

But perhaps the most significant of the differences between 'actually existing neoliberalism' in Lebanon and its declensions and variants elsewhere centres on the role of the state. As Hannes Baumann and others have pointed out, Lebanon's elites share the propensity, apparent in many other twenty-first-century contexts, to use the state's powers to create conditions propitious to private initiative and investment.¹³³ But where scholars such as Salwa Ismail have argued that efforts to dismantle the architecture of formal welfare allocation in countries such as Egypt have unintentionally bolstered oppositional forces by allowing them to become informal service providers, filling the spaces the state has deliberately vacated, the story is rather different in Lebanon.¹³⁴ For here, of course, the state, the private corporations that control so much of the economy, and the partisan organisations and communitarian support networks that provide welfare to the country's inhabitants are controlled to a large extent by the same actors. It is this unusually strong suture of public and private power and interest that defines Lebanon's political economy, that sustains its political system, and that bolsters the position of its political elites.

AL-AKHARIN, OR THE OTHERS

ON LEBANON'S REFUGEES AND MIGRANT WORKERS

There was a time when I used to take the road to Damascus every day. Every morning, I would call a taxi—I couldn't drive then; still can't—and head up from my flat in Beirut to Ba'bda, a little way up *tariq al-sham*—the Damascus road. Traced by a French concessionary company in 1858, this remains one of Lebanon's two main highways, snaking its way through the mountains, up to Dahr al-Baydar, and then back down into the Beqaa and towards the border with Syria. As with so many things in Lebanon these days, this daily route was an odd compound of the tedious and the absurd. The intermittent conversation, the heat and traffic, the crackle of the radio, which might, depending on the day, the tastes of any given driver, and his rapid assessment of my own cultural dispositions, blurt out staccato news announcements, Arabic *tarab*, Eurodance, or maudlin French *chanson*—all of these were familiar enough. But then there were days like that when the driver, his nerves drawn by the rain and creeping traffic, swept round the inside and, keeping close to the verge, knocked over someone who had stopped to change a tyre. As he sped away, he glared at his damaged rear-view mirror, muttering bitterly about the 70 dollars it would cost him to find a replacement.

Familiar, too, were the sights and sensations of the road. I came to recognise, and dread, every pothole and bump, to know the road works

and roadblocks, those checkpoints manned by barely post-pubescent soldiers who sleepily cradle their machine guns against their hips, like young mothers hold their firstborns. I came to expect the sight of the young Syrian children—most five or six years old—who snaked their way through the oncoming traffic to hawk mosquito-killing contraptions that resembled electrified badminton rackets, their heads barely reaching above the window, children whose only reminders of childhood were the Disney characters clumsily printed on their blue or yellow t-shirts. I came to know when to avert my eyes, when we passed another road accident, mangled metal and strewn bodies, or when we got stuck behind one of those antique, garish lorries that crawl up the mountain, carrying not piles of furniture or white goods, but sheep or cattle, piled atop one another, bleating with pain as their limbs buckled under them. And I grew to recognise, without thinking about them too much, the hierarchies that governed these stretches: the off-white minibuses, with their load of grim soldiers on leave and Filipino and Nepalese domestic workers in their infantilising pastel uniforms and flip-flops; the weather-beaten Mazda and Mercedes, hiccupping their way along; the Fiats and Suzukis; and, at the apex, the 4x4s and SUVs, whose drivers sat sullenly shut up behind their Ray Bans and tinted windows, tyrants of the road who ruthlessly cut in, weave through and shunt others to the side, seemingly insulated behind the darkness of their sunglasses and blacked-out windows, finding false comfort in their technological superiority.

It is not easy to go anywhere in Lebanon without seeing a car—or, for that matter, without driving, or being driven. Cars, cars everywhere—cars driving on the outside of a lane, transforming what is hardly a dual-carriageway into a racecourse, keeping on the shoulder, urgently beeping till they accelerate away with a sudden burst of energy, leaving behind a streak of fumes; cars overtaking others on the sudden, sharp bends in mountain roads, as in a deathly fit of pique; cars coming at you against the traffic; cars double-parked, triple-parked on street-corners and junctions. The Lebanese do not like to walk. It is true that some trudge along mountain roads on still hot summer evenings, utterly drenched in sweat, in a desultory concession to healthy living, or stroll along the seaside at sunset. But most regard it as the sign of a lack, an activity best left to those who cannot drive or afford

a car, for serving soldiers, migrant labourers and domestic workers, and the odd quixotic Westerner. Even children whose parents are at work or otherwise engaged will be ferried to and from school in the back of a *service*—a common taxi. Why walk to get somewhere, when one could drive? Out and about, in the streets and on the roads, the Lebanese are not so much bipeds as hybrid beings, centaur-like cyborgs so closely imbricated with their vehicles that they are meaningless, and helpless, without them.

Accordingly, driving has come to stand as a symbol, and a symptom, of the predicament of contemporary Lebanon. Trite as it sounds, the sight of a nation at the wheel serves as a particularly stark, and immediate, reminder of the sharp inequalities of wealth and status that run through Lebanese society, in a country where around 8,000 individuals, or 0.3 per cent of the population, controls 48 per cent of the wealth. For on the road, it is hard to ignore the disparity between the many who soak up the thick exhaust fumes—their broken windows permanently down, their ventilation units wheezing relics—and the few who sit high up in their pristine vehicles, insulated in their crisply air-conditioned cocoons. It is no surprise that *Crédit Suisse* ranked Lebanon sixth in its global wealth inequality index, behind only Ukraine, Denmark, Kazakhstan, the Seychelles, and Russia.¹ If the car still stands for some for the treasured bourgeois values of ‘freedom, self-possession, self-discipline, and ease’, others have long since had to let go of these twentieth-century dreams of individualism.² For many, the car stands not for moneyed self-affirmation, the confirmation of a comfortable present and the promise of a better future, but merely for a lack of better alternatives, a beat-up reminder of the past and its travails and disappointments. No longer does the car carry the promise of ‘dignity as free subjects’, capable of ‘governing [themselves]’, as Charles Taylor put it.³ Far from an engine of democracy, the car is in contemporary Lebanon a signifier of inequity.

And at the bottom of this hierarchy are those who go by foot. There are the migrant workers: the Filipino, Sri Lankan, Nepalese or Eritrean women who take their *madames*’ little pooches down for a walk twice a day and sit by the pool as middle-class children splash about; the Sudanese, Egyptian or Nigerian men and women who fill up the cars of the Lebanese at petrol stations, and wipe away their piss and their

shit in the toilets of restaurant and malls; the Indian and Pakistani bin-men who jump down from their rubbish trucks to pick up the trash left out on the streets, or who stalk the roadsides, diligently sweeping up the empty soft drink cans, torn food wrappers and plastic bottles thoughtlessly tossed from car windows; the Ukrainian or Romanian women who walk about towns like Maameltein, allowed out from their work (as 'hosts' in the country's 'super nightclubs'—or brothels) to run their errands in shops adorned in Baltika beer hoardings and adverts for phone cards and wire transfers.

Even lower still, however, are Lebanon's refugees: the 170,000 or so Palestinians whose grandparents and great-grandparents arrived here in 1948, fleeing war and expulsion, and the million men, women, and children from Syria who now make up more than a quarter of Lebanon's population. For if Nepalese and Filipino domestic workers and Indian bin-men are excluded from the networks of partisan and confessional support and kin solidarity that provide some sustenance to Lebanese citizens in these persistently hard times, then Palestinians and Syrians find themselves locked out of all but the most precarious and low-waged of informal work. More than just non-citizens, they are perceived by many Lebanese as threats to their own citizenly status, to their fragile, stubbornly protected entitlements. Lebanon's Syrian and Palestinian inhabitants are subjects who live in a state of constant impermanence, who are refused the status of permanent residents because their installation and naturalisation would throw off-kilter Lebanon's unsteady confessional equilibrium. And yet they are not, of course, simply refugees, inactive recipients of aid awaiting their eventual return to their homelands. They work, just as they have always done, performing the most arduous tasks, those that the Lebanese themselves have long since abandoned and do not want to go back to. They are the fruit and vegetable pickers who work in the orange and banana orchards of the south or in the vineyards and potato fields of the Beqaa; the construction workers that you see waiting by the roadside for a foreman to pick out his crew, or busily moving about building sites, short wiry men from the Syrian north and east, who sleep in half-finished buildings, their lives hidden away behind improvised curtains hanging from the breezeblocks; they are the scrap metal collectors and rag-and-bone men who wade waist-deep in Beirut's waste bins, sorting through the detritus to find

something of value; the building superintendants who unblock drains and keep an eye out for intruders; the 10- and 12-year-old boys who put shoppers' goods away in plastic bags for a coin or two of change, if they are lucky; and the shoe-shines and beggars who sit on flattened cardboard boxes in the street. For begging, too, is work. It requires extraordinary resilience to walk the streets all day long, to sleep rough, to be hungry and dirty and exhausted and scared and indebted and lonely, to withstand the cold and the heat and hold out against the abuse and contempt of passers-by who pretend not to hear you or push past, swatting you away as they would a fly. But it also calls upon other resources: on courage and resourcefulness and creativity, to be able to speak to others, to confront them with one's own abject condition, to face their disgust without forgetting your own humanity and sense of self, and to shape one's experiences into narratives that capture their compassion, when one has no other means of getting by than pleading for others' charity. It is work to be at the end of your tether and still to go on and get by—just about.

In the world of the camp: Lebanon's Palestinians

On Boxing Day 2017, Saad Hariri, still reeling from his mysterious resignation in Riyadh, took to the nostrum at the Grand Sérail, the prime minister's offices in central Beirut. Before an audience of dignitaries—American, European, and Arab diplomats, fellow members of parliament, and representatives of the PLO—he announced the long-awaited results of the census of Lebanon's Palestinian refugees. Born of the joint efforts of Lebanon's Central Administration of Statistics and the Palestinian Authority—just one of the signs of a rapprochement between the Lebanese and Palestinian states that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago—this made for surprising reading. In late 2017, there were 174,422 registered Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. While 45 per cent live in Lebanon's twelve officially recognised refugee camps—Baddawi and Nahr al-Bared in the north; Burj al-Barajneh, Shatila, Mar Elias, and Dbayeh in greater Beirut; Ayn al-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh, near Saida; Burj al-Shemali, El-Buss, and Rashidiyeh, near Sur; and Wavel, in the Beqaa—the majority of the refugees, 55 per cent, live in 156 informal encampments and shanty-

towns. (The census did not enumerate those Palestinians who have not acquired—and indeed cannot acquire—Lebanese citizenship, but who live not in these separate settlements, but in Lebanon's towns and cities.)⁴ This figure was a far cry from the 449,957 refugees recorded in the registers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA, the organisation established in 1949 to provide assistance to the Palestinians displaced in 1948 by the establishment of the state of Israel and the outbreak of the first Arab–Israeli war.⁵

Though sociologists and political economists had insisted for years that the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had fallen sharply with out-migration, Hariri's announcement still came as a surprise to many observers.⁶ If some were relieved at this revelation, happy to learn that years of flight from discrimination and poverty had reduced a presence they saw as a cankerous imposition on Lebanese society, others remained wary of these figures, which they feared were no more than a prelude to the permanent installation of the Palestinians in Lebanon. For that is what is at stake here—not just Lebanon's oft-repeated commitment to Palestinians' right to return to their historic homeland, but the deep-seated fear that these refugees will set the confessional order off balance, undermining Lebanon's sovereignty or strengthening one community at the expense of others. Well aware that some might construe his comments as paving the way towards *tawtin*—the 'naturalisation' or 'resettlement' of the Palestinians—Hariri was at pains to stress that this was no statistical Trojan horse, repeating several times that 'this census does not open the door for the Palestinians' implantation'.⁷ For Hariri knew all too well that the preamble to the revised Lebanese constitution of 1990 explicitly states that 'there shall be ... no settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon'—a phrase that all understand to refer to Lebanon's Palestinians.⁸ And he knew, too, that both Christian and Shia political parties were at once wary of any measure they feared might increase the relative demographic weight of the Sunni community, and eager to seize upon any opportunity to discredit him. Since the end of the civil war—a conflict that many in Lebanon have come to regard as *harb al-akharin* or *la guerre des autres*, a 'war of others', provoked in large part by the international community's attempts to force Lebanon into accepting the burden of the Palestinian presence—all the country's political parties have stated and restated

their opposition to *tawtin*. Hariri, his position still insecure, was not about to break with precedent.

