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WAITING ON EMBERS: DURATION, DISPOSSESSION, AND EVERYDAY LIFE AMONG IRAQI MIGRANTS IN JORDAN

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Dr. Eleanor B. Sheldon.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have transliterated Arabic words using the International Journal of Middle East Studies system as a base, omitting diacritical marks except for *'ayn* (') and *hamza* ('). To transliterate the Baghdadi-Iraqi Arabic spoken by many of my interlocuters, I have added the dialect-specific consonants *gaf* (g), *cha* (ch), and *zhay* (zh).

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developed at the 2019 “Contemporary Amman and the Right to the City” conference, arranged by Studio-X Amman and the IFPO. An early sketch of what would become chapters two and three was presented, workshopped, and published through the 2017 Project on Middle East Political Science roundtable on “Refugees and Migration Movements in the Middle East.” A rough outline of what would become the dissertation’s central argument was shared at the 2018 American Anthropological Association panel on “Nationalism and its Adaptations in an Era of Mass Displacement.” Sections of each chapter received comments over the course of the 2018-2019 UChicago Urban Fellows biweekly workshop. A condensed version of the fourth chapter was presented at the 2019 American Anthropological Association panel on “Publics and Labor: Value and Everyday Sociality in the Middle East.” The section of the introduction that deals with extending Hana Batatu’s class analysis was first shared at the 2019 “Beyond Turmoil and Conflict: Iraq since 2003” graduate student roundtable. A first draft of chapter three received invaluable criticism at a 2020 meeting of the “Historical Capitalisms and Social Theory” workshop at the University of Chicago. I am grateful to the organizers, discussants, co-participants, and attendees of these events, and thank all those who contributed such worthwhile criticisms and helpful suggestions.

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ABSTRACT

Waiting on Embers:

Duration, Dispossession, and Everyday Life among Iraqi Migrants in Jordan

My dissertation explores how Iraqi migrants in Jordan confront obstacles to the ongoing viability of their form of life following war and displacement. Decades of American-led efforts to integrate both Iraq and Jordan into a regional subsystem of security and trade have rendered Iraq unlivable for more and more of its communities, while also ensuring that Jordan remains a stable haven for people and wealth put on the move by war. Based on fieldwork in Amman, a city populated mostly by migrants displaced by regional wars, I consider the practices and experiences of Iraqis of different classes, sects, and backgrounds as they navigate the lengthy period of waiting for refugee resettlement. For these migrants, everyday life demands a practiced attunement to the vicissitudes of history, politics, and war. To better theorize the link between the lived experience of displacement and the forces that produce it, I ask: What intentions guide Iraqi migrants in their passage through Jordan? How do they orient themselves to the instability that could always unmake their best laid plans? And according to what guiding intuitions do they navigate encounters with the many different national groups that populate Amman?

In answering to these questions, this dissertation analytically resituates the sufferings and hopes of displaced people within the shifting configurations of a capitalist world system. To this end, I offer the following arguments: (1) Periods of indefinite waiting on an uncertain future are not a time when nothing happens. Iraqi migrants in Jordan are conscious of the fact that they are undergoing a process of dispossession, understood as the parting of a group from the means for reproducing itself on an ongoing basis. (2) This situation is lived through engagements with

durable embodiments of value, such as buildings, status documents, food and drink, and even the labor-capacity of human persons. Analysis of everyday life reveals that these value-bodies (or commodities) mediate between collective experiences of displacement and the social forces that produce this condition. (3) As Iraqi migrants operationalize popular understandings of difference through techniques of "dealing" (*ta'aamul*) with other "kinds of people" (*anwaa' an-naas*), materially-mediated relations between classes take the appearance of innate capacities and appetites thought to inhere in ethno-national figures.

Introduction: Duration, Dispossession, and Everyday Life

"*The astonishment that the things we are experiencing in the 20th century are 'still' possible is by no means philosophical. It is not the beginning of knowledge, unless it would be the knowledge that the conception of history on which its rests is untenable*."

– Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.

The morning sun rises above Taborbour Intersection, casting the long shadows of stray concrete blocks across the empty lot where I sit and wait for Taher. He's right on time, 6:30 AM, pulling up in his red flat-bed truck. I hop in, and he hands me a cup of hot tea, with his wheat-colored moustache turned up in a smile. We're headed to the factory that Taher's father owns in the Zarqa Free Zone. Times have been tough for the merchants and small-time industrialists who work in this tariff free market ever since the borders with Iraq and Syrian were closed due to the threat of the Islamic State. The family factory, which employs about twenty Palestinian and Yemeni workers to make detergents, will only open for a week to fill an order bound for Saudi Arabia, then close again indefinitely. "The market isn't moving any more", Taher tells me. And neither are we. The stretch of road that runs from Tabarbor to the Pepsi Interchange is choked with traffic. "People keep getting up earlier and earlier," Taher explains, "It changes little by little, then, without noticing it, you're stuck." Once we make it past Pepsi, the traffic lightens up and, by the time we switch north from Army Street to the Damascus Highway, Taher shifts to a higher gear. He's got his left elbow on the steering wheel so his hand is free to hold a cup of tea, while his right hand grips the gearshift, with a cigarette tucked between the third and fourth fingers.

We're moving fast, but the landscape is so vast and open now that distant, fenced-in sites linger in my window. "They're all either industrial parks or military bases," Taher says. "In Iraq, you'd have never seen them. They'd be camouflaged because of the American reconnaissance planes." But out here, along a stretch of land that runs from the eastern outskirts of the big cities and across the basalt desert to the border with Iraq, Jordan keeps its special relationship with the U.S. out in the open. The airbases that dot this part of the country launch sorties into Syria and re-fuel the big cargo plane that makes daily shipments of materiel to that country's armed opposition. Here, too, are America's special joint operations centers, where soldiers and police from Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine – along with who knows what paramilitary groups and mercenary companies – are trained to combat enemies in their respective homelands. The special industrial zones have wartime origins as well. Their conception dates back to the Oslo Accords, when the U.S. offered their Jordanian partners in peace generous subsidies to open Qualified Industrial Zones that would integrate the Kingdom into a peaceful and prosperous regional system of trade and manufacture.

Even the roads we're driving on were built with strategic integration in mind. Back in the 1970's, the Iraqi state began funding construction of a highway system to connect their country to Jordan's only port at Aqaba. This link to the Red Sea would prove crucial during the 1980-1988 war with Iran, when Iraq's own sole harbor at Basra was blockaded. At the height of that conflict, American security experts imagined that the "Jordanian supply corridor" would, come peacetime, serve "to integrate Iraq" in to a "regional subsystem" of "moderate", "nonrevolutionary", and pro-"status quo" – that is, pro-American – Arab states. (Terrill 1985, 46, 54) But after Iraq annexed Kuwait to pay off its war debts in 1990, only to be driven out in a war that announced a "New World Order" of unipolar American hegemony, the long road to Baghdad would become a smuggler's highway for gas and goods throughout the decade of murderous United Nations

sanctions. The course of events took another bend after 2003, when Jordan offered its services as the logistical lynchpin for the American project to forcefully reintegrate the Iraqi pariah into the international economy. And now, in an unexpected reversal of fortunes, it was the overland route that was closed, and goods bound for Iraq would have to ship out from Aqaba, around the Arabian Peninsula, then up to Basra, an itinerary that was too expensive for firms like Taher's to turn a profit on. "In a country like Jordan," he'd told me, "You can work hard and you will not be rewarded for your efforts. Now everyone is desperate for money, and they're trying to get it in a bad way. I want to go to the West, because of my daughter. I'm tired of not saving any money here." But years have passed since Taher first filed for recognition as a refugee, and there was no way to know whether or not his case had progressed in the meantime.

As we turn into the Zarqa Free Zone, Taher flashes his residency permit to the man sitting in a white plastic chair, who waves like he knows him well. This little card can be gotten by any family who qualifies for investor status by keeping about $20,000 deposited in a Jordanian bank. Taher's family lost their status not long after the border closure forced the factory to shut down, then regained it after they sold some machinery. Taher weaves between fields of cars, trucks, and construction equipment that run as far as the eye can see, and stops often for old dogs sleeping in the middle of the road to wake up and shake off the dust. "America has a very bad history," Taher is explaining to me as we get out of the truck, "Did you know it? I watched a documentary about the people who had a civilization before the other people arrived in American and killed them. How can America talk about humanity (*insaaniyya*) with such a bad history?" I let him know I watched the video he'd sent me the night before of a party of Syrians clinging to a capsized skiff in the Mediterranean while the Maltese and Italian navies argued over which nation's territorial waters they were drowning in. We ascend a short flight of steps to enter the factory and Taher

immediately begins helping the Yemeni machinist calibrate the equipment, then goes to his office to eat a breakfast served by the Palestinian chemist. Her daughter works on the assembly line. She went to school for nursing but, because the family have no connections in the Jordanian Army, she will never find placement in a hospital. T wo men present themselves at the office looking for a job, and Taher deigns to hire one of them, he tells me he regrets it because, "He's an Iraqi and Iraqis don't know how to work." There's plenty to do in the first hour. Taher studied civil engineering, but he's taught himself how to clean, calibrate, and repair the old machinery held together with tape and salvaged plastic. After that, we retreat to the office, a small room just off of the production floor. He takes out his phone and starts flipping between videos of his infant daughter laughing in his arms and Facebook groups set up by traffickers advertising their services. "Honestly, I would do it," he says of paying to have himself smuggled to Europe, "But all the money is in the machines and the lease for this place. No one will buy us out now." And as for the residency deposit? It's in his father's name, and his father wants his son by his side, working under him. He sighs and looks out the window, over a landscape of shipping containers that, like him, are stuck in place.

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After the factory finished its run, it did not reopen. Taher returned to Iraq with his wife and daughter after the government's victory over the Islamic State in 2017, when money started flowing back into Baghdad, carrying with it a real sense of optimism that things would, at last, begin to change for the better. He'd tried his hand at running a fast-food restaurant, but the business failed, and he found himself returning to Amman after less than a year. "You can make money in Iraq, but you must pay the right people to protect you. Iraq is different now. People only talk about money or religion. I felt just like a stranger there, even with my own family members." By the

time I left the field in the spring of 2018, he'd begun working as a freelance realtor for Iraqi investors trying to unload their empty apartments. He had hoped to make enough money to buy into an illicit, but widely practiced chain migration scheme to be resettled in one of those Western countries where, he imagined, his daughter could grow up in a place where people enjoyed justice (*'adaala*), humanity (*insaaniyya*), and rights (*huqooq*). When that didn't work out, he started taking whatever odd jobs came his way. Taher always told me that he wanted to have five children, but without enough money to sustain a big family, he still finds plenty of joy in his daughter's laughter. He remains on the lookout for opportunities to be resettled, but, as the world becomes a less open place with each passing day, the odds have never looked worse.

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This dissertation examines Iraqi migrants' orientations to the shifting configurations of war and accumulation that have left them locked out of global flows of labor and capital. These orientations reveal that the duration of being stuck in place precipitates specific and consistent changes over time. For migrants like Taher, this process begins in the country of origin, when the viability of a form of life that emerged through the Iraqi state's totalitarian and brutal efforts to realize the value of its oil wealth through investment in agriculture, education, and the military ended with the 2003 American invasion. The invasion gave way to a radically different situation, in which identarian factions backed by foreign powers raced to expropriate people from their homes and livelihoods. For those who felt they can no longer go on living in such a state, escape to Jordan offers hopes of finding shelter long enough to be resettled as refugees in the West, broadly imagined as those countries where the state continues to ensure justice, humanity, and rights for its citizens. In the meantime—a meantime that goes on for years without assurance of an end—these migrants must

find a place for themselves within Amman's highly stratified society of displaced peoples who, like them, have been put out of place by conflict, and now find themselves stuck in Jordan.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where my fieldwork took place, owes its own viability to the presence of these national others. Jordan is inhabited by about ten million people, around three million of whom are recognized as "guests" in the country, a category that includes registered refugees, foreign workers, and some 150,000 Iraqis of various statuses. (Al-Jaanabi, 2018) In addition, an uncounted plurality of Jordanian nationals considers themselves Palestinian and profess their right to return to their homeland. The Kingdom is a nominally constitutional monarchy that was decolonized in 1946, and today can be fairly described as a dependency or protectorate of a regional American-Israeli-Saudi hegemony. The state's solvency and stability are guaranteed by billions of dollars in aid and investment payments from USAID, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and their allies granted in return for hosting people that its neighbors do not want and weapons aimed at the places they have left behind. Jordan's King Abdullah II initially hailed affluent Iraqi migrants like Taher as "our siblings" (*ashiqqaa'naa*) and "our guests" (*dhuyoofnaa*), inviting them to invest in a then-bubbling market for real estate speculation and tax-free trade in exchange for rights to live, work, and move in the Kingdom. But as the years piled on, returns diminished and the violence back home only got worse. Now, many of these once comfortable families find themselves struggling to give their children the lives to which they themselves had been entitled by birth. All the while, fresh wars continue to displace people from Iraq into Jordan, and these newer arrivals must also find a place for themselves in relation to previous arrivals. The dilemma these migrants confront did not emerge through a single event; It has come about over time within a system that continually gives rise to its own violent reconfigurations.

Nevertheless, the rest of the world tends to view Jordan's refugees through singular, dramatic events. My own interest in Jordan came about through a longstanding effort to understand the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. This led me to conduct fieldwork with Iraqi refugees in the United States in 2011, who explained that they had spent years living in Amman before being resettled. As I began visiting their friends and relatives who were still stuck in Jordan in 2012, the Syrian Civil War broke out. Millions of people began to flee into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe, capturing the attention of journalists, donors, humanitarians, and scholars. International interest in Iraqi refugees would return only after new rounds of displacement followed Islamic State's campaign of expropriation and genocide in 2014, and my research would come to incorporate a community of rural Christians from Northern Iraq while still in the field. Looking to the past, Amman's landscape and demography has been greatly shaped by generations of Palestinian refugees who fled Israel's successive conquests following its establishment in 1945. And the city was founded, in its modern form, by Circassian and Chechen peoples of the Caucuses, who were driven out by the Russian Empire and resettled to what was then an Ottoman frontier in the mid-1800's. I should also note that this dissertation's claim to be about Iraqi migrants in Jordan is importantly incomplete, for I say nothing about the tens of thousands of people who entered the country after a failed revolt against the Ba'athist regime at the end of the First Gulf War.

Sadly, there is no exhausting accounts of displacement in the region. It is the very "visibility" of refugee crises as globally mediated events that "conceals" the more durable processes patterning displacement in the Middle East. (Chatelard, 2009) But sustained ethnography does offer the possibility of viewing the whole as it is glimpsed from the position of one of its parts. For my interlocuters who hope to wait out the duration of displacement in Jordan, everyday life demands a practiced attunement to a situation that is always changing, and yet often

changes in far too predictable ways. Inquiring into their form of life can help us see past events in their isolation and better theorize the relationship between lived experiences of displacement and the underlying forces that drive it. To this end, I propose the following questions: What intentions guide Iraqi migrants in their passage through Jordan? How do they orient themselves to the instability that could always unmake their best laid plans? And through what intuitions do they navigate encounters with the city's many different histories, as they are confronted in human and non-human surroundings?

In posing these questions, this dissertation resituates the sufferings and hopes of displaced people within a conversation about the shifting configurations of global capitalism. Here, let me present an overture of the argument. Drawing on theories of spatiotemporal consciousness, capitalist value, and communal viability, I argue that Iraqi migrants in Jordan are undergoing dispossession: a process whereby people are more or less gradually parted from their means for reproducing themselves as a group without having to directly sell their labor to the owners of capital. This process is reflected[1] in rhythms of activity and practical techniques that express a particular sense of how past, present, and future relate to one another. Between experiences of displacement and the processes that produce it as a condition, material embodiments of value, or

[1] "The word 'reflection' can lead to many confusions, and above all to many simplifications. If we are to avoid them, all we need to do is notice that in nature reflections are profoundly different from what they reflect; and the image in the mirror only appears to be a reproduction of whatever is in front of it. The theory which maintains that on the one hand there are things and on the other their reflection in men's minds, and that one reproduces the other, is philosophically puerile. A reflection in consciousness, or a reflection which constitutes a consciousness, can be incomplete, mutilated, inverted, distorted, mystified; it is a reflection and yet in the generally accepted sense not a reflection." (Lefebvre 2014, 114) We cannot, however, do without reflection. The diremption of a thing from its reflection is the first step to attaining a dialectical consciousness of Reality (*al-haqq*), "For the seeing of a thing, itself by itself, is not the same as its seeing itself in another, as if it were in a mirror; for it appears to itself in a form that is invested by the location of the vision by that which would only appear to it given the existence of the location and its [the location's] self-disclosure to it….Life is an intelligible reality, as also knowledge, each being distinguished from the other." (Ibn al-Arabi 1980, 50, 53) A dialectal approach to the social sciences adopts precisely this understanding of reflection (or "speculation", from the Latin *specularum* [mirror]): "The conceptual labour of the human species" occurs in the movement of concepts between the distinct, dirempted, yet mutually intelligible moments of living and of knowing. (Adorno 2017, 76-77). If all this reads as so much empty speculation, I ask the reader only to reflect on these lines once again after having read more of the dissertation's content.

commodities, serve a double-facing, mediating role. Many different kinds of things can take on this commodity form, such buildings, documents, food and drink, and even the human body's capacity for toil. What makes them all commodities is that they embody two different aspects of value: 1) qualities that make affordances to the practices that sustain a shared form of life and 2) a quantity of abstract time that renders them alienable things attainable through exchange. This double form already carries a contradiction within it, and the ethnography attests to how this contradiction unfolds in time. The very same processes that render the value-form quantitatively commensurable are also the processes that challenge the ongoing viability of the practices through which the form's qualities are put to use. Obviously, the way in which people resolve this dilemma cannot be explained by reference to material conditions alone. Different people live this contradiction in different ways and, as they do so, draw on resources of the cultural imagination. But one important conclusion that I want the reader to come away with is that as the dissertation moves across a spectrum from the propertied to the dispossessed, a movement that many Iraqi migrants in Jordan experience as the irreversible passage of time itself, the duplicity or diremption (*'izdiwaaj*) inherent to life in a class society appears more and more clearly as a problem of living. It is this consciousness of the situation that sheds light on dispossession as a process through which, "communal value (i.e. the value a community regards as essential to its viability)" (Munn 1992,20) is subsumed within "the contradictory nature of the form of social mediation that constitutes [capitalist] society." (Postone 1993, 67)

My hope is that this argument will advance efforts to interpret the refugee crises in the Middle East and beyond via a broader critical analysis of the capitalist world system.[2] But one goal

[2] Today, international NGO's and the United Nations privilege programs that aim to make refugees "self-reliant" through wage work, (Easton-Cabria & Omata 2018; Lenner & Turner 2019) while responses to the refugee crisis feed into global circuits of production and exchange as much as any other large-scale industry. (Andersson 2014; Sukarieh & Tannock 2019; Morris 2019)

of this dissertation is to push this critical enterprise out of its comfort zone in the realm of UN, NGO, and state-led interventions. For the most part, ethnographies of displaced people are situated within the anthropology of humanitarianism, which is founded on a theoretical foundation built to address the exclusion of the political subject in institutional and legal terms.[3] In this framing, sites of humanitarian encounter are places apart, where the agents of "humanitarian government" employ expert disciplines to produce "subjects and subjectivities possessed of political meaning." (Fassin 2011a, 1-2) At best, this approach supplements liberal internationalism with a sense of its own epistemic blind spots. But, to offer a deliberately simplistic analogy, the model of knowing power governing the excluded subject is a hothouse plant theory that can flourish only in sites that have already been prepared for it (prisons, courts, camps, clinics, colonial offices, NGO's, universities, etc.). To apply this approach to the case at hand, we would first have to omit the open-ended complexity of the social totalities in which real people live and replace it with the closed content of legal codes and expert discourse. Then, we would be tempted to add the creativity of human thought, emotion, and action back into the picture as either the illustration of or resistance to these determining bureaucratic designs. In any event, an approach that methodologically limited itself to the ambit of humanitarians and state-actors would have no room in it for the standpoint of Iraqis in Jordan. For them, the downsides of intervention are already obvious. And the brutality, graft, and incompetence that dominate their lives cannot be understood, let alone critiqued, as the unintended consequences of naive experts. Moreover, no matter how much they suffer from exclusion in political and legal terms, their wealth, their labor, and their lives are tangled up with

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[3] Ticktin identifies the "key theorists" of the sub-field as "Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben." (2014, 278) As theorists of, respectively, discipline, statelessness, and exception, all of these thinkers assume the exclusion of their subjects as a starting point, and analyze this exclusion in terms of legal categories, expert knowledge, and political discourses.

the whole of their adoptive society, which itself draws sustenance from their presence. What is needed, then, is an approach that accommodates their knowledge of the diffuse and durable processes that characterize their situation and that they continually generate through their transformative participation within a society of the dispossessed.

"Waiting on Embers"

"*Oh, my eyes, I don't want you to keep crying your tears.*

They said we'd go back tomorrow, but tomorrow's two years.

Aren't you bored of the tears? The candle burns no more.

They've gone far from me now. Who are you waiting for?"

– Mohammad Al-Salaam, *b'ad maariid tabcheen.*

In recent years, anthropologists and philosophers have raised provocations about the finitude and vulnerability of shared forms of life that become apparent when communities face social abandonment, environmental devastation, and destruction at the hands of invaders.[4] The topic of "immigration in dark times" (Fassin 2011b) is a particularly apt field in which to ground these provocations empirically, and the past several decades point to fact that states are moving towards ever more severe efforts to police, detain, and deny admittance to those on the wrong side of the border from entering those parts of the world where life may yet flourish. More specifically, I follow a number of recent ethnographies in foregrounding the lived experiences of would-be

[4] Ethnographers working in Iraq have drawn attention to America's deliberate campaigns of infrastructural (Al-Mohammad 2007), environmental (Dewachi 2013), and social (Rubaii 2019) devastation. Han (2018) offers an excellent critical appraisal of this literature in the field at large.

sojourners who no longer find life at home to be viable, and yet are blocked from physical movement across borders by transnational "securocracies." (Feldman 2006) From Fuzhounese villagers participating in "cosmologies of credit" (Chu 2010), to Togolese citizens cultivating "nostalgia for the future" (Piot 2010), to Moroccan youth who seek to pass through "the burning" of illegal migration (Pandolfo 2007), would-be travelers draw from wellsprings of the cultural imagination to articulate visions beyond the confinements of their boundaries and live relationships to other people, places, and times, in both this world and the hereafter. Like these works, my analysis moves along the elucidating paths that my interlocuters have traced through their inventive reconfigurations of existing tropes and the particular "structure of feeling" (Williams 1967) imbricated with sojourning and futurity at the moment of their foreclosure. What is more, writing with the benefit of what is by now a substantial comparative ethnographic record on the topic behind me, I pursue the possibility of integrating these varying perspectives within a theory that can actually account for why our world of global connections appears in the very different ways that it does when viewed from the position of each of its parts. This possibility of situated totalization is suggested by the intentions, orientations, and intuitions of my interlocuters, who have fled one country only to get stuck in another, and now find themselves reflecting on their changing state.

The title of this dissertation, *Waiting on Embers*, is a colloquial expression meant to convey a powerful feeling of anticipation. These words were spoken to me by Abu Osman, an Iraqi asylee who has been living in Amman for about five years. Since leaving the field in the fall of 2018, I have been trying without success to facilitate his family's resettlement. Abu Osman hails from a

suburb of Basra, and both he and his wife, Om Osman[5], trace their origins to a large tribal confederacy that moved freely between Iraq and Kuwait up until 1990, when the former country invaded the latter. This was around the time that Abu and Om Osman were born and, during the period of punitive sanctions that followed, he and his wife's families benefitted from the Ba'athist "'state-ization of the tribe and tribalization of the state" (Dawod 2003), a policy through which the Party incorporated the social structure of Sunni tribes into the state apparatus by endowing sheikhs and their relations with land, houses, and government jobs. Perhaps this is why, following the demolition of the Iraqi state, their property was targeted for expropriation by Shia militias, who murdered Om Osman's uncles in their front yard while she hid in her home, and kidnapped and tortured Abu Osman until a hefty ransom was paid. After these events, the couple, at the time still only engaged, fled to different parts of Iraq, then crossed the border to be reunited in Amman, where they married and had a son. Abu Osman never finished high school and his only job had been as a low-paid civic employee inspecting construction permits while taking on side jobs as an electrician at these same sites. Over the years that I have known him, he has gotten by plying his trade as an electrician, taking photographs and making handicrafts for a private charity run by a group of transnational Iraqi elites, and receiving some money from a brother who made it to Australia by boat. But the doctor's bills for treating his son's recurring respiratory infections were straining his relationship with his patrons at the charity, and, lacking a work permit, there was no recourse to turn to if a contractor refused to give him his wages when he finished a job, as they often did. Describing his situation over the phone about a year after I left Amman, he gave new energy to a commonplace trope, telling me through what sounded like gritted teeth, "We are

[5] Arabic speakers often call one another by Abu ["father (of)"] and Om ["mother (of)"] followed by the name of their eldest male child.

waiting on embers, on something that is hotter than the embers. (*nintathar ‘alaa jumur, ‘alaa ahaar min al-jumur*.)”

In the anthropological conversation on displaced people, suffering is treated as a problem of representation for the anthropologist and other expert knowledge producers.[6] But as much anthropologists tend to worry about how we represent our subjects, we should not forget that our subjects also confront the problem of how to describe their circumstances to us. In telling me that he was “waiting on embers”, Abu Osma drew on a popular tradition that incorporates what are in fact a great variety of terms used to call attention to differently difficult situations.[7] To be “waiting on embers” does not reflect the same state as waiting in fire, *an-naar*, a word that, in the Arabic speaking world evokes the punishments of hell. Likewise, to suffer as an asylee in Jordan is not the same thing as being subjected to torture in Iraq. Many other migrants echoed Abu Osman in distinguishing between these two states of distress through tropes of the afflicted body, specifying the difficulties of life in Jordan through the use of terms like “[blood] pressure” (*dughut*), “headache” (*dowkha*), and “exhaustion” (*ta‘aba*) that point to a problem both more attenuated and less intense than dangers of explosions, kidnapping, and torture they faced in Iraq. In fact, many people in Amman recognize this refined articulation of differently difficult dilemmas as characteristically Iraqi. Sadness (*huzn*), longing (*haneen*), and wounds of the heart (*jurooh*) are all perennial topics in the Arab songbook. But according to listeners of many different nationalities, it is the Iraqi singers who express them with the greatest power. Particularly popular in Amman

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[6] Affecting ethnographic descriptions of migrant suffering, it has been argued, invoke a culturally and historically particular concept of pain as a universal human experience that reproduces the logic of the very same humanitarian discourses these critics aim to study. (Fassin & Reichtman 2009; Robbins 2013; Ticktin 2014:276; Monterescu, Kallius & Rajaram, 2016: 27; Theodossopoulos 2016, 180) This is a good critique of liberal discourses, but it is only a first step towards considering how other concepts of pain might lead us to a deeper understanding of the forms of agency and relatedness that obtain within other traditions or communities. (Asad 2003, 67)

[7] Hayder al-Mohammad drew my attention to the highly specific distinctions that the Iraqi poetics of suffering articulates between different sorts of painful situations.

are Iraqi singers of *mawwal*, sentimental song-poems that provide ample space for vocal improvisation. These songs begin with barely articulate cries of anguish or slow, groaning verses ranging over the fragile filament of harmonized strings or synthesizers, like a bird pitched in a storm looking for a place to land. But this opening movement soon gives way to muscular, tightly rhythmic verse driven on by a percussive ensemble with all the urgency of a specific story that needs to be told. The transition from cry to lyric reminds us that suffering should not be opposed to language, but is better understood as a provocation to communicative engagement. It is an invitation to turn toward another as a way out of "private experience" and into awareness of ongoing, sustained processes. (Das 1996, 2006; Wittgenstein 1958, P. 154)

The question, therefore, is not how we should represent the pain of displaced people in our writing, but what people in pain are telling us when they are calling our attention towards their situation, and how we might follow these moments of intuition towards a fuller knowledge of the situation that they reflect.[8] Figurative language reaches out to give form to "the inchoate", that field of objects, processes, and events with which we must live and which forever exceeds our efforts to fix it in description. (Fernandez 1986) And, like all the most sophisticated figures of speech, Abu Osman's "something hotter than embers" grasps this inchoate as a process in the

[8] As with "reflection", the concept of "intuition" deserves some qualification to avoid confusion. In the dialectical tradition, intuition is not opposed to knowledge as a fundamentally different epistemology, but rather corresponds to a moment in the movement of comprehension that knowledge must necessarily proceed from but must also surpass. (Adorno, 96-97) Of particular importance to the case at hand, Abu Osman's use of the trope of "waiting on embers" to describe his situation expresses the initial moment of knowledge as it grasps what Adorno frequently referred to, as the "atmosphere" of the social. This intuitive grasp of the whole that is expressed in the trope of "waiting on embers" does not offer a completed, clear picture of a totality, but rather, to adopt the Iraqi social historian Ali al-Wardi's favorite metaphor, a "glimpse of history" as it resides in its "traces"; a moment of illumination that necessary precedes the presentation of particular facts and yet remains open to transformation in light of those particulars to come. (see also Adorno, 99) And so, to return to Fernandez's language, the trope is "an attempt to predicate the inchoate", and the inchoate is, in this case, a social totality grasped through an unfinished, underspecified sense of the whole. Again, I want to acknowledge that there are specific difficulties which inhere in this kind of explanation and which have to do with the fact that this idea presents itself, for the time being, as somewhat lacking in content. As with the note on reflection, I ask the reader to consider these comments again in light of the more specific ways that the dissertation will employ both tropes and theory to develop a situated totalization from the standpoint of its subjects.

duration of its becoming. Embers burn slowly, and Jordan is a place where duration poses a specific kind of problem. Most of the migrants who appear in this dissertation describe Jordan as a "transit station" (*mahatta*) on the way to another place. But delays in transit can last for years, as migrants wait on an opaque bureaucratic process of resettlement that offers no guarantee of results. In the meantime, they must as a matter of everyday existence enter into relations with others that in the long run end up being at best unprofitable and at worst exploitative. "There is no future in Jordan", so many of them say, not because they have lost the concepts to imagine the future, but because the opportunities to achieve the future they do image are hoarded up in places far away from this part of the world. As one of the most expensive cities in the region, Amman is a place where "your money is eaten-up", where "everyone sees you as a sack of cash", where "even a 'hello' will cost you", a place that "drinks your blood." And whether they are industrialists like Taher or laborers like Abu Osman, Iraqi migrants' rights to appeal to the state in the event of a raw deal are severely curtailed. As costs mount and savings dwindle, each passing day further erodes distinctions that separate them from *al-masaakiin*, the poor and pitiable, whom they perceive through images of and encounters with those who, from their standpoint, have already descended deeper into dispossession. Different concepts of pain, Asad reminds us, call our attention to different "modes of living a relationship." (2003, 3) And, for Iraqi migrants in Amman, the pain of waiting on embers is a mode of living the relationship between classes.

Calling attention to the importance of class and, more generally, to material concerns is not meant to suggest that migrants are acquisitive individuals motivated by narrow interests. Arguing against the facile parsing of motivations among would-be migrants, Chu (2010) shows that people seek to join global flows of prosperity because they conceive of themselves through their meaningful relationships to others. Similarly, young fathers like Abu Osman and Taher seek

resettlement not to accumulate wealth for its own sake, but to use it to honor their responsibilities as sons, fathers, husbands, and friends. In many parts of the region, the pains of dispossession are felt so acutely because of the challenge that economic transformations pose to realizing what Naguib terms "nurturing masculinity": a gendered form of relational personhood achieved through the provision of food and other goods that function as the material embodiments of care for children and families. (2015) When viewed in light of the ethnographic record, it is clear that the materially-mediated movement of value towards the ongoing reproduction of relationally-constituted persons is a general feature of human societies. In this long view of value, separate acts of exchange become meaningful when integrated within the more attenuated process of reproduction these exchanges serve. (Weiner 1980) Note also that mobility, like nourishment, is a quality contained in certain material things that attain their "communal value" from the uses these things afford to the practices through which a community ensures its ongoing viability over time. (Munn 1992, 20) For Iraqis stuck in Jordan, navigating a highly unequal system of access to mobility in order to accumulate wealth is inseparable from meeting the responsibility of relationships to others.

However, I want to avoid making the kind of argument that would contrast what we all know to be the real wellsprings of value in human societies with the rhetorical valorization of the independent, self-maximizing subject that, it has been observed, is enthusiastically promoted by NGO's, humanitarian institutions, and states. (*cf.* Elyachar 2005, 7) This is because, despite the profuse denials of its boosters, capitalism, when seen through the everyday experience of class, is also a relational system of value that must maintain certain conditions in order to achieve its own continuity over time. This world system is, of course, unimaginably bigger and more complex than the societies we might locate within a given ethnographic site and which, we can say, are "en-

globed" within the higher totality.[9] When viewed from the position of a part, this totality can seem as vast and unpredictable as a climatic or ecological system. Such big, complex forces that arise from the ongoing interaction of humans and nature are difficult to grasp, and impossible to make precise predictions about. Nevertheless, we can identify lines of force in these systems when we experience their moments over the course of a longer duration. To make this claim does not by itself lead to any given determination of human action. Nevertheless, we cannot not understand the significance of the acts I will go on to describe without some real sense of the climate in which they occur; or, as it were, the atmosphere through which they take flight. And, at risk of pushing the analogy too far, I believe that limiting the scholarly analysis of capitalist society to what is written in the discourses of (neo)liberalism is a bit like trying to analyze climate change while having to rely on models offered by people who deny its anthropogenic nature. In both cases, we would be limiting the purview of our investigation to the task of debunking models that quite simply arise from collective investments in ignoring reality. Meanwhile, the status of these denials is already far too obvious to those being swept away. The next three sections of the introduction elaborate, contextualize, and try to anticipate potential criticisms of this starting point.

The Old Status Groups & the Post-Invasion Classes of Iraq

If we conceive of capitalism as a relational value system, then, "Classes, properly speaking, are relational categories of modern society." (Postone 1993, 320) Taher cannot be an owner without workers, Abu Osman cannot be a worker without a boss. This is, of course, a formal and abstract way of putting it. This dissertation explores the fine distinctions that people draw within and between classes, such as the different national types that people treat as if they were equivalent

[9] This is, then, a world systems analysis of global capitalism as a totality that endures the ongoing reconfiguration of its own composition over the *longue durée*— "a theory that treat[s] the entire world… as a single unit of analysis." (Abu-Lughod 201, 2004)

with one's role in the division of labor. It also asks why these types are so often taken for granted when there are also distinctions between capitalists, lettered professionals, and manual workers within a single national group. But mine is far from the first attempt to reconcile capitalism's fundamental relational categories with other meaningful forms of social distinction. In an unfinished chapter in Volume Three of *Capital*, Marx states the problem without resolving it: "The stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere." It is interesting to note that this problem becomes urgent in the Marxist tradition when consciousness of class fails to overcome other sorts of distinction at specific historical moments of struggle. Thus, Marx's analysis of the Bonapartist counter-revolution in France (2008) provides the following formulation: "Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence as foundation, there is built a superstructure of diversified and characteristic sentiments, illusions, habits of thought, and outlooks of life in general. The individual in whom they arise, through tradition and education, may fancy them to be the true determinants, the real origin of his activities." (47) This metaphor of foundation and superstructure is, we know, too often taken to suggest that socio-cultural forms are materially determined, but this is a confused interpretation. James' analysis of the Haitian revolution glosses Marx's metaphor better: historical moments of rapid social transformation force choices between relations grounded in property and other possible bonds. (1963, 44) Another historian writing in the Marxist tradition who takes up this interpretation is Batatu (1978), whose analytical distinction between "classes" and "status groups" is employed throughout this dissertation.

