physically abused her, and threatened her with physical violence and murder, but is herself a well-known women's rights politician and activist, reveals, on the one hand, the discrimination interfaces that women in Halima's position experience and, on the other, the double-edged role that other women can play in this context: women's rights activists and emancipation fighters, on the one hand, oppressors, on the other, emphasizing the discrepancy between class interests (migrant worker vs. employer) and sharing a similar societal identity (being a *woman*). As many testimonies show, *host mothers* in particular are involved in the abuse and exploitation of women workers, which describes the phenomenon of female misogyny, i.e., hatred and rejection of women by other women. As in Halima's case, it becomes vividly clear how labor responsibilities in capitalist orders shift to differently racialized and feminized bodies differing from context to context, but do not fundamentally change.

Anti-Racism Movement (ARM)

The ARM was formed in 2010 by a group of Lebanese feminist activists and migrant workers in response to a racist incident at a private beach resort in Beirut, where ARM activists filmed the management's acts of discrimination and segregation. ARM's aim is to fight racist discrimination and abuse in Lebanon on a social and institutional level through awareness raising and advocacy. ARM focuses on MDWs, but also works with migrant workers in general, Sudanese refugees, governmental ministries, media institutions, schools, universities, and civil society/international/intergovernmental organizations. It views its work as a political engagement and, as it mentions in the annual report, adopts feminist ethics without specifying them any further (ARM "Annual Report" 7).

Since 2012, ARM has been a registered non-governmental organization with a growing platform (Facebook: 18,771; Instagram: 805; Twitter: 717 subscribers). By 2016, ARM had established three Migrant Community Centers (MCCs) and a Sunday Educational Space in three major cities. The MCCs aim to create a safe space for migrant workers, where they can meet and learn new skills and have access to information, which is provided in English and Arabic. The focus is not only on the living and working conditions of DWs, but also on the issue of and various facets of racism in general. The MCCs contribute to building a strong migrant civil society, with a focus on women as leaders. The offered programs include languages, computer, rights education, and advocacy training classes, as well as cultural exchange events and social gatherings.

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The MCCs are run by general coordinators and migrant community leaders and are supported by members of the ARM. Its work has a broader range than that of the other two organizations, focusing on various effects of racism in everyday life, including migration, gender-, and labor-specific aspects. Here too, an important part of its work and representation is documented by testimonies from other community members and people seeking help. Campaigns, measures, interviews, and reports are summarized in the annual report and are freely accessible (ARM).

All three organizations provide important and much-needed work, but also tackle problems that should be the state's responsibility. Within a capitalist-structured world, where (neo-)liberal supporters call for the restriction of the state's grip on the economy, civil society organizations are essential for providing a safe space and platform to voice the interests of civil society, influencing public opinion, and creating political pressure.

Conclusion

Based on the knowledge about and insights into these organizations, the range of their issues and the different forms of their support, and an in-depth examination of the legal aspects of Kafāla regulations in Lebanon, it can be concluded that research on existing forms of Kafāla is complex. In addition to the obvious work-specific aspects, which the organizations and individuals concerned refer to as slavery, there are also concrete aspects of migration and self-organization or protest, as well as feminist approaches. A look at the work and working conditions of DWs, who are predominantly female and represent a large work force of 250,000 in a country of about 6 million, but who are hardly legally protected, exposes the restrictive and interlocking migration and labor law regimes (here: regulations). Domestic work, which is allotted to persons who are regularly positioned or read as women and thus represent so-called feminized work, is not paid for by the majority of people worldwide and thus also not in Lebanon. To achieve more social justice for their conditions, another definition of work is relevant that recognizes household labor as work. However, since this is not regular paid work, it is not only not remunerated, it also receives little or no social recognition. From a materialist approach, it thus becomes clear that, due to the class relations in which they live, people are divided into social strata that, on the one hand represent docking for identity and identity formation, but, on the other hand, also represent their relationship to and dependence on society. On this basis, feminized bodies in binary-coded social gender relations are considered crucial for production aims but are put, in parallel, into created categories of *women* (binary gender context) or *migrant* or *non-white* to justify lower remuneration. On the other hand, they are seen as responsible for reproduction, educating offspring, and caring for the household. Although this is a relevant building block for the survival and formation of social orders and the cornerstone for the material survival of families and entire generations, this feminized work is neither paid nor socially recognized, as if it were not *real* labor. Thus, the shift of this work and thus responsibility in Lebanese society from Lebanese women to non-white immigrant women, who are sometimes brought illegally into the country for the sole purpose of domestic work, is not only proof of the close link between labor regimes and migration regimes, where migration is regulated by labor and labor regulations depending on status, nationality and class affiliation. It also reveals the exploitive character of feminized work in patriarchal social structures, which, even as proclaimed work and labor from abroad, does not receive fair recognition and remuneration. Labor responsibilities in capitalist orders only shift, but do not

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fundamentally change. Moreover, many women's careers are based on the exploitation of other women's labor, as is revealed in the cases of domestic workers. The discrimination, oppression, and exploitation of women by other women in the name of feminism and women's rights goes beyond the question of gender identity to a class question in which the maintenance of certain class relations and the privileges of certain social groups of people are the main concern. Civil society organizations such as TIL, KAFA, and ARM thus open up the possibility of self-organization and the reclaiming of agency, especially where women and workers are denied it and these organizations provide a platform for their voice. Their thematic focus and linguistic as well as local reach and accessibility are a form not only of representation, but also of self-organization, strengthening of the community, and reclaiming the ability to act.

Notes

[1] See Jureidini, Ray, and Nayla Moukarbel. "Female Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Case of 'Contract Slavery'?" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, pp. 582-607.
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[2] Marx's broader analysis of the modes of production and the role of the global working class, which he called the proletariat, is found in *Marx und Engels Gesammelte Werke*. *Das Kapital* was a groundbreaking, thorough analysis of production modes and the exploitation of the proletariat by the ruling class, which is often to be equated with the political ruling class (MEW Volume 13). According to it, humans are, broadly speaking, divided into two classes, the exploited and the exploiters, and all social and political power relations depend on socio-economic relations. Thus, the individual class background – along with other factors – has a huge impact on people's lives: access to education, material living conditions, and health issues. However, class dominates all social relations and, as Marx pointed out, society is continuously shaped by class struggle in various forms. He argues that within these class relations all value is produced by the labor and exploitation of the proletariat – the most extreme form of which exploitation is slavery – and these structures prevail through various mechanisms, particularly the state itself (Zeiler 8).

[3] The applied terms *white* or *non-white* are used as contemporary concepts within a certain context and time. Thus, white does not intend to highlight the exact skin color of a person, but rather the (inherited or given) access to certain needed and desired resources in society. It summarizes legal, political, and material conditions and resources that provide a certain living standard and thus privileges for a certain group of people who are mostly of European and therefore white descent. Racialization of people can thus include their religion, value/cultural perceptions, phenotype, and class belonging (and many more, depending on the time and context).

[4] In contemporary Marxist and non-Marxist theories and concepts, *class* is sometimes defined as an identity and the individual perception of a person within society. The important point in this is not to insist on classical Marxist definitions and interpretation, but to differentiate between *class* being perceived and promoted as (often individualistic) identity or as social relations and power relations, shaping society and social orders in total. With the premise that class is a social relation in which humans – and nature, for that matter – are exploited to various degrees by other humans, the understanding of labor as a means of survival by selling one's labor for a wage is relevant. Thus, this paper addresses the interconnection between selling labor, migration, and specifically migration-related labor and labor struggles, with a focus on gender-specific exploitation and violence.

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[5] Slavery and servitude are connected to outright ownership or bondage, whereas forced labor may be most of the time a temporary position or situation (Hamill 13-14).

[6] "Servitude shall mean the labour conditions or the obligations to work or to render services from which the person in question cannot escape and which he or she cannot change" (UNODC Model Law 36). This definition is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but neither provides an exact definition. The term servitude may also relate to the concepts of *servile status* or *serfdom* in the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery (1956). These terms are often considered more to be a practice similar to slavery, but constrained and less coercive than outright ownership. The definition of domestic servitude is still developing under international law (Hamill 14-15).

[7] The UNODC Model Law provides further interpretive guidance on the definition, but it does not further clarify what the exercising of power attached to the right of ownership means. The statutes and decisions of the international criminal courts, the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and the subsequent UN Special Rapporteur on Modern Forms of Slavery provide further guidance on definitional matters.

[8] Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) prohibits slavery and human trafficking. Article 6 and 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) deal with the right to work and with just and favorable working conditions, including the right to rest, leisure, and restrictions on working time. Article 8, 9, and 10 grant the right to form and join trade unions, to social security including social insurance, and the right to appropriate standards of living. Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) guarantees the right to equality and freedom of movement.

[9] Convention No. 98 on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining (1977), Conventions Nos. 29 and 105 on the Elimination of Forced Labour and Compulsory Labour (1977), Conventions Nos. 100 and 111 on Combating Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1977), Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 on Minimum Age for Admission to Labour and Worst Forms of Child Labour (2003 and 2001), Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (2012) with a reservation on removing the requirement of prior authorization from the Ministry of Labour when establishing a trade union.

[10] The office was out of service during the civil war and was reopened again in 1995 after the war.

[11] The article also excludes other groups of workers who are subject to special regulations, e.g. agricultural unions, government departments, and day and temporary workers who are not covered by the personnel system.

[12] Some legal provisions can be found in the 1962 Foreigners Law, the 1949 Labour Law, the 1932 General Contractual Obligations Law, and the Lebanese Penal Code.

[13] For more information, see Kaj, Nisreen. *In Black and White? A Look at Race Thinking, Racialisation and Racism in Contemporary Lebanon*. Working paper, Center for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, 2012.

[14] In this context, the authors use this term as it is used by the organization itself. The authors' preferred term would be sex work.

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An Intersectional Analysis of Syrian Women's Participation in Civil Society in the Post-2011 Context

Dima Al Munajed

Based on qualitative research conducted in Lebanon and Turkey in 2018, this paper centers on Syrian women working in various civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Syrian post-2011 context. It examines conflict and host-context impacts on Syrian women's participation in CSOs. Using an intersectional framework derived from feminist studies, it argues that gender, socioeconomic status and ethnic/national identity are key intersecting social markers that influence the ability of Syrian women to participate in CSOs in these countries. Findings also demonstrate the value of intersectional approaches in improving our current understanding of discriminatory practices against Syrian women in civil society.

Keywords: **Syria, Civil Society, Intersectionality, Gender, Conflict**

Introduction

Entering its tenth year, the Syrian civil war continues to produce the largest global mass displacement of our time. According to UNHCR, 5.6 million Syrians have fled their homeland seeking refuge in neighboring countries since 2011, while 6.6 million are internally displaced. They rely on assistance from the world's "humanitarian club," the collective of Western donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (Dixon et al. 110) and support from growing numbers of host organizations and those of Syrian civil society (CSOs).

In times of conflict, women from civil society play a key role in achieving peace and creating more gender-inclusive postwar societies (Mazurana and Proctor 24; Bhattacharya 233; Bell and O'Rourke 300; Colvin 334; Manchanda 4743; D. K. Singh 658). Post-2011 literature claims that the participation of Syrian women in civil society has increased (Williamson 3; Fourn 11) but remains restricted to lower organizational levels (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 9; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 7). Syrian CSOs before the war exhibited the same gender inequality in leadership. In 2010, although equal numbers of men and women were employed in Syrian CSOs, only 13 percent of leadership positions were held by women (Al-Khoury et al. 13).[1] This under-

representation implies that female perspectives are lacking in organizations working to assist primarily women and children in a war context.

"Humanitarian club" funding with its ability to direct the global development agenda (Dixon et al. 110) transfers neoliberal notions of gender equality into local CSO structures and projects (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 21; Fourn 16; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 23). Conflict itself influences women's traditional gender roles [2] enabling them to overcome exclusionary practices and access male-dominated activities in public spaces, assume new roles as heads of households, and increase civic and political engagement (Buvinic et al. 112).

Since the conflict began, few studies have addressed the post-2011 participation of Syrian women in civil society. This paper addresses this gap for Syrian women working in international, host and Syrian CSOs in Turkey and Lebanon after the war. It attempts to answer the following questions: How has the ongoing Syrian conflict and host-country context influenced the participation of Syrian women in CSOs? Which key social markers intersect with gender in each context and limit this participation?

Studies on gender inequalities in Syrian civil society, such as Rabo's *Gender, State and Civil Society in Jordan and Syria* often focus on gender aspects. Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin , for example, attribute the Syrian women's leadership and decision-making exclusion in Syrian CSOs to gender insensitivities in the CSOs and to mirroring existing societal gender hierarchies at the workplace (9). Similarly, humanitarian-aid discourses treat Syrian women affected by the conflict as a single category, vulnerable and needing further *empowering* or *awareness* (Couldrey and Peebles 34). This homogenization lacks contextual analysis and ignores the influence of other factors such as class and rural/urban origins on Syrian women's positionalities.

This paper is the first to apply an intersectional approach derived from African-American feminist studies in the latest work by Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, to identify social markers influencing Syrian women's ability to participate in civil society. Intersectional approaches critique earlier feminist theories that assumed all women shared a common reality (Campbell and Wasco 781; Kiguwa 227). Systems of oppression are regarded as interlocking; race, class and gender are key social markers involved in defining African-American women's realities. Ever since then numerous feminist researches have examined intersections of gender with other factors such as age, dis/abilities, ethnicity, nationality, academic status, space and geopolitical location, settler colonialism, sexuality, language and legal status (Kiguwa 228; López et al. and Chavez 5).

This paper argues that the ongoing conflict situation in Syria and resulting displacement have triggered changes in the traditional gender roles of Syrian women and increased their participation in civil society. In the context of Turkey and Lebanon, the intersectional analysis reveals that gender, socioeconomic status and ethnic/national identity are key intersecting social markers influencing the ability of Syrian women to participate in CSOs, placing them in varying positions of privilege or disadvantage.

Findings are based on qualitative research conducted by the author during her doctoral field research in 2018. Data was collected through 80 in-depth interviews conducted by the author with Syrian women and men in host, Syrian, and international CSOs, in addition to expert interviews with government, academic and research institutions in both countries.

To contextualize findings, this paper begins by outlining the current conditions of Syrians and Syrian CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey, the two countries hosting the greatest numbers of Syrian refugees. The following sections will illustrate in greater

depth how the conflict and identified social markers influence Syrian women's current civil-society participation in these countries.

A Precarious Existence: Living Conditions of Syrians in Lebanon & Turkey

According to UNHCR, Turkey presently hosts an estimated 3.7 million Syrian refugees and Lebanon one million ever since Syrians first began crossing borders in April 2011 to escape the civil war. These refugees are unable to claim rights awarded by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, a fact with serious implications for their living conditions, rights and future prospects. Turkey is signatory to the convention, but with a geographical limitation granting asylum rights exclusively to European refugees (Chatty 21), while Lebanon has refrained from signing the convention to avoid any legal obligations toward Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon since 1948 (Shamieh 55). From the outset, the governments of Lebanon and Turkey adopted contrasting strategies for managing the refugee crisis. Lebanon granted Syrians six-month visas based on existing bilateral agreements (Kabbanji and Kabbanji 14) and shifted responsibility for the refugees to CSOs and international organizations, particularly UNHCR, all of which became the main providers of health, education and livelihood assistance (Janmyr 4; Civil Society Knowledge Centre, "Formal Informality, Brokering Mechanisms, and Illegality" 15). Turkey adopted an open-door policy under the framework of "temporary protection" (İçduygu et al. 452). It took over UNHCR's responsibility for determining refugee status (Woods 12) and shouldered full responsibility for the refuges by applying a non-camp and government-financed approach that encouraged self-settlement outside the government-built refugee camps (World Bank 2; Chatty 20). New laws were introduced to address Syrian refugees' rights in 2013/14. Syrian refugees were granted *guest* status and placed under a newly established General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM). Their access to health care and education was formalized. They were also permitted to work in defined sectors and to register their businesses (İçduygu et al. 462). By 2018, there were approximately 8,000 registered refugee-owned businesses in Turkey (Yassin 104). Outside the camps, Turkish CSOs are a main source of assistance for Syrians (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2).

In 2016, the *EU-Turkey deal* promised Turkey 3€ billion in return for preventing illegal migrants reaching Europe and improving the living conditions of Syrians internally (Singh 10). Government policies shifted toward supporting integration in education and the labor market (Cloeters et al. 11) and in that same year President Erdoğan announced that Syrians in Turkey meeting certain requirements could receive Turkish citizenship (Şimşek 177).

No similar shift toward integration or improving living conditions occurred in Lebanon. The Lebanese government still refuses to acknowledge the presence of refugees on its land, labeling Syrian refugees as "temporarily displaced individuals" (Janmyr 7). When their numbers surpassed one million, it ordered UNHCR to suspend registration of additional refugees and thus resulting in increased illegal migration and worsening living conditions for illegal refugees (Janmyr 18; Shamieh 60; Kabbanji and Kabbanji 27). Syrians can reside in Lebanon only if they are sponsored by a Lebanese citizen as economic migrants in a very limited number of occupations,[3] or if they possess a UNHCR registration certificate (Janmyr 15). The Lebanese government has been criticized for redirecting developmental aid to support Lebanese benefactors instead of Syrian refugees (Kabbanji and Kabbanji 32), for discouraging income-generating projects to prevent settlement and integration, and for prohibiting UNHCR from building permanent refugee camps

(Kabbanji and Kabbanji 13; Chatty 20; Yassin et al. 37).

Compared to Lebanon, Turkey's management of the refugee crisis evinced greater respect for the dignity of the refugees as well as for their agency (Chatty 30). However, studies show that displaced Syrians in both countries suffer from negative social attitudes toward them and exploitation in the labor market and hence resulting in informal employment and low wages that place many families below the poverty line (Semerci and Erdoğan 26; Şimşek 7; Shamieh 64). This forces families to resort to negative coping strategies which include child labor as well as child marriage which has quadrupled among some Syrian refugee communities compared to before 2011 (Yassin 23; Kivilcim 201; Woods 20).

In Turkey, the language barrier and administrative bureaucracy limit the ability of Syrians to benefit from rights awarded to them by the government as well as causing further challenges in education and work (Cantekin 202; Knappert et al. 70; Çelik and İçduygu 258; Woods 9). In, Lebanon living conditions are far worse. Syrians experience food, water and housing insecurity while living in informal tented settlements or other forms of substandard shelters under threat of eviction. They suffer from arbitrary curfews (Chatty 24), verbal and physical harassment (Alsharabati et al. 16), kidnapping by pro-Syrian Lebanese government militias (Fourn 5), and major bureaucratic and financial obstacles to registering new births (Yassin 52) or obtaining residency and work permits (Civil Society Knowledge Centre, „Formal Informality, Brokering Mechanisms, and Illegality" 20), along with limited access to education (Yassin 81) and health services (Shamieh 65).

Syrian CSOs in Lebanon & Turkey

In 2010, some one thousand active Syrian CSOs were providing financial assistance and social services to 10 percent of the Syrian population (Al-Khoury et al. 4). Most of these were concentrated in urban centers providing mainly healthcare support, while financial support was a main activity in deprived rural areas. More than half of these CSOs were established from 2000 to 2010, stimulated by government policies to develop the sector (Al-Khoury et al. 5) alongside deregulatory market policies moving Syria in the direction of a Social Market Economy (World Bank, The Toll of War 4).

Developmental efforts in the sphere of civil society were led by the Syrian president's wife, Asma Al-Assad, who in 2001 established *The Syria Trust for Development* (The Trust), a local NGO with development projects for Syrian youth, children, women and rural villages in governorates across Syria. At all levels, the majority of Trust employees were females. The Trust provided an attractive working environment for highly skilled migrant Syrians who had lived abroad and returned to Syria. Speaking from personal observation while working at the Trust as a research analyst from 2008 to 2011, much effort was put into developing the capabilities of employees through training and various learning opportunities. After 2011, there would be many Trust employees who would utilize these skills in other INGOs or in launching their own initiatives. A number of INGOs and UN agencies were operating in Syria before the conflict. According to Syrian law, INGOs require a local partner to execute projects in Syria. In this new phase of activity, INGO collaborations with Syrian CSOs including the Trust became more common, and according to Wael Sawah, author on Syrian civil society in an interview with Walker, Syrian CSOs became more diverse in their focus including environmental and cultural activities as well as those involving children and women.

Syrian CSOs underwent a second growth spurt after the outbreak of war in 2011. The numbers of new Syrian CSOs in the period 2011-2017 exceeded that which had

existed in Syria since 1959. Geographically, they spread to other Syrian cities and neighboring countries (Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 6). Ranging from informal community-based organizations to professionalized NGOs that adopted Western NGO cultures, language and practices (Dixon et al. 112), these organizations initially focused on providing aid and humanitarian relief to meet refugee needs (Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 6). Efforts gradually shifted toward development as the crisis continued, mirroring shifts in donor priorities. According to a 2017 mapping of Syrian CSO activity, around 40 percent were engaged in humanitarian aid and 50 percent in social and developmental activities (Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 18) Additionally, interviewees often spoke of Syrian CSOs as safe spaces where Syrian communities in host countries can reestablish links with their community.

In 2018, Syrian women and children comprised 81 percent of registered refugees in Lebanon (Yassin 20) and 67 percent in Turkey (Cloeters et al. 22) and thus making them a main beneficiary for CSOs in these countries. In both Turkey and Lebanon, "relatively nascent" Syrian CSOs (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 8) find themselves working alongside more developed local and international organizations addressing a wide range of social issues (Paker 10). Compared to the private sector, better employment conditions in CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey attract Syrians even when employment is informal (Fourn 8; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 6;).

In Lebanon, a common language has allowed a number of Syrian cultural CSOs to flourish, in addition to education and health services that are underprovided for Syrian refugees. Despite their supportive role, many INGOs in Lebanon are perceived as corrupt by Syrian refugees (Shamieh 66). Legal barriers prevent Syrians from being formally employed in CSOs (Fourn 10) or to register their own organizations. Yet Syrian CSOs do exist in Lebanon, operating informally within alternative structures such as non-profit private companies or functioning in an official capacity as Lebanese CSOs founded by Syrians who are also Lebanese passport holders. Turkey allows Syrians to register their CSOs (Dixon et al. 113) and to work in them. Relying on locally grounded approaches, the role of Turkish CSOs in facilitating integration and social cohesion grows as they work to counter the ethnic-based exclusionary nature of Turkish society by providing language courses and organizing events that bring both communities together (Paker 5; Cloeters et al. 26). However, cooperation between Syrian and Turkish CSOs remains limited due to "hierarchical relationships, language barriers and cultural differences" (Mackreath and Sağnıç 3).

Influence of Gender as a Social Marker

The 1973 Syrian constitution calls for gender equality and removing obstacles that prevent Syrian women's advancement (Kelly and Breslin 1). Their economic participation was encouraged by the ruling Baath party policies (Abu-Assab 17), and the Syrian government's ninth five-year plan (2001-2005) was committed to increasing female participation in public life and decision-making by 30 percent (Kelly and Breslin 18). Still, in 2011 the female labor participation rate had dropped from 21 percent in 2001 to 12.9 percent in spite of improvements to women's educational enrollment at all levels and a growing economy. This figure, however, should be interpreted with caution since it fails to capture informal employment rates among women. The rate of labor-force participation for men over this period had also declined from 81 percent in 2001 to 72.2 percent in 2010, thus indicating a failure of the economy to absorb both male and female workers (SCPR 35). Although Syrian women were the first to gain voting rights in the Arab world in 1949 (Kamla 606), little improvement followed in their representation in parlia-

ment across time, increasing from 9.6 to 13.2 percent from 1997 to 2017.[4] At higher governmental levels and in the judicial system, Syrian women have an even smaller presence (Kelly and Breslin 2) making it harder to enforce policies that promote gender inclusiveness. Syria has ratified the UN's *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) with reservations in 2003 (Kelly and Breslin 2), and in February 2019 the country passed amendments on over sixty articles from the *Personal Status Law* to improve women's rights.

