Migrant Worker Lifeworlds of Beirut

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ABSTRACT

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A country of approximately 4 million citizens, Lebanon is home to over half a million Asian and black African migrant workers concentrated in its capital city of Beirut. An estimated one quarter of Lebanese households employ a live-in female migrant domestic worker on a full time basis. Over the last decade, many of these women have fled domestic confinement to enter Lebanon's informal labour market, and have recently been joined by hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing war across the country's eastern border. This dissertation examines the social worlds of these migrant workers. It demonstrates that non-Arab migrant workers in Beirut are not simply temporary workers, but constitute a specific subject category structured by socioeconomic relations that determine the possibility of their life in the city. Specifically, it argues that migrant workers in Beirut are subjects denied recognition, and who therefore lie *outside the nation-state*, while having forged an urban belonging *inside the city*. I demonstrate this by examining migrant workers' interactions with the joint nexus of citizen-state authority, their experiences of time in both labour and rest, their modes of receiving address and inhabiting speech in the Arabic language, and their intimate and collective relations in the city. Together with growing numbers of male Syrian refugees, migrant workers in Beirut have created an urban underground that has transformed both what and *who* it means to live in the city today. This dissertation offers an ethnographic map of these transformations.

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Transliteration and Transcription

Unless otherwise noted, all Arabic translations are my own. I have transcribed things as they were heard, attempting to remain as close to the original speech as possible. Where logical, I have employed transcription practices that are common to the Levantine dialect, such as the use of *ch* for ش and the spelling of certain vowels with *ei*. Due to the dialect pronunciation of the letter ق as ء, I transcribe this letter as *[q]*. The letter ع is distinguished from أ with an apostrophe before or after the appropriate English vowel (eg. *'u* or *a'*) depending on clarity of spelling. MSA and dialect have been transcribed differently in accordance with pronunciation, for example *'amila* in MSA versus *'amile* in colloquial. Long vowels have not been indicated with diacritics except in Chapter Three, in which being able to hear the sound is central to understanding the argument of the chapter. Doubled letters (ّ) are indicated logically. Constructs (*idafa*) are indicated with a dash, and when the last vowel of the first term of a construct is to be vocalized, it is transcribed as such (eg. *alaqatu-zawaj*). A dash is also used to logically indicate the separation between distinct words or particles that are spoken without a break. Arabic script is used only in two instances: once in Chapter Three for a visualization impossible to render in English transcription, and once in Chapter Four for the script of a tattoo. French citations have been accessed through English translation software.

Instead of you traveling, the city travels. Look at Beirut, transforming from the Switzerland of the East to Hong Kong, to Saigon, to Calcutta, to Sri Lanka. It's as if we circled the world in ten or twenty years.

—Elias Khoury

They are very rich, but it's hard for them to pay me money. The house is very big, but they make me sleep on the floor.

— Sri Lankan domestic worker, Beirut

Preface

In the summer of 2012 I traveled to Najaf, Iraq to conduct preliminary fieldwork for my then-dissertation project examining the transformation of religious rituals of death, martyrdom, and pilgrimage in the context of the U.S. war on Iraq. I had arranged to stay in the home of a man named Adnan, who was connected to my extended family through an international Shi'a pilgrimage circuit, as well as his wife and teenage daughter. Due to visa delays, however, by the time I arrived to Iraq in late July it was already the month of Ramadan and, given the sweltering heat of Iraq summers combined with the long days of fasting, Adnan and his family had wisely decided to spend the month in neighbouring Iran. I was put in touch with a nephew who picked me up from the airport and dropped me off at the family home, where I arrived to Umm Adnan, the matriarch of the family who had chosen not to accompany her son to Iran, and a Bangladeshi domestic worker named Rahima. It was an average of 52°C (125 °F) that summer, I could only leave the house in the full-length polyester black robes and head covering of the conservative Shi'a city, and I was having some trouble adjusting. Ramadan schedules also meant that all my meetings were scheduled for the evenings after the fast had been broken, so I spent the sweltering days in the house, often slipping in and out of sleep and trying to sneak water when no one was looking. The air conditioner worked for a few short hours a day, and along with a meek breeze it emitted a horrid smell that made it hard to breathe. And the metal tank that held the family's water supply was hoisted on the sun-soaked rooftop, meaning the water that ran through taps was scalding and had to be left to cool overnight before it could be touched. As for the company, Umm Adnan took an immediate disliking to me, seeing no reason why she should

have to house and feed this stranger, inexplicably young, female, single, and brazen enough to want to leave the home alone after sunset with a male driver. I soon left the home to stay in a hotel where I could at least control my mobility, and where predatory men proved my new companions. But before doing so I spent a number of days in the company of Rahima, struggling to communicate between her limited Arabic and my own unfamiliarity with the Iraqi dialect.

Rahima's was a story that any reader of international news would be loosely familiar with. She had three children and a mother in Bangladesh whom she was supporting with her salary; she was overworked and miserably unhappy in this strange land; she did not like the Arabs but had faith in God; she had not been paid in months. In my fieldnotes I record that my first night in Iraq I heard her crying intensely, angrily, and it felt like a bad omen. But the next morning she began to share her story through a patient mixture of gesture, sketches on napkins, and insistent repetitions of key Arabic vocabulary. Adnan had told her he would only pay her if she slept with him, Rahima explained, and he used to constantly harass her on the cell phone that was her only point of access to her family in Bangladesh. She had responded by throwing away the SIM card and had only recently secretly acquired a new one. She hated Iraq, she hated the food, and she particularly hated Umm Adnan, who often denied her meals and with whom she fought viciously on a daily basis.

I had first visited Iraq in 2009, conducting research for a Canadian NGO I worked with many years previously as a teenager. We had traveled around the country in a small group led by an Iraqi-Canadian whose large family lived near Basra, and he had obtained security clearance for us to enter the Green Zone in Baghdad and meet with representatives of the new government. The effects of the U.S. invasion were everywhere but the civil war-like violence of 2005-2006

had abated and ISIS did not yet exist, and it was because of the profound feeling of possibility I encountered during that visit that I had decided to apply for the PhD with a project on the country. But this trip to Najaf was my first alone. Prior to making my arrangements I was told that Adnan had been imprisoned under Saddam, as had his father, his wife, and his brother, only the latter of whom managed to escape the country. I was therefore prepared for some amount of tension, religious conservatism, and the possibility of both skepticism and hostility as I attempted to move around Najaf in the socially illegible category of a female, ostensibly Shi'a Muslim, anthropologist. But I was not expecting Rahima. The intellectual framework I had brought to my fieldsite was drawn from a careful study of Islam, modern Iraq, and the ongoing war. Rahima, the Bangladeshi mother being abused by the family of a former prisoner who now ran a prosperous religious tourism business as part of the Shi'a ascendancy of post-Saddam Iraq, was nowhere to be found in this story.

It turned out that Rahima was, in fact, an omen, and I probably should have paid closer attention. I returned to Iraq once more, the second trip even worse than the first, and eventually made my peace with giving up my intended fieldsite and dissertation project. Two years later I arrived in Beirut to conduct fieldwork that followed from my Iraq project, now seeking to examine the discourses and practices of martyrdom accompanying the Lebanese armed group and political party Hizballah's military intervention on the side of the Assad regime in neighbouring Syria. A few months into my stay, I met Beza, an Ethiopian chef at a small restaurant in Beirut that had become a local hub for Syrian dissidents, refugees, and anti-regime sentiment. Beza had been in Lebanon for seven years, arriving as a domestic worker and then escaping to join a pool of

undocumented workers who fill the country's informal labour sector, and we soon became friends.

It was Beza who introduced me to Dawra, the thriving area east of Beirut's historic Armenian neighbourhood that was now the center of migrant worker life in the city. Thrilled that I was familiar with Ethiopian food from my time living in the cosmopolitan urban centers of North America, Beza took me out for an Ethiopian meal in Beirut. It was greasier, spicier, and heavier than the versions I had tried before, but half the restaurant seemed to be observing me eat with my hands until we cleaned off the *injera*-covered tray, and it appeared I had passed the test. Meanwhile, my initial research project had quietly disintegrated, as a mixture of obstacles — primarily access, outside the strictly controlled Public Relations apparatus run by Hizballah — and hesitations — my internal discomfort at being a woman in oppressively conservative religious spaces had reached a limit, as had my own commitment to a set of questions that I had first conceived of many years prior — forced me to take seriously the difference between an academic proposal and fieldwork. The field, however, through Beza as intermediary, gave me the gift of a new project. This dissertation is its result. It bears no obvious signs of the various steps that preceded it, and lacks any thematic resemblance to its earlier iterations as a research project. But in my Najaf encounter with Rahima lie the affective traces of this dissertation's intellectual interests and political commitments both, including the ones I only came to recognize retrospectively.

Introduction: Who is the Middle East?

A man from Saudi Arabia fell in love with a Sri Lankan woman. He kidnapped her and took her to the desert. When she saw all of the sand she said,
"Ana no kanniss killo" *(I'm not going to sweep it all).*[1]

Approximately one in ten people living in the Middle East[2] today is an international migrant or was forcibly displaced (Connor 2016). This number is even higher in the tiny Levantine country of Lebanon, where an earlier wave of Palestinian refugees and a recent, significantly more populous movement of Syrian refugees are repeatedly pointed to as examples of how national populations have been reconfigured as a consequence of regional geopolitics. If one begins not from external political events, however, but from everyday life, the fact of *migration* in Lebanon is most evident in the half a million migrant workers who perform the menial labour that the country is dependent upon for its daily functioning. The Lebanese capital of Beirut has a storied history as a cosmopolitan refuge for Arab exiles and European wanderers, and it continues to function as a haven for cultural production in a region torn by armed conflict. Today, however, it is non-Arab workers that are Beirut's most visible international presence, a community that is vast in size, diverse in origin, and ethnically distinct from its Arab majority.

This dissertation offers a theoretical and ethnographic map of these migrant workers' lifeworlds. It argues that within contemporary Beirut, Asian and black African migrant workers are subjects denied *recognition* while simultaneously having carved out *belonging*. Migrant workers are thus a population that is outside the nation-state, yet inside the city. My research

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[1] This "joke" is quoted as one being sent around through the internet in Moukarbel (2009).

[2] The "Middle East" is defined to include: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

focuses not on domestic workers trapped in homes, the subject of most organizational and popular attention to the issue in Lebanon, but women who have fled domestic confinement or otherwise found a way to enter the informal labour market of Beirut. It is here that these women, along with a smaller number of their male counterparts, have forged an urban underground that caters to their needs and that has transformed the possibilities of life not only for themselves, but for others living at the margins of Lebanese society. Over two years of fieldwork, I discovered a Beirut where Bangladeshi grocery stores open in Palestinian refugee camps, Ethiopian domestic workers marry Sudanese refugees, and Filipina women invite Syrian construction workers to join them for karaoke. Theirs is a world of diverse religious and commercial establishments, informal service provision, community rituals, internal codes, ways of speaking Arabic, and secret spaces of leisure, consumption, and desire. And yet this Beirut exists alongside the extreme precarity of its inhabitants, many of whom are undocumented and at constant risk of detention or deportation, and almost all of whom are subject to the exhaustion of manual labour and the exploitation of the market and its overseers. This social world forms the site of my ethnography, one centrally concerned with how attachments are forged under conditions of structural exclusion.

As a tiny country that is home to multiple non-citizen populations, Lebanon offers a rich site for such questions. At its most ambitious, however, this dissertation is also offered as a provocation to rethink the assumed subjects of the region at large. Underlying its ethnographic specificity is thus a broader question: who do we think of when we discuss the societies and cultures of "the Middle East"? I want to suggest that the default subject of the Middle East is commonly imagined as one whose cultural, religious, and/or national identity is fully coterminous with the dominant population of the nation-state being studied. What Deeb and

Winegar refer to in their overview of anthropological work on the region as "Arab-majority societies" (2012), then, is not simply a factual description of a ethno-linguistic majority, but an imaginative claim on who constitutes the assumed locus of anthropological inquiry. And yet the demographics of this region continue to change. Migrant workers in Beirut, my dissertation shows, are not simply temporary foreigners whose lives can be collapsed into the category of *work*. They are a vibrant population who have transformed the entire landscape of the city.

Consider the question of gender, a theme that is so central to studying the Middle East that there are entire courses devoted to its impressive bibliography. When a text, a syllabus, a lecture, or a book sets out to address the issue of women and gender in the Middle East, who is the gendered subject of this query? To ask a more pointed question: can the approximately 2.2 million female migrant domestic workers in the region (ILO 2015a) also figure within this framework? Similarly, the recent attention devoted to Islamist movements gathered under the subfield 'The Anthropology of Islam' not only risks sidelining the nuances of how life is lived beyond religious expression (Schielke 2010), but also envisioning societies at large as *characterized by* believing Muslims. As Shami and Neguib (2013) point out, when Christian or Jewish communities have been studied, they are therefore dealt with as separate and contained. To take another example, although Arabic study continues to be prioritized as the primary (if not exclusive) linguistic training needed to study the region, by the 1980s there were already over two million Urdu-speaking Pakistani workers in the Gulf (Ahmed 1984). Malayalam is currently spoken by over 1.6 million Indian workers in the Gulf (Rajan 2010). My point is certainly not that learning Arabic is *unnecessary*, it is rather to ask: what would it take for Urdu and Malayalam to also be conceived of as an active register of linguistic life in the Middle East? And

why is this currently not the case? It is the anthropological limits of this imagination of the region that my work seeks to intervene in.

Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf [3]

Of the global estimate of 150.3 million migrant workers around the world, Arab states account for over a tenth (11.7%) of this population, or a total of 17.6 million people.[4] Broken down by gender, the region accounts for a full 17.9% of all male migrant workers in the world, and 4% of all female migrant workers. By contrast, the combined citizenry of this region, at 152.6 million, constitutes approximately 2% of the world's total population (UN 2015) and only 1.5% of the world's workers. In fact, despite encompassing very little territory, the Arab states have the highest proportion of migrant workers as a share of all workers out of any of the ILO's designated world regions, at the astonishing ratio of 35.6% (South Asia has a share of only 1%). Migrants in the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates [UAE]) account for over 10% of *all migrants globally* (ILO 2015), making the Gulf the leading destination for labour migration in the global south of the early 21st century (AlShehabi et al 2014). In the countries of Bahrain, Oman, Qatar,

[3] Although the Arab Gulf region includes Iraq, I use it here to mean the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (listed in-text below). There is very little information available about migrant labour in Iraq, which does not technically employ the *kafala* system (also explained below) like its Gulf neighbours. However, as noted in the Preface, despite ongoing violence and instability in the country, migrant workers are certainly present. In 2009, it was reported that thousands of Asian migrant workers were entering Iraq on tourist visas and staying on to work illegally (Migrant Rights 2009). In 2011, *The New Yorker* carried a long investigation on foreign workers on U.S. army bases in Iraq, many of whom were tricked into coming by being promised a different destination by local recruitment agencies (Stillman 2011).

[4] Unless otherwise cited all these statistics are drawn from a report by the ILO (2015) and use the ILO definition of the region, which excludes the Arabic-speaking countries of North Africa and includes the following 12 states: the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

and the UAE, migrants make up the majority of the population, sometimes reaching over 80% and far outnumbering native citizens. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia is home to the fourth largest migrant population in the world (ILO 2017). Together with Jordan and Lebanon, these GCC countries are known for their migrant sponsorship system named *kafala,* often described as drawn from pre-modern local traditions of hospitality towards guests and travelers.

The *kafala* system formally emerged in the 1950s as a framework for governing and regulating migrants in the Gulf states (Longva 1997). The system broadly rests on the principle of sponsorship, binding foreign workers to a sponsor citizen (known as the *kafeel*) in the country where they wish to work for a contractual period. This dependency — wherein workers cannot enter or exit a country at will, nor freely transition between one place of employment to the next — is often understood as the source of the seemingly exceptional abuse associated with *kafala*. Indeed labour conditions in the Gulf countries are notoriously exploitative and regularly condemned by human rights organizations and the critical press. The issue has attracted growing attention in recent years, as the Gulf states' strategies of economic diversification in preparation for a post-oil future, including entering into partnerships with international cultural, academic, and sports organizations, have led to increased concerns about the human cost of the region's glitzy development. To list only two of the more famous instances: in 2016 Amnesty International exposed rampant abuse on building sites across Qatar preparing to host the Fifa World Cup in 2022 (Amnesty International 2016). Fifa is now being sued in Swiss courts on behalf of a Bangladeshi worker (Gibson 2010). And in nearby UAE, ambitious plans for the Sadiyat ("Happiness") Island, home to NYU's satellite campus of NYU Abu Dhabi, have given rise to an international coalition of artists known as Gulf Labor. Featuring an impressive roster of

names from the contemporary art world and a number of highly public interventions, Gulf Labor has been writing, organizing, and petitioning conditions surrounding the construction of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi as well as other planned museums since 2010 (Gulf Labor 2017).

Elizabeth Frantz has argued that the *kafala* system is "the main form of bonded labor in the Arab region" (2013, 1083). Even in the face of international trafficking networks and refugee vulnerability, this is likely the case. Anh Nga Longva (1999), one of the first scholars to publish on the issue, noted that the contractual nature of migrant labour in the Gulf is one of its key distinguishing features, leading to the impossibility of permanent settlement or naturalization. Yet today many countries run guest worker programs that include a mixture of prior screening, temporary work visas with no access to naturalization, and strict restrictions on employment and mobility that resemble the practice of *kafala* sponsorship. In the U.S., for example, migrant domestic workers' visas are tied to their employers and changing employers is difficult if not impossible, a fact that has exacerbated vulnerability to abuse (HRW 2001). And in Canada, temporary foreign worker programs not only ensure worker vulnerability but have been central to defining the ideological lines between those workers who are entitled to legal-political rights, and those workers who are not (Sharma 2001). As Gardner (2014) has noted, what is *unique* about the *kafala* system is the diminished role of the state as well as the legalized and customary transfer of responsibility for migrant workers to citizen sponsors or their proxies. In order to best understand *kafala*, however, it is also necessary to consider certain historical and politico-economic characteristics of the countries where it pertains.

The current configuration of the GCC states dates back to the mid-20th century. When British colonial hegemony in the region slowly declined from 1930—1970, what had previously

been a mixture of relatively independent kingdoms, allied sheikhdoms, and British colonies coalesced into independent modern states. As Adam Hanieh notes, "significantly, these four decades also coincided with the discovery of oil in the region and the commodity's growing centrality to the world economy" (2011, 57). Access to the region's oil revenues was a source of international rivalries, particularly between Britain and the postwar U.S. For many decades this access was controlled by foreign multinationals that paid rent as well as royalties to local rulers, whose wealth dramatically increased as a result. It is also at this time that oil companies turned outwards, primarily to colonial India, for labour. Although oil concessions often included clauses requiring local employment, a combination of British colonial officials' preferences as well as a lack of local experience with industry or regularized employment led to a growing proportion of oil workers brought over from the Indian subcontinent (Seccombe & Lawless 1986). When the Gulf states began exporting oil commercially after the end of the Second World War, the number of foreign workers rose further (AlShehabi 2014). Technical and managerial expertise continued to be drawn from the U.S. and Britain, but significant numbers of clerical, artisanal, and semi-skilled positions were staffed by these foreign workers. Conditions differed between countries: Saudi Arabia, having been outside of British control, primarily imported Italian settlers from Eritrea (AlShehabi 2014). In contrast, the UAE had long-established patterns of migration and trade with South Asia, and remains unique in the region for the long-time prevalence of a South Asian workforce (Hanieh 2011) as well as the ongoing class diversity and cultural integration of its South Asian communities (Vora 2013). Yet despite this history of foreign employment, the large-scale 'Asianization' of the region's labour market did not occur until the 1970s.

The massive presence of Asian labour in the Gulf is generally ascribed to the fact that the region boasts "the world's largest and cheapest proven global reservoir of crude oil" (AlShehabi 2014, 4). As petrodollars flooded the region (particularly following the OPEC oil embargo of 1973), the story goes, Gulf countries needed workers to staff their large-scale infrastructural development — and those that came were men in need of work. Later, as oil revenues became less stable but citizen populations had become very wealthy, the foreign workforce shifted to meet a growing demand for domestic service (Frantz 2008). Despite the basic truth of this association, the heavy reliance on Asian labour is not a neutral matter of demand and supply but the product of a history that bears heavily upon contemporary inequalities.

During the 1950s and 1960s, as anti-colonial sentiments spread across the world and Nasser's Egypt loomed large in regional visions of pan-Arabism, the Gulf states saw the growth of popular movements, worker strikes, and leftist rebellions (Chalcraft 2011; Hanieh 2011; see also Takriti 2013; Vitalis 2007).[5] It is against state suppression of these demands that Hanieh argues "an acute reliance on temporary migrant labor flows came to overlay an extremely narrow definition of citizenship" (2011, 60). At the time, Arab labour, particularly Egyptian, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Yemeni workers, were key parts of the Gulf workforce. After the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestinian migrants in particular greatly increased. Palestinian refugees were even given direct employment preference by Saudi Arabia, followed by other Arab Muslims (Seccombe & Lawless 1986). These Arab workers brought a range of political

[5] It is worth noting that worker action certainly predates this era and crosses migrant labour communities. Syrians and Indians in Bahrain led some of the country's earliest strikes in the 1930s, and indebted Baluchi, Persian, Najdi, and African pearl-divers in Bahrain regularly protested British and local authorities in the 1920s and 30s (Chalcraft 2011). In 1943 Indian workers led Saudi Arabia's first organized strike against U.S.-run ARAMCO, after which Saudi threatened to prohibit Indian migration (Seccombe & Lawless 1986).

experience and regional knowledge with them and played central roles in the workers' movements of the 50s and 60s (Chalcraft 2011).

By the 1970s, many Arab workers in the Gulf states strongly sympathized with Arab nationalism and the Palestinian cause. Shi'a populations were further radicalized by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. These workers also made attempts to settle down, bringing their families and demanding equal treatment and rights (Hanieh 2011). As a result, Gulf countries gradually began to shift migrant labour reliance towards South Asia and tightened restrictions on long-term residence for Arab families (Hanieh 2011). What Hanieh describes as a 'narrowly defined notion of citizenship', one founded on loyalty to the state, was created to grant a tiny minority of citizens privileged access to oil revenues in the form of state services and benefits (AlShehabi 2014). This shift, as noted by historian John Chalcraft, "was demobilizing, not just because it involved migration per se, but because Asian labor fell outside the pale of pan-Arab identification and mobilization" (2011, 44). The process was further accelerated after the Gulf War of 1990-1991, as Arab residents were expelled under the pretext of support for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and South Asian countries were simultaneously becoming reliant on remittances from overseas workers (Hanieh 2011). As Gulf citizens were ideologically and materially enfolded into the newly capitalist "petro-modernist" (AlShehabi 2014) states, the new workers were to be temporary, non-Arab, and constitutively excluded from local labour organizing and consciousness. This history of worker suppression and state-enforced precarity remains key to understanding the current conditions of migrant labour in the Arab Gulf.

The recent growth of international attention and advocacy surrounding migrant labour in the Gulf has also been accompanied by an increase in anthropological attention. Andrew Gardner in Bahrain (2010), Paris Mahdavi (2011) and Neha Vora (2013) in the UAE, and Attiya Ahmad in Kuwait (2017) have all published fieldwork-based monographs that join Anh Nga Longva's seminal ethnography of migrant labour in Kuwait published in 1997. Similar work has also appeared on Qatar (Gardner et al 2013) as well as the non-Gulf state of Yemen (De Regt 2009, 2010), accompanied by impressive edited anthologies on the topic (AlShehabi et al 2014; Kamrava & Babar 2012). It was Longva who first insisted that we understand *kafala* as a social institution, and "the central institution … that defines identities, rights and obligations" (1999) in countries where migrant workers outnumber locals — an observation that has informed most subsequent work on the issue.

In a recent volume entitled *Transit States* (AlShehabi et al 2014), the editors suggest that literature on the Gulf has focused either on the political economy of oil rents, capital markets, and ruling families while ignoring migrant labour, or analyzed migrant labour through an emphasis on exploitation, individual stories, and the impact of remittance flows. They argue that the latter 'sociological and anthropological' lens tends to be overly narrow in focus and would do well to directly engage political economy. The volume brings together a strong set of works that demonstrate the importance of the figure of the non-citizen in understanding the contemporary Gulf region as a whole. Yet in many ways, the volume returns directly to Longva's emphasis on the centrality of *kafala* as institution in the overall organization of power within a given state. Anthropological works on specific instances of Gulf migration have in fact broadened rather than narrowed our understanding of both the *kafala* system and the GCC region. In particular, authors

have made key contributions to understanding forms of belonging forged by middle-class South Asian communities in Bahrain (Gardner 2010) and Dubai (Vora 2013), destabilizing nationally-bound conceptions of two regions with very long histories of exchange. Attention to issues such as urban spectacle and city-building in Dubai (Kanna 2011; Kathiravelu 2016), changing notions of gender and kinship across the region (Ahmad 2017; Leonard 2002; Nagy 1998; Osella & Osella 2000), and practices of religious conversion in Kuwait (Ahmad 2017) elucidate the textures of social life that have accompanied the rise of petro-capitalism and neoliberalism (Buckley 2013; Hanieh 2011). What remains oddly lacking is a perspective that puts the Gulf countries in conversation with the two Levantine countries where *kafala* is also at work, namely Jordan and Lebanon.[6]

Anthropologist Andrew Gardner has recently surveyed over a decade of ethnographic research on migrant labour in the Gulf (2014). Despite making key contributions to understanding the overall operations of *kafala*, Gardner argues that these works are characterized by the substantial variability found in migrant experience. He attributes this to the outsized responsibility *kafala* accords to individual citizen sponsors, particularly in the case of domestic work. And yet almost *all* combined academic, NGO, and media coverage of *kafala* point to the consistency of key experiences: the confiscation of passports, the non-payment of promised wages, an ethnicized and gendered hierarchy of both wages and stereotypes, the high rate of domestic worker confinement and the general concentration of abuse in the domestic sector, the lack of legal protection or access to justice, and the inevitable growth of a community of

[6] For a potential exception, see Moors et al (2010). This jointly authored, multi-sited chapter does not take the *kafala* system as its object of analysis but brings together basic observations about migrant domestic worker presence in the public sphere across the cities of Dubai, Istanbul, and Beirut.

undocumented workers for whom illegal employment is the only realistic possibility.[7] These experiences, then, can be understood to be direct consequences of how *kafala* is structured. When comparing the Gulf literature with my fieldwork in Lebanon, I saw both overall data and specific stories constantly repeat themselves. It is beyond my capacity in this dissertation to conduct a comparative analysis between the oil-rich, politically authoritarian states of the GCC, and the service-sector dominated, politically weak state of Lebanon — although the role of both as financial centers of the region bears mention here. But the similarities I identified, ones that also match comparable evidence from Jordan (Frantz 2008, 2013), suggest that the social life of the *kafala* system exceeds the unique political economy of the GCC states. In order to consider what these region-wide experiences might reveal, I first take a closer look at migrant labour in the country that forms the site of this dissertation: Lebanon.

Lebanon and its Non-citizens

The modern historiography of Lebanon is dominated by three key themes: sectarianism, an outwards-oriented liberal economy based on the service sector, and a tense relationship to the country's regional setting (Traboulsi 2012). Lebanon was originally carved out of Ottoman Syria as a French mandate in 1923, largely in collaboration with local Maronite elites pushing to create a Christian enclave in the Muslim oasis of Greater Syria. It gained full independence in 1943 and remains unique in the region for adopting a mechanism of power-sharing between its religious communities known as confessionalism, particularly through an unwritten National Pact that

[7] Alongside the academic references listed in-text above, for only a few examples of country-specific case studies conducted by international NGOs, see: Amnesty International 2016 (Qatar); HRW 2007 (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, UAE); ILO 2004 (Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, UAE); ILO 2015b (Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan); Jones 2015 (Jordan, Lebanon).

ensured the President of the Republic always be Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister always be Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of Parliament always be Shi'a Muslim, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Speaker always be Greek Orthodox Christian (Salibi 1971).[8] It is this basic institutionalization of sect in the political (and legal) architecture of the state that has made sectarianism the 'animating concept' (Safieddine 2015) of persisting notions of Lebanese exceptionalism in both popular sentiment and regional study. Hence a sectarian framework of analysis is often used to explain the defining feature of the country's modern history, the 15-year long civil war of 1975-1990 (Haugbolle 2011). Recent scholarship that has contested sect-based analyses of Lebanon has therefore emphasized the role of sex and gender in the constitution of sect and citizenship (Mikdashi 2014), the history of state institutions and the lens of political economy (Abu-Rish 2014; Safieddine 2015), or the political and intellectual histories of the Left (Bardawil 2010). My own approach to Lebanon seeks instead to foreground its *non-citizen* populations as central to any anthropological understanding of Lebanese society. I argue that categories such as gender, language, labour, urban life, and citizenship must be understood by positioning non-citizen populations as *primary subjects* of analysis rather than delimited by their socio-legal marginality as migrant workers or refugees — particularly as two groups that constitute a massive proportion of Lebanese society.

Over 100,000 Palestinians arrived in Lebanon fleeing the *nakba* of 1948, and a smaller number arrived after the occupation of 1967. The majority originated in Galilee and the coastal cities that fell to Israel in 1948, leaving them with almost no chance of return while subject to widespread opposition to their settlement in Lebanon (Sayigh 1995). More recently, around 1.5

[8] The National Pact also includes similar provisions for army leadership and set a Christian:Muslim ratio for Parliament, the latter of which was modified by the post-civil war Taif Agreement of 1990.

million Syrians have entered the country since 2011 fleeing the ongoing war in Syria. These two movements have left a country already formally divided along lines of religious sect the site of further internal fissures that loom large in the public imagination. Today, Syrian refugees make up nearly a quarter of the population, with a loose current demographic breakdown as follows: 4 million Lebanese citizens; 300-350,000 Palestinian refugees; 1.1-1.5 million Syrian refugees; 250-300,000 (primarily female) migrant domestic workers; an unknown number of (primarily male) foreign workers, including Syrians that predate the refugee movement, Egyptians, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and very small numbers of Ethiopian, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Filipino, and West African men; as well as a number of Iraqi and Sudanese refugees (for the most recent attempt at exact numbers, see De Bel-Air 2017). My own estimate, based on popular estimates as well as conversations with NGO workers, activists, journalists, lawyers, and migrant community leaders (see also Dahdah 2012), place the total number of non-Arab migrant labourers (including domestic workers) at no less than half a million but likely far higher, outnumbering Palestinians in a country that was once the headquarters of the Palestinian revolution.

Lebanon has long relied on foreign labour to fill the majority of its low-wage jobs. The financial-mercantile oligarchy credited with early formulations of Lebanese nationalism as well as creating the blueprint for the country's future advocated an economic model later named 'the merchant republic', with low taxation and no restrictions on the movement of capital and goods (Hartman & Olsaretti 2003). Hence the post-independence state did not seek to develop a productive economy based on domestic industry, agriculture, or technology, but rather sought to facilitate regional trade, tourism, the finance sector, and domestic consumption (Gates 1998). Skilled local professionals, together with highly priced local commodities, would necessitate

cheap external labour (Chalcraft 2006). Syrian workers in particular have thus historically been central to the building of the modern Lebanese state and economy (Chalcraft 2009). As Lebanon became a regional mercantile and financial hub after the Second World War, Syrians came to dominate the country's agricultural and industrial sectors as well as construction and public works. They were soon joined by Palestinian refugees seeking to build new lives in the country. The former Ottoman provincial capital of Beirut was already known for its cosmopolitan middle class of merchants and professionals at the start of the 20th century (Hanssen 2005). But the 1950s were Beirut's infamous 'golden age', as the city became known as the 'Paris of the Middle East' and developed a reputation as a French-inflected, Mediterranean holiday destination for a European and even American elite (Traboulsi 2014). The city's expanding economy and cultural possibilities consequently attracted large amounts of Arab labour and investment.

Within the traditional private sphere, middle- and upper-class Lebanese households have also long relied on outside help to perform domestic labour (Fawaz 2005). In Ottoman-era Mount Lebanon, such labour was primarily arranged through relations of patronage between well-off families and local village poor, as well as working-class Syrians and Kurds. Rural families from the region would place their daughters in the homes of the wealthy, where in exchange for household labour the girls would be educated and socialized into the gendered mores of the Levantine elite. Wages, if offered, would be paid directly to the girls' fathers (Jureidini 2009). After the arrival of Palestinian refugees, many young Palestinian women joined the domestic labour pool. In 1958 the merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic led Egyptian women to travel to Lebanon in search of work. Middle-class families would then "entice them from the bars and the streets into their homes to work" (Jureidini 2009, 77). These

Arab women became what have been referred to as 'fictive kin' and often continued to maintain ties and claim financial and emotional obligations long after leaving the home (Jureidini 2004, 2009).

It is against this history that large numbers of Syrian and Palestinian workers filled Lebanon's working classes before the start of the civil war. By 1970 there was one working Syrian for every two working Lebanese in the country, and an estimated 1/7th of the Syrian workforce was now working in Lebanon (Chalcraft 2009). This presence was not met with alarm, but welcomed as a sign of the country's strength:

> It was thought natural that the 'Switzerland of the East' should attract professionals from Europe as well as labour from less well-off neighboring countries, and the Lebanese economic miracle required cheap, unskilled labour in any case, which could not, it was held, be supplied from within Lebanon (Chalcraft 2006, 2).

Lebanese citizens were also engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled labour, but according to Chalcraft (2006, 2009), a combination of factors led to a preference for Syrian workers.[9] These included recent gains made by the Lebanese labour movement that could be avoided by hiring Syrians, who demanded neither social nor political rights by comparison, as well as the fact that Syrian workers spent their wages in the relatively cheaper context back home, meaning they could be paid less without complaint. Syrian capital also helped shape the country in this period. The Syrian elite,

> fleeing the Baath party's rise to power and its nationalization of the Syrian economy in the early 1960s for Lebanon's laissez-faire economic liberalism, became major investors and shareholders in banks, companies, and construction projects (Picard in Monroe 2014, 86).

[9] It is worth noting that in the same period, Lebanese emigration was also growing, with an average of 3000 people leaving annually between 1945-1960 and a significant increase following the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. Emigration continued to grow from 1970-1975, fueled by the demand for labour in Gulf states facing a sudden influx of oil revenues, as discussed earlier (Tabar 2010).

Syrians needed neither work permits nor visas and could enter the country with nothing more than national ID cards, further facilitating the ease of cross-border exchange. In fact, the two countries maintained open borders from their creation until 2015, when Lebanon introduced new visa requirements for Syrians in response to the rising number of war refugees.

Despite this long history of cooperation and movement, Syrian workers in Lebanon have also been victim to the two countries' fraught political relations. The Syrian army played a key role during the Lebanese civil war, entering the country as part of an Arab peacekeeping force in 1976 and variously intervening and allying with opposing sides of local conflicts during the war itself. Syria also exercised significant control over Lebanese politics and the economy during these years. Syrian troops remained in Lebanon for 29 years and were not withdrawn until 2005, after massive protests and international pressure followed the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, allegedly at Syrian hands. Due to these wartime associations and fraught alliances, Syrian workers faced mass expulsion from areas that fell under the control of Christian forces. Chalcraft argues that this expulsion "was probably the single-most important of the pull factors in the arrival of Asian labor in Lebanon from the mid-1970s onward" (2009, 95).

It was therefore during the country's civil war that migrant workers began arriving from Asia and then parts of Africa. Egyptian and other Arab workers had quickly fled the climate of militarized insecurity and returned home. Palestinians, unable to flee and centrally implicated in the war, also became targets of heightened suspicion and distrust. "During the civil war they [ie. the Palestinians] became so strong", recalled an elderly Lebanese woman, "we stopped asking them to come for housework because we were afraid of them" (Jureidini 2009, 88). Young Palestinian maids would even threaten to call 'the Palestinian police' if abused or mistreated,

newly empowered by the atmosphere of guerrilla activity (Jureidini 2009). At the same time, the civil war saw approximately 40% of the Lebanese population leave the country between 1975-1989 (Tabar 2010). Where Chalcraft locates the turn to Asian labour as a consequence of Syrian expulsion, Tabar situates it in relation to Lebanese outmigration; it is of note that neither consider relevant factors on the opposite end of the labour flow. As Dahdah (2014) points out, global crises of the 1970s also led to a number of Asian countries, particularly the Philippines and Sri Lanka, introducing policies aimed at exporting their labour force in order to reduce unemployment and increase remittances. The confluence of these factors therefore provided the backdrop for the demographic shift in Lebanon's foreign workforce.

The *Kafala* System in Lebanon

As noted above, the *kafala* system is shorthand for a mode of organizing a temporary workforce through what is referred to as 'sponsorship', such that any foreigner who wishes to work in Lebanon must first be formally sponsored by an individual entity on the Lebanese side. Lebanon's adoption of the *kafala* system is likely a product of direct connections between the country and the GCC states in the decades of the Gulf oil boom and Lebanon's post-civil war

reconstruction.[10] At the same time, various local factors have led to the specific configuration of the *kafala* system in Lebanon. Unlike in the Gulf countries, for example, Syrian workers in Lebanon do not fall under *kafala* and have routes to residency that are not available for other non-citizens (Migrant Rights 2015). Below, I offer a limited overview of this configuration.

The earliest evidence of non-Arab labour in Lebanon is small numbers of women from Sri Lanka and the Seychelles entering the country in the 1970s (Jureidini 2003).[11] The first Lebanese recruitment agency to offer the employ of Sri Lankan domestic workers was reportedly opened in 1973 (Young 1999) or 1978 (Jureidini 2003). Despite the ongoing war, the number of migrants continued to both increase and diversify during the 1970s and 1980s (Dahdah 2014). In 1981, writer Alys Faiz recorded meeting a middle-aged woman from Colombo who had been working in the mountains of Lebanon for many months at a salary of $100/month, out of which she was to pay her agent in Colombo $40/month for two full years (Faiz 1993). In 1982 — the year of the Israeli invasion and siege of Beirut — one-fourth of foreign worker permits were issued to Asians (Chalcraft 2006). And in 1984, a local newspaper reported, that "Pakistani, Bangladeshi… Ethiopian, Egyptian, Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indian, Thai and Korean workers" had

[10] According to Tabar (2010), the demand for labor in the oil-rich Gulf states was a major source of Lebanese emigration after the Second World War, accelerated by the effects of the Arab war with Israel of 1967. Lebanese migration to the Gulf continued during the civil war. Over the last twenty years, Tabar points out, this has shifted to skilled and professional workers as the Gulf has embarked on projects of economic diversification. Nonetheless, Lebanese migrants working in the GCC states continue to send vast amounts of remittances. In 2015, Lebanon's $7.2 billion of remittances accounted for 16% of the GDP, and approximately $5 billion of this came from the GCC states (Mahmoud 2016). In addition to the workforce, the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, have a close relationship to Lebanon's political leadership, most notably in former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri (Hanieh 2011). Hariri made his wealth in Saudi Arabia before returning a billionaire to Lebanon and becoming the country's first post-civil war prime minister in what Traboulsi describes as a "financially-backed coup" (2014, 26). According to Frantz (2008), the migrant domestic workforce in Jordan took shape only after Jordanian labour migration to the Gulf led to revenues that enabled Jordanians back home to recruit foreign workers, and the Jordanian economy become closer intertwined with that of the Gulf. This is likely also the case for Lebanon, but historical work needs to be undertaken to investigate this in more detail.

[11] Beyene (2005) also records meeting an Eritrean woman who had been working in Lebanon since 1974.

appeared in numbers in “bakeries, factories, construction sites, households, agriculture, restaurants and even in hospitals, where they work as registered nurses and nurses’ aides” (in Chalcraft 2009, 95).

Despite this early evidence, the vast majority of Asian migrants came after 1993, as the country embarked on ambitious postwar economic reconstruction projects (Ireland 2011). To offer a brief overview of the numbers: by the early 1990s, there were already 10,000 non-Arab workers in the country (Chalcraft 2006). In 1994, 50.4% of the foreign labour force in Lebanon was reported to be Asian as compared to 43.8% Arab, and this difference increased to 64.7% Asian vs. 22% Arab by 1997 (Moukarbel 2009). A full *half* of the legal migrant workforce in 1997 was reported to be Sri Lankan, with nearly 20,000 work permits issued for Sri Lankan domestic workers in the first ten months of 1997 alone (Abu-Habib 1998). By the year 2000, over 90% of Asian migrants to Lebanon were working as maids (Baldwin-Edwards 2005).

In 2002, a decade after the end of the civil war, the population of Lebanon was reported at 3.6 million citizens; somewhere between 200,000 to 1 million Syrians (if so vast a range can even be offered as statistic); 409,000 refugees, the majority of whom were Palestinian; 100,000 Sri Lankans; 30,000 Ethiopians; 20,000 Filipinos; and 11,000 Indians, with a significant proportion of migrants working illegally (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). The 2000s also saw the arrival of female domestic workers from Madagascar as well as various parts of West Africa, the latter of which Bret (2007) locates not in formalized recruitment networks (as with the other countries) but in interpersonal relationships between Lebanese expatriates working in Francophone Africa, specifically Congo, Togo, and Senegal, as well as Anglophone Ghana and Nigeria. Domestic workers continued to dominate the migrant workforce, and 82% of foreign

work permits issued in 2004 were registered as 'servants' (Ajami 2007). More recent estimates of 'foreign migrant women' living in Lebanon reach up to 400,000 (Dahdah 2014), including up to 160,000 Sri Lankan women (Moukarbel 2009) and 100,000 Ethiopian women (Dahdah 2014). However, due to the large proportion of undocumented workers and the fact that official statistics are kept only on the basis of legally issued work permits, all such numbers remain notoriously unreliable.

Exact numbers aside, the community of non-Arab migrant workers in Lebanon has been progressively growing for the last 40 years. It is an argument of my dissertation that, in order to understand contemporary Lebanon, we must attend to the differences between the historic experience of non-citizen Arab populations in the country, and the postwar presence of Asian and black African labour. For this reason, I choose to limit my use of the term 'foreign/migrant workers' throughout this dissertation to Asian and black African workers, despite the fact that Arab workers are technically subsumed under the English category as well as its equivalent Arabic term (*'ummal al-ajanib*). This is not to deny the forms of exclusion that Syrians and Palestinians are subject to through their own foreign status, but to insist on the fundamental difference between being an Arab in Lebanon, and living as non-Arab, racialized labour.

Based on all available estimates, non-Arab labour in Lebanon is dominated by women in the domestic service sector. International media coverage regularly conflates the ILO-provided (2016a) estimate of 250,000 female migrant domestic workers with the *total* number of migrant workers in the country. However, men from Sri Lanka and the Philippines quickly followed the arrival of their female counterparts amidst the postwar demand for low-skilled labour, and were soon joined by workers of both sexes from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Bret 2007).

In 2008, the Syndicate of Owners of Female Housemaid Employment Agencies (originally established in 2004) changed its name to the Syndicate of Owners of House Workers Recruitment Agencies in Lebanon, demonstrating a clear intention to recruit men (Dahdah 2014). And on an average day in Beirut, although women in the pastel stripes of a maid's uniform can often be seen out on errands or leaning over balconies in order to polish glass windows, the city's streets are also filled with South Asian men in the uniforms of cleaning companies. None are more conspicuous than the neon green uniforms of the Hariri-affiliated private waste-management company Sukleen.[12] Due to the absence of male migrant workers from popular and scholarly conversations on the issue, as well as their presence in the social worlds of my fieldwork, I insist on an analytic framework that includes both male and female experiences within my discussion of migrant labour, while also attending to specific gendered operations of power. However, the primary context in which my work is set remains the Lebanese *kafala* system, and its overwhelming association with female domestic work.

An estimated one quarter of Lebanese households employ a live-in migrant domestic worker on a full-time basis.[13] According to the latest study by the ILO (2016b), the largest nationality groups of domestic workers in the country come from Ethiopia, followed by Bangladesh and then the Philippines. The vast majority are in their twenties and thirties, with an

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[12] After being denied an interview with Sukleen representatives during a garbage strike that had much of Beirut on edge, I was told in confidence that 1/3 of Sukleen's employees were Indian, 1/3 Syrian, and 1/3 Lebanese. The Indians, however, were hired on temporary contracts based on a bilateral agreement that often involved wages to be paid on a daily basis. This highly temporary nature has furthered the invisibilization of these workers, and appears to have contributed to a paucity of information about (primarily male) non-Arab migrant workers in the country who are not domestic workers.

[13] This calculation is drawn from the estimate of 250,000 female domestic workers employed in private households across the country (ILO 2016a), the average Lebanese family size of 4.3 (Masri 2008), and the widely-cited estimate of 4 million Lebanese citizens. Dahdah (2012) comes to the same ratio. It neither accounts for households that employ more than one live-in domestic worker, nor for the many who are employed in private households but do not have legal paperwork, nor any male domestic workers.

average age of 29 (ILO 2016a). They arrive through a large transnational migration network that includes multiple brokers, starting from those tasked with local recruitment in their home towns. Recruitment does not always happen directly: many of the women I met first encountered Lebanon through a friend or a neighbour, their success stories either circulating as rumours or patently evident in the sudden income of remittances. Workers can pay anywhere from $200-$3000 to work in Lebanon (Dahdah 2014; ILO 2016a). These migrant and their families often incur large debts in order to facilitate this travel. Others, however, arrive to Lebanon having turned over only their passport, and are expected to work off their debt upon arrival. Workers arrive through means that vary from direct flights to dangerous smuggling routes by both land and sea, differing primarily based on the brokers involved, the local political situation, and the existence of a legal travel ban to Lebanon. Because of such bans on the part of Ethiopia and Philippines, for example, Ethiopians are often smuggled in via Yemen and Sudan, and Filipinas through the Arab Gulf states (ILO 2016b).