Hana Batatu's *The Old Social Classes and New Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (1978) is an over-1,200 page chronical of the Iraqi people from their struggles under the yoke of

British imperialism to their achievement of a planned economy that directed oil revenues towards the development of the nation's people and industries during the 1970's, a period many of my own interlocuters refer to as Iraq's "golden age" (*al-'asr al-thahabi*). Batatu's analysis is subtle and nuanced, but, overall, he stakes his claim that Iraqi history moves in one direction, from the fragmentation of "traditional status groups" towards a nation united in progress under the command of a "class-for-itself." (7-8, 11) There is, of course, a painful irony in revisiting Batatu's conclusions after the fact. As early as 1991, the doyens of Iraqi studies were pointing out his optimism was misplaced, and that the revolutionary economic reforms he described had not led to "transition from the values of *Gemeinschaft* to those of *Gesellschaft*." (Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 1412) Since then, United Nation sanctions, the Anglo-American invasion, and proxy struggles between regional powers have left Iraqi society appearing as a collection of isolated parties engaged in a politics of theft and violence that many migrants cited to me as the reason they had left Iraq behind. But, as was laid bare by their response to the 2019 Iraqi October Revolution (*thawrat al-tashreen*), which sought the abolition of the post-invasion constitutional principle of sectarian quotas for parliamentary representation (*mukhasasa*), the leadership of these identarian factions constitute a single "sovereign class" who are "collectively, in relation to the rest of society… occupying the position of a ruling authority" and possess "distinctive interests, privileges and powers" despite the often bloody competition between them. (Asad 1972, 82)[10] And so, I find myself in agreement with Batatu, who wrote that, "To reject class analysis out of hand, merely on account of contingent ideological associations, is, from a scholarly point of view, inadmissible." (Batatu 1978, 5).

[10] Asad identifies the features of a "sovereign class", the class "who defines and applies the rules of the game" within a society that appears to be characterized by fragmentation, violence and an "acephalous" absence of authority within his critical reinterpretation of Frederick Barthes's ethnography *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans*. Dodge (2019; 2020) has analyzed recent political events in Iraq along similar lines.

How, then, do we reconcile the inadequacy of Batatu's conclusions with the truth of his premises? According to Batatu, a class is defined by its position within an "economically based formation" in which different sections of society enjoy different relations to property, and the class-in-itself becomes a class-for-itself when it begins to self-consciously define itself in terms of these relations. (7, 8) A status group, on the other hand, is the "social position" accorded to a particular group of people among members of the society in question. (6) This distinction is important, because, without it, there is no way to even formulate the question of what happens to a group's "views of life" when its "conditions of existence" undergo transformation. (Marx 2008, 22) Moreover, my account of dispossession as a durative process is to a great extent informed by Batatu's own attempt to describe emerging consciousness of class relations as a "crystallization" that is, "of course, very complex, and depends on the concrete correlation of circumstances." (8) As he explains, a single status group, such as a group of "tribal sheikhs", might be composed of more than one class, such as a "landed section" within that group. (7) But whether or not this status group acts as a class is not known in advance. "Difference in the degree or extent of ownership or control of the means of production *could* be so great as to constitute, in terms of social consequences, a qualitative and not merely quantitative difference." (7, italics mine) This dissertation considers what this process of "crystallization" looks like from the position of diasporic communities in Jordan. We will consider critical moments that make apparent whether or not quantitative changes in the degree of ownership have come to constitute a qualitative difference in social identification. These critical moments range from the political and public to the personal and intimate, but they all appear as conflicts in which people must take a stand (*mawqif*), such as controversies over corruption in the 2018 Iraqi Parliamentary election, aversions towards being grouped in with other sorts of refugees, dilemmas about whether one should nurture

relationships in the present or save for the future, and workplace disputes between bosses and workers from different ethno-sectarian groups. I will avoid what I see as the main inadequacy of Batatu's argument by rejecting his claim that status groups are necessarily "traditional" and that the ascent of class consciousness is inevitably "modern." For Batatu, the revolutionary state attempted to modernize consciousness by creating a new owning class of educated, cosmopolitan, and secular professionals bound to the party apparatus. But now that this apparatus no longer exists, the class that was constituted in relation to it starts to look more like yet another status group held together by shared habits and outlooks, but who differ from one another more and more with each passing day in their degrees of ownership. To understand why this old Iraqi status group is coming apart in displacement, we need to consider a problem that Batatu, like many Marxists of his day, grappled with mightily: "the problem of 'primitive accumulation'" (1133)

States of Dispossession

Capitalism does not reproduce in isolation. To ensure its ongoing viability, capital must undergo a process of "expanding reproduction" so that crises arising from its immanent contradictions can be continually forestalled by incorporating relations external to itself. (Luxemburg 2004) For a long time, Marxist scholars focused on "the so-called 'primitive'" moment in this process. This a problem that Marx inherited from Smith, and that he claimed to have solved in Volume One of *Capital*, showing that, both formally and historically, the owning classes can only acquire their initial outlay of wealth that allows them to begin exploiting labor-power by looting it through direct physical violence. (1977) By restricting debate on this problem to capitalism's moment of origin, this solution lead to a lengthy and largely unresolved debate among anthropologists and historians about what happens when circuits of capitalist accumulation make first contact with non-capitalist societies. I will not reprise that debate here. There are serious logical and

epistemological reasons that efforts to locate the exact moment in time and space at which a society stops being pre-capitalist and starts being part of capitalism will remain inconclusive. (Asad 1984, 1987) Moreover, there are certain problems we need to be prepared to abandon when new historical circumstances make the questions that motive those debates appear less compelling than they once did. (Scott 2004)

After all, this dissertation is not about a first-contact situation. Here, a social formation that arose in relation to a past configuration of the world system is now being dissolved at another moment. To understand how this could be, I turn to scholars who have rethought the problem of original accumulation for the present. Harvey (2004) has shown that “accumulation based upon predation, fraud, and violence” does not need to be “relegate[d] to an ‘original state.’” (74) His work on the history of neoliberalization demonstrates that for the hegemony of U.S.-based finance capital to weather the crises of the 1970s, “markets in general and capital markets in particular had to be forced open to international trade.” (77) Wealth that had been diverted from circuits of accumulation and fixed in various public goods during the period of post-war modernization had to be expropriated as private assets to serve as the asset base for speculative profits. (2007) Note that Iraq’s history does not quite match up with the timing in Harvey’s story, because the need to secure international hegemony in the military sphere does sometimes dictate the timing of economic restructuring in particular regions of the world. First, the Ba’athists had to be propped up as a bulwark to protect the comprador aristocracies of the Gulf from the Islamic Revolution throughout the 1980’s, second, when it did come time to call in Iraq’s debt in the early 1990s, Saddam Hussein responded by annexing Kuwait, and third, the changing moral accounting of the Washington establishment during the rest of the ‘90’s (who after all had plenty to keep them occupied in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia at the time) determined that Iraq would be

contained by cutting off its ties from the world system and starving its people into revolt. However, as soon as Clinton's cadre was replaced Bush's pandemonium of evangelicals, Zionists, right-Hegelians, comprador con men, and nakedly avaricious capitalists of all sizes, Iraq's reprieve from the inevitable opening-up expired. The destruction of Iraq was a bonanza for capitalist accumulation, including, as we will see in in the first chapter, within Jordan itself.

The seizure of spoils and the opening of markets is not the only way in which dispossession is necessary for the ongoing viability of capitalist relations. Morris (2019) draws attention to an aspect of Marx's "originary" argument that has to do with the fact that classes, those relational categories of modern society, need people to occupy them. In other words, "the reproducing of expropriation" is, at least in part, a question of human reproduction as it is achieved through relations of sexual difference. (44) She writes that indebtedness leads Southeast Asian families to see no way of fulfilling their obligations as kin without their "assum[ing] the position of one who conceives of labor-power as alienable" (63) and that this reroutes the desire to achieve a familial future into circuits of exploitation through "a medium that operates within households while exceeding them…intervening at every level of the subject's production, and transforming kinship from a system of heritability and alliance into a code for accounting of credit and debt." (62, 64) The insight here is that familial relations come to be subsumed within capitalist relations through the mediation of a value form that has become essential to them both. This dissertation deals with an analogous process, and, although it does not take up credit and debt as one of these forms of mediation, it suggests that the duration of displacement has a debt-like effect on the lived experience of time, insofar as it this experience is mediated by time's becoming an accountable quantity that must be carefully balanced in order to fulfill what parents conceive as their

responsibility to future generations. The value form that mediates the subsumption of intergenerational time within accountable time is the commodity.

Commodity Duplicity

Capitalist value is embodied in its elementary form of social mediation, the commodity. To better express the formal, relational, non-empirical nature of this concept, this dissertation uses "value-body" (*wert-körper*) interchangeably with "commodity" (*ware*). (as in Marx 1990, 143) To understand the commodity in this sense, we have to accept that the form possesses a double-nature and that this duplicity is not reducible to the aspect that is apparent in a given moment. In the most abstract terms, Marx defines this duplicity as embodying both the "quality" and "magnitude" of value. (125) As an embodiment of qualities, a thing can be said to possess a "use value", with its uses being determined not by the nature of the object itself, but by human communities in a particular historical period (126), and, we might add, a given cultural order of practices. (Sahlins 1976) As a magnitude of "exchange value", any commodity can be rendered commensurable with another because each and every one embodies a given quantity of a "homogeneous substance, common to them all… human labor in the abstract." (Marx 128) This is not a normative claim about what sorts of activity society should hold in esteem. It is a descriptive claim about a mode of production that achieves its ongoing viability by rendering human action-in-time homogeneous and commensurable so that it is possible to exchange labor-power in the wage relationship, the characteristic form of "social domination" in capitalist societies. (Postone 1992)[11]

[11] Marx's arguments about capitalist exploitation cannot be understood without having both sides of this double form in mind. If I can try to summarize the entire argument of *Capital Volume 1* in a sentence: Capital is valorized through labor because commodified labor itself possesses a dual aspect: labor-power produces, in its being consumed as a use-value, products that embody quantities of value in their exchange greater than the quantities of labor-time that were consumed to produce the labor-power that is sold as an exchange-value in the wage relationship. The claim that Marx only offered a "supply side" theory of commodity production, and that we need to look for elsewhere for a "demand side" theory of commodity consumption has given us a very useful way to think about intra-elite contests over

The double nature of the commodity form allows it to function as the form of mediation through which we (both my interlocuters and I) relate the object of observation (experiences of displacement) to the object of study (the social forces that produce this condition as dispossession). (Troulloit 2016) Instead of following things across distinct moments of their biography, this dissertation follows people as they live with "the routine coexistence" of the commodity's duplicitous values, and centers the commodity as the medium through which the sensual, concrete "lifeworld" of shared experiences is both "made" and "unmade" in relation to the larger system of exchange. (Weiss 1996, 11) We might call this an approach that follows the movement of the concept through life. I try to show throughout the dissertation how the coexistence of these two facets of value is temporalized in changing orientations to a given commodity, with each chapter treating, in turn, the built environment, status documents, food and drink, and the human body's capacity for labor. In each moment, I am interested in how two different orientations to time, concrete and abstract, meet as simultaneous potentials in these embodiments of value. On the one hand, commodities, as qualities-in-use, make affordances to practices that produce an "intersubjective spacetime", a socially-constituted sense of past, present, and future in which consequential action can be said to "go on". (Munn 1992, 10-11) On the other, commodities, as magnitudes-in-exchange, are commensurable with all other commodities as "moments of an abstractly homogeneous substance that is mathematically divisible and measurable", including the "labor [that] in capitalism gives rise to a social structure that dominates it." (Postone 1993, 155-159) These two orientations to time, concrete and abstract, are embodied in the same thing, a

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consensus on taste. (Appadurai 1986, 57-58) But, as a critique of Marxism, it simply ignores the way that consumption and production are related to one another in the argument that Marx actually made.

duplicitous value-body. As these different aspects reveal themselves in a succession of lived movements, they are integrated[12] as a situated impression of everyday life.

Everyday Life as Scope and Method

The concepts this dissertation examines, which include class, property, and the commodity form, are essentially relational. That is, they are elucidating because they do not readily correspond to any one observed object, subject, moment, or topic. Because these concepts will, by design, resist reduction to an empiricist framing of fieldwork, it is easy to imagine that I am imposing alien categories on people who have no conception of them in a problematic way. But this is not what I am proposing. Instead, I am interested in pursuing a study of concepts as they are "embedded" within forms of life (Asad 2003, 17) that encompass, in their duration, many different moments, projects, and events. Therefore, this dissertation takes everyday life as both the scope and method of its inquiry.

As a scope of inquiry, everyday life is located in habituated moments of encounter and interaction between people as they go about navigating recurring situations. Here, let me offer some qualifications for using a term that is often taken in a very vague and general way. Everyday life is not an untroubled condition. It is a "site of unevenness" (Harootunian 2000, 57) shot through with moments of "disquiet." (21) Neither is everyday life a singular and universal experience. There are many different possible compositions of "temporal unevenness" that are integrated within a given sense of "everydayness." (54) Finally, everyday life can be a refuge from violent

[12] Along with "reflection", and "intuition", "integration" is another concept that needs both further explanation and more substance to be understood. "The relation of every humble, everyday gesture to the social complex, like the relation of each individual to the whole, cannot be compared to that of the part to the sum total or of the elements to a 'synthesis", using the term in its usual vague sense. Mathematical *integration* would be a better way of explaining the transfer from one scale of greatness to another, implying as it does a qualitative leap without the sense that 'differential' element (the gesture, the individual) and the totality are radically heterogeneous." (Lefebvre, 184 [italics mine])

eventfulness, but it also incorporates that eventfulness' products, and different senses of the present reflect "the figure of uneven development generated by capitalism as it enters societies at different moments and different rates of intensity." (57) In the structure of the dissertation, the different compositions of everydayness are revealed through movement across different classes and groups of Iraqis in Amman. We will begin to see that the degree to which a status group is conscious of its class character, and the degree to which relations of reproduction are subsumed within relations of exploitation, are reflected in the distinct temporalizations of action and experience.

One of the more important observations this dissertation makes is that claims about dispossessed peoples' existential uncertainty or conceptual poverty in conceiving of the future are overstated. People who have been displaced over a sufficient duration will themselves begin to plot the trends that emerge from the changing composition of everydayness at each of its momentary points, and they will also integrate coordinates furnished by the presence of others whom, they intuit, have already arrived at points further along the line. Consciousness of the everyday is, therefore, always a consciousness of moments that, to use Husserl's terms, both "retain" pasts and "portend" futures from each current position. And this consciousness of the everyday as the integration of its past, present, and future moments makes it possible for people to enact "practices of everyday life." (De Certeau 1988) These "arts of living" are techniques for "making-do" in capitalist societies, and insofar as they are efficacious, they reflect a real knowledge of how life's moments are temporalized in consistent rhythms, patterns, and trends. Even if they do not enunciate this knowledge as representation, these practices possess a certain "formality" that makes them identifiable as research objects. (23) I make an epistemological claim to access this knowledge through observation, participation, and interlocution: carefully noting modalities of action that I encounter in the field, learning to embody these practices in my own

conduct, and reflecting on these performances with people more practiced in them than I. I hesitate, however, to follow the many scholars of everyday practices who valorize their research object by emphatically interpreting it as a mode of resistance to power. The manner in which people inhabit an exploitative society reveals knowledge of the world as they know it to be, not as we would like it to look.

To bear fruit, this method demands intimacy between fieldworker and informant. And in Jordan, as in many parts of the world, a code of conduct governs the degrees of nearness and distance, or of openness and closedness, that are considered appropriate for relations between gendered, classed, and nationally-identified people. My presence in others' lives was a strange event that had to be integrated within existing categories of sociality. Being a man of about thirty, it did not take very long before I fell in with different groups of other men whose ages ranged between twenty and forty. I entered into these men's lives along a specific plane of intimacy, that of friendship (*sadaaqa*). Friends were, in my experience, enormously generous to one another in sharing their lives. But I did not try to test this generosity too much by prying into aspects of life that might not be considered appropriate to put into view. Women do appear in my fieldwork, but usually as the sisters, wives, and mothers of my intimate companions. I took these opportunities to solicit their perspectives, but, because women and men generally do not socialize publicly outside of special occasions, I could not really learn to embody their everyday activities as I might alongside another man. Likewise, I spoke to older people, both male and female, but these interactions were more like formal interviews than participation in everyday life. Being American was less of an obstacle than one might expect. Most people in Amman understand that if every individual were held accountable for the crimes of his ethno-national group, then cross-group social interaction would be impossible. In fact, I had a hard time convincing people who insisted

on a strict separation of people (*sha'ab*) from state (*dowla*) that, under a democratic sovereignty, citizens are responsible for the actions of their government. They were much more likely to assure me that I was being naïve about the extent to which America was a democracy. Being American did lead to many interesting observations and discussions about how people in Amman gauge the character of strangers on the basis of their nationality, which will be addressed in the first chapter.

The Hidden and the Manifest

"*All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided*."

– Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. III

This introduction has had a lot to say about the necessary diremption of processes, totalities, and essences from moments, parts, and appearances, and I now want to signal how I will relate these two poles over the rest of the dissertation. Let me say at the outset that no amount of scholastic contemplation will resolve the contradictory relationship between what is hidden and what is manifest in everyday life. This is a dilemma that confronts people in the course of living. To start thinking about how this works, let me take a page from Ali Al-Wardi, the 20th century Iraqi social historian, and his unorthodox reformulation of the categories of *al-baatin* (hidden, interior, latent, esoteric) and *al-thaahir* (apparent, manifest, visible, exoteric). These terms are drawn from Islamic theology, and, as religious concepts, they have greatly influenced the dialectical and phenomenological theories I employ. But Al-Wardi critically reconfigures this binary in his book *The Sultans' Preachers* (w'adh al-salaatiin) (2013[1954]). There, he inveighs against both modernist and traditionalist social reformers of his day, writing that, "We cannot reform human nature through the forceful remonstrations of preachers." (8) The preacher, whether secular or

religious, intends for his words to reach his subject's "hidden consciousness" (*al-'aql al-baatin*), the innermost seat of "latent motivations." However, according to Al-Wardi, this interiority is shaped not by what we are told, but what we perceive in our surroundings, that is, by what is apparent and manifest. And what is apparent is that a class of wealthy and powerful people who are "not opposed to stealing and monopolizing and bribery and grasping" are in charge. And so, while the apparent world influences our inner or hidden thoughts, the "utopian" exhortations of the preachers only influence our "manifest consciousness" (*al-'aql al-thaahir*), which relates to the ways in which we present ourselves to another's regard. (25) Thus, it is the impressionistic and undiscoursed world of appearances that informs consciousness of what is essential, while efforts addressed to our inner selves drape the world in a garment of superficial appearances. As we try to reconcile awareness of the world as it is with our attachment to the world as it is described to us, we confront a contradiction between "the principle of the preacher and the value of the society" that gives rise to a "doubling of the personality" (*'izdiwaaj al-shakhasiyya*), manifesting as a disconnect between the tongue (*al-lisaan*) and the heart (*al-qalb*), or between what is expressed and what is intended. (24) If the preachers were genuine in their intent to reshape our inner nature, says Al-Wardi, they would go about reforming the material relations that their subject encounters "every day of his life." (319)[13] But this would render the preachers and their sultans superfluous.

Following Al-Wardi's cross-wired critique, this dissertation proceeds by tracing the entanglements of the hidden and the manifest. Note that these poles are not opposed to one another

[13] Pursely notes this position makes al-Wardi a critic of Freud, whom, he argued, promoted a "metaphysical" notion of the unconscious that universalizes his specifically "turn-of-the-century Vienna" milieu. (2019, 342) This leads him down the road of essentializing the socio-cultural formation of the psyche by arguing that Iraqis are genealogically predisposed to neuroses arising from the contradictory civilizational impulses of Islamic piety and Bedouin acquisitiveness. It is possible that Al-Wardi's PhD studies in the United States during the heyday of "culture and personality" school influenced this argument – especially as it is stated in his *The Personality of the Iraqi Individual*. It is also possible that he disguised the critique of his own actually existing society through historical allegory for *The Sultans' Preachers*. I just don't know.

as representation to reality, lies to truth, accident to necessity, or type to token. Appearance and essence are dialectically embrocated in reality. What we might be tempted to dismiss as superficial often ends up ascending to the status of accepted truth, while what announces itself to be profound often finds its impact limited to the surfaces of life. Moreover, Al-Wardi is, I think, correct in identifying duplicity or diremption (*'izdiwaaj*) as the insurmountable condition of subjecthood in a class society. My interlocuters know that the rich made good by doing bad, that politics is a dirty business, and that most people do not mean what they say. Viewed from their position in the world system, what Marx called the "secret" link between accumulation and dispossession is obvious and apparent. In their own ethical pronouncements, they want not just to do good, but to do it in a way that aligns their intentions and acts, to embody the truth in both the heart and the tongue. Yet they also know that everyday life exhibits an unquestionable degree of dissemblance (*nifaaq*), and behind every pronouncement or public-facing project is a world of hidden acts and intentions. To align values and actions transparently is a luxury that fewer and fewer people can afford, unless, it is imagined, they make it to another country from which these contradictions appear more remote. Different individuals and groups live this situation in different ways. And, as the dissertation moves across different sites, groups, and practices, we will consider the varyingly situated compositions of the hidden and the manifest that emerge within them.

Chapter one of the dissertation, "Visible Accumulations", describes how the figure of the affluent Iraqi investor rose to prominence through the effects of wartime accumulation on Amman's built environment. From the moment my fieldwork began, local interlocuters assured me that "all Iraqis are rich." Yet this impression takes only the most visible manifestations of migrant presence for a picture of the whole and, as such, lets us consider how the practices of everyday life can reflect aspects of reality while failing grasp the whole story. Showing how people

in Amman read the built environment through its accumulated histories of violence, I argue that this way of seeing surfaces for their depths extends to the commercialized interactions through which residents deal (*ta'aamul*) with different types (*anwaa'*) of people, and that these superficial impressions of others are, counterintuitively, more durable and determining than the changeable material conditions that give rise to them. I then test this claim against the case of the 2018 external voting in Amman for the Iraqi Parliamentary elections, during which the overwhelming majority of polling stations were placed in the city's affluent western neighborhoods.

Chapter two, "Portentous Statuses", takes the reader from street-level encounters into the more private worlds of professional-class Iraqis awaiting resettlement. These pharmacists, engineers, accountants, and other lettered professionals seek to endow to their children the form of life to which they had been entitled, but to do so they must wait on vast and opaque bureaucracies to acquire refugee status documents and, in the meantime, sustain their hopes through work in exploitative arrangements. Through the mediation of various status documents, such as visas, residency permits, and the refugee status determination, time spent in displacement becomes accountable against both day-to-day and intergenerational timescales, with the averred figure of *al-masaakiin* marking the limit of the projection. The differing financial and moral costs of these statuses is leading to the fragmentation of a single status group into its different class components, whose destines are determined by the titles to mobility they enjoy.

Chapter three, "Ambivalent Diversions", shifts from the responsibilities of family life to scenes of leisure and consumption among friends. As my companions debate whether or not these pursuits are a waste of time, I consider why and how the same practice can come to be evaluated differently according to different orientations to time. I use this contradiction to unfold the mediating role of the commodities that are being consumed, arguing that food, drink, and nicotine

are both sensuous objects that make affordances to the mutual presence of others and pricey terms in an exchange of waged time for time-off at a rate that is less and less favorable with each passing year. The social connections that men forge and maintain through these practices are valued in their own right but, under conditions of dispossession, they cannot be reconverted into material wealth that would ensure the ongoing reproduction of the status they once signified.

Chapter four, “Rendered Transactions”, brings the reader from the tables where comestible commodities are consumed to a restaurant kitchen where they are produced. There, a group of relatively recent Iraqi arrivals to Jordan toil under difficult conditions and tell me there is no time to embody aspirations towards rights, fairness, or piety. To perform their work efficiently, I learn at their hands how to desensitize parts of the body, transforming them into useful instruments of labor through repeated violation. Here, the diremption of acts and intentions that is so vexing to contemplate is transposed to the relation between body and its parts, mirroring the dismemberment of an animal into its organs, or the alienation of labor-power from the laborer. As this work is visibly manifested in the shaping of the body, both workers’ and bosses’ outer appearances are taken as evidence for inner capacities and desires. This takes the dissertation full circle, back to the popular notion of various national and ethno-sectarian “types” described in the first chapter.

Chapter 1

Visible Accumulations: Seeing Iraqi Migrants in Amman's Landscape of Politics

"*The visible about us seems to rest in itself. It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the sand*."

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

"*Politics is a sea*."

– Iraqi saying

Standing on the northern edge of Jabal Amman and facing Jabal Al-Qala'a, I witness a procession of architectural traces. Shifting my gaze from west to east, I see the sand-colored columns of a Roman temple, the crumbled remnants of a Byzantine church, and a square stone structure that was once an Umayyad gatehouse. I continue eastward, beyond the edge of the mountain's precipitous slope, and my sights meets an enormous Jordanian flag hanging heavily in the pale sky. It is fixed to a thick, white pole so tall that the banner sits on the same visual plane as the hilltop monuments. Taken as a whole, the scene is one of discrete stages of settlement, from classical roots to modern, free-standing nationhood that unfurls according to a "panoramic" principle, which orders the vicissitudes of historical change into the illusion of natural progression. (Buck-Morris 1989, 67) But this image vanishes as soon as I leave the viewpoint at which it appears. Were I to descend that slope on the eastern edge of Al-Qala'a and pass into the space that

is now obscured by the balustrade on which I lean, I would walk down a steep and winding road lined with tall apartment buildings, some of which are still inhabited by the descendants of Circassian migrants who were resettled in the 19th-century to what was then a provincial Ottoman frontier after they were expelled from the Caucuses by the Russian Empire. Then, from the bottom of the wadi, I could ascend Jabal Ashrafiyya and, beyond that, arrive in Al-Wihdat, passing through neighborhoods and markets that grew from the nucleus of United Nations refugee camps for Palestinians driven off their land by Israel. Had I instead taken a taxi in the direction of the giant flag and circumnavigated the Royal Court complex where it is planted, I would arrive in Al-Hashemi, a neighborhood that has become home to many Iraqi and Syrian refugees displaced by the brutal proxy wars now being waged across both countries. Tracing these routes in my mind, I turn my back on the view. Descending from the panorama platform, I find myself on the balcony of the Wild Jordan Café. Inside, planners and architects are presenting research on informal urban housing of Syrian refugees who have fled from the confining and remote camps where they were held. Entering the main building, I pass by a modestly-sized brass plaque, which proclaims that the building is a gift from the American people meant to encourage nature tourism in Jordan, given through the United States Agency for International Development [USAID]. Exiting the structure, I emerge onto Rainbow Street, a small commercial corridor lined with restaurants, shops and bars. From here, I can walk to the start of Al-Zahran Street, which runs the length of West Amman through a numbered series of eight traffic circles and intersections. Taking that route, I will pass by at least three major commercial centers, all built amid separate flurries of investment in construction, and arrive at the sprawling outskirts of the city, where villas that both display and store the wealth of affluent emigres from Syria, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere are being built.

Each of these itineraries would take me through urban spaces shaped by flows of wealth and people put on the move by war. Amman's residents learn to read the histories of violence that are concretely manifested in architecture and demography, from the informal settlements that house the poorest refugees to the glitzy commercial districts built with the foreign investments and international assistance that sustains Jordan's status quo. As both stores of value and sensuous elements of the environment, these material forms stand at the boundary between the everyday experience of displacement in Amman and the historical forces that produce this condition. But we cannot speak of a given "everyday experience." Amman's steep gradients are both topographic and sociological, obscuring some populations and histories while offering others a place of prominence in the public eye. The vistas that organize space and time might be thoughtful crafted to tell stories about the city and its people, as in the case of the Wild Jordan Café's viewing platform. But, in the much larger part of the world that persists outside of these highly posed arrangements, these topographies emerge through chance conjunctures of bodily movement and historical change. How, then, does a group orient themselves within such a variety of people, places and times? Why do these orientations foreground some aspects of the city's layered landscape and omit others? And how do certain prominences come to dominate impressions of the whole? To answer these questions, this chapter describes the practices and concepts by which Amman's Iraqi residents orient themselves to the city's political and historical landscape.

Before turning to this topic, let me say something about the concept of a landscape. Landscape is the term used for the relatively organized, consistent, and meaningful impression of a space that both guides and is structured by people's activities within it. (Anschuetz, Wilshusen, and Sheick 2001, 160-161) This notion of landscape, which has been imported to ethnography from archaeological scholarship, draws on a phenomenological "spatiality of situation" that

emphasizes bodily engagements with the world and the figures that populate it. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 100, 102) The phenomenological emphasis on engagement, motion, and habitual activities embrocates the spatial organization of experience with "temporal relations [that] are equally critical to these acts and orientations." (Weiss 1996, 36) We are, then, concerned with how diffuse and recursive engagements with space and time coalesce into coherent and formalized "spatiotemporalizing practices", which consist of both "the discursive commentaries on observable changes in the city" and the "modes of action or practices and states of the city place-world which concretely engage and manifest these changes." (Munn 2013, 359-360) And among these spatiotemporalizing practices, we are particularly interested in those that relate to the "practical activity… of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past." (Ingold 1993, 152-153) All human landscapes contain traces of the activities of their inhabitants, and, to speak even more generally and philosophically, "The natural world we inhabit is shared because it has perceptible and imperceptible traces of others having been 'there' (or 'here'). (Duranti 2010, 26) But, as we will see, approaching landscape as a totality that produced by and used through human practice has a special importance for study of urban life in capitalist societies. Given the outsized role of the urban built environment as a material "fix" for surplus value within circuits of capitalist accumulation (Harvey 1985), the traces of activity disclosed in the perceptually apparent landscape index places and events that have taken place well beyond the immediate perceptual field but are, nevertheless, "parts of a single social field." (Gluckman 1963, 215) And the spatiotemporalizing practices of Amman's residents intuit the connection between "here" and "there" that has established through these circuits of accumulation. Moreover, as people engage with ongoing change in the city, the practices through which they imbue places with meaning extend to the shaping of human figures who are "not really perceived as individuals but

as strangers of a certain type." (Simmel 1950[1908], 148) And what is ultimately at stake in foregrounding this "system of practices" (De Certeau 1984) is "the unavoidable selectivity of any particular engagements" with the world that forms the basis for a "politics of landscape", in which certain sites and moments achieve prominence in the perspective of those empowered to represent a national community as a whole, while other, more marginal configurations of places, people and events escape notice. (Hannah 2013, 239) By working up from the qualities of "urban experience" (Abu-Lughod 1969), then out to the political and practical possibilities that this experience shapes, attention to landscape can orient the analyst to situations that coalesce through unplanned developments.[1]

In what follows, I use this approach to understand a particularly prominent figure in Amman's landscape: that of the affluent Iraqi investor. From the moment my fieldwork began, both local and émigré interlocuters assured me that "all Iraqis are rich." Iraqis are widely believed to only "live in [the expensive and upscale] West Amman neighborhoods of Deer Ghobaar, Umm Udhayna, and Rabiya, Gardens and Khalda… and visit the great shopping centers of Amman, like Mecca Mall, City Mall, Carrefour, Taj Mall, and others" (Al-Junaabi 2018, 86). But as I began to visit the construction sites, factories, and neighborhoods where Iraqi investors worked and lived, I was told that business in Jordan was failing and that the wealthiest players had already gotten out of the country to put their money elsewhere. To make matters more complex, the investors had been joined by two quite distinct segments of Iraq's population –urban professionals from fleeing

[1] Taking landscape as the product of human engagement with the world is an alternative to an approach that focuses on representations of urban space that discursively enframe the city as an object of rationalistic techniques of government. (Mitchell 1988) In a city where each master plan is abandoned before completion due to the vicissitudes of war and displacement, where foreign investment and international aid bring forth a succession of fashionable new commercial centers that render their predecessors obsolete before their time, and where construction on much-hyped development projects is abandoned as soon as the money can be siphoned off by the ruling class (Hamdi 2016, 105), there are limits to the insight that can be gained through a one-sided account of expert discourses.

the internecine conflict over land and influence in Iraq's big cities and, second, the rural Christian and Mandean laborers and farmers who had been expelled from towns around Mosul by the Islamic State. Part one of the chapter, "Figures of Affluence" describes how this association between Iraqi migrants, foreign investment and West Amman's geography of affluence was cemented during the period following the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, and argues that this configuration of nationality with class belongs within a wider system of practices through which Amman's residents navigate encounters with strangers in public. Part two, "The Landscape of Politics" applies the framework developed in the first part of the chapter to the case of the external voting that was conducted in Amman for Iraq's 2018 parliamentary elections, when the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission chose a prominent five-star hotel as its headquarters and placed the majority of polling stations for Iraqis in West Amman's affluent neighborhoods. Taken together, the two parts advance the argument of dissertation by spotlighting the built environment as the first in a series of embodied forms of value that sit at the inflection point between the lived experience of displacement and the social forces that produce it.

Figures of Affluence

"*The human being would like to appear among other people in a manner which marks his distinction in their eyes. And so, if the people, as a whole, respect a particular quality, you will see the individual person making various attempts to embody this quality, to show it off and to compete over it… For mankind, as we have already so forceful shown, desires from the mot innermost space of his heart to present a clear impression of prestige to others… And thus, the gazing eye regards all the rank and influence that come through wealth by way of another's regard*."

– Ali al-Wardi, *The Sultan's Preachers*

Constructing the Iraqi Investor

To understand the prominence of the Iraqi investor in Amman's landscape of politics, we must first situate the city within regional and global circuits of capitalist accumulation. This situation is already very apparent to Amman's residents. Whether I was riding shared taxis in less affluent eastern neighborhoods, or sitting in the parlor rooms of Iraqi housewives in the westernmost parts of West Amman, new construction glimpsed from the window elicited stories about hidden sources of wealth and secret histories of violence that ranged from the likely to the fabulous: this building went up after the owner returned from Ukraine, that shopping mall is financed by the politician who got his start pushing a vegetable cart and mercilessly climbed his way up to the ranks of high society, or those people adding onto their home discovered a hidden cache of gold left by the retreating Ottomans and guarded by a jinn. My friend Ali, an Iraqi architectural engineer who helps build villas that store and display the wealth of transnational elites in West Amman, once referred to the visible manifestation of violent histories in Amman's built environment quite aptly as *turaakam 'ahdaath*, "an accumulation of events." It was as if these structures disclosed[2] what Marx referred to as "the secret of primitive accumulation", from which "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." (1990, 538) And whether we consider "accumulation" in the more colloquial sense, or take up it up in its technical meaning, the term points to how the flows of wealth and people and the violence through which these flows are set in motion are, in the popular discourses that circulate around new construction, disclosed through transformations in the built environment.

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[2] Following Munn, "I draw on Heidegger's notion of 'disclosure' to emphasize that, as elements of the everyday world, places show themselves forth to people in ways reflecting their nesting in wider place-practices, situations, and understandings as well as a person's specific perspectives of the moment; people then 'bring out' and configure these disclosures through their own formulations which can in turn enter into other understandings and formulations of places and the place-world." (2013, 363)

As these rumors and tall tales correctly intuit, surplus accumulated through violence and invested in real estate development link Amman to the broader "regional war economy." (Moore 2017) And it is through the story of Jordan's integration into the regional war economy that we can understand the Iraqi investors' rise to prominence. Let us begin with the year 2003, when Jordan played host to both a special World Economic Forum at a Dead Sea resort and to American soldiers, advisors and military material bound for Iraq. This moment marks the start of a roughly decade-long period during which the Hashemite Kingdom would pursue a multi-pronged strategy to attract foreign investment, first, and more publicly, by absorbing the wealth circulating through the well-oiled the American war machine and, second, and more covertly, by capturing the spill-over of formerly fixed assets that American had "liberated" in Iraq. The accumulation strategy was, in turn, nested within a larger and more ambitious American project to remake the entire region that, whether it was pursued by war or by diplomacy, aimed to unite Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and, eventually, Iraq under a single planned Middle East Free Trade Area. (Moore 2003; Momani 2007) This ambitious design was, then, equal parts "neoliberal" and "neoconservative", and the processes of the "urbanization of capital" (Harvey 1985) and "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2004) that unfolded in Jordan and in Iraq, respectively, were always mutually interdependent.[3] A strong push towards deregulating markets and encouraging foreign direct investment in Jordan coincided with military and intelligence cooperation between Jordan and the U.S. to fight the War on Terror and conduct the occupation of

[3] Thus, both "neoliberalism" and "neoconservativism" only appear as coherent ideologies after the processes and impulses that animated them had already taken hold in the world. To understand the nature of these animating drives, we must situate the simultaneous pursuit of speculative "neoliberal" profit in one country and the extraction of wealth through direct "neoconservative" physical force in another within an international totality that is not reducible to any of its parts: "a regional war economy." (Moore 2017)

Iraq, while Iraq was reconstructed according to principles of faith-based politics, regressive taxation, and the devolution of state services from universal programs to privately-held initiatives.