In 2011, Syrian women displaced in Lebanon and Turkey found themselves once again in patriarchal environments (Kivilcim 202; Khatib 438). Gender violence in Turkey occurs at double the rates in Syria (Knappert et al. 64) while traditional gender roles limit the access of Turkish women to leadership positions (Aycan 454). An intersectional study on the exploitation of working Syrian women in Turkey finds that their refugee status and gender intersect, subjecting them to a "reinforced exculsion" caused by gender roles in both host and home countries (Knappert et al. 76). Despite this, Turkey's Kemalist legacy and non-discrimination principle in its Civil Code, which for example prohibits polygamous marriage and requires the sharing of marital assets in divorce, allows women in Turkey to enjoy greater legal rights compared to women in Syria. A young Syrian woman living in Istanbul spoke of Turkish gender dynamics and their influence: "We were exposed to another society, a more open one, a girl's education is just like a boy's and the quality of education here is more advanced."[5]

Despite the presence of an active Lebanese civil society focusing on sexual harassment and women's rights (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 33; Khneisser 2), Syrian women in Lebanon suffer extensively from gender-based violence and exploitation, human trafficking and limited access to health care, thus affecting their health because of intersections in ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status (Shamieh 68; Yasmine and Moughalian 27).

Nevertheless, this study finds evidence of changing gender roles for Syrian women as triggered by the conflict and resulting displacement. Many of the Syrian women who were interviewed claimed to have experienced their first employment after 2011 in host countries so as to financially support themselves and their families and thus becoming breadwinners or household heads.[6] The absence of a male household-head due to war is not the sole driver of this phenomenon. Exploitation and informal employment conditions in both countries, as quoted in interviews, prevent males from alone meeting their family's financial needs as was the case in Syria.

Discriminatory employment practices are experienced by both Syrian men and women in host countries. However, many interviewed Syrian females, including top-management position holders, spoke of additional challenges in balancing work and home responsibilities. The domestic role of Syrian women as primary caretaker remains mostly unaltered. The result is a *double burden* exacerbated by poverty and a lack of social networks in host countries. As the following quotes demonstrate:

> My husband doesn't mind if I work, but he wants everything perfect at home, children, doctors, schools, my husband doesn't participate, he wants everything.[7]

> Another obstacle is having children. We need family, or a mother in law, nurseries are private, there are no public nurseries; you also need nurseries that are close to work. Turkish people rely on family to help them solve this problem. At three years old, you can put

> them in a preschool that costs 700 TL a month; a typical salary is about 1600 TL.[8]

Some female respondents mentioned changes in gender roles regarding household duties such as receiving support from husbands in cooking or childcare. In Turkey, the double burden often prevents married Syrian women from enrolling in Turkish-language classes. Typically these women work from home, which increases their isolation, or they gain employment in low-skilled jobs that require less language skills.

Accommodating domestic gender roles and safety concerns drives Syrian women in host countries to seek opportunities in CSOs where better working conditions and hours exist. Some offer child-friendly spaces allowing mothers to accompany young children to work. Religious CSOs provide gender-segregated or female-dominated working spaces perceived as *safer* by husbands or parents because they are less likely to suffer sexual harassment or violence, making the transition from private to public spaces easier for women - as made clear by the following quote from a 21-year-old Syrian woman who works in a gender-segregated workspace at a Turkish CSO that allows her to accompany her infant to work: "This is a child-friendly space, a space that is safe for women and children."[9]

Other studies have also documented similar double-burden challenges faced by Syrian women who began working after the crisis (El-Masri et al. 14; Abu-Assab 23). Civil society's focus on Syrian women and children creates a demand for female rather than male employees. In Turkey, interviewed CSO managers stated that Syrian female beneficiaries prefer to deal with female rather than male staff. Donor policies demanding female participation across organizational levels with funding preconditions further reinforces the employment of Syrian women in CSOs. Among CSOs that I visited in Lebanon and Turkey, female employees were the clear majority. Similarly, Fourn notes that in Syrian CSOs in Lebanon:

> We did not observe blatant gender disparities in favor of men within any of the NGOs we studied. On the contrary, women are very well represented in leading positions, in stark contrast to most economic sectors. Some associations dedicated to women have almost only female staff (Fourn 11).

The growing presence of Syrian women at the workplace and the importance of their role as breadwinner in host countries after the war is also being reflected in contemporary Syrian art. One such example is the artwork above by Syrian artist Mohamad Khayata titiled *The Giant Worker*. The exaggerated size of the Syrian female worker in the artwork is a reflection of their growing visibility and importance to their communities as they work to support themselves and their families.

Fig. 1: The Giant Worker. Source: Mohamad Khayata.

Influences of Ethnicity/Nationality-Identity Social Markers

In Turkey, an "Arab" ethnic identity is grounds for discriminatory behavior against Syrians (Chatty 27). Turkey's "ethnic nationalism exclusively based on

Turkishness" (Aras and Köni 48) creates barriers for Syrian *Arabs* who are seen as culturally different, backward, dirty, poor, beggars, abusers of the welfare state and a threat to security and employment (Çelik and İçduygu 255; Chatty 27; Yavçan 168; Paker 5). The *guest* debate, grounded in religious duty or conditional charity instead of human rights, has been criticized for worsening the problem (Chatty 21; Yavçan 167; Semerci and Erdoğan 29) as demonstrated by the following quote:

> While doing official procedures, if you just speak two words in Turkish they transform and respect you a lot. They really like Arabs who have learned Turkish, otherwise they are very clearly racist, they don't hide it.[10]

Syrians working in Turkish CSOs expressed hope that promotion and better pay would become possible once they received Turkish citizenship. They also expressed desires to found their own CSOs one day. In light of Turkey's current arbitrary and class-based citizenship policy (Şimşek 1), this desire to create and head an CSO can be also understood as a means of surpassing ethnic discrimination that prohibits them from accessing leadership positions within Turkish CSOs. For undocumented Syrians, involvement in CSOs occurs only as informal employment, as the following quote demonstrates: "I am not an official employee here because I do not have official papers, so I'm not entitled to a raise in salary or a bonus."[11]

In Lebanon a complicated political history with Syria and perceived competition over jobs, housing, health, and education services has resulted in official discriminatory policies and social responses against Syrian nationals that extend to civil society. Lebanese CSOs openly express a preference for recruiting Lebanese staff even when their beneficiaries are mostly Syrians, as demonstrated by the following quote from the founder of a Lebanese CSO providing services to Syrian refugees: "We have no Syrian employees; we want to empower the Lebanese community so they get benefits."[12]

Socioeconomic Class & Syrian CSO Elitism

Socioeconomic class[13] influences the official status of Syrians in host countries and their participation in civil society. This is more clearly visible in Lebanon where Syrians with second passports and those who can afford legal assistance are able to overcome bureaucratic barriers and secure residency permits or register CSOs, while Syrians at the other end of the social spectrum live in dire conditions with few rights and little hope of securing CSO employment opportunities. In Turkey, educated wealthy Syrians can afford to establish their own businesses and CSOs; they also face fewer difficulties in obtaining residencies and are priority candidates for Turkish citizenship.

The increasing *NGOization* of local CSOs reinforces socioeconomic differences that produce elitist leaderships in Syrian civil society. CSOs compete for funds from INGOs and Western governments to survive, making staff with foreign-language skills and NGO-related experience essential (Mackreath and Sağnıç 62; Dixon et al. 99; Svoboda and Pantuliano 16). Generally speaking, within Syrian CSOs, findings confirm that the higher the educational degree the higher the position within the organization for both males and females.

Educational attainment among Syrians, however, is influenced by urban/rural differences and gender. In 2010, 60 percent of the Syrian population held a primary-school degree or less. Women were 2.5 times more likely to be illiterate than men, with rural illiteracy occurring at twice the rate of urban areas (SCPR 34). Syrian women from rural areas are therefore less likely to have postgraduate degrees than their urban counterparts, and because civil-society organizations in Syria are concentrated in urban areas, namely

Damascus followed by Aleppo and Lattakia (Al-Khoury et al. 5), they are also less likely to have had the opportunity to accumulate NGO-specific experience.

The influence of socioeconomic status on education and the accumulation of NGO skills is more evident in Lebanon. Prominent female Syrian leaders often have wealthy urban backgrounds and higher educational degrees from Western universities in development-related subjects such as *Gender Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies*. Fourn confirms this educated urban middle-class characteristic among Syrians engaged in civil-society work in Lebanon (4).

The language barrier in Turkey alters this dynamic by creating demand for Syrians fluent in Turkish and Arabic in Turkish CSOs. Management in these CSOs relies heavily on Syrian interpreters, teachers and psychologists in projects with Syrian beneficiaries. This creates opportunities for young unskilled Syrians who took advantage of free language courses and learned Turkish to accumulate CSO work experience, attend training sessions, support their livelihood and finance further education. Several Syrian women who were so engaged did express hopes of establishing their own CSOs in the future. For Syrian CSOs in Turkey, access to alternative funding from Arab countries allows them to bypass the complications involved in Western donations. With each year, they also develop their CSO structures and skills further. This is more challenging for young Syrians in Lebanon where access to higher education is restricted by legal issues, academic qualifications, and affordability (Yassin 82).

Conclusion

This paper finds that the ongoing Syrian conflict and displacement have created conditions resulting in a greater presence of Syrian women in the public space as workers and members of civil society in Turkey and Lebanon. International, host and Syrian CSOs are key sites for this increased participation. This phenomenon is influenced by a number of external factors including the existence of better working conditions for women in CSOs compared to the private sector, higher demand in CSOs for female rather than male employees, international donor policies that support female participation, and opportunities for capacity development within these organizations that allow unskilled Syrian women to gain experience and further advance within the sector. The ongoing Syrian conflict and consequential growth of civil society has been a catalyst for change in Syrian women's traditional gender roles. This change is slowly finding its way into the domestic sphere of Syrian families, but traditional gender roles persist in the majority of households and place a greater burden on women who struggle to manage both work and home duties. For Syrian women with children, involvement in civil society and the public sphere is even more challenging.

For Syrian women in Turkey and Lebanon, this paper reveals that their socioeconomic status and ethnicity/nationality intersect with gender to influence their ability to participate in civil society. It also demonstrates how gender studies focusing solely on gender as the primary cause for discrimination against women can result in over-simplistic interpretations that fail to adequately capture other key sources of discrimination such as the situations highlighted above where socioeconomic status and ethnic identity play a bigger role in determining participation than gender.

The negative effects of these social markers are stronger in Lebanon as compared to Turkey, which allows Syrian women to work in and establish CSOs. Ethnic identity mainly prevents Syrian women from occupying leadership positions in Turkish CSOs. In Lebanon, discriminatory policies and social practices greatly hinder the participation of Syrian women along socio-

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economic lines and those of national identity.

It is unclear whether Syrian women can use their increasing presence within civil society to advocate collectively for greater gender equality and participation in all public spaces within host countries and in Syria. Evidence from my interviews shows that a strongly unified and representative feminist agenda in Syrian civil society has yet to materialize - as might be expected from a civil society that currently places a priority on dealing with the humanitarian impact of conflict rather than advocating greater rights for women (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 12). Further research is needed to examine the progress of Syrian civil organizations and the role of Syrian women within them as they advance their skills and capabilities.

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Notes

[1] Contact UNDP Syria for obtaining a copy of the report.

[2] Gender here is understood in the socially constructed and dynamic sense, influenced by current evolving political and post-Arab Spring events.

[3] Decree No. 29/1 dated 15/02/2018 Ministry of Labour, Lebanon, see www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/74a11682-051a-4d83-a8fe-905a54b3968f.pdf. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

[4] Figures taken from UNDP estimates for Syria, see http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/31706. Accessed 17 Apr. 2020.

[5] Personal Interview. In-person meeting. 27 Oct. 2018.

[6] In 2018 there were 18 percent of Syrian households which were Female-headed (Yassin 41).

[7] Group Interview. In-person meeting. 18 Sept. 2018.

[8] Personal Interview. In-person meeting. 19 Oct. 2018. .

[9] Group Interview. In-person meeting. 19 Sept. 2018.

[10] Personal Interview. In-person meeting. 26 Oct. 2018.

[11] Personal Interview. In-person meeting. 18 Sept. 2018.

[12] Personal Interview. In-person meeting. 6 Nov. 2018.

[13] Understood here in relation to urban/rural dichotomies and relative poverty preventing access to education.

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Women's Rights In Egyptian Law: The Legal Battle For A Safer Life

Radwa Elsaman

Egypt's history has witnessed notable strides in connection with women's rights. Meanwhile, Egypt is a signatory of the significant international conventions on gender equality. Nevertheless, interference to change women's position is faced with colossal failure sometimes. One of the reasons could be the lack of relevant legislation. Other essential obstacles include social practices and stereotypes that prevent the application of the rule of law. The absence of community support is the third reason. Finally, misconceiving Islamic religious rules impacts women's rights in Egypt. Solutions include legal reform and complementary policy actions; allowing real political participation; opening the door for women initiatives; teaching gender in schools and universities; and ensuring better access to resources when it comes to economic rights is another possibility.

Keywords: Egyptian Women, Women's Legal Rights, Gender Equality in Egypt, Women in Law, Gender and Law

Introduction

Debates about gender equality are not new to Egypt. Egypt ranks lower in gender equity than many other countries worldwide. Most scholarly work analyzing gender equality and the law, as well as women's rights in Egyptian laws, focuses on the lack of legislation or on flawed laws. Lack of academic work on women's rights is an essential barrier to women's rights in Egypt. Nevertheless, other factors are equally important in promoting gender equality in Egypt. This paper includes a more profound argument on gender-related dynamics and constraints than focusing on the demand to issue new laws or to amend current legislation to protect Egyptian women's rights.

The paper presents four different case studies of causes that negatively affect gender equality in Egypt and impede the feminism movement. The first case study explains how social norms and societal practices are more potent than laws and regulations to the extent that they hinder the rule of law and prevent the application of the relevant laws, regulations, and legislative policies. The second case study discusses how a lack of community support renders the existing legal framework ineffective or at least undermines its efficiency. The main difference between the two cases is that, in the first case, social

norms that are equal to or even more powerful than existing laws prevent the latter's application. However, in the second case, there are no social norms that prevent the implementation of the law; instead, it is the community that feels burdened by the laws and accordingly decides to ignore them.

The third case study analyzes how different ways of understanding religions could affect the issuance of relevant laws and regulations, which in turn undermines the efficacy of such legislation. In this case, we have laws and regulations that are issued based on religious rules. Still, these laws imply a misconception, rather than a violation of religious rules. The last case study explains the relationship between the absence of a legal framework and gender inequality in an attempt to confirm that legislative gaps and flawed legislation are still elements that affect women's rights in Egypt, but not the only elements.

Social Norms and Challenges to the Rule of Law

According to Mahmoud Elsaman ("Between Rule of Law and Social Norms" 12-13), existing social norms are sometimes strong enough to prevent the application of laws, regulations, the proper functioning of the rule of law. An excellent example given by Elsaman is the declining appointment of women to Egypt courts. However, the new Egyptian Constitution, following a revolution, has for the first time expressly provided for women's right to work as judges in Egypt based on the concept of gender mainstreaming (Elsaman, "Between Rule of Law and Social Norms" 12-13).

Elsaman's argument seems very sound, since the 2014 Constitution is the first legal document in Egypt that provides explicitly and without any qualifications for gender equality between men and women (The Constitutional Declaration of the Arab Republic of Egypt 4). That contrasts with the previous constitutions that used general terms to express gender equality such as "citizens are equal before the law"; "the state shall provide equality"; or "no discrimination shall take place based on sex" (The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 40). Most importantly, the new Constitution is very detailed, mentioning the various aspects of equality in terms of nationality, work opportunities, civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social rights, and cultural rights. The text of the new Constitution extends further to confirm women's rights to join the Egyptian judiciary. It seems that the intention behind such writing is to reflect the revolutionary spirit of the January 25 uprisings and turn it into constitutionally mandated liberties. Thus, gender equality and women's rights in the new Constitution comply with the modern liberal vision of the new state (McLarney, "Women's Rights in the Egyptian Constitution: (Neo) Liberalism's Family Values").

The historical legal incident that first triggered the debate over the right of women to be appointed to Egypt courts is Aisha Rateb's case. This lawyer applied for the position of judge in the administrative court system represented in the State Council of Egypt in 1949 (Messieh and Gaber, "A Win for Women in Egypt's Courts"). The Supreme Administrative Court declined Aisha Rateb's application based on her gender. Sixty-two years after Rateb's case, Omnia Taher, a young lawyer, filed a lawsuit claiming her right to join the State Council as a judge. The suit has not been decided yet; however, the Unit of the Commissioners of the State Council submitted their report in January 2017, advising the court to dismiss the case. It is worth noting here that Rateb's Judicial Decision of 1953 was issued in the light of a constitution that generally provides for gender equality between men and women without expressly providing for women's right to hold public posts. In contrast, the judicial reaction to Taher's suit represented in the Commissioners' report of 2017, is issued in light of the 2014

Constitution, which not only provides for gender equality, but also specifically for women's right to hold judicial posts. Accordingly, the Commissioners' report of 2017 is inconsistent with the rule of law and conflicts with a constitutional rule (Elsaman, "Between Rule of Law and Social Norms" 12-13).

Here comes Elsaman's core argument is that the existence of defective social norms adversely affects development and contradicts the application of the rule of law. According to Elsaman, social norms are informal rules that individuals feel obliged to follow either because they have an inner feeling of duty towards them or because they want to avoid the social sanctions that result from the norm (Brennan and Anoma, "Social Norms, the Invisible Hand, and the Law" 2). The prevailing social norms that prevent women from being judges in Egypt include the difficulty of administrative work, the lack of workplace stability, the oppressive social commitments of women, and the conservative nature of Egyptian society. Some argue that administrative work is difficult for women to handle, mainly because it requires women to spend long hours away from their homes and children. Also, judges are usually required to relocate to prevent them from establishing social relationships with litigants and petitioners, to guarantee impartiality. It is socially hard for women in Egypt to leave their families and relocate (El Sayed 135). Further, it is argued that women cannot handle administrative work, e.g., prosecutors' duties related to sexual crimes. Mainly, Egyptian women are conservative and sensitive to some sorts of cases that entail sexual content, such as cases of rape or sexual harassment (Elsaman, "Between Rule of Law and Social Norms" 12-13). Generally, most opinions conclude that women are excluded from the judiciary due to the nature of Egyptian society. They state that the community itself is not ready to accept female judges.

Elsaman concludes that the existence of defective social norms deprives society of various chances for development. It might also undermine respect for the rule of law. The Egyptian case of denying women's right to work as judges deprives Egyptian society of women's contribution to enhancing the judiciary. Moreover, defective social norms in Egypt have violated the rule of law by breaching the relevant constitutional principles.

Another example of how social norms impair the rule of law and prevent the implementation of gender equality as established in the 2014 Constitution is political rights. Article 11 provides that:

> The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political […] rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. The State shall take the necessary measures to ensure the appropriate representation of women in the houses of representatives, as specified by Law. The State shall also guarantee women's right of holding public and senior management offices in the State. (The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 4)

According to the OECD, over the past 20 years, the level of women's representation in the Parliament has remained either under 3% (following the elections in 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2012) or at 13% and 15% (following the votes in 2010 and 2015). For the first time, a quota system was instated for the 2010 and 2015 parliamentary elections. Currently, women hold 15% of the parliamentary seats, the highest proportion of women ever to serve in Egypt's parliament. Nevertheless, while these improvements are encouraging, the percentage of female elected parliamentarians in Egypt remains low compared with the majority of countries in the Middle East. Meanwhile, 15% female representation in the Parliament is a meager ratio compared with 85% of male representa-

tion (OECD "Women's Political Participation in Egypt")

Egyptian society has been influenced by resilient cultural arguments that discourage women from participating in public life. Egyptian women's participation in public life is dealt with as a challenge to traditional social roles for women, which establish that leaving political work in the hands of men achieves better results for society. Socially, women are said to lack the ability to make effective political alliances. Social norms, for example, are reported to have dictated that public events in villages and governorates are appropriate for male politicians to campaign at, but not for women. The same applies to mosques, which reduces women's opportunities to convince citizens to vote for them (OECD "Women's Political Participation in Egypt"). Another blatant example of the breach of the rule of law based on social norms is legislation that contains clauses contrary to what has been established in the Constitution. Sometimes the constitutional guarantees have been undermined with limiting clauses such as "to be regulated by law." (El-Ashry and Arafa, "Gender Equality in the Arab and Muslim World") In this case, constitutional guarantees have little effect in practice where legislation continues to contain gender inequality (El-Ashry and Arafa, "Gender Equality in the Arab and Muslim World").

This argument sounds correct in that having such generic terms can undermine the efficacy of gender equality as a constitutional principle. Nevertheless, in the case of the new Egyptian Constitution, none of these terms were used to confirm gender equality. Thus, while the Constitution makes it clear that

> The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil [...] social [...] rights following the provisions of this Constitution (The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 4),

the Egyptian Penal Code discriminates against women. The penalty for committing adultery goes up to two years for women, which is severer than for men, whose punishment is limited to a six-month sentence. Evidentiary standards also differ in that a man must commit adultery at the marital house, while women's act is punishable wherever it occurs (Law Promulgating the Penal Code, 274 and 277). The reason behind such discrimination in penalty is that the negative psychological effect of the incident on men is considered more severe than on women. It is worth noting here that this distinction has no basis in *Shari'a* law.

Dumping Family Responsibilities and Lack of Community Support

According to the new Egyptian Constitution, the State is committed to achieving employment equality among all citizens. The Constitution also provides that

> the State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all […] economic […] rights. The State shall […] ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements (The 2014 Egyptian Constitution 4).

In the same context, the Egyptian Labor and Employment Law has a set of specific rules on the employment of women to enable women to carry out their duties to their families and children without suffering prejudice or deprivation of rights at work (Law No. 12 of 2003 on Labor Law). For instance, it prohibits discrimination in employment opportunities, work conditions, and salaries.

Moreover, it grants women some special privileges related to their physical nature, such as paid maternity leave, childcare, breastfeeding hours, and protection against dismissal during these times.

Other benefits include granting women the choice to terminate an employment contract for marriage, pregnancy, or maternity. The only limited legal restriction on jobs for women is related to those jobs that do not fit their nature, such as mining, working with asphalt, loading, and unloading (Law No. 12 of 2003 on Labor Law).

The above legal framework should have ensured at least an employment rate close to that of men; however, according to Amal Khairy, women are actively discriminated against, with only 26% of them in the labor force (Khaiy and Mohamed "An Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap"). Moreover, statistics show inequality in payment by gender, particularly in the private sector (Khaiy and Mohamed "An Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap"). Also, favorable working rights granted to women by the Employment Law sometimes result in discrimination against them. Thus, employers are overloaded with obligations towards women employees, which leads them to prefer a male workforce. The various types of work leaves, requiring employers to establish nurseries once the number of female employees reaches a certain percentage, and the requirement to implement security measures if women work at night and others are examples. Furthermore, a rough working environment for married women in particular leads them to prefer public sector jobs, thinking that they are less challenged by the lower workload (El-Ashry and Arafa, "Gender Equality in the Arab and Muslim World").

Lack of community support need not impair the application of the rule of law. Also, it does not reflect legislative gaps, and a comprehensive legal framework exists. However, women's rights are still negatively affected by the lack of support and of facilities provided by the community. Also, family burdens and societal overwhelming of women with more obligations and requirements stand between women and gender equality.