On the Lebanese side, employment is loosely structured as follows: individual sponsors must first obtain pre-work authorization for the migrant from the Ministry of Labour, which requires a copy of the intended worker's passport. Once this is obtained, the security and intelligence agency responsible for foreigners, known as General Security, will grant a three-month residency visa to the worker. Within this time, the sponsor is required to present a set of documents to relevant government offices in order to obtain renewable one-year residency and work visas for the worker, or to send her back if the trial period does not go as planned (Moukarbel 2009). In place of this rather tedious process and in response to rising demand, licensed private recruitment agencies have largely taken over such employment.

Although legally any family can sponsor a domestic worker directly, over 87% do so through an agency (ILO 2016b). Agencies pay a $33,000 fee to the National Housing Bank and meet certain additional requirements in exchange for being authorized to bring 200 women in per year, technically on condition that each migrant is linked to a specific request from an employer, but widely ignored in practice (Dahdah 2014). Each works in collaboration with similar agencies in countries of origin, and the entire process involves fees paid to intermediaries at multiple points. In Lebanon, agencies play a major role in matching families with domestic workers that meet budgets, cultural preferences, or job requirements. They are widely known for creating catalogues of women, such that 'catalogue shopping' has become an image widely associated with domestic worker procurement in the country (Abu-Habib 1998). Agencies have therefore become responsible for explaining the terms of the employment contract and offering advice on worker treatment. Their misinformation and mistreatment of workers is often blamed for high levels of citizen ignorance requiring employer responsibilities and worker rights, and many have been quoted providing justifications for abuse as necessary to ensure worker compliance (eg. ILO 2016a; Mansour 2005; The Why 2016). The number of licensed private recruitment agencies in Lebanon has risen from 150 in the early 2000s to over 400 today (Dahdah 2014) (a number believed to be much higher to account for those operating unlicensed), and signs advertising domestic workers can regularly be seen hung outside office buildings in Beirut. In 2015, one such agency provoked outrage when it advertised a 'special offer' on Kenyan and Ethiopian maids for Mother's Day (Examiner 2015).

The majority of Lebanese employers of domestic workers are female, and tend to be educated working adults seeking household assistance, often for the care of young children or the

elderly (ILO 2016b). On average, employers pay between $2000-$4000 to sponsor a domestic worker, a cost that includes travel, work authorization, required medical exams, and the agency fee (Dahdah 2012; ILO 2106b). In addition, they are required to place a $1000 deposit in the bank to be returned upon the worker's departure, as well as pay for annual work and residency permit renewals at a cost of $600/year,[14] and private medical insurance at a cost of $70-$90/year (Dahdah 2014) — the latter requirements often ignored. Workers are required to sign a (one-year, renewable) contract at a notary public, but nearly 75% do not receive a copy of it (let alone a translation or accounting for illiteracy), and the majority of employers do not abide by the majority of the contract's provisions (ILO 2016b). There is no minimum wage for domestic workers and they do not fall under Lebanese labour law. According to the latest study by the ILO, the average salary is $180/month (minimum wage in the country is $450/month) with significant discrepancies between nationalities (ILO 2016a). The accepted pay scale is partially attributed to different recruitment costs but popularly associated with a racialized hierarchy of workers, or what Dahdah calls "ethno-professional representations":

> The Philippines, "Mercedes Benz of the servants," are thus considered to be clean, educated, English-speaking and caring for children; The Sri Lankans are known to do the housework well and to be "hard on the job"; And Ethiopian women, like the Sri Lankans, seem to suffer from the color of their skin, and are considered by Lebanese and Lebanese women interviewed as stubborn, uneducated and uneducated women (2012, I/6).

Currently, it is estimated that 80% of Bangladeshi women are paid less than $200/month, whereas 40% of Filipina women earn $400/month or more (ILO 2016a). According to the same study, 80% of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon have worked for a single employer, 40%

[14] It is worth noting that, if taking only the official government figure of 130,000 migrant domestic workers, the renewal of these permits alone creates an annual revenue of nearly $80 million (Dahdah 2014).

have dependent children in their countries of origin, only half have their own sleeping quarters, and half feel their papers are being withheld from them against their wishes (ILO 2016a).

Despite the control of private agencies over this labour market, there has also emerged a form of 'parallel migration' (Dahdah 2012) that relies on personal networks. Women who have been in the country for a number of years have often found sponsors for a husband, sibling, cousin, or friend. I was regularly approached with requests to ask whether any of my Lebanese friends might be able to serve as a sponsor in such a context. Employers are saved agency fees, and workers are able to reunite with family members, pay back debts, or keep promises to those left behind. According to one Ethiopian interlocutor, every single Ethiopian man in Beirut had arrived through a woman who worked there for some years and arranged for his sponsorship.

The word *kafala* is not actually encoded in Lebanese law, as it is in Qatar, for example. Instead, *kafala* is used to refer to a mixture of laws, jurisprudence, and customary practices that govern migrant (primarily domestic) worker sponsorship in the country. It is shrouded by confusion, arbitrariness, and the structural limits of access to a phenomenon largely secreted away behind the locked doors of private homes spread across the country. Nonetheless, an NGO-fueled interest has led to an impressive quantity of English-language academic writing on the issue (eg. Abu-Habib 1998; Beydoun 2006; Bizri 2009, 2015; Dahdah 2014; Jureidini 2003, 2009, 2011; Moukarbel 2009; Pande 2012, 2013, 2014; Picard 2013). Important work has also been done by MA students at the American University of Beirut, who have conducted some of the earliest ethnographic research with domestic workers themselves (Ajami 2007; Beyene 2005; Yeon Lee 2009).

Expanding on themes that form the sites of NGO interest and often relying on NGO reports for much of their data, these works have primarily attended to the ways in which the international rise of a feminized precariat and local structures of repression combine to maximize worker vulnerability. Jureidini and Moukarbel as well as Fawaz (2005) have offered a limited historic understanding of foreign domestic labour in the country, but there remains an urgent need for a comprehensive history in the model of John Chalcraft's work on Syrian labour in Lebanon. Other works have expressed an interest in the possibilities of political gains after the Arab Spring (Picard 2013), the details of migration flows, and the key role of private mediators (Beydoun 2006; Dahdah 2014; Fernandez 2013). All consistently emphasize women's strategies of resistance. Bizri (2009, 2015) stands out in the list for an exceptional and careful linguistic study of Sri Lankan domestic workers' Arabic speech patterns, a new language she calls "Pidgin Madame". Overall, however, there remains a lack of integration between work that focuses on non-Arab migrant labour while placing Lebanon in the background, and diverse work on Lebanon that rarely even mentions such workers' existence.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of anthropological interest in Lebanon, which has become one of the region's primary 'prestige zones' alongside Egypt and Palestine (Deeb & Winegar 2012) due to both ease of access and a significant shift from rural to urban-based studies (Bier 2016).[15] With the growth of the field must therefore come a greater understanding of the role played by non-Arab migrant workers in the constitution and everyday operations of class, gender, and citizenship in Lebanon.

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[15] Nor is this limited to anthropology alone. For the last two years, the Arab Studies Institute has hosted an interdisciplinary Lebanon Dissertation Summer Institute in Beirut to respond precisely to this growing interest across the social sciences. For details, see http://lebanondissertation.weebly.com/.

Sofia's Story

Sofia has been in Lebanon for over 55 years. When she was a young child in Brazil, six or seven years old, orphaned without family to care for her, Sofia was adopted by a wealthy Lebanese family conducting business there at the time. Brazil continues to be home to millions of residents of Lebanese origin, and Sofia's adopted parents were part of a wave of migrants from Lebanon to South America dating back to the late 19th century (see Khater 2001). In Sofia's case, the young couple, who at the time had no biological children of their own, decided to return to their village home in the mountains of Lebanon with Sofia in tow. It was the early 1950s and Lebanon was in the first decade of its independence, prosperous and promising.

Back in Lebanon, the family thrived. They lived in a large villa and were reputed to be of significant means and local connections. Sofia began to grow in the company of first one and then a second sibling, whom she referred to respectively as her sister and brother. Her adopted parents, too, attained the status of mother and father for the young girl. For two years, Sofia went to school with her siblings just like the rest of the children in the extended family. At the age of eight or nine, however, she was pulled out of school to help out with some chores at home. Her young sister continued to pursue an education but Sofia was asked to help around the home with the cooking and cleaning, first a few small chores — wash the laundry, sweep the balconies — and then with increasing responsibility. The years passed. Sofia grew older, as did those around her. Her adoptive parents aged and her adoptive siblings got married and had children of their own. Sofia kept working. Eventually the heads of the household died, and Sofia, now unquestionably transformed from daughter to maid, moved on to work in the house of the woman whom she still referred to as 'sister.' Sofia has continued serving this Lebanese woman,

whose biological claim to a family that began as shared gave her a future of marriage and reproduction that was foreclosed to her (formerly) adopted sister. Sofia continues to work in the manner of a cherished domestic servant, passed on through generations of a family who are the only kin she has ever known. She is now 62 years old. For over five decades of exhausting labour in lieu of life, Sofia has never been paid a cent.

At a certain point, approximately a decade ago, Sofia's sister/employer realized there might be something about their unorthodox family situation that could get them into trouble. The Lebanese woman went through backdoor channels to have a sponsorship contract drawn up and managed to renew Sofia's Brazilian passport, thereby ensuring all paperwork was in order. This puts Sofia in a relatively privileged position compared to many other domestic workers, for Sofia's passport is kept in her own possession, making her technically free to leave the country. In a reversal of the fate of thousands of undocumented workers in Lebanon, the nature of Sofia's employment is a fiction that is testified to in *legal* documentation but not in social life. Over the entire course of her young life and late into middle age, Sofia did not have a single person to talk to outside the Lebanese family that brought her to the country as a child. She lived and worked long days in a small town in the mountains, and rarely if ever visited Beirut. She does not read or write, and until a recent intervention, she did not have a cell phone.

Two years ago, a Christmas celebration was held at the home where Sofia works and resides. The children of the extended family gathered, as tends to be the case on such occasions. A family member brought their young Ethiopian domestic worker to the celebration in order to care for the kids or clean up after the meal, as can be witnessed at many Lebanese family

Christmas celebrations, where no one pays much attention to the maids' holiday. The Ethiopian woman, relegated to the social quarters of domestics and infants, struck up a conversation with Sofia. She was shocked as she began to understand the story. Aware of the services of the Migrant Community Center (MCC), a Beirut space started to support migrant workers some years prior, the woman convinced the family to allow Sofia to accompany her to church on an upcoming Sunday. Her intervention opened Sofia to the possibility of another world.

It was at MCC that I met her, but somehow, Sofia did not look like any of the other women. She has a protruding jawline, short cropped hair, enormous eyes and stark white teeth, giving her a permanent expression of one slightly dazed. She speaks a gently stunted Arabic, like that of a child or an adult with learning disabilities— or, perhaps, that of a Brazilian girl who grew up trapped in a Lebanese village for her entire life. She has a strange relationship to her employer and former sister, one of intermittent obsession and distancing. Sometimes she cannot imagine life apart from her, and other times she says she is ready to do anything as long as she can leave. But how can she leave? The family does not know that MCC is trying to help her escape, but there needs to be a plan in place first.

Even within the rules governing domestic worker sponsorship, Sofia cannot legally transfer her employer because of her age. No family will agree to sponsor a domestic worker over the age of 60 when the kind of work required demands a younger body, and even if one were to try, the Lebanese state would never believe it or approve it. The Brazilian Embassy has offered to assist her repatriation, but Sofia has nothing in Brazil: no family, no language, no social ties, and no meaningful recollections. Despite having lived in Lebanon virtually her entire life, Sofia has no access to Lebanese citizenship. The flimsy piece of paper recording her

‘adoption’, one that Sofia remarkably still holds in her possession, was not issued by a governing authority and bears no legal weight in contemporary bureaucracy. As for Lebanon’s old peoples’ homes and monasteries, they will not take foreigners. What job will Sofia find at this age? Who will raise enough money to pay for the next years of her life? And so Sofia comes to MCC whenever she can escape in order to attend French classes and meet other women, delighted in the newfound company. An overworked, underpaid lawyer has now spent more than two years searching for a solution to her case. Like the many others that live on the margins of Beirut — the Syrian children selling roses amidst busy traffic, the Palestinian grandmothers rolling grape leaves in the homes of refugee camps, the twice-displaced Palestinian-Syrian teenagers from Yarmouk camp rolling hashish joints in cold Beirut basements, the Kurdish and Iraqi refugees desperately waiting for an interview from UNHCR — Sofia waits. Unlike these men and women, however, Sofia is black.

Thinking About Race and Racism in Lebanon

Sofia’s is the story of a limit. It is the limit of a world in which an adopted child cannot be conceived of as kin, and it is a limit that appears to us as marked on the body. But the question of ‘race’ in the Middle East is a complicated one. For one, the category of Arab — considered White on the U.S. census — is neither racially distinct nor racially homogenous. Eve Troutt-Powell’s work on the history of Egypt’s relationship with Sudan, its black Arab neighbour, has partially examined how local ideologies of race were formed through the overlap of British imperialism, the regional slave trade, and developing Egyptian nationalism (2003). In late 19th century Egypt, Troutt-Powell demonstrates, Egyptian writers and nationalists were fully aware of

discourses of race being constructed in western Europe, and many used this language to frame their perspectives about Sudan and its people. In Lebanon, where loud voices insist that the heritage of the country is Phoenician and Christian rather than Arab and Muslim, such careful genealogical work remains to be done.

Historian Elizabeth Thompson's *Colonial Citizens* (2000) has examined how the French mandate laid the grounds for the gendered construction of citizenship in Lebanon. Rewriting a history that has privileged sectarian and class identities over gendered ones, Thompson offers a seminal contribution to the study of Lebanon in her careful excavation of the legal and social legacies of the mandate period. Among these legacies is the presence of French colonial troops drawn from the French colonies. Thompson notes that Senegalese troops were often singled out in women's memories of the mandate period as particularly threatening. After rebel leaflets distributed in the early 1920s warned, "The French will rape your women! The Senegalese will kill your children!" (47), Thompson describes, "the Senegalese would become a regular target of nationalist propaganda in sexualized and racialized imagery that fused men's gender anxieties with outrage at French domination" (49). A decade later, Thompson quotes the American consul in 1931 describing the French military occupation as follows:

> For there saunter along the streets of Beirut (and, I presume, of Damascus, Aleppo and other towns of this country) the doughty soldiers of Morocco, the Spahis of Algeria, beautiful specimens from Senegal and even the short, high cheek-boned, slant-eyed fellows from Indo China, always carrying their side arms (in Thompson 2000, 185).

These moments, along with Thompson's attention to the role of Nazi ideology in Lebanon's fascist Phalangist movement, offer a glimpse of European racial ideology combining with local anxieties and discriminatory associations to produce the contours of a category identifiable as

race. And yet it would be impossible to stabilize such a category across the experience of French colonial conscription, modern statehood, and contemporary neoliberalism in Lebanon.

The Migrant Community Center (MCC) described in Sofia's story above is a project of a Beirut-based coalition named The Anti-Racism Movement (*Harakat Munahadat al-'Unsuriyye*), or ARM. ARM was launched in 2010 after activists using a hidden camera filmed acts of discrimination against migrant domestic workers at one of the city's most well-known private beach resorts, Sporting Club. The group involved both Lebanese activists and migrant community leaders, many of whom had been in the country for some years and were recognized as authorities in their respective national communities. It was through this collaboration that a need was articulated for a space where migrant workers could gather free of harassment, surveillance, or public scrutiny. MCC was created for this purpose, soon offering a mixture of social and educational activities including weekly language classes, monthly dinners, group trips to Lebanese landmarks, workshops on legal aid, and much more. MCC members and organizers have been central to the creation of the Domestic Workers' Union as well as the annual May Day Workers' Parade (discussed in Chapter Four of the dissertation). In 2016, an additional center was opened in the southern coastal city of Saida (Sidon), and in 2017 a third center was opened in the northern coastal city of Jounieh. In addition, a parallel initiative known as the Migrant Workers' Task Force (MWTF) founded in 2011 by two American expatriates interested in offering language classes within a different city neighbourhood, was incorporated into MCC in 2016. MCC has therefore attracted numerous young expatriates traveling through Beirut for leisure, Arabic study, or NGO work, and its volunteer base is composed of a significant number

of North Americans and Europeans interested in helping out or, as I was, conducting research on the issue. Together with the English and French education systems that dominate middle-class Lebanon, as well as the country's international NGO presence, this has led to the widespread circulation of global discourses of human rights and social justice within these circles.

On June 27, 2016, towards the end of my fieldwork, eight suicide bombers targeted a Lebanese village named al-Qa'a on the border with Syria. The series of attacks on the mostly Christian village killed five and wounded many more, and were quickly attributed to Syrian fighters associated with ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra retaliating against Lebanese involvement in the ongoing war.[16] In response, the provincial governor imposed a curfew on Syrian refugees in the area, a practice that had already been seen in other districts. Driving through the country that summer, it was common to see banners strung in central roundabouts forbidding the movement (*al-tajawwul*) of Syrians after dark. Some banners named Syrians directly (usually 'Syrian brothers', or *al-ikhwa al-suriyyin*) but many others used the word foreigners (*al-ajanib*) or even foreign workers (*al-'ummal al-ajanib*). The latter was generally understood as a euphemism for Syrians rather than an expansion to include non-Arab migrant workers, but many of us also heard reports of migrant workers in these municipalities being harassed or detained with extra vigilance. A group of local activists, including many associated with ARM or MCC, gathered and began an online monitor to track the increasing public and private targeting of Syrians in

[16] The Lebanese group Hizballah, an armed movement and political party with a controlling stake in the Lebanese Parliament, had been fighting on the side of the Syrian regime since 2012. It has deployed a large number of fighters in Syria and suffered significant casualties, although its gains in military expertise and regional influence recently led the Wall Street Journal to declare it the "clear winner" of the Syrian Civil War (Abi-Habib 2017).

Lebanon. Unsurprisingly, an effort was made to link discrimination against Asian and African workers, often highly gendered in its targeting of women, to that of Syrian refugees.[17]

The coming together of an organized social movement surrounding migrant labour and the heightened political targeting of Syrian refugees has thus produced a common ground for public solidarity: racism *('unsuriyye)*. However, to the best of my knowledge, the subsumption of Syrians under the discourse of racism is very new. Seminal writing on the discrimination of Palestinians in the country similarly does not use racism as either a descriptive or explanatory device (eg. Sayigh 1994; Suleiman 2006). On the other hand, local NGOs focusing on the treatment of domestic workers regularly address the issue through the lens of racism. For example, as mentioned above, all the Migrant Community Centers operate under an umbrella organization named The Anti-Racism Movement. But the increasing prevalence of racism as a discourse meant to elicit public sympathy and outrage is far more likely a consequence of conscious activist tactics, the NGO-ization of politics, and the personal biographies of many of the individuals involved, than a sustained local history of *race*.

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One average summer day in the congested, construction-filled neighbourhood of Ras Beirut, a young man of South Asian origin was rushing up the busy road that leads from the American University of Beirut to the café district of Hamra Street. He was late to meet his wife, both of them professors with foreign citizenship who had been in Lebanon for a little under a year. His

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[17] This was heightened by the fact that in late March 2016, Lebanese police exposed a decade-old trafficking ring of Syrian women in a raid on a hotel known as Chez Maurice in Maameltein. 75 women were freed and reported tales of staggering torture, forced sexual activity, and confinement, in the country's largest revealed instance of trafficking that involved a network stretching across Syria and Lebanon. In the following months, a series of raids targeted female migrant workers living in rented apartments under accusations of prostitution. For more, see the pseudonymously-published A&R (2016).

haste attracted attention and he was suddenly seized by a group of men. They grabbed his arm roughly and began interrogating him in Arabic, a language he did not speak, questioning his right to run down the street in this city. One started getting particularly aggressive, and an English speaking passerby was called to to help out. Even with the presence of a translator, the Lebanese men who were forcibly preventing the foreign man from leaving did not believe his story. It was only after he called his wife, a white woman, to come intervene that he was released. Perhaps some rough apologies were offered.

The man was a medical doctor and not a migrant worker, but sometimes all it takes to confuse the two in Beirut is a dark enough shade of skin. Another South Asian American woman, also a professor, was once in a commercial establishment where she was required to show ID. A domestic worker in uniform stared with wide eyes as the young woman pulled out her passport. She turned and whispered with urgency, "What did you do to get your passport??" Meanwhile, when I would show my own passport to attend visiting hours at the migrant detention center, other foreign women would sometimes crowd around and ask to see it, and then ask to me to show them the visa that was only a cedar-shaped stamp on a white page, no sponsor's name trailing mine in mark of ownership. They would stare in mild disbelief or disdain and exchange comments I could not understand, while the young Druze security guard would ask with a grin, "What the hell is a Canadian doing visiting someone *here*?"

As the anecdotes above demonstrate, even differently-classed bodies can blur the lines between migrant worker and foreign expatriate through a shared experience of racialization. In this dissertation, I do not directly employ race as an analytic framework through which to understand the experience of migrant workers in Lebanon. However, I intermittently refer to

migrant workers as racialized due to the embodied nature of their exclusion. These lines are often as unstable as we know them to be in the U.S.; when I would walk down the street accompanying my Ethiopian interlocutors and friends, I too would suddenly be the target of racist slurs or vicious abuse directed our way. When I was alone or in the company of Arab friends, however, I would be commonly read as Moroccan, Yemeni, Iraqi, or a biracial mix of partly-Arab parentage. And as in the U.S., the protections of class are enormous. But associations between skin colour, particularly blackness, and a set of discriminatory assumptions incorporating everything from body odour to intelligence are an unmissable part of migrant worker experience in Lebanon. There is even an associated slur: *"Yil'an lawnik!"*, or "May God curse your colour!" Similar examples can be found throughout this text, but all are just as impossible to extricate from the structures of the *kafala* system that govern non-Arab, low-wage employment. Migrant workers in Beirut are therefore best understood neither as racially nor economically distinct but as a subject category that marks a joint socioeconomic relation that cannot be untangled. It is the purpose of this dissertation to trace the living contours of this relation.

Dissertation Genre and Overview

In February 2015, a popular group of Saudi artists associated with the YouTube channel Telfaz 11 (perhaps most famous for its brilliant rendition of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry" as "No Woman, No Drive") released a music video depicting migrant workers in the Gulf. Called "Kafeel" and chosen to launch a new comedy and music platform named Al-Jisr, the video was performed by Arabs Got Talent finalist Ibrahim el Khairallah and standup comedian Moayad Al-

Nefaie, both Saudi. It immediately went viral.[18] The video opens with a scene of a Saudi *kafeel* yelling at a South Asian man for reading a newspaper and ordering him to get back to work, followed by sequences of laborers rapping and dancing amidst open work sites of sand and cement. Khairallah and Al-Nefaie, who offer lead vocals, are dressed as Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and sing in a pidgin Gulf Arabic accented to match their respected nationalities. Their defiant refrain, *"ana ma fi khawf min kafeel"*, translates simply to "I am not afraid of the *kafeel*." A few mornings after the video was released, I arrived at the Beirut restaurant where I had been working as part of my fieldwork. I found the Syrian chef, a woman from Deir az-Zor who had come to Beirut to be a dancer and stayed after the war destroyed her family home, grinning and singing the chorus to Kafeel. The catchy beat had quickly traveled from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon, with the *kafala* system a familiar and defining feature of labour in both countries.

Two years later, Deepak Unnikrishnan (2017) published the first English language novel written by a child of Indian migrant workers in the UAE. Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People* has attracted significant attention for its magical realism-inspired style, composed of 28 short vignettes linked by the horrors, absurdities, and imaginative worlds of migrant labour in the Gulf's dystopia. Unnikrishnan was brought to Abu Dhabi as a 30-day old infant, and his Malayali family had been traveling and working in the Gulf since 1972. In 2008, a Malayalam-language novel about migrant worker experience in Saudi Arabia had already been published, this by a Bahrain-based Indian novelist writing under the name Benyamin. The novel was based on real-life events narrated to the author and was translated to English in 2012 under the title

[18] The video can be seen at https://youtu.be/J7MHRRcHah0. As of June 2017, it had 8.3 million views.

Goat Days (Koyippally 2012). Despite vast differences in narrative style and organization, both novels are incredibly difficult to read. *Goat Days* tells the shocking tale of an Malayali man trapped in a slave-like existence as a goat herder in the Saudi desert, denied water and company, and slowly feeling himself transform into a goat before he at last manages to escape. And *Temporary People* is unrelenting in its surrealist slippage between what one reviewer has called the charming and the terrifying, such that there is never a moment in the text that does not leave one deeply unsettled.

These works join Egyptian novelist Mohammad al-Bistaie's *Drumbeat* (2015), published in 2006 in Arabic and translated into English in 2010. *Drumbeat* tells the story of a fictional Gulf country where life is interrupted when all the citizens are ordered to travel to France to support their national team in the World Cup, and the country is left in the care of its diverse foreign labourers. It is in these examples of literary and cultural production that we get closest to tales of migrant workers in the Middle East: the inflections of their Arabic, the aspirations of their exhausting journeys, and the surprising possibilities of the Arab cities built by their foreign hands. Although both circumscribed by and indebted to its academic genre, this dissertation seeks to do something similar.

The ethnography on which this project is based consisted of so many conversations, casual encounters, developing friendships, and sustained attempts at observation that it would be wholly inaccurate to explain it through specific activities. Broadly, however, my fieldwork was divided into three stages. The first stage involved some months spent working inside a restaurant/café kitchen in the Hamra neighbourhood of Ras Beirut, where I was daily responsible for baking

desserts for the daytime menu. Although my shift was during the early morning (before the oven was turned over to the orders of the day), I regularly remained in the kitchen after my task had been completed and helped out wherever I was allowed, which usually involved chopping vast quantities of onions and garlic. The kitchen was staffed by a mixture of Ethiopian women and Syrian men, and it is they who first opened the social worlds of this dissertation to me. I worked inside the restaurant kitchen seven mornings a week for the first few months, and then three times a week after. During this time and then for some months after I had stopped baking desserts, I was also involved with certain aspects of the restaurant's daily operations and promotion, including assisting as a liaison between kitchen staff and management.

The second stage of my fieldwork involved moving to the neighbourhood of Dawra, the center of migrant worker activity in Beirut. During this time I familiarized myself with a number of establishments run by and catering to migrant workers in the city, including cafés, restaurants, and hair salons. Two cafés in particular, both run by Ethiopian women who had attained Lebanese citizenship through marriage, welcomed me into their small communities and invited me into their homes, relationships, and even disputes. I began to attend a range of Sunday events in the neighbourhood as well as to meet the diverse entrepreneurs, hustlers, hawkers, and street vendors that catered to the city's migrant workers throughout the week. Although my time living in Dawra was cut short due to extenuating circumstances, this part of my fieldwork was central to entering a social world that is far more marginalized and carefully guarded than local NGOs or community activist networks (the usual point of access for most reportage on this issue).

The third stage of my fieldwork involved interning for the primary such activist organization in Beirut, the Migrant Community Center discussed above (MCC). Part of this work

involved administrative and organizational tasks such as recruiting and communicating with volunteers, or helping coordinate the many educational classes offered at the center. I also assisted a second MCC intern with casework, namely the dozens of individual cases that were brought to MCC of migrant and domestic workers struggling with a vast range of abuse and mistreatment. This primarily involved liaising between the individuals concerned and services offered by relevant organizations in Beirut, from women's shelters to legal aid. It also involved hospital visits, prison visits, court visits, embassy/consulate visits, and individual communication with lawyers, unionists, and family members, as well as organizing a know-your-rights workshop and assisting with beginning the first multilingual migrant worker newspaper in the country. Being part of MCC also meant being welcomed into the community of migrant workers and activists that converge around the center, and being part of activities including daycare in the summer, group trips to Lebanese landmarks, children's birthday parties, Ramadan dinners, and much more.

Through my involvement with MCC, I also participated in community events ranging from Nepalese religious celebrations and Sri Lankan music festivals, to the annual May Day Workers' Parade and events related to the Domestic Workers' Union, as well as mourning ceremonies in the event of deaths and other more intimate activities. I also attended a Beirut-based consortium for NGO workers, activists, and international organizations broadly involved with the issue. Separate from my formal internship, I spent one year co-teaching Beginners' English at MCC on Monday evenings to a group of students primarily composed of female Ethiopian freelancers and male Sudanese refugees. Through this I participated extensively in attempts to formalize an English curriculum for the center, in collaboration with other teachers

and trainers. I additionally taught English for some months at Al-Naqab, a self-funded center for youth activity and education in the Palestinian refugee camp of Bourj al-Barajneh. Most of my students were Palestinian Syrian children aged 8-13 who had arrived due to the war, and due to lack of legal documentation many had been living for years inside the camp and unable to leave. (This work does not directly appear in the dissertation.)

Formal and informal interviews were also conducted with a vast range of individuals differently affiliated with migrant workers, including lawyers, service-providers, NGO workers, representatives from state embassies or consulates, current and former community activists and leaders, event-planners, pastors, local businessmen, and other figures of interest or authority. No interviews were conducted, on point of principle, with individual Lebanese employers of migrant workers or Lebanese recruitment agencies. No access was gained, on point of principle, to migrant workers through their employers (despite frequently receiving offers from fellow academics: "I can introduce you to my maid!"). This is not because I think it is unnecessary to speak to Lebanese employers, but rather a minor attempt at acknowledging the abundant presence of Lebanese voices in anthropological scholarship on the country, and the deafening silence of migrant workers.

The dissertation is centered around four conceptual clusters: recognition, and its relationship to citizenship and state; time, and its relationship to labour and rest; language, and its relationship to gender and power; and the city, and its relationship to intimacy and exile. In the first chapter, "The Recognition of Foreigners", I demonstrate how migrant workers in Lebanon are excluded from social and political recognition on the part of Lebanese citizen and state, such that they

have been rendered intelligible only as racialized labour. Key to this is an analysis of what I argue is a slippage between *citizen* and *state* when it comes to migrant workers' experiences in the country. I further historicize this by examining the category of 'the foreigner', and its constitutive status as the other of the Lebanese citizen. This sets the stage for understanding the social worlds shared by migrant workers and other non-citizens in Beirut, primarily Syrian refugees. Chapter Two, "The Time of Exhaustion", takes a closer look at the nature of migrant workers' daily lives. It theorizes the specific mode of inhabiting time for workers who are understood as both temporary and foreign, regardless of how long they have lived or will likely live in Lebanon. I read this experience of permanent temporariness in relation to the nature of repetitive manual labour and the concentration of both leisure and rest on the one holiday of the work-week, Sunday. In turn, I argue that the most definitive experience of migrant workers in Beirut is not poverty or racism, but an endless deferral of the future that stems from exhaustion.

Chapter Three, "The Language of Command", examines how migrant workers relate to the Arabic language, beginning from a common stereotype (and reality) that domestic workers learn to articulate Arabic verbs exclusively in the form they are most used to hearing, that of the feminine direct command. I detail the ways Arabic is learned, spoken, and encountered in sites including the home, the workplace, and the courtroom, and argue that the status of domestic workers as *subaltern* is inextricable from their interpellation by the Arabic language. The fourth chapter, "The City of Exiles", expands focus to consider the many encounters between female African and Asian domestic workers and male Arab refugees/labourers that I witnessed in Dawra, the neighbourhood that is the center of migrant worker activity in Beirut. I consider how, in the absence of both recognition and conventional kinship ties, migrant workers and refugees

have developed their own forms of intimacy and obligation. In doing so, they have not only forged their own private institutions and social practices but also an urban belonging that has made possible a claim to the city itself, one I argue is best evidenced in the 2015 establishment of the region's first Domestic Workers' Union.

The epilogue, entitled "Dreams of Freedom", turns to the story of Beza, the woman I identified in the Preface as the intermediary through which I came to this project, and (perhaps unsurprisingly) the most exceptional individual I encountered during my fieldwork. At a time when refugees are daily fleeing global conditions of conflict and deprivation, I suggest that so-called economic migration, structured by the many violences of our moment, might also be read as the attempt to articulate a certain language of freedom. The dissertation thus seeks to contribute to a larger set of questions regarding shifting notions of citizenship and belonging in an era of both significant regional upheaval and mass human mobility.

1. The Recognition of Foreigners

What, given the contemporary order of being, can I be?
— Judith Butler

One Friday afternoon I went to visit Hasan, who worked nights washing dishes in the restaurant where I had been working morning shifts baking desserts. Tall, muscular, with dancing eyes that constantly made his female colleagues laugh in Amharic, Hasan is one of a small number of Ethiopian men in Lebanon. He had told me to come visit him sometime at the art gallery where he worked his day job. The gallery is run by a well-known Lebanese curator who represents some of the country's leading modern artists, and I walked by it daily on my route to and from the restaurant. Upon entering I was greeted by a middle-aged Lebanese man dressed in black who pointed me towards the current exhibition. I explained I was here to see Hasan. "Who?" "Hasan, he works here." I was told there was no one else that worked at the gallery other than the famed gallerist himself, who was out of the country at the time. I insisted, and, politely but firmly, so did he. I had not wanted to use this sentence, but I gave in and offered, "He's Ethiopian."

The man did not hear me the first time, so we continued to engage in confused conversation until I repeated the sentence more forcefully. A look of surprise crossed his face, one he made no effort to hide. What ensued was a strange conversation where the man told me that yes, an Ethiopian man did work for him, but his name was not Hasan, it was Nour Safi, and he was sure of this fact because he himself had arranged for the man's work permit. I asked if the man in concern worked night shifts elsewhere in the neighbourhood. He hesitated. "Maybe?" We proceeded to compare descriptions. Nour Safi, I was told, was a short, slightly chubby, solemn

man that wore glasses and barely spoke. Not a single adjective matched my knowledge of Hasan. In any case, I was told that the Ethiopian worker was currently out and I could return within the hour if I wanted to speak to him. To the man's visible relief, I finally left, puzzled. That evening I passed by the restaurant and narrated the story to Hasan, who found it highly amusing. "Yes, he told me you came, I wish you had waited!" Casual explanations were offered: Nour Safi was indeed his passport name, but everyone referred to him as Hasan. He did wear glasses during the daytime. And it was a stretch, but perhaps the difference between my own height and the height of his employer might account for the opposite descriptors of tall and short. Shrug. Something still struck me as bizarre about the whole encounter, and I told Hasan as much. He remained unfazed. "That guy? (*haydaz-zalameh?)*", Hasan laughed, referring to his legal sponsor in Lebanon. "He doesn't know a thing (*ma bi-ya'raf shi*)."

Hasan works making tea and coffee, cleaning, helping set up and take down new shows, and running random errands for the art gallery. When I walked into the gallery and inquired about an additional employee, however, I was repeatedly told that there was no one else that worked there other than the traveling gallerist. Had I asked for or been offered coffee during my visit, or had the soap in the bathroom needed replenishing, or had I accidentally spilled something on the floor, the non-existent worker would have suddenly materialized in the form of Hasan's labour. This identification of migrant workers was one I repeatedly encountered among Lebanese employers and the public. Their labour was a disembodied force evident only in its effects, but detached from interpersonal acknowledgment. In fact, like such invisibilized labour the world over, it was most recognized in its absence: the stink of a garbage strike, the unwashed windows that draw attention to streaks on glass, the irritating delays in processing one's food

order because a kitchen is under-staffed. Cleaners do not get middle class visitors passing through art galleries in hip neighbourhoods in *any* global city. But in this scenario, my exchange was marked not only by Hasan's invisibilization but rather by an almost surreal failure of mutual intelligibility.

The only thing that Hasan's Lebanese employer and legal sponsor and I, the foreign anthropologist, could both recognize about the shared subject of our exchange was that he was Ethiopian. What "Ethiopian" conveyed here was not an individual nationality but a socioeconomic relation: the fact of his being a migrant worker. As his legal sponsor (*kafeel*), the man happened to know Hasan's exact country of origin. But in contemporary Lebanon, to describe someone using one of the major countries of origin of non-Arab migrant workers — Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya, etc. — is less to reference a country of origin than to signify a specific classed and racialized subject.[19] By walking into an art gallery and admitting that the employee I was looking for was an Ethiopian, I was explaining the kind of worker I meant — the kind with dark skin and low wages; the kind employed to do tasks that fall under the category of 'menial' or 'unskilled'; the kind, like Hasan, usually confined to the basement. It was impossible that I could be referring to any other kind of worker, for essentially nowhere in Lebanon (with the possible exception of certain elite liberal enclaves such as the American University of Beirut, but even this is unlikely) is there a worker of Ethiopian origin employed in a high-skilled position. In fact, Lebanese labour law is largely organized to prevent

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[19] Note that because Arabic is a fully gendered language, there is no ambiguity as to whether one is referring to a male or female worker. However, the fact that the largest number of migrant workers in the country are female domestic workers has led to specific terms being used for these women, primarily *Sri Lankiyyeh* ("female Sri Lankan") which has now come to mean any non-Arab maid. For more on this term and attendant naming practices, see Chapter Three.

such employment.[20] When Hasan laughed and said to me "he [ie. his sponsor] doesn't know a thing", he referred to to this fact. Hasan was not surprised by our inability to recognize him through distinct personal markers, including that most singular identifier of the proper name, because he knew that the only ground available for his identification was that of his status as a migrant worker. This is why, although this may seem to simply be an instant of two people speaking past each other, I want to read it as far more consequential. All our exchange of semantic content in the form of descriptors and anecdotes kept returning to the single word Ethiopian: that which signified only a racialized, labouring body.

In this chapter I lay out a conceptual framework for thinking about the subject position of Asian and black African migrant workers in contemporary Lebanon. I divide this framework into two lines of questioning, with a brief historic consideration in between. In the first section, I ask *how migrant workers are conceived of by citizen and state;* that is, within the the dominant social imaginary of Lebanon. Drawing upon Judith Butler's theorizing of mourning, recognition, and the human, I argue that migrant workers in Lebanon have been rendered intelligible within this context *only* as racialized labour, excluding them from the basic forms of recognition that govern citizenship. As a necessary consequence of this, they are both exposed to violence and outside the realm of grievability (what Butler would call a dehumanization). However, Lebanon is a country where citizenship is itself highly fraught. In the next section, I consider the historic significance of 'the foreigner' as the constitutive other of the Lebanese citizen, and locate

[20] Bilateral agreements and specific policies of the Lebanese Ministry of Labour, including requiring prior approval for every foreign work permit, restrict foreign workers in the country to specific sectors of activity. Hence according to the Central Administration for Statistics, in 2009 80% of foreign work permits were issued to female domestic workers alone (CAS 2011).

migrant workers under this larger category. Doing so allows one to complicate any simple oppositions between citizen and non-citizen, refugee and migrant worker, or Arab and non-Arab, insisting on both the complexity of these distinctions as well as the particularity of the migrant worker experience. This also sets the stage for later chapters of this dissertation in which dense social worlds are full of both non-Arab migrant workers and Arab refugees, making it difficult to neatly distinguish the two in the ethnographic everyday.

In the final section, I ask *how the citizen and the state figure within the imaginary of migrant workers*. I argue that for migrant workers, there is a slippage between the citizen and the state that results from a set of political and institutional logics that invest the authority of the state into the Lebanese citizenry. By posing these two questions alongside each other, I contrast two opposing logics of recognition and obligation at work when it comes to migrant workers' encounter with the Lebanese citizen/state. It is in the company of other non-citizens that migrant workers are able to escape a logic that otherwise threatens to destroy them.

Recognition, Intelligibility, Mourning

"What makes for a grievable life?", asks Judith Butler (2004, 20). In this text, Butler offers a humanist injunction to consider vulnerability as linked to the task of the social, wherein we might conceive of the human as "from the start, given over to the other" (31). Butler foregrounds the fact of human beings' physical vulnerability in order to theorize our fundamental interdependency and ethical responsibility to the other. She finds the most potent evidence of her claim in the paired examples of grief and desire. Both experiences trouble the distinction between an autonomous versus relational self, she insists, and instead foreground a life that is

lived *beside oneself*. Yet Butler also notes that in order for vulnerability to make its claim, it is dependent on existing norms of recognition. Hence she writes in an earlier piece,

> When we ask what the conditions of intelligibility are by which the human emerges, by which the human is recognized… we are asking about conditions of intelligibility composed of norms, of practices, that have become presuppositional, without which we cannot think the human at all (2001, 621).

Butler reads this notion of intelligibility through a Foucauldian 'politics of truth', whereby relations of power circumscribe the norms that render one intelligible as human, as citizen, as woman, or as grievable. It is precisely this relationship between the subject and given social criteria of intelligibility that I am interested in when it comes to migrant workers in Lebanon.

Recognition, in this context, lies at the core of what it means to be a subject. The concept of recognition is largely associated in social and political theory with recent debates surrounding identity-based political movements that arose in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly their treatment by liberal philosopher Charles Taylor (Markell 2003). In this context, *recognition* is one half of the phrase 'the politics of recognition', an approach to theorizing social injustice and redress that often sets itself apart from a logic of material redistribution, and highlights instead the need for public recognition of groups according to identity-based claims to difference. Markell (2003) notes that this assumes recognition to be a *good* that can be granted or denied, possessed or lacked. Instead, he is interested in putting forth a 'politics of acknowledgment' that sees in the existence of indeterminate others a certain unpredictability of the just outcome. This "risky inclusion of another in shared activity, without reference to her identity or … merit" (157) appears to come close to Butler's emphasis on interdependence, and while both are interested in recognition as at the core of a programmatic political theory, Markell is not quite a humanist. Where he thinks primarily in relation to institutional conditions of power and practice, Butler

asks us to think conditions of truth. And where Markell foregrounds democracy, Butler begins from violence. It is our vulnerability to violence and our complicity in it that lead Butler to consider the *task* of mourning as the basis of a reimagined political community.

Anthropologists, too, have long been interested in the work of mourning. In its ritualized form, this has resulted in much attention to burial rites and funerary practices analyzed in relation to social reproduction (eg. Hertz 1960; Van Gennep 1960). I want to consider the great insight from Hertz — that death is the temporary exclusion of an individual from the social, into which s/he is reincorporated and appropriately reinscribed through given practices of mourning — alongside Butler's philosophical insight on the transformative potential of loss. Butler insists that grief is not private but rather brings to the fore the undeniable fact of relationality (*Who "am" I without you?*, she asks); anthropology assumes this from the outset by locating ritualized mourning (as one particular site of grief) in the realm of social practice.

Butler turns to the unmourned victims of U.S. wars to ask how "our cultural frames for thinking the human set limits on the kinds of losses we can avow as loss" (2004, 32). Those unintelligible — what she describes as 'unreal' — "cannot be mourned because they never … 'were' " (33); their deaths go unmarked and vanish. On the contrast, Hertz reverses the order of examination to distinguish between natural and unnatural deaths, the latter of whom are often considered dangerous and remain out of place. These dead cannot be reintegrated into the social fabric — we might say, using Butler's conception of the term, they lie outside conditions of recognition — and so they may come back to haunt it. Both Butler and Hertz thus offer us a way of thinking the relationship between recognition and loss; for Butler, some subjects are rendered outside this social order through the workings of power in life ("a refusal of discourse that

produces dehumanization as a result" [36]), while for Hertz, the distinction happens in death. I offer this possibly counterintuitive pairing in order to frame a brief consideration of migrant worker deaths in contemporary Lebanon.

In 2008, Human Rights Watch reported that migrant domestic workers in Lebanon were dying at the rate of one per week, primarily by suicide. In 2017, it was reported that the death rate had doubled to two per week (Su 2017). For those who are employed legally and meet all the requirements set out by the Ministry of Labour, insurance covers the cost of repatriating the body to the worker's home country. Many women, however, do not possess this insurance due to employment that was secured informally or papers that have lapsed, a common practice by employers who do not want the hassle and expense of annual permit renewals. Moreover, these numbers pertain only to domestic workers employed within private households and do not account for the many migrant workers who die in other ways — to take only examples that occurred during my own fieldwork: men from injuries on factory floors, freelancers victim to a hit and run, the many who fall sick and cannot afford appropriate treatment, or those killed in accidents, houses burning down due to faulty maintenance, or armed fights.

In such incidents, organizations and allies are regularly contacted with desperate requests for funds to assist in the cost of repatriating bodies, the average cost of which is $3000. Such requests can only come from workers who have communities of friends and family — primarily those who do not work within the confines of the private household, where suicides are unsurprisingly also most common. The requests occur frequently and seek sums of money that are often impossible for the community to raise. A large number of migrant worker deaths in the

country therefore result in burial in Lebanon. This has become so common that there is a section of a cemetery on the outskirts of Beirut reserved for Sri Lankans, and community members gather there annually to pay their respects. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian community activist told me of a mass grave where the unclaimed bodies of Ethiopian women were said to be buried, one whose location she had been unable to find but was certain existed. By her count one Ethiopian woman died a week and many never made it back home, so where were all the bodies going?

I met Tirunesh three months after she first arrived at the hospital. A Red Cross ambulance had brought her there late at night in March 2016, unconscious and alone, and she had been in the ICU for her first month and a half. No one claimed to have any idea quite how she got there, who she had worked for, or what had happened: the doctor in charge said she had fallen off the third floor of a building, but an Ethiopian woman who worked as a cleaner and had been watching out for her, as well as a nurse, insisted Tirunesh's injuries were not compatible with that story. They suspected that she may have been forced to drink some form of poison, because she had no bruises on her body. Meanwhile, through the Ethiopian worker, word got out about her presence in the hospital and community members were alerted to a possible need for funds. In July and August, two surgeries were performed to keep Tirunesh breathing. The doctor agreed to accept $1000 from Ethiopian women who had raised what money they could, despite his stating that the full cost of the surgeries was upwards of $2000. Soon after, Tirnuesh regained consciousness, although still unable to speak or breathe on her own. When I went to visit in the company of MCC activists, she was covered in tubes and in need of her second tracheotomy to assist with her breathing. She was described as suffering from both physical and mental trauma that had left her like a "wooden block on a bed."