As American material, advisors, and lots and lots of cash flowed into Iraq along the Aqaba-Amman-Baghdad supply line, the largest mass displacement of people in the region since the 1948 Palestinian *nakba* (Sassoon 2010) began to flow from Iraq into Jordan, just as Jordan was opening itself up to transformational investments, particularly in the built environment. During this period, members of both the old and new Iraqi ruling classes moved unmeasured but certainly vast amounts of wealth into Jordan's markets for construction and consumption. These mostly urban and affluent arrivals from Iraq were hailed by King Abdullah II as "brothers" and "guests" (Mason, 2011) and were afforded opportunities to acquire legal residency in the Kingdom through investment in real estate and manufacturing, or by simply maintaining 30,000 U.S. dollars of deposits in a Jordanian bank. Top-level Ba'athists, among them members of the immediate family of Saddam Hussein, were the most high-profile and earliest arrivals in Jordan, and rumors and stories of their extravagant lifestyles, along with a public scandal involving the head of Jordan's spy agency selling citizenship papers to the wealthy, helped fuel perceptions of Iraqi affluence. Meanwhile, returning transnational elites and others who found immensely profitable niches in U.S.-occupied Iraq set their wives and children up in villas with allowances for shopping and private education. The correlation between the explosive growth of Jordan's private higher education industry and the arrival of affluent Iraqi families is a good index of this boom phenomenon. In the year 2000, there were, not counting community colleges and teacher training institutes, ten government-accredited private universities in Jordan. (Zughol 2002) By 2017, there were twenty-one. (Mahafzah 2017) Interviewees who attended private universities in Jordan

reported classes full of Iraqi students taught by Iraqi professors, who, unsurprisingly, were receiving much lower salaries than their Jordanian peers.

This rapid transfer of money and people would reshape both real estate and trade in Jordan. Given this chapter's focus on the urban landscape, I will emphasize the former, although most Iraqi investors I met moved their money between manufacturing and real estate through holding companies. "From 2002-05, the value of Iraqi transactions in the Jordanian housing market has doubled each year," write Sassoon (2010), citing a study by Saif & DeBartolo (2007), "rising from about five million Jordanian dinars (JD) to JD 100 million." What was it like for Iraqi migrants to make a living in this wartime boom economy? Ali, the architectural engineer who first described Amman as an urban "accumulation", walked me through how easy it was to draw water at the banks of the flow of capital and concrete in those heady days. The new villas being built for the Iraqi elite would need to be outfitted with golden faucets, marble sinks, imported furniture, and other accoutrements of opulence. Each of these construction components could be supplied through different channels, and at each stage in the process, money would spread to the cousins and contacts who were positioned as designers, suppliers, and contractors. Holding companies and construction firms also found room to employ Iraqis as accountants, secretaries, and site managers, allowing professionals to find employment without a work permit. Manufacturers and traders based in Jordan and those still earning their income within Iraq diversified their assets by building and buying rental properties, which then afforded migrants who could not purchase homes the opportunity to live in affluent neighborhoods while awaiting either a return to Iraq or resettlement abroad, as well as odd jobs as property managers for family members who kept the buildings as absentee landlords. In other words, the rising tide lifted all (sufficiently well-connected) Iraqi boats. This flow of wealth also boosted consumption-oriented businesses like restaurants and cafes

at precisely the moment when Jordan, under the firm hand of international guidance, was promoting the service economy.

This is not the first and only time Iraqis would be associated with affluence. The link between Iraq and opulence is an old one, as attested by the use of "*tabaghdud*" ("Baghdad-ing") to signify sparing no expense on having a good time. And the trope was given further credence during the period of punitive sanctions (1991-2003). During this time, the Iraqi state supplied Jordan with free fuel and offered other lavish gifts, such as scholarships for Jordanians of Palestinian origin to live and study in Baghdad. Those Iraqis who were able to get out of the country tended to be affluent and well-connected, and they freely stocked up on foreign goods while visiting Amman. But as the presence of Iraqi capital in Amman was realized in the visible forms of buildings going up and people going out, the figure of the affluent Iraqi came to remake everyday discourses and practices of spatial orientation among the city's inhabitants. In Amman, locations in the city are referred to not according to their government names, but through references to their prominent features. And this geographic vulgate evidenced an Iraqification of West Amman's then-emerging landscapes of investment and consumption. "In that time," I was told by Om Othman, an Iraqi factory owner who had purchased a newly built apartment in Amman in the early days of her exile, "you could say 'Fallujah' and the taxi driver would take you to Rabiah Circle. You could say 'Baghdad' and he would take you to Al-Gardens Street." These neighborhoods are among the priciest and consumption-oriented in the city. Established restaurants like Hajji Hussein, for kebab, and Al-Mahar, for fish, that had been shuttered due to the Anglo-American occupation were transported to Amman, where they would reopen under the same name, and often with the same chefs, staff and menu. To this day, the arcades that line the broad consumption corridor of Gardens Street (officially called Wasfi Al-Tal Street) are full of

such restaurants, along with Iraqi bakeries, currency exchanges, pharmacies, offices and hotels. Just as Circassian and Palestinian displacements into Amman transformed not only demography but geography as well, the "getting into place" (Chu 2006) of Iraqis in Amman remade the "place-world" (Casey 1993) in both material and cultural terms. Moreover, the conjuncture of an affluent diaspora and a real estate and consumer market eager to absorb foreign capital gave the material manifestation of migration a specifically high-end character. Those landmark sites from Iraq that were reterritorialized in Amman became points of reference for anyone who had to traverse these affluent areas.

This effervescence of construction and consumption disclosed the affluence of the Iraqi migrants in tandem with public discourses that recast the economic downsides to Jordan's dependent position in the international system as the effects of Iraqi migration. Between 2003 and 2006, Jordan experienced a huge increase in the rate of inflation in the consumer price index, from 1.6% to 6.25%. (Saif & DeBartolo 2007, 11) The actual reasons for high prices in Jordan has more to do with the implications of the Jordanian Dinar – U.S. Dollar currency peg on Jordan's balance of trade, but, real causes aside, this increase in the cost of everything from food to gas to rent was blamed in the press on wealthy Iraqis. (12-3) "Virulent attacks on policies allowing masses of Iraqis to come to Jordan" quickly followed from Jordanian politicians and journalists. (Sassoon 2010, 53) This outrage over the perceived cost of hosting affluent Iraqis would be cleverly turned to the advantage of the Jordanian state's efforts to attract foreign capital. Tellingly, where the major Arabic-language daily framed the impact of Iraqi affluence on the Jordanian economy through bold assertions about the Iraqi arrivals' class privilege ("They are not refugees", proclaimed Al-Rai), the English-language Jordan Times asked "Who should compensate Jordan for the massive Iraqi influx?" (both quoted in Sassoon, 185-6) By appealing to the international

community for assistance in managing the costs of this new refugee crisis, new streams of income would become available. Chatelard (2008) argues that "the concept of [the Iraqis in Jordan as a] burden legitimizes the call of host countries for international assistance." (5) By 2007, Jordan was citing the presence of 750,000 Iraqis living in the country (the most generous estimate in 2018 put the number at 180,000) and claiming "that Iraqis cost the country US$ 1.6 billion a year." And, in 2008, the state would receive $58.3 million "in bi-lateral or multilateral aid" for the UNHCR. Most of this money, however, would not reach Iraqi refugees in need:

> "In 2007, 61 percent of the agency's operational budget for Jordan was given directly to the Ministries of Health and Education in addition to direct assistance provided to underprivileged Jordanians alongside Iraqis. For its part, the Ministry of Social Development imposed upon international NGOs operating programs for Iraqis in Jordan that at least 20 percent of their beneficiaries should be poor Jordanians." (6)

By inflating the impact of Iraqi migration on prices for goods and housing, the Jordanian state managed to enjoy both Iraqis' money and the money for Iraqis. Lacking the capacity for "the internal generation of a substantial surplus", the dependent state pursues a strategic orientation to "the vicissitudes of this surplus" as it is generated elsewhere (Amin 1976, 28-29), so that wealth can be distributed to meet the demands of the ruling coalition. (Peters & Moore, 2009) This accumulation strategy is pursued on multiple fronts: It does not matter whether wealth flows through humanitarian, financial or military channels, because in all cases these currents can be diverted towards irrigating one's own back yard. The decision to cast Iraqi migrants as a burden on the Jordanian economy, as much as its decision to shepherd affluent migrants towards a market for investment and consumption, derives from this same structured necessity. And, whether as a brother or a burden, the figure of the Iraqi migrant would become more and more closely associated

not only with affluence in general, but with the specific manifestations of newly arrived affluence in certain neighborhoods of Amman.

What a Boom Leaves Behind

Above, I have tried to show that the figure of the affluent Iraqi investor rose to prominence amid the simultaneous destruction of Iraq and construction of Amman. But in linking Iraqi affluence to a boom moment in the cycle of capitalist accumulation, the preceding discussion cannot explain the perpetuity of this figure beyond the moment in which it arose. When Sassoon completed his account of Iraqi migration in 2007, he cited conversations with Ammani taxi drivers as "a good barometer of the sentiments prevailing on the street. Unfortunately, most of them in Amman are quick to blame the Iraqis for economic problems facing Jordan." (55) In my own experience, taxi drivers who took an interest in my work told me that Iraqi migration was, on the whole, a good thing, because Iraqis had brought money and investments, whereas the Syrians had brought only more unemployed people crowding into an already crowded city. And it was not just taxi drivers who seemed to believe that "all Iraqis are rich", as a Jordanian economist flatly declared to me in an early conversation. Yet by the time I began my fieldwork in 2014, it was clear that the boom period in which the association between Iraqis and affluence had been cemented was already coming to a close. As I accompanied investors, engineers, and architects on their daily rounds of the city, we passed through the facades of affluence on display to the street-level observer, accented with bright red and yellow signs announcing the luxury apartments available within, and into spaces that disclosed a quite different situation. On one of the first of these visits, I ascended the steep streets of Tela'a Al-Ali, one of West Amman's hilltop enclaves, with a businessman who invested his money in what had seemed to be a lucrative market in leasing and selling apartments. The building stood out from among its neighbors through the use of black metallic bars that passed

across the greenish glass windows between each floor, giving each an appearance of horizontal capaciousness and marking the division between each unit clearly even from the outside. Entering, I found that the interior of the ground floor was empty and dark. The Egyptian custodian (*al-haaris*) guided us inward with the flashlight on his cellphone to what would become a lobby, where a potential buyer sat at a plastic table under a single, unfurnished light. The building had been financed, I would learn, on the presumption that the apartments would be sold or rented before the construction was complete. With no customers, there was not enough money to finish the interior. Walking through the darkness, we entered a large room on the ground floor that was filled, wall-to-wall, with porcelain toilets awaiting installation. Subsequent trips to factories and construction sites confirmed the impression that Iraqi business in Jordan was not what it used to be. Factories were either completely inactive and packed with unsold goods or running their production lines for only one order at a time, then closing up until the next order came in. Construction sites were mostly manned by a skeleton crew of foreign labors whose presence vouchsafed that the land would not be seized or repossessed,[4] but where work proceeded at a barely perceptible pace.

Having dated the beginning of this boom period in the regional war economy to 2003, I would venture to mark its end in 2014, when soldiers of the Islamic State crossed from Syria into Iraq's western Al-Anbar governate, which borders Jordan and contains much of the long road between Iraq and Baghdad.[5] According to manufactures and traders, shipping goods overland from

[4] Even in affluent areas where formal title is a matter of record, land claims not backed up by the physical presences of occupants or workers are often contested in Amman. (Hughes 2016, 1086) Iraqi investors and businessowners told me, moreover, that they had little confidence in the Jordanian legal system to defend their rights as property holders, claiming that any challenger to who had relatives placed within the court system would win in a suit or arbitration.
[5] The effects of the 2008 global financial crisis in Jordan were primarily felt in rising oil prices, a decline in the value of the US dollar (and the dollar-pegged Jordanian dinar) and a reduction in "remittances from overseas Jordanians… and foreign grants." (Ahid & Augustine 2012, 82) In the field of construction, Lebanese and Saudi investors in the Abdali Downtown megaproject pulled their money out following the crisis, leaving the glass and steel towers, banks and shopping malls unfinished for the following decade.

Jordan into Iraq became impossible even before Jordan officially closed its border with Iraq the following year. The situation in Anbar was so chaotic that any vehicle sited by any party to the conflict would be fired on right away, rather than being turned back, robbed, or extorted for passage fees as had been the case in the past. The alternative route to Iraq passed through Aqaba, Jordan's sole port, and around the Arabian Peninsula to Basra, a detour that was prohibitively expensive for smaller manufacturers. There was, moreover, no way for these manufacturers to circulate their products in Jordan, because the local distribution networks were intent on shutting out Iraqi business owners. As factories idled, construction companies also suffered. Where the liquidation of the old Iraq had been good for the construction business in Amman, the descent of Syria into civil war and the cross-border incursion of a new and aggressive militia movement called the security of investments in Jordan into doubt among the transnational investor class. A very real fear that Jordan would become destabilized by surrounding conflicts and revolts spooked foreign investors looking to park their money in a safe harbor. "The big investors, the really big ones – I call them the octopi," Ali explained to me, "they've all gone on to Turkey and Lebanon or if they are really rich to Europe." And without all these octopi spreading their wealth around Jordan, there wasn't much reason for those who made their living downstream of the elite to hang around. Ali himself wanted to follow the flow of money to Turkey, where citizenship could be purchased through investments. However, his firm's assets were for the time being tied up in several stalled projects around West Amman. Even after the border reopened to much state-sponsored fanfare in 2017, Iraqi manufacturers confronted prohibitive new taxes and problems with getting their products to the market. Unrealized investments continued to present the appearance of work taking place, but, because the value of these structures rested in the expectation they could be quickly

turned-over, they went from promising assets to regrettable liabilities that tied their owners to Jordan even when migration elsewhere seemed to be a better option.

Meanwhile, a very different sort of Iraqi migrant would begin to arrive in Jordan. In 2014, the Islamic State beginning massacring and expelling members of ethno-religious minority communities in the Iraqi city of Mosul and its surrounding towns and villages. Most fled to Turkey, Syria or territory controlled by Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government, but thousands of families from Northern Iraq began arriving in Amman as well. (UNHCR 2015) These new arrivals would settle in the neighborhoods already populated by less affluent Iraqi and Syrian refugees like North Hashemi and the industrial, largely Palestinian-origin exurb of Zarqa, well to the north and east of the fashionable districts of West Amman. Hashemi is home to many NGO's and Christian charities, drawing families who can afford to pay rent on homes in the area to benefit from the various forms of assistance on offer. Families whom I visited in Zarqa were more desperate, squatting in shells of homes on otherwise empty lots or crowded into makeshift dormitories in a large Catholic Church-owned community hall. However, as I will discuss in more detail below, the arrival of these new migrants would not precipitate any dramatic change to Amman's built environment, and therefore their presence would not fundamentally alter the public image of Iraqis that continued to circulate in the more affluent parts of the city.

The passing away of this boom period reminds us that capitalist accumulation proceeds through "impulses… [that] are rhythmic rather than constant," as investments in the built environment take on durable and impressive forms that outlast the speculative trends that gave rise to them. (Harvey 1985, 17) Understanding capitalist accumulation as a cyclical process allows us to ask how and why impressions formed at one moment in the total process are or are not reshaped by subsequent moments. For if the discourses and practices by which people engage with the urban

landscape are remade in the current of events, why should each new historical moment of displacement not achieve equal prominence? So far, I have assumed "an intimate connection between concrete space and social memory." (Munn 1995, 99) But I have not discussed how this connection between (inside) memory and (outside) space is mediated through practices. These practices have, I would argue, a coherence and stability about them. They are not remade by each subsequent event, but rather integrate the meaning of events within a specific style of sociality. In the next section, I describe an important "everyday practice"[6] through which people in Amman navigate passage through the built environment and manage encounters with the strangers who circulate within it.

"Dealing With" Others

To understand the durability of the claim that "all Iraqis are rich", we can start by recognizing this claim does not stand alone. It is matrixed within a set of categories, assumptions, and techniques through which strangers intuit one another's origins, intentions, and dispositions. Whether I was conducting fieldworks at factories, restaurants and construction sites, or simply trying to manage routine tasks like getting a fair price for a tank of propane gas, I was informed by my interlocuters of a gallery of "human kinds" *(anwaa' an-naas*) who make their appearance in spaces of public and commercial interaction. The capacious Iraqi investor was joined by the too-clever Palestinian trader, the indefatigable Egyptian laborer, the dexterous Syrian craftsman, the self-entitled Jordanian government official, the quick-witted Yemeni machinist, and the arrogant Gulf Arab. I should note at the outset that these shallow impressions of difference rarely held up to probing. Where one construction foreman might confidently declare on site that "I only hire Egyptians for

[6] In invoking this term, I presuppose that "practice" precedes "everyday." That is to say, the everyday is not an unmarked or original state of human being, but "a present relative to a time and place" (DeCerteau 1984, xiii) that, like all senses of the present, is "overtly constructed" through practices. (Munn 1995, 84)

hard jobs, because they are the people who built the pyramids!", another concluded, in a more reflective, one-on-one conversation, "the reason everyone says Egyptians are good workers is that the only Egyptians who come to Jordan are the ones on guest worker visas." But recognizing the superficiality of these national figures of labor and capital should not lead us to dismiss them. In these personas, complex histories of war, displacement, and accumulation settle into a certain kind of trope that, by the very virtue of being incomplete, superficial, and wrong allows people to more readily engage with their tasks and surroundings. As Hacking writes, "what we can do with, and what can be done to us by things of a kind" is why certain ways of organizing phenomena "originated and persist in our interest." (1991, 113) Acknowledging that these kinds are useful for the people who invoke them is not the same thing as saying that they are true. "Consciousness reflects and does not reflect, and what it reflects is not what it seems to reflect, but something else, and that is what analysis must disclose." (Lefebvre 2014, 166) We are interested here in how "everyday life functions within certain appearances which are not so much the products of mystifying ideologies, as contributions to the conditions needed for any mystifying ideology to operate." (185) In what sort of world, under what sort of conditions, and amid what sort of activities, is knowledge of these impressions able to operate as a more or less practical means for navigating the city's landscape?[7]

In the broadest sense, these tropes found their use in engagements characterized by short-term, commercially-oriented "relations in public" between strangers. (Goffman 1972, 187) In local terms, this active orientation to others was referred to as "dealing with." (*ta'ammul*) Like it's English equivalent, *ta'ammul* designates a sociality that is, at its core, oriented towards work and

[7] Posing the question in this way, I am choosing not make the leap from the "public life" of tropes of human kinds to the process of "subjection and subjectification" that are so central to understanding "racialization" as it appears from the West. (Fassin 2011c, 425) Chapter four deals more directly with the question of what these surface-level impressions interact have to do with deeper matters of subjectivity.

exchange – the root of the word being *'amala* or "work." However, this disposition towards other people is not confined to workplaces. The related term "*mu'aamulaat*" includes any sort of interaction between strangers in which parties encountered one another in the course of their tasks, and could be translated as "errands", "dealings" or "transactions." Thus, a businessman or woman's entire day could be taken up with *mu'aamulaat.* Driving from site to site around the city, workers must be exhorted, progress inspected, materials purchased and delivered, forms must be signed and receipts must be paid at government offices, and contacts visited for coffee simply for the sake of staying in touch. Given the variety of encounters that occurred throughout the day, there was no one way in which to orient oneself to others – rather, it was well recognized that each situation and each audience required its own proper attitudes, expectations and even posture and use of language. One does not simply know how to deal with people in general, but rather must be prepared to "deal with all kinds of people." (*ta'ammul wiyya kul anwaa' an-naas*) This capacity for dealing with different kinds was well recognized and valued among Ammanis of different walks of life. Moreover, it was understood that people could be trained in and recognized for acquiring this capacity. So it went for some female interlocuters and I, all of us belonging to a category of people who were assumed to be deficient in our ability to "deal with." A young Iraqi woman who worked at the front desk of a charity that served refugees from many different countries spoke with pride about how she had begun her job not knowing how to "deal with all kinds of people" but had, through repeated encounters with the strangers who entered the establishment, acquired this capacity. A male investor, speaking of one of his employees whom he'd entrusted to take me under her wing for a day, explained, "She knows how to deal with all kinds of people. She's just like a man that way. Whatever kind of treatment that kind of person deserves, she will give it to him." Seeking to keep me out of trouble in my naïve wanderings

through the city, interlocutors advised me on how to read cues of style and comportment: If you see a long beard, you talk about God. If you see a young, unmarried guy, try talking about cars or soccer. And you, being American, will elicit comments about sex, drinking, and Israel. One interlocuter noted that this capacity for dealing with all kinds was not limited to Amman, explaining that a person from Kirkuk, an Iraqi city of many different ethnicities and sects, can "change his kind" to interact with various kinds of people. So concrete and specific was this cultivated orientation to others that it could even be practiced in itself as a kind of game or exercise. "You see that guy over there," said one companion apropos of nothing while playing backgammon at a cafe, "I know he's Qatari. From the way he sits, the way he holds the hose of his water-pipe. Everything. I just know." This interlocutory reflection on a practice evidence its coherence and formality. We might even call this orientation a *habitus*: an embodied engagement that both "express[es] the social structure" and "endows the self with particular capacities through which the subject comes to enact the world." (Mahmood 2005, 139)[8] The superficiality of "dealing with" does not rule out its paramount importance for navigating the landscape of Amman. The perceptual field is shaped by the wider and deeper histories that give rise to it, and yet, as far as everyday conduct in public is concerned, those histories remain, "A riddle no one even wanted to unravel." (Humphrey 1996, 86)

If "knowing how to deal with all kinds of people" is recognized as a way of engaging the world, what does this say about the world in which these engagements proceed? It is a milieu characterized by commercial transactions with strangers. For the affluent bosses, foremen, and homemakers who hired workers and domestics, these reductive tropes were a shorthand for

[8] To place these lines in context, Mahmood is arguing for a distinction between Mauss' emphasis on *habitus* as bodily technique (1973[1934]) and Bourdieu's use of *habitus* as a way of reading and signifying status. (1977) But when life itself is a matter of navigating commercial transactions, the techniques through which people "enact the world" *are also* the ones through which they "express the social structure."

selecting the right people for the job. And the inherent selectivity of hiring made beliefs about a person's innate, nationally-determined capabilities into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Witnessing the hiring process firsthand, then discussing it afterword, I learned that Iraqi bosses did not hire Iraqi laborers (with the very specific exception of rural Christian in certain jobs, as discussed in chapter four). This was because, they explained, the Iraqi will want special treatment and will not be able to follow orders and perform difficult work. And if vanishingly few Iraqis are hired for manual work, there are few exceptions to the expectation that Iraqi's can't do this kind of work! In other contexts, the need to know from kinds was also a way of navigating an environment characterized by profound mistrust of strangers. One contrast that Iraqi migrants of different classes made between life before and after displacement was that no one in Amman knew, or took an interest in knowing, their neighbors. An Iraqi man who had initially fled to Damascus, Syria where he remained for a decade before being displaced for a second time to Amman noted that, "Here, even a 'hello' will cost you money." This commercial orientation is also assumed in most cases to be a combat or competition, in which the Iraq migrant's own awareness of being marked as affluent is projected into the imagined intuition of his or her interlocuter. "As soon as they smell you are Iraq," said one member of the transnational elite who moved between Jordan, Canada and the Emirates, "they will start thinking of ways to cheat you." Speaking of his attempt to sell an apartment to a local family, an investor said "they see us as sacks of money." One middleclass father who was pinching piasters on the household shopping told me that, "I make sure to speak in the Jordanian dialect in front of shopkeepers. That way, they will know I've been in the country for a while and won't overcharge me." This kind of anticipatory intuition about the potential peril of ordinary encounters extends to other practices, particularly driving. Many times, I reflected with interlocuters about how the same kind of attunement to surroundings and feeling of being on guard

against everyone else who is trying to get ahead at your expense is common to both driving and dealing. I once sat stuck in traffic with a businessman behind the wheel. “The people here have no respect for traffic rules,” he said, “Let me show you how a Jordanian would drive.” In an ironic maneuver, he spun his steering wheel and drove his SUV half onto the sidewalk and, with the car tilted at a 30-degree angle, drove to the front of the long line of cars who were waiting to turn from the main road to a side street.

We are now in a position to suggest why the figure of the affluent Iraqi investor outlasted the period in which it arose and obscured other ways of seeing Iraqi migrants in Amman. Above, I argued that, lacking a single point from which to grasp the city as a whole, we should approach Amman through the “spatiality of a situation” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 100) that foregrounds the “particular engagements” (Hannah 2013, 239) in which a perceptual picture of the world emerges. Now, we can extend this engagement to encompass the human environment, where strangers “not really perceived as individuals but as strangers of a certain type.” (Simmel 1908, 148) Merleau-Ponty observes that:

> “To pay attention is not merely further to elucidate pre-existing data, it is to bring about a new articulation of them by taking them as figures. They are performed only as horizons, they constitute in reality new regions in the total world. It is precisely the original structure which they introduce that brings out the identity of the object before and after the act of attention…. Thus attention is…. the active constitution of a new object which makes explicit and articulate what was until then presented as no more than an indeterminate horizon.” (1962, 30)

In speaking of “the active constitute of a new object”, the philosopher did not, I think, have human figures in mind. Nevertheless, there are parallels to be drawn between the figure-making powers of attention as a perceptual relationship to the world that Merleau-Ponty describes and the

capacity to "deal with all kinds of people" that I have gone into here. The canny businessman, the cautious shopper, or the aggressive driver are paying attention—they are alert (*waa'ii*) to their surroundings—and by being so, are actively making figures of difference from that horizon of perception. There is no will nor need to understand people, places and experiences in a complete way, but only to furnish the world with such signposts and signals that are useful for a limited system of practices geared towards getting-by: driving, shopping, hiring, and, as much as possible, avoiding getting ripped-off. Just as a few famous Iraqi restaurants opening up in a neighborhood can lead to that neighborhood being referred to as "Fallujah", so do these figurations of human difference proceed through distillation to metonymy. And because this attunement to others is fundamentally not about the big picture, new developments happening in less visible parts of the city do not enter into this way of seeing others. It is often assumed that material infrastructure has a much more durable and inflexible lifespan than the changeable and adaptive cultural practices that make use of it. But here, it is the system of practices that maintains a conservative force, while the shifting configurations of the concrete totality are being remade too rapidly and in too many places at once to ever fully perceive.[9] The migrant who navigates in this way is oriented to this broader and more fundamental situation of the city as it is being remade through a process of accumulation in a regional war economy. But that orientation is not conterminous with or reducible to these economic determinations, nor is it even interested in such an exhaustive totalization. In this, the first part of the chapter, I have drawn on mix of sources, conversations and experiences

[9] This comment leads me to question the value of De Certeau's oft-cited distinction between "strategy" and "tactics." (1988) Plenty of others have pointed out De Certeau's romantic inclination that tactics are the exclusive preserve of the weak, but my own concern is more fundamental. De Certeau developed this distinction through an extended analogy to "walking in the city", in which the walker is adaptable, agile and able to operate in the short-term, while the city is reduced to a static materialization of a plan. This is a metaphor that misrecognizes the nature of its source. By rejecting the idea that cities are the determined output of expert knowledge, and more carefully accounting for the city as a repository of capital's valorization, the image of an "accumulation of events" leads us to see how certain "tactical" ways of navigating that city can be as staid and hierarchizing as any discoursed "strategy."

to suggest this possibility in a very general and hypothetical way. It remains to be seen how an emphasis on the way that people orient themselves within a fragmented landscape can offer insight into a specific case. This is the task of the second part of the chapter.

The Landscape of Politics

In a large auditorium on the third floor of Le Royal, a five-star hotel and conference center in Amman, four officials from the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission [IHEC] address an audience of journalists, election workers, and members of the public. The day is May 7th, 2018, three days before the opening of a two-day voting period for Iraqi nationals in Jordan on May 10th and 11th. Facing us from the raised platform of a stage where I had once seen a performance of Sumerian poetry given for Amman's Iraqi cultural elite, the General Director of external voting for IHEC ran a handkerchief across his shiny, bald forehead as an attendant passed a microphone to a man in the audience. The questioner stood, revealing himself to be a large figure in a boxy blue suit, with deep, sagging eyes and a trim white beard. This man introduced himself as "a member of the Sabean religious minority." He asked why, if "the majority of Iraqis" are living in the more working-class neighborhoods of North Marka and North Hashemi, was there only one polling stations in each of those areas, while there were several distributed through the affluent quarters of West Amman. The Director began to speak vaguely of "measures" that had been taken to assure that polling stations would be placed where the greatest numbers of Iraqis lived and "difficulties" encountered in getting an accurate count.

Questions on the topic continued to come, now from a group of questioners who identified themselves as Iraqi Christians. The Director's face reddened, and he half stood up from his seat, pressing his bulk down into his palms that rested heavy on the white table cloth. "The survey to decide the locations of the polling stations was the responsibility of the Iraqi embassy in Jordan,"

he declared confidently. And if the survey was inaccurate, he went on, it was not the IHEC that had erred. He insisted that this was not a matter of sectarian prejudice, for, he indicated, there was a Christian among the officials on stage and more among the staff who would be monitoring voting at the polling stations. The crowd continued to murmur among themselves, and I wondered why I, who had been conducting fieldwork with Iraqis in Amman for nearly two years, had never heard of such a survey taking place. “Besides,” the Director announced, “we can’t go knocking from door to door asking, ‘Are there Iraqis here?’” He then stood and apologized that he would have to end the forum, announcing that another elections official was soon due to arrive at the airport, and he would need to meet him there.

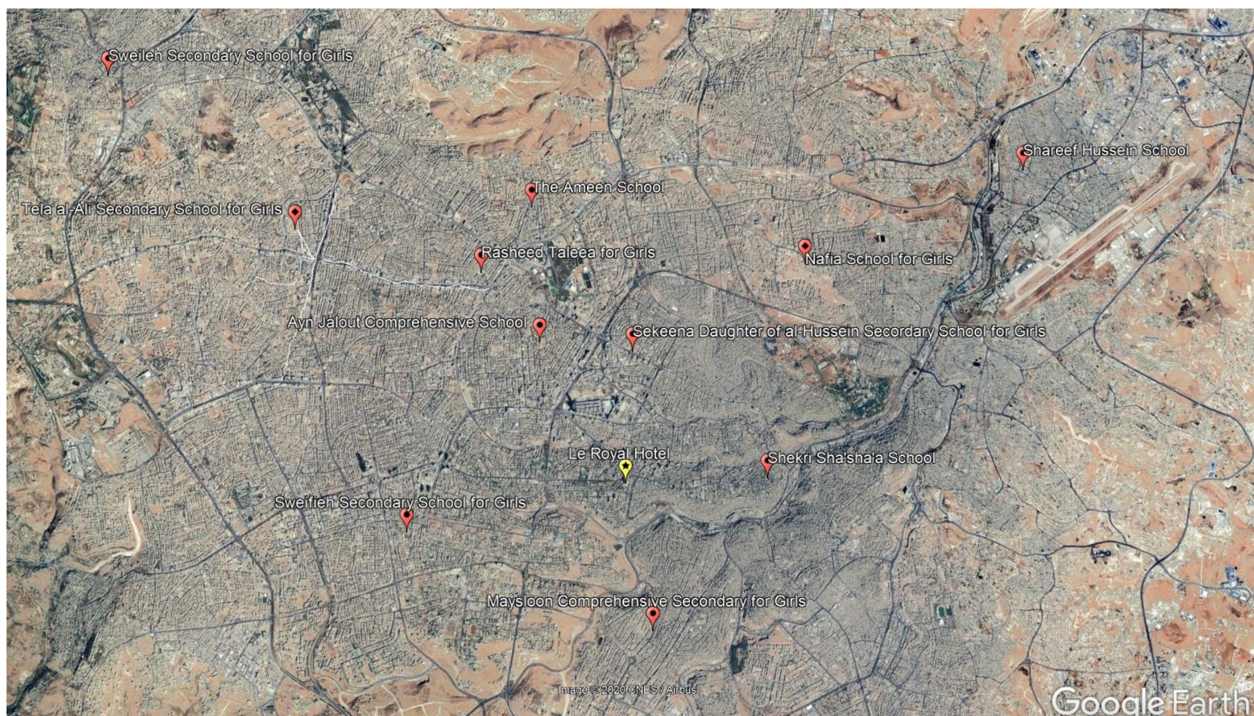

Figure 1: A satellite image of Amman shows the locations of the polling stations and Le Royal Hotel. [Image copyright: CNES/Airbus, 2020, reproduced in accordance with Fair Use for educational purposes that do not adversely affect the commercial value of the original image.]

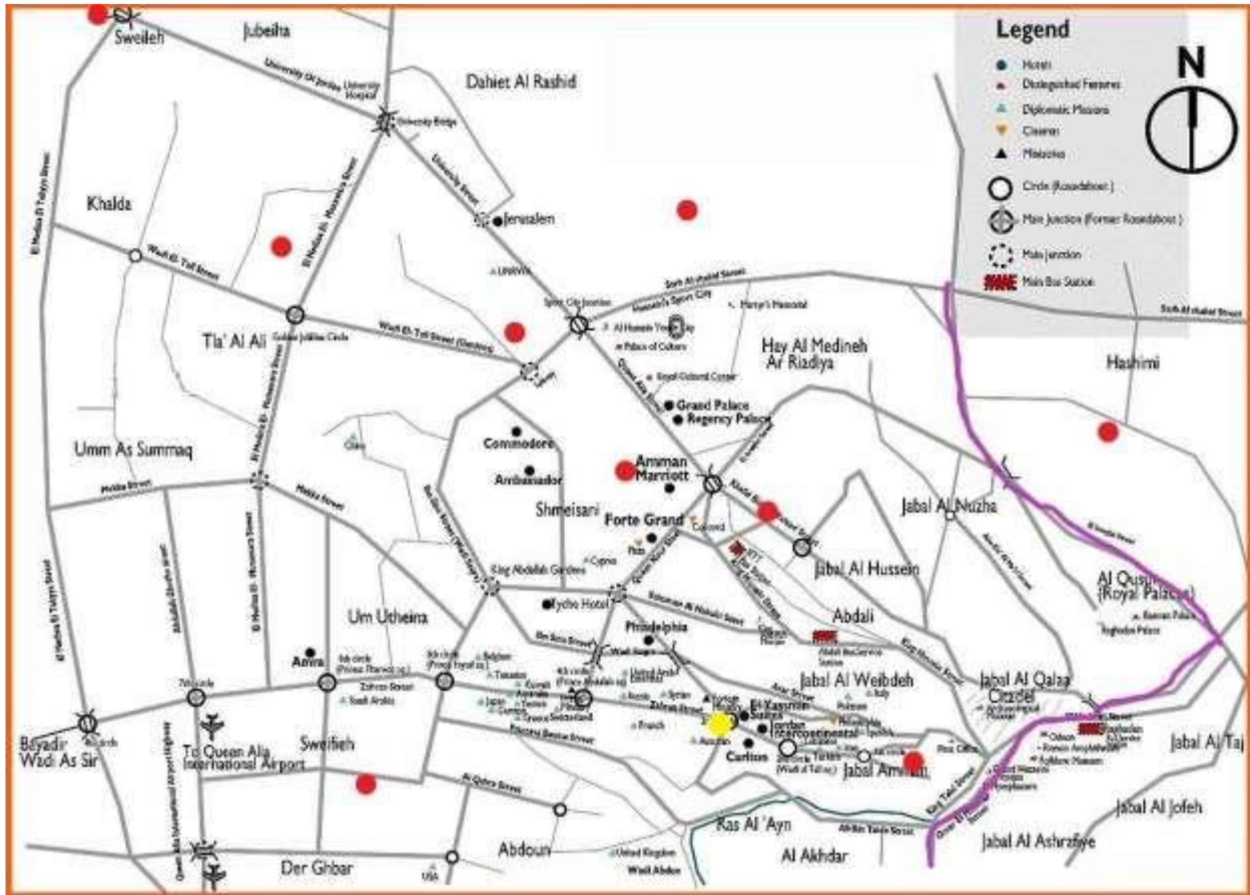

Figure 2: A tourist map of the kind offered by car rental companies in Amman, marked up by the author to show polling stations in red, the location of Le Royal in gold and a rough boundary of the East-West divide in purple. [Uncopyrighted image accessed at maps-amman.com].