Misconceiving Islamic *(Shari'a)* Law

Article 3 of the Constitution provides that

> The principles of the laws of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of laws regulating their status, religious affairs, and selection of spiritual leaders (The New Egyptian Constitution 3).

This provision has always existed in Egyptian constitutions throughout Egypt's modern history. The basis of family law in Egypt has always been Muslim law or *Shari'a* Law, as the majority of Egyptians are Muslims. Minorities (which make up less than 10% of the population) such as Christians are subject to their own rules (El-Kharboutly and Hussein, "Law and the Status of Women in the Arab Republic of Egypt" 35). The strong effect of Shari'a Law becomes evident in the general reservations Egypt made to the CEDAW agreement that "Egypt is willing to comply with this Article provided that such compliance does not run counter to Islamic Shari'a law." (CEDAW). Reservations apply to Article 2 on *Policy Measures*, Article 16 on *Equality in Marriage and Family Life*, and Article 29 (2) on *Administration Of The Convention And Arbitration Of Disputes* (CEDAW).

Having said this, the critical question in connection with family issues is how *Shari'a* Law is interpreted and conceived, since it is the primary source of family law rather than the family law rules themselves. Another, related question is who interprets *Shari'a* Law. The expression *Shari'a Law* means, first, the rules derived from the primary sources of Islamic law 19/06/20 14:20, namely the Holy Book of *Qur'an* (Glossary of Islamic Legal Terms 99), which Allah dictated word for word to his Prophet Muhammad (PB). The second source is *Sunna* (Glossary of Islamic Legal Terms 90), which means the practice of Prophet Muhammad (PB), taking the form of actions, oral statements, or

consensus in an attempt to explain *Qur'an*. Then come another two supplementary sources called secondary sources (Bassiouni and Badr 138-140) that include the *Ijma'* and the *Qiyas* (Glossary of Islamic Legal Terms 99). *Qur'an* is the primary source of *Shari'a* Law, working as the legal code and a reference for Muslims' behavior. The *Qur'an* is the highest source of the *Shari'a* Law, with rules that are not arguable and cannot be modified by rules derived from any other sources (Bassiouni and Badr 138-140).

Through the Sunna (Glossary of Islamic Legal Terms 99), Prophet Muhammad (PB) interpreted, explained, and completed the principles revealed in the *Qur'an*. Hence, the Sunna cannot contradict the *Qur'an*; otherwise, it is not a trusted Sunna and should not be considered. Where the Qur'an and the Sunna do not guide on specific issues, the supplementary sources of *Ijma'* and *Qiyas* apply. *Ijma'* is established through the unanimous opinions of the professional and knowledgeable Muslim jurists of each era. In the end, any conclusion reached through *Ijma'* must conform with the primary sources of the Shari'a, the Qur'an and the Sunna. *Qiyas* is a method of analogical reasoning that aims to govern a new situation with an old rule as long as this latest situation is similar to that dictated by the old law. *Qiyas* derives its reliability as a source of the *Shari'a* from the Qur'an and the Sunna (Bassiouni and Badr 138-140).

Based on the above, it seems that *Shari'a* law is not inflexible dogma. Also, changes in society necessitate an adaptation of law to time and circumstance. However, many factors affect the interpretation of Shari'a law and, accordingly, women's rights and gender equality in the Muslim world. Outdated beliefs and traditions, state policies, the absence of female Muslim jurists (particularly in the committees established to interpret *Shari'a* law), and the low rate of education led to misconceptions of Islamic practices and accordingly to discriminatory norms against women that are claimed to be based on *Shari'a* law.

A good example is the interpretation of the *Qur'anic* verse on polygamy. The verse reads,

> And if you fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly, then only one… (Yusuf Ali Sura 4, Verse 3).

A radical interpretation of the verse allows Muslim men to marry more than one wife. Mohamed Abdou, a leading 19th-century Egyptian theologian and reformer, notes that the welfare of the society is superior to the satisfaction of the sensual desire of individuals, and that the stipulations on polygamy are particularly challenging to meet (Amira, "Islamic Law and Gender Equality" 27).

Amira Mashhour's reading of the Qur'anic verse on polygamy, together with the historical context, leads to the conclusion that Islam discourages polygamy. Mashhour correctly argues,

> The verse was revealed after the murderous battle in which there was a large number of male Muslim casualties, thus increasing the number of widows and orphans for whom protection was required. That is why this verse was introduced to protect the widows and children of martyrs. Hence, allowing the survivors to take additional wives was a way of providing the widows and orphans with some physical and financial protection (Amira, "Islamic Law and Gender Equality" 27).

The Egyptian Family Law was developed to amend the conditions of polygamy over time by requiring husbands to confess any existing marriage and to officially notify the first wife of the new marriage. Also, the wife's right to ask for a divorce if her husband takes a second wife is recog-

nized (Law No. 100 of 1985 Amending No. 25/1929). Meanwhile, other jurisdictions, such as Tunisia, prohibit polygamy, though Tunisia is a Muslim country.

Another example is divorce rules. According to *Shari'a* Law, divorce is a man's right, provided he follows the relevant restrictions and limitations of the *Shari'a*. The details of divorce are outside the scope of this article. In return, women have a similar right, which is *Khul*. *Khul* means leaving part of a woman's dowry to her husband to get a divorce. *Khul* is an absolute individual right for women. Though this is the situation in *Shari'a* law, Egypt's family law was unjust to women in the area of divorce for ages. To seek a divorce, women had to go through a long process of showing evidence of harm caused by their husbands and other elements. In 2000, a new law was issued to allow women to seek a divorce in the form of *Khul* (Law No. 100 of 1985 Amending No. 25/1929).

A third example is inheritance law. Two types of rules govern inheritance in Shari'a Law. *Ashab Al-Frood* are ten defined persons, six of whom can be women entitled to a *defined share* of the estate. *Al-'Asabat*, are those entitled to the balance of the estate after distributing the shares of the *Ashab Al-Frood*. In *Al-'Asabat*, when a man and a woman have the same level (such as a brother and sister), the woman is entitled to half as much as the man. The rationale is to assign a financial responsibility to the man to provide household expenses after the father's death, to give sisters the expenses for marriage, and to provide for his own family as head of the household.

In contrast, his sister will be provided for by her husband. Egyptian inheritance law codifies only the first part of the rule, which is giving a sister half her brother's share, without the second part, assigning the brother the financial responsibilities explained by *Shari'a* Law (El-Ahsry and Arafa, "Gender Equality in the Arab and Muslim World" 3). Some countries, such as Tunisia, try to avoid *Shari'a* Law inheritance rules, claiming that it is unfair. However, the reality is that *Shari'a* Law inheritance rules are not adopted in the right context, as explained.

To sum up, the misconception of Islamic *Shari'a* Law has contributed to a long-prevailing misunderstanding. Most importantly, laws are issued based on this misunderstanding or radical perception of *Shari'a* Law, which should be reconsidered.

The Absence of Organizational Legislation and Flawed Legislation

Though the Egyptian Constitution provides, "…[T]he State shall protect women against all forms of violence…" (The New Egyptian Constitution 11), no laws have been issued or amended to combat domestic violence against women; sometimes a relevant law is promulgated, but it is so poorly drafted that it cannot efficaciously detect abuse, as in the case of female genital mutilation (FGM).

According to the OECD, domestic violence, particularly by partners and family members, is considered permissible because of the relationship of the woman to the perpetrator. A 2015 study found that almost half of the women aged 18 to 64 and ever married reported spousal violence (OECD). 70% of domestic violence crimes against women are perpetrated against wives, rather than daughters and mothers. Few countries in the Middle East area, particularly North Africa, have laws against such violence. Another example is marital rape. No provision in Egyptian law prohibits marital rape.

On the other hand, the Egyptian Penal Code has been amended recently to criminalize FGM. Also, in 2012, the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court recognized FGM as an infringement of the physical integrity of a human being. Nevertheless, statistics show that 9 out of 10 women in Egypt aged between 18 and 64 were victims of FGM. The percentage increases in Upper Egypt and the rural areas. The

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question here is why FGM is spreading in Egypt while it is illegal. The answer is found in the poor drafting of the criminalizing law.

To explain, Article 242 of the Egyptian Penal Code defines FGM as acts of female genital mutilation, by removing any of the external female genital organs, whether in part or whole or by inflicting any injuries to these organs without medical justification (Law Promulgating the Penal Code 242).

Adding this limiting clause *without medical justification* renders the provision devoid of meaning, or at least undermines its value by opening the door to bending the rules. Most importantly, the law does not define what constitutes *medical justification*. Moreover, Article 242 (a) criminalized requesting FGM, but did not mention aiding or abetting the practice (Law Promulgating the Penal Code 242).

These examples show that lack of laws or having a defective law remains one of the main reasons behind the inability to provide the proper legal protection for women's rights.

Any Way Out?

As we see from the above four case studies, many factors affect having a safe, legal environment for women in Egypt. The absence of law is a crucial one, as evidenced in case four. Other factors, too, affect the rule of law and prevent the application of laws. In case one, social norms are more effective than legislation to the extent that they hamper the implementation of the rule of law. Case two shows that lack of support from the community can lead to gender inequality despite good legislation. Finally, in case three, the misconception of *Shari'a* Law, as well as some other external factors, might lead to gender inequality in the laws and regulations based on *Shari'a* Law. Here is another essential argument of this paper. Gender equality and protection of women's rights in Egypt cannot be achieved by merely amending a law or adding a few provisions that restate the right of women to practice their rights freely without discrimination. Other measures must be adopted to overcome these obstacles.

Enabling real political participation and opening the door for women's organizations and initiatives is an efficacious possibility. Elsadda correctly argues that any politically motivated gender equality laws arising out of s corrupt agenda rather years of work on a women's rights regime do not lead to real achievements (Elsadda, "Women's Right Activism" 84-93). Elsadda gives an excellent example in the establishment of the Egyptian National Council for Women under Mubarak and his ex-first lady, who appeared as the champion of women's rights. Thus, instead of supporting the women's rights movement, the Egyptian National Council for Women competed with existing women's organizations and tried to monopolize speaking on behalf of all Egyptian women. The result is that most of the legislative reform that has taken place in this era led to immense social problems on the ground, rather satisfying the demands for women's rights (Elsadda, "Women's Right Activism" 84-93).

Teaching about gender at schools and universities could be an important step. Thus, the radical traditions and wrong societal practice and misunderstanding of women's rights are a strong obstacle embracing new attitudes in practice. This underscores the importance of gender education, particularly in rural areas. Similarly, ensuring better access to economic resources and employment opportunities is another possibility.

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ANTI/THESIS

ANTI-THESIS

Perspectives on Gender Studies at the Universities of Manouba and Sousse, Tunisia

Jamie Woitynek

In Tunisia, the University of Manouba and the University of Sousse each offered a master's program in Gender Studies in 2019. This essay examines these programs' structures and foci, providing some comments on their contexts. Based on fieldwork including four expert interviews, this provides *one* limited attempt to introduce readers to specific perspectives on and narratives about two Gender Studies programs.

Keywords: Gender Studies, Tunisia, Knowledge production, University, Institutions

Background information

I conducted the initial research project exploring instruction in Gender Studies in Tunisia in 2019. The research project was structured by four partly explorative expert interviews about Gender Studies in Tunisia. The initial framework of the research project was approached from a *white* queer*feminist theoretical perspective, using a qualitative content analysis as method.

Notes on positionalities

Today, I greatly criticize my initial research project, especially in terms of questions of situatedness and situated knowledges. I question and try to reflect the conceptualization of the fieldwork, my *whiteness* and the privileges I benefit(ed) from, and explicitly the Area Studies-driven theoretical, scientific practice that I followed and aimed for. For all intents and purposes, one should not unreflectively and uncommented build an (academic) career on practices that play into the hands of or are based on (neo)colonial structures, ideas, theories, and methodologies. After due consideration, I decided that this is not what this article is primarily about. I still added important literature (of resistance) on topics connected to the aforementioned standpoints and considerations in my endnotes. I urge you to read this liter-

ature. From my recent perspective, I do believe that the interviewee's knowledge, their insights and their voices should and can be heard in this format - although the piece will always be tied to (my; a reader's; readers') white perspectives and contributes to (neo)colonial continuities, such as the uneven mobility of knowledge. Eventually, the piece was written in a participatory attempt and is published in recent cooperation and consensus with the persons I interviewed at the time. For questions and contacts, their email addresses are included in the endnotes.

Notes on Anti/Thesis

The Anti/Thesis section usually presents clearly contesting lines of thought about a specific subject. This is not so much the case for this article. Yet, the aforementioned structural and contextual problematic realities remain and should be further discussed, especially by the audiences of journals like META. So, I urge you to think about what I have tried to do with my slot in this journal. I invite you to like and dislike it. In my perspective, dealing with other forms of methodologies and theories can be a starting point, reflecting on one's own positionality can be a starting point, and stepping back from one's (conventional) work can be a starting point. . Failing and constant (un)learning *must* be starting points.

Affiliations

The research and the process were supported and attended by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's academic cooperation program *Independent Universities and the Promotion of Critical Research and Teaching* in the framework of a 6-month internship. The article was read and edited by the four interviewed scholars Prof. Amel Grami and Prof. Boutheina Ben Hassine (two representatives in the master's programs); Prof. Monia Lachheb, a former teacher in the program at Sousse; and Naziha Ardhaoui, a (former) student in the master's program at Manouba.

About the interviewed scholars

Amel Grami is a professor of Gender Studies and Islamic Studies at The University of Manouba, Tunisia. Her research focuses on culture, society, religion and politics in the MENA region and the Middle East, as well as extremism, Peace Corps volunteering, women, and peace building. Grami founded the program at the Manouba University and can be contacted.

Prof. Boutheina Ben Hassine is a scholar of history. Ben Hassine is specialized in the Ummayad and medieval period and focuses on women in these periods. Ben Hassine founded the program at Sousse University and can be contacted, too.

Prof. Monia Lachheb is a scholar in sociology. Lachheb focuses on the sociology of the body, gender and identity, and non-normative sexualities. Lachheb works on these topics mainly in the Tunisian framework, but also does research on Libya and Algeria. Lachheb is normally affiliated with the University of Manouba, but taught a semester in the master's program at Sousse. Lachheb works for the French institute IRMC (Institute de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain).

Naziha Ardhaoui was a master's student in the program at Manouba University in spring 2019. Ardhaoui studied English and Literature. So far, Ardhaoui has worked in training centers, sometimes for foundations. Ardhaoui's scientific interest is in comparative political sciences and media studies, approached from a feminist and Gender Studies perspective. Ardhaoui's master's thesis thus examines representations and the strategic medial use of women in the past electoral campaigns of Beji Caid Essebsi and Donald Trump. Ardhaoui has a major interest in qualitative research and fieldwork in Tunisia.

Structures and foci in the master's programs and surrounding contexts

Motivations, politics, and freedom of speech

Gender Studies has been taught in Sousse since 2017 and in Tunis, Manouba (Faculty of Literature, Arts and Humanities) since 2015 (Ben Hassine 3; Grami 8). Gender Studies are therefore situated in the broader post-2010/11 structures and realities of the country. The studies were established quite belatedly, in the opinion of one former professor in the master's programs (Lachheb 5). These formal establishments came well after the fact: Tunisian scholars look back on a long history of varying feminist interventions and projects (Lachheb 5; Antonakis 76, 105, 274).

From the moment when Gender Studies were institutionalized until recently, its master's programs and individuals working in the field have faced various kinds of political attacks (Ben Hassine 6-8; Grami 3, 11, 27). According to Grami, the increasing strength of conservative and religious politics and policies has an influence on the potential master's programs' finances and reputation and on the conditions and practices of freedom of speech (27).

Grami addresses the history and experiences of freedom of and restrictions on speech in Tunisian academia in relation to the former conditions of research and freedom of speech in the Ben Ali period (3, 9), but also the possibility of using and doing Gender Studies as a field of studies in favor of democratic transition and practice. Before 2011, censorship and restrictions of academic freedom and freedom of speech were quite normalized (Grami 3). Gender Studies and gender-related research are therefore a strategic tool for supporting a democratic transition in the country in a sustainable vision (Ben Hassine 6). As such, Gender Studies can be considered one part of a project of dismantling censorship of and restrictions on freedom of speech (Grami 4, 15).

On a broader motivational scale, the interviewees' standpoints vary. As Ardhaoui points out, Gender Studies serves her as a tool for defending LGBT and minority rights and for fighting for equality and against the patriarchy (Ardhaoui 3, 6). According to Lachheb, the field is an institutional attempt to establish a strand and tradition of the subject that is Tunisia's own (Lachheb 11). Contrastingly, Ben Hassine argues that the subject should be extended to more universities in the long term (Ben Hassine 3). Grami emphasizes the will and need to participate in global feminist knowledge production. This is framed as a postcolonial necessity with criticism of neo-colonial collaborations with partner organizations (Grami 6).

Foci in the master's programs

Interdisciplinarity as foundation

All four interviewees point out and ascribe importance to the interdisciplinary structure of the master's program and of the teaching and courses. This specifically appears in a variety of teachers with different disciplinary backgrounds and foci on a certain time span (Ben Hassine 6; Grami 18; Lachheb 9; Ardhaoui 11). An interdisciplinary structure also appears in the following emphases of teachers and the master's programs.

Emphases of teachers and foci in the master's programs

The study program in Sousse emphasizes gender and history (of e.g. human rights, individual freedoms) and socio-economic questions (Ben Hassine 4; Lachheb 3), but also gender in administration (e.g. management, fiscality) and law (e.g. the CSP) (Ben Hassine 5). Besides this, there is a focus on gender and identity as they thematically appear in art, literature, language, and methods and methodology, as well as in guiding field research (Ben Hassine 4). "Feminine leadership" and trainings are important in Sousse and are also offered by partner organizations (Ben Hassine 6). Violence plays a role as a subject in both universities, especially in terms of extremism (Ben Hassine 6; Grami 29).

The Manouba study program also includes courses on methods and methodology (Grami 23). Besides, the Manouba program sets goals such as consciousness and awareness raising and addresses subjects such as gender in feminism, history, culture, literature, politics, religion, media, law, social movements, sexualities, identities, and labor (Grami 15; Ardhaoui 8).

Both master's programs work on the deconstruction of representations, stereotypes, and relations tied to social constructs such as femininity and masculinity (Ben Hassine 6; Grami 8, 19; Lachheb 2, 6; Ardhaoui 3). Partly mentioned are non-normative sexualities and identity formations (Ben Hassine 6; Grami 27; Lachheb 3; Ardhaoui 5).

The two master's programs further ascribe meanings to geographic and demographic cleavages (e.g. dichotomies like rural/urban, coastal/interior, etc.) and conduct research on extremism (Ben Hassine 10; Grami 29; Lachheb 16).

Further, there is a great emphasis on intersectionality, which includes class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion in order to explain and research certain processes of intersectional societal ascriptions and invocations (Grami 5, 18; Lachheb 10).

Students' dissertations in the master's program differ slightly from the content-related tendencies shown above. They sometimes treat niche topics such as gender-transgressive perspectives on arts, work on transsexual persons in Tunisia, research on female jihadism, and the migration processes of Yemenite women in Syria (Ben Hassine 9).

Precariousness and hurdles

On a structural level, the two master's programs face different dimensions of precariousness. In the process of establishing the master's program, a crucial indicator was to have an approving dean (Ben Hassine 2). Intradepartmental conflicts were intense. These internal bureaucratic-administrative disputes had to be negotiated continuously (Ben Hassine 2; Grami 12).

Finances, resources, and budgets are too small in both programs (Ben Hassine 4; Grami 12). The budget for conferences and projects in particular remains fraught and precarious (Ben Hassine 11; Grami 14). Various interviewees pointed out that there is a dependence on international and political partners and collaborations, such as foundations or foreign universities. This also locates the study programs in the broader frame of a general dependence on projects and NGOs based in Tunisia that have international funding (Grami 14, 22). More generally, this is one example of Tunisian institutions' financial dependence on global governance bodies such as the IMF (International Monetary Funds), with its typically restrictive requirements (Maghreb Post, Ben Abid, Chandoul).

Certain tendencies of the Ministry of Higher Education should be mentioned here as the broader structural context of these programs. As discussed in an article by Mohamed Samih Beji Okkez, who spoke with the Tunisian University Professors and Researchers Union (IJABA), public universities in Tunisia face financial shortages and marginalization in favor of the expansion of the privatization of the educational system, which was followed by sit-ins and protests by university professors and staff in 2018/2019. Besides, recruitment of teachers has been frozen since 2015, and the financial shortages in the field of scientific research overall led to approximately five thousand unemployed postgraduates in the country (Okkez). The precariousness of students in Tunisia is enormous, and job prospects were further limited by the Ministry of Higher Education. This led to students' protests in May 2019, as Grami explained to me (Grami 1).

Teachers in the master's programs often work additional jobs, for instance, one job as a teacher in the master's program,

another in an NGO or in lobbying (Grami 11). Grami points out that this leads to hurdles in staffs' capacities in evaluations, interventions, and improvements (11).
Students have difficulties finding someone to supervise their final projects in the master's program or in their initial discipline (Ardhaoui 9). In spring 2019, when the fieldwork was conducted, there was no officially appointed professor of Gender Studies in Tunisia. Until then, there was no dedicated PhD program in Gender Studies, either. Gender-minded students and graduates would have to study another subject in a well-established discipline and write their dissertations in that major (Grami 21).

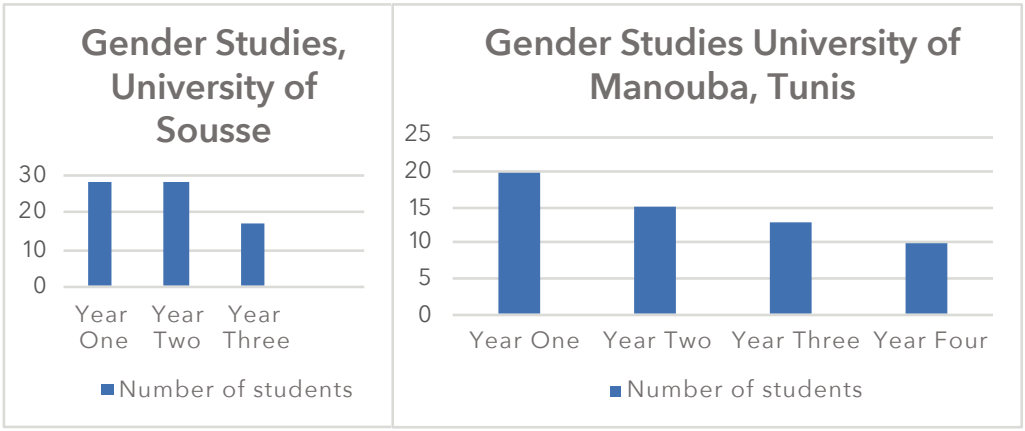

Fig. 1: Gender Studies, University of Sousse and Gender Studies, University of Manouba, Tunis. Source: Author.

Difficulties and prospects around visibilities

Certain themes, including LGBT-related content, have been the focus of political controversy. Teaching these topics involves putting finances at risk, with frank and open visibility appearing as a potential liability. Grami frames this as a concern and a matter of uncertainty (Grami 27). Especially in terms of the difficult, polarized political embedding of the study programs, visibility is an uncertain subject (Grami 27). This has become especially fraught in the wake of attacks on the subjects of the master's programs. Grami points out that the continuity of the master's programs is contested and lies in the hands and the will of the program's teachers (Grami 29).
Nonetheless, there are at least two important tools of visibility tied to the programs. One is the Club of Gender Studies at the Manouba University in Tunis, which operates mostly via Facebook, but also organizes film screenings, discussions, conferences, and workshops (Grami 12). The other is the relatively new NGO *Tunisian Association of Gender Studies* (ATEG), founded by the Gender Studies master's program at the University of Sousse (Ben Hassine 3, 5). These processes show a way of institutionalizing Gender Studies and gender-related knowledge beyond the programs' structure on a collegiate and an NGO level.