In December 2016, after some months of care, the doctor signed papers allowing for Tirunesh's release and return to Ethiopia if accompanied by medical supervision. Ethiopian Airlines demanded $5000 plus a stretcher, and an ambulance would also be required to meet her upon arrival. Her husband and two children did not have the money, so activists started an online campaign to raise it. In the meantime, the Ethiopian Consulate — who had been made aware of Tirunesh's case many months prior and had promised to follow up (including at a meeting I attended in July) — was repeatedly contacted for assistance. Despite their guarantees, the follow-up was delayed and adequate funds could not be raised. Tirunesh died in March 2016. It took nearly another month for her body to be repatriated to Ethiopia, with a mixture of funds raised by allies, other Ethiopian women, and anonymous contributors.

What makes possible a story like Tirunesh's? A number of factors complicate any simple narrative of abjection: the apparent generosity of a doctor who agreed to conduct surgery despite the patient's inability to pay the full cost; the chance fortune of an Ethiopian woman who worked in the hospital where Tirunesh was brought; the persistent effort of a number of other Ethiopian women to keep apprised of her health and assist as much as possible; the well-known incompetence of the Ethiopian Consulate. But I want to focus on one additional fact of this story. No matter who we spoke to, no one could figure out quite how Tirunesh had arrived to the hospital. Some identification papers were on her body, stating her name and that she was 29 years old. It was generally concluded that she worked in a private household and her employers had handed her over to Red Cross after the incident, then washed their hands of any further responsibility. The ambulance had not left any details, however, and no one who knew her came to visit her in the proceeding months, nor could we find anyone who was at the hospital the night

she arrived to corroborate any details. She was not unique in her mystery; over the course of my fieldwork I encountered many such stories, including multiple women deposited at a mental asylum for no clear reason, women who arrived at hospitals having lost limbs or burned skin from abuse, and women found wandering on the street in states of mental and physical disarray.

"There has been no vulnerability that serves as the basis for an apprehension of our commonality" (2004, 36), Butler explains of the relation between discourse, grief, and what she calls dehumanization. Despite the astonishing rates of domestic worker deaths, so frequent as to approximate a national epidemic, there are no socially recognized practices of mourning these women. Even if we imagine a scenario where a domestic worker dies and the family of the employer arranges for local burial and/or some form of private commemoration, there is still no public discourse or practice of *grieving* that such an act can be located within. Multiple times, activists have found themselves fighting insurance companies legally obligated to pay for a body's repatriation (both female domestic workers and male workers otherwise employed) who simply refuse to do so, with regular impunity. This is because the body of the racialized migrant worker in contemporary Lebanon is not, in Butler's formulation, a grievable subject. Their unnatural deaths, in Hertz's formulation, cannot come back to haunt, for they were never inside the social in the first place. What Butler calls dehumanization, I describe as a refusal of recognition. It is precisely because the migrant worker is first recognized *as human* (after all, employment demands a recognition of this fact) and then cast outside the norms that govern recognition within Lebanese society that renders them ungrievable subjects. There is no basis for a commonality — a social pact, we could say — within which the migrant worker in Lebanon can be imagined as the object of interdependence; one thus recognized as *fully* (both socially and

politically) human. S/he is only, and always already, a racialized and labouring body. This sets the basis for the treatment of such workers in both life and death.

Are We Not Human, Too?

What does it mean to say that the migrant worker is *only* intelligible to a Lebanese citizen as a racialized, labouring body? It is a relation that is best understood by examining everyday migrant worker experiences in the country. Makdis, a young Ethiopian woman I met when teaching English, once described her former job working with a private cleaning company that would sent her out to hotels, homes, and offices. She spent six years with the company. The hours were very long: she would arrive before 7:00 AM and work well into the evening, six days a week. There were many rooms to clean, what she described as an endless amount. Once, she was caught sitting in a chair taking a short break, and was angrily chastised. "They wouldn't let us sit down or even drink water", she recalled with fury. "*Manna insan kaman?*" Are we not human too?

The sentence "*Manna insan kaman?*" is technically grammatically incorrect, and would not be used by a native speaker of Levantine Arabic. And yet it captures the precise intonations of the dialect to roll off the tongue in perfect rhyme, each word composed of two syllables, each elongated vowel starting or ending with the consonant *n*. It is a sentence I heard four or five times from Ethiopian women, a pattern of speech that seems to have developed as part of a hybrid form of speaking Arabic that I discuss further in Chapter Three. Here, I want to read the content of the question through Butler's positing of the relation between intelligibility and the human. In a discussion of the legal and psychiatric case surrounding John/Joan, a person understood to be born as a boy, then determined to be a girl, and who then decided to become a

man as a teenager, Butler quotes the older John expressing his disagreement with doctors who told him vaginal surgery was the only way he could guarantee a life of love. John felt this to be a shallow prescription, and was certain there was more that made him worthy of love than what was between his legs. What his speech does, says Butler, is "offer a critical perspective on the norms that confer intelligibility itself" (2001, 634). It is this critical perspective that is conveyed by non-Arab workers who rhetorically pose the question of their own humanity in the Arabic language. In the brutal simplicity of this sentence is a forceful intervention, one that has taken the language of power and its own categories to produce a new syntax. *Insan:* from the root *a-n-s*; to be intimate, friendly, companionable; the opposite of beastliness. The etymology itself insists on *the human* in relations of recognition; as a figure of the social. This question, then, names the accusation at the core of migrant worker experience in the country: their exclusion from the category of the human as subject of recognition. In Butler's words, such a refusal "emerges at the limits of discursive life, limits established through prohibition and foreclosure" (2004, 36). Below, I offer three short vignettes as examples of these limits in everyday life.

1. Water

My final trip to the former 'Adliyye detention center,[21] an underground holding cell for foreign nationals that was established to temporarily hold those awaiting deportation but in practice functioned as a full-fledged prison for non-citizens, occurred in the first week of August 2016. I went to visit a young Ethiopian woman who had been picked up in an early-morning raid on a

[21] After years of promising to open a detention center where migrant workers were not held underground in conditions long denounced as inhumane, and holding patterns described as arbitrary detention and "legal kidnapping" by the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (Gatten 2014), General Security shut down the 'Adliyye center in September 2016. Detainees were moved to a nearby building above ground.

building inhabited by Ethiopian women and Syrian men, together accused of being engaged in sex work. I had only her name scrawled in black ink on my palm, a word I struggled to pronounce correctly, and a blurry image of her on my phone that I had tried to memorize before turning it over to a streetside vendor for safekeeping. I descended down the prison steps. An ex-boyfriend of the woman had asked me, through a mutual friend, if I could go visit the woman, as neither he nor any of her immediate friends had the paperwork or the time off to attend during visiting hours. I had trouble recognizing the woman so I turned to an officer for assistance, and he escorted her to the tiny window through which we were allowed to communicate. I explained that her former partner had sent me. Tears streamed endlessly, violently, from her eyes. “Water”, she insisted, parched and heaving. We must send water. She wanted nothing else, but it was the height of summer, she was trapped underground, and there was no water.

2. Dirt

In Lebanon, it is so common for private beaches to ban domestic workers from entry that in the summer of 2016, the Ministry of Labour issued a statement warning that the practice was a violation of basic rights and could elicit legal consequences. When I was an intern at MCC and we attempted to organize a group trip for migrant workers to the beach, the vast majority of access to which is privatized, it was common for resorts to refuse a group booking once they knew who was coming. Stories abound of racialized workers being told they dirty the water, or of Lebanese citizens refusing to enter the sea if a migrant worker is inside it, something I myself witnessed multiple times, often accompanied by cruel taunts from young children. Dozens of South Asian and black African domestic workers also described to me their experience of

arriving to their new place of employment and having the Madame first force them to strip, and then scrub, wash, and shave their naked bodies aggressively before they were allowed to begin the work of cleaning, so certain of contamination. This story is repeated in nearly all narrative accounts of migrant domestic workers in the country (most famously, Timblick & Sorssa 2016).

Also in the summer of 2016, a feminist organization known as KAFA undertook a campaign to raise awareness about employers' perceptions and treatment of domestic workers. According to a study it conducted in collaboration with the American University of Beirut, 27% of Lebanese employers stated that they consider their domestic workers to be unclean (Khalife 2016). As a result, KAFA produced a campaign video around a satirical new soap marketed to Lebanese employers specifically for domestic workers (KAFA 2016). The soap was named "Clensen Ozo Trio" and a mock-up stall was set up in a grocery store, where it was advertised under the tagline, "An advanced formula for cleaning female [ie. domestic] workers." The video blurs out the faces of Lebanese consumers discussing the product, and opens with two women discussing how black women and Ethiopian women in particular have a specifically unpleasant body odour. Another clarifies that Nepalese woman do not suffer from this, as they are not black. A large number of men and women are shown interestedly examining and grabbing the soap, until one young man objects that women from different countries cannot all be said to smell the same simply because they are domestic workers; rather, skin types vary by continent. An elder man objects more forcefully and names the product as racist (*al-tamyiz al-'unsuri*), but the video closes with scenes of many others happily taking the free product home.

Although the rather strange video concludes with text clarifying that the product was not real, and encouraging viewers to interrogate their own assumptions about domestic workers in

the country, it led to an even more bizarre response. The Lebanese Ministry of Labour mistook it for real, and called on citizens not to buy the product. That the very state agency responsible for issuing migrants their work permits issued two statements in a single summer against forms of discrimination that target domestic workers' bodies as sites of uncleanliness suggests the immense scale of the issue at hand. These are not simply widely-held stereotypes. These are, as Butler would say in Foucauldian terms, conditions of truth. These are modes of intelligibility and attendant practices through which various migrant domestic workers are apprehended as subjects: in the case of the soap, by attempts to scrub the black away.

3. Aid

General Security, the state agency responsible for all foreigners in Lebanon, runs a hotline meant to offer emergency assistance for domestic workers. Knowledge of the phone number is nonexistent among domestic workers themselves, but it has been distributed to a small crowd of concerned NGO workers. At a consortium for Beirut-based organizations connected to migrant worker issues, everyone admitted that those who have tried calling have barely ever received a response. On occasion, however, a General Security employee actually picks up. Once, a Lebanese activist called to request help for an undocumented woman who was very sick. The doctors had not given her much time and she wanted to travel back to her country immediately rather than risk dying in a foreign land, but her embassy was uninterested and unhelpful, and this was a final resort.

When the young Lebanese officer who responded to the call realized he was speaking to a fellow female Lebanese citizen connected to a community of migrant workers, he thought he

might be able to take clever advantage of the situation. He proceeded to ask the activist if she might be able to help him get a domestic worker for his mother. "What?" she responded in shock, unsure she had heard correctly. He explained further. He was in the market for a domestic worker but he only had $150/month to pay, and all the agencies he had contacted were requesting more money, so perhaps she would be able to help? She hung up in shock.

How is it that the embodied voice that speaks for the state, in a context meant to offer direct assistance to migrant workers, immediately conceives of the subject at hand through the figure of *employable labour*? There are two things happening here. First, the woman who forms the object of the plea is only intelligible to the officer (at least, in the first instance) as *domestic worker*. Second, the exchange that occurs appears to assume a social compact between citizens that supersedes any obligation to the officer's actual job, or any possible objection on the other end. When the General Security officer heard the voice of another Lebanese citizen on the phone, he operated under the assumptions that they recognized the referent in the same way. Hence he ignored what she was asking, in direct contravention of his job description, with neither apology nor candor but the simple confidence of common sense. It is not simply that the migrant worker lay fundamentally outside any forms of obligation that governed the Lebanese citizenry, such that even at the direct site of state assistance, it was not presumed that any assistance was actually owed. It is also that what *was* recognized was the socioeconomic relation: the story being told, in complete disregard to its content, could only conjure the abstract figure of a domestic worker as the subject of the economic transaction of employment. Where the statements of the Ministry of Labour insisting that domestic workers are not dirty show us the

contours of how subjects become intelligible as specifically racialized bodies, here we see how the migrant worker is also only ever the embodiment of exploitable labour.

In a recent text entitled "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon" (2014), Marxist historian Fawwaz Traboulsi breaks down the current configuration of class in today's Lebanon. He lists the 'ownership' of a domestic worker as a minimum status requirement of membership in the middle classes, secondary to owning an apartment and sending children to private school, but of equal importance as access to the internet, a mobile phone, and a credit card. That a Marxist historian could plainly list these commodities alongside a relation of employment again indicates the social conditions within which this employment is understood. This cannot be reduced to simple prejudice or class-based hierarchies. But nor can it be read exclusively through a binary opposition between the Lebanese citizen as the full realization of social rights and entitlements, and the migrant worker as most radically stripped of all such obligation. Because Lebanon is a country full of non-citizens, migrant workers must also be understood in relation to how citizenship has historically emerged in opposition to the category of the foreigner.

The Lebanese and The Foreigner

In 1926, a leaflet was distributed throughout the French mandate territory of Lebanon. It called for Christians to join the ongoing Syrian Revolt, an armed nationalist uprising against French rule that had been initiated by Druze leaders in neighbouring Syria the year prior, with the following cry: "Abandon resignation, which is sterile, and run for your sword… You have been

complicit with foreigners against your brothers" (in Thompson 2000, 47).[22] Under the weight of European colonialism, the referent to 'the foreign' — and its national-fraternal opposite — was obvious. Less than a decade later, however, there is evidence of 'foreigner' being used in Lebanon far more ambiguously. By the time Lebanon gained independence in 1946 and then struggled to formulate a state response to the arrival of Palestinian refugees in 1948, a legal discourse had slowly begun to sediment around the category of the foreigner. As *Lebanese*-ness was being formalized and objectified into citizenship of the new state of Lebanon, the foreigner was becoming legally synonymous with the non-citizen. I examine this process in three key sites: the original census; the arrival of Palestinian refugees; and the state agency known as General Security. I then consider the actual Arabic word 'foreigner' (m/f *ajnabi/yye,* pl. *ajanib*) and the implications of its contemporary usage in formal versus informal Lebanese contexts.

In her seminal 1999 essay subtitled "Who Are the Lebanese?", Rania Maktabi revisits the last national census undertaken in Lebanon, that of 1932. The pre-independence census was key to Lebanese state-building and formed the basis of political representation and eventual access to citizenship, as it was through census demographic data that those residing on Lebanese territory were able to obtain personal registration with state authorities. Maktabi points to the curious presence of the category 'foreigners' (*ajanib*) on the census alongside 'residents' (*muqimun*) and 'emigrants' (*muhajirun*). While both residents *and* emigrants were eligible for citizenship, including emigrants who were out of the country and did not meet the criteria laid out for personal registration, foreigners were not. The census defined foreigners as those who could not

[22] Although it is unclear whether the initial document was in Arabic or French, given the consistency with which *ajanib* is translated into English as "foreigners", I am assuming a relative transparency in meaning regardless of original language throughout this chapter.

prove residence in Lebanon during the first Lebanese (as opposed to Ottoman) citizenship law declared under French mandate authority in 1924. However, the designation appeared to hold irrespective of whether such individuals held citizenship of any other state. While the 800,000 residents as well as 255,000 emigrants were carefully enumerated according to sect, the 60,000 foreigners were not. According to Maktabi, it is likely that many residents of Lebanon unable to prove official documentation were suddenly designated 'foreigners' and therefore rendered stateless as part of a broader political process of demographic manipulation.

The unknown foreigners were not the only victims of the 1932 census regulations. Multiple groups were excluded from citizenship due to complications resulting from bedouin residency requirements, frontier zones bordering Palestine and Syria, earlier British-French agreements described as 'territorial amputations', inaccurate birth registries, and problems with the 1932 census. In a newly-drawn territory struggling with the conflict between a Christian self-image and a sudden Muslim population increase, this was not purely coincidental. All these dispossessed groups, Maktabi argues, resided in the predominantly Muslim parts of the country that were added to the Christian stronghold of Mount Lebanon when the borders of the Lebanese state were drawn in 1920. Additional steps were taken to favour the granting of citizenship to multiple Christian rather than Muslim applicants, further keeping with the political elite's vision of Lebanon as a Christian nation. Although subsequent legislation expanded access to Lebanese citizenship through naturalization decrees, it is interesting to note this early use of the term 'foreigner' to denominate even those Arabs indigenous to Lebanese territory or its border areas. Because data does not exist on who these foreigners were, it is certainly possible they included ethnic Turks, travelers, or other diverse subjects of the Ottoman empire. But the availability of

the term to produce the non-citizen — not according to defined criteria, but against a backdrop of competing visions of national identity — is evident in the earliest instantiation of the Lebanese citizenry.

In 1948 a new minority population entered Lebanon, as Palestinians fleeing the creation of the state of Israel sought refuge in the north. Approximately 100,000 refugees arrived in Lebanon as a result of fear, forced evictions, and multiple massacres (Sayigh 1994). Subsequent Arab-Israeli wars in 1956 and 1967 led to additional displacements, and a few thousand Palestinian refugee families also arrived with the forces of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) after the PLO was expelled from Jordan in 1970 (Suleiman 2006). When Palestinians first arrived in Lebanon, the Lebanese government agreed to regulate their presence as separate from other foreigners in the country. By 1950, once the likelihood of imminent return and a just resolution had diminished, the state began to reconsider. In 1959 a Lebanese presidential decree created the Department of Affairs for Palestinian Refugees as an office under the Ministry of the Interior, providing a legal framework for Palestinians in the country for the first time. Despite this apparent recognition, the central issue concerning the rights of Palestinians in Lebanon has been and remains their subsumption under the category of 'foreigner' (al-Natour 1997).

In 1962, a new law clarified the uncertainty of an earlier moment of nation building. A foreigner was now defined simply as "any natural or juridical person who is not a Lebanese subject" (al-Natour 1997, 363). In turn, foreigners were required to obtain visas for entry and exit into the country, or acquire residency permits usually granted by General Security. One month later, a third category was added in order to accommodate those foreigners who did not carry

travel documents from a country of origin but had been issued Lebanese residency or identification cards — namely (albeit unnamed) Palestinians. In 1969 the Cairo Accords were signed between the Lebanese government and the PLO, guaranteeing Palestinians' rights to residency and employment, as well as participation in armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine (Suleiman 2006). Despite the guarantees of the Cairo Accords, Palestinians in Lebanon have continued to be treated as 'special foreigners' given only the right to indefinite residency. A complicated set of laws has since been put in place to restrict Palestinian mobility, employment, access to education, property rights, political rights, and access to citizenship via marriage or other routes. As many scholars have documented, what this has amounted to is denying Palestinians both the rights of Lebanese nationals as well as the rights of refugees as stipulated by international law (al-Natour 1997; Sayigh 1994, 1995; Suleiman 2006).

The General Directorate of General Security (*al-Amn al-'Am*; La Sûreté Générale) was founded in 1921 as an intelligence agency under the French mandate of Lebanon. After the end of the First World War and in accordance with the infamous 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement that split the soon-to-be spoils of the Ottoman Empire between France and Britain, in 1920 the Supreme Inter-Allied Council granted France a League of Nations mandate over Syria and Lebanon, and Britain a corresponding mandate over Palestine (including Jordan) and Iraq. In September 1920 French General Henri Gouraud declared the State of Greater Lebanon, alongside five mandate-governed states that divided present-day Syria along presumed sectarian lines. Preceding even the first Lebanese constitution of 1926 (when the French formally declared the Lebanese Republic and adopted a parliamentary system of government), in 1923, the year the French mandate was

formally ratified, General Security was placed under the Lebanese Police force alongside its Judicial Police.

In August 1945 a state decree formally placed the Directorate of General Security in Beirut under the Ministry of the Interior. Its tasks at the time included "supervising general politics", controlling borders, surveilling all foreigners, censoring films, and issuing entry permits and Lebanese passports (ISF 2017). In 1998 Lebanese President Emile Lahoud appointed former army commander and chief of military intelligence Jamil al-Sayyid as Director of General Security, a position that had been previously filled exclusively by Maronites. Until his resignation over the controversy that followed the assassination of former President Rafic al-Hariri in 2005, Sayyid oversaw a large-scale transformation of General Security into one of the most modern, efficient, and powerful arms of the Lebanese state. It was one of the first state agencies to begin using computers and remains one of the only ones that is fully computerized, having recently launched a website redesign, an application for smartphones, and a Twitter account. According to its website, General Security is today responsible for the collection of intelligence regarding internal and external state security, governing media censorship, monitoring and overseeing all foreigners in Lebanon, and issuing all residence permits, Lebanese passports, and Palestinian refugee travel documents (General Security 2017). An agency central to Lebanese state-building, one that precedes even national independence and is today recognized as one of the most powerful arms of an otherwise-weak state, has therefore centrally taken the question of *who, where, and what are the foreigners* as its target. This is not just a historic fact, but one evidenced in contemporary interactions with General Security as well.

In my two years in Beirut I only ever heard the phrase *Amn al-'Am*, which is how General Security is referred to in everyday speech, spoken with deep revulsion. Palestinian friends were constantly subject to harassment and blatant discrimination in attempts to renew their state-issued refugee documents or obtain the necessary paperwork to leave the country. Even elite foreigners such as myself dreaded having to navigate the bureaucratic mess of their offices in order to obtain renewals or extensions on tourist visas. But it is migrant workers for whom General Security was the intimate, violent arm of the state. Although it was far more likely to be police officers of the Internal Security Forces who conducted raids on undocumented migrant worker places of residence, or who stopped individuals on the street, asked for their papers, and then demanded bribes of sex or money in exchange for not turning them in to authorities, these actions were regularly attributed to General Security.

It was well known that General Security ran the dreaded 'Adliyye detention center where all migrant workers detained for any reason (whether having committed a crime or being caught undocumented) would be held. Just as General Security controls who enters the country by authorizing migrant workers' legal entry and residence permits (after work permits are obtained from the Ministry of Labour), General Security also controls who leaves. It is General Security that transfers newly-arrived workers into the hands of their employers at the designated airport waiting room, and it is General Security that, many years later, escorts many of the same workers to the gate when awaiting deportation. Once, an interlocutor was explaining that an undocumented friend had recently been caught and was being held somewhere. A woman present immediately expressed her hope that the detained was being held by police and not General

Security. If the latter, she noted, we had better all say goodbye — there was no way any of us were seeing her again.

During my first visit to ‘Adliyye detention center, I went in the company of an Ethiopian woman who had been in the country for seven years. She looked around and shook her head in slight surprise. “Back in the day you would only see us — Ethiopians, women like us. Now, look how many Syrians there are.” With the implementation of new visa regulations and heightened concerns around security and terrorism, large numbers of Syrians in Lebanon were being detained daily. Reports soon emerged out of the prison that the cells were absurdly overcrowded and in disarray. In an interview with a lawyer for the organization Legal Agenda some months later, General Security was described to me as having one of the strongest administrations of any government agency in the country today. In the context of ISIS, the war in Syria, and the huge number of refugees in the country, General Security was said to have gained complete control over its decision-making with little external government oversight. Particular scrutiny was being directed at the Palestinian refugee camps, said to be a haven for armed fighters crossing the border from Syria (Lupo 2015). This powerful state agency thus serves as the institutional manifestation of the ideological threat posed by the figure of the *foreigner* in Lebanon.

Upon arriving at Beirut’s Rafic Hariri International Airport, signs for passport control point in two directions: to the right for Lebanese citizens, and to the left for Arabs/Foreigners (*‘Arab/ Ajanib*). The signs often confuse travelers, with those who consider themselves Lebanese but hold international passports debating which side to choose, and Syrians or Egyptians uncertain whether there is a specific line for non-Lebanese Arabs. In many parts of the Arab world, citizens

of the 22 Arabic-speaking states are given privileged status and waived visas or attendant fees and so the designation 'Arab' has an airport importance. Even in Beirut, where Arab and Foreigner (ie. non-Arab) appear on a single sign, it is a distinction that must be named, for to be Arab is to be a part of a shared political, cultural, and linguistic world that demarcates a boundary against foreignness.

In the medieval era, the opposite of Arab was '*Ajam*, a word used to signify Persians specifically and non-Arabs generally. *'Ajama*, literally meaning 'to speak indistinctly; to mumble' was the direct antonym of *'araba*, 'to speak clearly.' The term could thus be applied to any of the non-Arabic speakers with whom Arabs came into contact, but came to be used pejoratively to refer specifically to Persians in the early Islamic era (Bosworth *EI*; Eickelman *EI*). Now, *'ajam* has entered modern vocabulary as a relatively innocuous ethnic marker, used to describe things such as Persian rugs or related imports. In modern Arabic, the antonym of *'Arab* is instead *Ajanib*. The word that translates to 'Foreigners' is derived from a root (*j-n-b*) that conveys both proximity and avoidance — after all, one can only avoid that which is near. This transition away from *'Ajam* and the pairing of Arabs with Foreigners likely originates in the era of Arab nationalism, when the ideology of Arab unity and heritage began to promote the notion of political union within the Arab world.[23] Although I do not explore this broader historic context here, I simply want to foreground the current force of the designation *Ajanib* as direct semantic opposite to the entire linguistic-cultural-political formation encapsulated in the word *Arab*.

[23] Despite extensive search in English-language resources and consultation with multiple experts and historians of Arab nationalism, I have so far been unable to find a direct citation with regards to when this pairing entered the language.

As noted in the Introduction, the formal designation for foreign/migrant workers in Arabic is *'ummal al-ajanib*. But no one actually refers to migrant workers in everyday speech as *ajanib*. In Lebanon, the Arabic word for 'foreigners' is much more commonly understood to mean white Westerners, of whom there are many in Beirut. Migrant workers are more commonly referred to by their country of origin or by terms tinged with class discrimination, including *shaggheel/shagghale* (male wage labourer/female maid) or *khaddam/khaddame* (male/female servant). But by considering migrant workers' subsumption under the historic category of foreigner as non-citizen (and sometimes non-Arab), it becomes possible to better understand the social force of the category citizen (and sometimes Arab) as well.

The Citizen, The State, and The Foreign Worker

The Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990 killed approximately 100,000 people over the course of 15 years of fighting. It has been described as one of the most devastating conflicts of the late 20th century (Haugbolle 2011). Between 1975-1989, it is estimated that 900,000 people left the country, accounting for a full 40% of the population at the time (Tabar 2010). It is unclear what percentage of these emigrants returned to Lebanon in the years after the war, and as mentioned in the Introduction, population estimates of the citizenry remain highly uncertain. Foreign workers who arrived in Lebanon in the aftermath of this war were thus entering the country at a moment when not only the demographics of the country had radically altered, but the very social contract that held the citizenry together had collapsed. Although I cannot do the work necessary to examine the precise contours of this history and its relationship to the postwar figure of the

migrant worker, it is evident that the *citizen* of a state slowly reconstituting its own authority becomes a subject laden with significance.

Today, a minimum of 36% of Lebanon is composed of non-citizens. How does the state invest meaning and authority in the category of the citizen, that which forms its basic unit as well as its claim to legitimacy as a republic, within such a context? I want to consider this question from the reverse end: from the experiences of those migrant workers furthest removed from the state's legal, political, and cultural entanglements. How do migrant workers encounter the citizen? The answer I provide is: *as the state*. Within the social imaginary of migrant workers, there is a slippage between the categories of citizen and state, one that is made possible by everyday practices and institutions that suffuse the figure of the citizen with authority and impunity both. Below, I offer again three examples.

1. Police

Joe Semaan is a Lebanese man who drove around Beirut in a large white jeep pretending to be a policeman for an unknown number of years. He was said to sometimes wear a police uniform and to have tinted the windows and stuck insignia on the back of his car in order to identify him as part of an armed state force that he in fact had no connection to. Semaan's motivation for this sham was so that he could drive around, stop female migrant workers under the pretense of a mandatory ID check, get them in his car and then drive to a distant place where he attempted to sexually and/or physically abuse them, steal from them, and then let them go. On a Tagalog-language Facebook post where Semaan's photo and identifying details were posted in 2015, dozens of Filipina women in Lebanon attested to having been subject to the man's abuse,

including one woman who had returned to the Philippines but vividly recalled Semaan from many years ago. One described pleading with Semaan to take her to the police instead of giving him a blow job, at which he appeared to concede in sympathy, only for her to arrive realizing he had stolen all the cash she had stored in her purse ($300 carefully saved for family remittance). During my fieldwork, three black and white photos of Semaan, a smiling, middle-aged, balding Arab man with pleasant features and a hefty build, hung on the wall of the Migrant Community Center in Beirut. “This man claims to be police”, someone had scrawled in fine black print. “He is not. Take care.”

In June 2017, after a blog post about Semaan on a newly-launched website committed to documenting stories of migrant worker abuse attracted some attention (Uprety 2017), Semaan was taken into police custody for investigation. Women concerned for their safety and legal status have balked at coming forward to testify against Semaan in court, and so it is unclear what will happen to him. But Semaan offers an interesting case study for thinking about citizenship in Lebanon. Semaan can certainly only exist as an Arab. His person indexes this border between citizen and foreigner, for no Ethiopian man could so effortlessly impersonate the state. Because the national distinction between Syrian, Palestinian, or Lebanese is not easily distinguishable by sight (nor, for many non-native Arabic speakers, by accent), it is *Arab* that here encapsulates the embodied image of the state for migrant workers. It is also difficult to fathom female migrant workers getting into an Arab *woman*’s car in the recognition of her authority. Semaan’s actions suggest that the state’s monopoly over violence, in this instance, can be harnessed by the Arab male who chooses to perform its entitlements. But this is also only possible *in relation to* female migrant workers. It is only for them that the Arab male drives around in the avatar of the state.

2. Prison

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM (1:00 PM in Ramadan) were visiting hours at ‘Adliyye, as mentioned above the underground parking lot that had been converted by General Security into a ‘temporary’ holding center for foreigners. By 6:15 AM on most Tuesdays and Thursdays there would already be over 50 men and women gathered outside the prison, waiting. The men smoked, the women chatted, everyone searched for shade. By the time the sun was at its peak of afternoon heat, upwards of 200 people would have passed through, each hoping to visit someone imprisoned at the detention centre under the bridge. The visits themselves were brief, without touch or time. But it was the wait that was long.

At some point, an officer would arrive and distribute numbered slips of pink or white paper on which a barely-legible English number had been scrawled in pen. The rules of this distribution were highly unpredictable. Some days visitors were divided into those visiting family and those visiting friends, with those visiting family given preference. Some days men and women were divided; some days it was those visiting men versus those visiting women. Some days 100 numbered slips were distributed, other days the amount hovered closer to 50. Some days no slips of paper were distributed whatsoever and visitors were segregated by gender and made to line up in the order of arrival, prompting loud arguments, shoving, squeezing, and continuous rearrangement when the officer was not looking. Usually, 20 individuals constituted one round, and between one to four rounds of visits occurred over the course of a day.

The visit itself occurred inside a small, narrow hallway that could barely accommodate the allotted visitors. Visitors were crammed into a thin, cobweb-covered underground hallway and separated from the detainees by three levels of floor-to-ceiling metal walls with tiny holes

cut through them, smaller than the diameter of a pencil. The holes were uneven and the distance between the walls significant, so not even rolled-up paper could be passed to the other side. Visitors would squint to make out their visitee. Names were shouted in desperation, and all conversations would be held at a screaming pitch, attempting to direct speech between tiny gaps of air above a cacophony of multilingual speech. From start to finish, the entire process usually took three to four hours (often many more) for a 10-15 minute visit.

It is against this context that a rumour emerged among visitors that Lebanese citizens could access detainees through a separate entrance, without waiting. Over numerous prison visits, I heard this rumour repeatedly, although actual citizens were never quite sure what the facts were. There was certainly another entrance, used by lawyers, but there were no guarantees that non-lawyers could use it, although perhaps it had happened once before. And so the rumour persisted, and every time someone that looked vaguely Lebanese (myself included, largely due to my class position in that context) was in the line at ‘Adliyye visiting hours, a darker face would turn and explain kindly that for them, there were ways that did not require this wait.

Where Semaan drives around as a citizen engaging in actions that target migrant workers on the basis of a fictional impersonation of the state, at ‘Adliyye the migrant workers circulate their own fictions about the citizens of the state. In the rumour that Lebanese citizens do not need to inconvenience themselves by waiting, that activity which characterizes the basic nature of prison visits, migrant workers acknowledge the line between citizen and foreigner. The humiliation they are subject to in every visit must surely be reserved for non-citizens alone (including the many Syrians who are detained in ‘Adliyye, and waiting in line besides them). After all, they already know the experience of exclusion in Lebanon. It is impossible that such an

experience could also be demanded of the Lebanese citizen. Migrant workers name this boundary at the site of the state encounter: the operative distinction at the scene of a prison is not between state sovereignty and citizen subjection, they insist. A detention center for foreigners is rather a site of the *proximity* between state and citizen, such that the citizen should go around the corner to use the door known to be formally reserved for legal authorities. The *citizen's* mode of entry into the state's doors is not that of waiting, for the state opens its doors to its citizens immediately. Insistence on this difference, despite the fact that it was likely not the case in actual practice, is not the result of migrant workers' confusion. It is rather an analytic precision drawn from their knowledge that foreigners live on the opposite side of the relation of citizen/state.

3. Papers

Among migrant worker communities in Beirut, there is one recurring complaint that concerned NGOs and activists remain unable to do much about. Men and women, but mostly women, are paying hundreds, even thousands of dollars to Lebanese agents who promise to fix their papers in exchange for cash. The details vary, but the situation tends to be as follows: these women are former domestic workers who have escaped confinement in private Lebanese households. They are almost never in possession of their passports, which are illegally held by their sponsoring family. Moreover, the women lose legal status as soon as they flee the sponsor on whom their work and residency permits in the country are dependent. Once they escape, sponsors usually file their name with the police so the next time the women are stopped at a checkpoint or elsewhere, they are at risk of being exposed as escapees, detained, and eventually deported. In the meantime, the women must not only navigate the city and the labour market as undocumented,

but are also unable to leave the country. Many remain stuck in Lebanon as family emergencies, celebrations, or the simple passage of time back home is witnessed only in mediatized form. It is for this reason that many women are desperate to have their papers fixed. Many want to see children and parents who keep asking when they are coming home.

For an undocumented migrant worker in Lebanon who wishes to return to her country, the options are slim. The easiest way to deal with having circumvented the state's gaze is to simply make oneself directly visible to it: to be deported. In fact, as I was told by multiple lawyers, the reason General Security does not actively pursue runaway domestic workers is because they know that eventually, the women will return right back to them. But deciding on this route often depends on whether one wants to come back. Those deported incur a ban on re-entry for 5-10 years, thereby risking the income that sustains not only the worker but also her extended family, usually the reason for her travel to Lebanon in the first place. Re-entry bans can be thwarted by legally changing one's name and getting a new passport, but this is not easy, and takes both time and money. In the meantime, there are no guarantees that one's job will still be available or that a comparable one will quickly be found. In recent years rumours have also begun circulating that General Security is now using fingerprints to identify domestic workers, and so the risk of being caught and exposed looms in the distance. Even for those willing to take these risks, it is no simple task to get oneself deported. Women have devised clever schemes to seduce security officers or feign unawareness and get themselves "caught" by officers, those in plainclothes and uniform both. There is even a term for the procedure: *sallama haal-ik,* to submit yourself; to give yourself up. In summer 2016, 'Adliyye was so overcrowded that it was said the police were now taking bribes to arrest women, because the backlog on deportation meant there

was no place to keep anyone. *Imagine!*, women used to shake their heads in disbelief. *You have to pay to get yourself imprisoned!*

Being ready for deportation also requires more than a bribe. A detainee usually has to pay for her ticket back home, although on some occasions the cost is extracted from her former sponsor as part of a contractual obligation, and every so often it was rumored that the state or one's embassy would cover it, murky stories emerging out of the chaos of prison life. A detainee also has to pay a fine of $100 for each year she has lived illegally in the country, an overstay penalty that is sometimes waived. The actual deportation can take anywhere from days to weeks, and some women even spend months awaiting the finalization of paperwork. Many passports have expired over the years, and so embassies or consulates must get involved in order to issue a temporary travel document known using the French term *laissez passer*. In the meantime, prison conditions are notoriously horrifying. In addition, women who have had criminal charges laid on them, something they almost never know in advance of their detention, might have to wait months and even serve lengthy prison sentences before being able to leave.[24] And yet, despite all this, many women are willing to take huge risks to go home. Rahel, an Ethiopian activist introduced in Chapter Five, once told me that she had a list of nearly a hundred names of Ethiopian women who wanted nothing more than to go home, but did not have the means to try.

It is in this context that there has arisen a far more tempting way to leave the country: the illusive option known as 'fixing papers' (*zabbat awra[q]*). With some effort, lots of cash, and

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[24] It is a common practice for sponsors to allege that domestic workers stole cash or jewelry from their homes when they escaped, launching a criminal case against the woman that is usually resolved through out-of-court bribes or court sentences that demand repayment. This practice is widely reputed to be encouraged by police and is spoken of among employers as 'retrieving one's investment', referring to the approximately $1500-$3000 initially spent to acquire a domestic worker from a recruitment agency. For a more detailed discussion of one such instance, see Michelle's story in Chapter Three.

appropriate mediation, it is theoretically possible for a woman who has been undocumented in Lebanon to find a new employer, pay the fine for the years she was illegal, get General Security's approval to issue her a new work permit without being deported, and obtain the legal paperwork that lets her exit and re-enter the country. In recent years, Lebanese agencies that work recruiting and placing domestic workers in private homes have recognized this need and begun offering their services. For varying sums, they will contact former employees and repossess (what were in fact stolen) passports. They even allege to have a roster of Lebanese citizens ready to serve as new sponsors in exchange for cash rather than actual domestic service, mutually benefitting both parties.

It may sound tempting, but a lot of money has been lost down this route. One interlocutor paid $3000, at which point she was told her passport was now in the possession of the agency and not her former employers, and another $3000 would suffice to transfer it into her own hands. Dozens of others described paying deposits of hundreds of dollars that continued to accumulate until it became clear that no papers were going to emerge. The office of one Hajj Bilal, a Lebanese man titled with the honorific of one who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, has become notorious in this regard. Upon protest from a woman who had paid him a total of $2000 in multiple installments and saw nothing in return, he demanded sex before he would proceed with her papers. She had no receipts, and the text message exchange was not enough as a legal basis of prosecution. A woman from the Ivory Coast who is a well-connected activist within local migrant community circles paid a shocking $6000, largely contributed by a foreign journalist who had been moved by her story, only to have it "go down the drain."

In all my time in Beirut, I did not encounter a single example of a woman who had successfully "fixed" her papers through the payment of cash to an agency that had promised to do so. Yet all those who attempted to do so, including those who lost thousands of dollars of carefully saved or desperately borrowed money in the process, insisted they had heard that *this* agent was not a fraud; they knew for a fact that *this* office had done it before. These insistences often took the form of describing an agent's proximity to state power. So Hajj Bilal was said to have a brother in General Security, and to possess a machine that issued state-authorized IDs that had been smuggled into the basement of his office. Another man, to whom a Cameroonian interlocutor had paid $1000 in full confidence, was explained to me as friendly with the Lebanese ambassador to Nigeria, in an evident attempt to assuage my skepticism.

Lebanon is considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world.[25] Within this context, the payment of bribes in order to get things done is simply an accepted part of the functioning of state bureaucracy. That migrant workers would assume that money could be paid in exchange for solving the problem of their legal status, is therefore an assumption that matches common public knowledge about the relationship between individual payment and state-related outcome. However, in this context money was being paid not in the form of a bribe but in the form of a consumer transaction, and not to a direct representative of the state but to a private citizen. When I asked about the possibility of acquiring fake passports, I was constantly told that no one undertook such forgery due to the associated threats. Instead, the promise offered was that of legally-recognized paperwork in exchange for cash paid to a recruitment agency. Formal processes of state bureaucracy that govern the legal status of migrant workers in Lebanon,

[25] According to Transparency International, Lebanon ranks 136 out of 176 countries on the corruption index of 2016, scoring 28/100 on their scale. https://www.transparency.org/country/LBN

therefore, could be circumvented or accelerated simply through a payment made to a private (pseudo-corporate) entity. That many of these men were rumored to possess an individual proximity to state power only increased the seamlessness of the border between their standing as citizens, and their ability to inhabit the power of the state.

While in Beirut, I regularly heard stories of bribes paid to officers of the state or local political parties, including the neighbourhood thugs who would protect a building when needed, or acquire the permit necessary for a house party or a day's filming. In many of these cases I personally witnessed the success of these bribes, but my assumption that the bribe would succeed always preceded the outcome itself. For the migrant workers of Beirut, I want to suggest that transactions conducted with recruitment agencies offering to fix their papers are similarly construed. Paying the state and paying the citizen blur into each other in the same way that Joe Semaan can ask migrant workers for their papers and they will step into his vehicle, for in him they recognize the power of the state. These undocumented women were convinced that they, like the rest of us, could benefit from a nexus of citizen-state power that was known to respond effectively to large sums of cash.

The blurring of the lines between the authority vested in the state and the authority vested in the figure of the citizen described above is key to understanding migrant workers' experience of Lebanon. In fact, as discussed in the Introduction, what is unique about the *kafala* system compared with other temporary worker programs is the degree to which responsibility for the worker is transferred to the *kafeel.* Through *kafala,* the Lebanese state formally invests a degree of its sovereign authority into the individual citizen-sponsor. This is not only a male subject. In the context of domestic work, this usually means the female Lebanese citizen who manages the

household, a relation that has produced the entire social category of the "Madame." It is in fact the Madame who is responsible for the overwhelming majority of abuse directed at domestic workers (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three). In addition to facing abuse at the hands of the female citizen, domestic workers have also been overwhelmingly unable to access the Lebanese justice system or pursue available avenues of state recourse to their benefit (HRW 2010). For migrant workers, therefore, the Lebanese citizen is both their most intimate encounter with the authority of the state, as well as the figure through which they encounter their own exclusion from expected norms of reciprocity — not as individual experience, but as institutionalized social logic.

We are left with a strange contradiction. Within the imaginary of Lebanese citizen and state, migrant workers are subject to a kind of casting out of the social such that *they are those to whom nothing is owed*. This is not a metaphorical sentence: it is meant literally. Consider a brief anecdote reported in a study with domestic workers' employers, where a Lebanese woman described her struggle to find healthcare for her domestic worker, who fell very sick while working for her and had no recourse to medical treatment back home in Ethiopia. The employer had paid for insurance in accordance with contract requirements, but the domestic worker was denied admission and treatment at multiple hospitals (a common practice), until the employer personally pulled strings through influential contacts. Even then, she was denied much care.

> You should have seen how mistreated she was. I sat in the cafeteria [at the hospital] and started to cry. A doctor came in, a respectable doctor, and asked me why I was crying. I told him the story and he answered: 'Are you serious? You are crying because of an Ethiopian?' I wanted to hit him but my husband held me back (quoted in Abdulrahim 2010, 24).

What kind of social logic allows for a doctor to ask, in disbelief, "You are crying because of an Ethiopian?" The question returns us to Butler's insistence on grievability. It lays bare the basic logic of the ungrievable subject: she who cannot possibly be fathomed as the object of loss, because that would first require the acknowledgment of attachment.

And yet Lebanon could not function without its migrant workers. The relation of employment, after all, even if it refuses to accept mutual vulnerability as a principle, is still materially one of interdependence. This is why migrant workers *still believe they are owed something*. For a long time, I could not wrap my head around the fact that so many women who were so intelligent, so thrifty, and so aware of how to navigate the threats of life in Beirut had lost colossal amounts of money to what appeared so transparently to me as a patent sham of fixing papers. To provide another example, whenever I would encounter yet another story of unpaid wages reaching months, years, sometimes *even upwards of a decade* where women continued to work and accept the reassurances of the employer that the money was being kept aside somewhere, I could not understand how anyone could possibly believe such claims. But this belief is drawn from a different logic of recognition. It is a belief located inside an imaginary that poses the question out loud, in the very language that interpellates migrant workers as subaltern: "*Manna insan kaman?"* Are we not human too?

The formal, contractual responsibilities of the Lebanese citizen/state to the migrant worker are regularly violated, because the migrant worker is fundamentally not a subject with whom a contract can be engaged. Recognition is possible only the grounds of a certain equality, not of social position but in the recognition of the other as s/he who is able to recognize you in return. The dehumanization of migrant workers such that they are intelligible to the citizen/state

only as racialized, labouring bodies is what has frequently led to comparisons between the *kafala* system and slavery in popular discourse. But nor is this bare life. Not only do migrant workers inhabit their own humanity with full certainty, they also find others who recognize them as such. The social force of citizenship in Lebanon is so fraught that the country's non-citizens have built an entire world for themselves fully coterminous with their own exclusion.

2. The Time of Exhaustion

They give them no punishment
That serves as a break
—John Pluecker

Again and again, migrant workers would tell me, "next year I'll travel *(rah saafir)*." To *travel* in this sentence meant only one thing: to leave Lebanon, end one's tenure as migrant worker, and go back to the country from which one had come. Arduous though the process would be, next year they would do it: begin to get their papers in order for those who were undocumented, raise the money needed, give notice at their workplaces, think about what accounts needed to be settled, what objects needed to be purchased, and what goodbyes needed to be prepared for. Some had even begun accumulating things that could not easily be found in their home country to ship in advance of their departure (shoes, electronics, household appliances), or designated pieces of clothing they would part with when they would need to reduce their belongings for the eventual trip. Some had been in Lebanon for two or three years but had had enough, others had been in the country for over a decade. All had family, many children of their own, whom they spoke of missing desperately. They would sometimes joke outside of another's presence — "Zeina? She'll never travel; believe me. She can't. She's too comfortable here, she can't go and start again from scratch. Her entire life is here" — but made it a point to differentiate their own trajectories (and sense of *life*), going so far as to suggest a month that would be best for their departure. The month passed.

Over my two years of fieldwork, I met only one woman who left Lebanon out of choice and returned to her country of origin.[26] Some still say they are leaving soon but if asked further

[26] This excludes refugees and those deported against their will.

questions, demur. Others stopped bringing it up at a certain point. But the possibility looms, available to be called upon when fed up or frustrated, when rumours circulate that one's embassy will soon grant amnesty to those who want to travel but lack legal paperwork (something that happens with irregular frequency), or as a peace offer when a loved one expresses frustration at the brutal conditions of a worker's life: "next year, that's it, *wallah*, I'll travel!" This is the central question that motivates this chapter. Despite a professed desire on the part of migrant workers to exit Lebanon and return home, and accessible albeit difficult avenues to do so, why does no one seem to leave?