These fears of implantation have a deep history, which can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, when the government of President Fouad Chehab sent the agents of the Second Bureau—Lebanon's military intelligence—into the refugee camps to surveil their inhabitants, whose commitments to pan-Arab causes it deemed suspect. Relations between the Lebanese state and Palestinian political organisations only took a turn for the worse after the Six-Day War of 1967, when the PLO and its dominant factions, Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or DFLP, began to conceive of Lebanon's refugee camps as rear-bases for their armed struggle against the Israeli state. In 1969, the Lebanese Armed Forces and the PLO signed the Cairo Agreement, which gave 'Palestinians resident in Lebanon' the right to 'participate in the Palestinian revolution through the Armed Struggle'. Henceforth, the PLO's commandos would be allowed to move through Lebanon and its commanders to attend meetings in the Ministry of Defence. In 1970, the PLO moved its operations to Beirut, after the clashes of Black September against the Jordanian army forced it to leave Amman.

Over the course of the early 1970s, the PLO's armed presence in Lebanon would become a sore point of controversy in Lebanese politics. Though the Cairo Agreement had stated explicitly that Palestinian actions should not breach 'the principles of the sovereignty and security of Lebanon', many—particularly on the 'Christian right'—viewed this as an empty pledge. For politicians like Camille Chamoun, the head of the National Liberal Party, or Pierre Gemayel, the leader of the Kata'ib, the PLO was a 'state within the state', a foreign entity with dangerous pretensions to sovereignty, whose presence in Lebanon eroded the state's authority and posed a threat to the country's stability.⁹ Clamouring ever more loudly for a way to keep in check the PLO's growing power and audacity, they were dismissed by their opponents on the Lebanese left—the Progressive Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Baathists and others—as 'isolationists', whose refusal to put Lebanon in the service of the Palestinian *qadiyya*, or cause, showed that they were no more than stingy, small-minded petty

bourgeois reactionaries, whose errors would soon be laid bare by the forces of history. In the initial stages of the Lebanese civil war, from 1975 until the early 1980s, Palestinian factions fought alongside the men of the Lebanese National Movement against the militias of the rightist Lebanese Front. While the former regarded themselves as a revolutionary vanguard, fighting for a fairer dispensation at home and the end of neo-colonialism across the region, the latter saw themselves as a resistance force, defending the rights of Lebanon's Christians and holding out against their nation's absorption into an overwhelming territorial entity, like Jonah being swallowed by the whale.

By the mid-1980s, however, the tide had begun to turn against the PLO—and Lebanon's Palestinians. First the Israeli occupation of 1982 forced the organisation to go into exile once again, as they hastily abandoned Beirut for Tunis, and Palestinian society was shattered by the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in September of that year, when Lebanese militias allied to Israel killed as many as 3,500 Palestinian refugees living in these two camps on the outskirts of Beirut. Then Baathist Syria—an active participant in the Lebanese civil war since 1976, when it first sent reinforcements to prop up the Lebanese Front—turned its wrath against what remained of the PLO in Lebanon. The 'war of the camps' lasted from 1985 to 1988, a brutal offensive led on the ground by Damascus' Lebanese and Palestinian proxies—Amal, Al-Sa'iqqa and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. For three years, camps like Ayn al-Hilweh, near Saida, and Rashidiyeh, outside of Sur, were besieged and subjected to bombardment from the ground and the air. They still bear the scars of these assaults. In 1987, the Lebanese government—or what stood then for a government—repudiated the Cairo Agreement.

By 1990, when most of Lebanon's warring factions and parties finally sat down for peace talks in the Saudi city of Taif, many had found new enemies to resent and new causes to prosecute. Still, all could agree, as they went about drawing up a new political dispensation, that the Palestinians—diminished and decimated—could serve as a useful scapegoat. Over the following decade and a half, Lebanon's Palestinians would face growing securitisation and discrimination. Lebanese and Syrian security services transformed many of the country's refugee

camps into what the anthropologist Julie Peteet has called 'spaces of containment', encircling their perimeters with a constant military presence. At Ayn al-Hilweh, in the south, soldiers stationed at a checkpoint at the camp's entrance would stop all cars entering or leaving its precinct between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., taking down registration numbers and the names and identity card numbers of all drivers and passengers. Often, the *shabab*, or young men, of the camp would be subjected to rough treatment, the soldiers screaming at them to 'get down' and 'give me your identity card!' As one of Peteet's interlocutors put it, the point of such measures was 'humiliation'; after all, the Palestinians had long since ceased to be a 'political threat'.¹⁰ At Rashidiyeh, one of the few camps in the country where Fatah still maintained a significant popular following, the army would go so far as to stop anyone attempting to bring building materials to repair the homes damaged in the violence of the 1980s, in an effort 'to punish' its inhabitants for their 'pro-Arafat orientation'.¹¹ In the north of the country, where Syria's security services exercised a more direct and forceful influence, they lent their support to the PFLP-GC, Al-Sa'iqqa and Hamas, which came to exert their dominance over the camps of Nahr al-Bared and Baddawi. Over time, these parties would become known as *al-tahaluf* or 'the alliance', a sign that they were thought of as a loose coalition beholden to Damascus.¹²

If these measures appear contradictory—on the one hand subjecting some camps to ever greater constraints and surveillance, while on the other hand passing internal matters into the hands of Syria's Palestinian proxies—they obeyed the same logic: to create a perception of the camps as wormholes in Lebanese sovereignty, spaces of exception or, as they are often called, *juzur amniyya*, 'security islands', guarded from without because they are lawless from within. The Lebanese army may have changed tack in recent years, entrusting greater authority to the local representatives of the PLO and Fatah, whom they have tasked with ensuring security in the camps. But this policy is plagued by inconsistencies and practical constraints. At one level, the tendency of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces and military intelligence to treat members of the camps' security committees as mere 'informants' and subalterns carrying out their orders has the unintended effect of delegitimising and disempowering these men. For who among the camp's inhabitants

would be willing to trust these agents of the Lebanese state in their midst?¹³ But more than this, the tendency to trust the PLO and Fatah ignores entirely the changing political landscape of the camps and relies on a twin set of flawed assumptions—that Fatah continues to ensure a wide measure of popular legitimacy and that, as a consequence, it is in some way an impartial arbiter capable of presiding over Palestinian society in the camps and adjudicating in its internal disputes.

But, as scholars such as Sari Hanafi and Bernard Rougier have argued, Fatah's legitimacy—much like that of the popular committees—has been eroded in recent years, as other modes of informal governance more reliant on the ethical guidance and counsel of Islamic associations and factions have gained in popularity. Increasingly disillusioned with the insecurity of their surrounds, the inhabitants of camps such as Nahr al-Bared, Baddawi, and Ayn al-Hilweh have gravitated over the course of the early twenty-first century towards those groups that appear capable of providing both physical safety and moral stability. Thus many in Nahr al-Bared, left in ruins by the brutal fighting between the Lebanese army and the Islamist group Fatah al-Islam in 2007, initially welcomed the latter's presence in the camp. As one shaykh recalled after the camp's destruction: 'I am one of those who approved of some of the accomplishments of Fatah al-Islam, when you consider dealing with the drunkards and the fact that our girls could come and go without anyone misbehaving with them'.¹⁴ He was not alone in feeling that Fatah, preoccupied with the tasks of security, had forsaken the more important work of moral oversight. And, as Islamic groups of varying ideological inclinations have increasingly captured the ground once held by Fatah and other 'secular' factions, the organisation has increasingly been drawn into confrontation with these new rivals. At times, this can lead the entire 'security system' to break down, as it has done on several occasions in recent years in Ayn al-Hilweh, which has witnessed repeated bouts of armed fighting. (In one of the most recent bouts of fighting, in August 2017, Fatah found itself taking on a coalition of Islamist groups led by Jabhat al-Nusra, or Fatah al-Sham, as it is now known.)¹⁵ As Hanafi has argued, the securitisation of the camps—the reduction of rule to the mere maintenance of order—seems to show a strikingly impoverished and dysfunctional sense of what government might entail, endlessly reproducing the problems it is supposed to resolve.¹⁶

This, though, is perhaps the point. For only the utter collapse of the 'security system'—such as some would argue happened in Nahr al-Bared in 2007—can allow for a new kind of control over Palestinian lives to be established, one in which their camps would be 'open to the Lebanese army and the police and would be under the sovereignty of the Lebanese state'.¹⁷ Moreover, the enduring power of these discourses of lawlessness is not without its uses. In recent years, partisan mouthpieces like the FPM's website, *tayyar.org*, have increasingly depicted Ayn al-Hilweh as a Hobbesian site of war of all against all, a place of unrest and misrule, or as an open-air holding pen for all the criminals of the land. This is a place, journalists and commentators will claim, whose alleyways teem with fugitives eluding the grasp of the Lebanese state and, increasingly, with malevolent jihadi fighters, stolen across the Syrian border to lay down their bombs in Christian churches, Shia mosques, and army checkpoints. But these nightmarish visions only help to bolster the growing militarism of certain sections of Lebanese society, with their enthusiastic endorsement of the army's growing reach and power. And at the same time, they lend powerful justification to the arguments of those who maintain that the 'social integration' of the Palestinians into Lebanese society will never be possible, that they will always remain a boil on the body politic, but that it is possible to send some to the West Bank and Gaza and transfer others to sympathetic Western states like Canada, while leaving a smaller and more manageable population of 50–60,000.¹⁸

At the same time as they became caught up in revised security arrangements, Lebanon's Palestinian refugees were increasingly ensnared in a web of legal discrimination. The Palestinians, of course, have long been considered an exceptional set of subjects under Lebanese law, a special category unto themselves. In 1962, the Lebanese state defined Palestinian refugees as 'foreign nationals who do not possess identity papers from their country of origin'.¹⁹ At once neither entirely foreigners, nationals of another state who might enjoy all the benefits of reciprocity, nor refugees in the full sense of the term, possessing the particular entitlements that came with this status, the Palestinians were an anomalous and undefined presence. The consequences of this paradoxical position would become apparent over the next few years. In 1963, Palestinians were deemed ineligible for social

security: as stateless people, they could not benefit from the principle of reciprocity.²⁰ But by legislation introduced in 1964, they were assimilated to other foreigners and required to obtain an employment permit before seeking work in Lebanon.²¹ In other words, their status came with all the duties of foreignness, but none of the rights of statehood. In treating Palestinians in this fashion, Lebanon was itself exceptional. It ratified the Casablanca Protocols of 1965, which gave Palestinians living in Arab states the 'right to employment on a par with their citizens' and the right to receive 'upon request, valid travel documents', only with reservations, insisting that Palestinians could only work in Lebanon 'in accordance with the prevailing social and economic conditions' in the country and that it could make the entry of Palestinians into Lebanon 'whenever their interests demand it' 'conditional upon their obtaining an entry visa issued by the concerned Lebanese authorities'.²²

This legal architecture of exemptions and conditions—what we might call the law of ifs and buts—afforded the Lebanese state a great deal of latitude, on which successive governments would capitalise during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1982, at the height of the civil war, Ministerial Decree 1/289 prohibited Palestinians from working in 'over 70 commercial and administrative professions'. (They had already been excluded from syndicated sectors, like medicine, law and engineering, which were regulated by bilateral and reciprocal agreements; now, they were banned from being tailors, mechanics, company directors and secretaries.)²³ These prohibitions were reinforced in 1983, and again in 1993 and 1995, as the post-war political elite turned the nativist language of 'Lebanon for the Lebanese' to its own ends.²⁴ Indeed, the governments of the 1990s and early 2000s sought increasingly to restrict not just the participation of Palestinians in the labour market, but also their capacity to travel freely in and out of the country—another entitlement that might have come with the full recognition of their status as refugees—and to acquire real estate. In 1995, the minister of the interior, Michel el-Murr, made it compulsory for Palestinians wishing to enter Lebanon to obtain a visa from Lebanese diplomatic missions abroad, and for those wishing to leave the country to obtain an exit permit. He justified his actions by explaining that he did not want Lebanon to become a 'dump' for 'human waste' expelled

from other Arab states.²⁵ In 2001, a longstanding convention allowing Palestinians, as fellow Arab citizens, to acquire real estate in Lebanon was overturned, when the country's property law was reformed to ensure that 'all forms of real estate are forbidden to any person who [does not hold] a nationality of a recognised state'. In other words, Palestinians were disbarred from owning property, for fear that their acquisition of a plot of land or an apartment might facilitate their 'permanent settlement'.²⁶ It is no wonder, then, that Palestinians in the 1990s often spoke of the Lebanese state's hopes of 'eliminating the Palestinians from Lebanon', not through the violent tactics of the war years, but through 'strangling' them with law, leaving them no recourse but emigration.²⁷