About students in the master's programs

The following chart shows the numbers of students in each program over the years until 2019 (Ben Hassine 7; Grami 20). The data shows a decrease in the number of enrolled students over time. This is framed as either being caused by a new regulation that requires English proficiency for admission in Sousse (Ben Hassine 7) or as a result of the issue around the aforementioned PhD prospects (Grami 21). Surprisingly, Grami adds that there were around 100 students interested in enrolling in the Manouba master's program in 2020, of whom the program selected 35.

So, the number of students in the Manouba mastrs program rose in the fifth year.

The master's programs are generally carried out in Standard Arabic and French. At the University of Sousse, English recently became a third language and a part of the application. It is also planned to establish at least one English course (Ben Hassine 4). In contrast, the spokesperson of the master's program at Manouba says English remains a reading language and is not otherwise part of the courses (Grami 14).

Students in the master's programs at Sousse are described as critical, open, diverse in age, competitive, and ambitious (Ben Hassine 3). Many students are affiliated with NGOs such as Amnesty International, the ATFD (Association Tunisienne de Femmes Démocrates), 'Aish Tunisi (a data collection and evaluation project), or the Rotary Club (Ben Hassine 3). Students are interested in democratic transition and women's rights, for example in the debate about the Law of Inheritance and civil status (Ben Hassine 3). Many students study part-time while working as judges, lawyers, or in public administration in Sousse (Ben Hassine 3). Grami points out that students at Manouba are critical and aware, both of the societal relevance of gender and the connection to everyday life and of the structure and issues appearing in the master's program. These students clearly take a stance on different issues, including criticism of the study program itself (Grami 12, 15; Ardhaoui 6).

Students come from an enormous variety of initial majors. At Sousse, the students come from disciplines such as English, Arabic, History, Journalism, Political Sciences, and Law (Ben Hassine 7.). At the University of Manouba, students studied Arabic, French, Philosophy, Sociology, Nursing, Labor and Social Movement Studies, Archival Sciences, Economy, Architecture, and Media Studies (Grami 23).

Job prospects are described primarily as positions in ministries, schools, and NGOs (Grami 24; Ardhaoui 10). In regard to qualifications, Grami says that students gain an analytical gender lens. They could work in the aforementioned fields or in journalism, and they could improve the jobs and the quality of work in those professions (Grami 24). Ben Hassine notes that students gain theoretical and interdisciplinary views on gender and might learn how to do monitoring and workshops (Ben Hassine 8).

Partnerships and (neo)coloniality

The master's programs have various partner organizations and universities. The master's program in Sousse maintains several partnerships. One of the most important partnerships is with the Erasmus Plus Partners from Europe, Ukraine, and Morocco (Ben Hassine 2). The Manouba program used to be a partner in this project as well, but then withdrew from it. This was due to struggles with the (gender-) political agendas of the project's European partners, which were perceived as neocolonial (Grami 6). Grami clearly opposes the European attempt at (neo)colonial superiority in knowledge production on gender and in Queer Studies. She therefore withdrew from collaboration, taking a clear stance on what happened and what is required:

> Because they had this idea from the first meeting on: we are from the North belonging to the West and we will teach you how you should teach gender. […] I am not in this trend, you can listen to us, you can understand what is our work and you can also exchange ideas and experiences, etc. with us and I have a lot to share with you. And I am not in the position of the subaltern who should learn and consume. It is important to have an idea about what's happening in other countries, but I am familiar with this way of collaboration […] (Grami 6)

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Conclusions

Gender Studies at Sousse and at Manouba are located in a contested and challenging political and economic environment and face severe struggles over finances (especially for projects), staff, and visibilities. In this context, European partner organizations also act in a (neo)colonial manner. Further, this article has shown that the contents and structures of the master's programs are depicted diversely, sometimes appearing as contesting or related, yet they heavily resonate with the overall societal situation. Students often enrich the picture by bringing in important considerations, ideas, and research.

From my current perspective, namely one year after conducting the fieldwork, now as a master's student in a Gender Studies program in 2020s Central Europe, and as a representative in the curricular process of that master's program, I would like to conclude this piece by stressing the following important connection with recourse to the background information, the notes on positionality, and the remark on Anti/Thesis from the beginning of the article:

The two master's programs in Tunisia definitely hinge in a particular way on their socioeconomic environments. Yet, certain structures of precariousness, relations of power, (institutional, neoliberal, (neo)colonial) politics, and conflicts about what constitutes *proper* and *critical* knowledge production variously shape Central European Gender Studies programs, too. University (life) consistently requires critical interventions, attention, discussion, activist contributions, new forms and practices of solidarity, and critique in consideration of and resistance to the aforementioned dynamics.

Notes

[1] My thanks to all the research participants for giving insights, information, and comments on the master's programs and Gender Studies. Special and great thanks to Amel Grami, Boutheina Ben Hassine, Monia Lachheb, and Naziha Ardhaoui. I want to thank Habib Kazdaghli and Hazem Chikhaoui for background information.

[2] Contact Prof. Dr. Amel Grami: grami2020amel@gmail.com. For further information on Grami see: www.recht-als-kultur.de/de/fellows/ehemalige-fellows/grami/

[3] Contact Prof. Dr. Boutheina Ben Hassine: benhassineboutheina@yahoo.fr

[4] For an overview of universities and academic freedom in Tunisia: Mohsen el Khouni, Mouldi Guessoumi, and Mohamed-Salah Omri, editors. *University and Society within the Context of Arab Revolutions and New Humanism.* Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Academic Cooperation, 2017.; Habib Mellakh, editor. *Liberté Académique et Charte Universitaire en Tunisie et Ailleurs*. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and the Association Tunisienne de Défense des Valeurs Universitaires, 2016.

[5] The abbreviation *LGBT* (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans) is used here because the interviewees used it. To read about recent forms of and work on LGBT*IQ activism in Tunisia, I recommend: Shukrallah, Tarek. *Democratization and those who were 'left-behind'. An intersectional-materialist approach towards analyzing LGBT*IQ struggles within transformation processes in post-revolutionary Tunisia*. Rosa Luxemburg Foundation – North Africa Office, 2019.

[6] Gender content and gender-related research and theory are dealt with not only in these two explicit programs. Especially in sociology, philosophy, and literary studies, there are many teachers dealing with Gender Studies, Feminist Sciences, or other gender-related research in Tunisia.

[7] For further information on LGBT*IQ and rights in Tunisia see: Jelassi, Mohammed A. *Minoritized and discriminated against. Law as factor of inequality.* Heinrich Böll Stiftung Afrique du Nord, 2018.

[8] See also: Commission des libertés individuelles et de l'égalité, abbreviation: COLIBE. For further information on the Tunisian constitutional process and feminism from 2011 to 2014, see Alma Laiadhi, Alicia Pastor y Camarasa, and Marc Verdussen. *Tunisia – Perspectives on the Tunisian Constitutional Process 2011-2014.* UCLouvain, 2018.

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→ [11] For insights on the situation of Gender Studies and Feminist Science and associated conflicts in Vienna, see the following interview: Kroisleitner, Oona, and Traxler, Tanja. Interview with Birgit Sauer and Sushila Mesquita. "Forscherinnen: Ich habe das Gefühl ich bin in einem Dauerkampf." *Der Standard*. 8 Mar. 2015, www.derstandard.at/story/2000012455589/forscherinnen-ich-habe-das-gefuehl-ich-bin-in-einem-dauerkampf. Accessed 09 Apr. 2020. For insights on the German case, see also: Hark, Sabine, and Paula-Irene Villa, editors. *Anti-Genderismus, Sexualität und Geschlecht als Schauplätze aktueller politischer Auseinandersetzungen*. Transcript Verlag, 2015.

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CLOSE UP

Of Skin and Men

Julia Nauth

This analysis discusses the sexual objectification of the Tunisian woman in the drama *Of Skin and Men* by director Mehdi Ben Attia. The film deals with the position of women in Tunisian society and offers an insight into the everyday life of the protagonist. In recent years, there have already been some academic discussions on feminist theories and publications on gender-based violence in the MENA region. For this reason, the portrayal of women as the weaker sex should be considered from a media studies perspective. In this work it is argued that the protagonist is exposed to the sexual objectification, power and violence of the Tunisian man.

Keywords: Gender, Tunisian Film, Sexual Objectification, MENA, Film Analysis

Of Skin and Men

Tunisia, 2017 – The film *Of Skin and Men* has the 25-year-old orphan Amel, following the early death of her husband, discover her passion for erotic photography of the male body. She considers portraits a way of capturing the soul of the men she photographs. Being a young, emancipated, and modern woman in Tunisia, Amel is constantly exposed to sexual harassment, humiliation, and violence in her everyday life as a photographer and artist. The film gives voice to the difficulties of emancipated Tunisian women by documenting their rebellion against male-dominated structures. With the help of her provocative photography, Amel fights against the sexual objectification of women. She thereby reverses gender roles and turns the male body into an object of her photography.

The struggle for the emancipation of Tunisian women is thus still a current theme in Tunisian society in 2017. Criticism of the sexual objectification of Tunisian women and gender-specific violence can be found repeatedly in the film and has to be further discussed. This essay examines three selected scenes in which the woman is portrayed as the weaker sex. The analysis of these film scenes will hopefully provide an insight into the depiction of gender roles. First, an introduction will be

made to the Tunisian and Islamic history of women's rights to understand what causes contribute to the sexual objectification of women. This historical context will be linked to the film's theme to analyze why women's role in a male-dominated society plays such an important part in the film.

The Woman in Tunisia

The role of women in Tunisian society has already been discussed in many academic publications dealing with sexual objectification and gender-based violence. These studies focus not only on Tunisia in particular, but also on the MENA region in general. In particular Moha Ennaji, a leading academic from Morocco, and Fatima Sadiqi have published two anthologies on gender and violence against women in the MENA region. In her edited publication, Zahia Smail Salhi, a Professor of Modern Arab Studies, also deals with gender and violence in the MENA region.

Mervat Hatem's academic contributions deal, for example, with gender and politics, the position of Arab women, and theories of Arab feminism. Hatem states that Islam stands in clear contrast to women's rights, since the passages of the Koran originate in men's interpretations (15). However, according to Waletzki, the unequal position of women and men in Tunisia is not due to Islam as a religion, but to the patriarchal society (27). In the Koran, sexual intercourse is not only a God-given gift, it also serves human pleasure – whereby this pleasure is primarily granted to men; women appear almost only as sexual objects (Waletzki 32).

In contrast to the fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali has increasingly campaigned for the emancipation of women, improved the education system, and, through this modernization strategy, maintained the image of a democratic government. According to Waletzki, Ben Ali's policy on women served as an effective strategy in the fight against Islamism (110).

In her essay on women's bodies in the Egypt revolution, Mona Kasra deals with the self-portrait of the Egyptian Elmahdy, who fought against sexism, oppression, and violence against Egyptian women during the Arab Spring 2011 with her nude photo on social networks (55). For Kasra, the social media are a way of publicizing the rebellion against patriarchal structures beyond the borders of a country. Kasra notes that personal images on digital social networks have a much stronger effect in conveying socio-political opinions than text forms in online communication can (51). Thus, the protagonist of the film *Of Skin and Men* also receives enormous attention through her provocative, erotic photography of men.

The Woman as Sexual Object

Mehdi Ben Attia's French-Tunisian drama of 2017 focuses on a young woman's struggle against the male structures in her country. The protagonist Amel visits her husband's funeral; attended only by traditionally dressed men, she drinks alcohol and begins a love affair. In the wake of her husband's death, she enters a healing process and feels joy again through photography. She takes the expression of her art as a total expression of freedom.

This essay analyzes three scenes from the film *Of Skin and Men* in which men perceive the woman as the weak sex and a sexual object. This applies to one scene in which the protagonist invites a strange man to her remote storage room for a portrait shoot. Only shortly after the start of the shooting, the man begins to harass Amel, who defends herself and intends to end the shooting. When she tries to give him the promised money, he grabs her purse and steals all her money. He then offers to exchange it for sexual favors. When she refuses, he reacts aggressively and strikes out to beat her. Finally, he refrains from violence and arrogantly says that she is missing something. Then he leaves the storage room.

The scene depicts the Tunisian man's arrogance and portrays Amel as the weaker sex in relation to the man, who reacts aggressively and violently when he is rejected. This scene illustrates the position of women in an authoritarian and male-dominated society. The balance of power between woman and man in Tunisia is depicted here – a woman rejects a man and must fear physical and verbal violence. This view is shared by David Ghanim, who emphasizes in his study that

> [e]ven in Tunisia where women have benefited from the most progressive legislations and enjoy highest status in the Arab world, a study reveals that 20-40 per cent of Tunisian women experience physical violence and 50 per cent experience verbal violence. (46)

Another scene deals generally with the sanctity of the Tunisian man. One evening, on a dark street, three boys harass the photographer Amel with sexist comments. She manages to flee to a friend who lives nearby. Instead of talking to the boys about their behavior and outlining the consequences, the friend tells Amel that the harassment is no big deal and plays down her fear. The scene proves that the sexual objectification of women is a social problem caused by patriarchal structures. The image of women is already conveyed and stabilized in childhood. Sexual harassment thus does not originate from the children, but is/was adopted from their parents and their traditional environment. The police play no role in this scene, nor in the whole film. Amel's friend does not intervene in the situation, nor are the police called in to help, because only a few women in Tunisia decide to report sexual violence to the police. Ghanim also notes that acts of violence are rarely recorded by the police and attract little public attention (44). There is no need for Tunisian men to be afraid of legal consequences for sexual harassment or violence against women. The safety of Tunisian women in everyday life is therefore in the hands of a patriarchal society, which restricts them to the close spaces of home and marriage.

The last scene of the analysis underlines that Tunisian women not only have to fear sexual objectification and harassment in the public sphere, but also that even the private sphere does not cater to their safety. In the relevant scene, the protagonist learns first-hand that Sidi Taïeb is not merely a loving father-in-law. Drunk, he harasses her and begins to kiss her on the neck against her will. Zahia Smail Salhi, also emphasizes:

> Gender-based violence occurs in both the private and the public spheres and is perpetrated by intimate partners, family members such as fathers and brothers in patriarchal structures and male strangers. (17)

Sexual violence therefore takes place both at home and in public. Amel is exposed to sexual objectification several times in her daily life and thus to sexual harassment and violence and is not even safe from this at home.

Conclusion

The film clearly documents that, because of her gender and as a member of a patriarchal society, Amel has to fear not only sexual objectification but also gender-specific and sexual violence in everyday life. Although she fights against social pressure, the end of the film nevertheless voices a failure of the self-determined Tunisian woman. Although Amel does not allow herself to be restricted in her artistic development, she is subjected to the patriarchal social pressure of Tunisian society. Her love affair has failed and neither her father-in-law, nor the three boys, nor the male model had to fear any consequences for sexual harassment. Due to the open end of the film, it remains unclear how Amel's life story continues and

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whether she goes on to rebel against the patriarchal structures in her country.
The three scenes showed all forms of sexual objectification of women by men. In the first scene examined, the man injured in his pride is shown; he reacts to a woman's rejection only with incomprehension, contempt, and violence. The scene depicts the image of women as the weak sex and the Tunisian man's understanding of power. In the second scene, there is a direct representation of women as the object of desire. In this scene, sexual objectification does not show the man as an individual case, but presents men in the form of three boys in the street as a patriarchal and social problem. In the last scene, the sexual objectification of the protagonist culminates in the private sphere. While the first two scenes embodied the male-dominated society, the third scene shows that Tunisian women cannot even expect protection in their own home, but are considered and treated as the weaker sex.

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OFF-TOPIC

Reading Marx in Beirut: Disorganised Study and the Politics of Queer Utopia

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This article draws on ethnographic research carried out with Marxist reading groups run by a Lebanese revolutionary socialist organization. I examine the labor that Marxist theoretical practice was doing in a political conjuncture widely viewed as *post-Marxist*, discussing the relationship between theory and affect, and the role that affective infrastructures play in maintaining and reproducing social movements and political organisations. Drawing on Moten and Harney, I frame this intellectual labor as a form of *dissonant*, *disorganized* study - a mode of preparing for revolution by being together in *brokenness* and routinely generating a commitment to a particular political horizon. This form of political praxis as study unfolded within a Lebanese activist scene dominated by a pragmatic conception of politics, within which the critical labor of the radical and revolutionary left was largely considered *sterile*, mired in something akin to what Berlant calls cruel optimism. Drawing on Munoz, his conceptualisation of the politics of queer utopia, and his defence of utopian imaginativeness, I argue that for radical and revolutionary leftists in counter-revolutionary times, cultivating solidarity and camaraderie by maintaining a space of study that could enable technologies of both self and collective constituted a *productive* political act.

Keywords: Lebanon; leftism; Marxism; utopia; queerness; study

When I carried out the fieldwork that would inform this paper, the Middle East was mired in a post-revolutionary context where emboldened authoritarian regimes had suffocated activist energies. At the time, activists all over the region had found themselves in a moment of retreat from the street.

I carried out fieldwork in Beirut between the summers of 2016 and 2018, amongst independent activists contending with the aftermath of the 2015 garbage protests – a political event that participants saw as charged with potentiality, but that quickly fizzled out, stranding them in a post-eventual moment of *dead time* heavy with the debilitating sense of having yet again failed to facilitate transformative change (Jeffrey xv).[1]

I spent my time in Beirut amongst activists attempting to make sense of, work within and against, what many were experiencing as a conjuncture of "stuckedness" (Hage, "Alter-Politics", ch. 2). My interlocutors spoke in terms of what felt possible before, during and after the *Hirak*, as it was locally known, and described their political work as characterised by the routinisation of failure – an experience that had imposed debilitating, depressive disposi-

tions against which they had to constantly fight to persist as activists.

In the aftermath of the garbage protests, there was a turn towards a pragmatic and technocratic approach to politics within Lebanese civil society. A desire to work towards mass consensus, avoid divisive issues and collaborate with the institutions of the state came to predominate, as activists contending with the routinisation of anti-status quo failure developed a nervous commitment to *acting* – to forms of advocacy and lobbying based on their potential for *getting something done*, however minute or ephemeral that something might be, in order to counteract the hopelessness gripping the country.

It is important to contextualise the development and increased popularity of this form of contentious politics in Lebanon within the increased visibility of politicised, middle class, liberal-left activists in the Middle East more generally who, disenchanted with the organisational frameworks of the *failed* parties of the traditional left and reeling from smothered revolutions, had been joining or founding NGOs or networks rather than political parties, and introducing "new forms of political action and more open, dynamic ideologies, as well as simply preferring pragmatic action to strict ideology" (Cole 241).

Of course, shifts in the contentious politics of the Middle East since 2011 cannot be de-linked from developments on the international scale, especially given the reverberations of the events in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain and other regional locales, which inspired activists around the globe to agitate against their own status quos. In 2011, Dean argues, "Europe and the USA experienced the most significant political movement on the Left since 1968" (261). One important, distinguishing factor of these mobilizations, she writes, is that many of the participants insisted that they were *not* political events.

The participants in these mobilizations, Dean continues, abandoned attempts at forging a *we*, an identity rooted in a specific, coherent political project and worldview, emphasizing, instead, "issue politics, identity politics and their own fragmentation into a multitude of singularities" (264). Within this context, neglectful, broken or corrupt states, rather than capitalism as a high-functioning global system structuring social, economic and political life, were framed as the primary culprits behind local, context-specific problems that remained un-universalized, prevented from being framed as symptoms of something "beyond themselves" (Dean 267).

Emancipatory discourses and lexicons of resistance travel. They travelled from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Zuccotti Park in New York in 2011. And, the anti- or post-political approach to agitating against the order of things described by Dean above, made its way to the Middle East as well, as activists coping with political failure debated what strategies and tactics were most suitable to the counter-revolutionary conjuncture they found themselves in.

Recently, a growing body of literature in the social sciences has attempted to make sense of "processes of depoliticization" by analysing them through the lens of "the post-political" (Wilson and Swyngedouw 6). While the term has been used in multiple ways and deployed to explain a diversity of situations, it generally refers to an increasingly ubiquitous condition in which:

> political contradictions are reduced to policy problems to be managed by experts and legitimated through participatory processes in which the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance. "The people" – as a potentially disruptive political collective – is

> replaced by the population – the aggregated object of opinion polls, surveillance, and bio-political optimization (Wilson and Swyngedouw 6).

This has given rise to an approach to political change that seeks to achieve compromises between all *stakeholders* involved in a given issue – what has been called *good governance* and which, rather than aiming to interrupt and fundamentally rework the "existing state of the neoliberal political-economic configuration," aims merely to adjust it and make it more bearable (Wilson and Swyngedouw 5). Scholars like Wilson and Swyngedouw argue that the post-political conjuncture began with Francis Fukuyama's infamous assertion of "the end of history", by which he meant the end of the long battle between incompatible ideologies. "Utopia, in short, was a thing of the past" (7).

Elsewhere, I have applied the lens of post-politics to Lebanon's post-*Hirak* context, in order to make sense of the turn towards a pragmatic and technocratic approach to politics within the country's civil society scene (forthcoming). This forms part of an attempt to contribute to a much broader literature on the ways in which neoliberalism has restructured not only "policy arrangements and governing practices" (Larner 191) since the mid-1980s, but also political projects, resistance practices, and imaginings of the agent of change and the subject of politics.

In delineating what he considers the areas to which the anthropology of resistance should dedicate increased attention, in addition to calling for an embrace of the broader affective turn in anthropology, Kurik adds the need to think through what neoliberalism, not only as a force structuring economic and political life, but as a governing rationality affecting *all* aspects of life, plays in shaping subjectivities in protest. It is important to understand the post-war sectarian-neoliberal order in Lebanon not only as something to which activists were and are opposed, but as a system in which they are also embedded, and which has shaped and constrained their activism.

In this paper, however, I turn to minoritarian practices that actively challenged neoliberal rationality and the vision of reality and political possibility it imposes in the Lebanese context and beyond. I draw on two years of fieldwork with the preparatory Marxist reading group for prospective members of the Lebanon-based revolutionary socialist political organisation *Al-Muntada Al-Ishtiraki* (The Socialist Forum), to evaluate the reasons behind and the effects of an alienated activist minority's insistence on engaging in Marxist theoretical practice in a conjuncture widely labelled *post-Marxist,* when leftist thought and critique was widely dismissed by many anti-status quo actors as sterile and idealist.

In so doing, my goal is to argue for an attentiveness to the generative role that ideologies, alter-realities, futurities and the affective infrastructures that prop them up play in the survival, reproduction and growth of social movements, in light of the global popularity over the last few years of post-ideological or anti-ideological approaches to contentious politics. Additionally, I hope to draw analytical attention to the central role that study as a mode of political praxis can play in the nurturing of the radical political imagination, the sense of futurity this imagination can be productive of, and the loyalty this horizon needs in order to survive in the face of innumerable obstacles and delays. This, then, is very much a study of the banality of resistance and of the intimate life of social movements, and the crucial role that this banality and intimacy can play in the fuelling of anti-status quo action even in the face of routine failure.

At the time of writing, Lebanon was in the grips of an unprecedented revolution – one that would surely spur many an analytical response. But there is a dearth of scholarly literature on the processes that precede and follow bold political events in the region – the *in between*, during which the foundations for these pivotal moments, as well as their shortcomings, are cultivated.

There are lessons to be derived, I argue, from an overlooked form of leftist political praxis that unfolded during a counter-revolutionary moment – one dismissed as not worthy of being viewed as praxis at all. These lessons may be useful not only for scholars hoping to make sense of the rise and fall of social movements, but for anyone invested in cultivating such movements within both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conjunctures.