For many migrant workers, the length of their stay in Lebanon is characterized by an endless deferral. Although they adamantly describe their presence in Lebanon as temporary, many hesitate if asked about future plans. "I haven't done anything (*ma 'amilt shi*)", I heard repeatedly. Individuals describe themselves as unable to return until enough money has been raised to make the migration worth it: children put through college, a piece of land purchased for family, a house built, and then furnished, perhaps a car added. Some cite constant family demands, "if only they knew how hard I'm working", "they just spend and ask for more", and all mention the high costs of living in Lebanon for which they were not prepared. Yet even the mention of material goals is rarely spoken with determination, rarely accorded concreteness. Although all those who were not raising children present with them (and even some who were) remained adamant they did not want to spend the rest of their lives in the country, and nearly all spoke of going back home rather than setting their sights elsewhere (eg. the Gulf or Europe), it was very rare to hear plans or visions of life after Lebanon. The time of the future trailed off, like a sentence ending in an ellipsis, meandering, full of hesitation.

What is the relationship between the idea of futurity for a migrant worker who speaks of her aspirations to one day return home, and the slow dreariness of the present that characterizes her everyday life in Lebanon?

The current population of migrant workers in Lebanon can been loosely grouped into two categories: domestic workers and freelancers. Where the majority of domestic workers are legally tied to their citizen employer, the majority of freelancers work illegally. Depending on financial worth and type of establishment, a Lebanese business, like a household, can serve as the legal sponsor for one or more male or female migrant worker hired to perform 'unskilled' labour. The most common examples are cleaning and maintenance companies across the country that sponsor hundreds of male and female migrant workers. However, the difficulty of obtaining work permits and the concurrent responsibility for the individuals involved mean it is far more common for such employment to occur informally.[27] Moreover, as Dahdah (2014, 21) notes,

> … the law is ambiguous and applied on a case-by-case basis, sometimes depending on the relationships of each entrepreneur … anyone who has relations with officials of the administration or authorities responsible for control of migration and labor can circumvent the law. [A Ministry official] stated explicitly that "The Ministry of the Interior is unable to ensure compliance with the rules in place to control migration … ." According to the same person, "The Ministry cannot restrict illegal recruitment as both informality and clandestinity are essential to the Lebanese economy."

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[27] Take for example this excerpt from a 2016 interview with current Minister of Labour Sej'aan Azzi, where he was asked, "It is known that you have been very strict about granting work permits to foreigners. What is your criteria for denying or granting a work permit?" His response: "When the Ministry of Labor receives applications for work permits for foreigners, it investigates. Unlike my predecessors, I make three types of inquiries. I contact the applicants and ask them about their applications. In 90% of cases, my suspicions are validated, especially since some countries mention the individual's profession in their passports. For example, the owner of an Arabian perfumes shop visited me once, requesting a work permit for a cleaning girl. He submitted the application. I took a look at the application and saw the girl's photo; she was strikingly beautiful, not in a suggestive immoral manner. I called him. He said: "No, she is the company's manager and she is my friend."" Azzi suggests that he was able to read the act of attempting to fool the state in the woman's photograph; that she was too beautiful to be only a cleaner and hence something was amiss. Indeed, it turns out she was *the manager*, a superior position that cannot be given to a foreigner, and that indicates the Lebanese man who applied for her work permit was more likely her business and/or sexual partner. The permit was denied. (The Legal Agenda 2016).

The term 'freelancer' originated as NGO-parlance for former domestic workers who escape situations of abuse or decide to stay in the country after completing their work contract, and join Lebanon's large pool of informal labour. Most leave without passports or possessions, trading legal status in the country for control over their labour power. A smaller number enter into arrangements with former or new legal sponsors, who allow the women to work and live independently in exchange for a price of the sponsor's choosing. Although a far less discussed phenomenon, many male workers also end up undocumented for reasons that include having been smuggled into the country in the first place, overstaying legal visas, or being unable to afford permit-renewal fees. Documented, undocumented, and vaguely-documented migrant workers therefore saturate the low-skill, low-wage employment sectors of Beirut. I hence use 'freelancer' to refer to the category of migrant workers, both male and female, who are not live-in domestic workers but seek employment through the market. These workers are free from the most exploitative bonds of the sponsorship system but constantly subject to both police harassment and public prejudice. Unlike the women trapped in houses, they are Lebanon's most visible foreign worker presence.

Labour under capitalism, we know from Marx, cannot be thought without thinking time. Freelance life is organized around the unit of the seven-day week, with the average work schedule consisting of long (8–14 hour) shifts from Monday to Saturday, and Sundays off. Sundays are the climax of everyday life for migrant workers in Beirut, including many domestic workers for whom it is the customary holiday, albeit regularly denied.[28] It is the day to which all

[28] While it is legally-mandated for the employer to grant a domestic worker one (ie. any) day of the week off, in customary practice this day is Sunday. However, according to the latest estimates, a full *half* of Lebanese employers refuse her this right (ILO 2016a).

other days are oriented, and it is the day on which the entire city transforms. Each week is therefore characterized by six days of physically taxing drudgery, followed by a Sunday of concentrated leisure and rest. At the same time, like similar workers around the world, these are also subjects who have been rendered politically and legally temporary regardless of how long they have lived in or will continue to live in Lebanon. They live in constant digital contact with family back home and witness children grow, parents die, and remittances materialize into promises paid for. As the weeks seem to blur into each other, the years keep adding up. What is the temporality of this life?

In this chapter, I examine how freelance migrant workers experience both work and leisure in order to approach the question of how they inhabit time. I do so by first turning to Siegfried Kracauer (1998) and his discussion of the social transformations that followed the rise of salaried labour in Weimar Germany. Although I am not approaching freelance migrant labour as a *new* phenomenon in the same way it figures for Kracauer, such freelancing only became a common practice some time after the initial growth of the migrant domestic service sector, and by most accounts has become highly visible only in the last 10–15 years (Dahdah 2012). Today, freelance workers lie at the center of economic life in Beirut. At the same time, they are subject to multiple exclusions from social life and urban mobility. The result of this, I show, is the standardization of an experience that I gather under the word exhaustion. Exhaustion, and its temporality of an extended present, is the primary unifying experience of all freelance migrant workers regardless of country of origin, age, gender, type of work, or length of stay in Lebanon. It inflects their speech, their bodies, and even their rest. It characterizes their relationships to

family, to technology, and to the future. In a world where *work* and *time in Lebanon* are perfectly synonymous, exhaustion becomes the very atmosphere of the city.

Salaried Masses and Freelance Migrants

Kracauer's short text *The Salaried Masses* (1998) turns to Weimar Germany at a time when salaried employment had sharply increased in the country. It was no longer the industrial working classes but the 'salaried masses', working primarily in commerce, banking, transport, and civil service and suddenly including high numbers of women, who were transforming the nature of labour. Kracauer locates this historically in the development of modern large-scale enterprise and the rise of the principle known as rationalization. Rationalization, not just an abstract principle but a word that Kracauer frequently encounters used by managers, takes the logic of the assembly-line into the clerical departments of firms and offices in order to reorganize operations on the basis of efficiency and mechanization. Kracauer is interested in the relationship between these material transformations and the ideology that subtends them. Extending Marx to note how "an industrial reserve army of salaried employees has come into being" (30), he turns his attention to the development of a new employee culture found in its most extreme form in postwar Berlin.

Kracauer's analysis is composed of overheard speech and microscopic everyday observations, an ethnographic mode of inquiry that is all the more insightful for its Marxist commitment to materialist analysis. He posits a simple sociological question: how does one maintain job satisfaction under such working conditions? The answer, of course, is ideology. Hence Kracauer constantly exposes the contradictions between a salaried employee's material

circumstances, mechanized and serialized into an endlessly-replaceable job, and her ideological interpellation as both described (by others) and narrated (by herself) to be personally well-suited for and *desiring of* said job. This is what takes Kracauer into detailed discussions of companies promoting 'community' through group activities and associations, even as they seek to break employee power in the form of trade unions, or employees prizing luxury goods and bourgeois values, even as these will never offer them entry into bourgeois society. The thing about migrant labour in Lebanon, however, is that it has never come with this ideology.

Not a single migrant worker in Beirut ever told me they liked their job. Such a notion is in fact unfathomable, as the type of labour that migrant workers arrive to Lebanon in order to undertake is both legally and socially circumscribed as undesirable. The content of the work alone leaves this relatively transparent: in NGO terminology, the jobs are often captured under the phrase 'The Three Ds: Dirty, Dangerous, and Difficult' ('Difficult' is sometimes replaced with 'Demeaning'). Within the legal hierarchy of foreign workers established by General Security, workers are divided into four categories. The first is reserved for skilled workers, the second includes 'artist visas' (largely a euphemism for sex work), and the third and fourth are reserved for unskilled labour, under which all migrant workers discussed in this dissertation fall. Moreover, within a certain discursive imaginary in Lebanon, the labour undertaken by migrants is also laden with discriminatory associations of foreignness.

Banker, essayist, and "Father of the Constitution" Michel Chiha is usually credited with first proposing an ideology of Lebanese nationalism. In his writings, most composed in the 1930s and 40s, Chiha emphasized modern Lebanon as heir to Phoenicia, culturally and religiously

proximate to European Christianity, and economically entrepreneurial and free-market. Key to Chiha's ideology was a "congratulatory self-image of one class as the embodiment of Lebaneseness" (Hartman & Olsaretti 2003, 43). The average Lebanese subject was to be an educated member of an elite, someone who seeks emigration and pursues wealth, and, importantly, engages in no menial labour (Hartman & Olsaretti 2003; Traboulsi 1999). This labour, in turn, was to be undertaken largely by foreigners. Chalcraft (2006) discusses the circulation of this notion some decades later in his examination of the discourse surrounding Syrian workers in pre-civil war Lebanon. In some instances the idea that "the Lebanese refused through pride to take just any work" (2) was simply articulated as a matter of what he describes as 'conventional wisdom', while in others it was explained through an economic logic such that "a Lebanese economy dominated by services could not supply sufficient unskilled labour, and thus manual labour was required on a permanent basis from the outside" (2). Sociologist Ray Jureidini alleges that similar sentiments could be found at the close of the civil war, when "the idea of employing Lebanese women and girls in such a servile position [of domestic work] was anathema to a national pride that was emerging" (2009, 90). Although these examples by no means account for the actual workings of 'unskilled' labour within contemporary Lebanese society, it is of note that such labour as discursive object has often been linked to foreignness.

Just as Chapter One demonstrated how migrant workers lie outside the modes through which social and political recognition is distributed in Lebanon, and thus we could say that these workers are not ideologically interpellated as full social subjects, so migrant workers need not be ideologically interpellated in order to labour. Both domestic work and freelance work is not accompanied by an ideology that seeks to produce workers who are invested in their jobs,

because these workers are not first recognized as subjects in a shared social order. What this also means, of course, is that there are few opacities in recognizing the nature of the work itself, as well as the economic relations of exploitation in which migrant workers find themselves. But I want to use Kracauer because his analysis nonetheless insists that the massification of economic forms moves towards a certain standardization. In Weimar Germany, he sees this as the development of standard character types: the salegirl, the typist, etc. This is because the world he describes seeks to produce subjects who inhabit labour as a form of individual identity. In Beirut, as I have described, this cannot be the case. But the widespread phenomenon of freelance migrant labour cannot leave the workers themselves unaffected. Instead of a certain kind of subject, what is therefore being standardized is a certain kind of experience.

Work, Work, Work, Work, Work, Work…

In the Lebanese capital of Beirut, where approximately 50% of the country's population resides, men and women from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sudan, Kenya, Madagascar, Cameroon, Nigeria, and growing numbers from the West African countries of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso, can be found slogging away at all the menial jobs that keep the city running. Male migrant workers dominate the janitorial and sanitation sectors, a majority employed by large companies that then market their labour to smaller businesses such as offices, hotels, or restaurants. Universities, hospitals, and government buildings sometimes hire cleaners directly but more often subcontract to such companies. Young men work as porters, gardeners, servers, building attendants, security guards, and factory workers, whereas women continue to dominate the gendered labour of cooking, cleaning, and

caring for children and the elderly.[29] A darker-skinned employee dressed in a unicolor uniform, hair covered in a hairnet, can be found at the lowest end of most small-scale and all large businesses: the woman who washes the floors but not your hair at a hair salon; the man who takes out the garbage but not chops the vegetables at a restaurant; the woman who makes coffee but does not show her face at a travel agency; the man who replenishes bathroom supplies but does not answer the phone at a bank. Hotels or larger establishments usually have multiple such employees, as do the homes of the elite such as ambassadors and politicians. There is one (according to her, at least) Ethiopian nurse in Lebanon, and she works illegally, employed on paper as a maid at the family home of the hospital's manager, because that is the only work the Lebanese state deems her worthy of. The rhythm of many lives, then — hours, days, weeks, years — is characterized by the dreary, repetitive nature of the verbs that make up an urban freelancer's vocabulary: wash, clean, dry, chop, boil, fry, wipe, dust, polish, stack, sweep, soak, rub, rinse, fold, drag, lift, carry, dump, place, pour, fill, re-fill, and repeat.

When teaching Beginners/Intermediate English at the Migrant Community Center, I was astonished to find that many students, especially the women, possessed a large repertoire of a specific subset of English vocabulary while unable to formulate a basic sentence in the language. They knew only the vocabulary of their work. Marta, for example, a freelancer who had been in the country for four years, knew the words 'sweep' and 'dustpan' but did not know that the past tense of 'go' was 'went'. Rahel could rattle off a lengthy list of similarly-themed words,

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[29] As noted in the Introduction, Lebanon's economy is dominated by trade and services (eg. banks, tourism, or government), which collectively make up 70-75% of its GDP (Global Finance 2017). Industry and agriculture are much smaller and, especially the latter, centered outside Beirut. Over the course of my fieldwork I heard of only Syrian and Palestinian agricultural and construction workers but did encounter groups of men from Sudan, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who worked at various factories in and outside Beirut.

including some in Swedish as she worked cleaning at both the Swedish embassy and the home of the Swedish ambassador, but she was not aware that the past-tense conjugation of 'am' is 'was'. The women learned the words they knew the same way all new language is learned: through repetition. For years, their days had been filled with both an Arabic and an English glossary of menial service, actions and objects identified in relationship to a set of repeated orders. As the tasks became more familiar, so the attendant words entered their speech. The entirety of how they first inhabited the foreign language was through the words of service.

I once asked the class, "What did you do today?" We had been practicing the past tense. "I worked", came the flat response. And yesterday? Before class? Last week? Your birthday? The answer barely deviated from the first-person simple past of that one English verb everyone knew before even joining the class: *work*. To ask the students to describe a time before or after work, even though many had the vocabulary for morning rituals or evening rest, required forcing them to stop and hesitantly re-articulate in smaller units of time. We struggled to slow their sentences down, to consider morning showers and evening meals, but it always felt a laborious demand. Descriptions of morning and evening routines seemed to come with great difficulty. Instead, days were described quickly in order to arrive at the moment we were: English class at MCC, everyone gathered in a space by choice and in some equality— decidedly *not* work. Hence when asked where someone worked, the answer was nearly always a neighbourhood rather than a place of employment. The actual site of employment seemed of no relevance and I would often receive puzzled looks if I inquired in more detail. When the response was given: "You know, cleaning that building— ", it was never with embarrassment but a flat obviousness. "What difference does it make?", Rahel replied dryly.

I once made the mistake of teaching the question, in Arabic and then English, "What do you do?" The response was a partly-confused, partly-exasperated "I work." "All we have here is work", I was told; "Lebanon is all work and nothing else." "This is not life", remarked Beza once, coolly discussing her time in Beirut as we all gathered for a final drink after the restaurant had closed to customers. "This is just work." An Ethiopian colleague of Beza's brought it up later, in case I had misunderstood: "Do you know how much Beza has worked? She has worked like a donkey (*mitl himar*). Day and night, she has worked." Over the course of my fieldwork, I was regularly approached by migrant workers who worked full-time jobs of 8–12 hour shifts, six days a week, with requests for help finding more work to fill the stretch of day or night left empty. "I came here to work", a 25-year old woman once told me, declaratively. A freelancer, she had been working in Lebanon for seven years and was currently doing 10-hour night shifts at a bar. "I did not come here to relax or stay at home watching movies or sleeping. I want to work." It was a statement that I felt was meant to convince herself as much as I, her interlocutor, but soon after she began another part-time job caring for an elderly woman three afternoons a week. But if all of Lebanon is work and all of work is dreary repetition, how is time made progressive?

Where Have the Years Gone?

"How long have you been here?" It was the first question I would be asked by everyone I met in Beirut. With migrant workers, however, it was also a question expected in return. Initially I was nervous asking it, but I quickly realized no one minded answering. In fact the information was readily offered without solicitation, but with a curious qualifier: many people seemed to forget exactly how long it had been. Some held a clear number in their head and stated it immediately.

Shakour introduced himself in English as, “I’m from Sudan I have 13 years in Lebanon.” Others hesitated: Nine— maybe ten? — 2004 — maybe 2006? The younger ones would know it best, precise to the number of months, while those who had passed the decade mark proudly offered anecdotes about how Beirut used to be, before the material afterlives of multiple wars had receded in face of spectacular urban development. But descriptions of their own lives during this time were offered circuitously: a perambulation around the city from one neighbourhood to the next, as rents became unaffordable, jobs changed, or friends moved in and out; a series of seemingly-interchangeable jobs, some better-paid or better-treated, but never really a rupture in the genre. Specific experiences in Lebanon were certainly described as pivotal or recalled with fondness. But the dullness that characterized the aggregated years was inescapable. When the number of years given was high, it was almost exclusively spoken with a quick, sharp laugh. It was the laugh of that which is hard to believe (how quickly time flies!) and yet somehow, despite yourself, still the case.

Daily time for freelancers in Lebanon, then, is organized around the repetition of work. Non-repetitive time — the time of linear progress — happens in another place. After all, migrant workers do not live only in the temporality given to them by conditions of the Lebanese workforce. Migrant workers are from somewhere, and they are going back. This is why there is no hesitation at offering an outsider information about how long one has been in the country. Even when the number stretched beyond a decade with no end in sight, there was a basic affirmation of the temporary nature of the stay and the intention, however distant, of returning. As a result, years were used to measure the children who had grown and the parents who had aged, not the work permits that had been renewed or the army checkpoints that had been

fastidiously avoided. Years were made to bear the weight of absence, not presence. It was common for migrant workers to gather and celebrate the birthdays of family members back home, and I was regularly invited to parties for children, cousins, and nephews and nieces I would never meet. Notably, the absent life communally celebrated was always that of a child. In doing so the years were made heavier; they marked milestones of speech and school, the change of small bodies in slow bloom. Beza, for example, would often show me photos of how her eight year-old son Sami had grown during her seven years in Lebanon. She refused to tell anyone her birthday, providing only the date of Sami's birth, on which she would buy a cake, cook a large meal, invite her friends home, and receive gifts in his name. Sami's life was the only linear time in her life, it was in fact the exact measure of her time in Lebanon: if it was an equation, it would be *t (time in Lebanon) = S (Sami's age) - 1.* Her own years were irrelevant.

For these migrant workers, what was contained in a measure of years was thus often an identification with internal attachments of kin and land. The referent to this number was not the place they were (Lebanon) but the place they were *not* (home). This is why when considering what they had accomplished during their years in Lebanon, many repeatedly told me, "I haven't done a thing (*ma 'amilt shi*)." The speakers of this sentence had all spent numerous years working in a foreign country, learned a new language, and built a life for themselves that involved great strength and a fierce commitment to their own thriving, and yet it did not even qualify as action. To *do* was to do back home, in the place that was not temporary: to buy land, to put family members through school or sickness, to have a house built or a sibling married. The scale of actionable time was constantly directed to a familiar place where life could move forward and things could be done, beginnings and endings recognized and named.

Tired Bodies

As mentioned in the Introduction, popular debates about migrant workers in Lebanon revolve around the institutionalized exploitation of the *kafala* system and the prevalence of interpersonal racism in Lebanese society. But the primary affective state of a freelance migrant worker is not that of one wounded by racism, suffering from poverty, or fearful of the state. It is that of *exhaustion*. Exhaustion fills bodies and speech, ages young skin, and was constantly named — to me, as outsider, at least — in a register not of complaint but description. Workers were constantly getting tired or describing themselves as falling sick but in need of rest not medicine, the women pointing out aches in limbs and joints, the men valiantly shrugging off the admission that they did not get enough sleep. I became aware of this as an impossible chasm between our differing relationship to the question, *how are you?* At one point or another, every single migrant worker I met mentioned to me how tired they were. On an English exam where they were asked to introduce themselves, Isidore, who is from Burkina Faso, wrote: "I am a young boy I hav 25 year I live in Beyrouth 4 year ago I am a driver I work 7 days I no have a free time. I work evriday 7 am till 6 pm." This was not simply a description of inadequate free time. It was one of depletion.

I once saw Hagar sitting idly on the steps outside a café, where the rest of the staff would take their cigarette breaks. She explained to me that she had developed a severe respiratory infection over the past few years and every time the kitchen was cleaned with chemical products, she needed to leave or she would begin coughing violently. Doctors were expensive and of no help. She barely waited five minutes before insisting she must return to work, the chemicals now dispersed into the air she would still breathe. She left the job a few months later and remained unemployed for some months after that, but at some point I lost track. Rita, on the other hand,

has worked two jobs, a daytime and evening shift, for the full eight years she has been in Beirut. At one point she was caught freelancing and deported to Ethiopia, where she quickly changed her name and returned on a new passport. Rita has wealthy siblings in Canada but an old family feud and stubborn pride means they will not help her, or she will not take their help if offered, and so she works. Even on Sundays tiredness seeps out of her eyelids; during visits to her home, her limbs seem to collapse about her. Her response to "How are you?" rarely strays from a mention of fatigue. Her colleague Zeina, with whom I share almost an exact birthday, once invited me to her home. When we reached the five flights of steep, crumbling stairs, she paused, laughed awkwardly, and encouraged me to go ahead past her. Everything about Zeina felt weary, from her skin to the sound of her voice to the way her sentences come out, slow, like her knees as we climbed. It was Zeina who would refuse to allow me to chop more than a token amount of onions when I hung around in the restaurant kitchen: "You'll get tired, *habibti*. You're not used to it — I am." Labour as time marked these bodies differently than the scars and burns they all bore from their workplaces. It produced a strange weakness and frailty in bodies that were also young, muscular, and daily accomplished tasks that demanded astonishing physical strength.

The first time I guessed the age of an Ethiopian woman with whom I had begun working in the restaurant kitchen, I was off by a full decade. Age, in the English language, carries two meanings: as noun, that which increases in a fixed ratio with calendar time, and as verb, that blurred sense of how a particular body betrays itself. Age in this latter sense, that wear of a body evidenced by lines and folds, creased textures and tired stances, marked all migrant workers I encountered, male and female. They had *aged*, that is to say, not through the gradual and inevitable passage of time but through the accelerated consequences of physical labour. *They all*

looked older than they were. Of course, age as number does not manifest itself in a universal typology against which all beings can be measured. It was my own assumptions that were wrong, until I learned to see differently. But *work* for these workers took its most concentrated form on their bodies. For some the specifics of work changed constantly and for others it involved years of continuity with minimal variation in content. But for nearly all, it was a vacuous expenditure of time that was most recognizable in its depletion of the self. Despite all surrounding circumstances constantly drawing attention to the workers' temporariness in the country, never did their cyclical patterns of work contain within them a visible horizon of completion.

Abdallah was only 18 when he arrived in Lebanon. He was sent with his older brother Ali to replace his father, who had come from Sudan and worked in the house of a wealthy Lebanese family for 40 years. The patriarch of the family was a celebrated Member of Parliament and his daughter, in whose house Abdallah and Ali now serve, is a highly successful business owner formerly married to a well-known bank CEO. Abdallah is desperate to leave Lebanon and was one of very few migrant workers I met who constantly questioned me about all possible routes to international immigration. Ali, the elder brother, was reputed to be impregnating girls across the city, so at a tender 22 Abdallah was convinced the responsibility for family support was his to bear. But the sons feared they had found themselves in an intergenerational script of repetition.

By the time their father finally left Lebanon, he was carried on a stretcher. He had been paralyzed and could not move his limbs, so had to be horizontally transported home to heal. "The problem is he drank a lot of whisky", Abdallah, who does not drink, confessed with neither judgment nor pain on his face. "Even at home in Sudan he used to drink, whatever was there, but when he got to Lebanon it got much worse. He would drink everyday, you know you can find

anything in Lebanon, and cheap, too." The drink wore the aged man down, as did the work. Abdallah did not suggest a relation of cause or effect. His father has since improved, native earth having restored to his limbs the capacity for movement, but he is still far too weak for a lifelong labourer only in his 60s, and he remains an alcoholic. In his stead his sons work long days, Abdallah in a factory that makes some of Beirut's best-known extravagantly-priced American sweets and Ali as a personal server for the lady of the household. They find little comfort in the fact that their father, body defeated after four decades in Lebanon, eventually arrived at his moment of return.

Cell Phones are the New Watches

In this world of long days and longer years, how does anyone keep time? The shift from the public clock to the individual pocket-watch was essential to the rise of time-discipline and the regularization of the working week (Thompson 1967). The individual watch has now been replaced by the cell phone, but the cell phone is far more than a watch. For a long time, I was struck by the fact that all the migrant workers I encountered had far newer, nicer, and certainly more expensive cell phones than myself or any of my middle-class friends. When I finally worked up the courage to ask, I learned that vast numbers of migrant workers with disposable incomes are indebted to local phone stores from which they have bought the latest smartphone for costs that can approach triple their monthly salaries, to be paid in pre-arranged installments. Alemnesh, who makes $600/month, spent $820 on her new iPhone. Yusuf, who makes $400 a month at a steady job and occasionally finds side hustles, has both an iPhone 5 and an iPhone 6, each of which he paid upwards of $600 for and each of which he keeps active and refills with

credit regularly. When walking along Beirut streets on a sunny afternoon it is common to see Indian and Bangladeshi men in the brightly-coloured uniforms of sanitation workers parked beneath the shade of a tree, holding their shiny, large-screened phones in front of their faces while on a video call in a language other than Arabic, presumably with someone back home. That which now maintains time is primarily that which maintains *ties*, and in doing so, mediates between the temporalities of repetition and progress and the spaces of Lebanon and home.

One Sunday I attended one of the MCC's monthly fieldtrips to a Lebanese landmark. The much-anticipated events gather 50-100+ individuals for whom buses are rented and travel routes meticulously planned in order to avoid checkpoints that might threaten those without legal status. From our 8:00 AM gathering and throughout the course of the day, the smartphones did not stop documenting. When we were taken on a boat ride in the dark rivers of the Jeita Grotto, a prehistoric system of limestone caves rediscovered in the mid-1800s, the guides explicitly forbade photography to the uproarious objections of every single person around me. The constant capturing of fleeting life moments is a widespread characteristic of contemporary mediatized living, and in this migrant workers are no different from the Instagram practices of cosmopolitan teenagers and web-savvy tourists. But where do all these photos go? Most are posted on social media platforms and shared with friends and family, particularly for those migrant workers whose only real-time connection to those back home is through practices of digital communication. Appadurai (2016) has described this as the deliberate creation of a living archive, a response to the memory of loss that characterizes the condition of migration. But it is not the archive that forms the model of this constancy, for the archive implies within it a

temporality of both past and future. This is a practice of the *now.* Digital sharing is the attempt to produce a co-temporaneous experience of life in a condition where there is no co-presence.

The freelance migrant workers of Beirut work not on factory floors of timed repetition, but in service sectors of solitary endlessness: sweeping cigarette butts away in lobbies and stairways, wiping story after story of fingerprint smears on glass windows, washing and drying the same sticky glasses of *arak* and wine. In all these spaces, the smartphone is a constant companion. Throughout my shifts working alongside Ethiopians and Syrians in the kitchen, the repetitive acts of stirring, chopping, peeling, or frying would often be done by women with phones in their pockets and headphones in their ears, carrying on conversations with beloveds in other countries. When the morning's preparation had been completed and we gathered around makeshift chairs of vats of oil and tahini for a quick breakfast, workers would watch Amharic-language news segments or share videos with the latest updates from the wars back home. Even amidst the demanding pace of the workplace, the smartphone produces its own temporality; it is digitally-shared intimacy and immediacy both.

Consider the case of Ethiopians, for whom this is directly dramatized in how their phones keep time. Ethiopians come from a country where the clock is configured along a 12-hour and not 24-hour cycle. In Ethiopia, the day starts at dawn and not midnight; what is 7:00 AM in the same time zone is 1:00 in local Ethiopian time. At 7:00 PM, the cycle begins anew and it is again 1:00. Upon moving to Lebanon, Ethiopian workers must adjust themselves to the conventions of 24-hour time and I often heard them joke about the confusion of their early attempts to do so. As a result, many leave their cell phones on Ethiopian time, having become adept at making the calculations in their head in order to switch hour based on who they are talking to or scheduling

plans with. Migrant workers from other countries had their phones set to Lebanon time instead, although operating systems were often configured in scripts and languages of origin. The smartphone here neatly serves as mediating device between two spatial nodes and their attendant times. But when that which keeps time also governs communication, one is never outside the world of time-keeping. This constancy of digital connectedness is far from unique to the migrant workers of Lebanon. But it is a condition accentuated in a context where not only work, but also its absence is underlaid by overwhelming exhaustion.

Sundays

Sundays in Beirut see the sudden transformation of the city into a barely-recognizable version of its weekday self. Construction stops and traffic decreases, that unceasing violence of the car horn replaced by the sound of men buying scrap metal and elderly beggars warning of divine intervention. One morning, Said, our local wanderer who had lost all his family in successive wars and gained in return the care of one street corner by the sea, crooned tragic love songs to the tune of his wheelbarrow until a neighbour opened his shutters, leaned six floors down, and screamed *Kha-LAS!.* That either men could be heard was a Sunday delight. In fact, Lebanon is one of the only countries in the region that observes Sunday as part of its weekend. Whereas Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, all of the Gulf countries and most of Arab North Africa observe a Friday-Saturday weekend — Friday being the ordained holy day in the Islamic tradition — the Christian-identified Lebanon has opted for Saturday-Sunday instead. For many of Beirut's middle- and upper-class inhabitants, on Sunday the weekday pace of working chaos is replaced by extended family lunches and summer trips to the sea, grilling skewers of meat on balconies or

plots of village land. There is one population for whom Sundays, also holidays, mark a very different experience: those migrant workers who belong neither to the land nor its people. On Sundays they are not workers, and it is the only day the city is theirs.

Prior to beginning fieldwork, I would wake up certain mornings in Beirut in surreal calm, wondering why sleep felt different and air tasted strange, only to remember it was Sunday. Soon after, however, Sundays were marked by a frenetic series of events, days so packed at times I felt fieldwork might *only* be happening on Sundays. For those migrant workers who have one day a week off, Sundays offer services at Pentecostal churches and Sikh temples, Ethiopian concerts and Nepalese cultural festivals, Sri Lankan cricket tournaments and Filipina karaoke competitions, English classes and NGO-sponsored trips to local attractions. Streets are filled with their pedestrian presence, all the more stark because they are dressed in outfits of their own choosing. For many others, Sundays are simply the day to sleep. There is no activity reserved for the day apart from minor amounts of housework or occasional gatherings with friends. “I sleep for the whole week on Sundays”, I was explained with a grin by a woman who works both 7-hour day shifts cleaning and serving coffee at an office, and 9-hour night shifts, mostly on her feet, cleaning at a restaurant. Many like her barely get five hours of sleep a night during the rest of the week. Sundays, then, punctuate the week with two parallel and yet competing experiences of time: as much rest, and as much activity as possible.

Sundays begin on Saturday evening, the most popular night for migrant worker partying at the numerous ‘discos’ (ie. nightclubs) that have popped up across the city catering to diverse groups of migrant workers. The Filipinas have their own circuit, as do the Ethiopians, both attracting small numbers of other migrant workers and large numbers of Arab men. A few

country-specific nights happen on a less regular basis, such as when the Malagasy community gathered to host a night of popular music from Madagascar. Most are in rented hotel basements or large party halls, some rumoured to have previously housed illegal sex trafficking, especially of young female Syrian refugees. They tend to be hard to find unless you know what to look for. Crowds trickle in at midnight but the party is at its liveliest from 2:00 AM until dawn, and hundreds do this every Saturday without exception, starting their one-day weekend by staying awake all night the evening before. The drink of choice is XXL, a sugary energy drink of vodka and caffeine served in a can, banned by Lebanon's Health Ministry in 2014 and key to staying awake and dancing. Bodies are lean and carefully dressed, men in tight t-shirts, tapered jeans and baseball caps; women paying extra for trusted taxi drivers so they can walk out in short skirts and tall shoes. Those less inclined to sin but still uninterested in sleep might spend Saturday nights preparing meals for their church congregation, songs for the choir, or national dances for an upcoming celebration. Almost all events held for and/or by migrant workers — religious, political, educational, social, national — happen on Sunday. The morning is spent sleeping in by some and rising early by others, whether for church or temple services, community events, or charity-sponsored field trips, while the growing number of community entrepreneurs prepare for the influx of Sunday customers. Nowhere is this more evident than in Dawra.

For those migrant workers who have the day off, Sundays are celebration in a minor key, and Dawra is the day's spatial synonym. Its streets give in to their foreign gaits. Filipina women bring food they have spent days cooking and packed in portable plastic tupperware to sell on a strip lined with cheap clothing boutiques and karaoke restaurants. South Asian men line the sidewalks hawking fish or single vegetables, huge piles of murkily-colored gourds unfamiliar to

most eyes. The Arab men sell black and white socks; the Ethiopian men, who can be found wherever you can find Ethiopian beer, popular television serials on DVDs. After Saturday partying and after Sunday service, dressed in clothes that exist exclusively for one day a week, it seems as if *everyone* heads to Dawra.

Even for those who do not attend a Sunday religious service, Sundays thus tend to take on patterns of sameness: the same hair salon in the morning, the same restaurant in the afternoon, the same Dawra bar to drink and smoke *argileh* at night. The same group of friends for some, or the same hours of internet conversation with family members for others. Even the occasional festivals that offer musical celebrities flown in from home or elaborate national preparations of flag and food are nonetheless held in the same limited venues, arranged in the same ways, and tend to follow the same program. After months of participating in Sunday activities with diverse migrant worker communities it began to feel like all the events blurred into each other, turning exactly that which was meant to distract and entertain into a kind of monotony. Countless hours were spent in the same way, many of them quietly smoking and lazily browsing on smartphones in the presence of large groups doing the same, but no one ever expressed boredom or irritation other than myself. The sentiment "I'm bored" (also implying "I'm fed up", *ana zah[q]an/e; dajran/e; z'hi[q]it; d'jrit; mallayt*) was used to refer either to work or, more frequently, to Beirut in general, but never about a Sunday. This is because only on Sundays did time temporarily attain an agentive nature.

Freelancers, it turned out, only seemed to *have* time on Sunday. I commonly heard the phrase "I don't have time" (*ma 'indi waqt*) used to refer to sleep, a sentence that was most often followed by, "Just Sundays" (*bass el-ahad*). Although all workers had a certain number of

weekday hours without work, they would insist that they never had enough time for leisure or rest outside of Sundays. Those were not hours where time could be made yours; like the quick cigarette-break one could steal during the workday, they were simply the mediocre leftovers that filled the spaces between constant work. Similarly, mobility for freelance migrant workers is severely restricted during the week. Most freelancers choose not to leave their neighbourhood of residence (ideally the same as their work) out of fear of army checkpoints and police questioning. Even women with legal sponsors can be detained for being found too far from their workplace, or anywhere arbitrarily deemed as unacceptable. On Sundays this surveilling gaze of the state hesitates. Dawra in particular is understood as safer on Sundays (although intermittent police raids ensure there is never total comfort) simply due to the sheer numbers of undocumented workers that fill the streets — "Let them arrest us!", I often heard with glee. This is why, although the scope of migrant labour presence in the city remains a relatively insivisiblized phenomenon, migrant workers' one day a week of *not*-work is felt through much of Beirut as a temporary rearrangement of the urban landscape.

To see the sea, to clean one's own house and not another's, to gather with friends, to have sex, to taste one's own cuisine, to sleep in, or to make plans of any sort, most migrant workers must count the days until Sunday. For domestic workers, to smuggle out a letter, to plan an escape, to make a phone call to family, to wear clothes other than a uniform, to walk the city with choice and not under orders, to speak a language and not be spoken to, there is only Sunday. This is not simply a 24-hour day. If time is the only variable of the universe that moves in one direction, migrant workers' Sundays mark a Sisyphean effort to make time malleable, expanding to incorporate a week's worth of activity and pausing to fill one's body with sleep as lungs with

air. “I can’t breathe (*ma fini itnaffas*); I just want to breathe” was a repeated statement amongst migrant workers’ descriptions of their lives in Lebanon. In an acceleration of breath and activity, Sundays offer the only possible undoing of the otherwise-exhausted present. But all the Sundays Beirut has to offer are not enough to alter the nature of this time.

The Time of Late Capitalism

It is Marx’s great insight that the regulation of time is central to understanding the workings of industrial capitalism that historians such as E. P. Thompson built on in examining the development of workers’ discipline and class consciousness. Thompson (1967) describes the gradual rise of the tyranny of the clock, as generations of English factory workers were taught to internalize the lesson that time is money and idleness its antithesis. A century and a half later, General Motors employee Ben Hamper published his piercing account of working a vehicle assembly line in Flint, Michigan, a text that pivots around a single question: “What the fuck do you do to kill the clock?” (1992, 95). More recently, Jonathan Crary (2014) has brought this question into the 21st century with an exploration of what he calls 24/7 time, a time that surpasses the clock to demand nonstop productivity, and is obsessed with the conquest of sleep.

Crary’s *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* puts forth an argument that my ethnography confirms. Under late capitalism, he demonstrates, everywhere from U.S. military planning to corporate advertising, there has been a “generalized inscription of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning” (8). Because of capitalism’s drive towards limitless accumulation and neoliberalism’s monetization of everyday life, Crary notes, the inability of sleep to be harnessed towards production poses a problem. It is

therefore the logical progression of capitalism that has led to 24/7 time and what he calls the erosion of sleep. This is a time that has hastened both "the exhaustion of life and the depletion of resources" (17). Moreover, it acquires efficacy not through total conformity (no one is working, shopping, or on their phone *all the time*) but rather constant availability (there is no moment when one theoretically could *not* work, shop, or be on their phone). The *seven* is of note here: 24/7 time, Crary points out, "connotes an arbitrary, uninflected schema of a week, extracted from any unfolding of variegated or cumulative experience" (9). 24/365, after all, suggests too much possibility of change. This is why it is the week that is the unit of time that governs labour in Beirut. Migrant workers are only one node in a much larger phenomenon that has gradually altered the organization of labour around the world.

According to Crary, previous forms of repetitive labour "have not always precluded satisfaction derived from one's limited mastery or efficient operation of tools or machinery" (57). Crary traces this transformation through the end of factory labour, the rise of mechanization, the vanishing of a single lifetime job, and a culture that took shape around identifications with 'machinic processes' — precisely what Kracauer demonstrates in *The Salaried Masses*. For Crary this has led to the intensification of both real and imagined satisfaction to be found in work (we could call it ideology), followed by the ubiquity of electronic life. What this has meant, he says, is that "the enduring lifework available for most is the elaboration of one's relation to apparatuses" (59). But as we have seen, this specific ideology is not operative for these particular workers. Although they may be constantly using their cell phones, many have never used a computer, let alone owned one. Theirs is not a context where, as in the examples of freelance journalism or the start-up industry, work and leisure have become indistinguishable. Crary's

argument explicitly takes the West as its setting, as his subjects are named with a collective 'we'. Similar to Kracauer, what I find productive about Crary's analysis is therefore not its focus on the formation of a certain subject but rather of a certain experience.

Under Crary's formulation, sleep acts as "the only barrier, the only enduring 'natural condition' that capitalism cannot eliminate" (74). Sleep in this formulation is a fully social entity, a private state of vulnerability that is "crucially dependent on society in order to be sustained" (25). Crary admits that any such contract has long been broken (or perhaps never existed?), but he insists on sleep as a key threshold in the era of 24/7 time and its always-awake networks and markets. Sleep, here, is linked to visions of freedom. The difference between sleep and death, in turn, is that within the temporary absence of the sleeper from the world is contained what Crary beautifully describes as "a bond to the future, to a possibility of renewal and hence of freedom" (127). Crary's entire text is a masterful ode to sleep, that "nightly hope for the insensible state" that is "at the same time an anticipation of an awakening that could hold something unforeseen" (127). But here, I am writing about workers who never get enough sleep.

Crary writes of 24/7 time: "*It is a time that no longer passes*" (9, emphases added). Put differently, his argument could be reformulated as follows: late capitalism has created a group of people for whom time does not pass because *they are tired all the time.* The exhaustion that characterizes migrant workers' lives in Beirut is an experience that is borne on their bodies and named in their speech. Anna, a Nepalese worker and community activist who has been in Lebanon for 23 years, once posted the following status on Facebook account: "People see us happy on sunday but 6days how much pressure,humilation,rejection and hardship we have to face only we can know." What freedom is wrested in this weekly rhythm, underlaid by an entire

sociopolitical architecture of exclusion? For those who have the day off, Sundays, like Crary's sleep, serve as a barrier to the "suspension of living" (9) that is 24/7 time. One day a week, freelancers can even be happy. That is, if they have the energy.

The Present Exhausted

Freelance migrant workers in Beirut find themselves in a paradox: Lebanon is the place they spend all their time, yet time only meaningfully moves forward in the home that is not Lebanon. They are temporary residents, yet they know they may stay forever. They are at the supposed prime of their lives, in their 20s and 30s, having crossed borders to realize dreams and encounter a land of possibility, yet their bodies are being depleted by the labour that is the very condition of their aspirations. They have Sundays off, but all the Sundays in the year cannot produce the feeling of adequate rest or relaxation. The weeks of a freelancer have a particular quality to them, expanding into an endless present filled with the repetitions of manual labour, contracting into intensified moments of activity and relaxation. These experiences come together to produce a particular form of inhabiting time. If it were a tense, we might call it 'the present exhausted.' Like language, it has its own grammar, structuring that which is possible while always containing within it the possibility of its own undoing.

Lydia, who was once described to me as descending from Ethiopian queens, has been in Lebanon for 13 years. During this time she fled an abusive employer, met and then married a Lebanese Armenian man, gave birth to two children, and then divorced (or was divorced by) her husband. She now runs a small Ethiopian café in Dawra, the Beirut neighbourhood known as the center of

migrant worker activity. Most afternoons and all evenings she can be found in the café silently tending to her *argileh* (water-pipe), irritatedly bringing customers beers, and dancing alone to a mixture of Amharic and Arabic music, as if in a trance. Lydia has a tragic, slightly crazed quality to her, and after three months of visiting the café a minimum of four days a week, I was still uncertain if I had seen her smile. Once a week her teenage daughters would leave their father's custody to join her, tall, thick-haired, brown-skinned girls from whose mouths Lebanese Arabic emerged effortlessly, making their mother's pained pronunciation suddenly hard to listen to; their insistence that they needed to do homework and not drink beer yet another rejection of her maternal claim.

Marta, meanwhile, has been in Lebanon for 17 years and is still married to her Lebanese husband. She runs the Ethiopian restaurant a few steps away from Lydia's café. Her husband also owns two other Ethiopian restaurants and an African hair salon in the neighbourhood, and Lydia first sent me to the salon when I was looking to buy an Ethiopian spice mix for some friends (African hair salons are internally known as the place to buy spices). Marta's 9-year old daughter speaks Arabic better than Amharic but valiantly translates into the latter for the rare customers who only speak the former, as the two waitresses struggle with Arabic. Both Lydia and Marta have acquired Lebanese citizenship through their husbands, and will likely spend the rest of their lives in the country. And yet both seem to inhabit Lebanon with an intangible distance, as if it is a place they happen to have found themselves in yet remain outside of, watching their lives play out with a strange mixture of surprise and contempt. They are successful entrepreneurs who spend their time surrounded by women like them and men who bid their orders, but they do not share their children's native language.

I regularly encountered this sense of exclusion in my time spent with migrant workers, no matter their workplace, their legal status, or even their relative income security. It was a visceral feeling present in all my interactions and often named by setting up contrasts with the familiar: "Beirut is so small compared to Addis"; "Lebanon is dirty, its people are dirty; in our country we treat strangers like guests, we show them hospitality"; "In my country we have electricity and clean water"; "They are not like us"; "They do not treat us like them." Such sentiments were offered even by those who had dense social networks in Beirut and had mastered spoken Arabic and neighbourhood knowledge. In some sense it was most concentrated precisely amongst those who had been there the longest, as if in resigning to the likelihood of their permanence in Lebanon their status as strangers had sedimented into their very being. It was often they who refused Arabic with the greatest obstinance, they who did not leave the circumscribed urban triangle of home, work, and place of Sunday relaxation, and they who took every opportunity to describe with disgust Lebanon and its small-minded, black-hearted people. They expressed no desire to be included in that which was Lebanon — but nor was it an option.

"You know her?", Ayoub asked me after I had first met Lydia. "In her home country, people would bring her coffee. Over here she works all day and all night, she has to clean and take orders." The explanation was one of humiliation, for he had been asking whether I understood what the word (*zill*) meant. At this point we were sitting in Lydia's café surrounded by her friends, and yet, it was taken for granted that she lived in a world where no one would bring her coffee. This was not factually the case of course — over the next months both Ayoub and I brought Lydia a beer or coffee multiple times. But it was a description of the conditions of

life that were understood to be available to her. Stripped down to bare example, they were presented as the impossibility of taking a break: to have to take orders, and to be refused rest.