This situation only really began to change in the mid-2000s, when Prime Minister Fouad Siniora established the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee to re-establish channels of communication with the PLO. As one Lebanese official with knowledge of the 'refugee file' in these years put it, Siniora approached this question with 'an open mind'. While rejecting *tawtin*, he came to see that 'the Palestinian is not an enemy' and began negotiations both with the Palestinian organisations within Lebanon, and with the PLO in Ramallah. These ultimately paved the way not just for the creation of the LPDC, but also for the reopening of the PLO's legation in Beirut in 2006, twenty-four years after the organisation's offices in the city had closed after its departure for Tunis.²⁸ Indeed, these years witnessed a rapprochement of sorts between the Future Movement and the PLO, which came to see each other as fellow travellers of sorts. Like the Future Movement, the PLO—or at least Fatah—was a 'moderate', secular movement, not unsympathetic to the United States, and caught in a bitter rivalry with a pious party wedded to the ideal of violent struggle. While the Future Movement had to live with Hizballah, the PLO had to deal with Hamas. If these two parties could be staunch allies within the 'axis of resistance', then why could the Future Movement and the PLO not work together? As Are Knudsen has argued, these feelings were reciprocated by the PLO. In 2007, Abbas Zaki, the head of the organisation's legation in Lebanon, issued the 'Beirut Declaration' in which he apologised to 'our dear Lebanon' for all the harm that the Palestinians had done to the country.²⁹

This intensification of relations soon began to result in modest reform. As the official that I spoke to in 2012 put it, Siniora developed a commitment of sorts to Palestinian ‘dignity under [Lebanese] sovereignty’.³⁰ In 2005, Ministerial Memorandum 1/67 overturned the draconian restrictions introduced in the 1980s. Henceforth, ‘Palestinian refugees who are born in Lebanon and who are registered with the Lebanese Ministry of Labour’ would be able to work legally as cooks, barbers, or electricians.³¹ However, there are still at least nineteen groups of syndicated professions that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are barred from practising today. These do not just include occupations such as medicine, dentistry, law, engineering and accountancy; Palestinians are also prohibited from working as nurses and physiotherapists, money changers and tourist guides.³² Further reform followed in 2010, when the Lebanese parliament ratified an amendment to article 9 of the Social Security Law, making registered Palestinian refugees eligible for pensions and redundancy benefits. And yet, despite all the effort that civil society activists, advocacy groups, and NGOs put into this initiative, and all the fanfare and controversy that surrounded its passing, this remains in practice a modest legislative change, and Palestinians are still not eligible for statutory protection in case of sickness or pregnancy.³³ Many, even among those who regarded themselves as sympathetically disposed towards Palestinian refugees, took no issue with these limitations. As my interviewee put it in 2012, why should the Palestinians have the *daman*, or national insurance, when two-thirds of Lebanese workers did not benefit from this measure?³⁴

What’s more, it is telling that a mere 1.6% of Palestinian refugees across Lebanon benefit from pensions.³⁵ For despite limited reform to the legal status quo in the years since 2005, these men and women continue to confront de facto discrimination in the labour market—just one of the factors that contribute to the precarity and deprivation of their lives. In December 2017, Saad Hariri announced that the unemployment rate among registered Palestinian refugees stood at 18.4%, almost three times as high as that among Lebanese of working age.³⁶ Youth unemployment was higher still: almost 24% for 20- to 29-year-olds and almost 26% for 15- to 20-year-olds. In all, only 51,939 Palestinian refugees were in work, less than a third of those who lived in the camps and settlements.³⁷ But alongside unemployment, we must

also reckon with under-employment, and the deep effects on lives and livelihoods of casual, insecure labour. If those in the camp of Mar Elias, in the sprawling southern suburbs of Beirut, have been able to capitalise on its position at the intersection of several densely populated neighbourhoods to open grocery stores, restaurants and workshops catering to a Palestinian and Lebanese clientele, others do not benefit from the same advantages of location.³⁸ In Sur, for instance, 31.1% of Palestinian workers subsisted on day work. In Saida, this percentage rose to 35.5%. In Tripoli, it stood at 73.9%.³⁹ Paradoxically, however, Sur has by far the highest proportion of Palestinians in low-paid seasonal and occasional work—on construction sites, say, or as agricultural labourers in the orange, lime, and banana orchards of the region. In Rashidiyeh, some 46% of those in work are occupied in these sectors. In the northern camp of Baddawi, however, only 11% work in what UNRWA has called ‘elementary occupations’; 46% are ‘craft and related trade workers’ and ‘machine operators’—in other words, hairdressers, mechanics, *kandarji-s* or shoe-menders, and the like.⁴⁰ Though this skilled work might sound preferable to the wearying labours of the fields, these remain modest, low-paid occupations in which casual, informal contracts appear to still be the norm. Under such conditions, it is hardly surprising that only 1.5% of all Palestinians in work had a fully notarised employment contract, and that 82.6% made do with mere oral agreements with their employers and overseers. Nor is it surprising that more than half of Palestinian workers earn less than 500,000LL, or \$333, per month—almost \$150 less than the legal minimum wage for Lebanese workers.⁴¹

These working conditions have ripple effects through the lives of Lebanon’s Palestinian refugees, affecting their diet and physical and mental health. In 2010, some 58% of those questioned reported that they were vulnerable to food insecurity—often finding fresh fruit, meat, and dairy products out of their financial reach. Fifteen per cent reported severe food insecurity—struggling, in other words, to provide adequate food for the household on a regular basis. A third of Palestinians reported chronic illness, with many suffering from hypertension in particular, and just over a fifth reported experiencing depression or anxiety—an entirely unsurprising statistic given the financial and physical pressures that so many face. But it is not just

work and the absence of work that leaves its bruising imprint on the lives of Palestinian refugees.

Equally wearying are the material circumstances in which they live—the state of their streets and homes, of their camps and settlements. One need only take the briefest of looks at UNRWA's descriptions of Lebanon's twelve officially recognised refugee camps to gain a sense of the tiring effect of these spatial surrounds. At Wavel Camp, in the Beqaa, 'housing is unhealthy as many refugees still live in original Mandate-era army barracks, which lack daylight and ventilation'.⁴² At Ayn al-Hilweh, on the outskirts of Saida, 'shelters in the camp are small and very close to each other. Some still have sheet metal roofing'.⁴³ At Shatila, in Beirut's growing spread, 'environmental health conditions ... are extremely bad. Shelters are damp and overcrowded, and many have open drains. The sewerage system needs considerable expansion'.⁴⁴ Even Mar Elias, whose inhabitants often stress the 'relative quality' of their water and electricity supplies, insisting that it is 'one of the best camps in Beirut', is marred by 'bad' housing conditions and failing infrastructure. It is, as Mohamed Dorai has written, a 'pocket of poverty' enfolded within the fabric of the city. Indeed, it is this relative deprivation that lends its inhabitants an advantage in certain matters, for they can capitalise on the lack of regulation that prevails in the camp to make marginal gains. While shopkeepers and restaurant owners can keep operation costs low, bringing in customers drawn in by the cheaper fare, others can turn themselves into irregular landlords, leasing out informal housing to Syrian, Egyptian, Sudanese or South Asian migrant labourers who cannot afford rents in other parts of the city. This is the case, for instance, of one man who decided in the mid-1990s to 'build a supplementary floor on the top of my house', which he divided into 'a two-room apartment' and 'one single room separated by a small terrace'. 'The room is rented by two Sri-Lankan domestic workers and the apartment by a Sudanese family with two children', providing him with a supplementary income of \$200 per month.⁴⁵

For others, however, poor housing and failing infrastructure are not so much opportunities for small gains as sapping, tiresome facts of the everyday. There are exceptions, of course, and, despite its ongoing financial problems, UNRWA has made great efforts to improve the infrastructure and housing stock of certain camps, such as Burj al-

Shemali, with its electricity network, potable water, and sewerage and storm water drainage systems.⁴⁶ But it remains the case that many live in desperately inadequate conditions. In 2010, 40 per cent of respondents to a survey of Palestinian households reported 'water leaking through their roofs or walls', and another 8 per cent told of living in shelters made of 'corrugated iron, wood and asbestos'. A similar proportion reported living in overcrowded conditions, with more than three people living in one room.⁴⁷ Children and adults, the young and the elderly, all piled together with nowhere to go, no place to escape from the noise and the smells—of food, of sweat and sour breath, of farts and shit—and the constant presence of each other. Such things take a toll, and conditions are worse still in Lebanon's informal settlements, like Jal al-Bahr on the outskirts of Sur.

The everyday strains on refugees are only exacerbated by the dependence of so many on UNRWA. In a country in which healthcare is largely a private commodity, a third of Palestinian refugees requiring treatment fall back on the agency's clinics and dispensaries, while another 10 per cent rely on the Palestinian Red Crescent.⁴⁸ Even as the organisation provides essential relief, there is no escaping the fact that some are saddened by what they see as debasements that come with dependency. Already, in the 1990s, Julie Peteet chronicled the growing sense of frustration at the failings of the popular committees that govern camps like Shatila, and of the embarrassment engendered by undignified reliance on international organisations. In one story, Peteet's interlocutor Umm Khalid recounted her efforts to secure the committee's assistance for a disabled man, wounded in the fighting of the 1980s, and who now fed his family on the rations that UNRWA provided. 'I marched in' to the popular committee's offices, Umm Khalid told Peteet, 'and I said to all of those men sitting there, "You are sitting here, your presence or nonpresence is the same thing!" ... We just ignore the poor and don't care for them? When he is strong he is ours and when is weakened we throw him away?' In this tale, a woman's frustration with the ineptitude and self-interest of the camp's self-appointed male leaders intermingles with political disillusion and cynicism, the revolutionary ideals of the 1980s faded into washed-out, hollow phrases, but also with shame that the Palestinians are no longer a people seeking self-determination, but merely refugees reduced to

reliance on external bodies. A similar sense of hopelessness pervaded the words of another of Peteet's acquaintances, Suha, who had been dropped by her graduate supervisor. When Peteet asked her what she was going to do, she responded: 'What can I do? We are Palestinians and refugees. We have no rights. There is no one to appeal to.'⁴⁹ As Hannah Arendt once argued, rights belong to those who belong to nations. 'The calamity of the rightless' is that they 'no longer belong to any community whatsoever'.⁵⁰ As Lebanon's Palestinians have lost a sense of themselves as a people and their identity has become little more than a legal category, so too have they given up on the rights they once thought were theirs for the taking.

And yet, as the anthropologist Sylvain Perdigon has argued, Palestinians can find ways of eluding and rejecting these ways of apprehending their own lives and place in the world. In his work on the camps of Sur, places like Rashidiyeh, al-Buss, and Mieh Mieh that are among the most socio-economically deprived of Palestinian settlements in Lebanon, Perdigon notes a persistent 'reticence' to speak of oneself as poor. It is not that his interlocutors do not know what poverty might entail. On the contrary, it is an ever-present part of the assemblages of their everyday, of that world of 'ordinary calamity' in which they live, plagued by the sensory awareness of 'a leaking roof, a lingering untreated pain' or a sputtering electricity generator, the troubling knowledge that 'a damp sleeping room ... will give [the] children asthma', and the nagging fear that one does not have 'food for tonight's family dinner', a fear felt as a physical ache, a disquieting tightness in the throat. These are men and women who live, it is clear, 'at the mercy of what each day brings'. Still, though, they resist the language of poverty. Even as they grasp and acknowledge that their condition is born of 'something political'—*shi siyasi*—that it is a structural effect, in other words, of particular governing practices, they continue to insist that their predicament is distinct to that of the global poor of South Asia or Latin America—*nahna ghayr*, 'we are different'. For Perdigon, this signals the adherence of these men and women to alternate modes of envisioning sovereignty, as a political condition founded in *sabr*, or patience, in endurance, in the capacity to put up and carry on, moving wearily but steadily from the present into the future.⁵¹ But there is something else here, that Perdigon only hints at: a refusal to acquiesce

in the sovereign schemes of the Lebanese state, with its pursuit of precarisation: its attempts to foster 'uncertainty', 'insecurity', and 'vulnerability' as instruments of 'social regulation and control'.⁵² In short, this reluctance to lapse into the language of poverty, to recognise oneself as poor, is a way of preserving a measure of dignity, of worth, of mastery over oneself and one's place in the world. As Perdigon has argued, the 'moral codes' and languages of 'self-making' that these men and women rely upon provide the makings of a particularly resilient kind of subjectivity. Far from stranded figures, stripped of all but the most 'basic' of 'biological dependencies' and standing naked before the state like a tree caught in the gales, Palestinian subjects find meaning and succour in the ethical and affective language of kin and community.⁵³

The labours of abjectness: Syrian refugees in contemporary Lebanon

The Palestinians of Lebanon, however, are not the only figures to be framed by Lebanese officials and foreign donors and scholars as exemplars of 'bare life' or mere recipients of aid. Strikingly similar discourses have swirled about the Syrian refugees who have arrived in Lebanon since 2011. Like the Palestinians before them, they are imagined as abject beings, shorn of all the trappings of political subjectivity. And like the Palestinians, they are feared as security threats, dangerous pathogens infecting the Lebanese political system. If the latter view appears a disturbing product of the growing nativism and militarism of Lebanese society, then the former can seem a simple reflection of statistical fact.