The Stench of Possibility

The garbage protests of the summer of 2015 constituted the largest cross-sectarian mobilisation around livelihood concerns and demands since the end of Lebanon's 15-year civil war in 1990 (Kerbage 5). The *Hirak*, as it became locally known, was a resounding *enough*. It was a declaration of the intolerability of humiliating, widespread precariousness and neglect; a refusal to continue to accept a disposability that served to enable the luxurious lifestyles and wealth accumulation of a privileged few, allowing them to profit endlessly at the expense of others (Butler and Athanasiou 147). The *Hirak* was, in short, an *event*, in Alain Badiou's sense of the term, which constituted a "real break" a moment of rupture, destabilising the "pre-existing order," that framed the status quo as a condition that not only could but *had* to be tolerated, the alternative being descent, yet again, into civil war (Stavrakakis 122). The *Hirak* was, for a diversity of anti-status quo actors, an event charged with potential, with the transformative possibilities that could emerge from a standing together in public – until its momentum fizzled out and it *failed*.

There were two competing anti-status quo discourses vying for hegemony during the *Hirak*. One survived, evolved, and came to dominate the doxa and praxis of Lebanese civil society, while the other retreated to the peripheries of that milieu. Middle-class, youth-led collectives like You Stink, which claimed to have launched the movement through its hashtag, positioned themselves as the organisers of these mobilisations. Theirs was a rights-based approach, underpinned by a vague discourse about an ineffective and corrupt government, and a generalised opposition to "the rule of 'Crooks'" (Kerbage 18). Controversial issues that could prove divisive were avoided, and:

> specific demands were articulated in a purely scientific and technical language and were confined to providing various environmental solutions to the trash crisis…Knowledge production advocacy was always dominated by a discourse of technicality and scientific expertise, distancing itself from social and economic demands emerging from the protestors (Kerbage 18).

But the pragmatic and technocratic politics of You Stink and similar groupings was not the only discourse being propagated by independent activists during the *Hirak*. Al-*Sha'b Yurid* (The People Want), a gathering of independent activists, collectives and organisations that broadly identified with leftist principles, was formed not only to participate in the protests in an organised manner, but to actively challenge what its members considered the limited and problematic discourses of groups like You Stink. They pushed for an approach that went beyond garbage – that addressed the political system and Lebanon's sectarian-neoliberal order in its entirety. *Al-Sha'b Yurid* criticised the

demand for a private sector solution to the garbage crisis. It countered the popular narrative that working class protestors – who challenged middle class organisers' dedication to non-violence and its equation with civilised protest – were infiltrators (*mundasseen*), thugs sent by sectarian bosses to disrupt the protests. To calls for reforming the system, *al-Sha'b Yurid* responded with the need to persist until its dismantlement.

But *al-Sha'b Yurid* was overshadowed by groups like You Stink, which exerted significant control over the narratives and statements presented to the media, speaking on behalf of the many, simplifying and generalising demands and interests in a way that proved incapable of maintaining the momentum of a street that eventually lost sight of what it was mobilising for. As the government debated various solutions to the garbage crisis, it ignored the input of civil society and eventually imposed a solution that a country desperate to be rid of the flood of toxic waste overtaking it was forced to accept.

Unlike the technocratic and pragmatic politics associated with groups like You Stink, the left-wing radicalism of *al-Sha'b Yurid* crumbled after the protests, in a post-*Hirak* temporal conjuncture that could be characterised, at best, as stagnant and, at worst, as counter-revolutionary. Activists felt paralysed by what many called '*iḥbāṭ* – frustration and disillusionment. The experience of routine activist failure and the durability of Lebanon's sectarian-neoliberal political system drew many towards an embrace of a pragmatic and technocratic approach to politics.[2] Within this context, the radical left increasingly come to be seen by independent activists and intellectuals in Lebanon as an out-of-touch and elitist club – a framing that, I argue, has contributed to its marginalisation as an object of study within the academy as well.[3]

For many of those advocating a pragmatic and technocratic approach to political agitation, the left came to be framed as being mired in something akin to what Berlant calls cruel optimism. Optimism turns cruel, Berlant explains, when one becomes attached to:

> compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered to either be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic…whatever the content of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world (24).

Refusing to acknowledge the *impossibility* of achieving their socialist desires in the Lebanese present, these radicals, it was argued, chose to abandon *realistic* political work for the luxury of ethical paralysis. In the remainder of this article, I will challenge this positing of supposed leftist inertia and negativity as a relation of cruel optimism. In a moment when the need to examine social movements in the Middle East carries a particularly potent sense of urgency, it might seem futile or indulgent to examine a form of activism derided as detached and irrelevant by many on the ground in Lebanon. However, I wish to pushback against this framing.

I draw on participant-observation with Marxist reading groups organised by *al-Muntada al-Ishtiraki* (The Socialist Forum), a key participant within *al-Sha'b Yurid,* to argue for an understanding of collective study as a form of productive political praxis within counter-revolutionary conjunctures such as the one Lebanon and the wider Middle East found themselves in when I carried out fieldwork between the summers of 2016 and 2018.

I argue for an understanding of the reading group as a space where a *politics of queer utopia* could be and was being practiced, amidst stifling socio-economic and political conditions. Following from Munoz, I use the term queerness to designate "a desire for another way of being in the world and time, a desire that resists the mandate to accept that which is not enough" (365).

The reading group, I argue, constituted a space for the routine cultivation of a utopian imaginativeness that allowed participants to see beyond the straitjacket of an insufferable present, and to develop a commitment to reaching past it. Rather than viewing the theoretical labor of the Marxists with whom I worked as something futile, sterile or detached from reality, I approach it as an attempt to puncture a hegemonic conception of reality that limited the scope of political imagination and action.

An Alternative Left

Officially established in 2011 the Socialist Forum, which at its peak played host to between 50 and 60 members, defined itself not as a political party, but as a project for the building of one (*mashrūʿ bināʾ hizb*). Its members distinguished themselves politically from other leftist and liberal parties and anti-status quo activist groupings based on their revolutionary theory of change, which necessitated that equal attention be paid to gender and sexual rights, the building of socialism from below, the liberation of workers, the critique of capitalism and the protection of the environment, amongst other core principles, and that saw reformism and electoral politics as inadequate strategies for long-term political change.

Haugbolle situates groups like the Socialist Forum within a history of *rebel intellectuals* in Lebanon who drew inspiration from the British *new left* of the late 1950s, and who were critical of the communist parties of Syria and Lebanon, the Soviet Union and the Arab nationalist brand of socialism adopted by Nasser in Egypt and the Baath parties in Iraq and Syria ("Bassem Chit" 67).[5] The revolutionary left of contemporary Lebanon, it can be argued, belongs to a tradition of Lebanese leftism that emerged in the 1960s with groups like Socialist Lebanon, who "saw in Marxist theory and practice…the appropriate tool to effect the revolutionary transformation of their society" (Bardawil 319), and whose disillusionment with Arab nationalism led to a return to the textual source in order to argue against "Stalinist interpretations and undercut the official Soviet doxas of the time" (Bardawil 323).[6]

Although the political organizers associated with Socialist Lebanon had, for the most part, become in the post-civil war period the disenchanted, independent intellectuals about whom Haugbolle and Bardawil have written, many of the core principles that shaped their beliefs and strategies lived on among younger generations of revolutionary leftists like those associated with the Socialist Forum.

A Safe Space for Study

I began attending the Socialist Forum's reading groups in July 2016. They took place in the organization's small office, located in Zico House, a heritage building in the Sanayeh neighbourhood of Beirut, a few feet from one of the most iconic outlets of local fast-food chain Barbar, as well as the infamous Ministry of Interior. Sometimes three or five, sometimes twenty of us, would sit in a tight circle of plastic chairs, sweating under the mild breeze of a weak, old air conditioner in the summer, and shivering in our coats by a small portable heater in the winter. Sessions sometimes lasted for an hour and a half, sometimes three hours, punctuated by cigarette breaks marked by extended debates after heated argu-

ments, or the occasional awkward silence following a dull discussion.

Each reading group ran for an eight-week cycle and involved participants reading Marxist texts as well as articles written by members of the Socialist Forum. These were assigned by the organization, made available in both English and Arabic, and read alongside texts participants suggested themselves. The reading groups were mandatory for those interested in joining the Socialist Forum – a means of introducing them to the ideological infrastructure of the organisation and ensuring ideational compatibility. Participants were not compelled to join the organisation, but they could not become members without first engaging in this ritual. Participants were young, for the most part, born in the late 1990s or early 2000s, overwhelmingly university students or recent graduates from Beirut's two American universities, as well as the public Lebanese University. They brought a diversity of interests with them – Trump, university life, feminism, queer theory, BDS. Few would finish all of the assigned readings before a given session, but the discussions were almost always lively regardless – imbibing was not the goal.

What many of the reading group participants I spent time and spoke with seemed to have in common prior to joining the reading group was a desire to make sense of things in their environment that were gnawing at them; to find the words and frameworks to articulate and argue for why certain things made them uncomfortable, angry or depressed, why they felt alienated within so many social milieus; and to be anchored in something that *felt* right and *looked* right, instead of floating solitarily from one inadequate socio-political space to another – to see themselves reflected in a collective.

Elena, for example, grew up in a home and milieu dominated by members of the Lebanese Communist Party.[7] Her parents, however, refused to introduce her to their ideological and political background, or to share memories of the civil war. Living in the southern city of Saida, she tried to get involved in the protests that erupted in 2011, inspired by the revolutions in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and other neighboring countries, but found those unfolding in her locale dominated by Arab nationalist parties, which did not appeal to her. When her partner joined the Socialist Forum, she followed suit after hearing about the reading groups. Like many of those I interviewed, Elena told me that prior to joining the reading group, she was secure in her values – she could *feel* them, but she couldn't find a way to articulate or formulate them coherently until she began participating in this process of collective study:

> I didn't know how to discuss, build arguments, defend why I see myself as a socialist. This is where I found the *right words*. Left to my own devices, I would have said I didn't have time to read, but once it was structured, things were different. I saw the reading groups as a safe space to say whatever I was thinking.

Elena's experience in the reading group shaped her participation in the garbage protests of 2015. "I always thought of myself as not having enough information. I wanted information," she told me,

> 2015 happened and I felt, now everything I know I can somewhat apply in these protests. We didn't only go and protest. We would talk to people, plan, write statements. I felt like we could do something. In 2011, I would just go to protests alone then go home. It was important to me, to feel like I was part of something and I was doing something, even if with a small group.

Carrying out such life interviews, it became clear to me that the impetus for joining the Socialist Forum was, for many, as much about the personal as it was about the political; about what these individuals needed to survive in an *existential* sense; what they needed to cope with life in Lebanon and to make something of it more substantial and fulfilling than merely getting by. It was about not feeling abnormal or insane, idealistic or irrational for their views of and visions for the world; and, it was about gaining validation and gratification.

Mounir, a math teacher, attributed the development of his political consciousness to his move to France for university, where he first became acutely aware of his Arabness. He described the reading group as a form of therapy:

> I might have lost my mind if I didn't have these reading groups, because I hated my job, my relationship was complicated, I lived in a place I didn't like outside of Beirut. Coming back from France was hard, but the reading groups empowered me – thinking with people who were actually asking questions and looking for answers, and the unwritten rule was solidarity, listening for alternatives, being able to change your mind in response to other people's experiences, and also taking into account privileges.

Only in his late 20s when we met, Nasser, a teacher and graduate student in Middle East Studies at the American University of Beirut, already boasted a life peppered with activist experiences. He attended the climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009, worked with the anti-racism movement in Lebanon, received training in non-violent direct action from IndyACT and Green Peace, and even spent around four months camping with Occupy activists in Colorado, Nevada, Arizona and Oakland. Everything he participated in, however, eventually failed, faltered or petered out. In the reading group, Nasser was able to come to terms with his political desires as legitimate, necessary but also fantastical – as goals that must be worked towards even if he were never to see them manifest. The reading group emerged as a safe, nurturing space for cultivating a commitment to a perhaps impossible, but nevertheless crucial, grander vision – one to which there existed no alternative that carried a comparable promise of universal egalitarianism:

> It's a fantasy, but a *necessary* one. It's an ideal, we accept that, but at least we can attempt to keep getting closer forever, and it becomes a continual dialectical process of becoming. That's both historical and idealist – it's not one or the other.

Nasser insists that one of neoliberal ideology's primary goals is to set the parameters of what is and what is not realistic. Part of the impetus for being engaged in the theoretical exercises of the reading group was to create a space for constantly challenging and fighting against this vision of reality.

In the space of the reading group, study emerged as a mode of preparing for revolution distinct from knowledge production for the sake of reform as could be seen amongst the expert-activists dominating Lebanese civil society at the time of my research. The study mode is "dissonant" (9), as Halberstam writes in his introduction to Moten and Harney's *The Undercommons*. It is "disorganized study" (9), which refuses order and expertise; "a mode of thinking with others separate from the thinking that the institution requires of you" (11); a way of "being together in brokenness" (12). This study mode is meant to transform the subject and teach them the conditions and techniques necessary for transforming others.

The contrasting mode of activism is characterized by expertise-driven knowledge production: a being together in enlightenment – sharing ideas deemed neutral and scientific and only in need of being heard, already designed and ready for assembly. Reform the system and the subject will transform or, alternatively, transform the subject and they will dismantle the system.

Before being able to collapse sectarian-neoliberalism, the Socialist Forum recognized the need to end the standpoint from which this system of governance *made sense*, from which it read as a reality that was always already inevitable. Lebanon's population, like that of much of the world, had been made accustomed to precarity (Butler and Athanasiou 43). The normalization of precarity as the way things simply are had made it difficult to mobilize people in the service of change that, as a result of this normalization, *felt* impossible. Many had developed coping mechanisms to survive and navigate the everyday precariousness that characterized their lives. To abandon these coping mechanisms in the name of rebellion or revolution was seen as too big a risk to take for an alternative future that had been made to feel unachievable.

Neoliberal rationality, Wendy Brown argues, incapacitates the imagination, rendering it incapable of designing visions of the good life, limiting its focus to survival and the acquisition of wealth ("Undoing the Demos" 43).[9] Comarroff and Comarroff write that it could be convincingly argued that neoliberal capitalism "in its millennial moment, portends the death of politics" (322), or at least its dilution to the "pursuit of pure interest, individual or collective – or to struggles over issues (the environment, abortion, health care, child welfare, human rights), that important though they may be, are often, pace Jameson (47), dissociated from anything beyond themselves" (322). In the Lebanese case, both mainstream political parties and many of civil society's anti-status quo movements insisted that mismanagement was Lebanon's key problem, an understanding which authorized managerialism as a solution to neoliberal development that was not so much considered a fundamental problem in and of itself, shifting the focus to what was said to be its flawed or corrupt implementation.

Through its reading groups, the Socialist Forum not only brainstormed how best to engage in "a struggle within a reality," but also how to approach "the struggle *between* realities" (Hage, "Dwelling" 11). The reading group was a space for contending not only with a material, but also an ontological violence, that had imposed a particular understanding and experience of reality and, with it, what constituted realistic or worthwhile political struggle, foreclosing more radical possibilities. The refusal of what many other activists accept as a reality – sectarianism, neoliberalism, the failed state – that could only ever be adjusted, reformed or improved upon made, to borrow from Moten and Harney, *fugitives* of these radical leftists, fugitivity here being a product of a refusal to settle, a "being together in homelessness," and an embrace of "dispossession" (96) not only from mainstream society, but from the already peripheral community of anti-status quo activists as well.

Nomads wandering between socio-political milieus until they were drowning in disappointment and boredom, sought solace in the reading group as study mode, where they could remind themselves and one another routinely that they "cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgment generated by the very system that denies that anything was ever broken", that they must refuse "the choices as offered" in order to create a productive dissonance; that they must

strive to "access the places that we know lie outside" the walls of the present (Halberstam 6). Marxism, for the reading group participants, functioned much like queerness as described by Munoz – as a "structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (1).

Before joining the reading group, many had a sense that something was off, a cauldron of feelings bubbling inside them – anger, discomfort, anxiety, disgust. In the space of the reading group, these feelings were validated, given material roots, their sources explained. This process of emotional excavation, of making analytical sense of the visceral, was therapeutic and enlivening. Even those who had discovered on their own in Marx and others a convincing explanation for their alienation and rage, needed this process of *collective* analysis and acknowledgement to feel ready and willing to struggle for the world they wanted. The camaraderie generated by this space and process of collective study was key to the reproduction of the utopian imaginativeness these leftists were committed to maintaining a commitment to.

"Leftism gives me a sense of solidarity," Tina told me, who when we spoke was studying for an undergraduate degree in philosophy at the American University of Beirut:

> Solidarity in the sense that a lot of people felt just as hopeless and mistreated as me, and misery really loves company. It also gave me a sense of agency because it provided me with tools to understand oppression, rather than just accept it as a static fact. But most importantly, it gave me an alternative, and hope that our political situation is not, by essence, *unchangeable*.

When the present constitutes a drawn out impasse, "preaching to the choir" can emerge as a valuable and political act, as a "world-confirming strategy of address that performs solidarity and asserts righteousness" (Berlant 238). This ritual can serve as a means of performing a future utopia – what it might be like when or if a particular worldview becomes hegemonic. It is in this sense that, Berlant argues, optimism that manifests as "a stubborn collective refusal to give out, wear out, or admit defeat," might not actually be cruel, "but the bare minimum evidence of not having given up on social change as such" (259).

In the space of the reading group, the present was confronted, analysed, taken seriously but also transcended, left behind, with the collective gaze of the participants working together to unblur a vision of what could be. It wasn't a space for pragmatic solutions, but for rethinking and reformulating questions and problems. Sessions were, to build on Munoz, moments of *temporal disorganization*, "where the here and now is transcended by a then and there that could be and indeed should be" (9); a challenge to the limits that neoliberal rationality had imposed on the radical political imagination.

The Affective Output of Marxist Theoretical Labor

Feeling convinced by the ideas and the logic being articulated in the space of the reading group was important to Mounir, but equally essential was what he called the emotional factor – the therapeutic component:

> You *feel* oppression, you don't need to think about it to feel it, but *when you put words to it*, you become *empowered*. That's not because ideas empower you, but because you have a group of people with these ideas empowering you. They probably won't

> have readymade solutions, but this solidarity, I felt it, and it did help me in my life, to move away from the job I didn't like, the people who were draining me, everything and everyone I thought I owed anything to, and practicing this idea that I am legitimate, my ideas are legitimate, and other people share these ideas.

One of the most memorable reading group sessions I attended was one where Jean, a graduate student in journalism at the Lebanese University who was also balancing a full-time job at a local humanitarian NGO working with Syrian refugees, opened up about the abuse he had experienced from his family because of his sexuality. He described, to a room full of recent acquaintances, the experience of having been beaten by male relatives in front of his parents. What made him feel comfortable enough to share such a harrowing and personal story? "I hesitated before I talked about personal stuff," he told me,

> but I felt that the people in the reading group, because they understood from a *structural* perspective the thing I went through, wouldn't judge me. They understood. Before, I didn't understand things as – I'm oppressed. I used to think, *that's it*. My parents didn't accept that I'm gay, and that's it. They kicked me out, and it ends here. I didn't think that this was part of something bigger, part of misogyny and patriarchy and a number of other things.

It didn't matter to Jean whether the other participants shared his particular experience. It didn't matter to him what anybody else's sexual orientation or gender identity was, or if they shared his working class background. What mattered was that the people around him *understood*, rather than shared, his particular struggle – that they understood it as not particular at all. "The people in the Socialist Forum, they have a different story and experience. I don't need to know it, but these people share the ideas that explain or make sense of the thing I went through."

The Socialist Forum's reading groups were not strategy sessions – teleological exercises meant to result in a step-by-step manifesto to guide revolutionary change. They were spaces for discussing readings but also for telling stories through which to cultivate what Hage, following from Bourdieu, calls a "specific radical illusio: not just a conception of the world but an investment in it." Bourdieu, Hage tells us, "links illusio with a social libido because the way we invest ourselves in the social world is not only intellectual but also libidinal" ("Critical Anthropological Thought" 291).

In the Socialist Forum's case, study, to borrow from Agamben, was a means without an *immediate* end – a being with others who refused the present and the limited choices for increased inclusion it offered, developing alongside them a fidelity to this refusal bolstered by an understanding of various forms of oppression as structurally interlinked, and of democracy and politics as something akin to what Butler and Athanasiou call a collective "commitment to incessant contestation" (156). The reading group was a space for routinely performing one's (un)belonging (Butler and Athanasiou 159) to the lifeworlds enveloping and suffocating those who felt alienated by them; from ways of being, thinking and acting grounded in nation or sect, ethnicity and class, or even enlightened secular elitism. Refusal and negation were not necessarily mere forms of escape or distraction in this case, but technologies of self and collective.

"I can't talk about a utopian society or communism in a hundred years," Mounir told me,

> but I can talk about solidarity and communism as it's practiced every day. Obviously, it's not the dominant structure, *but just because it's not winning doesn't mean it's not there*. It's there every time someone cooperates with someone else, every time someone resists oppression, this is how I see it. I don't believe something is coming *that is going to sweep us all away – it's already here,* we just need to go down to its scale and work with what we have.

Borrowing theoretically from Berlant, I see the Socialist Forum's reading group as a space defined by "an attachment to the process of maintaining attachment" to the political (260); a space where, building on Munoz, a form of "affective reanimation" was routinely provoked as a means of displacing "disabling political pessimism" (9). In the space of the reading group, utopia was cultivated as a structure of feeling.

Devotees of Trotsky's notion of permanent revolution, it makes sense that the members of the Socialist Forum who designed and convened the reading groups attempted to cultivate within this space something akin to what Alain Badiou calls fidelity to *event-ness*. For Badiou, an event "refers to a real break, which destabilizes a given discursive articulation, pre-existing order" (Stavrakakis 152). Lebanon's garbage protests of 2015 could be classified as an event. Every event, however, is accompanied by the "ever-present risk of terror and absolutisation" (155). In order to avoid this, Badiou argues that political actors must cultivate what he calls fidelity to *event-ness,* rather than to a one-off event, a dedication to "a permanent democratic revolution in our political ethos, a sceptical passing that will have to be re-inscribed in every political act" (157).

This is what Badiou calls ethics, and it is in this sense that I agree with critics of the revolutionary left who claim its adherents subscribe to a primarily ethical positionality, but I disagree that it is necessarily an inert positionality, or a safe and comfortable one. On the contrary, it can be a means of routinely reaching beyond the quagmire of the present towards a "horizon imbued with potentiality" (Munoz 1). In the case of the Socialist Forum, critique was not a means of dismissing *everything*, as one of my sceptical interviewees put it, but dismissing a present that was not enough and would never be enough for these leftists, who chose to approach politics as a "critical mode of hope" (4); a striving against what Munoz calls "straight time" (17), which "tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life" (22). It was a mode of abandoning "prescriptive ends" in favour of "an opening or horizon" (Munoz 22).

It is in this sense that I argue the politics of the Socialist Forum's reading groups as utopian and queer in Munoz's sense of the term, driven constantly forward by a socialism their participants knew they would likely never touch, but whose potentiality continuously mobilized them. "Utopia is an idealist mode of critique that reminds us that there is something missing, that the present and presence is not enough," writes Munoz (100). In the negative work of critique is a positive projection forward, away from a pragmatism that imprisons one in an insufficient present.

In her work on American satire, Haugerud argues that humor's gift "is to show us that today's world can be made differently" (203). In this article, I have argued that, for participants in the Marxist reading groups I attended over the course of two years in a Beirut reeling from the supposed failure of yet another anti-status quo mobilization, this was Marxism's gift, to show that "alternatives, as unreal and absurd as they may seem to be, are not unthinkable" (Haugerud 203).