There is, it must be said, an alternate reason why migrant workers might not leave Lebanon: they do not actually want to go back. Everyone first left for a reason — broken hearts or determined ambition, family obligation or family escape — and the diversity of these stories reveals the flaw in analyses of migrant labour as a simple product of economic necessity. Many young women left rural worlds where their neighbours knew too much about them, rejoicing in the urban anonymity of a city where they had their first drink of alcohol, their first intimate relationship not subject to lies and secrecy, or their first taste of disposable income. Many others fled precarious conditions that have only worsened in the years since their departure and offer little in terms of future dreams. All have been changed by their time in Lebanon. And yet they continued to speak of their homeland with insistent desire. Nostalgic though its image may have become in sites of foreign cruelty, migrants continue to profess a conviction in eventual return; the only question no one can answer is *when.* The time of the present exhausted, then, is not a functionalist attempt to explain away the contradictions between professed desire and practical action. Instead, it asks us to think how overlapping experiences of structuring time come together to produce distinct temporalities of life in a working world of immense precarity.

One week in English class, my co-teacher and I had been discussing the difference between uses of the simple present and the present continuous. In one explanation, the two tenses can be differentiated by that which is generally or habitually true (the simple present) versus that which is happening *now* (the present continuous). “I study English”, the students repeated after

us in unison. “I work in Gemmayze. I live in Beirut. I drink tea every morning.” Then we asked them to use their imagination and suggest a hypothetical action, something they might find themselves doing. Acting it out, I started off with, “I am talking on the phone”; “I am going to my friend’s house.” They caught on in the following pattern: “I am going to Ethiopia”, “I am going to Sudan.” The class was almost entirely Sudanese and Ethiopian. I wanted to correct them, to clarify that we meant “I am going” as in something they might say everyday, en route somewhere, not a distant and unlikely plan. I wanted to explain that the latter would make more sense not as the gently-adjusted “I am going to Ethiopia soon” but as the far more ambiguous “I will go to Sudan”, but that this would be the going of futurity, and not the going of our contemporaneous moment. It did not seem worth clarifying, however. Future departures, however unlikely, made the most sense in the present tense.

3. The Language of Command

"Can you explain what the word 'subaltern' means?"
It refers to those who do not give orders; they only receive orders
—Gayatri Spivak

There is a joke told in Lebanon about how migrant domestic workers speak Arabic: entirely in the verbal form of the feminine direct command. Every Arabic word starts as a trilateral root, and the roots form verbs from which emerge nouns, and the only verbs a domestic worker ever hears are in the form of the feminine command. *Go! Come! Get up! Leave!* Much is lost in translation into English, a language where gender is neutralized and the infinitive mirrors the imperative, such that the authoritative violence of the latter can only be represented by a punctuation mark also used to express excitement. *Ru'hī! Ta'aī! [Q]umī! Fillī!* — the final elongated "*ī*" is the rhyming refrain of the Arabic female.[30] While the sound also marks the second person female singular pronoun (*intī*), simple present (*b'tfillī,* you [f, s] leave), and simple past tense (*fallaytī,* you [f, s] left), in the imperative tense it presents a phonetic disjointedness. The harsh syllabic ending of the male command (Leave! *Fill!*) is interrupted by that stretch of the *ī* that *she* necessitates: *Fill-lī!* But the domestic worker does not know these grammatical specificities. Tense, subject, and mood come together in the only verbal sound she ever hears in this new language, its guttural consonants oddly unfamiliar, its careful deciphering the key to her new life in a prison without a passport. For her, Arabic is first a language of command.

The subaltern, in Gayatri Spivak's known formulation, cannot speak. That is, she — "as subject of language not only in the grammatical sense but in the sense of having a voice that can access power" (Morris 2010, 4) — cannot be heard. Ethnographically, however, we might ask a

[30] It should be noted that "*ī*" is also the first person pronominal suffix, used to indicate my/mine/me.

related question: How is the subaltern spoken to? What does it mean for the domestic worker to be interpellated in the imperative form? Interpellation, as Judith Butler (1997) notes in a discussion drawing upon both Austin and Althusser, is not a descriptive but an inaugurative act: its purpose is to establish the subject in subjection, therefore its content cannot be judged as true or false. The same formulation is used by Roman Jakobson (1990) in describing the linguistic form of the command: the imperative differs from a declarative sentence, he notes, because it cannot be challenged by the question *is it true?* In parsing the social relation between the subaltern as subject, and the giving and receiving of orders as practice, I want to pay attention not only to the speech of the subaltern but also that which she encounters, or the *linguistic* constitution of her subject position. This is all the more stark when the language in which she is commanded is not even that which she speaks.

The female domestic worker arrives to Lebanon with her native language, and, on occasion, a varying amount of English. Some women receive brief Arabic training sessions prior to their departure but these tend to be limited to the vocabulary of domestic activity. From the moment she is taken aside by security officers at the airport through the course of her employment as a domestic worker expected to reside in the home of her Lebanese employer, she is addressed largely in Arabic, a language that excludes her.[31] This exclusion from language is how she comes to inhabit Arabic itself as well as the home, her workplace, and Lebanon, a country of and *for* Arabs. It is even how she is made to inhabit her own name. If the subject is

[31] It is certainly the case that elite Lebanese households often address their domestic workers in English and/or French. There is no clear data on what percentage of employers this might be, but the vast majority of the women I met served in homes where the primary language of address was Arabic. In addition, every single migrant worker I encountered had attained a minimum level of fluency in Arabic from their time in the country, and not English or French. Moreover, because Arabic is the language of the state in Lebanon, I maintain that it is Arabic that is the language of authority in this context.

constituted through language, then the subaltern is constituted by a mode of address that creates the conditions of impossibility for her speech. Here, this mode of address is marked by the authoritative deployment of a particular language. This is a structural relation that is present in *all* low-wage migrant labour that involves workers migrating to a country where they are not native speakers of its official language. In the Lebanese context, therefore, specific forms of Arabic address (and not just the international regime of precarious female labour and the Lebanese sponsorship system) make possible the social relation between the native giver of orders, and the foreign receiver of orders.

In this chapter I examine this process of constituting the subaltern subject through a foreign language. I argue that these forms of Arabic address have produced what Voloshinov (1986) calls a 'behavioural speech genre', a combination of verbal utterances and extraverbal complements that govern social patterns of behaviour and speech in a given context. I parse this particular genre — one organized around the patriarchal logic of denying a woman's agency — through a series of locations that follow the chronology of a domestic worker's arrival to Lebanon. I then consider the experience of those women who escape and continue to reside and work in Beirut as freelancers. For those who escape, a new kind of speech becomes available: not only do they find communal spaces in which to speak their native languages, but they are also able to assume the subject position of the Arabic speaker. For those who do not, the situation is grim. In contemporary Beirut, there is a new kind of language being formed, a bricolage that moves across linguistic registers of intimacy and power. It has produced the possibility of exchange among its diverse speakers, but it cannot alter the mode by which they receive address in a country where Arabic remains the language of state and citizen. It is this usage of Arabic,

what I designate 'the language of command', that has come to dominate both private and public forms of speech directed at (current and former) domestic workers. The chapter is followed by an interlude that reflects on the methodology of conducting fieldwork in Arabic with those for whom the language was first and foremost the language of their own subjugation.

The First Question

Upon arriving in Lebanon, domestic workers wait behind closed doors in a ground-floor section of Beirut International Airport cordoned off by General Security.[32] Those who arrive on evening flights spend the night on the cold floors in the company of women from various countries, with no free access to a bathroom until the following morning. Outdoors, Lebanese citizens (a mixture of individual families and recruitment agency representatives) gather in a small waiting area designated for picking up migrant workers at set times of day. The area is filled with the impatient boredom of those who have better things to do, shuffling through sheafs of paper that contain visa authorizations, work contracts, and photocopies of a stranger's passport. Eventually a security guard calls a foreign name and a woman rises. A shared language is not yet needed. Her name is repeated, and someone on the outside strains to match the sound with the spelling on a piece of paper. Muffled laughter can be heard as the guards too struggle with the syllables. The process happens quickly, many names and many rising, a single guard checking papers for the match before handing the women off to the designated Lebanese. Sitting in the public area observing the exchange, the first question one hears is, "Do you [f, s] speak Arabic?" (*b'tihkī*

[32] Most domestic workers arrive in Lebanon by plane, including those who are traveling from countries that have officially imposed bans on their nationals working in Lebanon (ILO 2016a). A significant number of male migrant workers and refugees have been smuggled across the land border with Syria, but I did not encounter any female domestic workers arriving by this route.

'arabī?) Many of the women lack the words to answer and shake their heads, silently following those who clutch their passports out of the airport. Small bags the size of carry-on luggage, stuffed with foreign snacks and anticipation, drag behind.

It is not that I was expecting "How was your flight?". But it seemed an odd choice. To ask the question in Arabic, after all, seems a tautology: in its legibility lies its answer. So why *this* question? The apparently neutrality of a question that any could ask of another belies the authority being claimed in this setting. Even if the woman understands, whether due to attending pre-departure training sessions or other prior exposure to Arabic, here it is as if a declaration is being made. The Lebanese citizen states, in a fluent and casually-pronounced new language, her authority to this place, and it does not require Arabic comprehension for the domestic worker to understand. The sentence may be disguised as a question — in its nature a reciprocal and intersubjective exchange — but it is an utterance to which the addressee literally cannot respond. Voloshinov (1986) reminds us that language should be understood neither as a set of isolated individual utterances nor as an abstract system of linguistic forms, but as a *social event.* The word, he says, is the product of reciprocal relationships. It is a "bridge thrown" between the speaker and the listener. But the foundational linguistic encounter of the newly arrived domestic worker is one that eliminates the possibility of reciprocity. Instead, the metaphorical bridge thrown institutes a structural discrepancy between the two parties of the address. It is a relation of exclusion that sets the stage to later morph into a relation of command.

Rose, a domestic worker from Cameroon, recalled her first memory of Beirut:

> When she [the representative of a recruitment agency] arrived [at the airport], they called my name. I went out. She immediately said: "*la la la la la la la!*" What was that? I did not know. I did not understand the local language back then.[33]

La, the Arabic "No", the first prohibition. In stringed repetition it appears oddly as if a song, a child playing with his tongue or sticking it out in order to tease, annoy, or mute whoever is speaking. It is first heard as gibberish. Rose has no recollection of what the woman was responding to in her apparent objections, nor does she clarify this in the remainder of her recorded testimony. Her primary memory of the time is illegibility. "When we arrived [to the agency office]", Rose continued, "I asked him [the driver] if I could make a phone call. He replied to me in Arabic." No call ensued. A few moments later:

> A woman came in, and all the girls stood up. I did not understand. She turned around to look at me, then asked me why I did not stand up with the others. "But who are you?" I asked [in French]. She was the secretary of the agency. "Ok, nice to meet you!" I replied, "I did not know I had to stand up every time you came in" (Sayegh & Rose 2016).

In the early days, the domestic worker can neither hear nor be heard. The language of her subjection appears to her as a string of sounds, later recalled as the failure of communicative speech. A question is asked (by her). Instead of an answer, she gets Arabic. A command is given (to her). Instead of obeying, she asks questions. In Rose's case we assume, because it is Lebanon, that someone is able to respond in her native French. But her own status as foreign domestic worker is not yet legible to her. She expects to be addressed as the subject she knows herself to be, and she remains in possession of both her language and her name.

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[33] This excerpt is from an interview conducted with Ghiwa Sayegh and translated from the French original. Both the original and the translated transcripts appear online in the 2016 issue of Kohl Journal.

New Name, No Name

"Being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language", writes Butler (1997, 14). In Lebanon, domestic workers whose names are disagreeable to their Lebanese employers are sometimes made to take on Arabic names. The new names might match the initial consonant of the woman's original name, like Aliya in place of Atsenash, as if a mnemonic device of generosity in case she forgets she is no longer to be addressed as herself. Many are abbreviations: Bezawit into Beza, Malini into Mala. Some women pick the name, choosing one common to their native region but more palatable to Arab ears, like Salayish who chose Sara, or one easier to pronounce, like Betesida who went with Betty. Other times they are assigned, like with Ushani, who I knew only as Tania for over a year, or Nassissie, who I knew as Rita the first two months, until in both instances someone chastised me for using the incorrect name. *You will no longer be your name*, these women were welcomed in their first week of work. *You will receive orders under a new sign*. It appears the ultimate denial of recognition. However, this practice of Lebanese employers insisting upon using a female Arabic name to address domestic workers in the second person also has a corollary in the third person. Originating in the history of Sri Lankan women as the first domestic workers to arrive in Lebanon, today all domestic workers may be referred to in the singular as *Sri Lankiyye*, or 'female Sri Lankan.' The descriptor has attained the status of a generic term that signifies 'non-Arab maid.' In doing so it strips the Arabic adjective from its primary content (the nation) while retaining its gendered markers of cultural, racial, and geographic distance, further inscribing them with the derogatory designation of domestic servant. As the popular joke goes, "So, where is your *Sri Lankiyye* from?"

The thing about a proper name, Butler reminds us, is that we are dependent on another for the very "designation that is supposed to confer singularity" (1997, 64). But the address of naming first assumes that one has already been named, and, therefore, can be named again. "In this sense, the vulnerability to being named constitutes a constant condition of the speaking subject" (66). Butler describes this linguistic vulnerability towards one another as a primary form of social relations. In Butler's reading of Althusser's model of interpellation, the subject need not be subordinate to an authoritative voice nor necessarily yield to its call. Interpellation requires neither dyadic reciprocity nor accuracy; it can be efficacious in absence, as in reference to a third person, and in mistake, as in intentional misnaming. In such a context, she argues, "one is still constituted by discourse, but at a distance from oneself" (73).

For Butler, hate speech partakes in the general conditions of naming as exemplified in the proper name, conferring specificity while gaining its force from iterability. The Cameroonian domestic worker does not respond to *Sri Lankiyye.* In fact, the term is not even used to address her, only to refer to her. She is not subordinate to its voice and its naming is literally mistaken: it describes a woman who is not from Sri Lanka as Sri Lankan. But as Voloshinov (1986) notes, rarely do native speakers of a language feel pressure to conform to dictionary definitions. This is why words are social phenomena. As Butler elaborates via a close reading of Foucault, the many kinds of racist speech that circulate certainly reconfigure the limits of public discourse. In the Lebanese context, however, the injurious effects of *Sri Lankiyye* are not primarily felt by domestic workers because the same women are much more forcefully interpellated in direct address. It is here that the two practices of naming, that which replaces Atsenash with Aliya and that of the racist slur *Sri Lankiyye*, differ in what Austin would call their perlocutionary effect.

Changing a domestic worker's proper name — that designation assumed to stay stable alongside other kinds of naming — is the forced replacement of one linguistic-cultural register with another. The new name precipitates the surrender that will be demanded of her to the new language of power (and by extension, all those who are native to it).

At the airport, the domestic worker is addressed as she who does not speak the local language. The state, however, must call her by her foreign name in accordance with the strictures of legality and security that govern migrant labour. Before she can walk into Lebanese public space she must be accurately identified, authorized, and documented. Only after she has been handed over to the authority of the sponsor on whom she is legally and financially dependent can she then be dispossessed of her name. In this forced re-naming, she is (again) produced as subaltern. If the subaltern is she who can only receive and not give orders, here it is she who cannot even be commanded by her own name, and yet must obey. Newly anointed, the domestic worker is told how to work, how to dress, how to address, and how to receive an address (recall, for example, the scenes as depicted in Ousmane Sembène's film *Black Girl*). She begins to hear the new name as *hers* the way the black teenager might learn to recognize himself in the suspicion of the policeman; what Butler describes as interpellation at a distance from oneself. But this act of (mis)naming will always be unstable. If the one named in an address is not in fact described by it, notes Butler, then the subject surely exceeds the power of this naming. In this context, it has a curious effect. It produces the proper name as itself an unstable category.

My first experience with 'Adliyye Detention Center was an attempt to go visit an undocumented Ethiopian woman named Betty. Despite having known her for months, it was only then that I learned that Betty was not her actual name. Moreover, none of her colleagues,

many of whom were Ethiopian and had been working with her for two years, had any idea what her legal name was. To visit the detention center we would need her name as written on a passport she herself did not possess. Betty had changed her name so long ago that even after she had escaped and started freelancing, she kept the name that had come to mark her existence in Lebanon. Only a small group of confidantes knew her earlier name. These friends had no trouble referring to Betty by both names, and as I later witnessed with many others, women like Betty effortlessly responded to multiple designations. Nor were all such name changes done by force.

As is common among immigrants the world over, many men and women adopted nicknames, middle names, or abbreviated versions of their official names for the sake of ease in navigating a new linguistic environment. Undocumented migrant workers who were deported had also learned to circumvent the subsequent ban on re-entry by legally changing their names, acquiring new passports, and returning to Lebanon. Women who escaped domestic confinement also often changed their name to make it harder for them to be identified by former sponsors or police. So frequent was this practice of name-changing that I learned of it only in passing, a previous name mentioned as casually as an old haircut. It was common for women to be referred to by up to three different names depending on who was speaking, seemingly to little confusion beyond my own. Some women joked that the complicated naming practices of the undocumented helped them outsmart state surveillance, but all shrugged off my inquiries about the difficulty of recognition. The slipperiness of their names was never articulated as a loss of self.

"The more one seeks oneself in language, the more one loses oneself precisely where one is sought" (1997, 66), says Butler. As she insists, identity cannot be found in accumulating all the names one has ever been called. Nonetheless, if naming derives its weight from convention and

historicity, we do not expect individuals to respond to multiple proper names. These women, all freelancers (ie. escapees), recognized the constitutive effects of the employer's address and managed to preserve a self other than she who is forcibly re-named. This is why it was considered unremarkable to possess more than one name: the name had been separated from the person. As if a pseudonym, being forced to take on an Arabic self-designation appears to facilitate this process. As noted, not all workers are subject to forcible renaming. But migrant women being made to take on Arabic names is only one example of a larger subjugation to the supremacy of Arabic power that results from non-Arab migrant labour living in an Arab country where they are denied full recognition. It is not only required that a domestic worker be prepared to work. It is also required that she work *in Arabic*.

How to Learn Arabic Without Being Taught

"How did you learn Arabic?", I asked my interlocutors. Television, said Rita — the dubbed Turkish soaps that were always on in the house. "Not like you. They didn't teach me (*ma 'allamu-nī*)." At the time, the grammatical correctness of the sentence impressed me. First, 'to teach': the second (intensive or causative) form of the verb 'to know' (Form I *'alama*; Form II *'all-lama*). Then, 'they taught', conjugated in the third-person plural past, followed by the addition of the appropriate negative particle. Finally, the object of the verb attached as pronominal suffix — like knowing when to say 'me' instead of 'I.' It was a careful training of the ear and tongue, unaware of its own beauty. Rita was right, of course. No one ever teaches a domestic worker Arabic. It is remarkable that these women learn what is reputed to be one of the most complex of global languages through some mixture of desperation and determination. And

to some degree or another, all domestic workers working in the region do develop some familiarity with the language. What becomes of the domestic worker once she too can speak and hear in Arabic?

As described in the Introduction, domestic workers are paid along a hierarchy that is partially attributed to cost but centers around racialized associations, which include assumptions about language skill. In conversations with interlocutors who were non-Arab migrant workers, Arab workers/refugees, and middle-class Lebanese citizens, certain assumptions surfaced constantly. The Filipinas (most expensive to employ and highest paid) were assumed to rely on English to communicate, believed to be educated but reputed to be very weak speakers of Arabic. The Sri Lankans, who are paid reasonably only because they are the oldest community of domestic workers in the country (Moukarbel 2009), were generally mocked for their dismal Arabic skills (and overall lack of beauty, if not intelligence) even after having lived in the country for decades. The similarly average-paid Ethiopian women, the newest and fastest-growing group of non-Arab workers in the country (ILO 2016a), were described as excelling at Arabic and having a feisty and talented reputation in the language, one also tinged with seduction and immorality. As for the Bangladeshis, they are the lowest-paid and cheapest-acquired (ILO 2016b), said to be terrible at English and Arabic both, but they did the harshest work for the least money and without complaint, I was told, so it appeared communication could be done without.

The domestic worker is not expected to remain mute. After all, orders need to be received and carried out. But from the outset, the milieu into which she enters is one that links her treatment and socioeconomic position to her assumed relationship to the Arabic language. Her linguistic capacity is therefore circumscribed by the discourse of the domestic service industry.

This is why the Arabic speech of the domestic worker can circulate as an object of ridicule; hers are not the mistakes of the white foreigners, the Kurds, or the Armenians, minorities also known to struggle with the language. Rather, hers are the dimwitted repetition of the sounds of her own subjection. She repeats the feminine command, the joke goes, as the very action of the verb itself. In doing so she can only inhabit the grammatical subject position of her own servitude. The entire system of the root-based Arabic language traps her in this mimicry of herself as subaltern. But can Arabic truly be that which interpellates the subject as subaltern if she comes to inhabit its forms and even excel in its articulation? The evidence of this can be found only if we insist, with Voloshinov, on the social nature of the verbal sign.

Beza was one of two Ethiopian women I met in Beirut from whom I constantly learned new Lebanese colloquialisms. I myself was not fully aware of this until a new Lebanese acquaintance laughed disparagingly and remarked, “You speak Arabic the way the Ethiopians do.” The foreigner’s utterance carries multiple identifying traits for Arabs, for whom even the slightest shifts in pronunciation can index dense local histories of origin and experience, particularly in a country as marked by internecine violence as Lebanon. But the accent of one’s own speech is only a mark of difference, not of subject position. I had studied Arabic in schools, and my use of the language betrayed primarily my status as non-native. But Beza? Prior to coming to Lebanon she had obtained an English-language diploma in Computers from a school in Addis Ababa. Now, she insisted she had forgotten all her English over the course of her seven years in Lebanon. It had been replaced by a lilting, melodious Arabic that had even come to enter her Amharic speech. “How did you learn?”, I finally asked, after months of wondering. “Insults”, came her single-word reply.

Like *no,* the first prohibition, and commands, the first verbs, insults are the first nouns (after the new name) of a domestic worker's Arabic. For Butler, injury carries with it the paradox that language can exceed its own purposes, hence her interest in the political possibility of "reworking the speech act" (1997, 86). To be called a name that one does not understand *as a name* would appear to be a different matter. Legal scholar Khaled Beydoun (2006) recalls his embarrassment at visiting his Lebanese grandmother and seeing his uncle summon two domestic workers who did not understand Arabic, but were ordered with a set of aggressive hand gestures and raised voices. Long before she understands its meaning, it is the accompanying cues — the sounds of disdain, the threat of violence, the comportment of body and face — that convey to the domestic worker the mode of such an address. As Butler notes, the address both sustains and threatens the body. What then makes possible its resignification or response?

Beza's earliest memory of Arabic is hearing the word "donkey" (*himar*). It is a popular insult, and one her employer used to refer to her so repeatedly that it has achieved the status of her very first unit of Arabic vocabulary. Seven years later, however, she recalled it as "red" (*ahmar*).

> There were three other Ethiopian women (*habashiyyat*) in our building, one on the second floor and one on the fifth floor. We used to see each other and gather and ask each other questions. I asked, what does *ahmar* mean? They told me it meant donkey. They learnt the same way, from friends (*as-hab*), girls like us.

In this phonetic slippage, the misspelling of a sound, it would seem that even injurious speech can be disarmed. By repeating it as the phonetically-similar "red", Beza strips the insult from its cruel efficacy while retaining its immediate recognition as "donkey." Her Arabic will not mimic her own denigration. But Beza, by the time she told this story, had long fled the life of the

domestic worker. The woman who speaks the Arabic of her own agency, like she who comes to inhabit multiple names, is she who survives the scene of the subaltern.

The House as Prison

Domestic workers refer to the domicile simply as "inside" (*juwwa*). "When I was inside", began every recollection of a female freelancer formerly confined, whose current freedom was also named in its paired opposite. Which is to say, being "outside" (*barra*) might have its own risks, but there is a reason everyone runs away. As long as she stays inside, the domestic worker is trapped in the grip of Arabic's command. The house, felt as her prison, is where she is stripped first of passport and then of speech, often subject to conditions of extreme deprivation and exploitation. The domestic worker inside the house is given two options: work, or die. In fact, she comes to learn, her options are slightly different versions of this choice: escape, or suicide.

As outlined earlier, a minimum of a quarter of all Lebanese families employ a full-time live-in foreign domestic worker. The women may be asked to do anything and everything by their Lebanese employer (usually a female) from cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly, to packing a teenager's purse with lipstick and sanitary napkins for a night out, moving furniture that far outweighs them, washing multiple cars and entire summer villas, or massaging naked male employers who violate with impunity. Those who manage to flee or are found abandoned report physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse of a quality so staggering, it is difficult to imagine what the actual scale of abuse might be. In 1997, a Sri Lankan woman reported that when her employers would leave the house, they would lock the door, lock the fridge, and then tie her hands until their return (Abu-Habib, 1998). Two decades later, I learnt of

a 15 year-old Bangladeshi girl who described a year's worth of torture by employers who had electrocuted her, scalded her with a hot iron, and beat her with both fists and a steel hammer while she worked confined in their home from the age of 14, until the patriarch's brother decided it was time to call a local domestic violence hotline.

Less than 50% of Lebanese employers give the domestic worker her legally-entitled day of rest each week. Of these, a further half forbid her from leaving the house alone on this day. One out of five employers locks the worker inside the house *at all times*. Countless stories exist of domestic workers being trapped in homes for years until they seize the opportunity to escape, throw a letter off a balcony to a passerby, or are otherwise discovered by sympathetic neighbours or extended family. Over 93% of employers confiscate the worker's passport upon her arrival. 40% refuse to pay the woman's salary in full at the end of every month, instead paying irregularly, upon request, upon termination of the contract, or not at all. Women frequently report being forced to work 10, 12, even 18 hours a day, with few breaks, for years on end. One-third of employers are said to beat their domestic workers. All the above practices are illegal. With no required minimum wage for domestic workers, more than 75% of employers pay less than $300/ month. The darker-skinned a woman is, the less she can expect to earn. Women are regularly refused a room of their own and relegated to sections of the kitchen, balcony, or even the floor beneath the bed of the 'Madame', a truly exquisite practice of intimate confinement. Regardless of where she sleeps, a domestic worker can be woken at any hour in some form of arbitrary or urgent command. She is legally allowed to change her sponsor (known as *tanazul*, or 'relinquishment') a maximum of twice, and even then only after the expensive and arduous process of first finding a new sponsor and then obtaining consent and legal paperwork from both.

All such changes remain further subject to the approval of government authorities, something often denied. The comparison to slavery quickly suggests itself. (Atiyah 2005; Beydoun 2006; HRW 2008; ILO 2015b, 2016a, 2016b; Insan 2014; KAFA 2014; Tayah 2012).

"You have no idea what it's like inside", Aysha would tell me. Once, I asked about the recurrent phenomenon of the non-payment of wages. How did they get away with it?

> It's just, when you live in a house, you feel yourself— as if you are in a very strange place, you are very scared. The time you live outside, it's not the same thing. We've seen the outside, now there is no fear, you do not fear anything at all. But the ones who are still inside, they fear a lot, they do not know the country well, and they [ie. the sponsors] tell them things that are not good, like if you leave, the police will capture you and you will go to jail — so people fear.

The opposition between inside/outside dominates her description even though we were ourselves indoors during the conversation. The workplace of the domestic worker, Aysha states, is entirely synonymous with confinement, such that every other place is marked by the expansiveness of the outside. Aysha had long fled the home where she worked her first four years in Lebanon. In addressing me she refers to the subject of domestic work in the second person not in order to invoke my familiarity with the situation but as an ethical demand. The 'you' is asked to imagine and to empathize. But it is also an attempt to convince. I am being taught. Due to limits of access, I only knew women like Aysha who lived outside, and encountered them as women of great strength and perseverance. Yet Aysha insists that the same women were once shrunken versions of themselves, incapacitated by fear and unable to differentiate between truth and lies. They were different kinds of beings inside, beings governed by the closed walls of strangeness and fear. *It is not the same thing.*

As mentioned in Chapter One, in 2008 it was reported that one domestic worker a week dies in Lebanon (HRW 2008) and this number may have since doubled (Su 2017). The majority

of deaths occur by women hanging themselves inside the home that is their place of work and residence, or by jumping off the balcony (the latter category is at times unclear whether suicide or murder). That women who have traveled great distances and incurred vast debts in order to work in a foreign country are tying rope around their necks and jumping floors in order to shatter their bodies on asphalt is an indication of what the Lebanese domestic space has become for these workers. It is the condition of possibility for their presence in Lebanon, and yet also that which forecloses life. At a 2014 May Day march demanding rights for migrant workers, former domestic workers held up a placard that read (in English) "We came here to work, not to die!". Addressing the joint entity of state and Lebanese public, the women appeared to speak the language of the domestic service industry, acquiescing to the synonymity of work and life. Yet the fact that the opposite of employment, and the referent of death, was not workplace accidents but workplace *suicides* produced a parallel structure of responsibility between both events. Suicide was no longer self-death, it was murder.

It is perhaps uncoincidental that Spivak (1988) famously turns to suicide in her theorizing of the subaltern — both that of *sati*, widow-suicide, and that of Bhubaneswari, the young woman who hung herself after (or so it seemed) she was unable to carry out a political assassination tasked to her as part of the Indian independence struggle. Rajan (2010) cautions us that death is not constitutive of this subject, nor is suicide the undoing of subalternity. Rather, just as Spivak demands that we attend to the audibility of speech — for the subaltern cannot insist, "I am subaltern!" — so Bhubaneswari's suicide is offered as a text to be read. But hers is an agency "that consists in *resisting misreading*" (Morris 2010, 6). "Suicide is constitutively indecipherable… no clear will is operative but only its dubious substitutes, desperation,

imitation, or indoctrination" (Rajan 2010, 125). Here I want to offer a reading of the domestic worker's suicide in relation not to the failure of her speech, but the denial of her linguistic personhood in the language with which she is spoken to.

I am not suggesting that the domestic worker kills herself because she cannot speak Arabic. As noted above, many in fact do come to learn the language. But even those who do are made to inhabit it just as they are locked inside the Lebanese home: with the willful eradication of their agency. Beaten, raped, accused, ignored, demeaned, trapped, and then denied even the wages that are supposed to absolve all such behaviour according to the abstracted logic of capitalist exchange, the women are displaced from their native languages and then made to receive Arabic as a string of commands, threats, and insults. Many may acquire the necessary vocabulary to speak the subject "I", but it is uncertain if they will be heard. I did not encounter any stories of a domestic worker who convinced the Madame to give the worker back her passport, increase her wages, or better her treatment through dialogue. Consider the words of one dissatisfied employer, an utterance that cannot even fathom its human object as part of its address: "Maybe I have to send her [back] to Ethiopia, or else, if she wants to stay here, I will throw her out of the window" (Yeon-Lee 2009, 46). These words were spoken casually to one of the other domestic workers in the home, a Filipina woman who had attained seniority over the new Ethiopian employee. In the absence of records that document the employers' direct addresses, we are left with the traces of the employees' recollections (*"No!"*; *"Donkey!"*) and the silences of their corpses. Domestic workers' suicides are embedded within the extreme psychic consequences of making language the instrument of their own servitude. Fortunately, there is another option, and it is far more common: running away.

Runaway Bricolage

Every former domestic worker has her escape story. Most include carefully hatched plans with the assistance of friends, allies, or men scheming for their own profit. Some involve jumping out of windows, secretly duplicating keys, or nighttime dashes, running without looking back under the cover of municipal electricity cuts as if a cinematic scene of suspense. All involve a combination of gentle coaxing, firm insistence, and serious chutzpah. Like Yvette, who asked for one night of respite from sleeping in her usual spot of the floor beneath the Madame's bed in order to spend the night reciting prayers for her sick mother. Like Lemlem, who pretended to be madly in love with a Lebanese man and was begrudged permission to leave by softened Arab hearts, or Chemain, who, the morning after being sexually solicited by the male of the household, simply told the Madame she was walking out the door and would not be stopped. Hundreds go quietly to church with a small handbag and never return.

Selam worked in the mountains, 17-hour days where she was made to cook and clean two massive villas under the demands of a man she saw only as long as it took to bark orders. A year later, still lacking basic Arabic comprehension, she was taken to government offices in Beirut in order to renew her work permit. A fellow Ethiopian caught her eye, and stories were exchanged. "Just leave", Selam was told. "But how?" Selam knew no one in the city, nor spoke its language. The woman insisted, giving her money for a taxi and a piece of paper on which she scrawled directions (in Amharic) and a phone number. "Wait for me here." And so Selam did. When Selam's employer emerged from closed doors to find his maid had wandered off, his rage took armed security to contain. "He went mad (*Jann*)", Selam later recalled with delight. And from

these many moments of flight, lacking possessions, certainty, and legal paperwork of any kind, the women encounter Beirut anew.

There are no clear estimates on how many freelancers exist in Lebanon, but as noted in Chapter Two, African and Asian women fill the flea markets, vegetable bazaars, and discount clothing stores of the capital. They work in every variety of commercial establishment and can be hired for all residential needs. Lebanon is a country flush with regional wealth, and there are plenty of under-compensated, over-exploited work opportunities on offer. Women who work multiple jobs can make up to ten times the amount they are paid as domestic workers, in addition to gaining freedom of mobility, association, and a sudden control over their own lives. But the risks are high. Even those with legal paperwork (ie. sponsors who allow them to work outside the house) can be arrested, detained, and deported simply for being found in a different neighbourhood than the home of their sponsor. Landlords exploit these vulnerabilities in charging exorbitant rent, implementing strict rules about visitation or apartment usage, and neglecting building maintenance all while threatening to report the women to state authorities. Raids are regularly conducted due to tips or complaints from neighbours. The undocumented avoid neighbourhoods known for police presence, army checkpoints, or racist occupants. Many spend years on the Mediterranean coast without ever seeing the sea. And as soon as they gain this precarious freedom, the women are faced with a world they must navigate in Arabic.

Beirut has a glamorous reputation as an Arab city fully fluent in Anglophone and Francophone culture. But for anyone other than an ensconced elite, access to employment, municipal services, and daily tasks all require a degree of competence in Arabic. It is near impossible to independently negotiate the price of an apartment or acquire a new gas canister for

the stove without the language. Moreover, women marked by classed and racialized bodies must be constantly aware of threats to their person, and often rely on charm, wit, sympathy, flirtation, or compromise to navigate a range of situations. This is done almost exclusively in Arabic. As a result, a domestic worker must enter the position of the independent Arabic speaker (that is, she who initiates situationally-determined speech and not simply she who receives) as soon as she flees the prison of the home. Just as it is only on the outside that she can act out of choice and not command, it is only there that the language can then be made her own, its sounds rolled around in the accent that marks her origin, its sentences beginning with "I" or ending with "mine." The city, she realizes, is full of others like her, and they can speak to one another. While walking around on busy streets, a pedestrian in Beirut might see a Bangladeshi, a Nepalese, or a Ghanaian woman chatting together in Arabic. In restaurant kitchens, Ethiopians and Syrians exchange banter and make grocery orders with this shared vocabulary. In the seedy bars and nightclubs that cater to the city's underclass, Arabic is the language of sleaziness and intoxication. It is how migrant women would order a beer from a Lebanese bartender, request a dance with a young Nigerian, or fall in love with a Kurdish customer at a café.

The freelancer suddenly finds herself doubly articulate. One evening, I sat in an Ethiopian-run café where groups of Ethiopian women accompanied by Syrian men had gathered to drink beer and smoke *argileh*. A couple sat in front of us, and the man showered the woman with Arabic compliments and declarations of love. The electricity went out, and he leaned in for a kiss. She laughed and said something in Amharic. A friend quietly translated in my ear, grinning. "You have no clue— I am totally in love with someone else. You're just good to pass the time here." The woman addressed no one in particular, but under the cover of darkness she

brought a fleeting public into being. For Warner (2005), a public is that modern discursive arena constituted by impersonal address, such as that of a text. Its pair, the counterpublic, is such a space as formed in conflict with dominant norms and in order to posit alternate deliberations. The café itself is one of many physical spaces in Beirut unmarked from the outside and constantly under police threat due to a predominantly undocumented clientele. Flipping between Arabic flirtation and Amharic confession, the woman who spoke does not presume this to be a social space of mutual intelligibility or deliberation. She is still in Beirut, after all. But she demands recognition in the act of speech. Rather than speaking in the voice of the universal subject or the public participant, she claims a power *over* language; that is, the power to delineate between those who will and will not understand. It is an audacious move. But she has fled her Lebanese captors and made a bid for her own freedom. Her getaway is her initiation into a new community, one not only marked but produced by its speaking possibilities.

The word, says Voloshinov, is the most sensitive index of social change. Thus language is not simply handed down but is a "continuous process of becoming" (1986, 81). The Arabic spoken in the non-Arab spaces of Beirut is its greatest indicator of this creative power, something I never once encountered in public conversations about the new [Arab] generation's failure to master Arabic, or the modern utility of a scripturally-inherited language. But Arabic itself cannot remain a stable player in this redistribution of power. It is not enough to note that the language first enables the subaltern to articulate (or withhold articulation), and then enables strangers to communicate. As domestic workers flee Lebanese households and enter the informal labour market, that which they inhabit *as language* also undergoes a transformation.

When a group of freelancers gathers together at someone's home and converse in Amharic, French, Tagalog, or another native language, Arabic seeps in. To begin with, colloquial Lebanese Arabic is full of rhetorical flourishes. Strangers liberally sprinkle sentences with 'darlings' and 'beloveds', and exchanges are full of expressions like *'ala rasī!'* or *'tu(q)bur-nī!'* (literally 'on my head!' and 'you bury me!', ie. 'anything for you!'). By far the most common term of endearment adopted by all non-native speakers who spend time in Lebanon is thus *habībī* (literally, 'my love'). But other phrases are also common among former domestic workers, particularly ones that are likely some of the first phrases the women learned to recognize. These range from exclamations mostly used for dramatic effect, like *iskutī!* (shut up!) or *'ayb! 'ayb 'alaykī!* (shame! shame on you!), to simple directives like *'amil-lī (q)ahwe* (make me coffee) or *khallī-a heik* (leave it aside). When I first sat in these spaces as the sole outsider, the words seemed to meld into the primary language being spoken so seamlessly that I was not sure if I was recognizing Arabic, or simply misrecognizing sounds. I soon realized the women were doing what is known as code-switching. Among Arabs, the Lebanese are notorious for sentences that effortlessly switch between Arabic, French, and English. The habit sticks. Not a pidgin but a bricolage, migrant workers across the country (and surely the region) have reconfigured their own patterns of speech and in doing so, expanded both the assumed usages of the Arabic language and the composition of its speakers. This is the shadowy outline of a counterpublic coming into being through an insistence on survival, and therefore, efficacious speech. It is, in Warner's formulation, a counterpublic characterized by shared discourse and the attendant recognition of each other as part of a collectivity. The domestic worker who gains her mobility therefore also gains language, and a linguistic public, anew. But as long as she is in

Lebanon she also remains the target of both a private and public address that is configured around ordering her obedience to its dictates.

The Love Ban

In September 2014, General Security issued a decree (*ta'mīm*) banning domestic workers from intimacy. Circular No. 1778 demanded that any Lebanese employer wishing to sponsor a worker (or transfer the permit of one previously sponsored) must notarize a pledge verifying that:

> There is no (*la yujad*) relationship of marriage or attachment of any kind (*ayyu-'alaqat-zawaj aw irtibat min ayyi-naw'a kan*) that links (*turbat*) the worker (m/f), Arab [ie. non-Lebanese Arab] or foreign (العامل(ة) العربي او الاجنبي), to any Arab or foreign person *(bi ayyi-shakhs 'arabī aw ajnabī)* located on Lebanese soil… In the event it is later found that a relationship of marriage exists or has occurred after the entry of the worker (m/f), [the worker] must be referred to General Security and a ticket secured for his/her deportation to his/her country (The Legal Agenda 2015a).

A progressive legal organization soon appealed to the Ministry of Justice and later succeeded in acquiring the support of the Notary Syndicate to refuse to comply with the decree. General Security cannot issue legally binding orders, but (as discussed earlier) their immense power as head of the security apparatus that oversees all foreigners in Lebanon means the agency regularly acts above the law with little public recourse. In a vocal campaign against the decree, local media and legal activists designated it "The Slavery Circular" *(Ta'mīm al-isti'bad)* or "The Love Ban" (*Ta'mīm mana' al-hubb*).[34]

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[34] In the summer of 2015, Legal Agenda contacted over 35 notaries across the country to inquire after compliance with the decree. They found that all except 3 adhered to it regardless of whether they approved of its content. In response, Legal Agenda launched a campaign pointing out that any decree that so 'violates public order' is technically prohibited by law, yet both the Ministry of Justice and the notary publics had simply acquiesced to General Security's demand. Legal Agenda presented the decree as one more example of how the law was being transformed into a tool of the country's powerful security apparatus. It also pointed out how the decree enjoins employers to become involved in surveilling domestic workers' intimate lives, as well as its connection to previously denounced edicts that forbade migrant workers from bringing or having children in Lebanon. As part of the campaign, Legal Agenda presented a letter to the Ministry of Justice to demand the abolition of Circular No.1778 due to its violation of multiple international conventions to which Lebanon is a signatory. A month later, the Council of Public Notaries joined the campaign against the decree. In July 2015, the Ministry of Justice issued a memo revoking the decree and the campaign was declared a success (Legal Agenda 2015b).

The short text of the pledge deserves a close reading. In its initial framing, it leaves no doubt over who can speak: it is not a demand made of the worker herself, but rather of the employer, who is the only full subject of state recognition. Although the actual text of the pledge is careful to leave the gender of the worker undefined, the demographics of the migrant labour market as well as the social circumstances (namely the widespread coupling, as I discuss in Chapter Four, of non-Arab female migrants with Arab males) leave no question that its target is the domestic worker. Examples of pledges used by notaries and obtained by Legal Agenda all pertained to the sponsorship of female domestic workers, and used the appropriately gendered word (‘*amila*) throughout the text. And while the decree technically includes non-Lebanese Arab workers under its demand, because it specifies the *kafala* system under which neither Syrian nor Palestinian populations fall, in practice its target remains the female foreigner.

The prohibition also does not take the form of proscribed actions. It is not articulated as a set of forbidden verbs, such as ‘She will refrain from having sex, date, marry, live with, have children with’, etc. Rather, it is formulated in terms of being: there is no; there does not exist (*la yujad*) — that which precedes the possibility for action. It is important to note that this phrasing employs the passive form of the verb: *la yujad* could literally be translated as, ‘there is not to be found.’[35] Whereas the English language finds the passive form of the verb quite unwieldy (consider ‘the cleaning was done by the worker’ vs. ‘the worker cleaned’), in Arabic it is more common for sentences to begin with the passive form. The passive is used when it is already obvious who the subject is, for example, or when the action itself matters, but its performer does not. But the grammatical essence of the passive form in any language is that *the action of the*

[35] Thank you to Seemi Ghazi, who first taught me the grammar, and then again showed me this point.

verb can be named without grammatical reference to the subject. In opting for the passive, the force of this sentence thus rests entirely on a negation, rather than any referent to an active human subject: "There is no relationship…". Before even the punishment can be mentioned, the possibility of the relationship's existence must be denied. The relationship itself functions here only as a substitute subject, one whose irrelevance to the verb of *being* is evidenced in the fact that, although 'relationship' (*alaqa*) is gendered as feminine and subject-verb gender agreement is usually required, here the passive verb 'there is no' retains its masculine pronouncement (*yujad* not *tujad*). All the emphasis of the sentence therefore lies in the single clause of a passive (subject-less) negation. Meanwhile, the domestic worker herself is invoked through an absence ('no relationship') that we know to be the object of a prohibition. This prohibition does not even take the form of a negative *command*, for to do so would be to designate her a verbal subject.

Twice in the text of the pledge, the Arabic root *r-b-t* is used in different forms. It is a root that signifies connection and attachment, both in the literal sense such as the tying of a knot and in the abstract. There will be no relationship of connectedness (*irtibat*) that has attached (*turbat*) the female worker to another man — note, again, the use of first a noun and then the passive tense in order to avoid naming the domestic worker as verbal subject. Meanwhile the Lebanese man is exempted from the prohibition, because even the state cannot tell its male citizens how to expend their desire. The male citizen, in a country where only he can pass on citizenship, is the ultimate arbiter of his own attachments, and the only full subject of individual sovereignty. The pledge then goes on to clarify the boundaries of the absence of the woman's desire and its accessories: anyone present, in the literal sense of standing upon (*muqīmun-'ala*) Lebanese territory. In accordance with convention, the word I have translated idiomatically as soil but

means earth (*ard*) is pluralized (*aradī*) and adjectivized (*lubnaniyya*), literally "Lebanese earths." Such is the unimpaired reach of the state's vision of its own authority (recall: this is not even a decree with legislative force.) As for the non-citizen male (*shakhs 'arabī aw ajnabī*), his involvement in the matter is an ancillary clause, object of a later preposition. He is not even guilty as her accomplice, for that too would be to bestow on her some agentive capacity. Instead, the entire pledge rests on the void that fills what would have been the space of her action.

In João Biehl's *Vita* (2005), Biehl traces the social death of a woman abandoned to an urban zone where unwanted Brazilians are left to die. There Catarina writes, filling books with nouns strung together to form a remarkable and haunting poetry. There are few verbs. In fact, Catarina seems trapped in these nouns, what Biehl describes as "disjointed objects" (314); "a sentence without remedy" (247). Over the course of his research into Catarina's personal history, Biehl feels as if he is slowly finding the missing verbs to her scattered dictionary. Catarina writes in refusal of her own erasure, "assembling words that gave form to her being" (314). But the history of neglect that abandoned her to a social category that Biehl calls the 'ex-human' can be described as a trajectory that "kept taking verbs from her" (223). It is a similar process of stripping a woman of agentive behaviour that defines the treatment of domestic workers in contemporary Lebanon, one that permeates both private and public domains. Here I am attempting to excavate this process not in *Vita*'s interpersonal and institutional practices of abandonment, but in modes of address. Such addresses have become so customary that they have come to constitute their own genre of speaking.