The next day, two days before voting would begin, I managed to follow-up with the Director in his temporary office in an upper floor of Le Royal Hotel. I had come with Abdelhadi, a key informant and friend who had aced his public examination to earn a spot as a supervisor for a polling station. Abdelhadi and I were seated in the kind of cushioned metal chairs that are nice enough to use for wedding guests or lecture attendees, but built to be stacked up and stored when

unneeded. Across from us, the Director sat behind an immense wooden desk and, to my right, a fourth, unidentified man, wearing a green windowpane-patterned suit and carrying a walking stick of lacquered bamboo, was seated on a small couch. The Director bade me to wait to begin the interview until after a secretary had arrived with a brass tray bearing small glasses of tea, each one giving off a white whorl of steam. Once I was permitted to begin, I asked the Director about the survey he'd mentioned the day before, noting that my scientific research into Amman's Iraqi communities would benefit from such a trove of demographic data. "No survey has been conducted," the Director replied. "Well, the survey from the embassy, the one you mentioned at the press conference," I went on. "The was a survey conducted, yes," the Director replied, "But it is impossible for any survey to be precise."

"So, if the survey was imprecise, how could you anticipate the turnout of voters in different locations?"

"It is not wise to try to anticipate things. God-willing, the whole Iraqi community of Amman will vote in the elections. And we have anticipated the turnout at 90,000 people."

"And how can you estimate the turnout so precisely if the survey is not accurate?"

As the Director grew visibly impatient with this line of questioning, I decided that I would have to ask elsewhere about this mysterious survey that seemed to shift from inaccuracy to precision and back to non-existence at every turn in the conversation. Instead, I asked the Director why the IHEC had selected Le Royal Hotel for their headquarters. Before he answered, the man in the windowpane suit, who had been sitting in silence on a large, upholstered couch that looked like it had been brough in just for him, leaned forward on his walking stick. "Le Royal is at the center of Amman, here at the Third Traffic Circle," he explained, "it is halfway between the eastern

and western halves of the city.” This east-west divide forms the central axis of the local geographic imagination, and divides the denser, older, and poorer half of the city from the sprawling stretch of shopping malls, hotels, government offices, villas, and embassies that continues to spread westward. Perhaps sensing that this geographic claim would re-open the matter of the polling places, which were overwhelming located to the west, the man in the windowpane suit followed this remark with another. “Le Royal is also a very important symbol for the Iraqi community in Jordan” he explained, “Don’t you know, the building was built to resemble the spiral minaret of Samarra, al-Malwiyya?” Indeed, I had attended several events celebrating Iraqi arts and culture at Le Royal, and the building itself, from its general shape to its interior décor, was full of references to icons of Iraqi cultural heritage done up in gold leaf and marble –Mesopotamian kitsch by way of Las Vegas. At these events, the same halls that were being used for public fora and trainings on the elections had been filled with guests in velvet-trimmed suits and sequined evening gowns, and television journalists who kept their cameras turned to the audience, seeking famous faces in the crowd. We started talking about the events we’d attended at Le Royal when the Director put down his half-finished glass of tea and told me he would need to return to his business, dismissing us. I never did find any evidence the survey he had alluded to had taken place. When I took the matter up with the embassy, I was directed to the IHEC and, when I spoke to other IHEC officials, I was directed to the embassy. By the end of the month, the Iraqi Council of Representatives had passed a resolution nullifying all the votes from the external elections, citing widespread irregularities and fraud.

***

In this section, I show how an orientation to the surface-level manifestations of hidden and remote political, economic, and historical events impacted the way that Amman’s Iraqis constituted a

“represented [national] community” (Kelly & Kaplan 2001) during the 2018 vote. “Basic political relationships” writes Kelly, “determine who counts, who is counted, and who is accounted to.” (2006 157) But what sort of politics is in play when an agent and representative of the state like the General Director declares, at a public gathering no less, that he “cannot go around knocking from door to door”? Elections, even fraudulent ones, are a kind of “exemplary event” that “exposes the lived experience of politics” in a particular place and time. (Wedeen 2003, 681) And the misdirection over the existence of a mysterious survey, along with the accusations of corruption that lead to the nullification of votes cast outside of Iraq, exemplifies the experience of the political among Iraqi migrants in Jordan. “*As-siyasa bahar*” – “Politics is a sea” –a companion once told me. This apt description conjures the image of a surface on which we witness waves driven from the depths by unseen currents. It is an image that accords with the previous section’s description of distinct events (*ahdaath*) of war and dispossession taking place beyond Jordan’s borders that are disclosed in the material accumulation (*turaakum*) of Amman’s built environment. After all, these depths are not only unseen, but hazardous to enter. “*As-siyasa ilha rijaalha*” – “politics has its own men” – another saying went, a reminder that we must content ourselves with steering a course across that surface, foregoing the danger of submersion. As much as, if not more than in Amman, “seeing the political” in Baghdad means seeing the changes in the urban landscape that evidence the workings of a hidden, dangerous, subsurface realm as they become manifest in shopping malls, housing, hotels, mosques, and roads. (Sirri 2020) Of course, Jordan and Iraq are far from alone in this respect. And when the “close encounter” with the state proves “deceptive”, we should begin to strategize around “new spaces” in which to locate the “materiality” of the political. (Trouillot 2001, 127) It is here that foregrounding partial impressions, everyday navigations and the built environment can prove useful.

Le Royal's Prominence in the Topography of Affluence

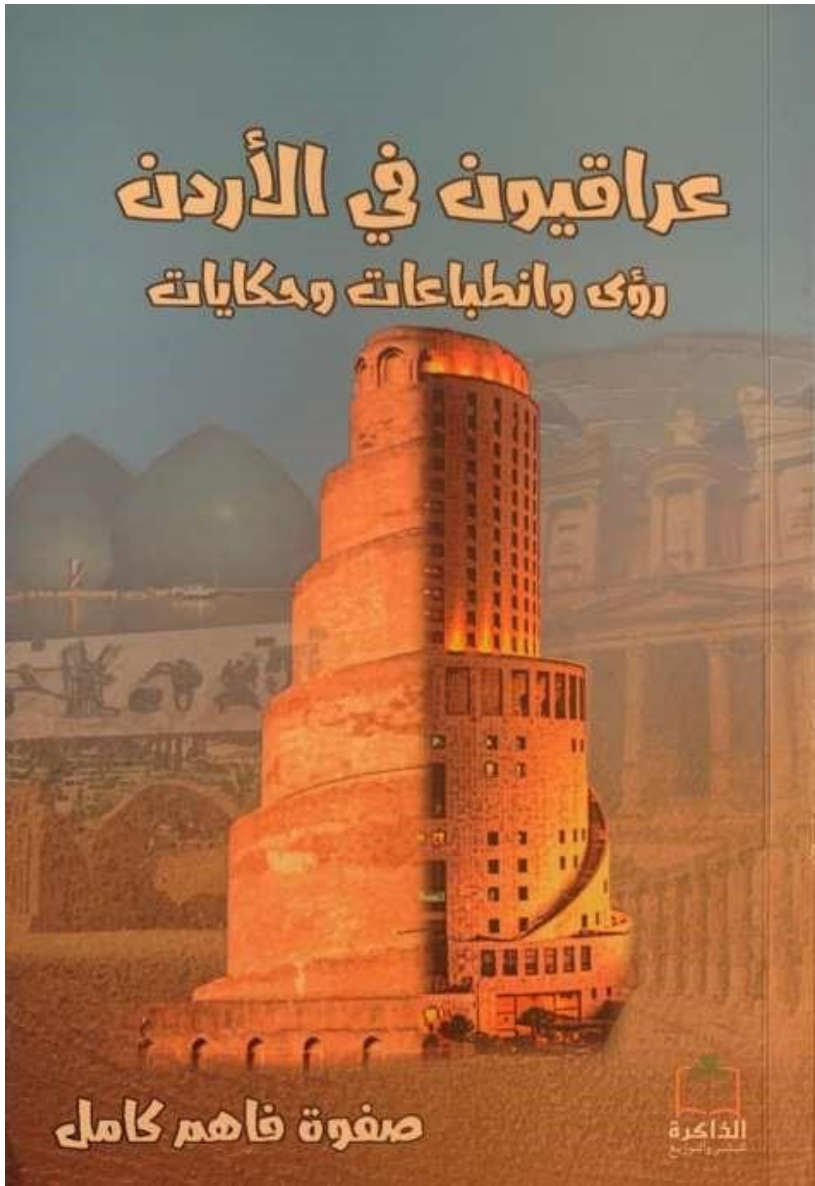

Figure 3: Le Royal merges with *al-malwiyya*, flanked by iconic monuments of Iraqi and Jordanian cultural heritage on the cover of *Iraqis in Jordan: Visions, Impressions, and Stories* by Safwat Fahim Kamil. [Book cover image by Hani Safwat Fahim].

In selecting Le Royal Hotel for its headquarters, the IHEC sent a message about what counts when it comes to representing Iraqis in Jordan. Recall the words of the man in the green windowpane

suit, who described Le Royal as the geographic and symbolic center of Amman's Iraqi community. Election officials and temporary staff repeated this claim in subsequent conversations, and beyond the time and place of the elections, the Iraqi-ness of Le Royal was unquestionably affirmed among interlocuters. Le Royal communicated its Iraqi-ness in an overtly symbolic manner. Everyone knew that Le Royal's towering form was constructed to resemble the iconic spiral minaret called *al-malwiyya*, which is located next to the Great Mosque of Samarra. This monumental site for worship, in its time the "largest known in the Islamic world" (Grabar, et al. 2001, 30) was constructed in 836 A.D. (221 hejri) at the command of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim at the site of his new capital, about 100 kilometers up the Tigris river from what is now Baghdad. The distinctive spiral minaret has been reproduced on banknotes, textbooks, postcards and other contemporary tokens of national identity. There is, however, a deeper kinship between Le Royal and Iraq's great monuments, in light of which such postcard-worthy reproductions are like so many shadows cast by the solid object, only hinting in silhouette at its prominence. Attend to the precipitous walkway that spirals up the outer edge of *al-malwiyya*'s red-brown tower. The walkway elegantly reconciles the appearance of sperate levels stacked one atop the other with the continuity of a single path along which the prayer-caller would ascend skywards. This solicitation towards an "ineffably embodied practice of ascending" (Wylie 2002, 445) beckons the viewer to participate its spiraling form, and it is this invitation to involving the body in space that has made climbing *al-malwiyya* such a popular activity for tourists and pilgrims into the 21st century.[10] The impressive effect of monumentality is itself a hallmark of Mesopotamian architecture. The first-millennium B.C. Neo-Assyrian capital of Khorsabad, for example, would have impressed the

[10] In 2005, an unidentified armed group set off a bomb from on top of *al-malwiyya*, collapsing the upper levels of the tower. This attack presaged escalations to come in a deadly battle among Iraqi militias and their international backers over the identity of places, including the subsequent 2006 and 2007 bombings on the sacred tombs of Shi'a Imams on the grounds of the Great Mosque, adjacent to *al-malwiyya*.

visitor with an absorbing sensory "landscape" achieved through "the effects of height, depths and mass" that "were clearly embraced by the artists and engineers of the city." (McMahon 2013, 165) And the 1983 Martyr's Monument in Baghdad that honors soldiers killed in the Iran-Iraq War likewise achieves a monumental effect through the artful arrangement of mass and its absence "to create space for reflection on the meaning of death" (Khoury 2013, 219) in a manner that exceeded the discursive content of the propagandizing that surrounded its construction. (225) This, to be sure, is a cursory survey of an architectural tradition. I only want to emphasize that monumental architecture achieves its effect by imposing itself within people's perceptions and activities. It is an artform that organizes landscape around itself, and that, in so doing, asserts its designers' presence and influence. Now, let us consider how embodied encounters with Le Royal itself precipitate particular effects through the encounter with its architectural logic.

If you stand in the third major traffic circle on Al-Zahran Street, Le Royal is right on top of you. In fact, the hotel was constructed in violation of municipal regulations mandating the distance a high-rise building must be set back from the street. It was only completed after the builders paid a $1.5 million fine to the Greater Amman Municipality and obtained the personal intercession of the Prime Minister to permit construction. (Abu-Ghazala 2006, 150, 156) And although its origins predate the wartime boom period in construction described above, Le Royal, which opened in 2002, exemplifies the "localized perpetuity" (Munn 2013, 364) of events that accumulate in Amman's landscape. The building was financed by Nameer and Nadhmi Auchi, two businessman brothers who, so it is rumored, were given large sums of money by Saddam Hussein to purchase weapons in Jordan during the 1990's period of sanctions on Iraq. Instead, the Auchis invested the money in their grand hotel. Presumably because of this betrayal, Nameer

Auchi was murdered in Amman in 1998, while Nadhmi now lives in London as the billionaire chairman of an international holding company.

To return to the physical structure, although Le Royal overwhelms the space around it, it does not offer any obvious point of entry. One must look to a sloping, bow-shaped driveway that ascends at a sharp angle that discourages arriving on foot. This driveway leads to the true entrance to the hotel, a set of glass revolving doors, where guards in grey suits operate a metal detector of the kind you'd find at an airport and pat visitors down. This is a common practice in Amman's hotels and shopping malls, but, while waiting to pass through this security check, you might turn to look behind and confront an uncommon decorative flourish. Across the driveway, on another partial wall that screens the entrance, is a relief of a gold-leaf lamassu, the legendary Mesopotamian creature with a man's head, a bull's body, and long, angelic wings. Beneath the lamassu, valets line up with their hands folded at their waist to park the Mercedes that bring businessmen, politicians, celebrities, ambassadors, and wedding guests into the hotel. Entering the glass doors, you pass through a reception area decorated with more Mesopotamian motifs set in gold glitz and green marble. To the left, one can take elevators to access the lower floors, where the IHEC held its press conferences in high-ceilinged ballrooms. Continuing inward, you enter a large atrium lobby that repeats the oval shape of the building itself. Where, from the outside, Le Royal presents an impenetrable façade, it is here, from its center, that the evocative invitation to ascend its heights presents itself in full view. Staring upwards from the very center of the lobby, where a well-dressed man plays a grand piano on a raised dais surrounded by guests who languor in pairs on soft couches or sit deep in upholstered chairs tapping busily on their laptops, you can see straight through to the upper reaches of the hotel, ringed by a series of ovoid balconies. In these

upper reaches are the conference rooms and auditoriums where the IHEC held its trainings for temporary elections employees and public fora.

Figure 4: Le Royal's golden lamassu watches over a BMW sedan and a diplomat's SUV. [Photo by the author].

As a work of monumental architecture, Le Royal inverts the relationship between interiority and appearance offered by *al-malwiyya*. While the exterior of the structure is visible all

over the city, the invitation to ascend is not extended to external viewers. Imposing on the outside and opulent within, the building structures a passage from seen to unseen that can be experienced as a passage from pedestrian life to elite enclosure. Writing on the glamourous Abdali Boulevard, which is not far from Le Royal, Schwedler describes its glass-and-steel towers and new shopping mall as spaces of "aspiration" for Amman's residents. (2010) Similarly, Le Royal's opulent interior, hidden from ordinary view, but on full display for those who can enter the structure, afforded an aspirational space for the mostly young and well-off men and women who had decided to serve as temporary staff for the elections. My interlocuter, Abdelhadi, made no attempt to hide his giddiness about this fact as we leaned on the railing that wraps around one of the upper balconies. "You see all these young people here," he told me, indicating all the other 20 and 30-something temporary employees who, like him, were being trained to help administer the elections, "We couldn't imagine coming here to Le Royal to socialize. We see photos of people going to the bar on the top floor on Instagram, but it's much too expensive for us." Smiling broadly, he leaned his elbows on the balustrade and gazed down into the atrium, a pose that recalled the way one might stand while idling in a big shopping mall. "All this is really something!" Indeed, being at Le Royal in the time of the elections gave a sense of proximity to that secret world of power and money. Attending events in these upper and lower rooms, I noticed that the front row was always reserved for the same familiar figures: the Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan, her Vice Consul, and the President and the CEO of the Iraqi Business Council [IBC].[11] These same faces that were always

[11] Interviewing the CEO of the IBC at their offices, I was told that the organization advocates for Iraqi interests in Jordan at the Royal Court, and also promotes Iraqi culture in Jordan through sponsoring scholarships in architecture, lectures on cultural heritage, and art exhibitions. According to one informant who had been a member, the main reason for joining the IBC was that, until recently, they offered an arrangement with the French government to secure Schengen visas for members who would like to visit Europe, itself a perk secured by the Council's acting as a go-between for French companies seeking contracts inside Iraqi. I was not able to take this rumor up with the CEO of the IBC, because she refused to grant me a second meeting. However, I did obtain a dated copy of the IBC's annual report to members, which featured a notice on membership benefits that describes the Schengen visa as the main perk of membership. For more on travel documents, see chapter 2.

showing up at charitable events, antiques auctions, lecture series and book debuts were found at press conferences and public fora throughout the run-up to the elections. From this viewpoint, the elections appeared not as a collective coming together of the population as a whole, but as one in a series of fancy gatherings in which the very rich assembled themselves into their little *gemeinschaften* of charities, lectures, auctions, parties, salons, and the like. These events constituted the highest echelons of Iraqi Amman as a distinct and public-facing status group. Admitting the aspirant to its interior, Le Royal offers a glimpse to see and be seen as part of this small and busy society.

Figure 5: The IHEC announces itself in the lobby of Le Royal, flanked by English-language banners for a charity event supporting athletic activities for refugee children on the one side and an advertisement for the opening of a luxurious cocktail lounge on the other, along with the obligatory portraits of Jordan's king, his late father, and the crown prince. [Photo by the author].

The interior of Le Royal selectively admitted few witnesses to its opulence, but the building's exterior signaled its monumental presence across the city. Amman's topography is jagged and varied. Wider, commercial streets run between steep hills that are lined with houses and topped with smaller commercial circles or, in the case of some of the wealthiest areas, exclusive and commanding villas. Navigating these parts of Amman is usually done by car, whether one's own or in a shared taxi or minibus, not only because of the many steep ascents between one place and the next, but also because the narrow pedestrian sidewalks are often interrupted by storefronts that open directly onto the street, or trees that have been planted by homeowners to obscure their homes. Ascending and descending Amman's hills, different parts of the city present themselves to the traveler. It is difficult to get a sense of the whole, and several prominent landmarks that are visible from different summits act as a visual bridge for organizing position and distance among them. For those who traverse the city's western neighborhoods, Le Royal is one such landmark site. In the daytime, the buildings soars before drivers ascending Jabal Amman along Zahran Street, marking the terminus of a path flanked on either side by a royal procession of increasingly opulent hotels. One can pass through the traffic circle at which Le Royal is located by means of a series of bypasses that facilitate movement across Amman's affluent Western neighborhoods. (Parker 2009) From this point, Al-Zahran continues due west, past the commercial district of Sweifieh, where I conducted the fieldwork on the everyday consumption practices discussed in chapter three. Directly behind Le Royal is the Al-Khalidi hospital area, a whole district dedicated to Jordan's lucrative medical tourism sector. Turning off Zahran from Le Royal to the northwest will bring the driver to the Abdali Interchange, which is located in between the hotels, offices and arts center at Shmeisani and the newer, glitzier Abdali Boulevard that has eclipsed that once-hyped development. I recall an evening when a friend and I got lost driving

along the narrow, one-way streets of the eastern part of the city, only to catch a glimpse of Le Royal as a luminous beacon from atop another hill, guiding us back west to wider, more prosperous avenues. Unlike many other prominent buildings, which fall beneath the rise of other hills, Le Royal provides an anchoring point for drivers as they proceed in "crossing and recrossing the surface of the land" and "sighting and resighting from one landmark to another." (Malpas 1999, 41)

Figure 6: Le Royal lit-up red for Valentine's Day. [Photo by the author].

Having situated Le Royal's place of prominence in Amman's landscape of affluence, we can now consider the political possibilities engendered by this material arrangement. From both inside and out, Le Royal's monumental significance towers at the juncture of intention and its object, where the sensing, active body brings forth meaning through its engagement with the world. As we have already described, these engagements create impressions and figures that are always situational, and never the same to all people at all times. Le Royal, like other material and human aspects of the landscape, obtains its significance in the landscape in relation to an embodied "practical system."[12] Such a consistent and coherent "system of practices" (De Certeau, 1984) is, importantly, limited in its membership. The claim that this building is centrally located in Amman misleads us down the paths most frequently traveled by some parts of Iraqi society and not others. Traveling to Le Royal from North Hashemi, the neighborhood where I conducted fieldwork with Iraqi Christian refugees who arrived in Jordan after 2014, is made difficult by the need to circumvent the grounds given over to the Jordanian Hashemite Court. Taking the road south, which runs along the eastern side of the Court compound, will force you to eventually turn west into the narrow streets of al-balad, the old city. Taking the long way, to the west, and you will have to approach Zahran from the north, passing through the notoriously congested Ministry of the Interior traffic circle. All this assumes that you either have a car or can pay for a taxi. If not, you must take a long uphill walk to Naqawa circle, at the entrance to Al-Hashemi, and then take a bus that must pass either through the old downtown or the Interior circle. Given these geographic realities, it is not surprising that every person I met while attending trainings at the hotel hailed from the more wealthy, western side of the city. Nor should we wonder why these trainees claimed that nearly all

[12] "If bodily space and external space form a practical system, the first being the background against which the object as the goal of our action may stand out or the void in front of which it may *come to light,* it is clearly in action that the spatiality of our body is brought into being, and an analysis of one's own movement should enable us to arrive at a better understanding of it."(Merleau-Ponty 1962, 102)

Iraqis live on the west side of the city, and did not believe that any more polling stations were needed in the eastern part of town.

Le Royal's size, location, and historical and present association with Iraq's transnational elite make it an iconic landmark for Iraqi West Amman, and its visibility would come at the expense of other possible ways of seeing Iraqi migration in the city. Above, I asked why, if people's impression of a national group arise in relation to material transformations brought about by historical events, do all subsequent events not transform this impression? A major factor in the perpetuity of national personas is that these tropes are tied to practices that were largely unconcerned with achieving complete knowledge of other people, but merely picked up on those signals that were most crucial to "dealing with" difference in the course of day-to-day life. Therefore, not all events of displacement influence public perceptions of national groups in the same way. Still, one more question remains: what is it that makes some peoples' displacement more visible than others'? The answer becomes clear when we contrast the situation of more recent Iraqi arrivals to Amman with their compatriots. Allow me to summarize a few observations from fieldwork with Christian families living in Al-Hashemi and Zarqa. First, even those families who were had been well-off back in Iraq had had their assets in fixed, material forms, such as big duplex houses, factories, farms and caches of wedding gold. All of these assets were vulnerable to destruction or seizure by the Islamic State. None were so liquid that they could be put into fueling a boom in construction and real estate. Second, life being expensive in Jordan, what little these families possessed had to be spent conservatively. These new arrivals would not join their compatriots in the habits of consumption that had made the previous wave of Iraqi arrivals so conspicuous. Some would, however, take on jobs in restaurant kitchens and hotels, the topic of the fourth chapter. Third, Iraqis fleeing the Islamic State would, in the public eye, be lumped together

with the many other refugees of different nationalities from that conflict. The charitable organizations that provided places for these new arrivals to manifest their presence in public did not do so on the basis of a common nationality. When Christian Iraqis living in Al-Hashemi made an appearance at Le Royal Hotel, for example, they did so alongside refugees from Syria and Yemen as part of a charity sale of handicrafts. Unlike the elections, the charity event was not even pretending to be a nation-wide coming together, but rather one in which the wealthy demonstrated their good will towards the undiscriminated mass of the poor. Fourth, anxieties about religious persecution at the hands of their new neighbors in Jordan lead these new arrivals to take care with their own visibility in the city.[13] The church where refugees from northern Iraq gathered to worship in Hashemi is hard to notice from the exterior street. Its grounds are completely surrounded by a high white wall, and the embossed image of an equal-armed cross on the door to this compound is barely visible to passers-by. In Zarqa, the wall that surrounds the church compound is far more conspicuous, but also more intimidating. And fifth, the architecture and topography of residences in these areas did not readily afford glances of itself in the same way as construction in West Amman did. Homes in Hashemi are mostly set off downhill from the main commercial strip, tucked away down staircases or in basements. As in Zarqa's makeshift church dormitory, multiple families sometimes gathering in a single home, particularly more recent arrivals taking shelter with relatives who had already rented places for themselves. Each of these factors contributed to the fact that this latest set of arrivals did not achieve the kind of impressive effect on Amman's landscape of politics that the previous wave of displacement had.

Displacement in the Time of Landscape

[13] Similarly, my initial impression that there were few Iraqi Shia in Amman was quickly replaced by the realization that vanishingly few Shia would ever publicize their own religious identity, out of fear of the hatred that many in Jordan hold towards them.

In the second part of this chapter, we have seen how a particular and partial way of viewing the urban landscape of Amman made some parts of the city's Iraqi community more visible than others. Locating the uneven distribution of polling spaces within the materiality of the urban landscape offers a way to see politics as the concrete manifestation of hidden processes of accumulation through dispossession. But this point of view can itself be deceiving. Only those populations who can make their presence felt are fully counted in the place-world of those empowered to represent the community as a whole. What counted when it came to representing Iraqis as a national community in Amman was wealth or, to be more specific, wealth as it was embodied through a group's relationship to prominent features of Amman's urban landscape. This observation allows us to connect the "spatiotemporalizing practices" of affluent Iraqis to a "politics of landscape" in which not all viewpoints are equal. My argument is not that the IHEC decision to place the polling stations where they were was entirely motivated by impressions about Amman's Iraqi demography that were held by its staff and volunteers. The reality may well be much more complicated, for it surely involved pay-offs between Iraq and Jordan for the rental of schools where the voting took place, along with what now appears to be a coordinated effort by the major Kurdish and pro-Iranian political blocs to run proxy candidates in areas of northern Iraq depolluted by the Islamic State while disenfranchising the members of religious minorities displaced form these areas. (Hanna & Joseph 2018, 81-82) But even if we never get to the bottom of those currents that swirl in the depths of the sea, we can identify the precise mechanisms through which the unequal distribution of political space in Amman informed the taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the national community held by the people planning and conducting the elections. This is what it means to see the political in urban space.

This chapter has been largely concerned with spatial orientations, but I have also pointed to how the duration of developments that begin with changes in the landscape outlasts transformations in the population that moves within that landscape. Describing the temporalization of a political landscape in this way speaks to a long-standing conversation on the nation as it is "imagined" in the discursive realm of "homogeneous time" (Anderson 2006) and the "multiple temporalities" through which the nation-state is experienced by its citizens through its concrete manifestations. (Asad 2003, 5) Drawing on a phenomenological spatiality of the situation, we come to understand that "the presence of the past in the present" is not located within a "system of cognition" (Bloch 1977, 287) – whether we imagine that systemic rationality as ideological, cultural or governmental – but instead resides in a system of practices that engages with and creates material traces of human activity. (Binford 1980, 5) These traces manifest events that take place at a remove from the immediate perceptual field, but which, because they are linked to everyday life in Amman through the city's integration in an economy of war and displacement, form "parts of a single social field." (Gluckman 1963, 215) This overlap of the perceptual and the social field is a historically specific occurrence. It can be the case only because the built environment embodies value as a commodity: It is both a store of quantified value circulating in an economic system and a sensuous object bearing qualities that make affordance to practices. The double nature of the commodity form is what puts it on the boundary between the everyday experience of displacement and the broader currents of accumulation that produce it as a condition. What has already become apparent in this chapter is that different groups have different relationships to these properties, and therefore live the times of displacement in uneven ways. The next chapter will work out these terms by investigating the identity documents through which Iraqi migrants acquire the right to live, work and move in Jordan and beyond. These titles to mobility are a very different sort of

thing than the built environment, and are less a repository of past events then a sign of future potentials. But, like the built environment, they are stores of value that mediates the relationship between the everyday and the eventful that is so central to life in displacement.

Chapter 2

Portentous Statuses: Titles to Mobility and the Fragmenting of an Iraqi Future

"Oh, father of goodness, you flood your neighbors with good things [khayraat*]*

While your children are pitiable and poor [masaakiin]."

– Hussam al-Rasm*, helaawa wa tayyib*

Set among the hotels, restaurants, and high-end apartment buildings of West Amman are scores of pharmacies. In these airconditioned, fluorescent-lit shops, pharmacists diagnose all kinds of ailments and prescribe anything from antibiotics to antidepressants. During the day, many pharmacies are staffed by young women of Jordanian or Palestinian origin. This is because the local male pharmacists prefer to work in the more lucrative and prestigious back-offices that handle distribution for international suppliers. But at night you are likely to find an Iraqi man behind the counter. Iraqis are, by and large, denied membership in the Jordanian Syndicate of Pharmacists, and, lacking work permits, would face fines, arrest, or even deportation if inspectors from the Ministry of Labor or the Syndicate discovered them. But the Ministry and the Syndicate rarely send inspectors after the day shift has ended. The Iraqi pharmacist has little recourse to complain about the fact that he is paid half as much as his local peers, and he accepts the less desirable night shifts as a matter of course. The Iraqi medical education is held in high regard in Jordan and beyond and yet, in these jobs, this qualification cannot be transformed into a

satisfactory income. At once lettered professionals and exploited workers, Iraqi pharmacists inhabit a gray zone between the affluent émigré investor, whose financial capital is welcomed in the Kingdom, and the migrant manual worker, whose lack of legal protections force him to sell his labor at the lowest possible rate. But this condition is not permanent. Everyone knows their money will run out sooner or later, and everyone hopes they will have resettled to the West before that happens.

Such was the case for Musa, a Baghdadi pharmacist who came to Amman after his father was killed in a suicide attack while waiting to pass through a checkpoint. When I first met Musa, he, his wife, his brother-in-law and two young children were living in a big, bright third-story apartment with a spacious sunroom overlooking the olive and cypress-lined streets of Shmeisani. This affluent quarter of west Amman is populated by professionals and their families, along with a good number of Western functionaries who staff the city's NGOs and international corporations. A few months after I got to know Musa, he and his family moved to a much smaller, darker place overlooking the busy Istaqlaal highway, which encircles the northern limit of the city's affluent west side. The apartment was owned by a wealthy aunt who could not find any paying renters, and it would have to do until he and his family could be resettled as refugees. Big, red rollaboard suitcases rested on top of the cheap cabinets, waiting for the day they'd be taken down and packed for a new life abroad. Over time, I was drawn into Musa's small circle of friends, some of whom he'd met in pharmacy college back in Baghdad. Like him, these men were seeking an exit from Jordan along several avenues at once: they had pending cases for recognition as refugees from the United Nations, were waiting on the visa lottery for skilled immigrants, and they may have applied for a tourist visa and planned to apply for asylum upon arrival, or be courting private sponsors in another country who could help expedite their resettlement.

In each case, finding a way out required waiting for years on interminable and opaque bureaucratic processes. All agreed that "there is no future in Jordan." And for many, the future they awaited elsewhere was embodied in their children. "Everything changes when you have children," explained another pharmacist who had recently become the father of twins. "If you want your children to grow up well, to make something of themselves, to speak English, French, to have degrees, you cannot stay in Iraq or Jordan." This was, to be sure, a fate far less terrible than that which awaited millions of other refugees. But seeing the world system's bright, dividing lines for what they are, and sensing that their successors would end up on the wrong side of those divisions, men reported experiencing "[high blood] pressure" (*dughut*), "angst" (*dujja*), "stress" (*hamm)* and "headache" (*dawakha*), while describing Jordan as a place that "drinks your blood", while your money is "eaten up." Looking from the future to the past, one father said, "Our parents, our grandparents, they never had [health] problems like this." This parent's dilemma was, then, not yet a matter of bare survival, but a pain born of a sense of responsibility to both past and future generations that could not be realized in action.[1] For this cadre of well-educated professionals, the possibility that they will not be able to endow their children with the same opportunities and advantages to which they had been entitled is genuinely painful to contemplate.

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[1] In his essay "Thinking about Pain and Agency," Talal Asad (2003) describes how the singular concept of universal pain that arose in juridical procedures for determining harm, responsibility and redress (and that informs humanitarian genealogies of the subject) carries with it a notion of a "conscious agent-subject having both the capacity and the desire to move in a singular historical direction: that of increasing self-empowerment and decreasing pain." (79) The very recognition of the refugee as distinct from the "economic migrant" depends upon this grammar of concepts: the refugee is the person who seeks relief from a pain deemed legitimate, while the migrant is characterized by the nature of their own internal motivations that lead them to pursue opportunity elsewhere. But in their flight from danger, Iraqi asylees have consciously acknowledged that, in transit through Jordan, they leave behind one sort of untenable situation in preference for another one that is nevertheless differently untenable, and can scarcely be called empowering. And so, this chapter follows Asad's call to consider pain within "modes of living a relationship", such as the relationship of responsibility between parent and child (98) and, in this case, the relationship of one class to another.

In this chapter, I explore what has happened to the future for professional-class Iraqi migrants who find themselves waiting for resettlement in Jordan. There is, to be sure, substantial anthropological literature on the forms of "social suffering" (Kleinman, Das, & Locke 1997) that arise in relation to present-day anxieties about the future. My own interlocuters presented symptoms that recall the everyday fears of the Euro-American "precariat", who are likewise living through a quantitative decline in the economic valuation of skilled labor that threatens to become a qualitative break in sociological status,[2] the anxious experience of "illegality" that leaves deportable workers at the mercy of employers,[3] and the desires of would-be sojourners to become as mobile as the shifting configurations of a world system that has left them behind.[4] Each of these ethnographic comparisons contain elements of the formula whereby the experience of migration in our unequal times relates to the contemporary configuration of global capitalism. However, I would question whether it is in fact a *lack* of knowledge about what the future holds that provokes these states of disquiet. In proclaiming that "there is no future in Jordan", these migrants were not missing the conceptual equipment to formulate expectations about the time to come, (cf. Guyer,

[2] Although the term "precarity" has been devalued in circulation by those who seek to make it synonymous with the existential finitude of all human endeavors, scholars whose work remains grounded in the concrete situation of their interlocuters remind us that the term arose among European professionals and skilled workers confronting a new social reality that begins to emerge following the revaluation of their labor. (Mole 2010; Thorkelson 2016) I follow Parla's (2019) study of ethnically Turkish Bulgarians who have migrated to Turkey in extending this historically situated meaning of "precarity" to the case of university-educated, professional class migrants who have undergone the collapse of a planned economy and now must find a way to sell their skills in a liberalized labor market.
[3] As De Genova (2002) writes, "'Illegality' (much like citizenship) is a juridical status that entails a social relation to the state…[that] would be inconceivable were it not for the value [these migrants] produce through the diverse services they supply to citizens." (422) Willen (2007) offers an ethnographic treatment of "the embodied, sensory, and experiential consequences" (27) of illegality as a status that shapes workers' spatial and temporal navigations of the labor market.
[4] For example, villagers in Fuzhou, China may never leave their home, but assert their modern and cosmopolitan sense of personhood through the value-generating movement of kin and credit across borders. (Chu 2010) In a more pessimistic case, Togolese citizens express a similarly universal desire to migrate, but live this relation to motion through nostalgic melancholy or millenarian expectation, all too aware of their nation's increasing marginality to the international political economy and geopolitics. (Piot 2010) In both cases, people and relationships are defined not only in relation to their own embodied motion, but to the trajectories of other institutions, values, and persons as seen from the totality of a world system undergoing a historical process of reconfiguration.