Conclusion: On Utopia and Revolution

In October of 2019, Lebanon witnessed the outbreak of revolution – a revolution demanding social and economic justice and the fall of the ruling class in its multi-confessional entirety that was, importantly, *unanticipated* by the country's well-established civil society scene.

It is, perhaps, too soon to begin analysing this revolution, which at the time of writing was still ongoing. But, I think what Lebanon has been witnessing since the outbreak of this momentous event – which at its height brought an estimated 2.8 million people into the streets of the country – is the breakdown of this opposition that had become all too common when thinking about political activism in the country: the opposition between, on the one hand, the pragmatic and technocratic, what was considered *realistic* and achievable and, on the other, what was considered heterotopic and idealistic – a mere retreat into a liminal space of pure politics with no impact on the world. The October Revolution, marked by a mass politics of refusal, by the population's overwhelming rejection of the ameliorative gestures of the state, hints at the possibility of the emergence of an approach to counter-politics from below that transcends this limiting binary.

A central question moving forward, is whether the mass politics of refusal and civil disobedience unfolding across Lebanon can be harnessed; whether non-compliance can be organised; and whether disparate *no's* can be directed towards a practice and ethos of collective, *strategic* refusal aimed not only at collapsing an unjust system but imagining and inching towards an alternative.

In discussing the affective impact of collective study, I have tried to make the case for the centrality of the radical political imagination to the sustainability of social movements – to their ability to reproduce themselves. To be clear, I have not attempted to argue that, utopian telos in hand, activists will be assured a victory, but rather, that such a victory, while not guaranteed, without a utopian imaginativeness appears impossible (Jameson 38). What the *utopian leap* allows us to do, as Jameson argues, is to better diagnose and critique the conditions oppressing us in the present. Utopia is not just a "political vision and program," but also a "critical and diagnostic instrument" (Jameson 38).

The Lebanese ruling class has long trafficked in *political disorientation* and *fragmentation*. Perhaps what is needed, then, is "the creation of spaces where political analyses and norms can be proffered and contested" (Brown "States of Injury" 49-50), and through which a radical political imaginativeness can be cultivated, a commitment to which can be productive of the comradeship and solidarity necessary for a social movement to persevere and grow.

As Hermez wrote when reflecting on Lebanon's anti-sectarian movement of 2011, "what was pervasive in Lebanon was a unique situation in which we did action alone and reflection alone, but the two were often not done together, in tandem, as part of the same master project" ("Activism as 'Part-Time' Activity" 47). What was needed, he continued, was not so much "to live or die for a cause," but rather, "to create a movement that could be sustained full-time" (Hermez 49).

Noteworthy about what was, at the time of writing, unfolding on the ground in Lebanon, was that many of the revolutionaries who previously played active roles within the country's civil society scene appeared conscious of the fact that these conversations were neglected in previous movements and moments – that such stillnesses for much needed reflection, were routinely abandoned in favour of *acting*. They have responded to this gap with con-

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certed efforts to create spaces were these conversations could unfold – where world-making could unfold in the midst of a protest or sit-in; in the midst of the revolutionary event.

It remains to be seen what will come of Lebanon's October Revolution, but it is important to point out, at this early stage, the possibilities contained in the politics of refusal that have characterised and sustained it, and the ways in which this unprecedented and unanticipated political event has demonstrated the potentiality and productivity of a negative dialectics that, in other conjunctures, might have been dismissed as counter-productive (Povinelli 190) – in short, the world-making potentiality of refusing the present and slouching towards utopia.

Notes

[1] Lebanon's garbage crisis was sparked by the closure of the Naameh garbage landfill in southeast Beirut, to which the waste of Beirut and Mount Lebanon had been sent since 1998. The landfill was forcefully closed by protestors who lived in the village, and who had become fed up with the existence of the toxic dumpsite, which was originally meant to be a temporary solution to the management of the capital's waste. The closure of the landfill coincided with the expiration of the contract between the state and Sukleen, the private waste-management company tasked with trash collection in Beirut and Mount Lebanon since 1996. In July 2015, the government decided not to renew Sukleen's contract as usual, choosing instead to invite bids from alternative waste management companies, causing garbage to pile up in the streets, pour out of bins, and fester in the summer heat (Kerbage 5).

[2] This trend towards the pragmatic and technocratic crystallized into a more cohesive political movement with the emergence of Beirut Madinati, an independent campaign of Lebanese professionals who contested Beirut's municipal elections in 2016.

[3] There is a growing body of historiographically-oriented scholarly literature that argues the need to take seriously the twentieth century Arab left by examining the problem spaces or critical political conjunctures its adherents inhabited. But the leftists who occupy what Fadi Bardawil calls our *post-Marxist conjuncture* have not been offered the same degree of scholarly attention.

[4] The Trotskyist organization was the product of the coming together of two groups – The Revolutionary Communist League, associated with the Fourth International, and the Leftist Assembly for Change, which had informal links with the International Socialist Tendency. Despite differences, most markedly a generational one between the Revolutionary Communist League, established in the 1970s and made up of leftists active during the civil war period, and the Leftist Assembly for Change (established in 2005), which was more youth-led, the groups found common ground based on their desire to build an alternative to the Stalinist rhetoric and *stage-ism* of the Lebanese Communist Party.

[5] "This group included people who were influenced by Trotsky and the so-called Fourth International. Traces of Trotskysm can be found in the work of Yassin Hafez, George Tarabishi and others who clustered around the group Arab Socialism in the early 1960s, which later developed into what Tareq Ismael, writing in 1976, called a "New Arab Left" (Haugbolle, "Bassem Chit" 67).

[6] As Fadi Bardawil explains "at the heart of Socialist Lebanon's interpretation of the [Communist] Manifesto is an argument against the historicist 'not yet' that relegates the working class and the revolutionary act to the 'waiting room' of history, to borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty, since the objective conditions of the moment are not ripe for its autonomous action" (323).

[7] When referring to members of the Socialist Forum or participants in its reading groups, I use pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

[8] As Wendy Brown notes, it is important to understand neoliberalism and its myriad instantiations as "a normative order of reason developed over three decades into a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality" ("Undoing the Demos" 10).

[9] By the good life, Brown explains, thinkers like Aristotle and Marx "did not mean luxury, leisure, or indulgence, but rather the cultivation and expression of distinctly human capacities for ethical and political freedom, creativity, unbounded reflection, or invention" ("Undoing the Demos" 43).

[10] As Lauren Berlant writes, "discussions about the contours and contents of the shared historical present are therefore always profoundly political ones, insofar as they are about what forces should be considered responsible and what crises urgent in our adjudication of survival strategies and conceptions of a better life than what the metric of survival can supply" (4).

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Neighborhood in Nablus City: The Formation of a Social Safety Network during the Siege

Noura Kamal

In 2002, Nablus City in Palestine had to face more than one siege. The first siege affected all Palestinian cities; the Israeli army invaded the Palestinian territories and imposed a curfew for around a month in April. Later the same year between June and October, the city of Nablus witnessed a siege that was characterized by immobility and destruction. No one was allowed to leave their home; to do so put their lives under threat. This paper will reflect upon the role of the neighborhood in the construction of a social safety network. This network supported the inhabitants in their struggle to confront the occupational apparatus and to practice their daily activities despite the three-month siege that was imposed by the Israeli army. This paper focuses on neighborhood relations: describing their distinctive influence on peoples' lives and reflecting on the meaning of being a neighbor, the obligations of neighbors within the same district, and how these relations manifested during the siege in 2002 and afterwards.

Keywords: Palestine, Nablus, Neighborhood, Siege, Occupation.

Introduction

What does it mean to be a neighbor in Nablus city? What impact do social relations have on coping with the Israeli curfew that was imposed on the families living in the city in 2002 and in the years that followed? During my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013 in Nablus, a city in Palestine, I had the chance to meet families and individuals from differing backgrounds. It was striking to me that despite their different backgrounds they had the same reaction to the mention of the word *siege*, which was *allah lā yʿīdha min ayyām* (Hope that God will never let those days return). Their conversations made it clear that their memories still have a major influence on their actions and daily behavior.

At that time and in the years after, I kept communicating with people and families in Nablus. I used different approaches to be able to gather adequate data that reflects the reality from within. Participant observation and narrative interviews were my main tools to gain in-depth information about the daily life of the inhabitants. Meeting individuals, families, men, and women from different backgrounds and places in the city allowed me to delve deeply into the quotidian life of the people. In time, I was able to develop a strong relationship with them and gain their trust, which I cherish deeply until today. Not

only did they welcome me in their homes and share their experiences during and after the siege, they also included me in their daily life by telling me stories that can hardly be found in the literature. People's narratives and their stories can provide us with vital knowledge about human relations.

Everyone's story reflects his or her individual ways of dealing with the past. On the one hand, its consequences can still be detected easily in the present by looking at the continuing Israeli occupation and the deteriorating economic situation. On the other hand, empty spaces where buildings once stood or demolished houses and many other damaged buildings can be seen in the different areas of the old city which are: Al-Yasmīneh, Al-Gharb, Al-Qaryūn, Al-'Aqaba, Al-Qīsariyyeh, and al-Ḥabaleh and are a further reminder to people of the suffering they experienced.

The first siege was when the Israeli army invaded all Palestinian cities in April 2002 for around a month. Later, also in 2002, Nablus was invaded again for three months. During those days, no one was allowed to leave their home without putting lives under threat. Daily activities were forbidden due to the restrictions on mobility. People were allowed to leave their houses only every now and then for a few hours. It was impossible to practice simple activities, such as going to work or buying from shops, since everything was closed. What is fascinating is that the city seemed like a ghost town, but in reality, people were able to continue practicing their lives under the surface. Even though no one was allowed to move, people were still able to sneak to their shops with each other's help without being seen by the soldiers. Even schools continued to run in each neighborhood, where all students were gathered and the teachers took on the responsibility to teach them. They were able to contact each other by calling at home and exchanging information about the location of the soldiers. Knowing the exact places allowed the inhabitants to move from home to home or to their workshops without the soldiers seeing them. The inhabitants of Nablus were able to continue this pattern until the long siege came to an end.

The uniqueness of the city of Nablus is manifested in the social relations that exist among its inhabitants. This paper reflects on how the inhabitants were able to survive such a long curfew by relying mainly on their social network. Doumani illustrates that it is challenging to comprehend how the inhabitants of Nablus managed to stand together during the hard times: "The short explanation is that historical forms of solidarity and social networks, especially on the family and neighborhood levels, have combined with well-organized popular committees on the grassroots level to provide the minimum necessary degree of social cohesion" (Doumani, "Scenes from Daily Life" 1).

These social relations were the main factor promoting survival during the siege. Kinship ties were also important, but this paper will shed light on neighborhood relations, which became part of what I call the "pillars of resilience" (Kamal 38). According to Hastrup (106), resilience is "an emergent quality of all responsible social action; it is the rule and not the exception of social life, given that all societies must demonstrate a degree of flexibility to operate and ultimately to survive". The pillars of resilience are tradition, religion, kinship, and neighborhood, the combination of which helped individuals survive in the wider context, through support and inner relief. Altogether, the pillars led to the formation of a wide social safety network that individuals were able to rely on during the siege. Each one of the pillars is explained in different papers I will publish separately.[1]

One of these articles (Kamal, "Nablus Under Siege") analyzes religiosity, kinship, and the creation of resilience. It provides a deep insight into the concept of resil-

ience and its origins (Leslie and McCabe 116; Hastrup 28; Berkes and Turner 487; Holling 14; Alexander 2708). In addition, it highlights the specificity of the term in the Palestinian context and how it has evolved over the course of the 20th and 21st century. Furthermore, resilience's inherent link to the Palestinian concept of *ṣumud* (steadfastness) must not be underestimated (Thoburn 378; Rijke and Teeffelen 86; Meari 549; Schiocchet 3).

This paper focuses on the fourth pillar: neighborhood in Nablus. This article reflects upon neighborhood relations in Nablus and their role in the formation of the social safety network during the siege. It does so by describing their distinctive influence on peoples' lives, the meaning of being a neighbor, and the obligations of neighbors within the same district. This aspect links to Bourdieu's reflection on social practices, which he sees as "a set of dispositions that generate practices and perceptions. The habitus is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense or a second nature'" (5). In Nablus City, daily practices are embedded within the perception of how duties and obligations towards family and neighbors should be manifested through rituals and occasional practices. These regular practices in Nablus can be considered distinct social processes that contribute to the formation of neighborhood ties. From this perspective, this paper will delve with an ethnographic lens into what neighborhood means in the context of Nablus City during times of crisis and insecurity.

A reflection upon Nablus City

The city of Nablus is located between two mountains, Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, and lies to the north of Jerusalem/al-Quds. Nablus is situated within area "A" following the Oslo agreement.[2] It played an important role in history (Al-Zarū 36-37) and witnessed various different rulers (e.g. Roman, Turkish, British, and Israeli occupation). Due to its continuous active resistance to Israeli occupation,[3] it was separated from other Palestinian cities by several occupation methods, mainly military checkpoints.[4] Historically, Nablus City is considered a hub of resistance, as Beshara Doumani explains: "Nabulsis are proud of their city's epithet, the 'Mountain of Fire', an appellation deriving from a local legend that Napoleon, upon approaching Nablus, met his defeat when the inhabitants set forests and olive groves ablaze, burning the French soldiers. The legend speaks about one of the traditions for which the Nablus region is famous: it is a center of resistance to outside control" ("Scenes from Daily Life" 46).

Since *An-Naksa* (the setback)[5] and during the Israeli occupation, the inhabitants of the city lost their land and their basic rights. While I was sitting with an old man in his 70s in his family house, he remarked: "I was outside of Palestine when it fell under the Israeli occupation in June 1967. When I entered Palestine and saw the Israeli flag I started to cry." This man was not crying merely for a lost plot of land. His deep sorrow was caused by the loss of the rest of Palestine in the 20 years since *An-Nakba*[6] (disaster, catastrophe). As Taraki explains:

> The consequences of the Nakba in 1948 and the military occupation in 1967 have been far-reaching and must be brought into the analysis of family and household dynamics. Statelessness, economic dependency on Israel, water and land confiscation, the marginalization of agriculture, migration to oil states and beyond, and arrested urbanization are only some of the more salient aspects of this condition (…). The lives of individuals as well as households and the families they belong to have been affected in myriad ways by this overpowering reality. (Living Palestine, xiii-xiv)

The Palestinians' struggle continued over the years, whether by direct resistance to

the occupation (the First Intifada7 in 1987-1993) or by official negotiations.

Since the Oslo agreement in 1993, the economic and political situation has not improved people's living conditions, as Dag Lonning explains based on his fieldwork in Palestine from 1994 to 1995 and further prolonged fieldwork in 1996:

> The reality I faced was a people trying to survive in the midst of economic deprivation, closures and humiliation, as well as desperation and political frustration, all in the name of something their political negotiating partner, to some extent even their own leaders, as well as large parts of the international community called peace. (162-163)

Authors such as Dag Lonning (162-163) and Edward Said (13) confirm that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has not been able to fulfill its people's needs over the past two decades. Additionally, many people confirmed this during my fieldwork, emphasizing that the economic situation before the establishment of the PA was better.

The creation of the Palestinian Authority misled observers into thinking that the occupation had come to an end, but in fact, occupational practices became even more severe and destructive for Palestinian lives. When the Israeli siege started in April 2002, the inhabitants of Nablus faced brutal, new, previously unaccustomed techniques. Amal[8], who lives in the old city, told me about her experiences while we were walking through its alleys: "I did not expect the invasion to be like that. I remember during the First Intifada that, although Israeli soldiers were everywhere, we confronted them and lived our lives and went to work, but this time was so scary and death was everywhere."

Despite the continuous social, economic, and political resistance to the Israeli occupation, the invasion in 2002 was the peak of the violence. There were no longer normal means to vent the frustration the people felt as a result of the three-month-long siege. The social situation in the old city was heavily influenced by Israeli violence. Over the years since the First Intifada, many families left and moved to new houses outside of the old city. Many of those who stayed in the old city are poor. The social system in the city stimulated the rise of a social space under the siege by recreating strong ties among the community. The harsh living conditions due to the absence of a stable economic situation as a result of a continuous blockade of the city's border by the Israeli army for many years after the siege meant that it was difficult to maintain close relations in the same way as before. However, people managed to maintain their social relations, mainly their neighborhood ties, because they know that without their neighbors and relatives they will lose their social safety net. At the back of their minds, people believe that the Palestinian Authority is weak and unable to protect its own people.

Despite the obstacles they faced and face, the support they found from each other gave the people a somewhat positive outlook on life. Lisa Taraki explains that families in Palestine are characterized by being able to cope with the apparently unbearable situations imposed on them by the practices of the Israeli army ("Enclave Micropolis" 6). The city's customs and social relations were and still are a powerful tool in constructing its uniqueness. People care about their families and their informal social networks, which have become a main way of overcoming the difficulties they are facing. Even the Jewish Samaritan community (Schreiber 1)[9] that Nablus is famous for lives in harmony with the Christians and Muslims, reflecting the unity among the city's residents regardless of their affiliation. The norms and traditions were and still are stronger than the negative influence of the political situation. Such harmony reflects the particularity of Nablus City, in contrast to other Arab

countries where sectarian disputes have become a destructive force (for example Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon).

Experiencing the city may be described best in the words of one inhabitant: "We love to walk inside the old city, especially in the morning when everyone is starting to open their shops and lay out their products to attract buyers." These are the words of one of the residents who lives outside the old city, but I heard the same opinion from others I met during my fieldwork. After spending time with them, it became clear that, despite what they had gone through, they were still attached to their city. As one of the residents put it:

> "We love to live and we will live even if the situation is bad. This is our way of struggling and fighting the occupation: by living our life, going to work and school, and having fun."

Siham, who once lived inside the old city and moved out to live in the surrounding area, commented:

> "I came to the library today through the old city alleys; the roads are the soul – the smell of food was everywhere, the bread, the sweets, *hummus*, and *falafel*. All the smells are amazing."

Her colleague replied:

> I love the feeling when I walk in the morning in the alleys of the old city. I hear the owners of the shops pray for God to provide them with livelihood, and I said to myself, "Amen." Such a beautiful feeling. Seeing them put their products in front of their shops and each of them cleaning his shop, others bringing water to clean the space near their work, each of them having a good start and saying some prayers to comfort the soul. (Ayshe)

The dialogue between the two colleagues speaking with passion about their city and their feelings while watching the morning rituals of the people reveals the people's rootedness in their city. Not only this conversation, however, showed this deep-rootedness. I hardly met anyone who did not express the warmth they felt toward each other - the inhabitants - during their daily interaction, whether formal or not.

The absence of a welfare system in Palestine can be considered an influential variable for the strong informal relations among the inhabitants. As Safadi and Easton explain in their study of the evolution of the social welfare system in Palestine: "The inherited welfare programs focused on providing basic services for specific groups rather than enhancing the citizens' welfare" (58). In Nablus, cohesion and social ties played the important role of keeping people together during the siege. According to James Moody and Douglas White (5), cohesion creates connectedness. From this perspective, cohesion in Nablus is reflected in neighborhood relations, religious beliefs, and, most importantly, local kinship relations, which are manifested over many years through different kinds of social, economic, and religious practices, such as *A'shaʿ būnīye,*[10] *Al-ʿīdīye,*[11] and *Al-nuʾūṭ.*[12] These practices are not temporary; on the contrary, they lead to the establishment of strong, well-founded relations. This links to Appadurai's explanation of neighborhood as a multiplex interpretive site. His view is that "neighbourhood is a context, or a set of contexts, within which meaningful social action can be both generated and interpreted" (184). Neighborhood relations can be strengthened through daily relations among the inhabitants and the rituals they exercise during the year. This point of view brings us to Bourdieu and his explanation of the harmonization of experiences among individuals and the support they obtain through their participation in individual and collective activities:

> One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a common sense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning *(sens)* of practices and the world, in the other

> words the harmonization of agents' experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives from the expression, individual or collective (in festivals, for example), improvised or programmed (commonplaces, sayings), of similar or identical experiences. The homogeneity of habitus is what within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production - causes practices and works to be immediately ineligible and foreseeable. (80)

Such an important reflection on both neighborhood and cohesion provides us with an understanding that connectedness, the harmonization of agents' experiences, and meaningful social action all contribute to the formation of strong neighborhood ties. The following section will reflect upon this point by providing an ethnographic example from the field.

Neighborhood: the compassionate community

> "Your nearby neighbor rather than your far brother." (Palestinian proverb)
>
> "The neighbor before the house." (Palestinian proverb emphasizing the importance of inquiring about future neighbors before buying a house)

During a visit to an employee of the Palestinian Medical Relief Committee (PMRS), Lana, a doctor in the PMRS in her fifties, recalled the days of the siege by focusing on social relations. When she was informed about the scope of this research, she explained with a smile that people could not enjoy eating any meal knowing that one of their neighbors needed something. She said:

> It was the time when the siege gathered us in a good way (…) We used to cook together; there was a lot of food we used to store in our refrigerator that started to rot due to the lack of electricity. Days were without electricity and we had to manage our life. So, in order not to throw food away we gathered all the neighbors, so that nothing would be thrown away. (Lana)

Relations within the neighborhood *(ḥāra or ḥayy)* are considered a duty for better or worse. The notion of neighborhood is connected to the concept of "closeness", which "carries contextual meanings that range imperceptibly from asserted and recognized ties of kinship to participation in factional alliances, ties of patronage and clientship, and common bonds developed through neighborliness" (Eickelman 146). This connection to closeness highlights the duties that rest upon people within the same *ḥāra*. Neighbors are obliged to share joyful moments and to be supportive of each other in hard times. For example, at weddings, the families of the bride and groom are expected to invite not only relatives and friends, but also their neighbors. The number of invitees is large, so the wedding costs a lot of money. The invited guests are expected to give money to the bride and the groom as a present, in addition to being an indirect support to cover some of the couple's expenses. In this sense, kinship and neighborhood relations to some extent intersect, which connects with what Linda Stone says: "that it is part of human ideology relationship" (6). Kinship and neighborhood cannot really be separated from each other. This is in line with the theoretical position developed by Eickelman (140), who insists that in Middle Eastern societies the analytical separation of kinship from other social spheres does not make sense. Rather, kin ties are culturally linked with other forms of social proximity in the notion of *qaraba* (closeness).

Even if social relations can be costly, it makes sense for the inhabitants to make an effort for others and show care, as this

keeps the tradition alive within their daily interactions. This aspect can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's illustration of reproduction theory. Cultural capital refers to the cultural codes and practices that parents transmit, which become like a long-term investment. These practices are usually transmitted to children through the process of family socialization, or in Bourdieu's term, habitus (qtd. in Tzanakis 77).

> The structure which has produced it governs practice, not by the processes of a mechanical determinism, but through the mediation of the orientations and limits it assigns to the habitus's operations in invention. As an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted, the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others. (Bourdieu 95)

Bourdieu's main focus is on the relations between education, family, and social class and how education plays a vital role in the reproduction of social inequality. His perspective can also help explain how rituals and daily practices among the Nabulsis were essential in reproducing social ties in the same pattern among family members and their offspring to some extent. Peoples' pasts tell us that showing care and support for neighbors reflects the manners they uphold, and these behaviors are passed on from generation to generation and reproduce themselves throughout the years. Such behaviors are always challenged by political and economic circumstances. A woman reported that, before the First Intifada in 1987, any new neighbor used to be invited for dinner as a welcome to the neighborhood and to get to know each other. "They are neighbors and we should know our neighbors," she said.

Taking a short tour of the old city helps us understand what *neighborhood* means to people and how their relationship continuously recreates the same space over the years. On one field trip I took around the old city with Ibtisam,[13] she knocked on a door and called out the name of the woman who lived behind it. The woman did not reply, so Ibtisam simply opened the door and called the name of the woman again until she came and welcomed us, although we had come without an appointment. This incident reflects how people in the neighborhood are aware of each other's daily habits and can act upon them.