As of January 2018, the UNHCR estimates that there are 995,512 Syrian refugees in Lebanon—though, as it freely acknowledges, the fact that it has not registered new arrivals since May 2015, at the request of the Lebanese government, may well mean that this is an undercount. Most remain clustered in the eastern valley of the Beqaa, which provides a refuge of sorts to 357,395 Syrians. There, as many as half still live, in some cases almost seven years after their arrival, in makeshift tent cities exposed to the elements—blustery winds and snow in winter, burning heat in summer. Another 266,058 have headed for the ever-proliferating sprawl of Beirut and its conurbation, and 253,173 for the city of Tripoli and the northern reaches of Akkar. Like the Beqaa, Akkar borders Syria,

and some of its inhabitants have long maintained ties of kin, intermarriage, migration and trade across the border. It is no coincidence that the north-eastern district of Wadi Khaled, whose inhabitants share close relations with the region of Homs, should have been one of the first places in Lebanon to welcome refugees from Syria, as hundreds, then thousands attempted to escape the regime's brutal siege of Homs, which began in May 2011. Another 118,886 Syrians now live in the south of the country. Like the more than 30,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria—many of them fugitives from the camp of Yarmouk, in Damascus, the scene of bitter fighting in 2012 and again in 2015—who have headed for Lebanon, some of these men and women have streamed into camps like Rashidiyeh and Mieh Mieh, putting further stress on their already overstretched infrastructure.⁵⁴

What's more, all the socio-economic indices that we have indicate that Syrian refugees in Lebanon confront severe deprivation and debt. The average monthly working income for Syrian men was \$206, and \$159 for women. These wages are lower still than those that Palestinians receive, and though levels of female income are roughly comparable—as we shall see—to those of migrant domestic workers, the latter often, though not always, do receive the meagre compensation of food and board. Moreover, only 53% of Syrian households had a member in employment in 2017. (A third of men found work in construction, and just over a fifth in agriculture, while 55% of women worked as farm labourers and fruit-pickers, and 24% worked in services.) More than a third of those surveyed reported that not a single member of the household had worked in the last month. It is unsurprising, under these circumstances, that 77% of households reported shortages of food or money to buy daily necessities, and 87% had borrowed money to make ends meet and put food on the table. Most families, then, relied on a variety of coping strategies, from informal loans contracted on onerous terms with Lebanese or Syrian money-lenders, to selling off household items or land and property in Syria—often, one would imagine, at severely discounted rates—or withdrawing their children from school to provide a supplementary income. While two-thirds of households had resorted to such temporary tactics to alleviate their financial strains, 96% admitted that they had been forced to reduce their food consumption in order to pull through. Indeed, it was

common for most Syrian adults to consume only two meals a day, and a fifth of households reported 'low dietary diversity'.⁵⁵

But if food is difficult to come by, so is adequate housing. Almost three-quarters of the displaced Syrians in Lebanon now live in residential buildings, a proportion that rises to 96% in Beirut and 94% in Mount Lebanon, where so many have flocked in search of transient work. Only in the northern and eastern rural marches of Akkar, Hermel, and the Beqaa, whose economies remain largely agrarian, does a significant proportion—from 22% in Akkar to 50% in Baalbek and the Hermel—still live in informal settlements. (Tellingly, female-headed households are almost twice as likely to live in these tent cities.) But this regional variation belies broad similarities. For 53% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live 'in dwellings that were overcrowded, had dangerous structural conditions, and/or urgently needed repairs'. These are cramped outhouses in which watchmen and labourers are put to sleep; half-finished apartment blocks in which labourers live and work, the kerosene stoves on which they cook their meals sending flashes of blue light into the night air; poky extensions on informal housing in working-class quarters and suburbs like Mar Elias, Kola, and Dora. Leaking roofs and walls, damp, unsealed windows, with just an old bedsheet or some greaseproof paper closing off the room, failing sanitation, or no sanitation at all, and overcrowding—with many households, composed, on average, of four persons, living in less than 35 square metres: these are the daily lot of many Syrians, regardless of where and how they live. And yet none of this comes cheap. Nominal rents ranged in 2017 from \$35 per month for a plot of land on which to pitch a tent in the Beqaa, to \$328 for a room in Beirut. Less than a third of households did not have to pay additional fees for water and electricity. Though a small proportion offset these costs by working for their landlords, there is no avoiding the fact that rent often far outstrips the monthly income of most Syrian refugees, contributing not just to growing rates of debt, but also to the ceaseless, tiring transience and insecurity that plague the lives of so many. Twelve per cent of Syrian households had moved within the past six months; 38% of those had been evicted, and 20% could simply not afford the rent. Housing, food, heating, lighting, safe drinking water—all of this adds up, and the statistics tell an abject story: 76%

of Syrian households lived in poverty, and 58% were living in 'extreme poverty, unable to meet survival needs'.⁵⁶

This has contributed to forming a particular image of the Syrian refugee as a vulnerable subject, a recipient of assistance whose life can be summed up in statistical assessments of need. But if international donors and non-governmental organisations see Syrians through the lens of philanthropic governmentality, defining them primarily as objects of humanitarian relief, Lebanon's politicians and people have increasingly come to regard them as a threat to the body politic. Earlier chapters have outlined the rancorous polemics that broke out in the early stages of the Syrian conflict over the supposed presence of Al-Qaeda and other radical groups in Lebanon's border marches. These fears of Syrian refugees as dangerous free radicals, germs of terror circulating through the bloodstream of Lebanese society, have only grown more pronounced in recent years. As President Michel Aoun put it in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017: 'Terrorists have taken shelter in refugee gathering areas and camps, transforming them into a fertile terrain aiming to carry out terrorist activities.'⁵⁷

In these narratives, the eastern town of Aarsal and its hinterland have come to play a discursive role similar to that of Ayn al-Hilweh. After 2011, Aarsal rapidly became a reception point for refugees fleeing the fighting in the regions to the west of Damascus, and its population tripled, swelling to 80,000 in 2014. With this influx, it came to be seen as a nest of subversives, an unpoliced outpost through which extremists could enter Lebanon, before fanning out to plot their operations across the country. In the summer of 2014, the worst fears of the country's doomsayers were realised, when Daesh and Jabhat al-Nusra launched a joint offensive on the town after the Lebanese army arrested one of their commanders. First, they attacked the army checkpoints on the fringes of Aarsal, then they seized the police station, before establishing guards throughout the town. It took the army a week to regain control. Twenty Lebanese soldiers were killed in the fighting, and another eighty-five wounded. Twenty-nine were taken captive.

The fighting in Aarsal seemed confirmation of the ways in which the Syrian conflict could perforate and pockmark Lebanese sovereignty, giving rise to formidable new enemies. Lebanon's Christian and Shia

communities, long petrified by the ghoulish rise of *takfiri* Islam, saw the presence of IS and Jabhat al-Nusra on the Lebanese borders as a threat to their very existence. But this brief confrontation also created a sad and cruel legacy. Though four of the soldiers were killed by their captors and sixteen, taken by Jabhat al-Nusra, were released in a prisoner exchange in December 2015, nine men remained in the hands of IS.⁵⁸ For almost two years, their relatives—the *ahali al-makhtufin*, or families of the kidnapped—kept up a protest at their disappearance. At times angry, at others dignified, they maintained their resolve, calling on the Lebanese state to do more to secure the release of their sons and brothers. They held press conferences and sit-ins. They met with officials, ministers and army officers. They gave interviews. Every few weeks and months, the Lebanese media would speak of a breakthrough, announcing the imminent release of the kidnapped soldiers. Nothing, though, came to pass until the summer of 2017, when Hizballah and the Lebanese army strove to take decisive action against IS and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham—the organisation once known as Jabhat al-Nusra.

On 20 July 2017, Hizballah laid down the markers, launching an offensive against the positions of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham along the Lebanese–Syrian border. After a week of intense fighting, during which every advance and captured position was celebrated in jubilant news broadcasts and tweets by Hizballah's media arm, the party announced its victory on 27 July. In a gesture intended to show its humane observance of Islamic norms of just war, its military command organised safe passage for the remaining *takfiri* fighters and their families, putting them on coaches to carry them to the rebel-held province of Idlib, in northern Syria. Though many rejoiced in what they regarded as the resistance's victory over the forces of obscurantism, seeing it as another decisive step in the party's attempts to create a safe zone either side of the Lebanese–Syrian border, free of radical Sunni fighters and inhabited by loyal, pliant populations, others expressed deep misgivings about the wisdom of its acts. Did such an offensive not threaten to pull Hizballah ever deeper into Syria's conflicts? Might the party drag Lebanon into the morass, as in 2006, exposing the country to 'negative repercussions' rather than making it safer? What did Hizballah's autonomy say about its attitude to the Lebanese state, not to speak of the latter's ability to assert its sovereignty, establishing a legitimate monop-

oly over arms within Lebanon? And could one even think of the party as a Lebanese entity any more, a legitimate instrument of resistance, when it appeared more interested in shoring up its own position and that of the Assad regime than in protecting Lebanon's territory and population from harm?

Caught in a bind, the high command of Lebanon's army decided that they, too, had to take action if they were not to be outdone and humiliated. Operations began in the heights of Ras Baalbek on 14 August, and on 19 August 2017, the army's commander-in-chief, General Joseph Aoun, announced the beginning of the operation known as *fajr al-jurud*, or the dawn of the heights. Fought 'in the name of Lebanon, in the name of the kidnapped Lebanese soldiers, [and] in the name of the martyrs of the army', this offensive would liberate Lebanon from the scourge of radical Sunni Islam, flushing out the small units of IS fighters still hiding out in the high ground along the Lebanese-Syrian border. The Lebanese army, however, did not work alone, but continued to operate in conjunction with Hizballah's military wing. In a telling indication of just how deeply the 'party of God' had been drawn into Syria's conflicts, Hizballah fighters and soldiers of the Lebanese army positioned themselves on either side of the border, launching a pincer offensive on the pockets of armed men hiding out in the heights of Qalamoun, and Ras Baalbek.⁵⁹ On 27 August, the army announced its victory. Like Hizballah, it allowed the men of IS safe passage into rebel-held Syria. But victory was tinged with sorrow and anger. Only hours after the ceasefire, Major-General Abbas Ibrahim, the head of the Amn al-'Amm, or General Security, who had spearheaded efforts to negotiate with Jabhat Fatah al-Sham for the release of the kidnapped, announced that the remains of eight men had been discovered in the seized encampments. The soldiers had been killed by their captors.⁶⁰

These episodes speak, I think, not just of the growing tendency to think of refugees as a security threat, but also of the growing idealisation of the army. In a country in which aborted protests, surprising reconciliations, delayed elections, and incessant blockages have eroded faith in political leadership, the army is increasingly seen as an impartial and honourable arbiter, the sole custodian of Lebanon's fragile sovereignty. It has become common to see posters across Lebanon with the army's distinctive crest and motto—*sharaf, tadhyya, wafa'*, or 'honour, sacrifice,

and respect'—values whose absence from civic life many in Lebanon feel so keenly. These are sometimes, to be sure, keenly partisan tropes. Supporters of the FPM, in particular, hold up as paragons of martial virtue men like the commander-in-chief of the Lebanese armed forces, Joseph Aoun, and Brigadier-General Chamel Roukoz, who commanded elite troops in 2007 against Fatah al-Islam, in 2013 against the fighters of the Lebanese Salafi shaykh Ahmad al-Asir, and in 2017 against IS. (Not coincidentally, Roukoz is Michel Aoun's son-in-law.)

That Roukoz will be standing as a candidate in the 2018 parliamentary elections is a further sign of the erosion of the lines between security and politics in contemporary Lebanon. Another is the growing tendency of some to call for the registration and return of Syrian refugees to safe zones inside their own country. These are not new demands, but they gained greater currency with the announcement of supposed de-escalation areas inside Syria in the summer of 2017. In his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2017, Aoun made his feelings on the matter clear. 'There is no doubt', he announced, 'that it would be better for the United Nations to assist [the refugees] in returning to their homeland rather than helping them remain in camps lacking the minimum standard of a decent living.' 'As for the claim', Aoun continued, 'that these people will not be safe if they return to their country, we are all aware that this is a pretext, and it is unacceptable.'⁶¹ And, as with the Palestinians, the Lebanese state appears to be making it as difficult as it can for Syrians to gain the security of legal standing. In 2017, over 74 per cent of surveyed Syrian refugees did not have legal residency in Lebanon, and 55 per cent of all Syrian households did not have a single registered member. In large part, this is because of the onerous fees that Lebanon's General Security charges to renew residency permits—\$200, a sum easily equivalent to an entire month's income—but also because of growing fears of the state, its security agencies, and their intentions.⁶² If they are registered, some will ask, will it not make it easier for the Lebanese state to turn them back towards Syria? And, as the refugees themselves knew all too well, their own country was still 'not safe', despite what Aoun and his acolytes might say. They faced no guarantee that they would not be conscripted or face retribution and punishment for their actions before leaving, or even for their decision to leave.