2007) nor did their concerns arise from a place of absolute "uncertainty." (cf. El-Shaarawi, 2015) For, as I will attempt to show in the following pages, these asylees know all too what is in store for them if they do not beat the odds and make an exit. Recognizing that our interlocuters do frankly understand what their situation portends, we can move from elaborating their anxieties to considering their intentions, and to analyzing the specific forms of value that hold the potential to realize these intentions. In the last chapter, I showed how concrete structures embody historical events, *retaining* stories and signs of the past upon the grounds by which we navigate the present. Here, I consider another and quite different set of properties: the array of legal statuses that determine how Iraqis can live, work, and move beyond borders, and thereby *portend* what future is possible for their bearers. As one of the embodiments of value explored in the dissertation, these documents mediate between system and subject, giving shape and texture to the unequal times of displacement along class lines.

To understand the significance of these documents, however, we must first acknowledge both the hopes that are sought to be realized through their acquisition and the fears that must be averred in their absence. Therefore, I begin by describing the deep attachments that professional-class Iraqi migrants in Amman maintain to the idea of a mobile, cosmopolitan, and secular future. These attachments are relation and temporal; migrants have inherited from their predecessors and now seek to endow them to their successors. It is this familial future that is at stake while stuck in Jordan. Next, I catalogue the array of documents, statuses, permits, and licenses into which this mobile, modern future has been fragmented under present conditions of displacement. These are the portentous papers that will determine who can remain a member of this status group, and who will, in the time of a generation, no longer be able to count themselves among the generations that preceded them. Finally, I follow my interlocuters in frankly acknowledging what life awaits them

and their descendants if their ship does not, in the end, come in. Referencing the reductive glimpses of national kinds of people (*'anwaa al-naas*) discussed in the previous chapter, I show how spatial proximity to the desperate and the poor elicits a sense of impending decline that is often averred with disdain. *That* an inequality of futures exists from place to place and person to person is well recognized. Here, and in keeping with the concerns of the dissertation as a whole, the goal is to illuminate *by what mechanisms* and *under what relations* reified and alienated forms of value sustain their tremendous power to determine the course of these separate destinies.

Birthdays and "Black Days": The Iraqi Future as a Responsibility to Predecessors and Successors

It is a warm August evening, and my friend Abdurrahman and I are driving back from a shopping trip with his young son in the back seat. "Do you understand him when he talks?" Abdurrahman asks me as his son sings and babbles. "It's a little difficult," I admit, still unused to deciphering small children's speech. "Do you speak Jordanian or Iraqi when you talk to uncle Zakariya?" Abdurrahman asks his boy. "Iraqi!" the child says. "Really? You're not Jordanian?" Abdurrahman asks. Even if I can't make out everything the boy says, I can tell he's using certain tell-tale words from the local dialect. "No!" he exclaims, and pushes away the hand that his father has extended to prod his son. "Where are you from?" he asks again. "Iraq!" says the boy, waving his arms up and down. "Good. Now show uncle Zakariya how many English words you learned in school." As the little boy recites the names of the colors in English, we pull into a narrow street in the Gardens neighborhood and park the car. We get out and Abdurrahman guides me into the poorly-lit stairwell that descends to his basement apartment. His lanky teenage son, sporting a pale shadow of his father's broad moustache, holds the door for us as we bring packages of nuts, candies, and several bottles of *arak* through a living-room crowded with furniture and out to a

small patio encircled by high walls. There, I am met by Mais, Abdurrahman's wife, who is arraying plates of Lebanese *mezze* to accompany the *arak* before returning to the kitchen to mind the main course of Iraqi *dolma*. Musa had introduced me to the couple, and they had become my workout buddies at the gym where they train six days a week. Neither spouse is employed, and they are slowly but steadily spending their savings, although Abdurrahman does not try to hide the fact that he has found a way to import high-end perfumes and colognes that he sells, untaxed, though an Instagram account. Abdurrahman's mother, a single divorcee, had been resettled to Texas, while his father, a former army officer, remains in Iraq along with an older brother, along with both of Mais' parents. Like many Baghdadis of their generation and class, Abdurrahman and Mais are a mixed-sect couple, and, what is more, he is the son of a Sunni father and Shia mother, while she is the daughter of a Shia father and a Sunni mother. Later in the evening, when we have finished the appetizers and first round of drinks, Mais will make an all-too serious kind of joke about an uncle back in Iraq who has begun sharing Facebook posts from religious figures urging Shia spouses in mixed-sect marriages to seek a divorce.

Soon, we are joined by Musa himself, who has brought his four-year-old daughter to play with Abdurrahman's youngest son. Also in attendance are Mais' aunt and her three daughters, who all live in Amman, save for the eldest, who was resettled in Ohio with her husband. She has just returned for a visit now that the couple have acquired their U.S. green cards. The youngest of the aunt's daughters is still in school, and the middle one has graduated with a medical degree, like her mother, and now sometimes picks up shifts for local physicians in exchange for fifteen dinars (about $20US) for eight hours of work. "When you join me in Ohio," the eldest daughter tells her sister, "you will be a great doctor." We have all come to celebrate Abdurrahman and Musa's daughter's thirteenth birthday and to listen to her perform on the violin, although, as Abdurrahman

confided on the way over, they have not been able to afford her lessons for the last few months. After the cake is served, we get on the topic of birthdays. The middle daughter comments that hers is on a "black day" (*youm aswad*), when American forces entered Iraq in February of 1991. Abdurrahman laughs gruffly, and remarks that his son was born in 2003, a "black year" (*senna soodah*) for Iraqis. "And that just about made an end of it! (*wa shillha!*)" exclaimed Mais, ironically, inspiring Musa to get up from his seat and extend his hand over the small plastic table of drinks and snacks to offer her a low-five. "Iraqis like to laugh, even when we are suffering," Mais explains to me when the laughing has died down. "We are not like the Syrians who practice telling sad stories for the U.N." Later still, she asks me, "How do you see the Iraqis?" I am muddled by the *arak* that Musa continues to prepare for me, and the first thing I can think to tell her is that they seem to like to eat meat. "It's all meat! We must have it every day!", says Mais' aunt, and the other women laugh with her. "And you like to drink," I say, raising my glass. "True, true", says Abdurrahman, "but not in Iraq anymore. Maybe back in the 70's or 80's there were lots of nice discos and clubs, but not now." "And how do you see Jordan?" I ask them. Abdurrahman volunteers a reply, "Jordan is a poor country. And Iraq is a land of good things (*al-khayraat.*) We have an old history, but Jordan has just been here since the Romans. They don't have Assyrians, no Chaldeans, no Babylonians or Persians." Mais adds, "We didn't learn anything about Jordan in school. All we knew was that it was next to Iraq."

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There are certain scenes in our ethnographic experience in which the abiding concerns of our interlocuters are displayed as much for one another as for ourselves. At this birthday party, so many aspects of the mobile, cosmopolitan, and secular future that one Iraqi generation seeks to endow to the next were all on exhibit. This reunion closed the distances of space, time, and legal

status that separate Iraqi families in displacement and oriented participants to a set of mores, activities, and ideals held in common. In such scenes, the public discourses of national distinction are realized in spaces of "the most private attachment." (Spivak 2009. 76) What are these characteristic attitudes? Here is an ordinary nationalism that is at once assertively cosmopolitan yet shaded with chauvinism, claiming for itself an ostentatious irreligiosity, an exceptional store of cultural and material wealth, and a laughing contempt for victimhood. Of course, as we by now have acknowledged, such tropes of national distinction are flimsy things, even if their superficiality does not detract from their importance. Attending this gathering, and other family parties like it, I came to suspect that the explicit and self-professed Iraqi-ness of the attendees was being played up not only for me, the outsider, but also for their children and perhaps even for the other adults who, as much as their descendants, had never really known in their lifetimes what they so often referred to as Iraq's Golden Age (*al-'asr al-thahabi*). In this section, I consider the character of an attachment to that moment in Iraq's history, and show how it has informed the intergenerational hopes held by professional-class migrants awaiting resettlement.

The Iraqi exceptionalism of the professional classes marks them as members of a specific social group that was brought into being at a determining moment in Iraq's history. While this history resembles that of many other decolonial nation-states, Iraq is exceptional insofar as the country went from a vanguard of development, to a militarized and besieged totalitarian society, to an international pariah all in the timespan of a generation or two. The rapid destruction of Iraq informs migrants' awareness that no state of affairs is indefinite, and that change tends to be for the worse. The "Golden Age" of Iraq, as my interlocuters described it, falls roughly between the ascendency of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party in 1968 and the start of Saddam Hussein's grueling counter-revolutionary campaigns put in motion against the backdrop of the 1980-1988 war against

Iran. During this period, the state apparatus sought to realize the profits of surfeit oil wealth in the form of permanent liberation from Western dependency through monumental investments in education, housing, and agriculture. (Khadduri 1978, 111-114) As in other decolonizing nation-states, this attempt to realize national self-rule had been preceded by, and would proceed apace with, ideological efforts to create and elevate a new kind of subjecthood, "the new Arab man" (DiCapua 2018, 173-4; Pursley 2013) who, among other qualities, would be recognized by the liberality with which he provided for the education and independence of the newly "awakened woman." (Efrati 2004)[5] In his account of *The Old Social Classes and The Revolutionary Movements of Iraq,* Batatu concluded that the confessional, linguistic, and status-derived divisions that had fragmented Iraqi society and retarded the emergence of class consciousness were being unmade through the rise of a new group, "predominately of the middle condition and [who] tended, in some respects, to look out into life from similar standpoints and tackle many problems in a similar manner." (1978:1133) Rapidly relocating from provincial towns to the expanding urban center of Baghdad, these middling and soon-to-be upper classes are "more forward-looking than any of their predecessors."[6] This group of state-subsidized urban bourgeois did not vanish with war and sanctions, although this material deprivation did allow the party apparatus to become more

[5] My hunch, too protean to call a hypothesis, is that decolonial ambitions of self-sufficiency and the New Man predate and prefigure contemporary ideologies of "the good life" characterized by "multicultural accommodation, domestic security, and a sovereign national identity" in today's "neoliberal autocracies." (Wedeen 2013, 843) This would mean that what scholars identify as a purely Euro-American invention is in fact the appropriated and reified revolutionary impulse towards self-rule and collective prosperity that arose in other parts of the world, and that had its potential foreclosed upon due to its eventual accommodation with or surrender to the domination of capital.

[6] Batatu was not naïve to the fact that this middling group contained the seeds of a "new upper class" who were already establishing a sense of their particular and separate interests that would be defended through "the art of political survival… [and] the process of nation-state building." (1978, 1133.) To complete this nation-state building project, which was also a project of expropriating property in order to constitute a new ruling class, the Ba'athist regime would embark on "a wide-scale campaign of expulsion of so-called Iraqis of Iranian origin" at the outset of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. (Saleh 2016)

selective and more punitive through its control of distribution And although none of the young parents attending the party, let alone their children, had experienced the Golden Age directly, its echoes continued to sound in their attachments to a secular, cosmopolitan, and "open-minded" (*munfattah*) outlook that stressed the importance of advanced education and international mobility to achieving this modern self.

Let us now consider the specific attributes of this status group as they were emphasized by my interlocuters. First, professional-class Iraqi migrants put tremendous stock in preserving an "open-minded" outlook on religious prohibitions, gendered conduct, and, in particular, sectarian mixing. Abdurrahman and Mais held up their mixed-sect marriage of the children of two sets of mixed-sect parents as exemplary in this regard. Likewise, Abdurrahman and Musa, who, like Mais, was born to a nominally Shia family, were fond of remarking on their mixed-sect friendship. These multigenerational, inter-sectarian relationships embody the ethos of "open-minded" secularity that emerged from the material conditions of Baghdad's professional classes in the Golden Age period, when new people from different neighborhoods and parts of the country were housed in the same government-subsidized housing, attended the same public universities, and worked in the same ministries and state-own companies, and, in the process, got married to or became friends with one another. Some of this insistence on values of diversity and tolerance may have been at my behest, perhaps hoping to counter the narrative of Iraq as a land of immemorial ethno-sectarian divisions. For example, at many social gatherings an interlocuter might point from person to person around the table, saying, "He is Sunni. He is Shia. He is Christian," and so on. What is more, this open-mindedness could also serve as a polite way to smooth over relationship with strangers. "Did you follow all those questions about where I lived?" an informant asked me after meeting another Iraqi migrant for the first time, "he was trying to figure out: 'is he Sunni? Is he

Shia?'" But cosmopolitan secularism was most emphatically emphasized when it came to drawing distinctions between the professional classes and the poor, whether in Iraq or in Jordan. Jokes made at the expense of men and women in conservative Islamic dress in public were not uncommon. "Watch out," I was told by one companion as he cast his eyes towards a man wearing the short robe and full beard favored by religious revivalists, "He's gonna blow!" Most people attributed overt religiosity to poverty and a desire for material gain. "Look into the eyes of the preacher giving his sermon," said one man during an argument about whether or not these figures really believed what they said, "and you will see the dollar signs." The association between desperate avarice and overt religiosity formed the counterpart to the one between material comfort and ostentatious secularity. And the imagination projected a trajectory of social decline across these axes of distinction. Recall Mais' half-joking comment about the uncle who was advocating that mixed-sect couples seek a divorce. There was a real sense of losing relatives who had remained in Iraq to the pull of religious bigotry. "I used to keep in touch with a cousin back in Iraq," one man said, "until he started posting all these terrible things on Facebook. I saw him change through his posts."

A second distinguishing element was pride in Iraq's programs of literacy and universal higher education, and a more general insistence on the importance of "self-development" (*tatweer an-nefs*) through learning. As it was with an insistent secularity, the emphasis on learning and education was often expressed through distinction from neighbors. Comparing Iraq and Jordan, interlocuters stressed how much the former state cared for its people by providing them with medical care and educational opportunities free of charge. As I noted in the previous chapter, most of the private universities to which affluent Iraqi arrivals sent their children were staff by Iraqi professors. Where old money and arriviste investor families were prone to cultivating their

collections of objects of national heritage (*turath*), the professional class interest in self-development through education was oriented towards to West. Indeed, my presence was often the occasion for eliciting English phrases from young children by parents, who then asked me to instruct their children further. Under conditions of displacement, however, maintaining this distinction could be a consuming concern. “Everyone and everything develops (*yetatawor*) over time,” Musa’s younger brother once told me. “And so, if you are not developing, you will end up as a looser.” Young professionals like Musa and his two brothers, also both pharmacists, voraciously consumed pirated .pdf textbooks and YouTube instructional videos on topics like business management, nutrition, social theory and, of course, pharmacology. Their family history is particularly instructive of how the development of professional expertise served as an *intergenerational* project for realizing wealth in the form of professional qualifications. Their father had done well for himself as a “trader” importing foreign products during the decade of punitive sanctions that the international community had inflicted on Iraq. “Our uncle told our father, ‘wars and trade come and go,’” explained Abbas, the youngest brother, “‘But people will always get sick and need to see the pharmacist.’” Professional qualifications were a kind of “fix” for wartime accumulation that could, in better times, serve as a steady source of financial security. In this way, education served as a path for development not only over the course of a single life, but from one generation to the next.

Third, the middling classes attached great importance to mobility, both within the city and internationally. Those who had reached adulthood before the 2003 invasion spoke fondly of the ease with which they could move through Baghdad, transcending not just geographical but historical and sectarian distances through visits to and outings with friends. Likewise, they spoke with great sadness of the restrictions on movement in the city imposed by militias and checkpoints

during the American occupation. Reminiscences of drinking and eating at cafes and restaurants were held in fond regard, and, as previously mentioned, numerous establishments that were well known in Iraq had come to Amman to serve consumers in their new city. The parties that Mais and other Iraqi wives put on for their spouses and friends were another sort of opportunity to gather and mix in a celebratory atmosphere. Mobility also marked status at a transnational scale. Looking to the past, transnational mobility was linked to both education and political power. Under the Ba'athists, officers and apparatchiks enjoyed coveted opportunities to be educated at foreign universities, though they risked having family members imprisoned or tortured if they failed to return to Iraq after acquiring their new credentials. Today, the ability to move across borders is associated with the kind of Western-oriented, secular self that the middling classes feared was slipping away from them. "When Iraq was still a developed country," said one man who had been declined a visa, "we were welcome in many countries without a passport. Now, they look at our visa application and they fear we belong to ISIS. Can you blame them for thinking that way?" Under the international division of educational opportunities, realizing ambitions for self-development depending on the ability to cross borders. A young woman who worked as an assistant under Ali, the architectural engineer whom we met in the previous chapter, had applied for and received a fellowship for a Master's program in architecture in the United Kingdom, but was declined a student visa to attend. "Life is hard, now," she explained, "that's the way it is."

And for those who had already attained advanced qualifications, international mobility was the only way to realize the value of their titles. That "there is no future in Jordan" was often followed by the observation that "you cannot earn money here." Indeed, while many sufficiently well-connected Jordanians go to the United States to get educated and to realize the value of their education in skilled professions, Iraqis are left out of this circuit between the imperial core and its

periphery. “Globalization got it half right,” observed a man trained as an information technology specialist who had worked illicitly for a time before being replaced by a Jordanian citizen. “The developed countries have let us have access to knowledge, but they don’t let us go to where there are jobs to use it.” And, as the vignette above indicated, most displaced families had members already living in the West. Through contact over social media and WhatsApp, images and videos of Chicago, Toronto, or Sydney reached those waiting still in Amman, underlining the promise that resettlement heralded a return to a mobile, cosmopolitan way of life.

These orientations to a secular, developed, and mobile way of life are, as I have already stressed, fundamentally intergenerational. They look, on the one hand, to the past exemplified by Iraq’s Golden Age and, on the other, to the future exemplified by resettlement in the West. And so, it must be stated that the people professing these hopes have, in their own lifetimes, already experienced profound hardship and loss. The comments about “black days” and “black years”, along with Mais’ darkly ironic observation that the American invasion marked an end to that period in Iraq’s history of violence, all point, in a mocking and indirect way, to this fact. Here, I arrive at one of those points at which ethnographers must admit that we do not study peoples’ innermost thoughts, but rather those aspects of their lives that they chose to present to others. “No one ever told you stories about the sanctions, did they?” Ali, one of my more candid informants, once asked me. “How bad it was. How even the richest families sold their antiques and furniture, and how you could be executed for hoarding sugar. The generation from 1980 to 2003 never even saw an airplane, it was our dream. Everything was closed, and then it was all opened.” Indeed, most interlocuters were far more willing to talk about the falling bombs and dismembered bodies encountered after the American invasion than they were to talk about the depredations of the 1991-2003 sanctions, referred to among Iraqis as *al-hisaar* (“the siege.”) I can only speculate about the

extent to which interlocuters' interest in international travel, consuming meat at every meal, and providing the best possible lives for their children was a reaction to the experience of near-total international isolation, enforced vegetarianism and rationing, and an under-five-years-old mortality rate that, by the year 1999, had reached about 130 per 1000 live births. (Popal 2000, 793) Perhaps it was because everyone in attendance, save for myself, could be assumed to know these hardships too well already that the generation of those black years had no need to discuss them further. Collective acts of celebration and in-gathering are, as anthropologists have long observed, enactments of a community's normative values and self-conscious representations, which are brought into the lived world out of an otherwise absent historical time or cosmic place. A birthday party does not differ from any other ritual, at least in this respect.

Let me elaborate this point a bit further, because locating national identity in the responsibility between past and future generations while averring association with the present sits at odds with other accounts of the temporality of nationalism. Here, it is useful to introduce the four-fold distinction between "consociates", "contemporaries", "predecessors" and "successors" that Geertz (1973) adopted from Schutz (1962). As Geertz explains, we share our "social reality" not only with those whom "we actually meet… in space" ["consociates"] but also those who populate the past ["predecessors"], future ["successors"], and present ["contemporaries"] within a "community of time." (364-8) Writing as a village ethnographer confronting the New Nations at the moment of their emergence, Geertz staked his claim that the complex and situated orientations to "fellowmen" by which his Balinese informants both distinguished the aged from the young and connected them to one another "through a particular set of procreative links" were being swept away by "The new informality of urban life and of the pan-Indonesian culture which dominates it—the growth in the importance of youth and youth culture with the consequent narrowing,

sometimes even the reversal, of the social distance between generations; the sentimental comradeship of fellow revolutionaries; the populist equalitarianism of political ideology." (409-10) Geertz's assertion that nationalism flattened out richly attenuated "communities of time" into a universalized, homogeneous contemporaneity would, through its influence on Anderson (2006), become the conventional wisdom about national communities. But, among these Iraqi migrants, references to "contemporaries" enter only as dark interruptions and averred fates, and are contrasted with celebrations of "predecessors" and "successors." Clearly, much has changed since the dawn of the New Nations, underlining my point about the importance of an intergenerational timescale, and the dissertation's overall desire to avoid taxonomizing disjoined historical stages by instead embracing a perspective that privileges duration.[7]

I have discussed at some length the hopes that these migrants hold for themselves and their descendants, and hinted at the aversion they hold for figures of poverty, religious bigotry, and immobility. We cannot understand the stakes of resettlement for this group of migrants without such an account. But now that we do have a sense of what is at stake, I turn to the array of status, permits, licenses, and other portentous documents that have already begun to parse those who might achieve this future from those who will not.

Titles to Mobility: The Over-Documented Futures of the Iraqi Migrant

One day, Musa asked me to meet him for at a fast-food restaurant. Over slices of pizza, he brought out his cellphone and showed me an e-mail he'd received from the United Nations, regarding his

[7] But was it ever really the case that New Nations nationalism sought to overturn older, familial orders? As Pursley (2019) has shown, the vanguard doyens of Iraqi nationalism were deeply preoccupied with the disciplined development of young people and, more generally, with the reproduction of the developed self from one generation to the next. From classrooms, to the scouts' squadrons, to campaigns of household hygiene, Pursley demonstrates the "familiar futures" of Iraqi nationalism did not do away with a traditional temporality for a modern one so much as endeavor to align the "cyclical biological temporality" of the family with the "linear social" temporality of the nation. (2019, 8).

pending case for recognition as a refugee. "What is the English for *istaghaath*?" —an appeal—he asked me. He explained that his one-year-old son had started manifesting the symptoms of a chronic illness, and he'd sent a request to the UN office to expedite his case on medical grounds. The lengthy e-mail he'd received in return explained, in an English that suggested it had been generated by an automated program, that the UN does not consider any inquiries or requests related to a pending case without an in-person appointment. Musa did not seem surprised by this revelation, and he asked me if I'd like to come and meet his friend George, who was working at a pharmacy across the street. We skirted between the cars racing across a busy stretch of road and entered the shop, finding George behind a counter flanked with glass cases stocked with cardboard pill packages. After a warm greeting, George invited us behind the counter and into the backroom, where chairs were set up around a plastic table, near a small refrigerator, a portable propane stove, and a stack of diaper packages. He heated up a kettle, telling me that, "Even when's its 60 degrees outside, Iraqis must have hot tea!", and arranged some packages of date cookies on the little table. Like Musa, George was from Baghdad, and was a married father of two young children. After chatting for a while about work-outs and whiskey, George explained his case to me. He had been recognized by the United Nations as a refugee, his case had been passed to the American embassy, and, against all odds, his family had been selected for resettlement from among the many thousands of names on the rolls. However, even the select few must wait an unspecified number of months before receiving a phone call telling them that their flight has been arranged. In the meantime, the Trump White House had declared its "travel ban" on immigrants from a number of Muslim-majority countries, including Iraq, and George, despairing of his hopes to get to the United States, had told a UN employee he would consider having his name placed on the list to be resettled in Australia, instead. Following pressure from the government in Baghdad, the White House then

exempted Iraq from its list of banned countries, and George wanted to know what would become of his case. After being turned away at the American embassy and waiting several weeks for an in-person appointment with the UN, he was told that he had requested to withdraw his application to the United States, and was now on the waiting list for Australia. But when he managed to contact the Australians, he was told that his case could not proceed until he'd received documentation clarifying that he'd withdrawn his case with the Americans. Now, like Musa, he was asking me to explain a lengthy email that was essentially deferring further explanation for some unspecified amount of time. "It is *not fair*", said George, breaking out of Arabic for the first time in our conversation as if to ensure the nature of the situation was conveyed to me. "There is no future here in Jordan", he went on. "And could you go back to Iraq?" I ask him. "*Insal-moudhou'*!" he tells me. "Fugettabout it!", Musa echoed with enthusiasm.

In this section, I enumerate the array of permits, licensees, visas, and other documents that mediate the passage of time for Iraqi would-be refugees in Jordan. For migrants like George and Musa, resettlement, and all the aforementioned hopes that rest upon it, hinges on obtaining documents from multiple inscrutable bureaucracies. The dilemma in which George found himself reminds us that the workings of these overlapping institutions do not proceed in tandem, but rather turn in misalignment, leaving the would-be refugee's future fragmented across superimposed avenues of possibility. The UNHCR, the Western embassies, and the International Organization for Migration are, moreover, not the only paper-issuing institutions of consequence. The Jordanian Directorate of Residency and Borders issues the permits and visas that allow these Iraqi nationals to legally remain in the Kingdom for a limited time, while the Iraqi Syndicate of Pharmacists provided the professional licenses that are recognized by their employees, if not by the Jordanian Syndicate that attempts to enforce its local monopoly on issuing qualifications. Meanwhile, the

political opposition that exists in Jordan to issuing Iraqis and other arrivals work permits and citizenship papers forecloses the possibility of eventually integrating on a permanent basis into the local economy and society. Each one of these issues can be elaborated apiece, as I intend to do. But as the foregoing vignette makes clear, it is through the dissonant convergence of their multiple temporalities in the lifeworld of the displaced person that these legislated statuses acquire their significance. It therefore falls to us first to clarify the ways in which these documents are comparable when viewed alongside one another.

Taken together and when integrated within the everyday experience of the displaced, these documents take the form of embodiments of value. Recall that in the introduction to this chapter, I suggested that these different statuses are akin to the concrete structures that mediate between the eventful flows of a regional war economy and the everyday experiences of migrant residents. This claim appears counterintuitive, for legal statuses are generally held outside of the realm of exchange and the documents in which they are embodied possess an at-best paper-thin materiality. Moreover, Jordanian nativist political movements have been largely successful in preventing the state from embracing the credo of "flexible citizenship" (Ong 1999), despite the desires of successive governments to sell nationality to migrants directly. Some documents, such as residency permits and certain professional licenses, are in fact available for outright purchase. But, more importantly, all these documents are costly to obtain and to keep, and all of them only potentially permit the future realization of these sunk costs in the form of resettlement. Sometimes, this costliness is obvious and direct, like an overstayed visa that accrues daily fees. In other cases, the cost is indirect, like having to pay for food and housing in a very expensive city during the interminable wait for recognition as a refugee. In either case, even those things which are not in the direct sense purchased become comparable to one another insofar as they all embody quantities

of accountable time. These documents may lack the concrete enormity of hotels and villas. But, backed by the enforcement powers of states and police, they are as resolutely reified as the financial instruments of credit and debt that charge everyday time with calculable value, potentiating the conversion between lost jobs and lost time, the "making of time" through the spending of money, and the tensions that arise from weighing options and approaching limits in relation to the overarching concern of "caring for kin". (Han 2012, 33, 39) Having established this integrative function, let us now consider each document in turn.

Passports

Under normal circumstances, there is no path to citizenship for Iraqis in Jordan. No migrant will become a citizen with the passage of time, nor will children born in the country acquire a right to citizenship. This policy is largely the result of demographic anxieties over the Palestinians in Jordan. And the cases in which Iraqis have somehow acquired nationality have been clandestine, controversial, or indirect. The illegal sale of Jordanian national identity numbers to Iraqi businessmen was among the many scandalous accusations that brought down the former General Muhammad al-Dahabi, who used his position as head of Jordan's powerful spy agency to engage in embezzlement, graft, and money laundering from 2005 to 2009. (Al-Khalidi 2012) Plans to create a legal pathway for foreign investors to obtain Jordanian passports were first announced by the Ministry of the Interior to the national press in 2014. However, "the granted passport [would] not carry a national number [entitling the bearer to citizenship benefits] but rather be a special passport for easing their affairs in Jordan, including transport and official bureaucratic business. (*mu'aamulaat*)" (Tadros 2014) The government finally agreed to pursue this controversial program in 2017, after the legislation had been amended to require that resident-investors hire a quota of Jordanian workers and bring in Jordanian business partners. (Al-D'aja 2017) And, in

2018, an unnamed Iraqi investor received a passport for the first time through the new program. (Ghazal 2018)[8] The $1.5 million investment required to obtain this document was far beyond the reach of the vast majority of my interlocuters. Even those well-off investors who could conceivably acquire that amount of cash by liquidating their assets told me that they would be better off parking the money in Turkey or the Caribbean, since a Jordanian passport was not much more of an aid to international travel than an Iraqi one. Not only is nationality far beyond the means of those who saw "no future in Jordan", but neither does this status hold much appeal. To them, Jordan is a "transit station" (*makhatta*) on the way to permanent resettlement. What are needed are those documents through which one can buy more time to wait out the attenuated and indefinite resettlement process.

Visas

The Iraqi passport is ranked second to last in the world based on how many countries the holder can enter without a visa, and as such is more an impediment to mobility than an aid. But prior to 2006, Iraqis entering Jordan did not require visas. In those days, the Hashemite Court was all too happy to make pronouncements of Arab brotherhood and hospitality towards their neighbors. At the same time, Jordan sought to turn Amman into the destination of choice for American defense contractors and international organizations looking for a base of operations that was close, but not too close, to the conflict in Iraq. This state of affairs came to a tragic head on November 9th, 2005, when a series of coordinated suicide bombings took place at three different upscale hotels favored

[8] One odd story that emerged in an interview with a factory-owner suggested that this scheme for investment nationality may have been, like many stories about government programs in Jordan, a façade for some other sort of fix. This factory-owner claimed to have met with an official at the Committee for Investment that handles applications for investment nationality, but was discouraged from applying and told that the businessmen who would acquire these passports had already been selected before the legislation went into effect. To recall a point from the previous chapter, deceptions abound in encounters with the state.

by foreign diplomats and contractors, with the Al-Qaeda in Iraq organization taking responsibility. While the government never stopped proclaiming brotherhood with Iraq, prior visa clearance would now be required for Iraqis hoping to enter Jordan. Student, medical, and tourist visas that lasted from two weeks to a few months were not difficult to arrange through brokers inside Iraq. And it seemed that Jordan was not interested in deporting Iraqis with expired visas, either. Rather than putting a hard limit on how long an Iraqi could spend in Jordan, the visa created a ticking counter that marked time in a new and monetized way. For each day spent in Jordan on an expired visa, the visa holder would have to pay a one-and-a-half-dinar fee (around $2.10). Given that many Iraqis spent years in the Kingdom, and fees were levied against each individual family member, many families ended up with thousands of dinars due in payment. These fines would only have to be paid, however, on leaving Jordan for another country. Even families who were eventually resettled through the United Nations would have to pay off the fines if they ever wanted to return to Jordan. When I overstayed my visa by four days, I was sent to a small window, paid up, and went on my way. But for those whose fines outpaced their ability to pay, a large black X would be written over the Jordanian stamps in their passport, and they would be added to a blacklist barring them from entering the country for ten years. This policy effectively barred back-and-forth travel between Jordan and Iraq for those who could not afford to pay the fees. Moreover, no one with excessive visa fines could leave Jordan to visit another country then return home. Those without the wealth to pay visa fees, let alone acquire a residency card (see below), felt particularly constricted in Amman. "Amman is secure like a prison is secure," said one informant who had run up hundreds of dinars in fees. The mounting costs of the overstayed visas effectively governed who could freely visit relatives or conduct business abroad while maintaining a home in Jordan, and who would have to confine their existence to one country. This is one of the ways in which

the value embodied in documents makes acquiring refugee recognition more tenable for those already best positioned to wait out the process.

Tourist or student visas to the United States, Canada, or a European country were sought by some interlocuters as a strategy of last resort to expedite resettlement. Consider the case of one man who had been waiting for four years on the UNHCR to call him in for a second interview. This man explained to me that he was applying for a tourist visa to the United States, then planned to present himself for political asylum on arrival. Everyone had heard the stories about how this worked. However, I cautioned him against pursuing this route, as the Trump administration had just announced that it would begin imprisoning asylum seekers pending their case hearings, even if they had entered the country through legal means. Regardless, he told me he would press forward with his plan—his married sister had already been resettled in the U.S. with her husband's family and, moreover, he had already gone through great lengths to prepare for his tourist visa application. He went on to explain what these preparations entailed. The U.S. Embassy officials were all too aware that applicants sometimes applied for tourist visas with the intention of permanent settlement through an asylum claim. To convince them otherwise, he explained, one would have to demonstrate that you had every reason to return to Jordan. And these reasons took the form of material and financial stakes in the country. Thus, visa applicants brought documented proofs of bank accounts, business holdings, deeds and rental contracts, and automobile titles to interviews, attempting to prove that they had too much to leave behind by becoming an asylee. In this particular case, the applicant kept two separate bank accounts: one to present to the U.S. embassy for his visa application and another to present to the UNHCR for his refugee resettlement case, with the latter decision pending in part on his criteria of vulnerability. Not unlike George, this would-be migrant wound up in the strange situation of taking two or more positions at once, a kind

of hedge made possible by the existence of multiple institutions operating according to different temporalities without communication with one another. Here emerges an irony that would go undetected if we had confined the scope of inquiry to a single institution: Asylum is intended for the most vulnerable, but the getting into position to apply for asylum favored those who could convince officials that they were already comfortable in Jordan.

The "Protection Paper"

For Iraqis seeking resettlement abroad as refugees, the first order of business was to register for asylum seeker status with the United Nations. Following this brief interview, families receive what was referred to as "the protection paper." (*waraqat al-himaya*) This humble slip of paper performed three crucial functions in the resettlement process. First, the date of the protection paper's receipt marks the beginning of a series of processes that may or may not result in a refugee status determination. A family would have to wait anywhere from one to as long as three or more years before receiving a call from the UNHCR to come in for an interview to gather information for a refugee status determination. Then, another year or more might pass before the family would or would not be told if they qualified as refugees. The temporal character of the protection paper was opposite that of the Jordanian visa. There was never any way of knowing whether the time since it had been received had brought one closer to the goal of resettlement, and no count of mounting fees to tick off the days.

Second, the protection paper settles the question of who counts as part of the family for a single case. Papers are issued to families and not to individuals. The head of the household's photo appears in the upper right, while children, spouses, and dependents appear below it. The grouping of cases according to a nuclear and agnatic unit impacted how migrants navigated the resettlement

process. Thus, returning to Abdurrahman's case, the decision was made to have his divorced mother apply for a protection paper as a separate household of one, rather than as a dependent of her son. This was done because the family rightly gauged that priority would be given to the elderly, female, and single, and his mother was in fact resettled while Abdurrahman's family were still waiting on their second interview. In another case, a father who had previously been commissioned to train Palestinian *fedayeen* while an officer in the Iraqi Army was brought in for a special interview with an American military officer as part of his status determination interview. He refused to answer the officer's questions about his military history, and the family's case was subsequently declined. Several years later, this applicant's son was married, and, like so many other young fathers, decided he had to take drastic measures to ensure a better life for his newborn child. He fought with his father for months, seeking his blessing to start a new, separate application that listed him as the head of his own family unit, and putting him, his wife and his daughter on track to resettle without his parents. By parsing kin into nuclear units, the protection paper fragmented intergenerational connections and set relations on asynchronous trajectories of resettlement, creating geographic and emotional rifts between parents and children.