Another example: when the Israeli army invaded the city, the soldiers destroyed the shop doors, leaving them open to robbery. Neighbors looked after the shops and protected them - as Salim, a Nabulsi citizen, did when he took hundreds of dollars from a moneychanger's shop and kept them until he met the owner after the first siege was over. The owner lived in a village near Nablus and had not been able to take the money with him.

Why should Salim have been concerned about his neighbor's shop during an unpredictable situation when it was hard to move around? He could have taken the money for himself or even have left it and focused on his own business. Is it an ethical commitment to look out for others whenever they need assistance? Or is it a beneficial relation of giving and taking? Or is it the power of religious beliefs that remind people that they are "one body", as the Prophet Muhammad said (Al-Bukhārī 1279).

Whether it is an ethical commitment or a religious influence, it definitely reshapes peoples' behavior as part of the extended group in their daily lives that arises from the obligation towards each other. If someone is in need of medicine or food from his or her neighbor's pharmacy or shop, the neighbor is ethically obliged to give it to him for free, until he is able to pay

it back. This also links to *Ḥaqq al-šafʿa* (preemption), an obligation (under Sharia law) towards the neighbors that dictates that nobody can sell their house or land to a stranger without first asking their neighbors if they want to buy it. Such an obligation outlines neighbors' ties towards one another and is still a practice today.

In terms of religion, since their childhood at school, the inhabitants of Nablus have learned certain verses of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's sayings (Hadīth) by heart, which they mostly follow and circulate among their families and neighbors. They often tell each other that the Prophet commanded them to take care of their neighbors, and they repeat what is mentioned in the Quran (Abdel Haleem 54) when asked why they should be concerned about their neighbors:

> Worship God; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents, to relatives, to orphans, to the needy, to neighbours near and far, to travellers in need, and to your slaves. God does not like arrogant, boastful people. (An-Nisā' 36)

These verses were translated by the families into traditional practices that defined their way of reshaping their space, which brings us back to Bourdieu's comment regarding practices and their discourse:

> It would thus be possible to move on the ground where talk of rules seems least misplaced, that of custom or "pre-law", and show that the "customary rules" preserved by the group memory are themselves the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations, without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit principles. (16)

Bourdieu's analysis exemplifies that daily habits have the ability to construct a coherent relationship through the interactions among families, individuals, and neighbors. For example, if a neighbor cooks a meal that is not easy to prepare, the woman sends a dish of it to her nearby neighbor. Or if someone has lost a member of their family, neighbors become their main support during the period of mourning. They are expected to cook for them, take good care of them and to welcome people who come to show their respect and condolences to the family during the days of morning. On the whole, neighbors are expected to stay in contact all the time.

These kinds of strong ties manifested themselves during the siege through the establishment of popular committees (Kamal 50). During the siege in 2002, the families in Nablus City formed a wide social network to take care of each neighborhood in Nablus. Each neighborhood came under the responsibility of a well-known and respected person to keep in contact with all the families in case they needed any supplies. In addition to that, the popular committees[14] also embodied the social spirit, which could be seen in the initiatives of individuals to contribute to the wider network. For example, Siham, a woman in her forties who lives outside the old city, reported that even though her family did not have close relations with their neighbors, they still offered them their assistance. Siham's parents' house was one of the few houses in Nablus where the electricity was not cut off during the siege. They linked a power cable to their neighbors' houses, despite the increased charges they would have to pay. Additionally, some of her family members from a nearby village sneaked in during the opening hours of the siege and provided the family with vegetables, bread, and other essentials, which they shared with their neighbors.

Of course, there are certain variables that have an influence on the neighbors' relationship. Personal interests and achieving social and political status are also motives behind the concern for social relations. The better someone's reputation and

relations with their neighbors, the more they can achieve in public life. For example, people who belong to a political party or want to be elected to the municipality communicate with their neighbors regularly, making positive gestures and showing good intentions to others. I was introduced to one local member of a political party who is very active on the social level: he constantly follows up on the living conditions of his neighbors and contacts donors who are willing to cover the needs of the poor, especially during Ramadan. Many people who live outside the old city contact him because of his reputation for trustworthiness, which he has established over the past thirty years. Staying in touch with his neighbors and people from other areas in the old city, especially by informing outsiders about who is in need, gives him social status and helps make him an influential member of his party. Being part of the community means creating powerful relations that can be used during elections.

Nablus is a place where nothing can be hidden, and because of this, people are aware of how they behave and interact with others. They care very much about their reputations, so even if there are families who are reluctant to help their neighbors, most likely they will. Not offering assistance to people around them is unacceptable behavior among the people of Nablus. A woman told a story about a family who was forced to stay at their neighbor's house after Israeli soldiers took their home and turned it into a military checkpoint. The neighbors did not show proper hospitality and lacked Arab hospitality manners *(Ḥusn al-Ḍiyāfa)*, as the woman reported. This family became stigmatized for this. Although a long time has passed since the siege, this story and other stories about those who did not show a good attitude during the hard times became well known among the residents and have had an enduring effect on reputations. This means that social, commercial, and marriage relations will be affected in negative ways. People who do not follow the customary law of hospitality and do not behave in a communal way will be considered untrustworthy. Their neighbors will not keep close social and commercial connections with them.

Of course, not everyone is a good neighbor. Disputes can be found everywhere, but living in such a community means behaving in a certain way, because neighbors share one place that belongs to all of them. In addition, during the siege, the inhabitants activated their social life and kinship relations in positive ways, which marginalized their usual disputes. Regardless of the disputes that may arise from time to time among neighbors, the existence of relations became an important means of overcoming emotional and material difficulties. It is impressive how they moved around during the siege and maintained social ties despite the threat. The same behavior was practiced by people during the siege: cooking together, visiting each other without the soldiers seeing them, staying together for hours, and calling their friends and neighbors regularly. People tried to keep socializing despite the mobility restrictions and moving whenever the chance allowed them. When I asked families how they could not only survive physically, but also to take good care of their mental and emotional well-being during and after the siege, they told me that their relations with neighbors became even closer. They became closer to one another by sharing their fears and sorrows and talking about them whenever they met.

Neighborhood as a distinctive space

In comparison with other cases in Palestine, Asia, and much of the rest of the world, in Nablus the neighborhood can be considered a significant feature. For example, Patricia Lawrence visited a house in a village in Sri Lanka and reported a housewife's words:

The lines between who is friend and

> who is enemy have become impossible to draw. She had lived long enough to remember the period before the war with deep nostalgia. She lamented, "Now the people have a stone heart." When there is crying and shouting next door in the night, people in this village can't go over and ask, "Why are you crying?" because we don't know if the LTTE or the army is there. (176)

Several studies of Sri Lanka that deal with suffering and violence have not gone on to take a deeper look into neighborhood relations, which might be interesting to study in various political contexts (Spencer, "On not Becoming a 'Terrorist'" 120; Perera, "Spirit Possessions and Avenging Ghosts" 157). However, the example shows that the complicated relations in Sri Lankan society can hardly be considered a social safety net as they are in Nablus city.

Another case studied by Mamphela Ramphele in South Africa deals with the development of young people's identity as gendered individuals and their belonging to their families and communities. She mentions: "Violence against children is a serious problem in South Africa. (…) during 1993-94 officially reported child rape cases increased by 63 percent from 1993 (…) an estimated 85 percent of the survivors of child rape know their attackers well - family members, friends, neighbors and baby-sitters" ("Teach Me How to Be a Man" 103). This study describes the fragile relations within the community and how they affected the younger generations.

Of course, there are different reasons behind the suffering in these two cases. Sri Lanka went through a long civil war, which was not the case in Nablus. The violence against children in South Africa highlights how neighbors can hardly be trusted, which is also the opposite in Nablus. However, the comparison illustrates how relations of trust among families in the city can in turn create strong social cohesion. This brings me to Doumani (*Rediscovering Palestine* 66), with his emphasis on the importance of cultural capital as the element that maintains relations of trust among people. One of the reasons for the existence of these relations and their distinctive influence on peoples' lives is that most of the people are either closely or distantly related. During fieldwork, many people confirmed to me that inhabitants are relatives, which is called *Nasāyeb* - marrying not only within the same family (cousins' marriage), which is a big trend in Palestine (Taraki, "Living Palestine" xxv). In addition, the sons of the family usually live near or in the same neighborhood as their natal families. The inhabitants know each other by name; they know the family background and all the personal details of those who live in the neighborhood.

In spite of disputes in the city (which mainly encompass inheritance issues that I will not deal with in this article), during hard times families overcome their disputes and unite against the external violence imposed on them. In this regard, I often recall the words of one of the residents: "Having one destiny leads to unity." Maintaining their social relations with families and neighbors was a strong element in facing the siege, which is related to what Appadurai says about production: "It involves the assertion of socially (often ritually) organized power over places and settings that are viewed as potentially chaotic or rebellious" (183-184). One of the residents told me that he and his brother had not had any contact due to a family dispute. But during the siege, forced to stay in his home like a prisoner for an extended time, he became worried about his brother. He had heard about another family, the Al-Sho'bi[15] family, that was buried alive. The first thing he did when the citizens were allowed to leave their homes to get food was to look for his brother to be sure he was still alive.

In Nablus City, neighborhood also has its particularity as a major socio-economic network. To an extent, traditional practices

are a strong influence on such relations. According to Beshara Doumani:

> The internal dynamics of these networks changed over time. But, in form if not in substance, their continuity provided Nabulsis with a shared sense of social norms. Although changing and not always followed, these norms served as a set of common reference points that helped define what it meant to be a Nabulsi. It is precisely the constant reproduction of these networks over time and space that imparted to Nablus its unique character as a conservative interior trade and manufacturing town in which family dynamics have long dominated social and political relations and in which merchants played, and continue to play, a leading role in economic and cultural life. Indeed, it can be argued that the remarkable continuity in habits and forms of social organization in Nablus was rooted in the daily rituals and practices which knit the participants of each network into a tightly woven and resilient social fabric. (*Rediscovering Palestine* 56)

The concept of neighborhood in Nablus is characterized by the pattern of social relations that transcend generations. These relations are preserved through rituals and traditional customs that are practiced over the years, as mentioned earlier. The neighborhood can be considered a public space, which according to Jürgen Habermas is where public thoughts, values, ideas, and opinions can be formulated and integrated with each other (Habermas et al. 50).

To conclude, the peculiarity of neighborhood in Nablus is manifested through the shaping of the inhabitants' relations in which individuals, families, and their memories are all integrated. Regularly taking part in rituals and practices leads to the establishment of a social public space within each neighborhood.

Conclusion

Neighborhood relations in Nablus City had a vital influence on the way people survived the siege in 2002. Through ethnographic analysis and social and political contextualization, this article outlined the importance and role of neighborhood relations in the construction of a social safety network. Several ethnographic examples and how they link to the wider social and political framework are presented. These ethnographic examples not only deal with the situations that people had to confront, but also echo an everyday life pattern of neighborhood relations. To understand the distinctive concept of the neighborhood in the construction of social safety networks, the article analyzes its origins and the meaning of the concept for the inhabitants.

The kinship and neighborhood relations have reproduced themselves over generations; they have an immense influence on social relations as a whole and still play a major role in individuals' behavior and practices. They became a source for creating survival strategies during and after the siege. Traditional practices were used to keep people together, and this enabled people to interact on a daily basis until the siege was over. They meanwhile supported one another through shared activities. Their mutual obligations predetermined the way they protected and helped each other, regardless of whether they were in a dispute or not. These practices and beliefs based on what they had learned and experienced from their own culture became the main toolkit of survival.

The way people cope with the suffering imposed on them shows how they situate themselves in different roles among their family, neighbors, and friends. People's behavior and activity as individuals was an important variable in society. This had an impact on the social network, in terms of being part of both the private and public spheres. This highlights the fact that "the notion of agency thus implies that the

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people know that they act, even if they do not necessarily know the consequences of their act" (Eriksen 52). It is important to remember that the notion of agency is a result of internal and external influences on people's lives.

In the end, the article gives an overview of the city of Nablus and its historical background in order to highlight the reasons that led to the creation of strong social ties in general and neighborhood relations in particular. In addition, the paper illustrates how such patterns of relations were reflected in daily practices among the inhabitants of the city and during the siege in 2002. The meanings and the distinctive influence of neighborhood relations on peoples' lives are important in order to understand resilience in political and social upheavals. The obligations and duties among neighbors reflect that society can play the role of official institutions as a survival strategy, especially when the Palestinian Authority is not able function properly under the continuous occupation.

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Notes

[1] *Anthropos*, in print: "Nablus Under Siege: in print Religiosity and the creation of resilience." Article under review: *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies:* "A Palestinian City under Siege: Women's involvement in reconciliation with the past experience."

[2] On September 13, 1993, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Israeli state signed the Oslo Agreement, which was supposed to end the Israeli occupation, but in fact divided the West Bank into various "areas", A B, and C. The PA has full control in area A, whereas area B is jointly controlled, and area C in the West Bank is 70% under Israeli control. For more information, please see the map of the Oslo Accord division of West Bank and Gaza (Chomsky 281).

[3] All Palestinian territories were under occupation since 1967.

[4] Nablus had experienced closure for nine years (2000-2009), when no one could normally enter or leave the city. This meant walking through the rough hills and mountains to enter or leave the city; the main route was across Mount Gerizim in Nablus.

[5] The term designates the Six-Day War in 1967, when the West Bank of Palestine fell under Israeli occupation.

[6] *An-Nakba* is a Palestinian term meaning catastrophe and referring to the 1948 expulsion of Palestinians, when 750,000-800,000 were forced out of their homes.

[7] According to Lori Allen, "The first intifada (Arabic, 'shaking off') against the occupation began in 1987. Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had begun in 1967, and for Palestinians it meant military rule and a lack of civil, political, and human rights. Home demolitions, detention of political prisoners without trial, torture, and extensive land confiscations all characterized Israel's occupation. Israel built hundreds of settlements throughout the Occupied Territories, erected on land confiscated from Palestinians" (Allen 454).

[8] Amal is not her real name. All the interviewees' names in this project were changed for reasons of ethnographic anonymity and safety. The method of communication was personal meetings. I met each one of my interviewees on regular bases and had long conversions in addition to observing them during their daily lives. All the interviews were conducted in the period of June to December 2012 and July to September 2013.

[9] The Samaritan community lives on Mount Gerizim or Jirzīm. "This is one of the smallest minorities in the world. Most of them live in the City of Nablus in Palestine. As a small minority with a main interest to survive, and to reserve its identity and heritage, the Samaritans do their best to keep their neutrality and good relations with all powers and factions in the region. (…) The Samaritans in Nablus are in harmony with the Palestinian society…" (Yousef, Barghouti 34).

[10] *A'shaʿbūnīye* is an invitation among family members in *Sha'ban* (a month in Islamic calendar) before Ramadan. It is a way to show closeness and to celebrate the coming of Ramadan together. This tradition is linked to the people in Nablus.

[11] *Al-ʿīdīye* is a sum of money that uncles and aunts give to their nieces and nephews and that brothers give to their sisters on the first day of the *Eid* (Muslim festival).

[12] *Al-nuʿūṭ* is a sum of money that relatives, neighbors, and friends give to a newly married couple.

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→ [13] During this research, I made several tours of the old city of Nablus with Amal in particular, who lives there, in addition to others such as Ibtisam, whom I mentioned earlier, and Om Salman.

[14] Popular communities were established in 2000 when the second Intifada was broken. During the siege, they played a vital role in supporting the people in Nablus. The popular communities comprise an informal network in which each individual belongs to a different geographic area, in order to connect with people in the same area to find out about their needs and provide them with medical and food supplies when necessary. In addition, informal institutions also took part in such communities (Kamal 48-49).

[15] When I was starting my desk research in the Nablus municipal library archives, an employee there told me: "There is a horrific story: the whole Al-Sho'bi family was buried alive(…)" This story actually reveals the extent of fear and violence the inhabitants were facing.

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REVIEW

Īlāf Badr al-Dīn: ʿIndama hatafū "li-l-abad". Lughat al-thawra al-sūriyya (When They Chanted "Forever": The Language of the Syrian Revolution)

Areej Allawzi

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A collection of six chapters and a probing introduction by author Eylaf Bader Eddin make up the journey of *When They Chanted „Forever": The Language of The Syrian Revolution*. This book marks the first attempt to examine the features of the linguistic discourse used during the Syrian revolution, as referred to by the author, which started in 2011. The main period of the discussed language of the revolution is 2011-2012. It records the manifestations and the turning points in the development of the visual, audio, and linguistic discourse of this revolution. The importance of this work is that it discusses the cultural material produced during the time of the Syrian revolution. It also forms an unprecedented scholarly work that studies the two opposing types of discourse of the pro-Assad regime, during the pre-revolutionary period, and the anti-Assad regime during the first year of the revolution. A similar work entitled *Translating Egypt's Revolution: The Language of Tahrir* and edited by Samia Mehrez translates the archive of the Egyptian revolution. The contributors to this edited volume have translated a significant amount of cultural production during the time of the Egyptian revolution such as chants, banners, poems, and interviews, as well as presidential speeches. Their translations are informed by the cultural turn in translation studies and the nuanced role of the translator as negotiator between texts and cultures (Mehrez 15). Mehrez's book highlights the importance of translation in understanding how events have transformed Egypt during the revolution. Similarly, Bader Eddin's book, also within the context of the Arab spring, provides an account of the events changing Syria by discussing the discourse of the revolution, particularly, in 2011-2012.

Bader Eddin starts his work with a quote from Samuel Beckett's *Unnamable*:

No, they have nothing to fear, I am walled around with their vociferations, non will ever hear me say it, I won't say it, I can't say it, I have no language but theirs, no, perhaps I'll say it, even with their language (15).

The Unnamable is a monologue told by an unnameable narrator. It is a story to find one's identity, to define one's self and to examine the role of language in defining one's self (Nojoumian 387-388). The pronoun *they* in this epigraph may be taken to refer to the Syrian revolutionist who, according to the author, have nothing to fear and whose chants are vociferous against tyranny. Bader Eddin appears to determine his sense of belonging when he dedicates his book „to my Syria about which and for which I am writing, hoping to return to it" (17). By writing this book and

giving a voice to the voiceless, the author undergoes identity formation that results in positioning himself with the revolutionists. This is demonstrated when he states in the first few pages of the book that he refers to the political upheaval in Syria as a "revolution", bringing along an association with the political standpoint of the author that he is against the Assad regime (23).

The author investigates language as a distinctive feature of one society; the Syrian in this case. He observes the changes that happened to the language in light of the changes in the political, social, cultural and economic structure of the society and within the context of the Arab Spring. The book begins with the hypothesis that Syrians were forced to obey the regime not only through physical and material violence, but also through exercising a linguistic type of violence. It, thus, explains how language is used as a tool of coercion.

Bader Eddin uses Pierre Bourdieu's notions of symbolic capital and habitus as a main approach to the interaction between symbolic products and individuals owning these products within the Syrian public space.

A less complex framework could have been used in his study, such as Mona Baker's narrative theory. This theory provides a flexible framework since it moves beyond adopting either a single approach to translation like race, gender or religion or a binary approach like Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization. Baker's theory offers different potential strategies translators can choose from and that provide several interpretations of real life events and incidents.

To understand social reality, Bourdieu proposes his key concept of *field*, with a number of other related concepts, e.g. *capital*, and *habitus*, as an alternative approach towards understanding the social world. This alternative approach emphasizes the relation between the agent and the social structure. In this regard, symbolic capital is defined as "a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability" (Bourdieu 291). Symbolic capital is formed based on prestige and recognition. Bourdieu explains that symbolic capital has many forms including social, cultural, linguistic, and scholastic capital (291). In his book, Bader Eddin, particularly, uses linguistic capital to examine the linguistic heritage of the Baath Party. By using this Bourdieuan concept, the author also examines the struggle of linguistic goods between the system of linguistic structure adopted by Assad regime, reflected in its slogans, banners and songs on the one hand, and the system of the revolutionists' linguistic structure adopted against the regime on the other. Hence, Bader Eddin uses symbolic capital to analyze the discourse produced by the Syrian regime and the counter discourse generated by Syrian revolutionists standing against the regime. Using the concept of symbolic capital explains how language has been used as a linguistic tool of coercion by the regime. Bader Eddin further elaborates by providing the example of the book *Ka-dhalika qāla al-Asad* (Thus Spoke Al-Assad) which praises the Assad regime and thus, reading and promoting this book is a symbol of loyalty to the Syrian regime.

Bader Eddin, also applies Bourdieu's concept of public space; that is, the space in which the interaction between different agents take place (Bourdieu 107). This space, Bader Eddin argues, is dominated by the regime in Syria. Yet, since the beginning of the revolution, people started creating a new linguistic discourse in the social space, to resist the Assad regime. The resulting fierce conflict between the Assad regime and revolutionists, over dominating the public space and using it to promote each party's agenda, is thoroughly discussed by the author in his book. The concept of public space has helped Bader Eddin to see the reality of the conflict between the two parties, the

regime and the revolutionists. It becomes a battlefield where two symbolic commodities compete: the language of the present produced by the revolutionists and the language of the past that has always dominated the Syrian sub-consciousness. For example, the anthem of the Baath party that is recited at schools every morning. The language of the past reflects the history of the Syrian individual who was exposed to slogans and expressions under the Assad regime. This tendency by individuals, belonging to different social classes, to invoke different language expressions and structures in practice is a form of habitus that Bader Eddin uses as a tool to analyze the dominant language in the eras of Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad. He uses habitus as an analytical tool to study the dominant language of Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad as well as the revolutionary language in the first year of the revolution.

Habitus means a structure of durable and transposable dispositions that are responsible for creating reactions suitable for different situation (Bourdieu 53). Habitus affects daily actions and behaviors, consumption habits and leisure time. This study, takes into account dispositions, tastes and preferences of individuals based on the social world around them. Bader Eddin employs this concept to explain the relationship between the social context and the linguistic choices and references used by Syrian revolutionists. For example, the slogan "ما منحبك ما منحبك...إرحل عنا إنت وحزبك" (Bader Eddin 159) which means "we don't love you, we don't love you…you and your party leave" used by revolutionists reflects the social contexts, the dispositions and feeling of resentment growing against al-Assad and his party.

Bader Eddin draws on examples from other cases i.e. revolutions in other countries like Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Tunis. He elaborates on the linguistic influence between Arab countries in using revolutionary discourse within the context of the Arab Spring. He provides these examples explaining how habitus functions in similar contexts. In other words, he explains how social contexts dictate linguistic preferences and dispositions used by revolutionists in the same period in other countries. He, for example, explains how the French word *dégagé* was ascribed a new connotation, in the Tunisian revolution, different from its original meaning in French. The same word was transported to Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria to mean ارحل (irḥal) which means *leave*.

When discussing the hypothesis of the research, Bader Eddin, in certain occasions, seems to be empowering his reader with the agency to interpret the text. He does not enforce his own ideology, but rather gives the reader the intellectual space to build his case. This is demonstrated when addresses the research questions without guiding the readers to any answers. Thus, his work embodies the concept of "the death of the author" developed by Barthes (146). Yet, in other occasions he tries to build his case by using persuasive tone to lead the reader into his own interpretation.

The book forms an important resource documenting the changes on the linguistic structure in the Syrian community. The political events led to the polarization of the linguistic community into two opposing groups: pro-Assad and anti-Assad. The author uses semi-structured interviews with people against the Assad regime. Despite his attempts, Bader Eddin was unable to convince pro-Assad individuals to conduct interviews. Thus, there is a missing segment of the linguistic scene that represents the other societal dimension on which the sociolinguistic analysis is based. This lack indicates the absence of a comprehensive study that documents the linguistic changes that mark the Syrian community.