At the same time, however, Lebanon's Syrian refugees increasingly find themselves unwelcome. As one woman put it, 'the people here treat us badly. There's no work. We can't live a normal life'. By this point, she had lived for more than six years in one of the makeshift tent settlements of the Beqaa, caught in this world of protracted impermanence by the Lebanese government's refusal to allow international organisations to construct sturdier shelters. For such housing, better able to withstand the snow and the wind, might only encourage these men and women to stay on, becoming, like the Palestinians, another imposition on a small country. This nativism and xenophobia, of course, has long antecedents. There is a deep streak of civilizational contempt among some Lebanese for Syrians, whom they deem a backward and uncouth people. For some, particularly among Christians, this is admixed with resentment at the presence of Syrian soldiers and migrant workers in their midst, whom they have come to see as the representatives of an occupying power. After the events of the Cedar Revolution in 2005, many finally gave full vent to their frustrations in mockery and deprecation. I was once told a joke about two Syrian beggars, who would get together every evening after a day spent begging on the streets of Beirut. One night, one of the two arrived with a grin on his face, flashing a wad of \$500 at his astonished friend. 'How did you get that?' the other asked, bemused. 'Oh, I just went down to Sassine Square', in the heart of Achrafieh. The next day, the two men met again. This time, the second one showed up with his face bruised and his clothes tattered. 'What happened to you?' his concerned friend asked. 'I did what you told me, I went down to Sassine, and this is what happened to me.' 'But what did you say on your sign?' asked his friend. The bruised beggar showed his friend his sign, which read simply, 'I am a poor Syrian, please help me'. 'No, you idiot, don't say that. I knew I should have told you what to say,' the first one answered. At this point, he took out his sign. It read: 'I am a poor Syrian, please help me. I need \$500 to get back to Damascus'. Though some Lebanese have always seen these stories for the racist narratives that they are, there were no qualms in other quarters about expressing such sentiments in public. In 2008, I went to see the British band Gorillaz play at the Byblos Music Festival, in the staunchly Christian town of Jbeil. When lead singer Damon Albarn announced that he would be joined on stage by the

National Conservatoire of Damascus, many in the audience broke out in boos. Some would justify such actions as motivated by hatred and wariness of the Assad regime. It is clear, however, that there is more going on here—not least because of the fact that such animosities are shared by newly declared allies of the Baathist state, like Aoun himself.

In recent years, this xenophobia has increasingly been projected onto common Syrian refugees. After 26-year-old Raya Chidiac was found dead in the northern Christian town of Miziara in August 2017, and her family's Syrian doorman was arrested for her rape and murder, a sit-in was held in the neighbouring locality of Zgharta calling for the departure of all Syrians. 'Nowadays,' one demonstrator explained, 'the refugees outnumber the local people, and we no longer feel safe.' Chidiac's fiancé, who attended the sit-in, was even more explicit in his diagnosis of the problem: 'Syrians, who come from societies [sic] that are different to Lebanese society, have trouble adapting to a more open society and clash against this culture that is ours.'⁶³ This culture trouble could only be resolved by their expulsion and return to Syria. And yet it does not take that much for some in Lebanon to express their disgust and disdain for the refugees in their midst. One night in 2013, I was out in Beirut with my partner when a little Syrian girl—perhaps seven or eight years old—approached us. While I was speaking to her, the bar's manager rushed out to our table. He dragged her away by the sleeve and slapped the nape of her neck, screaming at her to get lost. When my partner told him that what he had done was completely unnecessary, he responded with the particular condescension reserved for a foreign, blonde woman: 'you don't understand,' he said, 'they're all thieves. They don't need to beg, they're just lying.' In this context, it is unsurprising that a growing number of Syrians—67 per cent in 2017—report being subjected to verbal harassment, most often at the hands of neighbours and employers.⁶⁴ Violent words and acts and growing discrimination, both legal and discursive, as well as the Lebanese state's deliberate cultivation of uncertainty and impermanence—these are the forces that Syrian refugees must reckon with, knowing that, still, they cannot go home.

And yet, there is another, more complicated story, hidden in plain sight in the mass of statistical material amassed by the UNHCR—that of Syrians as labourers, working as they have long done in precarious

and volatile circumstances on orchards and in vineyards, on construction sites and in scrap metal yards. This is the truth that none care to say too loudly: for all the complaints of the Lebanese about 'the Syrians'—that they are dirty and uncouth, the unsophisticated rustic cousins of their more cosmopolitan neighbours, that they are untrustworthy and criminal-minded, and now that they are dangerous sexual predators, murderers, and terrorists—Lebanon's economy remains reliant on their work. As Elizabeth Saleh has shown in her work on the informal economy of the scrap yards of Beirut, these spaces, with their dependence on Syrian migrant labour, enable the Lebanese to gain profits from such activities, even while maintaining the hierarchical distinctions and inequalities between different categories of people and different kinds of labour. That the Syrians who worked in the yard were all too aware of these discriminatory distinctions, and were ready to work with and against them, was clear from the fact that they named their overseer *mu'allim sarsur*, or Master Cockroach. At one level, of course, this act of naming only reproduced 'the web of social inequalities' in which they operated. At another, however, it also allowed them to reclaim some agency, casting themselves as useful actors who 'altered the urban landscape' for the better, helping to keep it clean and ordered, and turning waste into marginal gains.⁶⁵

In this heavy reliance on Syrian work, at least, there is continuity with the years before 2011. For, as John Chalcraft has shown, Lebanon's building sites and fields have long relied on the creation of a pooled labour market, in which Syrian workers are at once treated as moveable instruments of the economy and as objects of control and suspicion.⁶⁶ Though the Syrian conflict is in so many ways a deep caesura, a painful rip in the flesh of the region, we cannot lose sight of the ways in which these earlier patterns of mobility helped some to find their feet after 2011. In 2013, I spoke to one young man who worked as a gardener in northern Lebanon. Then in his late twenties, he had been moving back and forth between Lebanon and his hometown in the countryside of Hama since his teenage years. While working in Lebanon, he had married a girl back home, whom he left behind on his money-making sojourns across the border. When some took up arms against Assad's soldiers, he crossed back to fight alongside them. And when the violence quickly became too bad to endure, he moved his

wife, and the children they had since had together, to Lebanon. Even as this signalled a significant shift from the sojourning existence of the unaccompanied male migrant to a more permanent, fixed—if not necessarily secure—kind of presence, this move was only made possible by the contextual knowledge, the networks and contacts the man had accumulated over almost a decade.

In the world of the home

But Syrians are not the only moving people on whom the Lebanese economy relies. Like other Middle Eastern states such as the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia, Lebanon has built up a heavy dependence on migrant workers to do its most demanding, dirty and unattractive tasks: building and fruit-picking, of course, but also cooking, cleaning, clearing away waste, providing sexual services, and raising children. It is not just 'the lifestyles of the First World', then, that are 'made possible by a global transfer of the services associated with a wife's traditional role—childcare, homemaking and sex'.⁶⁷ A 'middle-income' country beset by 'third-world' problems—unfit infrastructure, gridlocked roads, failing electricity and a painfully slow internet—Lebanon has nonetheless benefited from the global redistribution of labour that has seen certain states, such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, farm their men and women out to others, in North America and Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere in Asia.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the realm of the home. Since the end of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of female migrant labourers from South and South-East Asia and the Horn of Africa have toiled in the households of Lebanese employers, preparing their food, cleaning their waste, and tending to their children and their old. It seems that Filipino and Sri Lankan domestic workers first began to arrive in significant numbers in Lebanon in the late 1970s and early 1980s, only a few years after the first waves of labour migration from these regions towards the Gulf. From the off, these predominantly female labourers represented a cheap and desirable alternative to the Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian and Egyptian women who had hitherto worked in middle- and upper-class Lebanese homes. While one might have thought that their lack of familiarity with the Arabic language and

Middle Eastern culture would have been seen as a disadvantage, in fact many potential employers regarded their utter strangeness as desirable. For not only were they far removed from the ideological conflicts that were then tearing asunder Lebanese society—conflicts that inevitably took a sectarian and racialised form, with Syrians and Palestinians thought of by some as intimate brothers and by others as dangerous strangers. More than this, their unsure footing on this new terrain—and the legal conditions on which they entered employment in Lebanon—made them easier to subjugate, sack and replace. Helping to keep wages low, these factors made this new source of labour accessible to many who would previously have considered domestic ‘help’ beyond their means.⁶⁸ As Michael Young noted in the late 1990s, the rush to employ newcomers from the Philippines, Sri Lanka or Ethiopia ‘has often seemed less necessary than advantageous socially’. In other words, ‘low-cost migrants are often instruments for the social enhancement’ of their Lebanese employers.⁶⁹ This is perhaps even truer now than it was two decades ago.

In 2010, the Lebanese Ministry of Labour issued 37,732 new work permits and renewed another 80,209—all in all, some 117,941.⁷⁰ By 2015, this number had increased to over 209,000.⁷¹ While once the bulk of these workers came from the Philippines and Sri Lanka—their origins giving rise to the practice, common enough among the Lebanese, of calling all domestic workers *sirlankiyyeh*—more than a quarter now come from Ethiopia. A significant proportion are also Bangladeshis and Nepalese—who received, respectively, 29.4% and 10.3% of the new work permits issued in 2010. Some 8%, meanwhile, come from Madagascar and other African countries, such as Togo, Cameroon, and Nigeria.⁷² In return for a monthly salary of between \$100 and \$150 for a Nepalese migrant with little experience of domestic work, and \$200 to \$300 for Filipinos, who are particularly prized because of their perceived superior civilizational standing and knowledge of English, these women are expected to carry out many of the essential tasks of domestic life.⁷³

As in other parts of the Middle East, domestic workers enter Lebanon under the *kafala* or sponsorship system. Built upon an array of regulations, laws, and assumptions, this is a powerful administrative mechanism whose entire purpose, it would seem, is to maintain the

control of the state and the employer over any migrant labourer working in the country.⁷⁴ This is a system coordinated by the 500 or so *wikalat al-khadamat*, or ‘service agencies’, that secure these migrants’ services for Lebanese employers. These agencies charge their clients the handsome sum of \$2,000 for their services, helping prospective employers to select a ‘girl’ from their books, drawing up all the necessary paperwork, securing visas and buying air tickets. In practice, though, much of the work is carried out by local recruiters, who operate in places such as Nepal on a double commission, charging \$200 to \$300 to the Lebanese agencies that rely upon them for steady sources of labour, and anything between \$300 and \$700 to the migrants who see them as gatekeepers. Once in the country, however, domestic workers largely fall under the responsibility of their employers. It is they who must come to Beirut International Airport to pick up their new charge from the offices of the General Security, where they must await their arrival, and it is they who must apply for a residence permit, or *iqama*, for their housekeeper before the expiry of their initial three-month visa. As this suggests, the relationship between employer and employee is underwritten by profoundly paternalistic—or maternalistic, given the extensive part that women play in these circumstances—assumptions about the unquestioned right of the Lebanese to exert extensive jurisdiction over the lives of these racial others in their homes. Indeed, it is telling that employers are commonly referred to as the *rabb al-‘aml*—quite literally, the lord or master of their charges’ work—while domestic workers are spoken of as *banat*, or ‘girls’. Often, when accused of racism or cruelty or pettiness towards their housekeepers, Lebanese women will exclaim that they ‘treat her like my daughter’. This is a discourse, then, that seemingly excuses a great deal. But even when it is not used as a justification for abuse, it yields deeply asymmetrical relations between employer and employee. While employers retain the option to ‘return’ their new employee to the agency if they deem them unsuitable for whatever reason, employees are expected by convention to surrender their passports to their employers, who lock them up in a drawer, out of reach. Should they leave their employer’s home without these identity documents, they are deemed ‘runaways’ in breach of their conditions of residence—and liable to summary imprisonment in the General Security’s holding

cells, where one migrant activist testified up to seventy women are detained while awaiting deportation. Though the relationship between these assumptions and Lebanese law remains a murky, uncertain one, they are widely believed to have force and are commonly put into effect. It is not for nothing that this Ethiopian activist should have exclaimed, during an event held in Beirut in September 2015, that 'the law has killed us'—*al-'anun 'atalna*.