Finally, for Iraqi migrants who cannot acquire residency permits and who have overstayed their Jordanian visas, the protection paper serves as the only guarantee against deportation. Jordan is not a signatory to the 1958 UN Convention on Refugees, and has no real international obligation to honor the status of asylum seekers in the country, although a "memorandum of understanding" exists between Jordan and the UNHCR. The protection paper is so named because it simply requests that the Jordanian authorities honor the "right of nonrefoulment" and not deport refugees to a country where they face "a well-founded fear of persecution." In practice, this means that the protection paper serves as an unofficial identity document for interactions with police and

government officials. Everyone I met carried a grainy photocopy of this letter-sized documents and kept the original, with the pale blue UN logo in the upper left, in a safe place at home. This was a good precaution, because police are a pervasive aspect of everyday life in Amman. The Jordanian police forces— "the Directorate of Public Safety" —do much more than law enforcement: They staff the many bureaucratic offices that deal with visas, residency, and even taxes and utilities. Many of the everyday "dealings" (*mu'aamalaat*) mentioned in the last chapter occur in the presence of or directly with the police. After living in Baghdad, where one could never tell which checkpoints had been infiltrated by sectarian militias, some Iraqi asylees expressed confidence that the Jordanian police had their best interests at heart and were there for their protection. However, no one doubted that if push came to shove, a protection paper would not be enough to avoid deportation. This was especially true for Iraqis working in exploitative and informal arrangements. The normal pay period for wage workers in Jordan is a full month, meaning that a substantial investment of time and effort must be made on good faith before seeing the results. After the first month, Iraqi workers might be given less than they'd agreed to in pay, or simply told to go home emptyhanded under threat of deportation. In effect, the protection paper, and by extension the "memorandum of understanding" that backed it up, was strong enough to permit Iraqis to live in Amman while awaiting resettlement and flexible enough to allow employers to exploit them in the meantime.

The Residency

Prior to the influx of Iraqis in 2003, an existing law on foreign investment offered yearly, indefinitely renewable residency status to any foreigner who deposited a certain amount of money in a Jordanian bank or purchased real estate in the Kingdom. This residency card (*al-iqaama*)

became the only available title to residency in the country for Iraqis, and would be sought out by all families who could afford to acquire one. Like the protection paper, residency is a status applied to entire families, although each individual receives their own identity card. When the wealthiest Iraqis began to arrive in the early 2000's, this sum was 30,000 Jordanian Dinars (~$42,000 US) per family, defined as a head of a household, their spouse, and their children. In order to generate additional funds and to put more Iraqi families on the books, the government subsequently lowered the cost twice, and as of my last visit in 2018, the deposit requirement was 18,000 dinars, or around $25,000 US. These deposits do not earn interest, but are refunded in full if the family does not decide to renew the status for another year. For this reason, the steep price of residency appeared reasonable to many professional class families seeking a permanent exit from the region. To meet the cost, vacated property could be sold or rented out in Iraq, relatives who had already been resettled or who were living in Iraq could be tapped for loans, and families with multiple adult children could put the residency in a parent's name and pool resources to keep the bank deposit in place for as long as possible. For example, Musa, his wife and children, his two brothers, and an unmarried sister all received their cards through a single account registered to Musa's mother, although this elderly widow had remained in Baghdad, along with a fourth brother who cared for her and contributed financial as well. However, this also meant that residency status could vary from year to year as family fortunes fluctuated. This was the case for Taher's family, who owned a small factory that had to shut down after 2016 border closure with Iraq. The wealth locked up in the residency status would have to be liquidated until some machinery was sold to get it back.

In terms of its effects on the texture of everyday life, residency status is a marked improvement over the protection paper and the overstayed visa. For those who can afford it, the residency card permits the sort of free, consumption-oriented mobility so sought after by members

of the professional classes. The residency card itself could replace the protection paper as an identity document presented in interactions with the state, vastly increasing one's sense of security and respectability. "I feel so different now," said one interviewee after collecting the money to acquire residency permits for himself and his family, "Before, people told me you can't go to the Dead Sea, or other places [outside of Amman] because they [the police] might stop you. You're an asylum seeker, and you should stay in the city where you applied." Becoming a resident gave him confidence enough to pass through the checkpoints and speed traps that litter the Jordanian landscape of leisure advertised to international tourists, but off-limits to mere asylum seekers. Residency permits also obviated the need for a visa, meaning that the 1.5 JD per day fee was not an issue and the card-holder could travel freely in and out of Jordan while awaiting resettlement. For more affluent resident, trips to Lebanon, Turkey, or even back to Iraq were not out of the question. Even among those who could ill-afford tourist trips around the region, some interlocuters explained that simply knowing one *could* leave Jordan freely alleviated the constricting sense of confinement provoked by the overstayed visa. Meanwhile, the entitled resident could continue to pursue a case with the United Nations. The many years it took to wait out the resettlement bureaucracies could, then, be passed while maintaining certain habits of professional class life. Perhaps this is why families would sooner move to a smaller apartment in a less affluent neighborhood and work in low-paying jobs than liquidate their residency deposits for extra cash.

Work Permits and Professional Licenses

On the back of the residency card, there is a field for employment and, on the residency cards given to Iraqis, "non-working" (*bela 'amal*), is written in bold, black script. Investors are allowed to work openly as business-owners, and handful of well-connected medical specialists and

university professors could angle for work permits by proving they could provide specific skills not already on offer from their Jordanian peers. But the vast majority of Iraqis who must make a living by selling their skills in exchange for wages do no benefit from this exception. Above, I noted how intergenerational trajectories of development, both national and familial, lead better-off Iraqis into the professions as a way of converting today's wealth into tomorrow's freedom from dependency. Degrees and professional licenses in medicine, pharmacy, accounting, or law remained assets for making a living in displacement, but their market price is greatly reduced on arrival in Jordan. As I noted above, inspectors from the Department of Labor and from the various professional syndicates actively pursue white-collar Iraqis, and it is not uncommon for plainclothes inspectors to raid businesses owned by Iraqi investors. Yet enforcement was highly selective. It was well understood that the Syndicate of Pharmacists tolerated Iraqis working during evening and night shifts, that the Syndicate of Engineers offered membership to the most connected individuals, and that the Syndicate of Proprietors of Rental Car Offices let any Iraqi with sufficient funds operate a business under their license. Counterintuitively, pharmacies in Amman would not hire Iraqis without up-to-date credentials from the Iraqi Syndicate of Pharmacists, and a network of brokers in Iraq served to file and ship renewal documents to displaced professionals in Jordan. Moreover, an Iraqi pharmacist could flash his Syndicate membership to a clerk at any pharmacy in Amman and receive the same discount on purchases as a Jordanian member! I never managed to get behind the scenes and hear directly from representatives of the syndicates themselves why they maintained such an ambiguous stance on Iraqis. By the time I realized how much power they had to authorize employment, the syndicates had taken a prominent role in public demonstrations against the expansion of progressive income taxes, and I was told that my requests for interviews were too politically sensitive. Even before

the protests, I was discouraged from pursuing this line of investigation by the one member of the Jordanian pharmacists' syndicate I was able to track down, who told me that no one would talk to me about doing something that was, after all, illegal.

The absence of proper work permits was felt most acutely when comparisons were made to other groups who held different statuses. First, Iraqi professionals might be given to complain about the entitlement of their compatriots in the investor class. "There is a big difference between us and the rich Iraqis", explained one interview subject who worked as a pharmacist, "they do not care about education, about knowledge, only about showing off. Their children are spoiled with new cars and everything else they want. We have to work and contribute." Second, these quasi-licensed professionals could be prone to denigrate the efforts of their local counterparts. "The Jordanian only works as hard as he needs to get paid," another pharmacist explained, "But Iraqis, we excel. It doesn't matter if you are Arab, Kurdish, Christian, whatever. Iraqis will go beyond what is required." Finally, a scheme to grant work permits to Syrian refugees would invite resentments among some Iraqi professionals towards this group in specific. From 2016 onwards, the Jordanian state and a consortium of international donors reached an agreement to begin providing work permits to Syrians in the country. This highly publicized program is the result of a worldwide turn to push the displaced into wage work according to principles of "self-reliance."[9] The plan only further frustrated Iraqis who felt they had been waiting for far longer in the country, and it added to perceptions that Syrians unfairly benefitted from international good will. Not

[9] In the spring of 2019, I was contacted out of the blue by a group of Italian researchers who had received funding to make an exploratory study of Iraqi employment in Jordan in light of the possibility of expanding the Syrian model to Iraqis in the Kingdom. When I spoke to the researchers over Skype from the United States, they did not seem to understand basic facts about Iraqi communities in Jordan, let alone possess an awareness of the difficulties faced in implementing permits for Syrian workers. This encounter with agents of international humanitarianism suggests that even if a comparable program was implemented for Iraqis, it would do little to alleviate the difficulties they face within the local labor market.

surprisingly, these impressions of others' circumstances were poorly informed. The new permits put the Syrian worker at the mercy of a sponsoring employer, they are only available to workers in special industrial zones where conditions are very poor, and, as of 2018, only a tiny fraction of the promised 200,000 permits had actually been given out. (Lenner & Turner, 2018) But the impression of unfair treatment contributed to the way in which displacement itself came to be experienced as a decline in status. Having established both the stakes and the means of resettlement for professional class Iraqis, I now want to consider the regard they hold for figures who embody the fate they are endeavoring to avoid.

The Proximity of the Poor

A year ago, Taher and his new wife moved from Tela'a al-Ali, another of West Amman's affluent enclaves, to an apartment in a sprawling area north of the highways that encircle Amman. Taher was trained as a civil engineer in one of Jordan's private universities, a most prestigious branch of a most coveted profession. He worked under his father at a family-owned factory, where he learned to calibrate and repair the machinery, and he had, when times were good, taken on more work designing apartment building for real estate investors looking for an asset in which to fix their money. But the factory was closed most of the time nowadays, and so he kept himself busy studying programming, robotics, and circuitry through YouTube courses and textbooks. Now, an order had come in from a contact in Saudi, so he would have to be present throughout the twelve-hour shift. Over the next several days, he supervised a dozen or so workers, nearly all of them Palestinian refugees who had been born or grown up in Jordan, as they mixed chemicals in huge underground vats, pumped those liquids into bottles on the assembly line, and boxed the bottles up before handing them off to a crew of truckers bound for the southern border. Taher worked up

a sweat on the job, especially when he and the Yemeni machinist had to climb over or under some large piece of equipment to fix the frequent breakdowns and leaks. The rest of the time, he sat in a small office connected to the factory floor, snoozing or drinking coffee brought to him by the woman who also ran the small chemistry lab, while he scrolled through Facebook, comparing the rates of traffickers who promised passage to Canada or Europe.

One day, over the hissing of pistons and the tart smell of concentrated dish-soap, Taher and I got to talking about another Iraqi engineer who worked as a foreman at a neighboring factory and who sometimes stopped by for coffee and cigarettes. "You see the way he holds his arm?" Taher asked me. "It was injured in a bombing. He showed it to the UN, and he's been waiting three years for resettlement. But he and I, we're not among the chosen." (*al-mukhtareen*) "You mean, you don't think you'll get picked for resettlement?" I asked. He replied,

> "I mean, maybe we're not among the chosen peoples (*ash-shu'uub al-mukhtareen*). The population of the West is declining. They need people to work there for them. So, they are choosing peoples to come and be laborers in Europe. They destroy countries in the Middle East – Yemen, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Iraq – and make them unlivable. Then, the people have no choice, they must go to Europe to work. In thirty years, slavery will return, and we're going to be the slaves!"

Taher's prophecy left no ambiguity about what the present situation portended for his successors. The duration of the resettlement process is uncertain, and it must be waited out with the aid of every possible means. But should these investments of time and money not come to be realized in titles to mobility that permit a better life, the alternative is horrible to contemplate. In this, the final section of the chapter, I explore how some would-be migrants identified and averred portents of an impoverished future as these possibilities were embodied in other people accorded different statuses and, therefore, destined for different fates. It is not, I think, an accident that Taher

dreamed his vision of global history while surrounded by dispossessed laborers from Palestine and Yemen, nor that other Iraqi professionals developed ulcers and high blood pressure worrying about their future as they rubbed shoulders with Syrian refugees and Egyptian guest workers. We have already considered how shallow impressions of national character emerge from commercial and transactional orientations to strangers in an urban milieu. This section points to the menacing power these figures acquire in relation to a future now fragmented across a multiplicity of statuses.

Proximity to national others occasioned comments about the total abjection of Jordan's working class. "Do you see that guy over there?" a companion once asked me while we sat sipping tea in a café. "He's Egyptian, maybe someone like him is Syrian. They have no rights. They have nothing. He does something wrong, talks back to a customer, and they kick him out on the street." Amman is remarkable not only for the remarkable variety of statuses that dictate separate rights among the workforce, but also for the fact that sites of work and leisure are populated by people bearing so many different gradations of status at once. But comments like this one remind us that, for all the granularity of legality in Jordan, one could draw an absolute distinction between people on one side of the line and the other. One may be more or less modern, mobile, and open-minded, but one either was or was not counted among *al-masaakiin*, the poor and the pitiable. And this distinction would have to be defended from the threat of ambiguity. Thus, Taher, a man who told me often told me he took pains to be a good boss, and whom I never saw hitting or teasing his workers as other bosses would, exploded in rage over precisely this point. One day, a newly hired woman working on the assembly line asked him for a broom. He responded with red-faced screaming that he was an engineer (*muhandis*), and not the kind of person you ask to help you clean up a mess. He then retreated to his office, where he sulked until the woman came and offered an apology. Taher's anger was uncharacteristic of him as an individual, but it was mirrored in

other cases when workplace proximity tainted the purity of class distinctions. I watched an accountant working the cash register at a restaurant excoriate his *maître d'*, a villager from Northern Iraq, for taking a call from an important customer when the accountant thought that this should have been handled by a more "respectable" (*muhtarim*) person, and another factory foreman become visible irked while explaining to me that he was a lettered *muhandis* and therefore nothing like the Yemeni *fanni* ("craftsman") who had no degree certifying his training. These slip-ups had to be correct to avoid any possible confusion between what was apparent in one's role in the labor process and what was established by one's official status.

Where everyday encounters in Amman brought human figures of dispossession into spatial proximity, perceptions of those who had remained behind in Iraq likewise marked a sharp line between the truly desperate and the merely inconvenienced. I have already pointed to the fact that many Iraqi professionals in Amman saw the sectarian politics that had consumed their country as the direct result of ignorance tempted by greed. Many people emphasized the total lack of rights, justice, and the rule of law that held sway after the invasion. "Iraq is a wild forest (*ghaba*)" said one, "where the strong eat the weak. If someone doesn't like where you've parked your car, they can call on a friend in a militia to send people after you. You can't go straight if you stay in Iraq. Half the people are thieves." Two denigrating terms used by some more affluent Iraqis to describe their impoverished compatriots remind us of the gulf of class difference that opens up in everyday conversations. The first, *shroogii*, was used to describe people who spoke and dressed in a markedly low-class style. Among affluent youth, slicking your hair into a tall pompadour or shifting your rounded vowels towards sharp, nasal tones would invite accusations of acting *shroogii*. The *shroog* are the Shia inhabitants of east Baghdad who migrated to the capital in the first half of the 20th century from the south of Iraq, where their farmland was being mercilessly

expropriated through British land tenure schemes.[10] The derogatory *shroogii* was thrown around by friends teasing one another, and I do not think that most people who used it were fully cognizant of its decades-long history. The second term, *hawaasim*, was used to describe people still living in Baghdad by Iraqis living on the outside, and it referenced more recent events. The origins of the term refer to a statement given by Saddam Hussein on the eve of the American invasion of 2003. He promised the Iraqi people victory in "the decisive battle of Iraq" (*ma'arakat al-'iraq al-haasima*). In the wake of Iraq's defeat and American viceroy Paul Bremmer's decision to dissolve the Iraqi police and military, looters stole everything from the artifacts in the national museum to the copper piping in municipal buildings. Playing on the term used by Saddam Hussein, these looters were referred to as *al-hawaasim*, the people of the decisive battle.

Spatial proximity to dispossession also pervaded sites of humanitarian encounter, deepening the fear that protracted displacement would precipitate a loss of status and distinction. Ultimately, what separated the wretched from the rest was their relationship to "justice" ('*adaala*) and "rights" (*huqooq*); the poor could expect none of them, while the well-off might still endeavor to practice them, and thus preserve their distinction. And the experience of the resettlement process itself suggested that one's entitlement to justice and rights was slipping out of grasp for good. Recall George, who had gotten stuck between multiple different institutions, all refusing to inform him what had happened to his case, and who mournfully declared that the process was "not fair." Another would-be refugee echoed George's complaints about long wait times and intractable bureaucrats, saying, "They don't even give you an appointment, they just tell you to wait until they

[10] Hanna Batatu, argued that the *shroog* were Iraq's own "wretched of the earth (*masaakiin*)" whose class consciousness was instrumental to the success of the Communist Party and the 1958 revolution. One year after the 1958 revolution, the Qassim regime hired the Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis to build a "City of the Revolution" (*medinat al-thawra*) that would house Baghdad's proletarianized masses. The City of the Revolution was neglected and marginalized by the subsequent Arabist and Ba'athist regimes. Today, most people know the area as Sadr City.

call you, so you wait. When you talk to them, you feel like you are talking to a wall. They treat you badly, they treat you like a refugee, like you are lower than them. Or nothing!" This claim appears strange. Wouldn't someone seeking refugee status recognition want to be treated as a refugee? But most Iraqi migrants I met did not partake of the liberal instinct to valorize victimhood, and in fact could be quite disdainful of those who, to them, embodied the role of public victims. Telling a story about the long lines that formed outside the resettlement offices before opening, one Iraqi pharmacist explained that, "you see the way they dress, the way they talk to their children, how their wives' faces are covered up. Do you really think these are the people you want to bring to your country? That they will succeed there?" This is one of the more striking examples of how professional class Iraqi migrants regarded their impoverished counterparts. Recall the subtler comment made by Mais in passing, that Syrians practice exaggerating their troubles, while Iraqis take them in stride. Here, we are reminded of the businessman's maxim, which states that: "One must know how to deal with all kinds of people." The wretched are violent and unruly because they have suffered and been exploited, and they are to be reduced to this aspect of their situation.

Conclusions: "Stuckedness", Change, and Mediation

What happened to the future for professional class Iraqis in Jordan? In this chapter, I have argued that while the duration of waiting for resettlement is indeterminable, no one was uncertain about what indefinite displacement portended, nor about what counted in waiting it out. The claim that "there is no future in Jordan" really means that there is no future in which succeeding generations will enjoy the kind of cosmopolitan, secular, and materially comfortable way of life that was inherited from preceding ones. The documented entitlements that permit the migrant to live, work, and move in Jordan embody the possibility of averring this contemptable fate. But whether issued by humanitarian, state, or private institutions, they are costly in terms of both money and time.

People who inherited orientations towards a mobile, cosmopolitan future from past generations and preserved those orientations through years of war, siege, and occupation came to fear that they would not be able to endow them to their children. A multiplicity of documented statuses created options to buy time, mobility, and legality in Jordan, but the mounting costs of waiting rose like a threatening tide. Placed in proximity to the downtrodden victims of countless conflicts, migrants strove in ways that were could be dismissive and unkind to assert that, no matter how jeopardized their position within this tangle of statuses might be, they had yet to cross the line that cordoned the wretched from the rest. Ultimately, the anxieties, struggles, and pains that these migrants report are, like so many sorts of pain, "modes of living a relationship." (Asad 2003, 3) And, in this case, the relationship in question is that of one class to another.

This argument has some implications for how we ought to relate the physical immobility of would-be migrants unable to exit their situation to the subjective experience of "stuckedness" (Hage, n.d.) these migrants endure. In his account of the Lebanese diaspora, Hage distinguishes between the physical movement of migration and what he terms "existential mobility": the fact that "Migrants and would-be migrants, like everyone else in the world, like to feel that 'they are going places.'" He argues that, "We move physically so we can feel that we are existentially on the move again or at least moving better." (2005, 470) Like my own interlocuters, Hage's Lebanese informants want to go abroad because, for them, "'There is no future here.'" (471) And, like Hage, I believe that ethnographic practice can offer insight into migration because of its "double gaze capable of capturing both descriptively the lived cultures with all their subtleties and analytically the global which structures them, both people's experiences and the social environment in which this experience is grounded, both the experiential surrounding that people are aware of and the macro-global structures that are well beyond their reach." (474)

My concern is that Hage's "double gaze" is not wide enough, for it does not incorporate the forms of mediation through which those "macro-level structures" make their embodied appearances in "the experiential surrounding." Lacking an account of mediating embodiments, Hage attributes the migrant's desire for mobility to a deep-seated and culturally recognized need for movement purely in terms of "our existential selves." (470) This collapsing of world and self, an analytical move made by many anthropologists who neglect to consider the relationship between what you see and what you get, obscures how physical immobility comes to be experienced through existential conditions of angst, ennui, and what my own interlocuters called *dughut* ("pressure") *only by way of* meaningful relationships to other people and things. To operationalize Hage's distinction while rejecting his conclusion, being physically stuck does *not* mean that one is existentially immobile, for the people and things that define who one is and where one belongs continue to undergo transformation over time. We see this happening to Iraqi migrants for whom the passage time in stuckedness is embodied in changes taking place in kin, in documented statuses, and in proximity to strangers whom they perceive as utterly dispossessed. Along each axis of mediation, the physically immobile self is undergoing a *relative* motion, leaving inherited entitlements behind, confronting mounting costs of waiting, and approaching an unimaginable, but evidently real, condition of lost status. As Munn writes of the commodification process in general, "Such changes do not, of course, merely operate in time; they also give time a specific form—in general, making absences and new pasts, as they make new forms of the present and, consequently, alter future potentials." (2013, 142) That being stuck in physical space should, with nothing more than the passage of time, put one on track to social decline is not well explained by reference to an existential proclivity for "what Spinoza calls to move towards a higher 'perfection.'" (Hage, 472) But it can be understood as the class consciousness of a historical

situation in which the future is rendered conditional on a certain rate of exchange between wages and time, along with an awareness that events have left certain people in certain parts of the world without a future on these determining terms. Iraqi professional class migrants in Jordan explicitly express this consciousness of the situation.

What evades this situated consciousness, however, is that the process it confronts in its place and time is not wholly unique. This is where ethnographic comparison becomes invaluable. Noting the apparent resembles between the fraught and painful manner in which class relations are lived by my interlocuters, on the one hand, and the anxious symptoms of what anthropologists in other parts of the world call "precarity", on the other, I want to end this chapter by pointing to the possibility for a comparative ethnography of dispossession in a global frame. By dispossession, I mean the process whereby a group is parted from its entitlement to the form of property that served as its means for reproducing itself. In this framework, comparison could be made between, say, the regard that professional class migrants hold for their fully proletarianized peers and the situation of Italian workers in factories with two-tiered contracts, where skilled workers who are still, for now, entitled to pensions and higher wages regard their untitled counterparts with whom they work in "spatial proximity" with distrust, anxiety, and even violence. (Mole 2012, 42) Recognizing the resemblances between multi-tiered employment contracts and the multiplicities of status that determine rights to live, work, and move in Jordan is only the beginning of a proper comparative analysis, and this effort might be furthered by asking why the severance of people from means unfolded at such a profoundly different pace and intensity in one country as opposed to another. Tracing more or less attenuated or violent processes of dispossession across different sites would do more than simply note *that* inequalities exist from place to place; It could help

explain *why* and *how* these inequalities relate to the changing position of nation-states within a global totality of production, consumption, and destruction.

Here, I want to draw attention to a contradiction within the situation of those migrants who still have an elevated status to lose. On the one hand, there is no possibility of reproducing social relations without the consumption of material goods: No birthday parties without a birthday cake. On the other hand, the regime of documents that track the passage of time in displacement make time itself take on the appearance of money, and every expense must be counted against the possibility of resettlement, because purchasing these goods uses up money that might otherwise extend the duration of waiting in Jordan. It is as if, in the condition of displacement, the present has been set against the future through the mediation of the value form. This contradiction between the present and other times is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Ambivalent Diversions: Contradictions of an Attenuated Present

"Practical men cannot see objectively the events in which they are submerged without a neutral medium in which such events can be artificially manipulated and reflected." – Samuel King & George Leckie, introduction to O. Korschelt's *The Theory and Practice of Go*

Take Al-Zahran Street west, well past Le Royal Hotel, and you will arrive at the Seventh Circle. This local landmark has been transformed at great expense from a traffic roundabout into an intersection and bypass, but the older name has stuck. Arriving from parts east, you must maneuver out of the fast-moving stream of cars headed for the bypass and into a lane that turns to the right, then, after glancing to make sure no one is trying to speed ahead of you, switch to the left into a U-turn lane that will deliver you back onto Al-Zahran, now on the opposite side and headed to the east. Keeping your eyes to the right, because you won't see it until after you pass under the pedestrian bridge, and you'll find a small street used to enter the commercial district of Sweifieh. On a weekend evening, this passage, about the width of an alleyway, will be packed with cars waiting for a pair of traffic police to wave them past a pair of pylons and into the bright lights of fast food restaurants, hotels, and storefronts. Sweifieh is one of West Amman's emblematic enclaves of bourgeois consumption, best known for Al-Wakalat Street, which, during the boom years of the mid-2000's, was refashioned as a pedestrian corridor and now features a Zara, a Starbucks, and a local café that has lifted its name and branding from the Snapchat social media application. The area also contains two prominent fixtures of Iraqi capital in Amman: The Al-

Sharqiyya building, which houses the offices of the Iraqi Business Council [IBC], and Galleria Mall, one of Amman's largest shopping centers, in which members of the IBC's board hold a major stake. More hidden from view, but well known to Iraqi visitors, are two cafes (*chaikhaanaat*), which I will here refer to as Dijleh "(Tigris river") and Mal'ab ("sporting field"). These multistory establishments cater to Iraqi men who come to smoke *nargeeleh*, drink tea, eat hamburgers and kebab, and play games. Whether you've come for Mal'ab's outdoor seating in the summertime, or Dijleh's larger indoor area in the winter months, you will find a few pairs of older fellows, who play backgammon with such speed and coordination that one imagines they have been meeting in this fashion for many years. But most tables are taken up by groups of five or six younger men crowded around chains of dominos, stacks of playing cards, or a *jackeroo* board.

Jackeroo is a hybrid creation – its rules are a more complex version of the Parker Brothers' *Sorry!*, but played with a bricolage of marbles, playing cards, and a specially-made wooden board. No one could say where *jackeroo* came from, but it had caught on with Iraqi, and, not long after, local card players with all the force of a fad. I began playing the game when the special wooden boards with small divots to hold the marbles were still being produced by Iraqi entrepreneurs with access to otherwise idling machine tools and then sold to friends through social media networks. Beyond its being the latest thing, the nature of *jackeroo*'s rules made for a fast-paced game full of reversals. Like the trick-taking card games that are so popular in this part of the world, the game is played in teams of two partners each. Each team member aims to move his four marbles from his "base" counter-clockwise around the board to his "home", while also attempting to "eat" his opponent's marbles along the way, forcing them back to the opponent's base, from which they must start their journey anew. One's marble moves a number of spaces according to the value of the cards played on that player's turn, but many of the cards also have special effects, like allowing

the player to swap his marble with another player's or forcing his opponent to "burn" a card and loose his turn. The combination of random draws, the widely varying values of the cards, and the great difficulty of achieving a "safe" position for pieces on the board (by contrast, forming safe positions is a basic element of backgammon play) inject the game with constant upsets and drama. "It's like driving in Amman," one playing-partner told me, "A lot of people drive fast and switch lanes just to screw others, not to get where they're going. I call it 'the malignant game' (*al-lu'aba al-khabeetha*)." Somewhat unexpectedly, the obvious analogy the game held to the migrant's halting journey towards a secure home was remarked on only once during the many nights I spent playing *jackeroo*. An old friend who had started a new life as a refugee in California had returned after two years to get married in Amman. He'd been drawn into what began as a debate over the existence of the "giants" (*'amalaaq*) mentioned in the Qur'an, and had been pressed into defending his religiosity. "Imagine you've got seventy years to live, like these marbles here" he explained, while touching two places on the board with the edge of his open hand, as if apportioning the measure of a thread. "Here you are, living your life. Why would you not want to," and, now plucking a marble from the board and holding it above the others, "Why would you not want to get a perspective from outside your life, in order to better take charge of (*tahkum*) your life and your behavior?" There is a brief and thoughtful pause before another man declares, "I'd rather keep my feet on the ground," and the game goes on.

This chapter explores the ambivalences that surround practices of diversion among young Iraqi men living and waiting in Jordan. By diversion, I mean all those practices of consumption, conviviality, and play through which we, to use a local expression, "burn time" (*yaharrag alwaqat*). That these diversions are held in an ambivalent regard by those who take part in them is evidenced in the fact that the very same interlocuters who passionately engage in these practices

declare, when asked to reflect on their conduct, that these pursuits were a waste of time. "Nothing important has happened in the last five years of my life," said one companion, then, taking a beat to look around the table where four close friends who played with him nearly every day sat, "Though I met these guys here." What accounts for this divergence between conduct and judgement? What sort of lasting bonds can be made in a period of time we hope someday to forget? And why does wasting time hold such an appeal? As our more pious companion reminded us through his object lesson, the position from which we view our situation shapes the meaning we give to our time. Taking the long view of a life in its unity, it is possible to evaluate and order our activities, aligning them with our sense of what is right. (MacIntrye 1984, 204) Yet, as his respondent made clear, staying mired in the moment holds an undeniable appeal.

This chapter argues that such grounded states sustain the presence of friends in memory and afford durable connections that are often missing from the short-term sociality of *"ta'aamulaat"* ("dealings [with]"), while also forbearing the weighty intergenerational responsibilities that emerge when eating and dwelling at home. The appeal of these practices becomes more readily apparent when we consider how the notion of "diversion" has served theorists of consumption elsewhere. In this more technical sense, diversion describes acts by which something of value is removed from paths of potential exchange and absorbed within the practices of a particular community in order to preserve or create new relationships and, potentially, new possibilities through which value can flow. (Munn 1983, 301; De Certeau 1984, 24-8; Appadurai 1986, 16-17) In the previous chapter, we saw how time, money, and property must be carefully conserved while waiting out the resettlement process. Following the theory of diversion, we are examining a case in which portions of this value are *diverted from* the path of migration and *into* practices of consumption and play that cultivate a particular mode of relatedness among

participants. What I am calling diversion theory is helpful insofar as it allows us to see how acts of consumption put existing resources to new and novel uses, while also reminding us that these acts always have a commensurate cost. And the stress on intention, technique, and calculation that this approach provides also helps us deepen our understanding of how consumption and leisure practices reflects social distinctions between status groups by shifting the attention from the specific object that signifies status to the stylistic manner in which the object is consumed.

However, the fact that interlocuters expressed such ambivalence about these acts makes me hesitate before asserting, as some diversion theorists have done, that creative acts of consumption resist, transcend, or overcome the prevailing political and economic situation. In particular, Appadurai's influential "politics of value" framework – whereby local, situated "regimes of value" can, through acts of diversion, assert themselves over and against a more diffuse and homogeneous flow of goods in global circulation (57) – strikes me as a poor fit for the case at hand. Here, "the tension between these two tendencies" (*ibid.*) cannot be isometrically fitted onto distinct spatial regimes across which an object circulates, but instead arises from interlocuters' own reflexive and changeable orientation to their situation while they are stuck in place. Thus, where a "regimes of value" approach would have us tracking the movement of an object from a "commodity situation" into some other discrete phase of its "biography" (13), I am more interested in the conflicting attitudes that arise in human situations throughout the duration of peoples' geographic immobility. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that where Appadurai's "politics of value" may have been timely for scholarship in a period of expanding, integrative global flows, Iraqi migrants' ambivalences towards consumption suggest a very different moment, in which the potential to realize particular and aspirational projects in the global imaginary (cf. Tsing 2000, 334) is continually receding with the reconfiguration of an objective and actually

existing global system. For, as I will show, however-so-much consumption and play afford diversion from the abiding concerns of the displaced, people are well aware that these the value of these pursuits *cannot* be realized through the longer-term trajectories of accumulation, reproduction, and mobility that they peruse.

This last point links the chapter's account of ambivalent diversions to the dissertation's overall effort to trace the forces that drive displacement as they are realized in the lifeworld of the displaced. Thus, the first chapter examined the histories of war and accumulation *retained* in the built environment, and the second centered the futures of social reproduction *portended* by different licenses, visas, and permits. In both of these cases, it is through these mediating forms that others times (and other places) that make up the total social field impinge upon the perceptual field, and thereby infuse the everyday with its distinct ethical, practical, and experiential textures. Moving forward, this chapter foregrounds the comestible commodities that, in their being consumed, enable the *extension* of a present that is to some degree insulated from and autonomous of the past and the future, yet always susceptible to rupture when regarded in a different light. To understand how this occurs, we first need to establish the basis on which participants distinguish diversion from other sorts of activity. What my interlocuters referred to as "sitting" (*al-ga'da*) is held to be distinct from work and family both because of the spaces and times in which it occurs and because of the sort of relatedness between people it fosters. Then, having established *what* "sitting" is, we will consider *how* it is achieved. "Sitting" unfolds through attentive engagements with objects of consumption that, in their being consumed, create a continuous, "intersubjective" sense of the present. (Munn 1992,10-11) It should be obvious that this does not happen through the agency of the objects themselves, whatever that means. Like all human practices of consumption, the cultivation of intersubjectivity draws out qualities inhering in material things

that latently afford the possibility for the culturally and historically determined uses to which they are put. (Marx 1970, 126) Nevertheless, the presence of things remains indispensable, and these consumed substances are particularly "dear" (*ghaalii*) to those who earn low wages, pay high prices for consumer goods, and must save as much money as possible to wait out the process of resettlement. This fact, in turn, leads us to examine why consumption comes at so high a price for migrants in Jordan, and to acknowledge some of the dilemmas that interlocuters confront in maintaining these costly practices. As throughout the dissertation, this chapter acknowledges the "routine *coexistence*" of multiple sorts of value within the commodity form that makes such divergent perspectives possible, and center the commodity as the medium through which the sensual, concrete "lifeworld" of collective experience is both "made" and "unmade" in relation to the larger systems. (Weiss 1996, 11)

A Time and Place for Friends

What are people doing when they eat, drink, and play together? In the ordinary language of my interlocuters, these activities are called "sitting" (*al-ga'da*). For example, you might call someone on the phone and ask, "What are you doing?" (*izhdatsawii*?) If that person replied, "Sitting with the guys" (*gaa'id wiyya ash-shabaab*), you would picture your pals assembled in a café, probably playing cards and smoking water pipes. Likewise, if you wanted to express your satisfaction with a particularly pleasant outing, you might declare that it was "an excellent sitting" (*chaanat kulish khosh ga'da).* And, if you wanted to discourage your group from spending their time at a particular spot, you might warn them that "the sitting there is lame." (*al-ga'da t'abana*) Of course, people are never just "sitting", they eat, drink, play games, talk, and many other things. But all of these activities are going on within a time and place (a "spacetime") given over to the unity of practice conveyed in the posture of "sitting." "Sitting" is a metonymy: a linguistic trope that uses a

characteristic part of the whole to communicate the whole as a distinct concept. "Sitting" is, moreover, a name for a particular style or modality of action that is temporally, spatially, and, most importantly, *stylistically* distinct from other sorts of activity. Establishing this distinction is important. We can have no sense of how people regard the proper use of their time without understanding the different uses to which time can, for them, be put. Diversions are always diversions *from*. But from what? Austen (1961) has argued that examining "excuses" is a productive way to decompose the too-general category of "action" into the distinct categories that are relevant for a particular community of speakers. "First," he argues, excuses arise when something has gone wrong or failed to take place, and therefore "penetrate the blinding veil of ease and obviousness that hides the mechanisms of the natural successful act." Second, "not every excuse is apt" for every mistake, and identifying those excuses that *are* effective is "one means of introducing some classification into the vast miscellany of 'actions.'" (180-1) In line with his essay's call for "*field work* in philosophy" (183), let me now say something about what "sitting" is by way of my own experiments with making excuses.