Bader Eddin concludes the book by describing the language of the Syrian

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revolution as a *glocalization* phenomenon being local and global at the same time (194). The Syrian revolution and its language remain *open texts* to use Umberto Eco's sense of the term (Eco 4). In her description of the Egyptian revolution, Mehrez uses Roland Barthes's terminology describing the revolution and its translations as *writerly* texts (Mehrez 1). The same applies to the Syrian revolution and its interpretations. They should not be seen as *readerly* texts with predetermined beginning and conclusion, but rather as *writerly* ones with undetermined meanings and narratives that continue to challenge researchers in all aspects (Mehrez 1). The same applies to this study since Bader Eddin acknowledges that the discourse of the Syrian revolution will continue to develop and thus, requires more research.

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Sherine Hafez: Women of the Midan. The Untold Stories of Egypt's Revolutionaries

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Women of the Midan: Untold stories of Egypt's Revolutionaries, by Sherine Hafez, is a much needed contribution to our understanding of the Egyptian Revolution. While this critical event, precursor of the many other conflicts that are still reshaping the region, has been narrated from multiple angles, using gendered corporality as the lens through which to investigate the revolution is an innovative and important approach. The book amply discusses the intersections of gender, sexuality, politics, citizenship and social movements which is a less-explored angle of the Egyptian revolution.

The book starts by laying out the concept of *rememory*, a term the author borrows from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, to explain the experiences of ordinary women who joined the protests in Tahrir Square. Rememory is presented as a corporeal act where the body is a "signifying agent of collective action and transformation" (Hafez xxvi). In this context, therefore, rememory is part of the repertoire of acts of contentious politics that revolt against the entrapment of women's voices, bodies, and stories in the nationalist project. As many academics have argued, including Hafez, the state is highly concerned with tailoring the notion of womanhood in accordance with the nation-building project and as such it shapes and oppresses women while also providing avenues for resistance and contestation. The scholalry work of Abouelnaga; Abu-Lughod; Ahmed; Badran; Baron; and Botman among others, has vaslty addressed these issues. The act of remembering is presented as a powerful process to build collective identities and preserve the social memory of a collective action currently under threat; for the present regime, January 25th was a brief anecdote preceding the *real* revolution of June 30th (an idea that is highly contested because many actors saw in that day a coup d'état that counted on the support of a vast majority of the population). The narrative of June 30th portrays El-Sisi as leader of the nation against the *terrorist* threat posed by the Muslim Brotherhood and who later instituted the *prosperous* current rule. Hafez explains how ever since then the ordinary women activists spawned in Tahrir Square have been *forced* to forget and are currently living in exile or have been imprisoned, demobilized or their activity otherwise suspended. While combatting precarity and under threat from a repressive security apparatus, these women struggled to redefine their resistance and positionality. Rememory emerges as a complex corporeal act that mediates the past and the present and forces the interlocutors in the

book to revisit painful events. Hafez's book raises and thoroughly analyzes the following questions: What are the practices and processes through which the gendered body in the Middle East and North Africa is constituted, experienced, regulated, and represented? How do bodies intervene within these spaces of regulation? And how can we begin to articulate an analysis of the contours of corporeality in the region?

Hafez's ethnography collects in-depth interviews with women across different social classes for a period of five years starting from the months following the January 25th revolution. Passages from these records are organized around the topics proposed by her chapters, thus providing rich interview data of women with very different backgrounds and drawing connections with such broader discussions as neoliberalism, women's bodies, feminism, citizenship or the politics of representation. While the book unpacks chapter by chapter the different threads of gendered corporeality that emerged in Tahrir Square and demonstrates a clear need to recollect the remnants of the voices of resistance, it also poses a discomforting question. As rememory is a fundamental act of political defiance, how does it interfere with the mediation of a present in the antipodes of the dream that Tahrir portrayed, where distance from past events seems a necessary act of healing? To better address this question, there is first the need to lay out the scope and boundaries of the book.

Women's voices in this book allow the reader to revisit the experiences of different constituencies during the first days and months of the revolution. The first eighteen days – from January 25th to Mubarak's ouster on February 11th – were those which the *rememory* of Hafez's subjects pointed to as the revolution's inception. These were the days when the "utopia of Tahrir" – as academics such as Sorbera; Telmissany; Wahdan and other interlocutors have named them – emerged to nourish the revolutionary narrative that sustained the uprising until August 2013. In this month the violent dispersal of pro-Morsi supporters from el Rabaa Square marked not only the most harrowing day of the revolution, but also the day that counter-revolutionary tactics succeeded in effectively reinstituting the army and perpetuating Mubarak's one-man rule. The book in this sense is a detailed testimony of these days and successfully unpacks the complex social web contained within Tahrir. Hafez used a network approach to access and interview subjects that she had first met in the square, choosing the stories that best represented the different social constituencies present in Tahrir. She refers to this method as "the intricate web of relationship" (Hafez xxix), yet I would have appreciated more details about how she met her interlocutors and why they were important to her. The book then is the result of participant observation during her fieldwork and follow-up in social media during her absencesas well as a product of the testimonials of those different constituencies historically present in feminist studies of the Middle East. Single women, workers, mothers, widows, state employees, maids, middle-class women all find their place in the chapters, thus helping the reader to understand the discursive narratives and politics of representation surrounding each of these women. At the same time, Hafez historicizes these different narrative threads in a manner that makes relevant the connection of women's struggles – and those of the citizenry at large – with past historical events. Tahrir as a collective experience is also historically situated, demonstrating that there was no *Spring* in terms of *awakening* (Korany and El-Mahdi), but rather a continuation of a long struggle for dignity, freedom and social justice. This method defined the boundaries of the research that Hafez carried out over five years of visits to Egypt from the USA, where she is a professor of Gender & Sexuality Studies

at the University of California. As an Egyptian transnational feminist, she positions herself as what I call an inside-distant observer. The Egyptian revolution was an eventful and emotional journey for all the people that went through it; hence I consider this inside-distant fieldwork a positive aspect that helps to push rich description into deeper analysis. She also explains how doing "cyber-ethnography" (Hafez xxxiii) was essential to the follow-up work during her absences from Egypt and was also a rich source for contextualizing important events. With the use of cyber-ethnography, she "made a choice of remaining in the United States to explain the uprising to a Western audience" (Hafez xxxiv). The purpose of the book is to understand the inner forces and stories of the women who dropped what they were doing to join a revolutionary movement that was highly demanding, dangerous and emotionally taxing, and so as to gain insight into just how these women were reshaped by this event; in this sense the book does not address the fragmentation of Tahrir and the subsequent restoration of the deep state. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the reader to Tahrir and the history of gender corporeality in Egypt. Chapters 3 through 6 relie on women's testimonies to unpack the many complexities that were first presented in the initial chapters. For instance in chapter 3 the stories of Zeinab and Naglaa explore middle-class struggles, while Samya's story thematizes a certain business elite, and Dalia – in chapter 4 – echoes the particularities of a Muslim sister. I particularly appreciated the portrayal of women in all their capacities; the personal and the political merges to show how women entertained their families, took care of their children, elders and friends, maintained an income, and participated in the revolution. These aspects of the ethnography deserve our attention, as they show the gendering of social space and widespread public and academic preconceptions about the public at large – binaries that are often used to undermine women's political participation. Hafez states that she *"intentionally avoided interviews with those who became celebrities of the media or those whose work was already publicly highlighted, choosing instead to feature those whose activism went unrecognized"* (Hafez xxx – emphasis in the original). Also useful for readers unfamiliar with the day-to-day events that marked the revolution is the gendered timeline that Hafez provides. The book is ethnographically rich and each chapter presents or expands on the stories of its interlocutors.

The book presents seven chapters that organize the research as follows.

Chapter 1 examines the politically active presence of women in the square to explain the discursive context within which their participation in the revolution is immersed. To place us inside the revolution, Hafez describes three scenes from the uprising: a woman leading a chant during the protest; the tale of the protest on International Women's Day (March 8th) which was attacked by thugs; and a woman activist in the first days of the camp. Against this background, she explores two main aspects of the women's revolutionary narrative. First, there is the double burden of the politics of representation that on the one hand labels revolutionary women in Western media as "dispossessed" and on the other blames them as "inauthentic" (7). Secondly the author addresses the low visibility that women's issues and writings receives. For example, she notes that only 42 of 888 articles refer to this topic in the bibliographic list on the Arab Spring published in 2015 (POMEDS). Hence the first chapter lays out the relevance and theoretical scope of the book and proposes an understanding of women's agency through the process of lived experiences as archived in the body and whose narratives she restores reverting to the memory.

Chapter 2 presents a well-documented history of gender and corporeality in

Egypt that is triggered by the question to Mervat: How did it all begin for you? (16) This account helps the reader to first approach the tension between remembering and forgetting and is used to unpack the centrality of women's corporeality in recent Egyptian history. While feminist research on the MENA region has frequently dealt with corporeality through topics such as the veil, female circumcision, polygamy or virginity, it has done so without centering the discussion on the body as a fluid subject; it has often treated the body as a modulated object without much agency. Hafez, therefore, reverses the theoretical approach surrounding prevailing understandings of the body to enlarge the discussion around feminist topics such as modernity, nationalism, and citizenship. Her contribution highlights gendered mechanisms affecting necropolitics and sovereignty, a subject that is core to understanding the army's restoration to power with the consent and support of a vast majority of the population, though it implies the normalization of routine violence against ordinary citizens.

Chapter 3 sheds light on Tahrir as a place of complex dynamics between important historical constituencies of Egyptian society and their intersection with neoliberal politics. These constituencies are the working class, minorities, and the Muslim Brotherhood, and all are represented in the stories of the interlocutors.

Against this background the author investigates notions of class and marginality from a gendered perspective, which is an addition to the discussion on these matters as proffered by other authors such as Bayat; El-Mahdi; and Beinin.

Chapters 4 and 5 delve into women's particular experience of the days of Tahrir so as to bring forward the multiple factors that fostered and conditioned participation. Chapter 4 provides a micro-lens into women's confrontation with family and friends as well as their compatibility with domestic life through the story of Amal (a cashier in a government office), Yamsin (a young revolutionary) and Dalia (a member of the Muslim Sisters). The chapter explores how women treasured their network of friendships and the solidarities they built as intrinsic to their participation in the collective experience of Tahrir, thus providing a more intimate look into the stories of these women who are also addressed in chapter 3. Chapter 5 analyzes the extreme violence that women activists faced. Hafez examines well-documented cases of violence against women in the square, such as the case of Samira Ibrahim, the Blue Bra Girl, and Alia el Magdy's nudity scandal. Exposure to violence, in particular sexual violence, was a risk that women protestors assumed when they decided to participate in the revolution. "Bodies That Protest," therefore, is a chapter which explains how "women's bodies are enshrined in nationalist ideology as iconic subjects of the state's protection, [while] inversely legitimate the state as a governing [and disciplinarily] power" (133). The chapter contributes to theoretical understandings of the body that are very relevant to framing not only the Egyptian revolution, but also the multiple uprisings that continue to destabilize the region.

Chapter 6 further explores necropolitics, it focuses the body to understand how disciplinary measures are deployed to restore the presence of the military regime. It does so through ethnographic accounts of activists Shaimaa al Sabbah, Hend Nafea and Sondos Rida Abu Bakr. While the affiliation of Shaimaa with the secular socialist movement helped in the international condemnation of her murder by security forces, it also obscured the death of Sondos, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood killed by the same security forces during protests in Alexandria. Hend, whose story is narrated in the documentary *The Trials of the Spring*, was sentenced to life in prison by a military court for her participation in those protests popularly known as The Cabinet Clashes.

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She escaped to the USA, where she was granted political asylum. These cases explore the toll of violence, the role of gender in political processes, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, thus demonstrating how gendered violence is an essential dimension of the relation between governmentality and the revolution.

Chapter 7 brings us to the present moment, addressing the need to reconstitute Tahrir as a public memory and a political act of resistance. At this point in the book the author has well grounded her argument, which maintains that women's power is infringed when they deviate from the gender and social contract, and she does so by means of a a rich ethnography. Hafez's examination of the Egyptian revolution, and particularly into the suffering of *rememorying*, reveals the need to expand the research into other unexplored areas of Egyptian history. If one is to introduce notions of self-care and healing, deemed important for the realities on the ground of many of our interlocutors, how should academics approach notions of remembering (as encapsulated by the notion of rememory) and forgetting as lived by the people that endured the revolution? While Hafez does not discuss these issues, they do emerge from her ethnography, and I think it important that they be introduced into future research on the Egyptian revolution. How did the survivors of the revolution heal from the wounds inflicted by a utopia that became a threat to existence? Hafez concludes her book with a political reading of how people recall the memory of Tahrir; she refers to Connerton's idea of „organized forgetting" (184) to explain the forces that induce an erasure of the collective memory of Tahrir. Yet a palpable tension in the book is the progressive resistance of her interlocutors to actually *remember*, which has grown exponentially with the El-Sisi regime. Thus, addressing the different understandings of pain and moments of suffering as remembered by our interlocutors during all these years would be important in exploring the relation between political activism, justice, and healing. While this debate is beyond the scope of Hafez's book, it clearly lays the groundwork for future research that will further expand the discussion around women's corporeality.

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Elisabeth A. Fraser: Mediterranean Encounters: Artists between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, 1774–1839

William Kynan-Wilson

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The complex nature of artistic exchange in the Ottoman world has been gaining traction in scholarship over the past few years. One of the latest offerings is Elisabeth Fraser's *Mediterranean Encounters* which, in the author's own words, seeks to examine how "travel accounts furthered a cultural exchange in which Ottomans had more agency than modern writers have acknowledged" (3). The final chapter aside, Fraser's focus is on grand travel books adorned with luxurious large-scale prints, all of which were produced in France by artists and travelers from France and other European nations, as well as the Ottoman world. This study delves into a richly tangled and fascinating cache of material; it is revealing in discrete ways but I continually felt that the source material could have been interrogated in even greater detail and that certain arguments could have been taken even further in order to reveal the nuances of Mediterranean visual culture.

Despite its title, this volume is a near-exclusive study of Franco-Ottoman cultural relations in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with an additional chapter on Eugène Delacroix's sketches from Tangier. The book is divided into three parts, each of which contains two chapters centered on a specific travel book. Fraser's work is compelling in its cumulative momentum, ably demonstrating how these books often responded to and built upon the efforts of one another. In many cases the same artists worked on multiple books and in others there is a clear sense of imitation and emulation. This tight focus on a few case-studies is a strength.

The first of three parts ("Power in Question") approaches the Comte Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier's *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* from two distinct perspectives: first as patron and then, in chapter two, as a source of competition and comparison through the work of Louis-François Cassas. The former, a French aristocrat and diplomat, better known simply as Choiseul, directed a grand project with a troop of at least 36 artists involved in the making of his *Voyage* which was published in installments between 1778 and 1782. The collaborative means of production of these books comes to the fore in Fraser's narrative and especially in these opening chapters. Choiseul's *Voyage* is shown to be the benchmark for subsequent French artists and patrons.

The second chapter focuses on Cassas, who was one of the dozens of artists employed by Choiseul. The relationship between artist and patron was deeply problematic, as references to an exten-

sive body of archival material demonstrate. The particular dynamic between Cassas and Choiseul was overturned by the events of the French Revolution: Cassas transformed himself from "Seigneur Cassas" to "Citizen Cassas" (67), while Choiseul's fortunes tumbled as he found himself in exile in Russia until 1802. Fraser subsequently casts Cassas as "subaltern" and poses the question (13): what does it mean to be both Orientalist and subaltern?

Fraser argues that Cassas' imagery presents his subaltern status while concurrently reflecting Orientalist tendencies. Attention focuses on Cassas' depictions of hulking heavily-armed Arabs and Turks, with Fraser contending that these images were intended to heroize these figures and, in turn, reflect the artist's own identity: "These images of incongruously powerful figures paradoxically bear a trace of Cassas' own subaltern status, betraying the socially marginal position that he sought to overcome" (82). Yet, this interpretation is at odds with the artist's own letters in which he described these peoples as barbarous, animal-like, and "ignorant fanatics" (82), and at odds with the images themselves which show menacing and sullen characters. The desire to frame the debate in these terms is therefore appealing but not wholly convincing; arguably the terminology distracts from what could have been a more nuanced and intersectional debate about class and identity in the Ottoman Mediterranean.

In the second part of this study ("Ottoman Culture Abroad") Fraser engages most fully with one of the stated aims of *Mediterranean Encounters*, namely to challenge Eurocentric approaches to the field. She examines the travel books of two artists working within Ottoman imperial circles: Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson and Antoine-Ignace Melling. These two chapters are the most stimulating in the entire book. Fraser posits Melling and d'Ohsson as "Ottoman cultural actors" (11) and in different ways they both are. The two figures point to the multifaceted forms that translation and mediation in cultural encounters could take. This is especially clear in the chapter on d'Ohsson and his *Tableau general de l'Empire Othoman* (published in three volumes between 1787 and 1820). D'Ohsson was a translator and cultural mediator in his work as a dragoman for the Swedish Consul in Constantinople. There are many layers of translation at play in this chapter, namely the translation of images from manuscript illumination to engravings. This is demonstrated through careful visual comparisons that show how French engravers interpreted the iconography, style, and spatial organization found in their Islamic miniature models.

On this point, however, one further mediation is overlooked. D'Ohsson comments that he was working from images in "Persian" manuscripts which Fraser rather cryptically dismisses as "presumably a translator's shorthand" (117). It is a shame that we are not provided with a reference nor with further discussion here. D'Ohsson's statement may prove gnomic but it merits revisiting because the author's central argument is that d'Ohsson was mediating Ottoman aesthetics drawn from Ottoman manuscripts. Yet in the dragoman's own words these were, in some sense, Persian images. That this subtle distinction, which cuts to the very issue of translation, remains unpicked is a missed opportunity.

The following chapter, which focuses on Melling's *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* (1819), argues that the German-born artist be considered in light of Ottoman artistic conventions as opposed to a purely European tradition in which he has previously been framed. In many ways this is a convincing argument, although not strictly on the grounds presented: the author cites Melling's fascination with the Bosphorus and specific sites along the waterfront as proof that the artist was

working in an Ottoman idiom by emphasizing places important to Sultan Selim III (153).

Both of these chapters prompt valuable re-thinking of the two figures in question. Melling's complex biography is well-presented (159): he was German-born, half-Italian, married to a Genoese woman in Istanbul, equipped with limited French and semi-literate Turkish, and he self-identified as a native of Lorraine (then a defunct state). In contrast, d'Ohsson's identity is less-well dissected; it would have been interesting to consider what it meant to be an Ottoman, an Armenian *and* a Catholic, and how this complex identity informs d'Ohsson's travel book.

In short, these two characters encapsulate the trouble with modern labels. On this point, Fraser expertly demonstrates the limitations of thinking in terms of "national schools" (159). This is most evident in relation to Melling. However, having rightly wrestled him from a European tradition she then classifies him as belonging to an Istanbul court school. In effect, one limiting label is replaced with another. We may need to move further beyond such language all together.

Related to this theme, one senses that d'Ohsson and Melling were working in response to their *exclusion* from Ottoman patronage. D'Ohsson's decision to publish in France is cast as his choice (101), but his extended praise of the imperial press in Constantinople (108-9) makes one question whether he was still seeking Ottoman support. Melling is likewise presented as an imperial insider, but he only begins work on his book after his sudden fall from imperial favor in 1800. This does not discredit his Ottoman qualities but it does give them a different complexion. Perhaps more precisely, these two travel books indicate a *desire* to be insiders of an Ottoman school even if the reality was more complex.

The comparisons Fraser makes do not always exploit the potential of the material under examination. For instance, far more attention is given to the stolid scenes by William Bartlett (found in Julia *Pardoes' Beauties of the Bosphorus* published in London in 1838) than to the fascinating and under-examined book by the Ottoman diplomat Mahmud Raif whose *Tableau des nouveaux règlemens de l'Empire Ottoman* was published in 1798 in French under the patronage of Sultan Selim's imperial press in Constantinople (compare pages 142-3, 145, 147, 151-3, 159, 235-7 on Bartlett's work to the single page on Raif [p. 156]). These comments illustrate the stimulating issues raised in these two chapters but also the extent to which they do not always go far enough in exploring the challenges and subtleties of the source material.

The third part ("Contradictory Contact") begins with discussion of Louis Dupré's *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople* (published 1825). Dupré's images are the most visually satisfying in the whole book. His figures pose with a beguiling ice-cool elegance. Fraser duly matches Dupré's art with some of her finest writing. Here she explores the tangled ethnic identities amidst the rising tide of nationalism in Ottoman lands. This chapter treats us to the fabulous scene of the French Consul, Louis Fauvel, painting on his shaded terrace before the brightly lit Acropolis of Athens. Fraser dubs Fauvel's posture to be one of "strange effect" (201), but it is surely a deliberate visual ploy: the crossed legs and languid resting arm of the consul contrast beautifully with the more violent forms of the adjacent classical carving.

The final chapter on Delacroix's sketches from his time in Tangiers in 1832 does not work in this particular book; it muddles the close-knit relationship of the preceding case-studies in geography, medium, and function. The central argument is that Delacroix's drawings from his journey differ from his European sketchbooks in being more *objective* and *distant*. In her rather jargonistic manner, she attempts to use these sketches to read "the politics of

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expansion through the uncertainties of encounter" (208). However, as the author later admits (223-4), the more obvious (and, to my mind, more convincing) explanation for this aesthetic is that the sketchbook was intended as an iconographic resource for later paintings and that it reflects the harsh practicalities of a trip in which the artist was physically unable to access many areas of north African society (232).

Taken as a whole, this is a grandly illustrated and beautifully produced book. The author's prose is oftentimes elegant. Take, for instance, the verve with which Fraser draws out Melling's cinematic qualities (136-7). However, there are issues in the presentation of evidence. The immense scale of these prints is frequently commented on but many of the largest images are the smallest of reproductions, few close-up details are provided, and the dimensions of these images are rarely provided. The language can also prove distracting. There is a tendency to overstate and overinterpret certain points, as well as a writing style in which theoretical approaches and jargon make certain sections laborious.

More significantly, the unique format of the travel book as a complex combination of text and image is remarked upon but never sufficiently examined. The texts in these travel books are rarely quoted from and there is little sense of their authorship, rhetorical style, and content. This is another missed opportunity. These travel books could have been used to engage with different modes of Orientalism. Edward Said's original conception of Orientalism was primarily a textual one, but this has since morphed in interesting ways to become a largely visual construction in modern scholarship. How these books might reflect different modes and different speeds of Orientalism remains an open question.

Furthermore, a number of observations important to this book are evident in earlier periods and in the work of many other artists in the Ottoman Mediterranean or were simply wider pictorial conventions of the age. For example, the claim that Melling was distinctive for focusing on the architecture of the Bosphorus is not born out when examined in the *longue durée*: European travel writing from the sixteenth century onward places great emphasis upon the shores of the imperial capital, and views of palaces along the Bosphorus are common to many early costume books. Also, to say that Cassas was "departing from convention" by depicting himself in Oriental garb in some of his Middle Eastern scenes (90) requires more contextualization, and neither was Dupré the first to turn characters from the generic costume book format into portraits (194). That the visual and rhetorical modes of encountering the Ottoman Mediterranean waxed and waned across several centuries is rather lost.

In sum, this is a book that will prove valuable to specialists interested in the particular artists under discussion and in the culture of French travel books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fraser nimbly demonstrates the status of the luxury illustrated travel book in this period and the multiple ways in which they were products of complex mediation *between* cultures and *within* cultures. This study rightly points to many important issues around agency and encounter in the Ottoman world even if it does not always unpack them in full.

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