The 'speech genre' is a concept first attributed to Russian philosopher and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1986). For Bakhtin, the speech genre is a relatively stable set of utterances that

come to typify the way language is used in a given sphere. He divides speech genres into primary (simple) and secondary (complex) types, such as rejoinders in everyday dialogue and the same dialogues as they appear in a novel, respectively. Voloshinov (1986) broadens Bakhtin's focus on genric and structured forms of speech to consider the arena of the speech performance and its accompanying gestural or behavioural complements, what he modifies as the 'behavioural speech genre.' For both theorists, these genres constitute repertoires of usage as diverse as the use of language itself, and are learned by speakers alongside formal linguistic patterns. This is why both insist that communication is ideological. It is only in the social realm that words attain meaning, and this meaning is constantly subject to historic struggle. As laid out in the Introduction, women from Africa and Asia have been traveling to Lebanon to work as domestic workers since the mid-1970s. Over the course of these decades, patterns have developed to govern interactions between members of the Lebanese polity and the domestic worker. Regardless of whether female migrant workers reside and work within the private home or the public market, therefore, they continue to receive the addresses of a behavioural speech genre organized around the logic of a language of command.

The Courtroom, Act I: Layla

On a Wednesday morning in late June 2016 at the Court of First Instance in Jounieh, a Lebanese coastal city just north of Beirut, Judge Josef bou Sleiman sat screaming into his microphone at a young Bangladeshi woman called Layla. Audio static and sweat reverberated off the walls. A single fan lay by the judge at the front of the non-air conditioned room, and an elderly lawyer who tried to cool himself with a folded newspaper had just been loudly reprimanded. As for

Layla, she had been accused by her employer, a stylish young Lebanese woman who stood beside her, of stealing $5000 when she fled from the house some months prior.

Filing a false complaint of theft is a common practice by Lebanese sponsors, and one known to be encouraged by police in order to trap escaped domestic workers. The act of escape (popularly referred to using the military category of deserter [*firar*], despite its lack of legal applicability) is not a prosecutable crime for a domestic worker, but theft is. The theft complaint thus prevents the woman from leaving the country until a court case has been resolved, usually through bribery and extortion. In employer parlance, the practice is casually referred to as 'retrieving one's investment', ie. the cost of hiring the worker in the first place.[36] In this case, however, Layla had returned — it was not clear whether out of volition or force — a mere ten days later. The employer now had to deal with the irritation of resolving her own complaint in order to renew Layla's annual work permit. "I found the money in a drawer", she offered meekly. The judge was not impressed, well aware of the practice, and chastised the Lebanese woman for playing games with the law. But he reserved a singularly infantilizing venom for Layla.

Spewing insult after insult, bou Sleiman told Layla she should be grateful she was not in Saudi Arabia where she would most certainly be beheaded. At this he mimicked the exaggerated swipe of a sword, to laughter from the benches. Eventually he agreed to drop the case. Before dismissing the two women he turned again to Layla, who had earlier stated she did not speak Arabic, and stood silently at the front of the room.

> Work well (*Ishtighlī imnīh*), Layla, do you know how to do that? (*b'ta'rifī kīf ta'milī heik?*) Do you get it? (*'Am tifhamī?*) Huh? Or go back to Bangladesh (*Aw irji'ī 'a Bangladesh*).

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[36] As noted in the Introduction, this cost varies based on nationality. According to a recent survey by the ILO, Lebanese recruitment agencies currently charge between $1300-$1500 for a woman from Bangladesh, $1900-$2300 for a woman from Ethiopia, $2500 for a woman from Kenya, $3000 for a woman from Sri Lanka, and $2500-$4500 for a woman from the Philippines (ILO 2015b).

His voice rose to a fever pitch while she remained still.

> You, Layla, what do you want? *(Intī, Layla, shu baddik?)* You want me to feed you? *(Baddik ta'mik?)* Clothe you? *(Baddik labsik?)* Give you something to drink? *(Baddik sharbik?)* Change your diapers? *(Baddik 'hafdik?)* Huh, what do you want?! (*Eh, shu baddik?!*) Listen (*Isma'ī*), Layla. There is no love and amor *(Ma fī hubb wa gharam)* — there is only work *(bass fī shughl)* — *O-Kay?* Get it? *(Fahimtī?)* Or leave to Bangladesh *(Aw fillī 'a Bangladesh*).

He snickered loudly, as did many in the audience. Layla waited, with no evident change in her expression or comportment. In the back row we clenched our fists in fury. A satisfied smirk spread across his face, and the next case was called.

The judge's actions perform the fantasy of the state's relationship to the figure of the foreign domestic worker. While clearly invested in staging his authority for the larger audience, as he was renown for in local lawyers' circles — "*huwwa caractère*", they would laugh, "he's a character" — in this moment he addresses Layla directly. He speaks loudly and carefully, enunciating in a manner meant to maximize his patronizing tone, and using vocabulary drawn from the realm of domesticity. His power affirms itself in his control of action: he claims for himself the very set of verbs that were in fact her only source of recognition, those of household labour. Like the decree from General Security, he does not proscribe a set of actions and forbid her from having a boyfriend, making friends, or lazing about. Instead he addresses her in an inverse structure of the child's command ("Feed me!) or the mother's command ("Feed him!"): *"You want me to feed you?"* The inversion is that of her subject position. In his formulation, she becomes the object of the operative verb. 'To want' in Levantine Arabic is not expressed as a verb but through a fixed preposition (*badd*) with an attached suffix that signifies the subject. Here the judge does not foreground her wanting, but rather the impossibility of its articulation. She is not being asked, she is being mocked. The ten-time repetition of *-ik*, the feminine singular

you, single-syllable suffix of the female object to his male Subject, *badd-ik ta'm-ik badd-ik shar-bik badd-ik labs-ik* (and on) rung out in the courtroom like the syncopated pounding of steel. One did not need to understand Arabic to recognize its intent. As with Catarina's family, the judge takes Layla's verbs and turns her into a (pro)noun.

Layla is addressed as grammatical subject of a verb only in two forms: rhetorical question ("Do you know how to do that?"; "Do you get it?") and direct command ("Work" [or] "Leave"). In both, she is simply a conduit for the pronouncement of totalizing state authority. We are returned to the refrain of the domestic worker's Arabic. The language of command allows for only one verbal subject position: that of the feminine commanded. Again, this is a formulation that is impossible to convey in English, where "Go!" and "I go" are so similar that the command form bears little phonetic and syntactic particularity, let alone any gendered markings. In contrast, here the grammatical specificities demonstrate how the domestic worker's Arabic can then circulate as an object of insult. Her articulation of "You, woman! Go!" as *the act of going* is a vocabulary that names her own subservience. Her actions are sounded as those that have not been initiated by, but rather demanded of her. This is less a description of her own speech patterns, however, than an insight into how she is spoken to.

"Listen", the judge orders once more, and begins to pontificate on existence. The formula is now a familiar one. "*There is no love, there is only work."* What kind of a statement is this? It is either to assume the omniscience of a God — that love does not exist — or the prohibition of the law — that love cannot exist *for her*. He speaks in the register of the former and with the force of the latter, but these words have no legislative consequence. It is unsurprising that the judge, albeit representing an entirely different branch of the state than General Security and one

sometimes in conflict with the latter, uses precisely the same formulation ('there is no') discussed above only in colloquial dialect (*ma fī*) rather than standard Arabic (*la yujad*). His is the informal corollary to the state's demand, for he addresses her directly while the crowd is watching. Thus instead of the staid *"'alqat-zawaj aw irtibat"* (marital or intimate relationship) he prefers "*hubb wa gharam"* (love and a deeper, ardent love), a formulation made popular by music and cinema and often used mockingly to convey exaggeration. He first gestures to an entire repertoire of feeling that he negates, just as The Love Ban takes pains to declare the absence of not only formal marriage but all intimate attachment, and then inserts a cultural reference of snark to be appreciated by a sympathetic audience. This is a social logic obsessed with the domestic worker's desire, and a speech genre obsessed with refusing her the position of verbal subject. It is so unable to imagine the domestic worker as she who acts, feels, and takes control over her body that it fantasizes its ability to prohibit her action without even naming her, simply by declaring *it is not the case*. Layla has already escaped once, however. The judge roars into the mic and flails his arms in the air all while knowing that Layla is a woman who has, out of her own daring volition, acted.

The Courtroom, Act II: Michelle

I was in Judge bou Sleiman's courtroom that summer day in order to attend the hearing of Michelle, a young Filipina woman who had recently been arrested along with her three Filipina colleagues during a raid at a local nail salon. All four of the women were undocumented and had been working illegally, and the other three were deported to the Philippines in rapid succession. Michelle could not be sent home because like Layla, her former sponsor had filed yet another

falsified theft complaint against her, this one in the astonishing amount of $10,000. Six of us sat on the bench furthest from the judge at the back of the courtroom: myself, two representatives from local migrant worker support organizations (both Lebanese), a young American woman who was the only customer at the salon during the raid, her Lebanese boyfriend, and J.J., Michelle's androgynous-presenting partner, who alerted us to the hearing in the first place.

When it was Michelle's turn to appear before the judge, she stood alone with no legal representation. To her left was the nervous, fumbling lawyer of her former employer, a wealthy French-speaking Lebanese businessman who himself had not bothered to show up. Michelle was asked if she spoke Arabic and replied, in English, that she did not. After a quick Arabic exchange with the opposing counsel, bou Sleiman turned to Michelle and explained in stilted English that he would ask her a series of questions for the purpose of his investigation, and translate both his remarks and her answers into Arabic for the court transcript. He gestured to our presence and used it to reassure her of the accuracy of his translation: "Your friend is Arabic and knows what I write, okay?" Beside him sat his clerk, a middle-aged woman whom he intermittently insulted and shamed for not transcribing fast enough or other inexplicable errors. The judge struggled as he began to question Michelle, constantly pausing in order to ask audience members for assistance in translation. It was a scene approaching the absurd, as when he asked her to repeat the name of the salon where she was apprehended, Tips2Toes. Bou Sleiman kept hearing 'tips' as 'lips' and refused to move on until someone had not only translated but explained the concept and its consumer appeal. Eventually he proceeded with his fact-gathering.

"You have boyfriend in Lebanon?" "No." "Girlfriend?" Michelle hesitated. I felt trepidation rising inside me. "*Yes*", she said, determinedly. "Which one?" he continued, correctly

assuming the friend was among her group of supporters in the back row. His tone was casual and bored, and he paused to translate the sentence into a neutral, formal Arabic: "She answered the question stating that she does not have a male friend (*sadīq)* in Lebanon but does have a female friend (*sadīqa*)." "What is his name— her name?", he continued, the gender slippage merging into his many grammatical errors in the English language. At this point he looked closer at J.J., who had stood in voluntary self-identification. "He is *boy* or girl?" the judge asked, suddenly sounding perturbed. Michelle answered in a quiet but clear voice. "Half." "*Half?"* "Yes." "What?" "Yes. Half. She's a lesbian." "*What?"* "*LES*-bian", Michelle repeated, firmly. "*Yiiiiiiiiiii…."* the judge trailed off in wonder. Laughter began in the courtroom, nervous at first and then increasingly unrestrained. All audible voices were male. We began to panic, for this declaration in a Lebanese court of law could have both Michelle and J.J. imprisoned. There was a marked pause, and the judge muttered in a low voice, "*What…?*". The laughter rose. His authoritative voice returned. "Half? How much half, *ya'ani,* down and up, down-ward and up-ward?" More chuckles. There was a pause while he repeated the former Arabic sentence to the clerk, this time emphasizing the clause "but she *does* have a *female friend* (*sadīqa*)" with a distinct undercurrent of disbelief. He turned to Michelle for confirmation. "She's a *girl* or a boy?" Michelle affirmed the former. "*Girl*. Naturally *girl*", he repeated. "Yes." "What is his—her name?" The binaries appeared to be confusing him as well. "Jennifer."

At this point the Judge turned to his clerk to narrate the appropriate Arabic translation and stated Jennifer's name, muttered something inaudible, and continued loudly, "And she is a (*wa hiya*) *les-bi-yan—*" He began to stammer in quick succession. "*—bi-yan— les— les— les— les— shu?* (what?)" There was discussion on the bench, and an audience member joined in. "Lesbian

is [spelled] with what, a B or a P?" the judge could be heard asking, still in Arabic. The clerk tried to clarify. "*Shadhha, shadhha*" she offered in hushed tones, using the derogatory feminine term for homosexual that translates to 'deviant' or 'abnormal.' But the judge was interested in transcription and not translation. "What do I care about *shadhha*?! *(shu baddī bil-shaddha ana?!)*", he responded irritatedly. "Les-bian is with *what*, a *B* or a *P*?" "With a B", the clerk conceded, as others chimed in in agreement. "Les-*Bian*. Okay."

Bou Sleiman glanced up at the audience, turned back to his clerk, and enunciated the word in his Arabic speech for a final time. "And she is a lesbian (*Wa hiya lesbian)*. Uh… and the following question, 'How did you meet her?' (*Kayfa ta'arrafti 'alay-ha?)*" Once again he faced Michelle and translated in his broken English. "How you make know her?" The subsequent questions addressed Michelle's work history and her sponsor's accusation of theft. An hour later the case was postponed until the former sponsor was present to testify and offer further evidence. By her next court appearance, Michelle was appointed a lawyer by a local Christian aid organization. The issue of her illicit sexual revelation was never raised again.

Vernacular (Non)Expertise

How could the same judge who had so reveled in humiliating Layla only a few hours prior completely ignore Michelle's unapologetic confession of her homosexuality, an act regularly prosecuted in Lebanon? And what could Michelle herself possibly have been thinking? It took nearly four months to resolve Michelle's case, at the end of which what amounted to a $5000 bribe (raised by a generous expat contribution) was paid to her former employer in exchange for his dropping the complaint and returning her passport so she could then purchase the ticket for

her own deportation. Throughout this time Michelle was imprisoned in an underground parking lot converted into a detention center widely denounced for its degrading conditions. Yet J.J., too, was primarily amused by our concern after the initial court appearance, and assured us she would tell Michelle to stick to the story that the two were just friends if it was raised again. Neither partner was struck with the shock that we (differently classed) subjects felt, first at the unguarded confession and then at its total lack of consequence, despite coming from one of the most marginalized defendants imaginable in a Lebanese court of law.

Peter Goodrich (1990) writes that the language of legal communication must fundamentally differentiate itself from the register of vernacular speech, both to guard its domain of professional expertise and to ensure the acquiescence of participants to the law itself. To recognize lay speech "would place the court in a position of relativity; the language of law would itself become just one more dialect… a further vernacular to be weighed in the scales of legitimacy" (185). Hence participants must learn a complicity with the order of the law — one that, Goodrich notes, substitutes all prevailing social difference to incarnate its own order in the space of the courtroom. Goodrich demonstrates this in a series of examples, focusing on the failed attempt of the Haida nation in west coast Canada to fight a land claim by refusing legal representation and instead themselves testifying to their ancestral claim to the land. Michelle too stood without legal representation, because detained migrant workers in Lebanon are refused access to legal counsel until and unless appointed by a single Christian organization that works in collaboration with the state. And so she spoke herself. But it was not only her individual vernacular that stood in opposition to the expert language of the law — it was the fact that the entire exchange was literally occurring in a different language.

Court proceedings in Lebanon are conducted in Arabic. Educated members of Lebanese society will often be fluent in English and/or French, but as bou Sleiman makes evident, this is no guarantee that the courtroom will function as a bilingual space. At Michelle's next court hearing, the judge began by telling her he would no longer address her in English as her lawyer could now serve as translator, with palpable relief in his voice. It was only in the absence of mediating representation that he addressed her directly. But the communicative force of the judge's address relies on the language of his expertise. In addition, the behavioural speech genre that governs interactions between domestic workers and Lebanese subjects, what I have been calling the language of command, is inextricable from *Arabic*. Once their exchange was stripped of Arabic, it seemed this genre was no longer fully available to govern the patterns of his interaction. Instead, their speech appeared comical, full of interruptions, tangents, and the judge's failure to understand even in a courtroom organized around his own authority.

Consider the following discussion, which I excerpt at length:

Judge: You come to Lebanon to work minimum two years, then why you left after five month? Why only work five months?
Michelle: I couldn't stay there Sir because you know I had a lot of work — I didn't rest there
J: What?
M: I didn't rest there — I don't have rest
J: You don't have rest?
M: Yes. I don't have food and she didn't—
J: [interrupts] —you don't have food?
M: Yes. And she didn't — I eat there only bread
J: Only bread?
M: Yes
J: Only bread? Bread? Without anything on the bread?
M: Yes. She buy me —
J: [interrupts] —*za'atar*?
M: [inaudible] Yes
J: [speaking above her] —chocolate? [laughs]
M: Yes
J: Ooooooo—
[Michelle inaudible]
J:—oooooo. Mmmmm. Give me chocolate please
M: [inaudible] and I…
J: I want chocolate *now*...

[pause, laughter from crowd]
M: And one time,
J: Yes?
M: One time I keep the, uh, the food in the fridge and—
J: [interrupts] —Okay okay, I understand that they don't give you to eat like you have to eat. So because of this you left?
M: No. And I have a lot of work there
J: What?
M: [louder] I have a lot of work there
J: You have a letter??
M: a LOT of WORK
J: Ah, a lot of work, okay.

This exchange seems to bear little resemblance to how the judge addressed Layla, so full of masculine grandeur and the imperative, and yet it retains a tone of denigration, only in English. The ability to mock, of course, is part of the power of command. And certainly a judge who was fluent in English would have had a different exchange. But if we take Goodrich's formulation, when the language of legal annunciation becomes vernacular, it can no longer guarantee its own authority. Because Arabic is the official language of the state, it is in Arabic that the full weight of the law can be pronounced. This is why switching between formal Arabic and colloquial Lebanese does not dilute the judge's speech. This weight instead falters in the judge's fumbling English. And when the law can no longer speak in the linguistic register of total authority, it also cannot hear otherwise.

The judge had surely heard the word 'lesbian' before. Even if the full weight of its meaning eluded him, his exclamatory response to Michelle's use of the word suggests he was at least somewhat familiar with it as taboo. And yet, after a derogatory remark ("down and up?") in response to Michelle's remarkable formulation of the queer body ("*Half*"), his only interest is in its correct spelling ("B or P?"). He goes so far as to reject any attempts at cultural translation, insisting that he will render Michelle's words either into Arabic as he understands them, or in the

precision of their sounds. This is a courtroom where speech has become loose and slippery, two strangers struggling in a second language, but one in control of the mic. He thus interrupts the conversation according to his whims ("I want chocolate…"). His authority to direct the investigation appears to have been ceded to quotidian exchange. All of a sudden his speech comes across as the exaggerated antics of a bad performer rather than the violence of the law. He is not even interested in his clerk's translation, for to translate would presume his command over her language as well as his own. It is only when he switches to Arabic that he resumes this command, his voice again blaring over the microphone and controlling the interplay between colloquial and formal registers of expression. But *lesbian* is not part of his expert vocabulary. In using this word, Michelle has placed herself outside the realm of commensurability in speech. Because his expertise is not threatened by an English unknown, and Arabic is a language without the sound "P", he simply demands it is recorded with the accurate consonant.

Over the course of their exchange it is quickly evident that Michelle is more comfortable in English than bou Sleiman. This does not alter the position from which she speaks, however. Recalling Voloshinov's insistence that language is a social phenomenon, Michelle's repertoire of response is drawn from her position as a migrant domestic worker in Lebanon, and not simply as an English speaker. The language of command hails her as she who cannot initiate action, only respond. But this is foremost a scene of judgement. The legal process, after all, is predicated upon the imperative to truth. Michelle's strongest "No"s are thus reserved for her insistence that she had not stolen a single thing when she escaped from her employer's home. It is this confessional demand that informs her answer to the judge's question, "Girlfriend?" His is a confusion of vocabulary, for what he meant to ask was not "Are you a lesbian?" but "Do you

have a female friend?", which is to say, if she does not have a sexual relation in Lebanon, does she have a social relation? Michelle hears it in its English specificity, as the unintended signified that has taken the form of a known signifier. She does not pause to consider that he might be confused, that he might be using language with unintended meaning. His is the voice of the Lebanese state at the scene of its force — she has just been handcuffed and escorted from jail — and she responds to this interpellation. It is a response of simple truth ("Yes") and unencumbered logic ("half"). Thankfully, the two do not speak the same language. The judge lets it pass.

Just because the subaltern cannot speak, of course, does not mean she *does not* speak. In this chapter I have shown how what we might theorize as the subaltern's silence, in the form of the domestic worker's forced compliance with the citizen/state's command, is inextricable from the ways in which she herself is spoken to. Here *speech* in Spivak's terms (that which ascends to audibility) and Butler's Althusserian terms (that which constitutes the subject) and *language* begin to overlap. The domestic worker's subject position as subaltern is inconceivable without her distance from Arabic, not as a language that can be learned but as the marker of a racialized subjectivity that will always exclude her. In the wealthy private homes and undocumented lifeworlds of contemporary Lebanon, Arabic address contains the violent sounds of this exclusion.

Interlude: The Language of Fieldwork

September 13, 2016. Yesterday, first week of post-field back-home writing, I dreamt about Betty, the first woman I knew in Beirut to be deported, and the only one by choice.

Betty. Betty had a boyfriend, a fiancé, plans of The One and The Wedding throughout her seven years of working in Lebanon and it was time, she was going to go home and get married. At first she would say she just needed to visit but then she stopped mentioning the "come back" part. The other women in the kitchen would laugh when she insisted it was about her fiancé— once they told me, "Everyone wants to go back. As if you need a reason! They'll probably break up as soon as she arrives, and so what if she does? She'll be home, that's the thing." Betty is a gorgeous, feisty type; she refused Mansour's offers of an extravagant pay raise to leave her day job and work longer shifts in the kitchen because, she told the boss, the other workplace was more fun and less demanding. When the women would talk about diets and weight loss she would say, "Psshhh. Look at my fat, it's sexy!", using the English word, and burst into laughter. She knew there was a police officer in plainclothes around Hamra Street that was always trying to ask her for "coffee", in order to get sex or get a bribe when he asked to see her ID. "They think they're so smart, they have no idea how much smarter we are than them", she would declare to collective pride. So Betty accepted the offer for coffee and promptly got herself imprisoned — "gave herself up; submitted herself" (sallimt ʻhaal-a) *they call it in Arabic, like it is a technical term — and waited to be told she was going to Ethiopia. It was done so ceremoniously that everyone pooled money to get her some gold as a departure gift, and said goodbye. But underground prison life wasn't easy, weeks of dark wait for the State, an unknown period of time until they walk in and tell you the time of your deportation, today!, and you struggle to convince the nicest guard to let you make the phone call. Her friends asked those of us with papers (only Aysha and I) to visit and take her some essentials (water, lettuce, tampons). We tried, but it turned out we didn't have her real name the first time, and the second time (the day before her deportation) they separated visitors into family and friends and the friends never got their turn.*

In my dream I stepped into a cab and there beside me in the passenger seat was Betty in drag, a fedora and maybe an eyeliner-drawn moustache or beard, not trying to pass but just playful. Suddenly she started speaking English and I realized her English was perfect, completely fluent and American-accented. I was shocked but she had a sly grin on her face the whole time, and then it dawned on me that I had never tried speaking English with her. We spoke. It turned out she used to live in America and had fled to Lebanon, where she had promptly picked up Arabic. I asked why she was working in the Lebanese service sector if she had an American passport and she shrugged and said, still grinning, "You don't know the extent of our stories."

***

Anthropology in the stead of Franz Boas — that is, that which takes as its object culture and not structure — has a cardinal rule: the anthropologist must learn the language. Arriving in Lebanon with plans for a very different project and set of interlocutors, I assumed that although I was

unsure of the methodology that constituted “fieldwork”, I was at least reasonably well-situated in Arabic. My research ended up being conducted primarily with women from Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Philippines, and Francophone West Africa. Most mixed spaces were full of Syrian, Sudanese, and other Arab men, and Arabic was still the language of shared communication. But I had come all the way to the Arab world to do research with subjects whose native language was anything but Arabic.

What does it mean to conduct fieldwork in what we could call, after Audre Lorde, the master’s language? On numerous occasions I accompanied Ethiopian friends and colleagues to cafés and bars where I was the only woman speaking Arabic, and heads turned across the room with heavy gazes of disapproval. On one occasion the owner, a potbellied Ethiopian man with a wife in Lebanon and a wife back home, gold chain prominently displayed, came up to my companion and chastised me in Amharic for not knowing my language. He had understood me to be the daughter of an Ethiopian mother and Lebanese father. “She’s Indian”, the women at the table came to my defense. He remained suspicious. There were many occasions where I was surrounded by female migrant workers who spoke in languages that I bore no familiarity with: Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Sinhalese, Nepali, Tamil, Tagalog. Some spoke English and some Arabic, but neither were preferred. The music, television series, or films that played in the background and filled the silences, occasionally grabbing everyone’s attention for an amusing advertisement or a suspense-filled scene, I heard only as sound. My fieldwork, then, does not claim the presumption of internal understanding that the anthropologist endeavors to attain. But meaning is never transparent, and all anthropology requires an act of translation (Asad 1987).

To conduct fieldwork in Arabic was to access both speech and practice mediated by a language that indexes the kinds of violence that have been outlined in the chapter above. Although the language did not hail me as the subject of its command, it was the same language. When I walked the streets with black women, teenage boys and young men would suddenly hurl insults and curse words, or taunt with the predatory slime of men on prowl. "What are you two, Sri Lankan [ie. maids]?" "Oh *heyyy*… Welcome to Lebanon!" "Do you two work together?" It was only Arabic that made these legible. To communicate with the women not in the language of their interiority but in Arabic was to encounter them within (but not share) the linguistic register of their subjection. It is my contention that this enabled me to attend more closely to the force of Arabic speech and the centrality of the language and its deployment in the everyday experiences of racialized migrant workers in Beirut.

All acts of interpretation are subject to the risk of mishearing, the possibility of failure, and the impossibility of commensurability. But Betty's appearance in my dream suggests another opening made possible by this foreign language that formed the grounds of our intersubjectivity: the gift of intimacy. One Saturday night I was out dancing at The African Club, a disco that caters to African men and women but had recently started playing longer sets of Arabic music for its growing male Arab clientele. There had been a short set of Nigerian and Ethiopian hits followed by what felt like hours of electronic remixes of the Arabic folk-dance genre known as *dabke*. None of the women were dancing, and the men were getting increasingly inebriated and obnoxious. Beza, my Ethiopian interlocutor and friend, pulled me close to yell something in Arabic into my ear above the pounding base. *"I. Fucking. HATE. Arabic!!"*

4. The City of Exiles
Part I

Beirut is built of gold and fatigue
—Mahmoud Darwish

The café has no name. There is no sign and no street address, only the colours of the Ethiopian flag painted on rickety steps as the identifying trait: red, yellow, green. Unlike the fluorescent white that floods every other Ethiopian establishment in the neighbourhood, it is always dark inside. It has been decorated to resemble a cave, brown paper wrinkled and stapled all over walls and ceiling, roughly painted in dark tones to create an impressive effect, the edges only slightly beginning to fray. The tables are plastic, as are the chairs, and all are a cheap, diluted neon assortment of red, yellow, and green. A plastic green ashtray adorns each table and is diligently emptied so that the space is always full of smoke yet never smells of stale ash. Multicoloured Christmas lights are strung along the right-hand wall, while a disco ball on the back wall rotates constantly, giving the daytime atmosphere a strange feeling of permanent nightclub. Framed images of scenes of women vaguely referencing Africa hang on one wall, and glossy posters of Ethiopian landmarks, an Ethiopian woman in traditional dress pouring coffee, and Ethiopian women's elaborately braided hairstyles hang on the others. There is *argileh*, coffee, and two kinds of beer on offer when the fridge is full: the local Almaza and the imported Heineken, both for the cheap price of a shared taxi ride (2000 LL/$1.33).

Nolawit, who is Ethiopian and separated from her Lebanese husband but has the citizenship, runs the café. She usually arrives to unlock the metal shutters sometime around 11:00 AM, except on Sundays, when she takes the morning off and opens for the afternoon

crowds returning from church. Nolawit doesn't talk much but smokes *argileh* endlessly, standing only to begrudgingly bring customers their orders. She sticks around until whatever point she decides it is time to go home and sleep, usually around 2:00 or 3:00 AM, unpredictably. Most evenings, the same group of five to ten people can be found chatting, drinking beer, smoking, or silently scrolling through Facebook feeds on their smartphones until closing: a few Ethiopian women, almost all undocumented freelancers, favouring bejeweled jeans and red hair extensions, and a few Syrian Kurdish men, almost all undocumented labourers and refugees, tattooed and scarred, a few carrying knives plus reputations for using them. Most are under 30 years old, many are coupled, and two, Rida and Gigi, are recently married. Both lack legal residency permits but landlords want cash and not papers, so they moved in together around the corner. They bicker passionately, as if with competitive pride, and Rida loves to play me a pounding Arabic song that everyone agrees is all the rage at the Ethiopian nightclubs. At one point the MC responsible for the remix shouts out, *"Ethiopian women are the most beautiful women in the world / But all they do is make problems / Watch out or you'll end up married!"*

Over the last decade, African and Asian migrant workers in Beirut have built a dense underground infrastructure of services, entertainment, support, and security that has radically transformed the city and the lives of the workers who keep it functioning. It exists as a separate layer of urban life, one that incorporates commercial and residential spaces, interpersonal networks, and practices of communication and consumption. It is publicly visible to an extent, but its internal operations rely on learned codes and guarded entry. It is multi-lingual, multi-national, and multi-ethnic, and it may be the most diverse corner of the entire Levant. Its spatial

centre is the adjacent neighbourhoods of Bourj Hammoud, Dawra, and Ras el-Nab'aa, and its temporal climax is Sunday, but it is a network spread throughout the city and beyond. It incorporates small side streets in one neighbourhood, a church and the alleys that spill out from it in another, private schools and wedding halls that transform into flag-filled celebrations for different nations and religions, outdoor stadiums that host international pop stars for migrant audiences, catering services for home-cooked cuisine, sports teams and fashion competitions and niche social clubs, the intermittent interventions of embassies and consulates, as well as ways to smuggle cell phones, sewing needles, and hair extensions into prison. It is a vibrant and thriving world, but it it is subject to constant harassment and the threat of forced closure at the hands of both state and society.

Like comparable neighbourhoods the world over, the spaces of this Beirut enable the coming together of a motley crew of social outcasts — refugees, migrant workers, sex workers, daily wage labourers; the unemployed, the homeless, the convicts, the addicts, the poor; the undocumented, the unmoored, the bored, the abandoned, the disturbed. But its sites are overwhelmingly full of two specific communities: female black African and Asian former or current domestic workers, and working-class Arab or Middle Eastern, particularly Syrian, men.[37] Over the months I spent living in Dawra, I became aware of an intimate exchange that has occurred amongst these communities. Many have fallen in love, coupled off, or formed alliances that circulate desire, resources, and expectations. New songs are being written, new sensibilities are being formed, and new modes of collectivity and organization are becoming possible. I met

[37] By 'Middle Eastern' I refer specifically to Kurdish, who tend to be Syrian citizens, or Armenian, who have Lebanese citizenship. Although it is possible there are Iraqi Kurds in Lebanon as well, I never encountered any over the course of my fieldwork.

numerous Arab and Kurdish men who are fluent in Amharic or can at least flirt in Tagalog. Everyone already speaks Arabic, but now some of the women speak Kurdish, too. Tattoos in beloveds' scripts are common. Mixed children are being born and raised, fluent in the speech patterns of the Lebanese dialect while still at risk of deportation. Lebanese DJs are on top of all the latest Nigerian or Ethiopian pop hits, and female migrant workers would tell me that these Arab men receive word of the latest sensations back home months before the songs or videos begin to circulate through their own social media networks. Dozens of Arab men wander around Dawra wearing Rastafari-inspired clothing, or have their hair braided by the skilled African women around them (a look that resembles yet remains distinct from the hashish-smoking, English-speaking, African drum-circle world of hippie-inspired alternative Lebanese masculinity). As Ayman, one of the Kurdish regulars at Nolawit's café, once shrugged to me, "We're all living here in exile (*al-ghurba*) — aren't you?"

In this chapter I consider the sociality of this city of exiles. I first briefly explain my choice of the word 'exile', particularly in a field under the shadow of Edward Said. In the rest of Part I of the chapter, I focus on two kinds of intersubjective relations that permeate the spaces of this city: sexual intimacy and friendship. By examining the terms used to designate these relations, ones often drawn from kinship — husband, wife, brother, sister — I argue that this is a world propelled by ties of *chosen unconditionality*,[38] namely choices that enable demands and obligations in a social world premised on estrangement. Although the phenomenon of coupling in particular is commonly attributed to promiscuity, self-interest, or boredom, I read these intimacies as an agentive refusal of the isolation that structures the experience of being a migrant

[38] With thanks to Aarti Sethi for this formulation (among many other things).

worker in Lebanon. And they are made possible by the city that brings them together, a reimagining of Beirut that I take up more directly in Part II.

To Not Be at Home in One's Home

In a short piece entitled "Exile and Creativity" (2003), philosopher Vilem Flusser reflects on how all those who depart from a homeland must transform the conditions in which they find themselves in order to live meaningfully. This, he argues, makes the condition of exile at least partially a *creative* one, by which he means one constantly producing a synthesis between the information the individual brings with her, and "an entire ocean with waves of information that toss him around in exile" (5). Flusser opposes exile to habit, where habit is a condition of anaesthetized stasis and exile is one of change, transition, and the provisional. Since "the human being is not a tree", he concludes, "perhaps human dignity consists in not having roots", and freedom "is not the question of coming and going, but rather of remaining a stranger" (4). Although I hesitate to accord exile the status of freedom, it is this condition of *remaining* a stranger that Edward Said theorized over the course of his career as the function of a critic.

For Said, exile is not only an actual condition of loss "legislated to deny dignity" (2000, 139) but also a metaphorical condition to be embraced as the task of the secular critic. Exile is a subjectivity to be cultivated, an intellectual mission of refusing filiative belonging to nation or kin, and of taking neither home nor language for granted. Said sees exile as unlike all other forms of displacement. It is a partially solitary state that resembles older practices of banishment, in contrast with the figure of the refugee, a creation of modern states, and the more ambiguous figure of the émigré. As opposed to Flusser, Said's exile is not a matter of life choice nor

everyday practice. It is not surprising that Said's favourite examples — Vico, Conrad, Auerbach, Adorno — both lived as intellectual refugees and are central to the canon of Western culture. Yet many of the things Said upholds in the epistemological condition of exile might also be applied to the world's many displaced: a bittersweet distance from any nation, a nomadic sense of independence, a plurality of vision, a sense of historic contingency rather than inevitability, and the impossibility of security or satisfaction (Said 1988, 1993, 2000). Here I want to insist with Flusser that we name exile not only as the critical stance adopted by the resolutely anti-orthodox bourgeois critic, but as the everyday conditions of life for the uprooted.

The choice of *exile* to describe a context where many have been displaced by the structural violences of nation, state, and capital may appear overly romantic. However, by contrasting Said to Hannah Arendt's discussion of the stateless as the paradigmatic figure of the violences of 20th century Europe, I want to suggest that 'exile' can capture something that the individual category of 'refugee' as distinct from 'migrant worker' cannot. In her 1951 book *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt describes the *stateless* as one of two populations who emerge newly significant in the wake of the First World War (the other being the *minority*). The stateless, she says, "were welcomed nowhere and could be assimilated nowhere" (1973, 267) — they had lost those those very Rights of Man that were assumed inalienable in the modern order. In her earlier essay "We Refugees", first published in 1943 and taking as its subject the Jewish community in Europe, she sums up the matter similarly: "once we were somebodies about whom people cared… we could buy our food and ride the subway without being told we were undesirable" (1994, 115). Arendt therefore reads the phenomenon of statelessness as dispelling the illusion of universal rights. Here the *stateless* and the *refugee* are presented as identical, and

find their only recourse in international legal protection (itself targeted towards repatriation/ deportation) or total assimilation (ultimately impossible). In the wake of the contemporary movement of peoples into Europe that has been popularly dubbed a 'refugee crisis', Arendt may seem uniquely prescient. But the phenomenon of statelessness is inadequate to account for the conditions shared by refugees and migrant workers in Beirut today.

To start with, all non-citizens in Lebanon other than Palestinian refugees technically *have* a state. Although they are outside its territory, it is the specificity of this state that determines both their legal status in Lebanon as well as the category through which they are most commonly identified, both by themselves and by others. Lebanon is not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, and so it is specific domestic laws that differentially govern the presence of Palestinian, Syrian, and Iraqi refugees in the country (Saliba 2016). Similarly, migrant worker sending countries have distinct bilateral agreements with Lebanon that are intended to govern conditions of employment for their nationals. As mentioned in the Introduction, certain countries have even imposed bans on travel to Lebanon. This restriction is regularly subverted, but has significant consequences on the cost and manner of migrant worker arrival to, and subsequent employment in, the country. Moreover, both migrant workers and refugees remain oriented towards their states of origin through the active maintenance of kinship ties. It is their shared experience of foreignness that has led them to seek in each other forms of recognition otherwise denied to them in Lebanon.

Over the course of this dissertation I have insisted that non-Arab migrant workers and Arab refugees be understood as distinct populations when it comes to thinking their experiences in Lebanon. I have noted that the historic and linguistic-cultural ties between modern Lebanon

and the Arabs of the Levant, specifically Syrians who were essential to the building of the modern nation, positions Arab refugees in a social category separate from racialized, non-Arab migrant workers. These groups are subject to different kinds of surveilling gazes on the part of the Lebanese state and citizen. They move through the city in different ways, they inhabit the Arabic language as native versus foreigner, and they are positioned differently inside the political landscape. Thus while male Syrian refugees have recently become the targets of a militarized security apparatus that has heightened in response to the threat of ISIS inside Lebanon, female non-Arab migrant workers have instead been subject to increasing accusations of prostitution or otherwise immoral (gendered) behaviour (A & R 2016). And yet the urban spaces of my fieldwork were regularly full of both these communities, often intimately intertwined. Without seeking to elide their specificities, then, it is the category of 'exile' that allows us to name their shared social world.

In the Middle East, as in Edward Said, the paradigmatic experience of exile belongs to the Palestinians (to be rendered exiles by the people of exile!).[39] The Palestinian refugees of Lebanon are in fact one of the most "over-researched" communities in the country (Sukarieh & Tannock 2015). In her recent book *Refugees of Revolution* (2013), Diana Allan notes that the weight of this attention has focused on acts of remembrance and resistance in line with how refugees are upheld within the discourse of Palestinian nationalism. This has occluded a focus on the material conditions of the refugees themselves, and Allan's ethnography is offered as a rejoinder to this neglect. Allan opens the possibility of thinking exile in Lebanon through local

[39] For an incisive consideration of Said's partial blindness to other forms of injustice in favour of the 'epic' of the Palestinian struggle, particularly forms of racism *not* targeted towards Arabs and Muslims in America, see Lal (2005).

factors and "emergent forms of subjectivity and belonging" (2013, 28). Due to the segregation of the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon inside UN-designated refugee camps, I rarely encountered any Palestinians in my fieldsites. But, taking a lead from the throwaway remark of Ayman, we might consider Lebanon's many Syrian refugees as well as its migrant workers as also the subjects of a contemporary exile. And it is this shared condition of exile that has brought them together not in Said's modernist vision of affiliation, but in a form that seeks to re-create precisely a set of filiative (traditional) bonds that have been rendered impossible in exile: the heterosexual dyad.

Girlfriend and Boyfriend

Much of the functioning of Beirut's migrant worker underground depends on alliances between female migrant workers and male Lebanese figures of authority. Charly is one such man. Charly is in his mid-40s, and has been working with the Ethiopian community in Lebanon for the past 13 years. Married to an Ethiopian woman, her access opened him to a niche market and, to quote an Ethiopian interlocutor, he has been "getting rich off our backs (*min waraana*)" ever since. Charly imports goods, organizes massive celebrations for Ethiopian festivals, brings the country's pop stars to perform in Lebanon, and is generally the well-connected person to go to in order to get things done. He is rumoured to have high-level connections with General Security that not only allow him to acquire temporary visas for Ethiopian celebrities, but also to have prospective competitors from within the Ethiopian community imprisoned or threatened in order to sustain his monopoly. In an interview, after a short discussion of employer abuse, Lebanese racism, and the precarious living conditions of domestic worker escapees — namely, after

establishing himself as an empathetic figure both to me in direct address and to the multiple Ethiopian women within earshot — Charly told me a story about the Ethiopian women of Beirut.

Once upon a time, the story began, Ethiopian women used to come to Lebanon as domestic workers and work very hard. They suffered, certainly, but they remained diligent, and they saved money that they sent back home, and houses were built, families were cared for, and children were raised in absentia. This was before 2011. Then the war started in neighbouring Syria, and Syrian males flooded the capital of Beirut in the thousands. The dutiful Ethiopians suddenly found themselves exposed to the corrupting influence of young men with nothing to do. The women were seduced. They started pairing off, girlfriend and boyfriend, a few at first and then more. The men offered some combination of love distraction and protection while desiring money, and the women began to spend their disposable income on the new men in their lives rather than keeping it aside for remittances. Soon the women stopped working altogether. They found the pressures of domestic work excessive, and they yearned for the freedom of male company. Laziness and unemployment spread through the city. Some of the women began to enter the sex trade for quick cash, and others devised clever schemes that did not depend on twelve-hour days of household labour in order to survive. Things began to fall apart. Moral and financial ruin lay in close wait, and *that* — here Charly gestured to the three young Ethiopian women who sat in chairs waiting their turn to plead their cases to him — is how we got to where we are today.

What is most interesting about Charly's tale is that it takes a position (according blame to Syrian men) in relation to a narrative he presumes to be available (first the presence of a significant amount of female Ethiopian freelancers who can choose sexual partners, and then

their coupling with Syrian men). Ethiopian women started traveling to Lebanon en masse in 1989 (Beydoun 2006) and by 2002, Lebanon was described as the most popular destination for Ethiopian women traveling to work in the Middle East (Kebede 2002). In 2006, estimates of Ethiopian women in Lebanon ranged from 15,000 to 30,000 (in Marian 2006). By 2008, the figure was around 45,000 (Dahdah 2010). In fall 2013 the Ethiopian government implemented a ban on its nationals traveling to Lebanon on a work visa due to widespread reports of abuse, a move that in practice primarily increases smuggling and trafficking (Shahinian 2012). The ban is legally still in operation but was effectively reversed in 2016 with the resumption of direct flights between Ethiopia and Lebanon. By 2015, the Lebanese Ministry of Labor recorded the official number of Ethiopian migrant domestic workers in Lebanon to be 73,098 (Fernandez 2017). Ethiopia is today the largest country of origin for domestic workers in Lebanon, constituting over 42% of live-in workers (ILO 2016a). In June 2017 the Anti-Racism Movement stated in a Facebook post that out of its estimates of 500,000 migrant domestic workers in the country (both documented and undocumented), a full 47% (235,000) are Ethiopian (ARM 2017). For Charly, these growing numbers of Ethiopian women are not understood as isolated workers, but rather act in the city as a collective noun. They are imagined as a unified yet changing community about whom generalizations can be made, and upon whom social ills can be attributed or displaced. Key to these generalizations are assumptions about their sexual behaviour.

It is not only the Lebanese Charly who tells such a story, although Charly's narrative is tellingly anti-Syrian in its specificity. The phenomenon of mixed coupling is one referred to constantly among female migrant workers of diverse nationalities, as well as NGO workers and other members of the Lebanese public. When I visited the home of Hawa, a conservative

Ethiopian Christian who was heavily involved in the local Ethiopian Protestant community, at one point she said wistfully, "You have no idea how beautiful our women are back home." Hawa continued:

> We like to make ourselves look good, to dress up and dress nice, but over here you can't — if you do, they think something else. Only in Dawra. Only in Dawra can we dress the way we want, because no one cares there. I'm sure you've seen it … on all days of the week you can find African women and Filipina women dressed up, skirts and lipstick and heels, just walking around like normal. The Lebanese and the Syrian men, they like these women, they don't focus on the difference [ie. being non-Arab], they all go around together and date each other.

In a previous conversation, Hawa had expressed her strong disapproval of those Ethiopian women who gave the community a bad name by engaging in acts that were implied to blur the line between bad dating choices and sex work. Much like Charly, Hawa had suggested that some of "our women" were lazy and although they had come to Lebanon to work, they chose to spend their time with Arab men instead.

Hawa's earlier remarks were made in a group conversation with a number of other Ethiopian women. At the time, the female compatriots who formed the subjects of their collective disapproval were described as some combination of promiscuous and naive. The women were said to "give themselves" (*b'ya'tu haalun*) to men who wanted only to take advantage of them, often ending up no better off than they were under the exploitative conditions of domestic work. But in the excerpt quoted above, Hawa focuses instead on the pleasures of a certain feminine self-presentation, one she assumes that I, as a young woman exactly her age, will recognize. The phenomenon of coupling is here presented as secondary to this act of beautification, with desire figuring as almost logically consequential. Her description of the Arab men is kind, even laudatory: "they don't focus on the difference." And where Charly emphasizes the demographic changes with the recent arrival of male Syrian refugees, Hawa points to the

spatial configuration of the city instead, where one neighbourhood has become associated with a release from the everyday pressures of the rest of Beirut: “we dress the way we want.” It is Dawra, it seems, that makes this intercultural desire possible.