On many nights I'd taken to relax at home by myself, a phone call would come asking me to join an outing. If I demurred, I would be interrogated: "What [else] are you doing right now?" There is already a lot of implicit thinking about the proper use of time going into this question. Going out to sit with friends is already a default state that takes place in the absence of other activities— it has a kind of inertia in the lives of those who practice it. What could excuse the failure to heed this call? As I very quickly learned, the idea of taking time to relax, unwind, and enjoy solitude was *not* an excuse. Indeed, men who spent too much time by themselves evoked either concern or derision from companions. In my own experience, saying I was taking time to be on my own might as well have been saying I was doing *nothing* at all. My experiments in

excusing myself did, however, yield two valid results. First, I found that if I said I had to work, I would be given a reprieve. My work, after all, required that I write up notes about what I had done during the day and that I get up early the next for an interview or site visit. People might begin to talk about how the American enjoyed working far too much for his own good. But they did accept that these were two distinct modes of activity, and that the obligation to work excused the invitation to sit. Second, I found that anything having to do with family members produced an immediate acceptance of my refusal to come and sit. Thus, a planned Skype call with my mother or the two-week period when my father visited me in the field was an automatic pass on sitting. These initial findings were further substantiated with observations of the same excuses being put to use by companions. Both having to work and having to be with family members were valid excuses for declining an invitation to sit or exiting a session of sitting before it had reached its conclusion.

If the time taken for sitting was categorically distinct from time taken for work or for family, these same categories seemed to govern the spaces in which it took place. As I have already discussed over the previous two chapters, the working day is marked by a series of short-term transactional encounters with strangers that play out in public, which my interlocuters call "*ta'aamulaat*" ("dealings"), while the special occasions that mark the ingathering of intergenerational kin occur in the home. "Sitting" happened in spaces that were outside the home, yet isolated from the street.[1] Mal'ab café was exemplary in this regard. This popular venue for sitting is located right next to a major roadway. But drivers and pedestrians would never stumble

[1] We might, following Oldenburg, refer to these "informal public gathering places" as "third places." (1996, 6) There is something to be said for the way in which the principles of Oldenburg's "New Urbanism" have filtered into the discourse of Jordan's architects and city planners, who did indeed lay the groundwork for the pedestrianization of informal public space in neighborhoods like Sweifieh with such values in mind. (Al-Asad 2005) However, absent a better account of the links between American and Jordanian urban planning practices, I find the term to be both too parochial and too general to be useful in this context.

into it by mistake. To access Mal'ab, one must first drive down a side street, then take a right past a street sign that indicates a dead end, only to arrive at an empty lot indistinguishable from the other unused spaces in the city. It is only once you have exited your car and begin to ascend a short but substantial incline on foot that Mal'ab reveals itself. Dijleh was, on the other hand, located on a street with many shops and offices that is very busy during the daytime, but largely empty at night. There, temporal patterns of use substitute for separation in space. Outside of these specific sites, the convivial activities of unaccompanied men are elsewhere kept at a spatial remove from spaces for families. Many eateries feature clearly marked areas for "young men" (*shabaab*) and "families" (*'aa'ilaat*). Here, it is not gender per se, but the presence or absence of intergenerational kin that is the salient category of distinction – though, it must be said, this distinction does not admit the possibility that groups of unaccompanied women might dine out on their own. "Sitting" could even take place inside workplaces if the proper distancing was attained. The pharmacies where several of my interlocuters worked all-night shifts were well-suited for this. George, whom we met in the previous chapter, enjoyed hosting as many as eight or ten friends in the stockroom, and he would even make us coffee and serve us store-bought pastries and sweets prepared by his wife. These offerings approximated the feeling of café sitting for those who could not go out at night, and attracted companions with whom to make the most of being stuck at work. Finally, sitting could take place on the *matall*, hilly outcroppings usually located above roadways where groups park their cars and look at the lights of the city below. The *matall* was for sitting on the cheap – men in late adolescence or their early twenties who did not have any source of income beyond a small family allowance might sit in this way. Chips, cigarettes, and convenience store coffee (or, among drinkers, beer) substituted for the fatty dishes, *nargeeleh*, and rich tea available

at the cafes. As with the cafes, the spatiality of the *matall* put it close to, but not visible from, sites of public encounter (in this case, the roadways).

"Sitting" is marked by a spatial and temporal remove from other sorts of activity. We can begin to understand what it is by appreciating what it is not. However, sitting is also a distinct modality or *style* of activity oriented towards the cultivation of a certain kind of relatedness. People did their sitting with friends, a group that was consistently composed of the group of around four to six people. As I learned through my own *faux pas*, one does not attempt to sit with different groups of friends from one night to the next. In the confined spaces of the café, everyone is visible to everyone else, and being spotted with a different group leads to some very awkward confrontations. In fact, close friends are distinguished from more distant acquaintances through the posture of sitting itself. Thus, partners who can be expected on any given night are not greeted at the table with any particular effort. It is appropriate, however, to stand up out of your seat to greet those who are coming by to say hello to an acquaintance in your group. And for those who have been long absent and are reuniting with old contacts at the café, it is appropriate not only to stand up and greet them, but to remain standing until they have seated. In this way, sitting is distinguished from standing as closeness from distance, or constancy from occasionality. In a broader sense, the degree of constancy in contact is what distinguishes different sorts of relationships from one another,[2] and degrees of contact that exceed what is considered appropriate for a certain kind of relation risk changing the nature of the relationship. (Borneman, 2007) Consider, for example, the lament of a recently married man who had lost his job and had to spend

[2]Writing on brother-sister relationships in Lebanon, Joseph (1994) describes the "constant connectivity... characterizing the social production of relation selves with diffuse boundaries who require continuous action with significant others for a sense of completion." (55) What Joseph describes as the behaviors of sisters towards brothers, such as nurturance, encouragement, and aesthetic advice, strike me as familiar aspects of male friendship as I experienced it.

his evenings at home: "Your wife stops being a woman and becomes your best friend, because you see her every day and do everything with her." In the other direction, constancy served to distinguish friends from transactional contacts. Thus, when I asked a companion whether he was always doing favors for others out of an expectation they would respond in kind at some future time, he explained, "God only knows [the future] (*allah ya'alam*). It's natural, it's humane, if you see someone thirsty in the desert, you will give him water. If I help you, it's because we're friends (*asdiqaa'*). And if you see me in need, you will help me. It's not a matter of personal interest (*maslaha*)." In other words, the constancy of presence is present tensed. An honest person (*saadiq*) thinks not to convert today's relationships into tomorrow's gain, as the opportunist (*maslahchii*) might through a strategy or transaction. Rather, the true friend (*sadiiq*) maintains a constant rapport that can be sustained in the course of unexpected events.

The constancy of friendship embodied in the activity of sitting points to the manner in which this activity creates a shared, encompassing, and ongoing sense of the present among participants. On its face, this claim is very abstract. It will become clearer when we begin to understand how different sorts of action "go on" in time. Let me begin to explain through another observation about "sitting" (*al-ga'da*) in ordinary language. Classical Arabic does not distinguish between a simple and present continuous verb tense, although the active participial noun form of a verb can be used to connote continuous or habitual action over time (*al-ism al-faa'il*). The demotic form of Arabic spoken by my interlocuters, however, has several ways of modifying present tense verbs to denote continuous action, including appending the active participle of "sitting" (*gaa'id*) as an auxiliary to the normally conjugated simple present verb. To give an example:

English	Iraqi Arabic-to-English	Iraqi Arabic
I walk	"I walk"	*imshii*
I am walking	"I am a sitter I walk"	*aanii gaa'id imshii*

Table 1: Present continuous actions in English and Iraqi Arabic.

This is not the only way in which speakers might form the present continuous verb—Baghdadis, one might just easily append the participle *da* before the main verb to do so. I would therefore hesitate to suggest that people who use unfamiliar verbal modes perceive reality in a some profoundly different way. (cf. Whorf, 2012[1936]) But, to return to the point from which we began, attention to ordinary language is a useful starting point for establishing how and on what basis a community of speakers recognizes and distinguishes between different categories of action. (Austen, 2007[1961])

Keeping this in mind, let us now fill out this postural grammar by contrasting "sitting" with "standing up." (*gaam*) Where "sitting" is used to connote continuous action over time, "standing up" is conjugated in the past tense and then added as an auxiliary to a second verb to connote the initiation of action in the past, similar the classical Arabic particle *qad*.

English	Iraqi Arabic-to-English	Iraqi Arabic
I'm reading a book	"I [am] a sitter I read a book"	*aanii gaa'id aqraa' kitaab*
I (had) started reading a book	"I stood up I read a book"	*gimit aqraa' kitab*

Table 2: Present continuous and past completed actions in English and Iraqi Arabic.

And, in this case, it seems that these different categories of action are distinguished on the different senses of time they embody in posture. How does the temporalization of an activity relate to the fact that different styles of action are suited for different sorts of obligations or relatedness? In the next section, I link the encompassing constancy of friendship to the mutual creation of an *intersubjective* present, and describe the materials and techniques through which this state is achieved.

Presence in the Present Tense

Sitting is one of those practices through which we create and sustain a sense of the present as a continuous and encompassing intersubjective state. Intersubjectivity describes the "organization, recognition, and constitution of relations between subjects" (Desjarlais & Throop 2011, 88) that unfolds in the course of group activities. These activities often involve the use of common substances to which the participants' attention is oriented. (Munn 1992, 61) This state is *not* given

nor imposed; It must be achieved.[3] A night that will endure in the participants' memory as one of "good sitting" (*khosh ga'da*) and thereby affirm friends' presence in one another's lives entails significant material investments, along with a degree of technical know-how. We can better assess the necessary materials and practical arts of sitting by noting elements that appear to be shared among a number of practices through which human beings achieve analogous states. Through acts of commensality, the sensual qualities of the food that are being simultaneously experienced by participants serve as a kind of bridge between the solitary, biological experience of eating and the collective significance of the meal as a socially meaningful event. (Simmel 1995[1910]) Gaming and making music furnish exemplary cases for understanding how people achieve intersubjectivity. Thus, players of speed chess embody the kind of rapid intuition that the game demands as a merger of self and opponent in a manner reminiscent of musicians achieving "a relationship of mutual attunement." (Desjarlais 2011, 35; Schutz 1951) In fact, sitting exhibits aspects of these gustatory, auditory, and ludic activities all at once, layering them over one another into a total composition. Let us now consider how these elements work to achieve a night of good sitting.

Commensality

"Sitting" always involves the consumption of food and drink, but good and memorable "sitting" is marked both by the quality of nourishment and the manner in which these comestibles are taken

[3]Like many flowerings plucked from the land of the philosophers and replanted in the garden of anthropological concepts, "intersubjectivity" has been domesticated to the needs of our discipline and, in the process, altered from its original form. Duranti (2010) has argued that Husserl's original sense of intersubjectivity was not as a state of mutual attunement achieved through practice, but the existential condition of that achievement. (22) Still, Duranti himself speaks of the "varying and gradient forms" of intersubjectivity realized in practices that cultivate attention to others. (26) Let us say, then, that while we are all always living with intersubjectivity as potential, and we realize this potential in an especially acute form through practices like eating, talking, and playing.

in. A preference for strong flavors and aromas reminds us that intersubjective practices require for their realization those substances that, by their distinct qualities, can most potently produce the same subjectively experienced state in multiple people. (Munn 1986, 16) At men's cafes, menus offer foods that contain large quantities of animal fat (*dism*). Both Dijleh and Mal'ab cafes provide *dism* in abundance. The former focused more on international fast food like hamburgers, while the latter offered Iraqi specialties like kebab and lamb stew. It became fashionable during my fieldwork for men's cafes to offer a "healthy" (*sahii*) menu option – chicken breast cooked in a little oil, served alongside boiled vegetables and rice, with a tart, sweet sauce made with powdered citric acid and plenty of sugar – but I never saw someone order the *sahii* item a second time after trying it once. Restaurants provided even more intensely concentrated conveyances of *dism,* usually offset with intensely acidic (*haamid*) vinegar and citrus. The most expensive dish to be enjoyed in this way is *koozi b'il-liyya*, lamb served over rice and topped with the entire mass of lard that collects in taillike deposits that grow on a specific breed of sheep. A portion of *liyya* goes into the ground mixture for kebab at Iraqi restaurants and rendered *liyya* is mixed with the water in which rice boils. Cheaper alternatives, like *shawarma* (Gyros) and chicken fingers achieved distinction more through quantity than quality. While no sitting meal is complete without tea, not any tea will do. Iraqi tea (*istikaan chai*) is distinguished by its density and darkness from tea made with a bag soaked in the water (*chai lipton*) – what one companion dismissed as mere "heated water." The *istikaan* is itself a glass vessel, wide at the top, then narrowing slightly before opening again into a bulb-shaped bottom. These cups are filled to the very brim with black powder tea made in a *samowar*, a device composed of one teapot that brews a highly concentrated liquid stacked on top of another teapot that boils water used to dilute the concentrate. Drinking from an *istikaan* requires dexterity, patience, and tolerance for pain – the glass is too hot to grab it at the

middle, so the fingertips are used to lift it by the slightly thicker lip, where the scalding liquid is most likely to spill onto the fingers. So much sugar is added to the cup that it acquires a syrupy consistency, but the sweetness never manages to eliminate the amber bitterness. Arabic uses the same verb (*sharaba*) to encompass the consumption of both liquids and tobacco, and this latter "drink" was taken "heavy" (*thageel*) as well. Typically, a single person would order a *nargeelah* (water pipe) for himself, with a single *ras* ("head" filled with a mix of tobacco and syrup) costing the equivalent of a whole pack to as many as three packs of cigarettes, depending on the establishment. "Heads" were available in a variety of flavors and men favored robust, spicy aromas over sweet and fruity ones.

For all their potency, these substances conveyed no more than the potential for achieving a session of sitting. The "modalities" and "formalities" of use (De Certeau 1984, 29) that govern their consumption shapes how each is experienced together to compose a memorable sitting session. As with playing a game or performing a piece of music, timing is everything. Within the course of a sitting session, *nargeeleh* smoking took place throughout, while a fatty dish ought to be followed with a cup of tea and a "greasy [fingered] cigarette" (*sigara b'iz-ziffer*). The layering of substances creates a sensation of inner heat, like a sauna working its way from the inside out. The whole feeling is intensely pleasurable, and a little overwhelming to the unaccustomed: As a companion put it to me in the afterglow of a stupefying heavy meal, "In your country, they have premarital sex and alcohol. Here, we have kebab." The timing of the sitting meal during the day is also significant. My own deeply-internalized digestive habitus never permitted me to comfortably consume so much so late at night. Perhaps this was because I did not engage in the same pattern of eating and sleeping that my café companions did. These men usually had a late afternoon meal prepared for them by wives or mothers after they returned from work, then slept a few hours after

eating, then woke up, showered, dressed, and perfumed themselves before heading out for evenings that could begin as late as eleven o'clock at night. Caffeine could only get me so far, and companions often lamented that, "We've got to teach you to stay up late." The refusal of my own body to learn how to sustain this state of activity is itself evidence of the fact that such intersubjective engagements are achieved not only through the qualities of the things consumed, but through the order and manner of their consumption. Still, companions reported that they too continued to experience the sensation of having consumed much at a late hour well into the following day. This very ordinary and intimate way of remembering a meal is not trivial. It already suggests how marking acts of consumption with a concentrated intensity is a key aspect of converting occasions into memory. (De Certeau, 1984: 82-3) I will return to this point shortly.

Noisemaking

In Appadurai's analysis of "the feeding of the body", he writes that regular meals "take on the function of structuring temporal rhythm, of setting the minimum temporal measure (my analogy to musical activity) on which much more complex, and 'chaotic' patterns can be built." (1993, 25) And, beyond the gustatory and aromatic qualities of the meals consumed, sitting in a café created a certain kind of "percussive" auditory surround. Appadurai's analogy between eating and musicmaking works, I would suggest, because eating with others is always already an auditory engagement. "All the pleasures of the mouth," writes Giard, "are twice submitted to the laws of *orality,* as much by absorbing food (the pleasure of swallowing) as by support of a profuse linguistic activity (the pleasure of speaking)." (1998, 186) These pleasures of profuse talking took two main forms, whether in the gaming café or elsewhere, in which what is being said was less important than how. The first could be placed under the rubric of "hobbies" (*hawiyaat*). A "hobby"

is not necessarily something you do yourself, but rather something you have an abiding interest in and knowledge about. One could count "cars" as a hobby even if you didn't own a car, but knew one engine from another and kept pictures of your favorite cars on your cellphone to share with friends. Usually, hobbies served as an entry into spirited debates that had no real conclusion: Is a hybrid or a traditional engine better? How many minutes of cardio should you do to maximize muscle mass? Was *Batman vs. Superman* a good movie? Did giants once roam the earth? The selfaware seriousness of debating around specific topics finds its inverse in the second style of table talk: *tahsheesh*. *Tahsheesh* means "irreverence", but it also names a genre of comedic performance widely consumed via television and internet programs that satirizes the absurdities of daily life lived at the mercy of the powerful and the corrupt. The same word is used to describe the collaborative joking and mocking that occurs among friends who quote and imitate this style of talking as it appears in the popular media. Where debating over "hobbies" assumed an antagonistic, one-on-one format, *tahsheesh* operated like a wave passing through one participant to the next, scrambling quotes from YouTube comedy programs, snippets of popular songs and political slogans, and profane insults, all remixed through puns, rhymes, and double entendres. It is difficult to reproduce the flow of *tahsheesh* in writing, and I regret not making recordings of these conversations during fieldwork, although such efforts might have been extremely off-putting to participants. Suffice it to say, much like the Cairene coffee-talk described by Elyachar (2010), these conversations were of an extremely "phatic" nature; that is, talk directed towards "the cultivation of channels of communication" in and of themselves rather than talk focused on conveying discrete information. (460)

Another way of contributing to the auditory surround of sitting was through amplifying the sound of clever "plays." As I have tried to indicate in the vignette above, the interior of a gaming

café on a busy night is noisy with clicks, clacks, and slams. Following the same practical principles as heavy eating and drinking, this intensity is achieved through skillful practice in order to convert occasion into memory. Knowing the rules of a game is only the first condition of knowing how to play properly. For example, the marbles used in the game of *jackeroo* fit into divots on a special wooden board. When one makes a good play, one can slam one's marble into its spot in just such a way that it lands snugly in its divot, producing a satisfying click. Overexcited players can easily slam the marble into the edge of the divot, causing it to spring out of their pinched fingers and roll off the board in embarrassment. Dominoes and cards afford louder retorts, but it still requires a certain know-how to time and amplify the sound they make in striking the table, and backgammon is the noisiest game of all. Loud plays silence loud talkers, and reorient the attention of all involved to the state of the game as it now stands. The echo of the game piece resounded in the voices of the gamers, who reacted to the new state with high-fives, curses, or perhaps the sound of their own palms striking the table in frustration. This same technique of creating a sharp, audible retort was used to draw attention to the "play" of joking that characterized *tahsheesh*. Thus, a particularly clever reference, pun, or insult could be amplified by one or more listeners extending their hand, palm up, in order to receive a loud slap from the person who made the joke. The manner in which audible retorts amplify decisive or clever action in order to establish act and actor in memory will become clearer in the next section.

Ludic Improvisation

The gustatory and auditory ambiance of a sitting session form something very much like what musicians call a vamp, pocket, or groove, within which individual performers can expressively improvise. In the vein of our extended comparison between eating, music-making, and

gameplaying, jazz musicians attain the "enigmatic" and "mystical" achievement of good improvisation by, paradoxically, spending years *imitating* good improvisers and, bit by bit, coloring these imitations with aspects of one's own uniquely developed style. (Berliner 1994, 2, 120-121) And honing my facility for good sitting through imitation and experiment is very much how I came to embody the intuition that guides ludic improvisation, and, after some reflection, to understand it properly. For it is through demonstrating mastery of ludic improvisation achieved through extensive exposure to the sitting surround that one becomes marked as a member of the friend group.

One night, I find myself at play and taking too long to decide my next move. "Play, play, play!" yell my two opponents, seated on either side of me. My partner can only stare pleadingly from across the table. Another two men wait to take on the winning team from this round. One stares at his phone; another tries to get the attention of the waiter distributing coals for the water pipes. It will not do to think any longer, and so I make my move. Some cursing erupts from my opponents, and I respond in kind. My partner giggles, he is now in position to "eat" two marbles from the other side. As the turn passes to the right, I continue the trash talking between pulls on a cigarette and sips of tea. One of the observers has become interested. "See guys? When he started speaking Iraqi he sounded Japanese," he says, "And now he's sounding Kurdish." But even partial fluency is exhausting. By themselves, both the game and the language can be managed. Together, they demand too much. When it is my turn again, I am so buoyed with feeling that I play right away. The marble clicks into its new place, and groans erupt from around the table. My partner feigns at weeping on an opponent's shoulder, while the player in waiting eyes the endgame like wounded prey. The turn passes to my right. In less than a moment, I recall a video that someone shared during a session of *tahsheesh* some days prior, and I quote the punchline, which had to do

with suffering a crushing blow. Everyone erupts in laughter, and extends their hands for me to slap. They will be repeating the same catchphrase several times throughout the night, and in subsequent meetings will tell their friends the story of Zico the American's amusing outburst.

Improvisational acts of skill compress the constancy of friendship into a singular moment, and extend this moment into ongoing time with friends as the echo of a memorable retort. First, the ability to perform is, in itself, a realization in action of constant contact with the same group of other people. Where my companions delighted in my rare success, they themselves were genuine players whose moves and jokes went on at a rapid and consistent pace. The ability to make "plays" of this kind is itself dependent upon tremendous amounts of time "sitting" with the same group. In fact, comments made by companions who later found themselves among new groups suggest that mastery of sitting is dependent upon the specific group with which one sits. Thus, a woman who continue to follow *tahsheesh* YouTube programs after being resettled to the United States told me, "The slang and the references change so fast. I don't understand the jokes anymore." The investments of time among the same group, on the other hand, are realized in the sharp retort of the clever play. The cultivated complexity of the practice establishes a kind of barrier for entry or terms of admission, which helps enforce the sense that sitting is indeed a world apart. The requirement that one must make a temporal buy-in so that one can be admitted to play the game resembles the "tournaments of value" through which goods diverted from commercial exchange are consumed in the realization of relational hierarchies. (Appadurai 1984; Meneley 1996) But this is a much more egalitarian style of activity than the tournament of value, for while it separates the group from the world, it does not does not attempt to rank participants against one another. Here, the "magic circle" of the game that divides play from other sorts of action (Huizinga 1980, 10) is coextensive with the social circumference of the friend group itself. The alternation

between the constancy of sitting and the sharp, brief jokes, plays, and sounds that emerge from within this ongoing sensorial surround maintains the bulwark of the present against the world beyond. To advance a synesthetic perspective, the sharpness of the retort that marks the clever play recalls the intensity of bitterness, sweetness, or acidity that breaks into the heavy *dism*-induced haze. And this same distinction between the ongoing and the completed act is present in the postural grammar of the present continuous "sitting" (*gaa'id*) and past perfect "stood up" (*gaam*).

These flourishes that break onto the scene of constancy are what, with regards to improvisatory storytelling, De Certeau refers to as "coups" – a term equally apt to describe a strike with a hand and a play in a card game! The successful coup "concentrates the *most* knowledge in the *least* time" and, in so doing, compresses the "unending series of experiences" in the "punctual moment of their recapitulation" which marks the "occasion" in memory. (83) Such a brief, loud, and focused moment crystalizes all the nights spent in preparation of its achievement – it is "an icon of the process which produced it." (Munn 1983, 278) And these iconic achievements will, in turn, "index" the kind of person one is among those who understand the kinds of habits and routines that go into achieving such a performance. (Caton 1986, 292) In the joke about going from Japanese to Kurdish made by the companion in the foregoing vignette, I approached inclusion through a fluency that was, I surmised, not only evidenced in my accent, but in my growing, if still imperfect, ability to keep up with *tahsheesh* cross-talk, hold a cigarette and a glass of hot tea in one hand, and continue playing the game on my turn. And, in rapidly referencing a popular punchline, I had compressed my growing experience of life among my friends into a joke that could, in turn, be repeated in subsequent "plays." It is through this alternation of constancy and occasion that the "ongoing present (spatiotemporal field) is experienced as continually surpassing

itself, engaging the future; and the past is continually being engaged within the present that surpasses it." (Munn 1983, 280) And it is this "spatiotemporal synthesis" (*op. cit.*) that makes "sitting" such a central part of creating and maintaining relationships throughout the duration of displacement.

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In this section, we have considered the techniques and materials through which people achieve a distinctive experience of the present and, through that extended, ongoing present, create and maintain friendships. This ongoing, encompassing, and intersubjective present is made through the practiced techniques that draw out and combine the qualities of value that inhere latently in material things. And these artful usages of materials are, in turn, amplified to commemorate time spent within the group that employs them. This encompassing present corresponds to the cafes' spatial and temporal distance from domains of work and family. Diversion is productive of new states always insofar as it is also a diversion from other possible endeavors. There is no encompassment without separation; we withdraw from one domain in order to draw close in another.

What, then, is sitting a diversion from? I have already suggested that the practice works by extending an intersubjective sense of the present that is somehow removed from the fraught histories and futures that color the everyday life of displacement. Chakrabarty (2010) has discussed how Bengali *adda* – "the practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversations" (110) – permits "a zone of comfort in capitalism", within which the "endless debates of modernity are played out." (144) Similarly, sitting creates a "zone", both spatial and temporal, within which events and problems taking place beyond that zone can be examined,

debated, and satirized. From within the ongoing space and time of the act, sitting is indeed a comforting, creative, and intentional way of carving out space and time for friends against the violent histories and anxious futures that reach into the lifeworld of the displaced. But, as we will now see, there are also positions in life from which people reflect on the worth of diverted time, and come to judge these years spent making memorable relationships as something they would like to forget. In the next section, I describe a handful of dilemmas that people have reported when contemplating a life of diversions. These dilemmas do not invalidate all that has been said about sitting as a sophisticated and affecting art of conviviality. But they do remind us that the very same embodied values that make sitting possible also convey the abiding concerns of dispossession.

The Will to Forget

"I wish to forget these days in Jordan," my friend Abbas told me one night while we sat in his car at the edge of a *matall*, overlooking the shimmering lights of the city below. "These three years, I consider them a waste." From a deep and habituated source of American optimism, I responded, "What about the friends you've made here? Are those times a waste?" He tells me, "Most of my friends are gone. Look, for work, I'm not so rich that I can own a factory. It's hard for a pharmacist. I'm working in the same job and not earning anything toward my future." I sit in silence with him a while longer, until we finish our beers and chuck the bottles out the window, leaving them amid the broken glass and crushed packs of cigarettes that litter the ground.

The claim that one wished to forget time spent in Jordan was a common one. Other people spoke of time both speeding up and emptying out upon arriving in the country, and many claimed that nothing important ever happened to them while living there. Sitting does indeed *make* a certain sense of time, if we understand time to mean the concrete and sensual duration of experience. But,

from a different point of view, sitting also *takes* time, when we understand time as the abstract quantification of days, months, and years that must be accounted during displacement. Sitting, then, is a technique of forgetting as well commemoration. For those mired in a state of attentive absorption within flow of the game, time as it exists outside the field of practice disappears, not unlike the "zone" experienced by gamblers taken in by the casino (Schull 2012, 19) or what happens to chess players who stay up all night playing online matches. (Desjarlais 2011, 191) And, through sitting, ludic improvisors together create for one another "recursive loops of fixed alertness" that "can induce trancelike states" with an "addictive" effect. (*op. cit.*) Yet the scent of burning time (*takhreeg al-wakat*) also evokes the feeling of "waiting on embers" (*intithaar 'alaa al-jumur*) that characterizes displacement in Jordan. From this point of view, the creation of an ongoing, intersubjective present takes on the appearance of transience and wastefulness, and one begins to doubt whether or not the values cultivated in this practice can be realized in future achievements. This will to forget – to cancel or erase the passage of time in displacement – raises contradictions in the foregoing discussion of sitting as practice of extending an ongoing, intersubjective present. And the line between these two viewpoints rests in whether we view the consumed commodity with regard to the qualities of value enjoyed in its use or the quantity of value that must be exchanged in its acquisition.

Transience of Friends

Sitting is fundamentally concerned with friendship. The same small group of friends form an exclusive partnership, and it is not considered polite to drift from one group to another. But, however long the odds may be, would-be migrants do sometimes end up migrating. Those who have spent years waiting in Amman will have seen several friends go on to other places. These ties

are maintained to some extent through phone calls and social media. For example, another man whose "best friend" had been resettled to Sweden spoke to him every day on the phone, usually when he was on his way to Mal'ab Café. I had several occasions to overhear these conversations, which consisted in the sort of "phatic" exchange of phrases through which people ensure that the channel of communication remains open. Others who had seen friends move on often passed the phone around during their sitting sessions in an effort to draw the absent person into the circle of mutual attention that characterizes the practice. However, these phone call friendships seemed like pale shadows of the rich, layered, and intense intersubjective experience achieved through gathering within the sensorial surroundings of the site itself. Even I, who exited the scene following the completion of my fieldwork, can attest to the subjective experiences of loss and inadequacy that arose in the wake of departure. One can only repeat phatic questions like "How are you?", "What's new?", "How're the guys?" and so on before the person on the other end begins to sound as if they are only staying on the line out of a sense of obligation.

People responded to this dilemma in different ways. For some, the answer was to disappear completely, cutting off all contact and only emerging months later when, for whatever reason, they decided that enough time had passed. Others went to lengths to hide the fact of their impending departure from friends until the phone call from the UN or appropriate embassy arrived telling them they had been booked on a flight to a new life. The timeline of resettlement was not allowed intersect the time-circle of friendship. On the other hand, departure could be the occasion for one last hoorah. These "departure parties" (*heflaat al-wadaa'*) were in many ways the inverse of the sort of gatherings characterized by "sitting." First, they were not casual affairs. They tended to happen at higher-end restaurants and people dressed up and spent more for the event. Second, they were not only for the attendance of the core group of friends. A much broader cast of acquaintances

and relations, including female relatives, attended the departure parties. These gatherings were, in this way, much more reminiscent of birthday parties. And, like birthdays, departure parties marked the passage from one state of being to another, along the timeline, rather than extending the present and fortifying the time-circle. There was, moreover, the fact that attention was oriented not towards the material of intersubjective engagement, but towards the person being feted. And so, while these parties might be said to commemorate friendship, they did so with a sense that the time apportioned for that friendship was coming to an end, and that something new was beginning. Keeping with the argument so far, different styles of activity are suited to different senses of time, and the sense of time that extended across the whole of the migrant's geographic and biographic trajectory is quite different from the time of an extended present.

Diversions from the Fatherly Future

As we have already heard from others, "there is no future in Jordan." Abbas' concerns about wishing to forget time in Jordan because "I'm not earning anything toward my future" is consistent with this statement. Earning money is not opposed to or outside of the "regime of value" to which this future is oriented. The previous chapter makes it clear that this future is the realization of a sense of intergenerational responsibility to predecessors and descendants that is made possible through wealth, or, more specifically, through the ability to exchange ones skilled labor for wealth that, in turn, can be exchanged for children's mobility, education, and, ultimately, class status. This is a "reproductive futurism" (Pursley 2019, 8) under which one is recruited to meet one's obligations as a father. And the time of sitting conflicted with this masculine obligation in some noteworthy ways. Willis notes that working-class men in England do not simply produce or perform masculinity, but also practice a "simultaneous relative demotion – a destressing" of those

aspects of their behavior that might be perceived as putting them into the same group as their female counterparts. (1982, 132) Similarly, those involved in sitting seemed to constantly be guarding against the fact that their activities were open to interpretation as passive, irresponsible, or otherwise unfitting of grown men. The very postural grammar that marks sitting as distinct from getting up already contains the resemblance to unmanly behavior. Men contrasted the pleasure of "sitting" on a night out with friends with the averred prospect of "sitting at home" (*ga'da b'ilbayt*).[4] The phatic style of talk that characterizes sitting also had to be distinguished from similar styles of talk on a gendered basis. "I used to hang with a different group at this café," said one companion, "but they were always sharing secrets about people and talking badly about them. This is women's talk/gossip (*hechii niswaan*)!" The intimacies that might be suggested in sharing food and drink were likewise averred. Thus, where the *nargeelah* (water pipe) could be shared in order to economize, the long hose was always passed with the nozzle end folded inside a fist and facing down, so as to avoid the appearance of extending a lascivious invitation.

The little disavowals of femininity, passivity, and homosexuality that pervade masculine sociality in this and many other parts of the world assure that behaviors that might look a certain way are not interpreted as such. As with the divisions that obtain between consumption spaces for

[4] In her ethnography of gender dynamics in Cairo, Farah Ghannam theorizes a category of manly action through the emic concept of *mawaaqif* ("stands"), to refer to "the stance one takes in a specific situation [in which] a man becomes noticeable and recognized by others as such." (2013, 83) The use of this derivative of *waqaf* to express the notion of action as "taking a stand" also found use among my interlocuters, for whom it had the additional connotation of resolve in a situation of conflict or disagreement – "taking a side" in a dispute or begrudging a point in an argument (*awaaqif b'il-amr*). If "standing in place" denotes consistency and loyalty, "standing up" (*gowm*), in its contrast to "sitting", carries connotations of asserting one's place with a similarly masculine resolve. *Gowm* is used to connote the embodied act of moving from sitting to standing, but it is also the term from which the concept of "a folk" or "a people" is derived (*al-qowm*), as well as the notion of "residency", as used for Jordanian residency cards. (*al-iqama*) The concept of *qawmiyya*, while usually translated into English as "Arab nationalism", carries both the sense of "a folk" *and* this sense of a physical assertion of place through decisive action against external intervention: to speak of Iraqi *qawmiyya* is to speak quite specifically of organized violent resistance to foreign occupation, not to the full historical and ideological sense of "nationalism" as the term is used in English.

families (*'a'ilaat)* and those for unaccompanied men (*shabaab*), this is not really a question of individually gendered subjectivities. The most important distinction is not between male and female subjects, but between familial and friendly relations, with each having its proper time, space, and style. Efforts to "destress" the appearance of unmanly acts from within the activity of sitting therefore evidence an awareness that this practice poses a threat to the realization of one's role as a (re)productive member of the family. Again, there is a contradiction between the ongoing, encompassing present cultivated in sitting and the way in which such diversions appear when viewed with a regard to the longer trajectory of a life.

The Cost of Living

As Abbas put it, the ongoing time of displacement in Jordan feels like a waste because one is not accumulating wealth that might otherwise be put to a future. There can be no consumption without the purchase of commodities, and there can be no purchase of commodities without the exchange of wages. The commodity character of consumption is particularly evident in the realm of café sitting. Thus, within the sphere of family consumption, mothers and wives refashion purchased goods and endow them with the appearance of something more than mere bearers of exchange value. Likewise, workplaces often rely on the labor of female employees, young boys, or, in the case of some higher-end offices, full-time Egyptian guest workers, to furnish and prepare coffees, snacks, lunches, and cigarettes. At the café, waiters and occasionally chefs do engage in banter with the guests. But there is no illusion about the fact that you are purchasing a commodified service at the cafe. Those who go out together each night do not, moreover, engage in the forceful attempts to pay for one another's meals and drinks as they do might at restaurants or among more distant associates. Café visits do not, moreover, come cheaply: "Half of my monthly income goes

towards going out with friends", one frequent companion explained, "I keep working because if you don't have some money, and the guys call you, you have to say, 'Sorry I'm sitting at home tonight.'" This particular friend made great efforts to keep up with working multiple odd jobs while also finding the time and money to sit with friends, which could be read at a glance through the dark circles under his eyes or the fact that he often missed his turn because he was keeping up with two different bosses on two different cellphones. If the twenty-four hours of the "working day" determine the total sum of our available waged and "free" time (Marx 2015[1887], 370-371), those who sought to pay for their sitting had to little choice but to expand the "absolute length" of this day in order to maintain their habit.