Some scholars have argued that the 'transfer' of migrants from certain parts of the world to others has freed women of certain affluent, secure backgrounds to work outside the household, taking up professional roles in the knowledge that someone else is doing the housework and the childcare.⁷⁵ This phenomenon, however, has had rather different effects in Lebanon. Here, this influx of migrant labour has permitted Lebanese households, in many cases, to give life to a particular bourgeois ideal of the gendered division of labour. In this script, played out in affluent and aspirational homes across the country, the woman is largely emancipated from the demands of work, whether in or out of the home, and free to focus on caring for herself and her family—shopping, exercising, socialising, engaging in charity work, and cooking and tending to her children as and when she sees fit. But, crucially, she is not entirely idle. For if the husband remains the central economic player, the wife can also take on managerial functions, supervising her housekeeper's work, training her, teaching her recipes, and admonishing her.

Race, gender, and class interlock here to construct a powerful narrative of superiority. The Lebanese man and woman are jointly and separately in charge—the one responsible for providing for the family out in the public realm of business, the other for managing the family's private, domestic affairs; their subordinates, meanwhile, are not just women, but *foreign* women whose nationality, race, and putative lack of linguistic fluency and familiarity with their Lebanese surroundings mark them as different and inferior. They are envisioned as beneath their employers in cultural as well as in socio-economic terms, underlings who can perform only the most menial and abject of tasks. If their Lebanese employers are playing out a fantasy of middle-class comfort in which the woman never need lift a finger in the house because of the man's capacity to provide amply, then these domestic workers are the very embodiment of the proletariat, whose sole asset is their all too

precarious physical labour. This is a vision of the household that not only reproduces in microcosmic form the 'global inequalities' on which it depends, but that is faithful to two key tenets of neoliberalism as it has developed since the 1970s: its faith in managerial expertise, drawn down in this case into the private sphere of the home, and its investment in a peculiarly conservative understanding of the nuclear family as a supposedly self-reliant unit of reproduction and care.⁷⁶ Contemporary Lebanese understandings of matrimony are, to be sure, deeply rooted in older notions of the middle-class woman as a domestic being, devoted to the tasks of being a wife, a mother, and a keeper of the house.⁷⁷ But this latter aspect has taken on particular importance with the growth of new discourses of self-care, consumption, motherhood and management which encourage Lebanese women to invest their own time and effort into particular pursuits, while strictly regimenting the time of others who work for them.

Much like the Filipino maids with whom the sociologist Nicole Constable worked in Hong Kong, the women employed in Lebanon's homes often follow a 'rigid' and punishing 'daily schedule', one that governs in careful and unrelenting fashion their use of both time and space—dictating what they must do, what they cannot do, where they must be and where they should not be.⁷⁸ For many, the rote tasks of the day—cleaning bathrooms and living rooms every day, polishing glass, ceramic and wood to leave them shining, making breakfast, washing up, preparing lunch and dinner, putting away leftovers, washing and ironing clothes, and other such duties—are broken only by the few minutes spent out of the house or apartment, walking the dog or running errands. Only then can they huddle together for a few minutes of rushed conversation with one or two friends who have been allowed out from neighbouring homes. On leaving to run errands, they will be given a wad of notes—carefully counted out to cover whatever groceries they have been asked to pick up. On their return, they must hand their employer the change, which is again counted up to make sure it is right. Many, too, are those who are locked in, and who are simply not permitted to leave their employers' homes. Such restrictions received some media attention during the 2006 war, when reports abounded of Sri Lankan workers locked up and left behind by their employers, who charged them with 'taking care of the house' while they fled for safer

areas.⁷⁹ Many were those who were not allowed to leave and who died with their employers beneath the bombs. This was the case of Kundbsejen Runjani, who was with her employer in her apartment when the building they lived in was hit during the Israeli bombardment of Sur; of Raniya Josef, who died with her employers in the southern town of Borj al-Shemali; of Malika, killed in Sheem; and of the other Sri Lankans who died in the south, whose names, tellingly, Lebanese witnesses did not know.⁸⁰ But there is nothing new about such entrapping practices. In 1998, Siani, a Sri Lankan domestic worker, told of her friend Mala, whose employers 'used to lock the door and fridge and tie her hands' together when they would leave the house.⁸¹

With such restrictions on their movements come keen demands on their time. As Annette, a Cameroonian worker attending a Mayday rally held in Beirut in 2011, told an activist, 'because they put down 2,000 dollars in an office'—that is to say, with one of the agencies that provides the Lebanese with their domestic workers—'you have to work Monday to Sunday', all week long without a break. It is not, she explained, that the Lebanese don't know better, but that all too often they simply don't care. 'There are human rights [*droits de l'homme*] in Lebanon', she went on, 'but the Lebanese do not use them'. After all, her employer 'knows, he told me an employee has a right to rest, to six days off a month'. But this has done nothing to alter his expectations. 'Why make a human being work like that, from six in the morning to twelve at night, or till one or two, without even eating? It gives people insomnia, and that's why so many girls are sick.'⁸²

Others, it is true, enjoy more latitude. They are free to take a Sunday afternoon off, spending time at the *suq al-ahad* or 'Sunday market' in the outskirts of Beirut, where some take up stalls, selling small pieces of jewellery and clothing or foodstuffs from the Horn of Africa and South and South-East Asia to their compatriots, or they get together with friends and boyfriends to cook, gossip, commiserate and flirt. But time to oneself remains scarce, and even workers who insist on the kind treatment they receive from their employers, like the Nepalese Menuka Baraili, only enjoy two hours of rest each day, 'after doing all housework'.⁸³ Countless times, I saw tired Sri Lankans and Ethiopians take off their shoes to come into a family room after dinner to ask if their employers needed anything else. Only once the 'lady of the house'

had told them their work was done could they withdraw to their own small quarters, watching a TV turned down low or chatting in the 'maid's room'. At times, this is little more than a cruel euphemism for a cubby or airing cupboard into which a mattress is crammed. If they are lucky, they will get a small room off the side of the kitchen. Lit by a single lightbulb, this is sparsely furnished—a single bed, or a bunk if there are two housekeepers at home, and perhaps a small dresser—and decorated with pictures of relatives and small statues of the gods garlanded with plastic flowers and illuminated with little candles.

This strict regimentation of time is a reminder that even those Lebanese who pride themselves on regarding their domestic workers as 'part of the family' still think of them as commodities of some kind. Having invested in the labour of another, they must make sure they utilise it to its full potential. For some, this might mean callously—and foolishly—depleting their employees' energies and driving them to despair in an endless round of chores and abuse and isolation. For others, it means consideration and kindness and ensuring that their employees remain happy with their conditions—and, therefore, willing to stay on. Lebanese employers might offer their domestic workers presents—one family I knew gave a longstanding employee a laptop, and others buy phones and clothes—and give them phone cards and 'money to call home', or buy them flights home for a visit every few years, so long as they receive an assurance that this is only a holiday and that 'the girl' will come back after a couple of months. If a 'maid' or 'nanny' decides to leave, she will often be called upon to stay on for a few months longer or—as in a couple of cases I came across—for a year or two. 'It is hard to find a good one', Lebanese employers will say, justifying their attempts to prolong another's separation from the familiar, 'we have to hold on to the house-workers we have'. But if domestic workers remain intent on leaving, they might be asked to train up—or even to help source—their replacements. They will pass on to them the cleaning routine and show them Middle Eastern or European recipes, showing them how to select vegetables and cuts of meat in the shop, how to prepare and season meals, and how to make Arabic coffee; they will teach them a little Arabic or English or French, if they do not have some already; and they will tell them about their employers' particular expectations and demands—in cautious, earnest

terms if they are present, and in less guarded terms in more private moments, when a rather less varnished portrait of *monsieur, madame*, little miss and little mister might emerge amidst stifled laughter. And even once a domestic worker has returned to Sri Lanka or Nepal, such pressures do not go away. As Baraili told her interviewer, she remains in touch with her former employers, with whom she still ‘communicate[s] by Facebook and phone’. But such conversations are not entirely innocent. ‘They are asking me whether I want to come back, they told me that if I decide to go they won’t get another person’ and offered to cover the costs of her flight and visa. These are tempting offers, and Baraili is ‘thinking about going back to Lebanon’.⁸⁴

As Baraili’s testimony suggests, ‘being part of the family’ comes with its own demands. The affective discourse of daughterhood and fondness into which Lebanese employers can so readily lapse is one that creates expectations of reciprocity. For few are the gifts or the acts of perceived kindness that come without certain unspoken obligations. But this familial language also has other effects. Perhaps most palpably, it disrupts and dissolves the boundaries between work and life. I have seen some employers who will respect the lines they have themselves laid down, telling their children or husband to ‘do it yourself’ when ‘she’s off’. But it remains all too often true that what is a workplace for some is a living space for others, who forget—or prefer not to remember—that receiving service during their own hours of leisure must, of necessity, prolong the working hours of another. And working within the home, with all its ambiguities, creates new and sometimes troublesome configurations of affection. In particular, it can foster intimate relations between children and the domestic workers with whom they often spend the bulk of their time at home, and who cook for them, tidy after them, clean them up, and play with them. While some mothers look benignly on these relations, others—even as they remain unwilling to commit more of their own time to the tasks of mothering—become resentful of the hold of another on their child. They will complain, for instance, that their little boy or girl speaks with a Filipino lilt, or that their Tagalog is better than their Arabic, linguistic irks that hint at their fear that their children are being appropriated by another person and taken over by another culture. As the anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has noted in another context, the relations between

domestic workers and their employers are often as tense as they can be tender.⁸⁵ That is not to say that some Lebanese do not come to care genuinely for the migrant labourers who have worked for them. I know of one woman who, for her father’s eightieth birthday, flew him, her husband and daughters to visit their former employee and her family in Sri Lanka, and of a family whose daughters remain in touch with their former housekeeper—a Filipino who met her American husband online through a Bon Jovi fan board, and now lives in suburban New Jersey—regularly exchanging Facebook messages and chatting on Skype. But rare are the cases where such enduring contact does not come with the hope, or expectation, that this lost figure will one day return to the fold.

It is not only where these women live and how they spend their time that Lebanese employers seek to take charge of, attempting to wrest control of the minutes and hours of their domestic workers’ days and the months and years of their working lives. For many also impose restrictions on their appearance, their physical comportment, their diet and friendships and relationships, expecting some measure of control over the bodies of their employees, as well as their labour. This choreography of control begins at the airport, where migrant labourers coming to Lebanon under the *kafala* system are expected to stand in a different queue to Lebanese nationals and other foreigners. Quite literally placed on the margins, they line up along the wall—Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Togolese and Madagascan women, and Nigerian, Indian and Pakistani men carrying heavy, old suitcases. After their interrogation by the same immigration officials who nod at other—white—foreigners seeking to enter Lebanon, they are placed in a waiting room until their employer is ready to come pick them up in person, as they must. This can be a frightening experience—particularly if, as was Menuka Baraili’s case, their employer is late, leaving them in this small room until the evening, not knowing whether anyone will come, or if they encounter some bureaucratic hitch or another, like the Nepalese migrant I knew who was held back because one official refused to believe that her tattered passport was real. This is an exercise designed to impress in newcomers and returning migrants alike the awful reality that they are subject to: the twin powers of a whimsical and unpredictable state and of their employers. What begins at the airport continues

whenever employer and employee leave the house together and are seen in public: in the supermarket or the street, where the employee trails a couple of feet behind, perhaps carrying a bag or two or holding a child while her employer picks out groceries or walks the pram, taking charge as is her wont, and in restaurants and beach clubs, where the housekeeper will sit or stand a foot away from the table. Never can they be seen walking or sitting together, as equals. Their hierarchical relationship must take this corporeal form.

These disciplinary regimes extend to other aspects of bodily comportment—to clothes and food and sex—as employers attempt to control their domestic workers' lives as consumers, just as they exert mastery over their lives as labourers. There is no doubt that many are free to dress and do their hair more or less as they please, if only at particular times, and it is common—increasingly so, it seems—to see young Ethiopian women walking about Beirut in jeans and pretty tops and trainers, or whiling away a half hour arranging each other's weaves. (As I write these words, I am sitting on the St Nicolas steps in eastern Beirut on a balmy early September evening, watching a gaggle of five East African women in their early twenties do just that as the darkness falls around them, the lilt of their talk carried up in my direction by the warm air.) Others, however, have to make do with worn hand-me-downs—baggy tracksuit bottoms and t-shirts and ill-fitting cheap flip-flops—or are forced to wear pastel pink or sky-blue maids' uniforms. These are clothes designed for the house—slippers and loose tunics and shapeless trousers, like a toddler's pyjamas—and yet I have often seen women dressed in this manner out on the streets. Regardless of whether domestic workers wear something old, something borrowed or something blue, it is clear that these sartorial choices made on their behalf are designed to mark out their inferior status, robbing them of their sexuality and their womanhood and infantilising them. It is through such means that they are kept in place and reminded of their subordinate and dependent status.