Mixed coupling was not only attributed to different causes but also qualified by ethnicity. A young European NGO worker who assisted with an emergency helpline for abused domestic workers once stated to me plainly that Filipina, Ethiopian, and West African women were the most desired migrant women among Arab males. She proceeded to point out the many couples we could see before us taking a stroll along the Corniche in the neighbourhood of Ras Beirut, often pausing for selfies against the picturesque backdrop of sunset and sea. At Nolawit’s café, both the Kurdish men and the Ethiopian women similarly expressed disbelief at my South Asian heritage: “You don’t look Indian”; “Indians don’t look like you”. I was told with laughter that Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi women were known to be unattractive, often smelled of spices, and dressed in traditional clothing. They were also highly conservative, and that was why one never encountered examples of Arab men dating a South Asian woman — a fact that I could only corroborate based on my own observations, although one that could also be explained by migration patterns (many women sponsor their husbands or arrive together) and residential preferences (many socialize outside of Dawra) rather than abstract desirability.

In February 2016, the popular talk show *Ahmar Bel Khat Al Areed* hosted a segment entitled ‘The [Female] Foreigner’s Episode’ (*Halaqat al-Ajnabiyye*)’ where it brought Lebanese Madames and domestic workers on stage for what amounted to a face-off (LBCI 2016). The show, which appears weekly on LBCI and has a reputation for controversy tending towards the dramatic, began by interviewing a woman named Neshani who had been in the country for

twenty years. “What don’t you like about Lebanon?”, asked the host. The woman hesitantly answered that she liked everything about the country, listing in order a Christian pilgrimage site and a Maronite saint followed by, “the people here (*insan hon*).” “And *who* do you like? (*Min bit-hibbi?*)”, the host followed up with a cheeky grin on his face. “Madame, Mister…” came her answer. “Ah, Madame — I thought you had a boyfriend here!”, he replied to her giggling objections, and the first round of audience laughter broke the ice for the hour-long episode. Between the next two commercial breaks, eight female migrant workers from different countries casually discussed their love for the Lebanese weather and their interest in Lebanese politics, until the show heated up with the arrival of Lebanese Madames to offer their side of the equation. Mirna, one such citizen, stated her position unequivocally: “We do not bring them so we can have them sit around like ladies and put on makeup (*nihna mish jaybin-un ta-nsattitun wa ya’milu mikyaj*). We bring them as servants; to serve us (*nihna jaybin-un khadam; l-ykhidmuna*).”

In the familiar manner of talk-show television, the episode continued to gather steam. A heated argument ensued as Mirna suggested domestic workers do not know how to use a toilet, turn on the lights, or bathe themselves, and the migrant women objected furiously. Later in the episode, arguments broke out over employers’ restrictions of their employees’ mobility, and the Madames’ disapproval of women who use their Sunday holidays to go out with men, the dangers of impregnation, and their inappropriate manners of dress. “How do I know if the girl that I have is *good*? (*kif ana biddi a’arif inno el-bint yilli ‘andi mniiha?*)”, Mirna asked, repeating the question thrice over the sound of objections. It is this use of ‘good’ to refer to a moral character associated with domestic workers’ interactions with men that has led to multiple state attempts to

regulate the sexual behaviour of foreign women, including The Love Ban discussed in Chapter Three. In 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that documented migrant workers with children were being detained and deported seemingly only as a punishment for having children, a practice also recorded in 2014, when the children were also deported (HRW 2014, 2017; for details see also Insan 2015). An unmistakeable feature of the social landscape of contemporary Beirut, the heterosexual coupling of migrant domestic workers with Arab men has therefore been attributed to a range of motives and desires.[40] For an anthropologist, however, the most interesting part is the stories.

A Love Story

Before it shut down, Sami's café was a small, unmarked Ethiopian spot down a narrow alleyway in one of Dawra's winding inside streets. The easiest way to get there was to look for the set of overflowing green garbage bins right before the entrance to Dawra's central roundabout and have your taxi driver let you out on the rotting curb. The heavy sliding door to the café looked like a billboard for an African hair salon that can be found all over Dawra and Harlem both (yellow and green; floating heads of intricate black braids) but once you pulled it aside you suddenly found a small, harshly-lit room filled with the smoke of *argileh* and cigarettes. There were eight small tables on the ground floor and two more up a steep and unstable metal staircase, tables and chairs all made of the same cheap plastic green as the rest of the Dawra's cafés, the kind that is easy to knock over if you're not careful. Sami's, as it was referred to, used to serve the prized St. George

[40] Consider this excerpt from Dahdah (2012, I/8): "While we were talking about the presence of Ethiopian migrants with a baker in Dora, a client did not hesitate to spit on the floor to make us understand that these women are "garbage". According to him, "They live only for money and make men completely crazy, causing divorces and violence." "

Beer, a crisp Ethiopian lager that was later said to be banned from Lebanon and is now nearly impossible to find around the city. Sami's wife would cook a few dishes a day, never any vegetables but always the raw ground beef dish known as *kitfo* (the dish constantly placed before me as a test to see whether I could indeed hold my own with my Ethiopian interlocutors). Sami himself was a dominating presence, strutting around in tailored outfits made from the gold-accented white chiffon fabric known in Amharic as *tibeb*. He was the equivalent of Charly among the Ethiopian men, and his hands stretched deep into the network of goods, cash, and people that flew regularly between Lebanon and Ethiopia. The women through whom I met Sami used to describe his newly-built villa back home, where another wife and their children resided, with a mixture of awe and anger. It was said that he had profited handsomely off his time in Lebanon, and that his café was only the most unassuming of his many local business ventures.

The first time I was taken for a meal at Sami's, it was a Sunday afternoon and we had just returned from an Orthodox church service up in the mountains. The crowd consisted of groups of Ethiopian women dressed elaborately for their weekly holiday, and one Ethiopian man who was selling DVDs of the latest soap opera serials. Later in the evening a young Arab man walked in, tall and muscular, with spiked hair and tattooed arms, the left one covered in white bandages. He wore white headphones that he did not remove and sat down with familiar ease, proceeding to chain smoke cigarettes in silence. Every so often he stepped out to answer a phone call, only to return and resume his position without a word. He was the only visibly non-Ethiopian presence in the room apart from myself, and I wondered. Without asking, my companion turned to me and explained. The man, who I later learned was also named Sami, was a young Syrian who had fallen deeply in love with an Ethiopian woman. They had decided to be together, and she had

returned to her home village in order to first obtain the approval of her family. While in Ethiopia, she was killed in a car accident. “He went mad (*Jann*)”, I was told. “He hasn’t been right ever since — he lost himself.” On his arms he had her name tattooed in Amharic, as well as the phrase ‘Daughter of Ethiopia’ (*bint el-habash*, it was read to me in Arabic). Under the bandages were the scars where he had slit his wrists. “Every week he comes to the café, sits like that, does not talk to anyone. It has been some months of this — not too many, but, far too many.”

The story sunk me. Over the next months I would see him every time I went to Sami’s, and we began to acknowledge each other from afar, the obvious foreigners, the ones who spoke only Arabic. The two Sami’s — Ethiopian café owner, Arab café tragedy — were friendly and the younger would often help adjust the music (a steady stream of Ethiopian hits) or make minor shop repairs. When a fire broke out from an overheated air conditioner, it was the Arab Sami who stood guard at the door watching for police or suspect passersby. But most of the time he sat in silence in the exact same chair, directly facing the door and no one else, headphones in his ears despite the fact that the café’s music was too loud to hear anything else, face tightly clenched yet somehow breaking. To stare at him was to be impossibly aware of a private pain, to feel something tear inside of you at the rawness of his defeat. Yet he kept returning. If the bandages on his arms were the signs of failed attempts at suicide, it seemed that this small Ethiopian café was literally keeping Sami alive.

Alain Badiou has theorized love as a manner of experiencing the world through difference and not identity: “What kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one?” (2012, 22). This is not love as the experience *of* the other but an encounter

with, gesturing to his theory of the event as that contingent occurrence that erupts into a social field but does not necessarily re-order it. It is for this reason that Badiou puts forth love as a necessarily risky "existential project: to construct a world from a decentred point of view other than that of my mere impulse to survive or re-affirm my own identity" (25). The declaration of this love, he continues, marks "that transition from a random encounter to a construction that is resilient, as if it had been necessary" (44). In the figure of Sami as lover and beloved, we see the encounter that this Beirut makes possible, a dense social world opening up porous spaces of refuge and desire. This is a love conditioned by the subject positions that the migrant worker and refugee occupy in Lebanon: both foreigners excluded from citizenship, but with differing social statuses in the country as female non-Arab versus male Arab, as well as different ties to a homeland. What is at stake in their encounter is thus a reorientation to the city that has brought them together. As Khaled Fahmy says in his social history of Alexandria in the early 20th century, cosmopolitanism cannot be ceded to the worlds of the elite but must also be sought in the illicit and on the streets; "in the frequency with which people from different communities were willing to do business with each other, to eat with each other, to drink with each other, and to have sex with each other" (2004, 305). But rather than providing a happy ending, Sami also reminds us of the risks of this exchange.

Sami's is not only *his* story. In its absent pair, it is the story of a young woman who lived in Beirut as a permanent foreigner and traveled back home in order to affirm a familiar cultural order: of gender, of kinship, of authority. And yet in having left Ethiopia to work in the homes of a Lebanese family, this was an order that she had already exceeded. Her unnamed invocation by my companion references some of the tensions at the core of this phenomenon of mixed

coupling. Why, where in another instance I was told by the very same Ethiopian interlocutor that it did not matter what reasons one gave to return because everyone simply wanted to go home (see Interlude after Chapter Three), did she here describe Sami's beloved as going home *in order to seek approval*? It must have meant she was one of the lucky ones with legal papers and a passport, I thought at first — but it was just as likely that obtaining paperwork was part of the struggle. To name the act of her travel as one of seeking approval was to locate this marriage within the domain of that which was simultaneously most proximate and most distant: Ethiopia and not Lebanon. It was to insist that, no matter how much had changed, there was still an order to how things should be done; an order that could be followed. Even amidst the displacements of exile, she represented the possibility that change can be embraced and incorporated into the social order. And yet, Badiou reminds us, the encounter cannot be subsumed by that which surrounds it, nor can it guarantee what it will leave in its wake. In seeking the legitimation of a bond, this young woman left behind its complete break.

Sami poses to us the task of anthropology in a difficult form: one without his direct speech. I never spoke to Sami, nor he to me. It is only in sharing space, staring, overhearing, and asking others that I attempted to piece together what I am offering as his story. The resulting question is not of its accuracy but what it gives us to think. I want to insist that we think Sami not only through the death that scarred his arms but also the life that sat before us, offering the gestures of reciprocal exchange: a glance, a slight nod, a rare, at times even curious, smile. A desire for music. He was always dressed similarly but never the same, and he took the time to style his hair, which could never stand so severely on his head without effort. In the set of explanations for mixed coupling found in accounts like Charly's — sexual desire, utilitarian

alliance, manipulative exchange — there is little room for such a character. If Sami is to be thought as a figure of *this* Beirut, and an alternate to the figure of the Syrian man that Charly provides, he is not a figure of self-interested masculinity. He may be an Arab, but he belongs to this space. He may be broken, but he lives in relations that cannot be collapsed into contractual exchange. He is a young man who sits in solitude, headphones protecting him from the demands of communication, while seeking out precisely the abundance of noise and the bustling sociality of weekend leisure to be found in the city. Alive before us, Sami testifies to what Levinas has called "the surplus of sociality over every solitude" (in Gandhi 2006, 89).

Husband and Wife

Where Sami's loss cut short the couple's plans to marry, there are many like Rida and Gigi, introduced in the opening vignette, who do. The contours of their marriage deserve further consideration. For Rida and Gigi, "marriage" is the name given to an act of will rather than that of legal recognition. Couples scattered across Beirut's migrant worker underground have weddings, move in together, and bear children outside the regulations that formally govern sexual intimacy in Lebanon. Marriage certificates are often forged retroactively with a bribe in order to deal with pregnancies, and insider networks can recommend clerics fast and loose with their ordained pen. Rida and Gigi, however, had no such papers. So what exactly does it mean for an undocumented Ethiopian former domestic worker, and a Syrian Kurdish refugee registered with the UNHCR but lacking a state permit, to say they are married in Beirut?

When I spoke to Gigi, she constantly joked about her relationship, recommending I do as she had done. "We've got an agreement" (*ittafa[q]-na*), she explained. Rida does not ask after

her whereabouts and nor does she. She avoids insulting his ex-girlfriends, many of whom she says still desire him and whose attempts to seduce him she has witnessed in her own presence. They fight about it later. They share expenses, and they distribute domestic responsibilities. Indeed, in their constant frequenting of spaces like Nolawit's café, each accompanied by a posse roughly matched in age, gender, and country of origin, as well as their teasing banter (Gigi constantly made fun of Kurdish masculinity and Rida of Ethiopian femininity), it seemed they both lived their dyad as on shared ground. When I asked about the future, neither seemed interested, giving no clear response and deferring to a topic more relevant to the present. Theirs was not a marriage governed by expectations of futurity but rather by the shared experience of exile (and its extended temporality) that they found themselves in. As *marriage*, then, it existed as a purely phenomenological entity: they were married because they said they were married. Within their own world, their marriage was accorded an informal recognition that was delinked from state institutions just as the overall world of migrant workers in Beirut continues to thrive outside of any legal legitimation.

Early during my time living in Dawra I was invited by Nolawit to join them in attending a wedding. The Ethiopian regulars from the café got dressed up, hair and nails done at the local salon, high heels and finest jewelry on display, and at around 3:00 PM on a Sunday in November we got in a taxi to go to the club where the wedding was happening. The taxi driver turned out to be a friend of Nolawit, a Lebanese man married to an Ethiopian woman whose prominently-displayed business card was striped red, yellow, and green (as was his shirt), and featured his name written in English, Arabic, and Amharic. As for the wedded-to-be, they were both Ethiopian Orthodox, and so the event was a community affair. I had only known the space in its

evening avatar as a popular Saturday night dance spot but it had been rented out and decorated, a DJ hired, a huge quantity of Ethiopian food prepared, and plastic water bottles of home-brewed *tej*, Ethiopian honey wine, distributed across the tables. Some women furtively snuck a bottle under a sweater before grabbing another, and were angrily reprimanded by others who had noticed. When it came time to eat, a muffled debate broke out over whether it was appropriate that the buffet table included both Ethiopian and Lebanese food, alongside judgments being exchanged over the general quality and quantity of the cooking. The crowd was overwhelmingly female, although both Arab and non-Arab men could be spotted, and young children could be seen twitching in uncomfortable formal wear and protesting at their mothers' refusal to stop dancing and take them home. It was still bright outside but the strobe-lit dance floor was quickly filling up, and a few women beside me proudly pointed out the reigning Ethiopian Beauty Queen (*malikatul-jamal*) of Beirut standing tall in the middle. The wedding went late into the night. Its most ceremonious activity was the endless clicking of an Ethiopian photographer with a spotlight and a tripod, who passed attendees his business card in case they wanted to purchase a CD of their photos from him at a later date. Guests competed animatedly for just one more photo, or perhaps a photo alone with the couple, or the prized spot on the sofa beside the bride and groom. And throughout the night, women exchanged estimates at how much the entire affair would have cost, raised eyebrows and hushed remarks conveying mixed degrees of dis/approval.

As the party drew to a close, a fight broke out between some women who wanted to take home the white flower arrangements that adorned the table where the bride and groom had been seated. Nolawit had been quietly drinking and dancing barefoot all night atop a couch in a far corner of the club where guests sat smoking *argileh*. It was she who had taken the flowers first,

and been stopped by two others who requested to share. Nolawit offered some and the women protested, asking for more. Heated words were exchanged and Nolawit furiously pulled flowers by the stem out of her bag, tearing their petals and throwing them on the floor. She walked across the room in her thin leopard-print stilettos, approached the empty wedding table, and yanked more flowers out of the now depleted-arrangements, continuing to scatter broken petals across the floor and cursing rapidly in a mixture of Arabic and Amharic at the ungrateful arrogation of those who regularly frequented the café she had poured her own savings into. Rita, a friend of Nolawit's who had accompanied us, turned to me, amused. "Whenever she drinks, this happens", she grinned. No one attempted to intervene and eventually our taxi arrived, as the Lebanese security guards who worked at the club ushered us out, although not before trying their luck at approaching some of the Ethiopian women for phone numbers. As we walked out the cops on the street stared and hollered. We had all been to the club before, and this part was familiar.

At one point during the evening Rahel, widely respected as a leader among the Ethiopian women, pulled me aside with a request on behalf of someone who needed assistance. I noticed Rahel was friendly with the newlyweds but seemed uncomfortable, and I later asked her what she thought about the wedding. She shrugged, in a manner that seemed to suggest both disappointment and a hint of reprimand. "We have no family here, we have nothing, we only have each other, so they like to throw a big party and enjoy themselves. Back home (*bil balad*) it would have been very different, not like this." It did not impress her, this wedding in a nightclub. It stood as a gaping reminder of what the women had left behind: a set of kin relations and traditions that were familiar, and that evoked in their familiarity order. And yet it is of note that the tensions that rose to the surface over the course of the wedding had nothing to do with the

marriage itself. Instead, they were contestations over resources, obligations, and entitlements — precisely the forms of exchange that structured this shared world. The truth of this marriage resided not in institutional recognition or ritualized ceremony (or the lack thereof), but in the sociality of *this* community. Precisely by conferring judgment on the wedding's offerings and competing to be seen under its spotlight, the attendees bestowed recognition on its claim.

Among the many couples scattered throughout Beirut's communities of migrant workers and refugees, *marriage* still marks something specific enough to occasion a celebration or reorganize living patterns. To choose the sign of marriage is to nominate heterosexual togetherness within a recognized vocabulary of ordering sexual relationships. But it is also to deploy kinship as the model around which to mold relationships that occur amidst great social and legal precarity. Many of these couples are composed of individuals who can easily be detained or deported, evident in the dozens who line up for weekly visiting hours at the detention center, where visitors are often split into 'family' and 'friends' and the former given priority (those without papers, of course, cannot visit at all). Their futures are highly uncertain: young women who have traveled to a foreign country only to flee the prisons of its domestic spaces, and young men who have left behind war and kin only to find themselves the target of a state security apparatus in a country heavily organized around filial origins. The noisy, exhausting city threatens isolation as its only guarantee. In declaring each other first boyfriend and girlfriend, and then husband and wife, these women and men thereby draw upon the most recognizable forms of intimate obligation — a *chosen unconditionality* —to organize their world precisely against this threat. Coupling allows for the presence of the other to figure as a promise: in exile, one offers attachment.

Like a Sibling

Migrant workers and refugees do not only come together in the couple form. Take Ayman, the Syrian Kurdish labourer introduced above as first naming to me the shared condition of exile that brought him daily to Nolawit's café. 26 year-old Ayman moves between two social scenes that often gather in one physical space: young Kurdish men, many from the Qamishli region of northeastern Syria very close to both Turkey and Iraq and currently the site of protracted battles with ISIS forces, and young Ethiopian women, all freelancers who live and work in Dawra. Ayman has a scar through his left eyebrow, a square jawline, long black hair always tied in a tight ponytail with the sides shaved beneath, and a large swastika on his right elbow that he tattooed himself, not because of Hitler but because he liked the image. He carries himself with a quiet certainty that veers on threat, imminently aware of its own menace. Rarely does he smile or raise his voice. Once his friends were showing me where they hid their knives, up sleeves and inside socks, as well as the many scars that testified to their readiness to wield them. Ayman quietly remarked that *he* did not need a knife to protect. In his early 20s, Ayman had faced what he described as the betrayal of his childhood beloved and betrothed, and it was her rejection that pushed him to leave home and travel to Beirut a few years before the start of the war in Syria. It was also at this moment that he had tattooed the front of his right hand with an Arabic sentence in crude blue lines reading, "I hate women" (أكره النساء). The first time I saw the tattoo I was shocked but he affirmed my reading without shame, summarizing the story and insisting that it did not, in fact, mean he hated women. It seemed hard to disagree, for among the women at Nolawit's café, Ayman was the most treasured of men.

I soon realized that the Kurds, under Ayman's direction, functioned as informal security for a café frequented by undocumented women. Ayman would usually be there every night until closing, and his group of young men were responsible for various negotiations with the Syrian workers who delivered coal for *argileh*, cold beer, toilet paper, and other supplies. The group would watch the streets for signs of police or other suspicious activity, they would appraise every new customer, and they would firmly remove any unfamiliar man who walked in intoxicated. When a male acquaintance of a regular female customer entered with a gun in his back pocket, Ayman's crew did not let him out of their sight. It was Ayman who strung up the Christmas lights during holiday season, who chose the fabric for Nolawit's latest idea to spruce up the decor through new upholstery, who called taxis that would know how to avoid checkpoints, and who advised the women on matters of heart and health. In a micro-community where gendered and ethnic divisions aligned seamlessly, and where the women could not read his tattoo but certainly did read his behaviour, Ayman was frequently described as "like my brother (*mitl khayyi*)."

Unsurprisingly, the Kurdish men had their own form of fraternalism. There were five that were very close, one of whom was described as Ayman's uncle and was in his early 50s, the rest of whom were closer to Ayman's age, and an additional five or six that came in and out. All had different reasons for being in Beirut, and differing degrees of interest in the militarized conflict that was raging in their hometown. Where many had siblings, parents, or cousins who were part of Kurdish forces fighting ISIS and would spend hours poring over footage of recent operations or attacks, Ayman would get frustrated and insist he was uninterested in politics (*siyase*). Regardless, Rida — a brilliant orator who favoured conspiracy theories — and Hasan — who preferred video game-like explosion videos — were his closest friends, and they referred to the

other as "my brother (*khayyi*)", bonded by their Kurdish origins and their Beirut exile. Ayman repeated to anyone who would listen that loyalty was his only principle, and gave the impression that his judgment of betrayal was something we should all fear. But even during Kurdish-language conversation, everyone was still gathered at an Ethiopian café. When it came time to celebrate Rida's brithday, it was Nolawit who decorated the place to host Ayman and his boys.

Ayman was unique among the Kurdish men around him for not only speaking Amharic fluently but also being able to decipher and string together sentences in the Oromo language, Ethiopia's second most populous. His uncle had been married to an Ethiopian woman, he explained, and he had lived with them for some years. He displayed images from these years with a soft pride that surprised me, his aunt having braided his long hair into the intricate weaves otherwise associated with Ethiopian women's hairstyles. It was through them that he first opened a *Central* station, the term for small corner stores that offer phones and discount rates for international calling. The stores are common gathering spots for migrant workers looking for ways to call home, and often end up associated with specific national communities of workers based on the rates offered and the composition of a given neighbourhood. Ayman, of course, specialized in Ethiopia, and like many others, the store he ran offered a range of goods from back home: spices, clothing, jewelry, DVDs, and even the popular drug *chat*, a plant native to the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (known as *qat* in Arabic), until it was banned and its Ethiopian importers were jailed in Lebanon. Alongside his linguistic skills, Ayman's familiarity with the Amharic script, careful hand, and possession of basic tattooing equipment made him in high demand among the young women of Dawra. Weekday evenings, after returning from a day job in a factory that produced soaps and shampoos, he would sketch silently in a corner of

Nolawit's café. On weekends a string of young women would make appointments to have the names of mothers, the shapes of territory, or the symbols of God inked onto their skin by his hands. After my fieldwork, I learned that Ayman had married a young Ethiopian woman called Baby, legendary for her looks and winner of the local Ethiopian beauty pageant the previous year. But in the time I knew him, he lived fully integrated into this café community. Although it was rare to hear him express personal affection, Ayman, too, let it slip on occasion when describing Nolawit or two other Ethiopian women: "*hiya mitl ukhti*: she is like my sister."

In contrast, consider Aida's story. 27 year-old Aida has worked in Beirut for eight years, and for the last few years has quite a stable job and a Lebanese sponsor who is a young progressive woman and considers Aida an equal and a friend, leaving her with the flexibility to frequently make trips back home and visit her family in Ethiopia. Outside Addis, where Aida's family lives, her younger sister Sara saw the money Aida remitted over the years, having first had a piece of land purchased and then a spacious house built and furnished. Sara also witnessed Aida's transformation from a shy, petite teenager to a strong, feisty, well-dressed young woman both hardened by menial labour and opened by the worldliness and hip consumer cultures of Beirut. Last year, Sara decided, against Aida's firm prohibition and pleading advice, to come to Beirut and try her own hand at migrant work. Aida refused to arrange a sponsor for her so Sara went ahead and contacted one of the recruitment agencies that place young Ethiopian women in Lebanese homes. Three weeks after Sara had arrived to Lebanon, Aida remained unable to track her down, daily contacting the agency and inquiring after her whereabouts. Sara had been placed in an undisclosed home for a trial period, as they argued was customary. Until three months had passed and Sara successfully obtained her residency permit (and even then only if the family

where she had been placed allowed her some form of outside communication, or unless she ran away), there was little Aida could do but wait for her younger sister to call.

Within these conditions, sibling relations are subject to the overall fragmentation of life that migrant workers experience in Beirut. Early one Thursday morning I ran into Nolawit in the visitors line at the migrant detention center, and I was surprised to hear her say she was waiting to visit her sister. This sister had been living in the country for six years, Nolawit explained indifferently; they saw each other every so often. At this point I had spent four months around Nolawit and had never seen nor heard of the sister. During the Ethiopian wedding we had all attended, Rita (another café regular) excitedly introduced me to her younger brother, who had been in the country for three years and, I later learnt, had a reputation as one of the most desirable young Ethiopian men in town. I spent many more months seeing Rita at least twice a week, including being invited to her home on multiple occasions, but I never encountered her brother again. In the meantime, the Kurdish men and Ethiopian women who filled these two women's spaces of daily socialization and formed roommates, neighbours, and friends, were designated as siblings.

Once again, this was a decision to nominate another in a way that allowed for demands of unconditionality to be made. But it was also a nomination that occurred only in the form of a simile: *like* a brother/sister. A separation was still marked, then; a separation that did not mark Ayman's description of Rida, nor Aida, Rita, or Nowalit's descriptions of what I assumed to be their biological kin. Just as ultimately siblings cannot be *chosen* within traditional kinship (but marriage partners may be), it is in sexual intimacies that inherited kin networks may be expanded to incorporate that which is outside the immediate structure of the family. But this context is also

far from a traditional one. Kinship, however it may organize social relations, has never been the model through which cities are inhabited.

City of Friendship

Writing on the modern city has privileged a series of key tropes that include individuality, anonymity, strangeness, and alienation. The urban has thus been theorized as a site produced by contradictions: so much proximity and so little intimacy; the traffic of crowds and the fact of extreme individuality; the offerings of abundance — commodities, cuisines, environments, experiences — and the unshakeable refrain of the lonely. As early as 1903, German sociologist Georg Simmel argued in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (2002) that metropolitan subjects therefore develop what he called a 'blasé attitude', one characterized by suspicion and reservedness, fleeting and atomized social encounters, and the replacement of qualitative distinctions by the quantified form of money. For Simmel, the metropolis also enables a richness of intellectual life due to its accommodation of two contradictory forms of individualism: both the essential equality, and the essential uniqueness of each individual. But according to the later theorizing of those associated with the Frankfurt School, the urban social relations that emerge out of capitalist exchange remain ones that rest on alienation, commodification, and the political and ideological mediations of institutional forms.

It is in response to these observations about modern life that movements arose to inhabit the city differently. Formed in 1957, The Situationist International promulgated the notion of psychogeography and the experimental act of the *dérive*, or drifting through urban terrain without motive or predictability. Meanwhile Marxist Henri Lefebvre, writing in French in the

1970s, was inspired by the Situationists while analytically committed to the centrality of economic relations for understanding what he termed 'the production of space.' Lefebvre (1992) insisted that lived space must be thought not as an ontological given but through a constructionist approach that privileges current modes of production, meaning that the organization of capitalism in a given city determines social relations as opposed to simply offering its setting. As a result, a new political contract was needed that foregrounded the struggle of urban inhabitants against property owners and the commodification of space (eg. real-estate development), out of which emerged Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city' (1996; see also Harvey 2008).

Tangential to an explicitly Marxist strand of writing but, like Lefebvre, writing in the aftermath of the uprisings of Paris 1968, French theorist Michel de Certeau has drawn upon psychoanalysis to think about the relationship between the unconscious and the city. De Certeau (2011) focuses on routinized everyday acts such as *walking* as generating an undeterminable urban environment entirely different from the unified maps of city planners. Similarly influential has been Walter Benjamin's much older figure of the flâneur, the emblematic urban aesthete drawn from Charles Baudelaire's portrait of late 19th-century Paris. Benjamin and the flâneur have recently enjoyed a resurgence in a range of interdisciplinary and non-academic writings on the (modern and post-modern) city (Stephen 2013). Resisting the capitalist imperatives of efficiency and consumption, the flâneur is a deeply solitary character. The city dweller privileged in many of these readings wanders with idle abandonment, both overwhelmed and enchanted by the sensory overload of the cityscape. But Beirut is not a European city. It is against this model that I want to foreground, in the sociality of Beirut's exiles, an urban subject that seeks instead the solace of the familiar.

During a trip to the airport to bid farewell to an interlocutor who was being deported to the Philippines that afternoon, I met a group of four Arab men who had come to visit two Filipina women also being deported that day. Two of the men had come to say goodbye to their girlfriends, who had been caught in an apartment raid and detained for nearly six weeks, and the other two men were friends who had come along for the occasion. The boyfriends had brought suitcases of the girls' clothing as well as cash for their trip home, although any tender farewells were made awkward by the irritable grunts of the presiding General Security officer. Over the course of witnessing nearly a dozen deportations at Beirut International Airport, I constantly saw partners and groups of friends waiting for the detainees to arrive in a locked police van and then rushing items of clothing and food, or gifts of jewelry and cash, into their hands.

What Charly's story does not mention is that a decade ago Dawra looked nothing like the migrant worker neighbourhood it is today (something I discuss further in the next chapter). There were far fewer networks through which a domestic worker could find out where to meet her compatriots or how to get help running away, let alone meet a boyfriend who would give her gifts before her deportation home. Yet when Charly described the demographic growth of two communities excluded from Lebanese belonging (Ethiopian and Syrian) as coming together in the couple form, he too revealed the strength of the associations between this newly forged social world and the phenomenon of mixed coupling. As evident from the airport deportations, this is not only a world of heterosexual dyads. It is also one that relies on chosen bonds and interpersonal commitments that we might gather under the name of friendship, or, what we could call after Leela Gandhi, an 'affective community.'

Cultural theorist Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities* (2006) examines the subcultures of fin de siècle anti-imperialism that weaved together utopian socialism, Marxism, anarchism, and additional political imaginaries coalescing towards the end of the 19th century. Gandhi describes a disparate set of countercultural characters acting from within the culture of imperial Britain, and names their actions, via Derrida, a 'politics of friendship.' Her conceptualization

> privileges the trope of friendship as the most comprehensive philosophical signifier for all those invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging (2006, 44).

It is for this reason I turn to it in a distinctly different context. Like the eccentric anti-imperial Westerners that populate Gandhi's book, many of whom are engaged in secret and unacknowledged friendships with anti-colonial South Asians, friendship is not just a trope here. Its Saidian insistence on affiliation, those relations consciously forged of conviction and history rather than born of origin, strongly resonates with the solidarities of migrant workers' Beirut.

I was often struck by the casualness with which members of the community centered around Nolawit's café would describe their initial encounters: a random meeting through shared acquaintance; a favour asked of a neighbour. This stood in contrast with the weighty bonds shared by the young Kurdish men, who gathered in the same space to listen to mournful laments as their hometowns were being bombed. It was as if they all simply happened to find themselves together in Beirut, and not that a tight dozen-person network had developed a structure of reciprocity and obligation distinct from the hundreds of other foreigners that lived around them. But their companionship was fundamentally aimed at exceeding the isolation of their shared milieu. They did not choose to wander the city for its strange delights, but to keep coming back to what was likely the only place in all of Beirut that they could say was *theirs*. Nolawit's café

enabled the cultivation of what Gandhi names as the 'invisible affective gestures' of friendship, and it is such gestures that are to be found throughout this city.

Yvette's Story

Yvette is 25 years old, of flawless skin and bored temperament, with carefully braided black hair reaching down her lower back and styled differently every week. She speaks with the cadence of a proselytizer, and her favourite activity is to sing at the highest pitch her voice allows, stepping side to side and shaking her body in praise of the Lord. Although she does not come from a Pentecostal tradition in her home country of Cameroon, she discovered the movement in Beirut, and every Sunday she leads the Dawra congregation of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in collective song while a diverse mix of African attendees slip back and forth into forms of glossolalia under the roar of a Nigerian pastor. She has been in Lebanon for three years.

Yvette came to Lebanon because a fellow Cameroonian who she refers to in the pattern of her church as 'my sister' had been working in the country, and had invited her to come work as a hairdresser for another Cameroonian woman that ran a hair salon in Beirut. Yvette was very skilled at intricate braiding, and based on her sister's advice she packed a suitcase entirely full of hairdressing equipment, a few cooking ingredients, and nothing else. Upon arrival, much to her surprise, she found a Lebanese man waiting for her at the airport with a copy of her passport. She was taken directly to an employment agency who sent her to a large villa owned by a wealthy Lebanese family in the mountains, where her task would be to clean and provide childcare. She insisted there had been a mistake and that she had not come to join the domestic service industry, so the family agreed to allow her to return to the Beirut agency from which she had been

acquired and pursue the matter (after all, if she left within the first three months they were entitled to a free replacement). It was there that the woman who ran the employment agency swore at Yvette loudly in a language she did not understand, slapped her hard on her right cheek, and then forcefully kicked her stomach with the sharp heel of her angular shoes. At this point Yvette, in great pain, realized it was safer to return to the house in the mountains. Upon doing so, the Lebanese family took her to a nearby hospital to check on her injuries. Yvette's abuse at the hands of the agency had led to internal bleeding and she was told a minor procedure would be required. She was terrified, as her father had once become extremely ill from a mishandled hospital procedure in Cameroon, so she refused the procedure. Early the next morning, under the cover of sleep, she fled the house with her small suitcase of hair equipment.

An Egyptian taxi driver soon noticed the young, strongly-built black woman dragging a small suitcase down a winding mountain road. "Where are you going?", he asked. "Cameroon", came her reply. He laughed. She had no money, she narrated to us years later, only determination. He offered to take her partway to the airport until his route diverged, and after a long drive he dropped her at the side of the road and wished her well. She sat, waiting. Eventually she lay her head down on her suitcase and went to sleep. After a few hours she awoke to find herself surrounded by onlookers, including an African woman to whom she pleaded for information about the promised hair salon. Another taxi driver offered to take her to Dawra, "because you are a young girl and we want to help you." By the time they arrived in Dawra it was after dark and all shops were closed. A Nigerian woman with two kids in tow passed by Yvette, who was once again standing stranded on the street. Yvette shared her story. Dawra had been right decision. The woman recognized the reference and took Yvette to a nearby salon that

was indeed run by a Cameroonian woman, and made Yvette wait outside while she conferred with the owner. It turned out Yvette's plans had been thwarted without her knowledge: the salon owner had become worried about the responsibility of another employee and sold her papers to a domestic worker employment agency. She would have nothing to do with Yvette. "Young girls simply cause trouble", she had insisted. Even after the Nigerian woman's insistence and appeals to national sisterhood, there was no changing her mind. The Nigerian woman apologized to Yvette, but it was getting late and she could not take Yvette home with the kids, for she would get into trouble. She had tried her best.

Yvette dragged her small bag back to the side of Dawra's main commercial strip, known as Armenia Street, and went back to waiting. It was getting late, but the tales of the faithful retain a remarkable capacity for the miraculous. At around 4:00 AM a Ghanaian woman walking by noticed her, stopped to listen to her story, apologized for being unable to help more, and gave Yvette 20,000 LL ($13 USD). The woman had just departed when a Syrian man passed Yvette in a car and offered to take Yvette home. At this the Ghanaian woman rushed back and began to fight with the man, imploring Yvette not to get in the car, but Yvette calmly reassured her that it was fine and she could take care of herself. The woman gave Yvette a phone number to call if she needed anything, and Yvette sat herself and her suitcase in the stranger's car. He drove her to his home outside the city, where she faced the wrath of his (Syrian) wife. The man insisted he had simply taken pity on Yvette and it was no girlfriend of his, but after a few days, Yvette was kicked out of the home by the woman. With the help of the gifted phone number, she made it back to Dawra, all the while still suffering from immense pain due to her untreated internal bleeding. Eventually, the wife of the pastor of an African church took her in and gave her refuge,

paid her medical bills, and found her a new job cooking and cleaning. All of this happened within her first three weeks in Lebanon. Having made it so far, her next job was with a well-mannered Lebanese man who made her cook, clean, and oversee the maintenance of three houses and three separate families for a mere $200/month total, until one day she collapsed from exhaustion and was warned by a doctor she must rest or die. She left, and lived to tell.

Yvette's tale speaks to the density of the affective ties within the migrant worker worlds I have been describing. Its diverse characters felt as if scripted when I first heard her narrate the story, and yet these are precisely the inhabitants of Beirut's urban underground: business owners, taxi drivers, church affiliates, sympathetic strangers. Although Yvette's speech was not recorded, I have tried to remain as faithful as possible in recreating her narrative through a careful set of notes. Her narration contained no rancour, and I forced back tears at the ease with which she was able to recall both the violences on her body and the gentle extensions of stranger generosity. Hers is a city where even the busy street can be a site of recognition. Some of these possibilities have been formalized, with the creation of associations such as the African Union, intended to promote solidarity among African residents in Lebanon (in practice almost exclusively composed of migrant workers rather than wealthier expatriates), and the Cameroonian Women's Association through which I first met Yvette. But associations are not what could be seen offering a helping hand after a police raid destroyed a Sunday sidewalk bazaar of Filipina women selling homemade food in plastic containers. It was the Arab men of Dawra who sold socks and lighters a few steps around the corner and had scattered in fear of the police only to return, cigarettes still lit in their mouths, bending down, creased hands extended outwards.

4. The City of Exiles
Part II

On Sunday, May 3, 2015, hundreds of migrant domestic workers and their allies marched down the streets of Beirut in a Workers' Day Parade calling for the abolishment of the *kafala* system, the improvement of migrant working conditions, and the adoption of ILO Convention No. 189 regarding the rights of domestic workers. The march was led by the newly-created Domestic Workers' Union, the first such organization in the entire region. It began at the Cola bus station in the southeast part of the city, and from there we marched loudly towards the Hamra district, where the events were to conclude with a festive celebration in a large outdoor parking lot. Migrant workers gathered to sell food, give or hear speeches, and perform in a curated set of traditional/fusion dance performances. Both the energy of the crowd and the volume of the speakers were high, and dozens of passersby unaware of the political precursor to the party stopped by to check out the fun. I recorded a bit of an Ethiopian dance sequence on my smartphone and quickly walked over to the kitchen of the neighbourhood restaurant where I had previously worked in order to see if any of the Ethiopian staff could slip out and join us. They loved the video and two women walked back with me, still dressed in the hairnets and aprons of their kitchen uniform, to join the dancing. After some brief minutes they had to rush back to work, however — although they were freelancers, Sunday was not their designated day off.

The two Ethiopian women were loosely aware of the Domestic Workers' Union as well as the May Day festivities due to the fact that they worked at a leftist hub in Beirut's cultural scene. Most of the freelancers in the city, however, were not. The week prior I had asked a few Filipina women at a local hair salon if they had any interest in joining the parade but they quickly

brushed it off, with the most talkative woman of the group laughing, "Sundays I just want to lie in bed and watch T.V.!" Although Lebanon continues to see the growth of NGO and activist organizations concerned with migrant worker rights, the vast majority of migrant workers in the country are either unaware of or do not access such services. And yet the creation of the Domestic Workers' Union (DWU) as a formalized political unit has occurred exactly alongside the proliferation of migrant worker spaces of religious, commercial, and social activity in Beirut. The temporal and spatial overlap of these changes has thus enabled not only new interpersonal attachments, but also new modes of collectivity and togetherness. Over approximately the last decade, migrant workers and refugees have radically transformed what, and *who,* it means to live in Lebanon's urban center. Theirs is a new Beirut.

In Part II of this chapter I step back from the intimate encounter to examine a social fact of the world created by Beirut's exiles: *belonging*. Rather than the density of intersubjective relations examined in Part I, here I am interested in the stakes of a population dispossessed of social and political recognition nonetheless thriving inside the city, and its consequences for Beirut at large. I begin by turning briefly to the rich tradition of literary and academic writing on modern Beirut to ask: What failure of the imagination has allowed hundreds of thousands of African and Asian labourers to remain so wholly outside the idea of who forms the city's population? As a counter-narrative, I offer a brief overview of migrant worker spaces in contemporary Beirut, as well as examples of how diverse characters inhabit these spaces. I then take a closer look at the DWU and recent May Day Workers' Parades, the only site in the Arab world where annual May Day demonstrations have united foreign migrant workers and citizen supporters in calls for change. I

argue that the speech of domestic workers who march on May Day, and their claim to participation in the political life of Lebanon, is the consequence of first having forged a belonging to the city. I conclude by considering what happens when this belonging has been rendered impossible. In the context of multiple layers of urban sociality that segregate citizen from exile, what is left for a citizen herself banished from the nation?

Whose Beirut?

Beyrouth! The name alone carries such allure. Paris of the Middle East; sultriest city of an Arab world torn apart by American bombs and bearded zealots; picturesque skyline of abandoned buildings scarred by bullet holes, and still the breeze of the bluest sea. Beirut has long been a key port in the eastern Mediterranean, and by the second half of the nineteenth century it was likely *the* commercial and cultural centre of the Levant (Johnson 1986). A century later, the poet Adonis wrote, "As soon as my feet touched its soil and I began wandering its streets, I felt I was in a different city: not a city of endings, as was the case with Damascus, but a city of beginnings" (in Creswell 2012, 37). "Beirut's genius was that it responded immediately to our needs as Arabs in an Arab world gone prison-like, drab and insufferably mediocre", continued Edward Said. "For some years, one could, in Beirut, burn with a hard gemlike flame; even the city's vice and profligacy had a brilliance you could not see elsewhere" (Said 1985). "I had not heard my blood speak / In a lover's name before / As it spoke and slept in Beirut", declared Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, immortalizing the city for his people of exile: *khaymatuna; najmatuna,* "Beirut our only tent; Beirut our only star" (1986, 50).

This was Beirut before the civil war, seemingly bursting with cosmopolitan promise. From 1958—1965, the largest number of Ethiopian college students getting degrees abroad were studying in North America, followed by Lebanon and Germany (Pankhurst 1967). Browsing through the yearbooks of the American University in Beirut during these legendary decades before the start of the civil war in 1975, one finds dozens of international faces, particularly from newly independent nations including Sudan, India, and Kenya. Lebanese author Hala Kawtharani writes of a fictional character that becomes fascinated with his mother's account of Beirut in the 50s and 60s: "a time when the faces of many colours from many lands walked al-Hamra Street and all the languages of the world could be heard" (2010, 95). This was a time of Arab nationalism, third world internationalism, and Havana's Tricontinental; USSR funding on one side and CIA funding on the other, all competing for the mantle of modernism and progress in the great cities of the global south.[41] It was a time when Beirut was the political capital of the Palestinian Revolution and the intellectual refuge for dissidents across the region fleeing censorship and repression inside authoritarian states. The neighbourhood of Ras Beirut in particular, home to the American University of Beirut (established in 1866 by Protestant missionaries) and the leftist café culture of Hamra Street, is regularly remembered through exceptionalist narratives of coexistence pre-1975 (Abunnasr 2013). But to read Samir Khalaf's words on this side of history is to mourn for that which has never been said again since the

[41] For an overview of Marxist intellectual trends in Lebanon that date back to this era and their connection to Third World national liberation languages and competing ideologies of the time, see Bardawil (2010). For an introduction to *Lotus Magazine*, the magazine of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association that was headquartered in Beirut from 1978-1982, see Halim (2012). For a discussion of the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom and its role in supporting the avant-garde Arabic magainze *Hiwar,* edited by Tawfiq al-Sayigh in Beirut from 1962-1967, see Holt (2013).

Lebanese civil war: "Beirut… is perhaps the only Arab capital which has been able to absorb politically divergent and ethnic groups without much tension or dissent" (1973, 73).

It is said that for many years after Lebanon's civil war, in colloquial French "C'était Beyrouth" was used to describe chaos; a place of destruction. According to political scientist Michael Hudson, writing in different times, "Lebanon is the only state in the Middle East, and one of only a handful in the world in recent times, virtually to collapse— not just as a regime or government, but as a state" (1985, 13). The name Beirut continued to index urban devastation in those decades: kidnappings, disappearances, armed factions, bombs, shelters, checkpoints, and the line between East and West. Consider the Lower East Side of New York City in the 1970s, bankrupt, dangerous, decaying: "*Beirut on the Hudson*" (Lunch 1977). Or Sicily in 1992, in an article discussing the Italian mafia's attack on judges investigating its operations using multiple massive car bombs: "*Palermo just like Beirut*" (Tondo 2017). "No other modern society has torn itself apart with that crazy mixture of brutality and style" (2012, 258), wrote Said again. The overwhelming 15 year-long violence of Lebanon's civil war, including multiple Israeli invasions, was immediately followed by the fall of the Soviet Union and the latter's efforts to promulgate third worldist ideologies in the region. Never again would Beirut be a central node for both the Palestinian liberation struggle and global circuits of Afro-Asian solidarity.