A similar logic dictates the diet that some employers attempt to impose on those who work in their homes. Some will think that leftovers are enough for their housekeepers, or that they do not deserve anything else. Others will forbid them from preparing their own food, because of aromas they consider noxious. Only rarely will employers

take pleasure in their housekeepers' food, asking them to prepare *pan-cit* or vegetable curries. This fear of wild odours and uncheckable urges also extends to other areas of migrant labourers' lives. I know of one case in which an Ethiopian housekeeper was dismissed for calmly explaining that she needed to have sex to maintain her physical health; 'returned' to her agency as unsuitable, she was no doubt instructed to keep her needs to herself and placed in another household. She cannot be the only one whose sexual life and desires are a source of disquiet to her employers. Indeed, this fear has given rise to legal measures, such as the decree that allows the Lebanese state to repatriate any domestic worker who marries on its territory as in breach of the terms of her *kafala*, or sponsorship agreement.⁸⁶

Paradoxically, however, only some are willing—as Menuka Baraili's employers were—to provide a small budget for toiletries such as shampoo and creams, a necessary monetary concession when employees are paid only every four or five months, as Baraili was, before sending much of their meagre salary back in remittances. This reluctance was mocked mercilessly in a 2010 short film by the Shankaboot collective, in which the fictional Madame Najem, a young woman of dubious taste who boasts of changing her hair with the seasons, ridicules her Sri Lankan housekeeper's request for some shampoo. 'May God give them [what they want]', she exclaims, her vermilion nails standing out against her yellow curls, 'a poor, miserable people without money, who wash in the river and brush their hair to remove the sand, and they come here and want shampoo...'⁸⁷ Given such reluctance to provide for their bodily needs, it is ironic that some who have only one bathroom in their apartments should insist their housekeepers wash down their showers and scrub them with anti-bacterial products after using them.⁸⁸ Indeed, according to a survey carried out in 2016 by the Lebanese anti-violence NGO Kafa and the London-based advocacy group Anti-Slavery International, some 27 per cent of Lebanese believe their housekeepers to be dirty, carriers of germs who pose a threat to the health of those around them. To expose this belief, the two organisations organised a mock promotional campaign. Under the watchful gaze of a hidden camera, two bright, smiley young women in their early twenties offer a new soap to shoppers in a supermarket. Named 'Clensen Ozo-Trio', this is designed—or so the fake campaign claims—specifically with domestic

workers in mind. As they approach shoppers, they explain that surveys have shown many Lebanese to have complained of their domestic workers' strong body odour. This new soap, with its mix of 'ozone and tricla-zone', will fix this pesky problem. Only one of those offered a free sample—an older white-haired man, his face pixelated out like those of the others shown—refuses, angrily telling the young woman 'there is nothing uglier than racial discrimination. We aren't better than them. We go and work in Europe and America like they do ... *haram* [it's not right]'. Others, when presented with the soap, offer up rather less savoury opinions. 'The blacks, the Ethiopians, they have this problem. They have a strong smell. In Nepal, the yellows don't have this problem. The black people, they have a strong smell,' explains one middle-aged lady. 'It depends on the continent,' another, younger, man opines, attempting to sound liberal-minded but falling instead into a pseudo-scientific discourse of biological racism, 'you can't generalise about all domestic workers. It depends on the type of skin.' One woman pauses for a moment, asking 'are you approved by the general association of domestic workers and human rights organisations?' When she is told that the soap has indeed been approved, she shrugs, and with a simple 'yeah, we'll try it' takes a sample.

It remains a discomfiting truth that many Lebanese who profess to be concerned about laws and rights and tolerance still seem to consider their domestic workers as racial others, disruptive presences whose bodies are inherently unclean.⁸⁹ Indeed, it remains hard for even those Lebanese who are otherwise relatively progressive in their social attitudes to imagine their domestic workers as cultural—let alone social—equals. I recall talking to one woman I know, who expressed disbelief that her housekeeper might once have worked as a school-teacher. 'How could she?' she asked, bemused, 'she can't even speak English properly...' When I reminded her that her Nepalese housekeeper knew Nepali, Hindi and Sanskrit—thinking it best to leave unsaid the fact that her own English was hardly perfect—she merely shrugged and said, *eh, barke*—'yeah, maybe...'

One manifestation of this deep-seated prejudice is the *de facto* ban that many beach resorts and country clubs impose on visitors of certain races. This segregation is often presented as in keeping with the need to preserve order and decorum within their precincts, and to respect

their clients' desire for quiet and security—notwithstanding the tendency of many to broadcast booming Eurodance over their loudspeakers and to allow groups of numbskulls to drain their cocktails in the pool amidst the dowagers paddling back and forth in visors and sunglasses like overdressed poodles. One country club catering to the rich and powerful made this prohibition clear in its internal regulations, posted at the entrance: bodyguards and handguns were strictly prohibited, and domestic workers were allowed only in the children's play area and had to remain fully dressed, in order to mark their distinction from those around them, in thongs and Vilebrequin Bermuda shorts. Notwithstanding such justifications, it is obvious that this prohibition stems from the rank racism that Shankaboot's fictional Madame Najem gave voice to, when she explained nonchalantly that she would never take her maid to the beach because she'd be 'disgusted to swim in the same water as her', and that she 'was very happy with the resorts that have respect for themselves, and that know that their clients couldn't stand to be in the same place as a servant'.⁹⁰

So pernicious had this situation become by 2012 that the then minister of tourism, Fadi Abboud, declared after a wave of social media recrimination that any resort found to be discriminating in such fashion would face the full force of the state's wrath. However, when the journalist Rona Halabi carried out an investigation in the wake of Abboud's statement, she found that little had changed in Lebanon's resorts. Accompanied by a young Ethiopian domestic worker, Ababa Gebachristos, Halabi attempted to gain entry to eight of Lebanon's best-known beach clubs. Only three allowed Gebachristos to enter. Others, when challenged, presented a host of excuses. At the Riviera, in Beirut, the doorman asked to see her identification. When asked why Halabi herself did not need to show her identity card, he explained with some hesitation, 'if something happens, I need to know where she's from'. His manager adopted a similar line. When Halabi asked him whether an American would have to go through the same procedure, as a foreigner, he responded simply, 'I know what an American is like'. '*Ya madame*,' he went on, growing frustrated, 'we're in Lebanon here, we're not living in France.' These words seemed to suggest a confounding set of attitudes. Gebachristos was suspicious merely by dint of her race. Unlike a white American, there was no saying how she might comport herself.

And despite Lebanon's pretensions to civilisation, one could not expect the same social standards to be applied as in Europe. There, liberal-mindedness and freedom from prejudice could be expected; in Lebanon, discrimination was simply the norm, and all had to accept it. The manager of the Malibu proved similarly unyielding. Upon being challenged, she replied simply: 'there is a regulation'—*qanun*, or law—in place 'for the swimming pool. We can discuss it from now until tomorrow, but there's no point.' When Halabi asked 'and what if it was a tourist coming with us', the response was immediate and dismissive. 'We don't usually receive tourists of this colour,' she said, with an emphatic movement of the head.⁹¹ Here, the simple logic of skin colour, rather than doubtful morality or criminality, was the justification.

The owner of another chic resort, the former captain of the Lebanese national basketball team, resorted to a rather different kind of justification when asked why Gebachristos could enter his club, but could not swim in its pool. In a conciliatory voice, he explained that the case of a domestic worker was much like that of a child. Just like children, they were 'allowed to swim in one place, but not in another'. Finding that this analogy failed to persuade a dubious Halabi, he continued in another key. 'Honestly, when we first opened,' he recounts, 'I used to let them come in with their ow—their employers'; 'as—' he blurts out, as if about to say *ashab*, or owners, before correcting himself and using instead another expression, *rab al-aml*, which he seems to consider more acceptable despite its similarly derogatory connotations. But, he explains, 'we used to receive complaints by the dozen every day. I'm with the state, I respect the state and law and order, but at the end of the day I'm the one who made the investment and put money in, they can't pass a law that people can't accept.' In short, 'in public places', Lebanon's racial others can swim where they like, 'but this is private here' and the writ of the owner, the investor, must stand, and not that of the state. As the owner of another resort in Jiyeh, to the south of Beirut, put it rather more bluntly: 'if the minister of tourism wants [domestic] labourers to swim, let him build a pool.'⁹² Whether they regard domestic workers as potential criminals or sources of moral disruption, as quasi-children lacking the rights of full adults, or as intolerable merely by dint of their phenotype, all prove equally intolerant of their presence within their establishments. And all follow the

same logic—private, quite simply, trumps public. Once within the private precincts of capital, the state no longer has a say. Perhaps they are not wrong. For, as the lawyer and civil rights activist Nizar Saghiyeh explained to Halabi, there is no law in Lebanon tackling racial discrimination against non-Lebanese nationals, a lacuna that leaves the Lebanese state without effective legal means to punish those found guilty of such flagrant racism.⁹³ Opprobrium, it seems, is the sole available course of action in the face of such behaviour.

In the face of such widespread and deep-seated racism, some have pinned their hopes on educating future generations. In 2009, two Lebanese children's authors, Laila Zahed and Maya Tawil, launched a series of books entitled *Mimi fi Sri Lanka*, *Mimi fi Jozor al-Philippine*, and *Mimi fi Ethiopia*, recounting the adventures of the eponymous Mimi, a young Lebanese girl, who travels in her dreams to these faraway countries, from which so many of the country's domestic workers hail. Their purpose, Zahed explained to journalists, was simple—to break the 'prevalent equation of Sri Lankan = maid, Phillipina [sic] = maid'. The books, which luxuriate in the beauty and exoticism of these places even as they seek to transcend cultural differences, include short fact-sheets about each of the countries Mimi visits, and teach children how to say 'thank you', 'goodbye' and other such basic phrases in Sinhalese, Tagalog, and Amharic. With these, the authors hope to break down the 'one-sided' 'relationship with foreign workers' that prevails in Lebanon. As they note, 'the domestic worker at home is often the one who adapts to our culture: she learns our language, learns to eat or even cook our food, knows our country but often no one asks her where she is coming from and how she expresses herself in her own language.' Perhaps, Zahed argues, children who read these books 'would understand and respect the people they are living with at home, and would grow into adults who are tolerant and respectful of other cultures and social classes'.⁹⁴

Others have used rather more direct tactics to combat discrimination and abuse and to secure greater legal recognition for domestic workers. Some of these efforts, like the Anti-Racism Movement or ARM, dedicated to 'documenting, investigating, exposing and fighting racist practices through multiple initiatives and campaigns', have been spearheaded by Lebanese activists. Basing their efforts on the now universal template

of the NGO, they seek to work within the neutral, amorphous spaces of civil society, exerting pressure on the Lebanese state, raising the awareness of the Lebanese public, and empowering migrant workers seeking to improve their social, economic and legal situation. ARM's initiatives range from social media campaigns and press releases drawing attention to particular instances of abuse and discrimination—when I visited their site, they sought to assist an African couple living with their young child in the Beirut neighbourhood of Ras al-Nabaa, and whose neighbours had waged a racist campaign of insults and violence against them—to calls for participation in moments of mobilisation, like the Mayday marches held in Beirut each year.⁹⁵ But the organisation is perhaps proudest of its Migrant Community Centers, whose three locales in Beirut, Jounieh and Saida offer 'safe and free spaces' for migrants to gather, 'where they can meet, learn new skills, work together, and access information, resources and assistance'. With their 'language classes, ICT classes, health awareness sessions, rights education, [and] advocacy training',⁹⁶ the MCCs are built around a conventional paradigm of 'capacity-building'. They seek, in other words, to instruct migrant workers in how best to take charge of their own lives—a pedagogical model adopted by NGOs the world over seeking to uplift the objects of their attention.