With these paradoxical associations of liberal cosmopolitanism and urban warfare, it is unsurprising that Beirut has been the focus of significant writing that takes 'the city' as its lens (albeit often parochially).[42] Seminal works have examined the use of postwar reconstruction in order to accelerate privatization (Khalaf & Khoury 1993; Makdisi 1997), a process that has

[42] For a provocative exception to this trend that takes as its object the development of late 19th-early 20th century radicalism across the cities of Cairo, Alexandria, and Beirut, see Khuri-Makdisi (2010).

continued until today (Khalaf 2013; Nagel 2002; Monroe 2016; Sawalha 2010). In fact, it has been argued that the modern city of Beirut is itself the *outcome* of 19th-century social struggles over space (Hanssen 2005). The segregation of the city along sectarian lines, what Makdisi (1997) calls 'spatialized sectarianism', continues to attract the attention of anthropologists and urban theorists alike (Deeb & Harb 2013; Fawaz 2009; Randa Nucho 2016), as do attendant class and lifestyle divisions (Khalil Harb 2014; Monroe 2016). At the same time, Beirut's relative sexual freedoms and reputation as a city with a vibrant nightlife and queer subculture have been a related focus of much attention (al-Daif & Helfer 2015; Chahine 2008; Merabet 2014). And as noted above, the Palestinian refugee camps of Beirut, particularly that of Sabra and Shatila, have been a key site of analysis for the study of Palestine in exile, as well as the loudest rejoinder to scholarship on Lebanon that collapses the category of citizen and subject (Allan 2013; Khalili 2007; Peteet 2005). But between a joint mourning and nostalgia for what the city once was, or a joint celebration and condemnation of what the city now is, there remains an inadequate attention to the changes themselves. The imaginative shift from the internationalist, anti-colonial visions of the 1970s, to the current associations between the African and Asian continents and the city's temporary foreign workers, has yet to be taken seriously in scholarly accounts of postwar Beirut.

In keeping with Beirut's metonymic relationship to Lebanon, fictional works and memoirs coming out of the region have also privileged the city as eponymous signifier for narrative content. A lengthy list of titles over the decades include *Beirut Fragments* (Said-Makdisi 1999), *Beirut Blues* (al-Shaykh 1996), *Beirut Nightmares* (Samaan 2010), *Transit Beirut* (Khalaf 2006), *Beirut, I love you* (el-Khalil 2009) *Beirut 39* (Shimon 2010), *Beirut, Beirut* (Ibrahim 2015), *Beirut Noir* (Humaydan 2015), *Limbo Beirut* (Chouman 2016), and more. If

migrant workers appear in any of these texts, they are mostly relegated to background scenery, more disturbing than the pollution but less exceptional than the bullet holes. Every so often they will make an appearance in their appropriate place, answering doors (Beydoun 2015), sweeping floors (Jaber 2016), pushing strollers (Hage 2008), serving breakfast (Alameddine 2009), or speaking Arabic awkwardly (Mandour 2016).[43] They are a social fact of the city, yes, but even if they may be found within it, nowhere is there room for the possibility that Beirut could be theirs.

Our Beirut!

One Sunday I drove through Dawra in search of a Sikh temple that was hidden on the fourth floor of a run-down apartment building across a huge automotive factory. The streets were resplendent with Sunday colour. "Dawra, you know, it's everything", commented Rahel, an Ethiopian organizer at the local Migrant Community Center whom I was accompanying. "It's Addis for the Ethiopians, Colombo for the Sri Lankans, Dhaka for the Bangladeshis… you have it all here." I wondered whether Dawra had become the new site of Beirut's legendary prewar cosmopolitanism, but to claim so would be to ignore the precarious economic conditions that underpin this world. Rather, Rahel points us to *her* Beirut, a city chameleon-like in its openness to those inhabitants who first enter it in exclusion. Today, foreigners have so wholly resignified Beirut that a single neighbourhood can be simultaneously described as three major global cities, even as Ethiopians, Sri Lankans, and Bangladeshis themselves rarely socialize in this neighbourhood outside their shared national groups.

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[43] It should be noted that among this list of works, Sahar Mandour's *32* (2016) stands out for its attempt to portray the Sri Lankan domestic worker as a real character with a name and personal story, albeit one whose relationship to Beirut itself is still fully collapsed into the category of domestic labour.

Dawra has not always been this way. The eastern districts of Dawra, Bourj Hammoud, and Ras el-Nab'aa were first populated by Armenian refugees arriving in Lebanon in the first half of the 20th century (Dahdah 2012). Most of those I asked during my fieldwork traced the area's transformation into a center of migrant worker activity back approximately a decade. Mala, a Sri Lankan community leader who has been in Lebanon for 35 years, attributed the change to infrastructural and socioeconomic developments. A remarkable woman who is a living historian of the Lebanese civil war, Mala started the country's first makeshift Sunday school for children of Sri Lankan women to study the Sinhalese language and Buddhist religious tradition nearly 20 years ago. She distinctly remembered a time before Dawra. Back then, she explained to me, there were no buses, and the families wealthy enough to hire a domestic worker often lived in large villas in mountainous villages. Women were isolated from any possibility of a vibrant urban existence, and used to gather secretly in parking lots or at church services — this is how, Mala mentioned with visible disappointment, many Buddhists converted to Christianity. Gradually, as wealth increased in the postwar Lebanese capital (likely a consequence of large-scale investment in postwar reconstruction as well as remittances flowing in from the Gulf [see Tabar 2010]), more migrants were brought directly to Beirut. The workforce itself also diversified, from primarily domestic workers to a range of low-wage job sectors around the city.

In contrast, Rahel, an Ethiopian activist introduced in more detail below, told me that only five years ago Dawra was "sleepy" but that "now, it has grown up with the Ethiopians." Rahel insisted with unapologetically discriminatory national pride that Sri Lankan women (the first to come to Lebanon) did not fight abuse, but Ethiopian women, well, "you beat her she beats you back." Rahel described the growth of Dawra as a consequence of the act of flight — it was

freelancers that helped create this new city. It is unquestionable that the growing number of women fleeing domestic servitude, joining the informal labour market, and meeting Lebanese men with whom they can enter into intimate and/or business partnerships, has made possible the range of commercial establishments that currently populate Dawra. According to Dahdah (2012), the commercial presence of migrants in Dawra used to be limited to Sri Lankan and Indian shops hidden in small alleyways. Although he does not date the shift, he notes that this has now given way to highly visible businesses catering to communities from the Philippines, Ethiopia, Nepal, and Bangladesh, including freight companies, financial transfer agencies, international call centers, restaurants, grocery stores, salons, and jewelry shops primarily selling gold.

Apart from the eastern suburbs that center around Dawra, numerous other semi-public spaces of migrant worker congregation exist in and around Beirut, particularly churches. In recent years a strip leading up from Hamra Street has started being referred to as 'Little Manila' due to the conglomeration of Philippines-associated restaurants, grocery stores, clothing boutiques, karaoke bars, and call centers spilling off two churches that have been the Sunday gathering spot for Beirut's Filipina domestic workers for approximately a decade. Sundays find these spaces full of carefully dressed Filipina women and leather jacket-clad Arab men, eating, drinking, dancing, flirting, and generally preferring the inconspicuous indoors to Beirut's weekend street life. Meanwhile the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has had a presence in Beirut since 1998 (Dahdah 2012). Worshippers gather on Sundays at one of two churches either in the Badaro neighbourhood of the city, or a half hour bus ride just northeast of Beirut in Ayn Aar. The latter church was in fact built with funds from the centralized Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which has a presence in Jerusalem and the UAE. The Ethiopian Protestant community

also has its own Sunday services in Badaro. Both congregations additionally organize group trips to various Lebanese sites — the Orthodox for the purpose of pilgrimage, and the Evangelical Protestants for the purpose of proselytizing. I attended one such latter event specifically organized for Muslim Bangladeshis, who were invited to participate and hear the call in an elaborate Sunday of festivities featuring a music-filled sermon held at a private beach.

The Bangladeshi community itself is the most under-documented of Lebanon's migrant workers. Many NGOs complained to me of limited access due to language barriers and apparently strict control of access by male authorities. During my fieldwork, an NGO that had partnered with an organization in Bangladesh to address these concerns twice attempted to bring a woman from Bangladesh to Lebanon, and twice was denied a visa by the Lebanese authorities at General Security. Back in 2006, the Palestinian refugee camp and surrounding area of Sabra and Shatila was already reported as the site of a Sunday "Bangla market" composed of temporary stalls selling Bengali food, films, and small trinkets (Mohaimen 2006). In 2015, a social worker told me she estimated that upwards of 7000 Bangladeshis now resided within the same area. During walks through Sabra market, I too found multiple stalls selling products targeted towards these Bangladeshi residents. I was told the products arrived via Dubai, centrally distributed through a network of Lebanese businessmen savvily aware of a captive market. Whether as large as the Orthodox church built in Ayn Aar or as small as a temporary Bangla stall in Sabra market, diverse establishments are thus altering the cityscape of Lebanon's capital.

One Saturday night Abdo, a young Sudanese man out partying at an Ethiopian disco, abruptly turned to me and said with a grin, "Here at this club, you can really feel like you're in Ethiopia or

Sudan." Abdo had not only never been to Ethiopia, he also came from a rural part of Sudan that he often laughingly described as living among farm animals. His comparison was made in the tenor of a dream-image. He was only 24 and already sick of his job, always quick to change the subject of conversation from what his workday had been to what the weekend parties would bring. His first girlfriend, an Ethiopian woman barely out of her teens, had died when she fell ill from something they did not understand and was denied medical care. He himself took her from hospital rejection to hospital rejection, pooling the savings of her friends until a private hospital accepted her on the condition of a $2000 cash payment. He found the money and then left to work the next morning. It was the last time her saw her alive. And yet, like Rahel, Abdo had resignified a Beirut dance floor into a familiar space that indexed entire nations. It was a *feeling*.

My first time attending a massive Ethiopian concert in Beirut was for a show featuring Ethiopian pop stars Jacky Gosse and Abinet Agonafer. It was organized by Charly, and I too could not help but be astonished by the feeling. Here only ten minutes from downtown Beirut I was surrounded by shout-outs to Addis and 3000 attendees, almost all of whom were black Africans. It was not my usual experience of the city. I recognized Ayman, as well as some of his Syrian Kurdish companions from around Dawra, but even they were visible outsiders as they awkwardly shuffled around the premises, pacing back and forth along the perimeter while the astroturf-covered floor filled with the energy of practiced dance moves. Although such events rely upon partnerships with Lebanese citizens such as Charly, this is a world that *exile* has made possible. It is a telling indictment of the elite's imagination that it is nowhere to be found in academic or literary representations of the city. But across Beirut, migrant workers insist that

their urban presence will not only be circumscribed by their own foreignness. It will also be articulated in the form of a collective first-person: *we, too, live here.*

Below, I offer a diverse set of examples of migrants who make varied claims on the city they have made theirs. These figures exemplify what Simone (2004) has called 'people as infrastructure', an argument for re-envisioning the organization of social life in cities that cannot be adequately explained through depictions of weak civil society or failed infrastructure. By considering how these individuals inhabit Beirut, we can witness the forms of belonging that have not only made possible the internal spaces of migrant socialization described above, but have also been turned outwards to directly address the Lebanese state.

The Wanderer of Solidere

Downtown Beirut is popularly referred to using the name of the company established to oversee its postwar reconstruction, Solidere (the French acronym for The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District). In what has become a foundational text on the reconstruction, Saree Makdisi (1997) mourns the loss of Beirut's 'historical richness' to the public-private partnership and destruction-(re)construction drive that coalesced under Solidere. Reading Makdisi's text two decades later provides an eerie feeling, with its projected sketches now intimately familiar as material scenes of the cityscape. But there is one thing missing in the realizations of Solidere's imagined Beirut: the people.

Today, downtown Beirut is sometimes referred to as *madinat al-ashbah*, or city of ghosts, and is perhaps easiest identified at ground level by the security checkpoints and razorwire that obstruct many of its streets. There are usually tourists (particularly Gulf Arabs) shopping at its

international boutiques, and some wealthy patrons smoking *argileh* or sitting for a meal at one of its expensive restaurants. But mostly the area feels empty, with any limited pedestrian presence dwarfed by the scale of a downtown core organized around a large outdoor shopping mall and built to resemble an image of the city's past.[44] Saturdays the central commercial area known as Beirut Souks hosts a large Farmer's Market, and Solidere is suddenly filled with some of the city's more socially conscious residents. But many of the same people avoid spending any time in the area the rest of the week. Indeed I often heard it referred to as a space to boycott, with its mixture of consumer opulence, armed security, and private-public collusion making it a potent symbol for all the social ills of the city at large, and leaving it an area primarily associated with a regional and international elite. I was thus quite surprised when a young Sudanese interlocutor suggested we meet after he finished work and wander around Solidere.

21 year-old Ahmed works at a patisserie in the hip Mar Mikhael area of east Beirut, a short ten minute walk from Solidere. In order to get downtown after work, he walks down a busy stretch of Armenia Street, intermittently stenciled with an image where the English words "EASTERN TURKEY" have been crossed out in red and replaced with "OCCUPIED ARMENIA." He then heads west taking Gemmayze Street (technically named after the French general Henri Gourad, who presided over the creation of the French Mandates in Syria and Lebanon, but no one calls it Gourad St.), home to some of the city's oldest bars and an ongoing young nightlife. Brushing past busy crowds and weaving between pedestrian, car, and scooter

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[44] Solidere's project involved the intentional demolition of many structures that remained standing after the civil war in order to facilitate a large-scale development project in the city center, the area now referred to in its entirety as "Solidere." The rebuilding overseen by Solidere involved the reclamation of land from the sea, the creation of a mixture of residential and commercial units, and a specific effort to preserve the 'traditional' character of the city center at the level of surface appearance, namely the use/ preservation of Levantine facades alongside entirely altered infrastructures and building interiors (Makdisi 1997).

traffic, he ends up perpendicular to the Charles Helou highway (named after the Lebanese President of 1964-1970). Next he crosses its open lanes of speeding vehicles, in what always felt to me slightly like a suicide wish, and walks adjacent to the downtown gathering place of Martyrs' Square (named to commemorate figures of Lebanese nationalism executed there under Ottoman rule, and located on the civil war-era demarcation line). He arrives at one entrance to Beirut Souks, the commercial heart of Solidere's city. A little off to his right is the privately-owned marina area of Zaytuna Bay, home to a state-of-the-art Yacht Club and a shiny retail esplanade partly built by Solidere out of land reclaimed from the sea. Immediately to his left is the towering Ottoman-imitation mosque built with a donation from former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri (founder of Solidere and martyr of contemporary Lebanon), and now home to Hariri's shrine. Ahmed once told me they all gather at the Hariri mosque for Friday prayers, referring to his group of male Sudanese friends. They are Sunni, after all, as is the mosque, and Friday prayer is mandatory for observant Muslim men, so it has become the ritual of choice.

The ghostliness of downtown Beirut is all the more eerie for its stark cleanliness. Just like its facades were intended to produce a fantasy of the idealized Levantine marketplace combined with the glitzy excesses of advanced capitalism (Solidere's slogan: "An ancient city for the future"), walking through its spacious inner streets often feels as if suspended in simulacra. All around are drably uniformed men who maintain its pristine quality. Cigarette butts are rapidly swept away even while still smoldering at the end of the filter. Abandoned food items, plastic water bottles, and litter is quickly picked up and disposed of. Floors are washed, windows are shined, and glass is polished, such that the image of an uninhabited space persists even in the presence of others. It is impossible to walk around Beirut Souks without seeing a darker-skinned

man engaged in some such janitorial activity. Hence it came as all the more of a surprise that this very location served as Ahmed's preferred after-work place of leisure.

On weekdays, starting around 3:00 PM, groups of Sudanese men gather in the open spaces of the Souks. Some, like Ahmed, work in the vicinity, and others take cheap forms of transport to get there — fortunately, it is a part of the city every taxi driver can find. "We like to walk around there", Ahmed shrugged when I asked him, as if it was self-explanatory. "It's so nice! The buildings and all. If you come with us, you'll see." I explained that I had been multiple times and I found the place eerie, but my opinion did not have much effect on Ahmed, nor did an attempt to discuss the politics of Solidere. Ahmed was the kind of young man who boasted of stringing along multiple Ethiopian girlfriends, and he was a rare Sudanese Muslim well-versed in both Amharic phrases and dance moves. But when I joined him the following week, he was the youngest of a quiet group of Sudanese men ranging in age up to 60-plus, casually chatting, seeking shade beneath well-positioned trees, greeting familiar faces passing by, and smoking cigarettes. Although I myself did not encounter them, I was told that Syrian, Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi men sometimes joined at the end of their work day. Some of the men worked 10-hour shifts as valets in parking garages that started at 5:00 AM, so by 3:00 PM they would be free for the evening and, in their own description, not yet ready to return to cramped living quarters. And so they would wander the alleys of that symbol of Beirut as neoliberal city, its only urban area literally referred to by the name of a real estate company.

I want to suggest that it is precisely the idea that downtown Beirut has been emptied of life and abandoned to consumers, tourists, and ghosts that allows it to be wandered by migrant workers like Ahmed. Such a space can only appear open for casual meandering to those not

hailed by the symbols of its weighty past, or contested national and regional icons: Martyrs' Square, Solidere's privatization, Rafic Hariri's faux Ottoman mosque. This is not empty space, and black-skinned Ahmed is no stranger to harassment on the street. But when he walks, with a gait far more guarded and purposeful than many of Beirut's casual citizen strollers, he goes down streets that cite histories unfamiliar to him, adorned with posters, icons, and graffiti that may be in a language he does not speak (English/French) or make references irrelevant or strange. This urban world is not the one he lives in — it is only where he works (as Beza said in Chapter Two, "this is not life; this is just work"). But the Sudanese men who gather in Solidere remind us that just as work is not the measure of life, nor cannot it determine the experience of a city.

Ahmed himself is constantly trying to leave Beirut. He dreams of getting out through marriage, sponsorship, refugee resettlement (although he is not a refugee), or some miracle that those of us with the privilege of international passports and transnational mobility should surely be able to effect. But for as long as he remains in Beirut, the city does not appear to him as it has often been imagined, namely a palimpsest of war in the ancient lands of the Fertile Crescent. It is instead an urban site full of knowns and unknowns, sights and experiences that Ahmed would often describe in differentiation from the rural farmland he grew up in. Because it marks him with some categories — young black man, migrant worker, foreigner — and not others — sect, religion, family name, village of origin — it allows him to see a different city. This city has its own spaces for exiles like him, navigated in its own languages and locations. Where others see in Solidere the harbinger of neoliberalism in Lebanon, Ahmed sees in it open space to wander in the company not of Beirut's ghosts nor its janitors, but of his companions.

The Activist and Visionary

Rahel is sitting in the back of a taxi and pointing furiously to her arm, sleeves rolled up. “This, this! See how dark I’ve become? This is how I got the money, because of *this* my body is like this!” We are on our way to a hospital just outside the city where an Ethiopian woman named Tseday is waiting to be released from an intense series of injuries she suffered when hit by a car while crossing the street. The driver had quickly fled the scene and, being undocumented, Tseday had no medical insurance of her own to cover the bill. She was in fact awaiting deportation back to Ethiopia but could not be released from the hospital until a doctor signed a form saying she was fit to travel, and the doctor would not do so until the bill was paid. Rahel spent the weekend under the fierce sunshine canvassing all the Ethiopian gathering places she knew, holding out a bag and imploring donations of any amount. It is a method she has used successfully countless times before, and one whose sweat and tired tan lines she recognizes. “The women all know me”, she offers as explanation, “so they give what they can.”

Sometimes it seemed unlikely that there was *any* Ethiopian in Beirut that did not know Rahel Zegeye. Visiting the home of a colleague at the restaurant where I worked, her Ethiopian flatmate peeked in to say hi and started chatting. Very quickly she asked, “Do you know Rahel?” The two had worked together on a theater production some years prior. Search the internet for stories on domestic workers in Beirut and Rahel’s name is omnipresent. Activist, community leader, and filmmaker, she has given countless interviews, run a range of group initiatives, and undertaken two feature-length film and multiple theater projects over her decade as a domestic worker in Lebanon. “I want to teach [Ethiopian women] about what happens in Lebanon, and not teach them how to clean and mop”, she declares in her characteristically straightforward manner

(Migrant Rights 2011). Rahel moderates two WhatsApp groups, each of over 100 Ethiopian women in the country, as well as runs a theater group of a dozen-plus Ethiopian women who meet weekly in a Beirut rehearsal space; recently, the group was key to producing the city's first multilingual migrant worker newsletter. Over the course of my fieldwork Rahel's two films, both concerning the experiences of Ethiopian women in the country, were frequently referenced by progressive Lebanese acquaintances as their most memorable and eye-opening encounter with this social issue.

When I first met Rahel, we were at a fundraiser lunch for the Migrant Community Center that had been attended by the new Sri Lankan ambassador. The female ambassador was being fêted by members of the Sri Lankan community as a potential lifeline after years of prior incompetence and disregard. Rahel immediately expressed her skepticism. "Every system is wrong", she stated in English. "When I see my embassy people, I immediately want to throw up." In censure of her vocal condemnation of the Ethiopian Embassy's inadequate support for Ethiopian women in Lebanon, the embassy has placed Rahel on a no-fly list and banned her from returning home. Rahel's may have been the truest exile of all of Lebanon's migrant workers and refugees: she had neither lost her legal status in escape nor fled a homeland being destroyed, but had literally been banished by the nation of her own passport and stranded in foreign territory.

Without asking, Rahel offered me her story with the ease of someone who is used to telling it: a former employer who overworked and underpaid her for four years, and then locked her in a shared hotel room and denied her food during the 2006 Israeli bombing of Lebanon. As with countless such stories of domestic workers who were abandoned to die or deprived of all basic sustenance during the 2006 war, Rahel was reduced to the generosity of another Ethiopian

woman who herself had little to offer. Rahel minces no words when she speaks of the Lebanese, often repeating a phrase I heard used by many of the migrant workers to whom I taught English: "*[q]albun [q]asi;* their hearts are hard." Rahel herself has strong relationships to Lebanese activists and yet, unlike nearly every other migrant worker activist I encountered, she retains no ties to any organization. Her treatment at the hands of both her Lebanese employers and the Ethiopian Embassy has embedded a deep anarchist sensibility within her, and her mistrust of institutions, even the ones she works alongside, constantly surfaces in conversation. I was regularly struck not just by her ferocity and strength — qualities pervasive amongst all the domestic workers I encountered during my fieldwork — but the certitude of her vision.

Rahel once described to me her disbelief in reports of domestic worker suicides, deaths she insisted were the result not of jumping but of being being pushed off balconies. "Why don't these women jump off buildings back home? What? You think we don't have tall buildings in Ethiopia?" The question stunned me. "Of course you do…" I stammered in return. At another point, she returned to the issue. "When I first found out that women were being killed in Lebanon, I didn't believe it. You bring someone to your country to work and then you kill them? Does it make any sense?" Rahel's was among the most direct speech I encountered in the field. She was the only activist or migrant worker I met who consistently remind listeners of wealthy Lebanese residents scattered across multiple parts of Africa. "I see them in my country, walking around with nice clothes, lots of money… I ask Lebanese people, if I kill just one person of yours in my country and bring the body back here in a bag — what would you think?"

It was Rahel's associations that were most jarring: infrastructure and suicide; the hypothetical scenario of Lebanese migrants killed by African citizens. By holding the example of

the Ethiopian city as a counterpoint to the experiences of Ethiopians in Beirut, Rahel suggests a relation in the form of an accusation: tall buildings do not in fact equal suicide, they equal murder. It was at this moment that I realized the sight I had spent months admiring — the breezy, plant-lined balconies of Beirut, those same Levantine facades that Solidere went out of its way to preserve as the mark of ancient surfaces and authentic city character — Rahel saw as instruments of death. It is this ability to see a different kind of city, one laden with different kinds of practices and subjects, that migrant workers in Beirut point us to.

The Hustlers of Dawra

Pamma Ghotra is a businessman who runs an event production company catering to the migrant workers of Beirut. Today, Pamma Productions organizes concerts and festivals featuring hit singers from Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Nepal, and Ethiopia. Its Facebook page features circular icons depicting the flags of all these countries as well as a link to a defunct website and a regular barrage of colourful event posters, announcements, and images of Ghotra posing with well-dressed stars clearly used to the camera. But it all started as a small convenience store in Dawra, and the now-ragged Pamma Market remains well-stocked with an assortment of goods that come in from India via cargo flights to Dubai. Ghotra is a 30-something year-old Indian citizen who is based in Beirut but travels regularly to multiple countries for what he loosely refers to as “business”, and moves fluently between over half a dozen languages. Among South Asian migrant workers in Lebanon, he is widely known as the man who will front resources for events ranging from cricket tournaments to religious festivals.

I first met Ghotra during an event organized by NARI, the Group of Nepalese Feminists in Lebanon, to celebrate the Hindu festival of Dashain. Ghotra had been given prize of place along with a select group of women (all former/current domestic workers) from the Nepalese and Sri Lankan communities, as well as representatives of local NGOs and migrant worker organizations. Ghotra was the only man seated in the front row, but he was accompanied by a beefy Lebanese man in a tight black t-shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap who kept referring to Ghotra as *ustaz*, a moniker of respect also used affectionately among men in the manner of 'dude' or 'buddy' but with a (often satirical) reference to authority mixed in. Walid, whose name I learned much later, rushed around to get Ghotra a chilled bottle of water, a can of coke with a straw, and a small folding table for the drinks. I had the distinct impression that Walid was working as Ghotra's bodyguard, something that felt incredibly out of place in the almost entirely female migrant worker crowd, many of whom were dressed in a Sunday best that conveyed the quiet dignity of poverty, and not the ostentation of a bodyguard-wielding elite. Over the next year Ghotra would constantly make a brief appearance at such events. Most of the year, however, he was either traveling or in Lebanon to host an elaborate multi-day music festival every 3-5 months, all featuring popular talent from one of Beirut's migrant worker countries of origin.

Ghotra's events are held in one of three venues based on expected turnout. Tickets sell for between $15-$40, and consistently draw successful crowds of hundreds or more. The events even have their own t-shirts: black, with sans serif white text stating 'PAMMA PRODUCTION: Event Management' or 'SECURITY.' The beefy Walid, it turned out, was a security guard who worked for a private company that was often contracted out for its services within the migrant worker underground, and Ghotra's events were only one example. I next ran into Walid at the Ethiopian

nightclub that hosted the wedding described in Part I of the chapter, and after introductions we started running into each other at daytime and evening events all around Dawra. He took it upon himself to affectionately watch out for me whenever the crowds of inebriated young men began to get rowdy, while I marveled at the figures who populated these spaces: Lebanese men working at live Punjabi concerts in Beirut, that cultural capital of the Arab world. Through Walid I learned that the nightclub was owned by another Charly-like figure, a wealthy Lebanese man married to an Ethiopian woman. And through Ayman I learned that the same club has become increasingly popular with the young Syrian Kurds, who are friendly with the club's DJs and bouncers through everyone's shared connections to a group of Ethiopian women in Dawra. Ayman and his boys even have a standing reservation for one of the club's prized tables every Saturday night.

This is not to say that Dawra forms one unified community. In fact, the most popular Ethiopian restaurant in Dawra has banned Kurdish men due to their reputation for violence. Jamal's is named after its Ethiopian male proprietor, who, like so many of his female compatriots, escaped cruel work conditions and struggled to survive for some years in Beirut. Eventually Jamal entered into a business partnership with an Ethiopian woman who was married to a Lebanese man and thereby had the citizenship necessary to undertake such a venture. The place is popular with the Sudanese, who prefer the food, and the Syrians, who prefer the *argileh*, but it is mostly full of Ethiopian women, who come bearing envelopes of cash that is assiduously counted before being sent to relatives back home through Jamal's transfer networks. One Sunday at Jamal's I was mistaken as the lesbian partner to my Ethiopian friend. A stern matronly woman inquired after our relationship in Amharic, eyeing me with apparent skepticism, only to then offer her home should we need respite from any homophobic exacerbation of our assumed

shared precarity. “It’s hard enough for our women here as it is”, she told my companion. This is Beirut’s city of exiles, full of appraisals of need or demand, networks of people and services, and the sudden gestures of generosity that sustain the possibility of life on the margins.

The figures that populate this chapter come together in the provisional and flexible intersections of the city that AbdouMaliq Simone has conceptualized using the phrase “People as Infrastructure” (2004). Simone is interested in the disjuncture between normative models and trajectories of urbanization, and the lived realities of urban Africans in inner cities such as Johannesburg, a place often seen as ruined *by* urbanization. Simone argues that these apparent ruins have also constituted new fields of action, what he calls ‘processes of conjunction’ that involve both regularity and provisionality. Residents of such cities must be ready for all sorts of hustles, constantly improvising in order to “derive maximal outcomes from a minimal set of elements” (2004, 411). Simone describes this as

> a specific economy of perception and collaborative practice… constituted through the capacity of individual actors to circulate across and become familiar with a broad range of spatial, residential, economic, and transactional positions (408).

It is precisely such an economy that exists in contemporary Beirut. The infrastructure of this world, what Simone defines as “a platform for providing and reproducing *life* in the city” (408, emphasis mine), is not just one of electricity blackouts or traffic-congested streets, but all the “combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices” (407) described above.

The Beirut of its citizens (and its Palestinian refugees) is also a city of improvisation. What I am interested in here, however, is the new layer of urban life created in the coming together of African and Asian migrant workers, primarily female escapees, with diverse Arab

men. In a 2009 interview, Simone was asked how the city became a framework of his analysis. He answered by describing being asked by Muslim welfare organizations in the 1970s to think about the marginalization of Muslim residents in the cities of Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. "Even though… you had very strong professional religious-political networks, there was something about the way in which many of the residents didn't fully come to grips with their possibilities of being in the city", Simone recalls (in Burga 2009, 164). I have offered the examples above as evidence that the migrant workers of Beirut are in the opposite position. They have not only come to grips with, but also developed a rich repertoire of belonging in the city, in partnership with the citizens and refugees who meet them in their spaces of exile. One of the most celebrated consequences of this belonging is that it has enabled migrant workers in Beirut to articulate new forms of public and politicized address.

City of Politics

What kind of political action does the migrant worker underground of Beirut make possible? For all its documented abuse of domestic workers, Lebanon is also home to the Arab world's first Domestic Workers Union (DWU), officially launched in January 2015. Foreigners are not allowed to unionize under Lebanon's labour law so the union is formally affiliated to a local trade union known as FENASOL, but the DWU itself has yet to be legally recognized by the state. In fact, the current Minister of Labour Sejaan Azzi has repeatedly condemned the initiative and described it as both illegal and dangerous (Kasinof 2016). Nonetheless, the movement to organize domestic workers in Lebanon has continued to attract local and international attention.

It may come as a surprise that the region's first domestic workers' union emerged in the tiny country of Lebanon. It is the Gulf countries that have drawn the bulk of attention regarding the *kafala* system, and conditions there are popularly understood to be far more dehumanizing than in Lebanon. Rather than an indication of disproportionate need, the DWU must be located in relation to the public culture of Lebanon at large, specifically its capital city. The actors that came together to organize and support the union include: representatives of international agencies including the International Labor Organization and the International Organization for Migration; representatives of state consulates or embassies; experienced Lebanese trade unionists; a progressive former Minister of Labour; former or current domestic workers who serve in some capacity as representatives of their national communities in Beirut; local and regional NGOs addressing the rights of workers, migrants, and/or women; young, educated Lebanese activists with access to a global language of human rights and social justice; international volunteers with an interest in political activism; a range of multilingual journalists and media representatives; and members of leftist (Communist or Socialist) organizations with mandates concerning workers' organizing. Combined with the infrastructures of mobility, language, and physical space needed to bring all these people together, it is no coincidence that it happened in the city of Beirut.

For the last five years, May Day demonstrations in Beirut have been organized by a coalition of organizations including those behind the DWU, uniting under the banner of migrant workers' rights. Protests are held on the Sunday closest to May Day in order to facilitate domestic workers' participation, although last year's competing march held by the national Communist Party serves as a reminder that organized labour does not always see its interests as

aligned with those of foreign workers. But it remains a deeply moving experience to walk among racialized workers overtaking the streets of Beirut for one day a year, voices raised in demand. Residents come out onto apartment balconies to stare down in wonder, sometimes accompanied by uniformed domestic workers not so fortunate as to have a weekly day of rest, staring hard at the presence beneath. Rarely has the reclamation of the streets been so stark a reversal of ordinary social hierarchies.

Consider the chants at the May Day protest of 2016, collectively written by a group of female migrant workers and local Lebanese activists at the Migrant Community Center where I conducted parts of my fieldwork. In English, there were two straightforward set of pairings: *"What do we want? Sundays off!"* and then, with rage, *"Domestic workers / Are not slaves!"* In Arabic, a more complex mixture of sounds and demands. First, there was *"Ta-ta-ta'iyye! Ma badna 'unsuriyye! / Ta-ta-ta'iyye! Ma badna taba[q]iyye!",* something that could be less forcibly rendered as, "Hey-ho! Racism has got to go! Hey-ho! Classism has got to go!". Then, intensifying the refrain, a call addressed to domestic workers: *"Irfa' sawtik irfa' sawtik! al-kafala bad-ha tmaw-tik!"*: "Raise your [f, s] voice, raise your [f, s] voice! *Kafala* wants to kill you [f, s]!" Here "*-ik"*, the syllable that marks the second-person feminine singular possessive your (raise *your*, ie. a woman's, voice) and pronominal object you (kill *you*, ie. a woman), forms the rhyme of this call and response. It is a perfect reversal of the prosody of command (see Chapter Three) that the domestic worker is otherwise subject to in Arabic address.

If there was still any question about *who* was speaking on these streets, the next chant named the subject explicitly. Addressing the Minister of Labour Sejaan Azzi, the rhyme went, *"Isma' isma' ya Sejaan / Sawt il-'amile bi Lubnan!":* "Listen, listen, hey Sejaan! The voice of

the [female domestic] worker in Lebanon!". Having named him, it then continued its direct address. *"Ya Sejaan, [q]ul il-ha[q]! 'Andak 'amile wa la la? B't'annif-ha wa la la?":* "Hey Sejaan, Tell the truth! Do you have a [female domestic] worker or do you not? Do you beat her or do you not?" Passersby would turn in shock at the sight of dark-skinned women hurling unapologetic accusations through megaphones at the notoriously corrupt Lebanese plutocracy. The women's final slogan drummed up the force of all the marchers behind a single word: "*batil*", formally meaning 'null and void' but in this context closer to that incantation of popular outrage, "Shame!" The chant moved through a series of experiences of a domestic worker in Lebanon, starting with "I came to Lebanon" and continuing through "They took my passport", "They won't let me work", and similar scenarios. To each came the marchers' response of indignation. *BA-TIL!*

What is of note about these chants is not only the degree of free speech in Lebanon that they attest to. It is the political force evidenced in both their content and the act of their pronouncement. The state is not an abstract theoretical entity for these domestic workers, fractured in its sectarianism or diminished in its corruption and ineptitude. It is close enough to warrant a first-name address and coherent enough to voice a demand for accountability. The straightforward nature of the slogans somehow seemed to deploy the strongest vocabulary available — slavery, killing, beating — with a near-ecstatic energy amidst the drum-beating, flag-waving demonstration. "It's so disturbing that we have to march down the street yelling *'Domestic workers are not slaves'*", commented a friend and fellow language teacher at the Migrant Community Center. And yet, as recognizable in public demonstrations the world over, the atmosphere was vibrant and joyous. Indeed those at the center of the named injustices

seemed the ones least disturbed. Their voices evidenced both a politicized orientation to the state, as subjects who make demands rather than acquiesce to its strictures, as well as a public playfulness that cannot be thought separately from the urban world that gave it both life and language. And Beirut, the Levantine capital that once again finds itself a refuge amidst the region's displacements, has been transformed over the last decade to make it possible to hear their voices. To conclude this chapter, I turn now to a figure who suggests what happens when one is inside the nation but has no such city.

Where Should the Citizens Flee?

In four months of near daily visits to Nolawit's café, Sherene was the only Lebanese woman I encountered there. Sherene is over sixty, maybe seventy, maybe older. The first time I saw her it was well past midnight and she was struggling to reapply red lipstick with a small handheld mirror and insisting she was about to go home. Even in the dim light her pale, powdered skin stood out against the black of all the other women in the room except myself. It was winter in Beirut, colder indoors that outside, and Sherene wore a hooded sweatshirt, velour sweatpants, sneakers, multiple oversized jackets, a knitted scarf, and held a large purse. There was something slightly tragic about her, unhinged and tending towards mad. She was talking about her lover, a much younger man who did or did not love her back, and it greatly irritated her that I did not remove my woolen toque indoors. Someone switched the music to Arabic. Sherene raised her arms to dance, insisting we watch, for she had once been a great belly-dancing beauty. She turned her fingers upward with the expert rhythm of a woman who knows the art, but it was strangely difficult to watch.

Later that week the Ethiopian women told me her story. Sherene lived around the corner and had been visiting the café every few months for a little over a year now. She used to be married but lost all her family in the 2006 Israeli bombing of Lebanon: her husband, her son, and his wife. It was unclear to me how, for Dawra had not been targeted in the war, but ever since that time, they said, she had not been well. Whenever she came the women would entertain her tales, offer her a beer, share cigarettes, and tease her about her alleged crush on Ayman. Most of their interactions made me uncomfortable. The exchanges between the young Ethiopian women and this far elder, disorienting Lebanese presence were characterized by a kind of aggressive banter that seemed far crueler in practice than it had been narrated in intention, and I sometimes wondered whether she bore the weight of their anger at the Lebanese population as a whole. But she, like Sami, kept coming back.

Eventually Sherene warmed to me. She shared stories, but she spoke in stilted, guarded sentences, often trailing off and leaving a beginning uncompleted or a statement unclear. She once said had a son in the United States but she did not want to bother him for money, and he did not call enough, although he invited her to join him in America but she did not want to leave. Another time, however, she suggested she had no kin that had survived Lebanon's tragedies. Her husband had died many years ago, God rest his soul, although she did not say how, and he had left her the Dawra apartment he bought when they were first married. She was only 21 at the time and he used to buy her the most expensive dresses to be found, dazzling and European, and the two would drink and dance with the scions of the city's elite, including that great musical icon of the Lebanese nation, Fairuz. After her husband died she had been committed against her will to 'Asfouriyye, the first insane asylum in Lebanon — when I tried gently to probe further

about this, Sherene ignored my questions — and now she took many pills to stay healthy. She rarely left the house anymore, but Nolawit and the other Ethiopian women, she liked to see them sometimes — as she had come to like seeing me, she added warmly.

One night I carried two five-gallon bottles of water up six flights of stairs to Sherene's apartment, where she had not had running water for months and was reduced to the generosity of the Syrian boys at the nearby gas station. They would let her fill her plastic bottles but never offered to help carry, and as all of us living in Dawra knew, there was rarely electricity for the elevator. Her small apartment, dimly lit by streetlights through the window, featured an enormous raised bed with white covers, a white sofa, and a large white coffee table, the entire surface of which was covered in small bottles of pharmaceuticals and makeup. There must have been nearly a hundred, all different sizes and shapes, some still in their cardboard packaging and others removed. The surface was remarkably clean, not a single spill or streak in sight. Sherene apologized for not having cigarettes to offer, as it was the end of the month and her pension funds had been depleted, so we sat facing the table of tiny little bottles and shared mine.

Of all the individuals I met in Dawra, it was Sherene who stayed with me most uncomfortably. Perhaps it is strange that in attempting to conduct research within and about a world populated by foreign migrant workers, and one with no shortage of terror and tragedy, it was a Lebanese citizen who left the greatest imprint of unease. In fact, it is precisely for this reason that she did so, for Sherene is the figure of inversion that brings together the two parts of this chapter. What domestic workers and refugees have created in Beirut is a consequence of their exclusion from the dominant organization of space and sociality in Lebanon. This, as

Flusser reminds us, is the immense creative capacity of exile. But a Lebanese citizen is supposed to be a subject of both the city *and* the nation.

The vast majority of female domestic workers living in Dawra have fled private homes and found some combination of speech, mobility, desire, and/or friendship as a result. They walk around. They love, they marry, they divorce, they start businesses, they frequent cafés, they speak with determination and demand. Sherene, who has lived in Dawra for longer than many of these women have been alive but has fallen through the cracks of Lebanon's kinship-organized social contract, sits mostly at home. Even in her native language, her speech breaks. Unlike the domestic workers, Lebanon has not stripped her of language and desire, and she can recall in her memory of the country these personal traces. Instead, the nation continues to mark her as its own — her native Arabic, her white skin, her belly-dancing expertise, her property, her monthly pension — while she lives in isolation. A group of strangers are now the condition of her speech, in a neighbourhood that is no longer familiar to her. Sherene poses the question Mahmoud Darwish once asked of the birds, like (some) passports the symbols of unfettered freedom in flight: where should the citizens flee after the last sky? What of those who are cast out of national belonging, abandoned in heartbreak or banished in madness? Those that appear to us as entirely alone, self-medicating against the pain of their loss — where might they seek refuge? The answer, I argue, is the urban underground that has been forged by the city dwellers who never belonged to this country in the first place: its migrant workers.

Epilogue: Dreams of Freedom

The diverse migrant workers who became my interlocutors in Beirut were deeply marked by the dreary, alienated nature of their labour and their lives. Exhaustion and disillusion emanated from even the most smiling faces, unmistakeable in bodily posture and pace, alluded to in speech and gesture. In all these encounters, I was treated with a spirited generosity and granted the confidence of trust. But even then, conversations often became circuitous, trapped by the basic knowledge that I was the one for whom there was effortless departure. Suggestions I made for short walks, trips to the sea, or attempts at new activities were repeatedly turned down with the unspoken dismissal of, *you wouldn't understand*. I continue to struggle with the ethical weight of this relation, as do all anthropologists working in such contexts. But I also encountered one exception to this story: Beza.

Beza, whose name surfaces throughout this dissertation, has now been in Lebanon for eight years. She works as the head chef of the restaurant where I conducted part of my fieldwork, a rare position for a migrant worker and a source of great pride. When I first met her, she described to me with delight how she had been finding her away around a kitchen ever since she was a five year-old child. Her mother had abandoned them at a young age, and her father would leave her at home to care for her younger sister while he went off to work. By the age of seven Beza was feeding her entire extended family, meals she had developed in experimentation, often stashing the failed attempts behind rocks and bushes outdoors before anyone came home, and trying again. Beza is a great storyteller. Her command over Arabic without ever having been taught the language leaves one as astonished as her beauty, mesmerizing and unselfconscious.

The stories of Beza's childhood are paralleled in the many burns and aches on her chef's body. Stories of abuse, stories of devastation, stories of threat and injury, and stories of escape. After arriving to Lebanon at the age of 18, she became extremely ill, was at first denied medical treatment and then forced to work to pay it off, and then sent back to Ethiopia in illness. She healed and came straight back. Once, when the male of the household where she was employed as domestic worker tipped a pot of scalding soup in her direction because she had added too much salt, she instantly threw it back in his direction. Soon after, she ran away. After becoming a freelancer, Beza worked two jobs for many years to pay for her aging father's medical treatments. When her father died, she could not leave the country due to her status as undocumented, and his loss sits with her daily, its words tattooed on her body. She does not sleep much anymore. "Beza thinks too much", her flatmates kept saying, jovially. "You cannot sleep if you spend so much time thinking." But Beza has little interest in living inside wounds.

For the entire two years that I regularly shared her company, Beza would remind me of a curious fact about pomegranates. *Rumman*, that mythical, erotic fruit so prized in Persianate poetry and Levantine cuisine, grows freely in Ethiopia. It is treated as a flower and appreciated for its beauty, but left to fall to the ground in the manner of acorns. No one in Ethiopia, Beza would tell me, knew what culinary magic could be enacted with a pomegranate. But she did.

All the other Ethiopian women who worked in the kitchen with Beza made it a point to cook their own meals. They found the Lebanese-Moroccan-Syrian-Armenian fusion food they prepared for the restaurant strange and alien, and in the corners of the kitchen they stored their own spices. Beza, on the other hand, had decided that she was going to return to her native region of Hawassa, Ethiopia, and open a Lebanese restaurant. The closest city had a university

that attracted some foreigners, she explained, and she was certain that with her acquired skills she would be able to produce a menu that not only appealed to but even expanded the local palate.

In Beza's sensory embracing of a cuisine, including ingredients she formerly understood as outside the category of food, is a glimpse at the fierce openness with which she lives as an undocumented migrant worker in Lebanon. Beza is the one who would calm me down when we were followed by a police officer sounding his horn only out of the pleasure of intimidation. It is Beza who, when I awkwardly asked permission to transform a friendship into an anthropological endeavor, responded simply, "We can't tell our own stories, so you certainly should." During the final month of my fieldwork, I learned that Beza had spent nearly $2000 of her own savings purchasing a diverse array of kitchen equipment, ranging from objects as large as a fridge and propane tank to as small as coffee mugs and an immersion blender, and had tucked them away in various corners of her shared apartment until she saved the money to pay for a shipping container to be sent to Ethiopia. These objects were in preparation for the restaurant she would open. Beza has no legal paperwork, no decided exit plan, but also, as she kept reminding me, no fear of prison. She was simply getting things in order.

Beza was far from the only woman I met during fieldwork who evidenced enormous strength and resilience. But she was singular for her unstinting commitment to a vision of freedom. At ever possible opportunity she would narrate her decisions in relation to this orientation. Beza's story intervenes in a standard narrative about both why migrants leave their homelands (poverty or desperation) as well as the nature of their lives on the margins of law and society. Through Beza, I want to suggest that outside of the hegemonic narrative of the American

dream, we have not adequately theorized the global phenomenon of South-South migrant labour in a language of aspiration and freedom.

In Robin D. G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams* (20023), he provides a radical black cultural history of the United States to remind readers of the dreams of previous generations at a moment when *freedom* has become nearly a synonym for free enterprise. The lives of migrant workers in the Arab world are steeped with the wounds of trauma and rank injustice. Although we see the beginnings of an explicit political legacy in the formation of the Domestic Workers' Union, knowledge of the union's very existence has barely reached the hundreds of thousands of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Beza herself expressed a cool disinterest in the union, respecting its goals but unconvinced in the relevance of addressing one's energies towards the Lebanese state.

"*This is not life*", I quote Beza saying earlier in the dissertation, pointing to her workplace as we closed the restaurant for the night. "*This is just work*." In the drawing of this most basic distinction is the affirmation of the fact that life is a force that far exceeds conditions of labour exploitation, and within the propulsive force of human mobility, is also the force of its dreams.

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