In other instances, it is migrant workers themselves who play the leading part, creating organisations like the Alliance of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon or the Migrant Domestic Workers' Union (MDWU). The latter has worked closely in recent years with FENASOL, or the National Federation of Employees' and Workers' Unions in Lebanon, to secure legal recognition of the rights of female migrant workers. Like ARM, it uses a diverse array of tactics, from social media to the more traditional resorts of activism—demonstrations, marches, and petitions. This synthesis of different modes of mobilisation is apparent in videos like that posted on the MDWU's page ahead of the 2017 Mayday demonstrations. In grainy footage seemingly filmed on a mobile phone, the MDWU's Founding Committee—thirteen women and one man—huddle in a close-knit group, holding up a banner adorned with slogans such as 'I heart MDWU' and 'Migrant Domestic Workers in Action'. In turn, several of them intone the same message, in English, French, Arabic, Nepali, Tagalog and other languages, calling for wide participation in a labour

day demonstration asking the Lebanese government to ratify the International Labour Organization's Convention C189, recognising the rights of domestic workers. This is the face of migrant labour activism now: overwhelmingly female, proud of its participants' status as both migrants and as workers, and founded on transnational solidarity and coordination between women of different origins: Filipino, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Cameroonian—and Lebanese.⁹⁷ Indeed, in recent years, Lebanon's Mayday celebrations have become sites of cosmopolitan sorority, female migrant workers marching together holding their respective countries' flags aloft, calling upon the Lebanese state to afford them greater recognition and to ameliorate their working and living conditions.⁹⁸

In making their presence felt and their voices heard, domestic workers seek to combat endemic verbal and physical abuse and to strip away, one by one, the fundamentals of the *kafala*, or sponsorship, system under which they must work. For it is a sad truth that instances of domestic workers insulted and harried in the street, locked into homes, screamed at, beaten and burnt remain all too numerous. In 2008, the Beirut office of Human Rights Watch reported that 'at least 97 migrant domestic workers' had died in Lebanon since January 2007. Forty had committed suicide. Twenty-four had fallen from balconies or rooftops, often while attempting to escape employers. Only fourteen had died because of health conditions. As one former ambassador put it when asked for his views, 'don't call this an embassy. We have become a funeral parlour. People die. Natural deaths, accidents, suicides'—it was all the same, and the death toll kept rising.⁹⁹ In November 2009, the organisation again drew attention to the troublingly high proportion of deaths among domestic workers, after eight women died in the previous month alone. Four had killed themselves, either by jumping from buildings or, in one case, by hanging herself.¹⁰⁰ These women had often been pushed to escape or suicide by continuous maltreatment. As Kamala Nagari, a Nepalese woman who recounted her fall from an apartment building, testified: 'I was locked in for two days, and they did not give me food or water. Then after two days, I wanted to run away. The apartment was on the fifth floor. I tried to go down using cable wires running along the wall of the building. The cable broke, and I do not remember what happened afterwards.'¹⁰¹

Many others testified to not being able to 'leave my employer's home' or 'call my family', of 'being lent out like property' to clean the homes of their employers' relatives, of being beaten for asking to 'go back to my country at the end of my contract', or of having their pay withheld.¹⁰² In one particularly notorious—and harrowing—instance of abuse, bystanders filmed as Alem Dechasa-Desisa, an Ethiopian migrant worker, was beaten and abducted outside her consulate. Upon their arrival, police found the car into which Dechasa-Desisa had been bundled still at the scene. While her abuser—Ali Mahfouz, the brother of the owner of her employment agency—was allowed to go free, Dechasa-Desisa was taken to a detention centre. After the intervention of Caritas, which maintains a presence at the centre, she was transferred to the psychiatric hospital of Deir al-Saleeb. Dechasa-Desisa committed suicide there two days later. Her attacker remained free. During her brief detention, he had even given an interview to Lebanese television, in which he explained that he was trying to return her to Ethiopia because she suffered from mental health problems.¹⁰³

If those who commit such horrific abuses can act with such impunity, it is because they operate within conditions of structural racism underwritten by *kafala*. It is no surprise, then, that in recent years migrant labourers and their advocates should have focused on overturning these structural circumstances. In the summer of 2014, they scored a rare victory when a Lebanese judge, Jad Maalouf, found in favour of a domestic worker who had sued her employer after he took away her passport. In his landmark ruling, Maalouf argued that this practice—as common as it may be—denied the migrant's right to free movement, as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is incorporated into Lebanese law. Employers had no authority to keep passports to 'protect their investment'.¹⁰⁴ Such successes come at a cost, however. In December 2016, the Lebanese authorities deported Sujana Rana, a domestic worker who had campaigned for the legal rights of her fellow migrant labourers. She had been arrested at her employer's home, held without access to a lawyer, and 'questioned about her involvement in activism'.¹⁰⁵ Given such rough practices, it is unsurprising that some, like the Lebanese scholar Ray Jureidini, should argue that Lebanon's domestic workers are nothing short of modern-day 'contract slaves'. It might be argued that their

condition is somewhat more akin to that of indentured workers: bound into precarious conditions by insecure and unequal contracts, they are caught up in a cycle of debt and obligation and held in place by profoundly restrictive legal conditions.

The question remains, however, why so many continue to want to come to Lebanon. Upon their arrival, many may know little about this 'new, unknown place', as Menuka Baraili described it, or may have been spun tales of plenty by the agents who recruit them—often, it would seem, relatives, like those who despatched Savitra Pulami Magar and Mira Ghising from Nepal, through Delhi and Dubai, and on to Beirut. The 'global ethnoscaapes' of such women are not so much grand vistas of opportunity, dreamscapes of migration, as a cramped series of boarding hostels, airport departure lounges, immigration offices and maid's rooms. But wilful ignorance may also play a part. As one migrant who had returned to Sri Lanka insisted, those preparing to head out were often unwilling to heed the warnings of those who had been to Lebanon, dismissing them as the product of mere jealousy at their own impending good fortunes. Whatever the case, all must soon learn something of their new surrounds, even if their knowledge is sometimes restricted to the home and wherever else they go in the company of their employers. When asked by a Lebanese television presenter what she liked about the country, one Filipino domestic worker answered 'the weather, and the mountains'. 'Do you go to the mountains by yourself?' he continued. '*La, bidhar bas ma' al-madame*'—no, I only go out with Madame, came the answer. Others' answers were just as revealing—'Samir Geagea,' said one woman whose employers were fervent Lebanese Forces followers. 'And what do you think of Michel Aoun?' the presenter asked, mischievously. '*Ma bhibbo*'—I don't like him—came the answer, a disgusted crease in the face, prompting laughter from the audience. 'Mar Maroun and Mar Charbel,' said another, citing her Maronite employers' favoured saints. Such religious synthesis is perhaps less uncommon than it might appear, even among those domestic workers who are not Christian or Muslim. I remember one non-Christian Sri Lankan domestic worker who found space in her prayers for the Virgin Mary, St Rita and St Charbel, constructing a little ex-voto in the kitchen adorned with incense and plastic flowers and images and candles of these Catholic religious figures.

And yet there is no doubt that these are conventional answers, calculated—as the presenter suspected—to please their employers and placate their audience.

In less guarded moments, domestic workers reveal a rather more knowing and unvarnished view of Lebanon. In late 2014, the actor and director Zeina Daccache—who found fame on popular comedy shows, before establishing Catharsis, a drama therapy company that has also put on plays by the inmates of men's and women's prisons—assembled a cast of migrant labourers for an improvised performance at Masrah al-Madina, the fashionable theatre space in Hamra. The performance, which received support from the Migrant Workers Task Force and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, shows a riotous and amusing set of views on Lebanon.¹⁰⁶ At one moment, a male migrant labourer notes the difference between Lebanon and his native Cameroon. The former, he thought, was a developed place, till he witnessed its frequent power cuts—a phenomenon unheard of, he insists, in Cameroon. Others berate the slow speed of the internet, another frequent gripe of the Lebanese about their own country. As the camera filming the performance pans out across the audience, some are bent over in uproarious laughter, while others shift uneasily in their seats, unhappy to be reminded of Lebanon's structural failings by these strangers, whose social inferiority once seemed so pathetically certain.

And more than this, migrant labourers must cope with all the familiar pangs of displacement. I remember often sitting with one Nepalese domestic worker as she showed me her photo albums, pointing with pride at the pictures of her son and daughter, carefully preserved beneath their plastic covers. Her son, she explained, smiling, was training to be a policeman, her daughter qualifying as a teacher—as she had done herself, before abandoning Nepal for the lure of remittances, first in Dubai and then in Lebanon. 'How old are they?' I asked the first time she went to her 'maid's room' to pull the albums out of the drawer in which she kept them. 'In these photos, twelve and fourteen, but now, fifteen and seventeen,' she said, noting the passing of time only with a short, sad nod of the head. While some feel compelled to leave children and husbands behind for work, often spending long stints of ten, fifteen or twenty years in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries, others choose to delay marriage and childbearing in their efforts to

accrue a little capital abroad. I knew one housekeeper who had arrived in Lebanon as a 16-year-old, but who returned to Sri Lanka only at twenty-eight, once she had patiently accumulated enough money to give herself a dowry capable of securing an attractive husband, and of setting up a business of her own. Soon after she returned, I heard that she had married a wedding singer—the Facebook photos showed a handsome figure with a raffish black moustache—and opened a bar. There is no doubt, then, that for some migration affords opportunities for social mobility. Why, after all, would so many take the well-trodden routes that lead to Lebanon, knowing of all the perils and pains that might come their way?

Conclusion

Neoliberalism is built on the unequal apportioning of resources, rights, and duties. To some are given new means for capital accumulation, through the transformation of public utilities into private assets, or through the regulatory engineering that has enabled new assemblages of state investment and corporate initiative, and that has cleared a way for particular patterns of urban restructuring. To others, however, are handed only the burdens of vulnerability and precarity. But if in other places across the twenty-first-century world, this stripping down of the person into an uncertain, shivering subject has been used to keep certain citizens in their place, in Lebanon these self-same processes have been used at once to enclose particular kinds of subjects and to push them away, encouraging their flight by making life untenable under present conditions. Syrians, like Palestinians before them, have become prey to such strategies. Already shut out of the circuits of partisan welfare that make up for what the state does not and cannot provide, these unwelcome guests also find themselves shut out by the combined forces of law and security. And yet, at the same time, while scarcely even acknowledging it, Lebanon's elites do rely upon these fearful foreigners, finding in them a useful and pliable source of cheap and casual labour. Much the same is true, too, of the many migrant labourers who work in Lebanon's shopping malls and homes—cleaners, housekeepers, and nannies who are subject not just to mechanisms of governmental control, but also to private regimes of surveillance and dependency.

For Lebanon's middle-class men and women need these migrant workers too much to let them go. Come from sub-Saharan Africa and South and South-East Asia, they are, in a fundamental sense, enablers of leisure, who make the lives of the Lebanese possible and free them to spend the time they have saved on household chores in other ways. But as much as they are service providers catering to the needs of their employers, they are also participants in an increasingly vivacious informal economy of leisure, producing and consuming their own modes of entertainment. When I was last in Beirut, the walls of Gemmayzeh were plastered with bright yellow posters. 'Charly Office Presents Fanos Entertainment and Events Ethiopian New Year Presentation at Beirut', they read, above a picture of the three smiling performers, Mesfin Bekele, Abiyot Kasanesh, and Yared Negu. The organisers were clearly hoping for a large turn-out, as they had booked out Chiyah basketball stadium, in the southern suburbs of Beirut. To make this possible, the concert would be held at 2:00 p.m. on a Sunday, when so many domestic workers would have the afternoon off. But not all forms of migrant leisure are necessarily as well-coordinated. Spend enough time watching the worthy videos put together by NGOs working with domestic labourers in Lebanon and you will find, among the suggested content, short home-made clips shot by Sri Lankan or Filipino men and women who have slipped away from their duties to spend a few hours on the country's public beaches. These are never more than a minute or two long. The lens wavers and catches the light as it moves about the circle, capturing the smiling, laughing faces; one person might be singing or playing the *tabla*; others are clapping along, their hoarse untrained voices joining the chorus; a bottle of spirits is passed around; some fish might be put to grill on a makeshift fire. It is to the various forms of leisure and pleasure jostling for space in contemporary Lebanon that the next chapter turns—to the hegemonic modes that shape how the Lebanese spend their nights, how they get married, and how they remake their bodies, but also to the spaces of evasion, of fun and evanescent pleasure, that can be glimpsed here, in these short clips of passing moments that someone has quietly archived away on the internet.

AL-SAHRA, OR THE NIGHT OUT

ON LEISURE AND PLEASURE IN CONTEMPORARY LEBANON

Late in the summer of 2011, a video went viral. It showed the CNN business correspondent Richard Quest doing the rounds of Beirut's 'rooftop bars'—'Skybar, Iris, White, Pier 7', as he reeled them off in his distinctive croaky tones—here moving through a crowd of gawping revellers, there sneaking in before the doors open to see the 'calm before the storm'. As Quest exclaimed in a voice-over, 'there may be fewer tourists because of the political instability'—his light way of referring to the six months it took Najib Mikati to form a government, or perhaps to the Assad regime's siege of Homs that summer. 'But worry not, the Beirutis party on.' Indeed, he explained as he entered one bar in what can only be described as resplendent leisure gear, his immaculate white trousers reflecting back the strobe lighting, 'the clubs thrive in the face of political instability. Millions of dollars are spent on new creations.' 'When you know the history of Beirut', Quest continued, 'then the rooftops start to make sense. The turbulent past, the hedonism of the present, and the what-will-be attitude to tomorrow', born of the uncertainties of living in a region preternaturally prone to conflict—these were what accounted for the Lebanese infatuation with nocturnal pleasures. 'In this city', he concluded, 'the people are voting with their feet late into the night'. Who these people might