Insofar as it involves the exchange of commodified labor and things, the price of consumption is an index (in both semiotic and financial senses) of Jordan's position within a world system of production, trade, and security. And, if we follow this index towards the deeper forces to which it points, we will discover that the high cost of living is to a large extent the result of economic policies that sustain Jordanian stability under American suzerainty. Of particular interest is the peg between the Jordanian Dinar and the U.S. Dollar. The dinar-dollar peg was established in 1995, as part of a broader plan to integrate Jordan's economy into that of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] countries by ensuring that wages paid to Jordanians working in the Gulf would not lose value when being remitted back into Jordan and to avoid the possibility that the value of capital investments made by GCC investors in Jordan would not vanish with the devaluation of the local currency. (Hijazeen & Al-Assaf 2018, 14)[5] The dinar-dollar peg has indeed helped ensure the stability of foreign investments in the country and prevented capital flight, but it has also

[5] To maintain this peg requires holding very large reserves of foreign currency, which Jordan receives in the form of humanitarian, military, and development aid from the GCC and the United States.

exacerbated the morbid symptoms of Jordanian manufacturing and increased the country's overall dependence on foreign imports. (Sweidan 2013) The cost of consuming in Jordan climbs still higher because of high tariffs on imported goods and high taxes on consumption.[6] Of course, most café sitters are only indirectly aware the effects of "exchange rate pass-through into the economy." (*op. cit.*, 159) But there is a certain consciousness of the forces at work evidenced in the various tropes that people use to talk about daily life in the country. Thus, Jordan "drinks your blood", "there is no future in Jordan", "your money is eaten up here", and "even a 'hello' costs money here." Moreover, everyone knows that consumer goods are much cheaper in other parts of the world, and act accordingly by cultivating small-scale schemes to avoid import and consumption taxes. Between fieldwork jaunts, I became entangled in plots to bring cellphones, battery packs, nicotine vapes, condoms, laptop computers, brand-name shoes and clothing, and other little luxuries into the country. Cellphones and battery packs were made particularly conspicuous, frequently laid out on the table so that we might compare their virtues and capacities. In so far as these commodities are acquired through networks of friends who have ended up traveling abroad, they are also, to reprise Munn (1983, 278), icons of the processes that produced them. However, this kind of casual smuggling is a relatively marginal activity. Those who engage in smuggling as a primary source of income do so in order to exchange commodities for money, not to consume them among friends.

The Inactive Body

[6] IMF and USAID efforts to move Jordan away from the regressive, consumption-based tax scheme they had imposed decades prior by expanding a progressive income tax were met by a revolt of the country's petit bourgeois professionals, who orchestrated street demonstrations leading to the resignation of the Prime Minister in the spring of 2019. Ultimately, the tax reform plans were abandoned and the Gulf countries decided to inject more cash into Jordan to ensure ongoing economic and political stability.

Sitting is a practice that requires embodied capacities of attentiveness and improvisation. And the cultivation of these capacities over great amounts of time also entails the transformation of the body, which, in turn, becomes yet another icon of the processes that produced it. Thus, the fat of a man's stomach (*kersh*) can be taken as evidence of social status, for it is only by consuming much and laboring little that this store can accumulate. We have already considered, in chapter one, how some people in Amman prefigure Iraqi migrants as both physically large and financially affluent, and how these notions about "living large", so to speak, are grounded in the public-facing displays of means through which other "kinds of people" encounter Iraqis in everyday life. In proverbial terms, "*al-kersh* [is] *hayba."* This latter term, *hayba,* is difficult to define, even for comfortably bilingual informants. My initial translation of the term as "prestige" did not meet their approval. *Hayba* is something like the combination of charisma and terribleness, an overpowering personality and presence through which one's will is imposed on others in a blunt and unsophisticated way. Saddam Hussein, I was told, had *hayba* in abundance. But why should the *kersh*, and by extension the *hayba* it embodies, be counted among the dilemmas of sitting?

At one of the Fallujah-style kebab restaurants you can find in Amman, Jordan, five young Iraqi men and I finished off our last morsels of lamb and beef liver. We were reeling in a haze of spices and fat as we waited on a cup of hot, dark Iraqi tea to revive us. One man placed his hands beneath his stomach and hefted it upwards. "This here *kersh* is twenty-five kilos." At this, the other men hoisted-up their own bellies to compare. "Why do you guys have a *kersh* like that?" I asked. "It's because we are not so active," said another, "We are always sitting and the only thing for us to do is eat." In this scene, the *kersh* measures time passed in consumption and leisure. However, this embodiment of accumulated time is valued in a very different way. Rather than conveying power, status, and presence, it is a reminder of limits to mobility and activity. Efforts to rid the body of its

misplaced weight by working out at the gym give further evidence to this claim. Both working out at the gym and working at low-paying jobs were described as being, if nothing else, "better than sitting at home." Those men who did work out routinely did so for the sense of progress towards a defined goal and opportunity to put expertise to work. For those wouldbe migrants most committed to exiting the region and starting a new life in the West, ambitions to transform the body along more svelte proportions were stated as a rejection of what they took to be the habits of life embodied in the *kersh*. Cooling off after a workout with one companion, I was told that, "I'd love to get in shape, but I can't as long as I eat like an Iraqi." This observation is reminiscent of Ghannam's account of a young Cairene body-builder explicitly rejecting the prospect of nurturing a *kersh* like his father, which he interpreted as old-fashioned and provincial. (2013, 70) There are, then, some men who do indeed conceive of the body at the conjuncture of two distinct and separate "regimes of value": international and parochial, or modern and traditional. Much more could be written on the history and circulation of these notions, though that would take us well beyond the scope of the present discussion. What I want to stress, instead, is that such divergent values emerge with regard to the many different activities, spaces, times, and relationships in the lifeworld of the individual, and that all of these different possibilities are mediated through commodities. Going out to the gym with your American friend or staying home to eat with your family are, like sitting at the café, choices that become meaningful in relation to the projects, relationships, and experiences they cultivate. And, as in every other case described in this section, the value of "sitting" appears dubious when it is put in light of a longer-term trajectory.

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In this section, we have considered some of the ways in which the very same practice that provides a diversion from the abiding concerns of the displaced presents dilemmas for those who participate

in it. The key to understanding this ambiguity rests in the distinction between the sense of an ongoing, encompassing, and intersubjective present cultivated in sitting, and the light in which sitting appears when placed in a longer-term trajectory of migration, accumulation, and reproduction. This perspective draws out the transient, unmanly, costly, and inactive aspects of sitting, and leads to a will to forget time that now appears as a waste. Thus, far from an overcoming of or resistance to the situation, sitting, through the medium of the costly commodities consumed therein, is colored by an awareness of the broader forces among which it is embedded.

Conclusion: Sitting's Ways and Means

This chapter has explored the ambivalent regard in which some Iraqi migrants hold elaborate acts of collective consumption and playful diversion. It has argued that this ambivalence resolves into the two different ways that "sitting" (*al-ga'da*) relates to time. On the one side, sitting is a distinct and cultivated style of action that, through a coordinated attentiveness to common substances, creates an ongoing, encompassing, and intersubjective sense of the present, thereby providing a welcome contrast to the violent histories and anxious futures that impinge up on the everyday life of the displaced. On the other side, when these diversions are reappraised from the more contemplative and distant viewpoint of the migrant journey as whole, they appear to be nothing more than a waste to be forgotten, for they use up the limited stores of time and money that might otherwise be put towards outlasting the lengthy and uncertain resettlement process. This is a contradiction that we cannot resolve through analysis. To return to the beginning of the chapter, we recall the story of two men comparing the merits of viewing life as a whole against the pleasure of being mired in the moment, and note that the contradiction itself ends up furnishing material for the irresolvable debates that go on throughout sitting sessions. We can, however, reflect on how this ambiguity reflects a contradiction immanent to the form of value that mediates the practice.

Commodities, embodiments of value, possess a double nature, they are both “substances” and “magnitudes” of value. As a substance, the commodity is a “useful thing composed of many properties; it can therefore be useful in various ways.” (Marx 1990, 125) The shared state engendered consuming animal fat, nicotine, and caffeine together is a “discovery of these ways and hence of the manifold uses of things”, as is the sharp retort made by a game piece laid down on the table in just the right way, or an amusing line from a comedy program or news segment. And all of these ways of using things contribute to a “process [through which] the community creates itself as the *agent of its own value creation*. (Munn 1986, 20), the community in this case being the circle of intimate companions. And yet, in a capitalist society, commodities *always* embody *both* distinctively useful qualities *and* homogeneous exchangeable quantities of a common substance. (Marx, 128) Every act of use is also, therefore, an act of exchange, and, in this case, every act of exchange also one of sacrifice, for the value given over to acquiring one sort of thing cannot be given again to get something else. “This situation is not a theoretical one,” writes Lefebvre, channeling a passage from Marx (1975, 42), “it is an ‘absolutely desperate’ reality; the man who has nothing finds himself ‘separated from existence in general’ and a fortiori from human existence; he is separated from that ‘world of objects,’ i.e. the real world, without which no human existence is possible.” (175) Or, in the plainer language of my friend Ayoub, “Look, I spend about half of my monthly income on going out with the guys. But I keep working because, if you don’t have any money and the guys call you, you have to say ‘Sorry, I’m sitting at home tonight.’”

However, the ambivalence that is so irresolvable from within the situation of displacement is not the unusual course that diversions take. Here, we should remember that displacement is a process that produces dispossession, the parting from the means by which a group ensures its own continuity. What might life look like without this contradiction in play? To answer this question,

permit me to dive back into the theory of diversions. To revisit Appadurai's argument, the diversion of commodities from the path of potential exchange into one of consumption allows for the cultivation of relationships through which new value can accumulate. That is, diversion *from* one path in the past is also diversion *into* another path in the future, and it is by asserting control over the means to divert and transvalue (or "enclave") commodities that status groups ensure their distinction from one another. (1986, 22) My sense is that Appadurai's clear and evocative vocabulary of values, paths, and diversions is really just a more concrete way of talking about Bourdieu's far more abstract and obscure notion of "symbolic capital." In both cases, the authors are looking at how social actors operationalize a phenomenological distinction between the diverted object as it appears in the act of exchange and the sum total of structures, knowledge, and pervious exchanges that stand behind the object, that are its resume or biography, and yet are, in Bourdieu's words "socially repressed" in the moment of the act. (1977, 176)[7] However, it seems that Appadurai and Bourdieu diverge on how this act of repression feeds back into a larger and more attenuated process of valorization. For Appadurai, consumption makes value in conceptual isolation from production; the diverted object simply becomes a different kind of thing upon its entrance into a new "regime of value": an autonomous field of tastes, fashions, and desires that must be accounted for through its own "demand side" theory. (58) But Bourdieu goes a step farther, arguing that, to be worthy of the name, "accumulations" of "symbolic capital" must be "reconvertible" back into "material capital", which can, in turn, be distributed to laboring subordinates to create more symbolic capital, and so on. (1997, 180) Here, Bourdieu, unlike Appadurai, does not try to supplant Marx's discussion of production in the valorization process by providing another, different theory of consumption as a valorization process. Quite the opposite:

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[7] In a way, the swallowing-up of duration by the moment inverts the logic of the De Certeau's "coup", in which the maximum amount of past time is made apparent in the most momentary flourish.

His theory of symbolic capital elaborates Marx's basic insight that production and consumption are dialectical moments within a higher totality.[8] He makes this elaboration by sublating the apparent contradiction between a too-narrow and "restricted definition of economic interest" that is so self-consciously opposed to "strictly symbolic interest" into a higher unity of "a general theory of the economics of practice." (177) This higher unity is not an abstraction so much as an integration of moments in time. It is realized through the ongoing reproduction of a social totality that subsumes moments of production *and* consumption within itself: "the patrimony of a family or lineage [that] includes not only their land and instruments of production but also in their clientele… a capital of rights and duties built up in the course of successive generations and providing an additional sources of strength which can be called upon when extra-ordinary situations break in upon the daily routine." (178) In other words, diversion from one path to another is never enough. For diversion to be valorized, the new pathways it creates must ultimately lead back into reproducing relations between distinct classes of socially-produced persons: patrons and clients, commanders and levies, honorable men and ordinary ones. (179) The move to sublate consumption and production into the higher level of the social totality is paralleled in the work of Marxist-feminist scholars who likewise do not try to supplant or sunder but instead elaborate the dialectic to encompass the forms of relational personhood that make the ongoing reproduction of the "patrimony" and the "household" viable within the market. (*e.g.* Morris, 2016: 57-59) And I would add, in agreement with Yanagisako (2012), that what has been said about women's roles in this regard is also true of men, who participate within "a gender-specific ethic of personhood and

[8] Marx writes in *Grundisse:* "Production, then, is also immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production. Each is immediately its opposite. But at the same time a mediating movement takes place between the two. Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter's material; without it, consumption would lack an object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products."

family" in which economic activity is linked to family responsibility as "interconnected projects of masculine creation." (20) The value of diversion only appears to be accounted for by reference to a consensus agreement on taste. Beyond that one-sided form of appearance are relations within what Munn calls "a wider dialectical system" of "communal value (i.e. the value a community regards as essential to its viability)." (1992, 20) It is when this viability has broken down due to external coercive forces that a theory of valorization grounded in consumer consensus becomes inadequate for the case at hand.

Now, what happened to that case? When we stop trying to isolate acts of production and consumption from the social totality, and instead view each moment with regards to the whole, we can start understanding why the ambiguity that surrounds the commodity form is articulated in the exact ways that it is: as a contradiction between the ongoing, encompassing, and intersubjective present and the progressive trajectories of migration, manhood, and accumulation. What has happened, I would suggest, is that the present situation has driven a wedge between two moments in a longer circuit of social reproduction exactly at the point where the consumptive production of "symbolic capital" meets the productive consumption of "material capital", thereby setting moments of diversion at odds with the long-term perspective. The destruction of Iraq and the escape to Jordan were events whereby the legal rights, social networks, and political privileges that allowed a class to convert and reconvert between social and material capital were lost due to the intrusion of an external coercive force. This, of course, returns us to the argument that displacement is an attenuated process of dispossession. And now, we can see why this process is not experienced in the same way as it might be by, say, peasants being parted from their land. What has been lost is not an original state of natural property, but the entitlements that had been won through struggle for a particular group during a previous period in the history of the Iraqi

state. These entitlements allowed certain families to participate in, and perhaps command, a position within the system of exchange, here meaning both the official distributive network of patrons and clients through which the means of subsistence flowed and by which Ba'athist Iraq was held together as a viable political formation[9] and their illicit counterparts. Analogous networks for converting and reconverting symbolic and material capital do exist in Jordan, but in a very different form from which Iraqis are, except for the elite of the elite, shut out. And they continue to exist in Iraq, but in yet another different form that demands participation in the bloody business of identarian capitalism. There, as we saw in chapter one, politics (*as-siyasa*) is the obscured terrain of struggle in which elites accumulate symbolic capital that might be realized as material capital, and back again, all through the mediating sacrifices of their clients, followers, and partisans who fight the sovereign classes' battles over property on their behalf. In the next chapter, we will meet some of the transnational businessmen who do, in fact, get something of value out of sitting in this way. But for those who have disavowed politics, resettlement offers another possibility for the recursive conversion of symbolic into material capital and back again—insofar as the professional class refugee imagines that, living abroad, he will be able to transform his qualifications, his work ethic, his high standard of culture, and all the other entitlements of his class into money through participation in a secure and just labor market that offers a wage sufficient to achieve the intergenerational perpetuation of his own elevated status. If we understand diversion, work, and family as moments within the totality of a human life, then it is as if my *jackeroo* partners are confronting a "geographical switching crisis", in which capital accumulated

[9] At least according to the party's own stated aims. Sassoon (2012, 35) argues that the Ba'athist regime was explicitly concerned with commanding the social totality as a totality, quoting Saddam Hussein: "'We have to emphasize that this society is led by a party, and that party is the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party…which leads [the people] in its values, its organizations, and also leads it in its ideas and its policies.. Thus, it is necessary that the party's values and ideologies are at the forefront of these activities…'"

in one circuit cannot, because of the spatial immobility of the material form in which that value is embodied, be converted to flow into another, more profitable circuit. (Harvey 1985, 13) And as each of these circuits converge, everyday life comes to be experienced through its irresolvable ambiguities. (Lefebvre 2014, 53-4)

For those who relish sitting for its own sake, the consequences of displacement are still uncertain. It is only when the flickering dawn of the averred future casts its harsh light into the consciousness of the present that sitting takes on its more troubling aspect. This impending situation is, as we have already seen, embodied in those persons who appear, in the eyes of the sitters, as beyond hope. Or, to put it in the terms of the foregoing discussion, those who have been socially and historically produced as members of another class: A class that have nothing to exchange to meet their needs but their own bodily toil, and whose position of necessity itself ensures the viability of the ongoing reproduction of capitalism as a social mode of existence. To move from one contradiction to another, it is from within the sites of consumption where sitting takes place that these other figures appear at both their most spatially proximate and their most consciously repressed. The workers who make and serve the comestible commodities that make sitting possible are themselves skilled contributors to the achievement of the intersubjective state, darting in and out to deliver food, coals, and games with smiling faces and an easy, laughing manner. But their contributions are not memorialized in friendship—they are sold in exchange for wages and forgotten as soon as the tab has been paid. Nevertheless, the human beings who present these figures for others are more than waiters, even if they are that, and, on leaving the job at the end of the shift, will go on with lives, in which they too are husbands, fathers, worshippers, players, and much else. There, they confront everyday ambivalences that are all the more intense because

the cost of their work is born in their own bodies, the only form of property they have left to exchange. It is to their situation that we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Rendered Transactions: Alienation in a Restaurant Kitchen

"*The waiter in a café is not playing at being a waiter. He is one. And he is not one. He is not selling his time (for working and living) in exchange for the role of a waiter. And it is precisely when he is playing at being a waiter (and a virtuoso in the art of carrying overladen trays, etc.) in front of his customers that he is no longer a waiter; by playing himself he transcends himself. Moreover, it is certain that a worker does not play at being a worker and could not transcend himself if he did. He is completely 'that', and at the same time he is completely other and something else: head of the family, or an individual eager to enjoy life, or a revolutionary militant. For him and within him, at his best moments and his worst, contradictions and alienations are at a maximum. For us, in our society, with the forms of exchange and the division of labor which govern it, there is no social relation—relation with the other—without a certain alienation*."

- Henri Lefebvre, forward to *The Critique of Everyday Life, vol. 1*.

I was three days into my job as a dishwasher at the Anta Warda restaurant when Rami asked me if I'd like to learn how the kebab was made. In about five paces, I'd crossed the narrow space of the kitchen and joined him in the butchering station, next to the headless carcass of a sheep that hung from a ceiling hook. We hefted the animal onto the table, and Rami went about dividing it at the joints with a huge cleaver that smashed through the bone and into steel table with a deafening noise. As I watched him work, the animal was transformed into piles of thighs, forelegs, ribs, and haunches, and then further disassembled into the components of *tekka* (cubes of meat), *dhuloo'*

(chops), and *kebab* (ground meat). Although the carcass arrived skinned and cleaned, it had been delivered along with its heart, liver, and testicles. These organs would be set aside in metal bowls and served to customers willing to pay a premium, or to the owners and their associates who met to talk over deals at the restaurant. The *liyya*, a jellyfish-like deposit of pure fat that accumulated in a sack above the sheep tail, was also carved up into cubes, some of which would be added to the meat grinder to make the kebab mixture, some rendered into liquid and mixed in with the rice, and a few kept intact to cook whole for those aforementioned special clients. By the time he was finished, Rami's face was bright read. Sweat dripped from the sides of his neck into the foam collar he started wearing after developing an excruciating twinge in his neck. As we began to store the now-dissected parts in the refrigerator, a question occurred to me. "Rami, are you fasting for Lent?" I asked him. Like all but one of the workers at the restaurant, Rami was a member of the Syriac Catholic Church. He and his brother-in-law, Joseph, had once urged me to wear a rosary under my shirt when coming to work, and he'd gotten into screaming fights with the manager over taking a day off to get a haircut and attend mass. But, despite what I knew of his devotion, his answer did not surprise me. "How can I abstain from eating meat in a place like this?" he asked me, throwing his hands down to his sides. "All day long, I am working with meat."

Figure 7: Working with meat. [Photo by the author].

In butchering the sheep, Rami partitioned a once-living creature into a collection of objects, with each accorded its proper price, place, and purpose. In this chapter, I argue that this partitioning of a living body into alienable parts is reflected in the experiences, concepts, and practices of the restaurant worker who gives up segments of himself—his body and his time—to his employer in exchange for the wages that will enable him to wait out the duration of displacement. To elaborate this process, I will take the reader through a series of pedagogical moments in which my erstwhile colleagues tried to teach me about the bodily practices demanded by this job. This account begins with their descriptions of the kitchen as a place and time where conventions of rules, piety, and

justice do not apply. This profane context abounds in the grotesque violation of both human and non-human bodies, "rendering" the sacrosanct whole into a collection of "anatomized" parts. (Bakhtin 1984, 196) Not content to let the body adapt to the grueling pace of toil in a passive way, workers learning their trade actively accelerate the transformation of their own living "nerves" (*'asaab*) and flesh into the unfeeling but efficacious instruments of production. Yet it quickly becomes apparent that the gains won by this accelerated output are not enjoyed by the worker himself. Both the hard-working body and its edible products are presented to the bosses, who then may decide to grant the workers extra free time in recognition of this surplus of "objectified" effort. (Marx 1990, 993) Earning this free time is precious, for it allows the worker to engage in pursuits outside of the kitchen, such as the ritual life of his community, or to simply catch his breath and recover from a state of constant effort. But, as we move from the "results of the immediate process of production" (*ibid.*) to the more attenuated timescale of "the valorization process" as a whole (Marx 985), we will see that, on the balance, this exchange leads to the accumulation of valuable substances in the body of the bosses and their associates, mirroring, in an inverse way, the transformation that work makes in the body of the worker. The restaurant was not a profitable enterprise in its own right, but the value of this small-scale circuit of production, consumption, and exchange was realized in the bosses' "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1997, 180) which, in turn, could be converted through transnational connections to truly profitable business opportunities. The embodiment of this valorization process in its form of appearance leads people to take a contingent division between workers and bosses as if it were a manifestation of particular ethno-sectarian natures, bringing us full circle to the gallery of "human kinds" (*anwaa' an-naas*) from which the dissertation began.

Before immersing ourselves among this group, I want to give some further thought to the basis of their distinction and, along the way, provide a sense of background and context. Arab and Syriac, Muslim and Christian, urban and rural, there were many ways in which the workers of Anta Warda could be considered a group apart from the people whom we have encountered so far. But here, I am primarily concerned with this group's distinct relationship to property, that is, its class (Batatu 1978, 6-8), and the social significance of this relationship, this is, its status. (11) The restaurant workers are distinct in both class and status on the basis of how they earn their living. To offer a somewhat simplistic schema as a starting point, where investors are able to transform their capital into assets and professionals can find work in accordance with their qualifications, the workers of Anta Warda must engage in intensive physical exertion on the job, and the jobs that they work often involve putting the body into situations that are widely considered unclean, demeaning, or otherwise unsuitable. The story of how the workers of Anta Warda arrived in this situation is a complicated one. Most of my colleagues at the restaurant had not been badly off to begin with. I was shown pictures of stately two-story homes, told tales about better times working in family-owned businesses, and was introduced to older relatives who were still collecting pensions from jobs as civil servants and schoolteachers. Yet the nature of wealth among the Syriac Christians of Nineveh Plains differed in important ways from that of both the old regime capitalists and the professional-class cosmopolitans who appear in previous chapters. For the latter groups, liquid capital, lettered qualifications, and an entire social milieu had, more or less, followed them to Amman. And although Jordan afforded few opportunities to transform this store of wealth into profit, their properties could sustain a standard of living for the duration of displacement. The workers of Anta Warda, on the other hand, had lost most of their assets over the course of a longer and more complex trajectory of dispossession. Much of the wealth that had been brought out of

Nineveh, in the form of cash and bridal gold, had already been spent over two years in the Ayn Kawa neighborhood of Erbil, the Kurdish regional capital that, like Amman, imposes a high cost of living on displaced residents in exchange for the assurances of an American-backed security apparatus. After Nineveh and Mosul were liberated from the Islamic State, these internally displaced refugees returned to their towns to find that wealth their families had stored up in homes, fields, and factories had been burned away with white phosphorous explosives set by retreating militants. Meanwhile, Iranian and Kurdish-sponsored militias, politicians, and civil society groups were starting to compete to dominate the region's political, economic, and cultural life, raising fears that peace would not last long.

"Our home in Nineveh is gone forever", said an elder member of this community whose son worked in another restaurant, "and we are seeking a new home with our daughter's family in Australia." Many other families had the similar plans in mind. In the meantime, Amman offered a dense concertation of NGO's and religious charities centered in the North Hashemi neighborhood, where the more affluent section of these migrants had settled. Still, charity and assistance from family living in the West was not enough to sustain life in displacement, especially as more and more relatives continued to arrive. For generations, young men and women from the Nineveh Plains had worked under Arab bosses in Mosul and Baghdad, taking unseemly jobs as cooks, maids, bodyguards, trash collectors, or sceptic tank cleaners, and sending wages back to the family until such a time that they returned to their towns to get married.[1] Now, in Amman, a recruitment

[1] This narrative draws on oral accounts given by elderly Syriac Christian residents of Amman in interviews and conversations. Unmentioned by these interlocuters were other moments of dispossession through violence that the Christians living in the area that now makes up northern Iraq and eastern Turkey have endured at various times in the 20th century. For such accounts, see Zubaida (2000) on the 1933 massacre and looting of Assyrian villages around Mosul, Donabed (2015) on the Soriya village massacre of 1969 and the demographic erasure of Assyrians in the 1977 national census, and Benjamen (2011) on the absorption of Assyrian cultural and civil society organization into the Ba'athist state apparatus throughout the 1970's, along with the ideological battles waged between Kurdish Regional and the pro-Iranian Iraqi Federal Government through NGO's and civil society organizations following the 2003

network had formed to supply some Iraqi-owned factories, restaurants, and hotels with Christian employees. As has happened before, "the expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production." (Marx 1972, 934) Violence begets capitalist accumulation not merely through the seizure of spoils, but by dispossessing people of their "means of subsistence" (1972, 727), leaving them dependent on the need to sell their labor, and usually on the buyers' terms. (271) This is why I have been quite serious in stating that the manual worker represents a kind of outer limit of the imagination for members of the professional classes—his condition is, to their regard, the terminus of the attenuated trajectory of dispossession that they themselves are undergoing throughout the duration of displacement.[2] I should also note here that one employee with whom I worked very closely was not, in fact, a Syriac Christian, but a Shia Muslim from the working-class Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad. While this man's own history remained much more obscure to me, his present situation is akin to that of his colleagues. However so much a fuller account of the history of these status groups might shed light on aspects of the experience I relate below, this is not the story we are as of yet in position to tell. Rather, I choose here to begin with what all these workers had in common: a relationship to the laboring body as one's most valuable commodity to be brought to market.

Foregrounding bodily labor as itself an embodiment of value, this chapter both builds on and departs from the concerns of previous ones. We have seen how the duration of displacement

invasion. Benjamen's forthcoming book *Negotiating the Place of Assyrians in Modern Iraq* will offer further edification on the longer-term links of labor migration between the Nineveh villages and Iraqi urban centers, but it isn't out yet.

[2] There is, from a formalized and abstract point of view, not much separating an unpermitted pharmacist, who is clearly engaged in an exploitative wage relationship, from the exploited manual laborer. "The stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere." (Marx 1894) The demarcation of middle and intermediate strata is a concrete and particular distinction resting on forms of appearance that vary in place and time, in this case determined by the degree to which the exercise of the body's direct capacities for physical toil constitutes the use-value of the labor-power being consumed by the production process.

is experienced through embodiments of value, from buildings, to documents, to consumer goods. These commodities (or "value-bodies") are both substances bearing qualities that make affordances to particular practices and magnitudes of value driven into circulation within a capitalist society. Recognizing this double nature of the commodity form has allowed me to theorize how the lived experiences of displacement relates to the forces that give rise to this condition, to acknowledge the central importance of a group's relationship to property (i.e. its class) to these experiences, and to shed light on the ambivalences and ambiguities that arise when a field of practice is set against a trajectory of mobility. Expanding on this last point, the previous chapter showed that, depending on one's vantage point, the practice of communal consumption called "sitting" (*al-ga'da*) is both an appealing engagement and a perilous diversion, depending whether the activity is framed as an encompassing, extended present, or within a longer-term trajectory of migration and reproduction. If a large degree of ambivalence surrounds leisure and consumption, we now turn to a situation in which, following Lefebvre, "contradictions and alienations are at a maximum." (2014, 37) Here, wages must be gotten through the direct and intensive use of the body, and this quantitatively intensified instrumentalization marks the worker in qualitative and durable ways that carry over into other spheres of life. From the point of view of the society as a whole, the debasement and stigma that attach to the body of the laborer are a common feature of many different places and times. (Arendt 1998, 79-80)[3] And, in the case at hand, the division is well recognized in the way that those who work "in a chair", as it is often put, regard those who must make a living on their feet.

[3] Kelly (1992) offers arguments against any attempt to ground the "universalization and naturalization of labor" (105) in what he dismisses as a "materialist metaphysics" (104), pointing to his own claim that such a perspective on labor is merely one among many culturally specific and historically variable "*forms* of labor." (105) My own sense, following Arendt, is that many cultures acknowledge differences between forms of labor, but that these forms are different in analogous ways, and that these differences return to a contrast between relationships to the body as a more or less immediate instrument in the production of value within the division of labor in a class society.

But what would happen if we went beyond the standpoint of the professional classes and considered how the demeaning and unsuitable aspect of this form of work is regarded by the people who must engage in it? What we will find, I hope to show, are the far more complicated ways in which those who already have to engage in manual work relate to what they too recognize as the often violating and exploitative nature of their job. Before going further, I must caution the reader against being carried away by their own assumptions about the modes of conduct that I will go on to describe. To save the reader this error, let me stress that there is an important analytical distinction to be made between "the work bodily practices perform in crafting a subject" and "the meanings they signify." (Mahmood 2005, 167) And, as we shall see, this distinction in many ways reflects the classed standpoints of those involved in interpreting what workers are doing. From the standpoint of the professional classes, workers' modes of conduct appear to be signifying an essentialized masculinity that is marked as working class and as culturally specific. But it is precisely this standpoint that I am attempting to go beyond. To do so, this chapter draws attention to statements made by workers in which they "articulated…the immanent form that bodily practices take." (133-4) Grasping this immanent form allows us to consider what these practices are doing for workers as modes of conduct directed towards the cultivation of certain bodily capacities. Moreover, an immanent standpoint leads us to acknowledge that workers themselves recognize the fact that "many different conceptions" of right action towards one's own body, "may exist simultaneously and perhaps in tension with one another." (Mahmood 2004, 121) Indeed, this tension between the very different conceptions of conduct that obtain inside and outside of the kitchen is one that workers' modes of conduct displace into the alienated relationship between the intentionality of the worker and the rendered substance of the body.[4] As I have maintained

[4] It is, then, a situation in which both alienation as a philosophical concept and economic alienation under specific historical conditions align with one another. Lefebvre writes that the "economic alienation" -- the "externalization of

throughout the dissertation, these practices of everyday life do not express an essence given by nature nor do they represent a form given by discourse, even if this is how they are interpreted in certain moments of appearance. Primarily, they are modes of living the class relationship that grasp this relationship through practice and, in so doing, can take us beyond superficial, distanced impressions of what is going on. And so, as I consider a particularly instrumentalized, profaning, and violent attitude towards the body, I ask the reader to follow me in trying to understand what this mode of conduct means to the people who enact it, rather than rushing to impute their own expectations about how masculinity should or should not look in this context.

Lesson 1: A Place where "Anything Goes"

My job as a dishwasher at Anta Warda restaurant started as a joke at my expense. I was sitting with Raed, who worked the cash register at this little Iraqi take-out joint, when he looked up from his phone to ask me, "Do you know any Syrians or Egyptians looking for a job?" I told him I didn't, then asked him what the job was. "We need a dishwasher," he explained. I'd been coming to Anta Warda for lunch every day for about a month, because I needed something to do during the hours when my interlocuters and friends were at home eating with their families. I would sit at a plastic table near the front door with Raed, whose official title was "manager" (*mudeer*), and, sometimes, with one of the two owners who hung around the place, and who, along with their friends and business associates, seemed to be the most frequent dine-in customers. The restaurant was staffed by six men, all but one of whom hailed from the same Christian town in northern Iraq

relations between human beings by means of commodities" that holds sway in capitalist societies -- is "merely" an "aspect" of "total alienation", that "encompasses life in its entirety", within capitalism but is also always present without it. (80) He cites Marx's 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' (1975, 322-30), asserting that this total alienation is grounded in the fact that "the product is simply the resume of the activity, of the production" that produced it. The fact that the object discloses the processes that produced it is the precondition for speaking of embodiments of value, a fact we have encountered at several points throughout the dissertation.

and now lived in North Hashemi, home to a large community of migrants who could ill afford the cost of living in West Amman. “Maybe you can hire me as a dishwasher?” I asked Raed. He put down his phone, laughed, then asked if I was serious. “It’s hard work,” he told me, “you will work around ten hours a day, with one day off every two weeks. The pay is ten dinars [$14] a day.” I told him I’d be willing to try. After all, I explained, it wasn’t the money I was after, but the opportunity to see how an Iraqi-owned business worked from the inside. Raed stepped out to call Ayoub, one of my *jackeroo* partners who, among his many different jobs, worked part-time as a bookkeeper for Anta Warda. He then returned and asked me to follow him. We crossed the length of the dining area, about fifteen paces end-to-end, then stepped behind the counter which separated it from the space where two chefs flipped skewers of kebab over hot coals. Standing in the corner, Raed pressed a red button on the wall, and we began our descent. The simple elevator, really just a platform that went up and down, gave a metallic groan as the bright yellow walls of the restaurant rose around us, giving way to the dark gray confinement of the basement. Raed shuffled past the tank of fat river carp that gurgled with the sound of circulating water to a large double sink stuffed with dishes, silverware, kebab skewers, and a mixing bowl full of fragile *istikaan* tea glasses. “Before you start,” he told me, “you should put on your uniform.” He pointed to the boxes of plastic aprons, gloves, and paper caps that lined a shelf about a two-feet above our heads, while his upper lip curled towards his nostril in a half smile. As I tied my apron and aligned my cap, Raed fiddled with his phone and opened his Snapchat application. “Stand there,” he said, “I’m sending this to Ayoub and the rest of the guys.” I let Raed have his snaps, then began washing the dishes in the sink. He raised an eyebrow at me, then told me to come back upstairs if I needed anything. I nodded and kept working. Soon, Raed returned, and offered me his phone, with Ayoub on the line. “I hear you got a job,” Ayoub told me. “Anything you need, anything at all, do not

hesitate to tell me. I will be minding you. (*adeer baalii 'alayk*)" He sounded more concerned than obsequious. Raed left me to my work but, shortly thereafter, were replaced by Rami, one of the chefs who cooked kebabs upstairs. Like his fellow workers, Rami's had fled from the Islamic State, first to the Kurdish region, and then to Jordan. When I first interviewed these men, they had assumed that I worked either for the United Nations or a Catholic charity and they implored me to assist with their case for resettlement. But after learning that I was merely an overaged student, they did not have much to say on the subject of their past, nor of life in Jordan, and went back to focusing on their work. Now, Rami stood beside me watching for a several minutes, then asked me, "Tell me the truth, are you really working here?" I told him, "yes." "This isn't your place," he told me. "Your place is a museum, or a university. The sink is not your place, Zakariya."

Rami's remonstration would prove correct. After only two weeks of grueling and dangerous work at Anta Warda, I retired from dishwashing, and returned to being a regular customer. But what did Rami see that set me apart from him? On what basis did he draw a distinction between the kitchen and the museum or university? And in what ways did he and his colleagues try to bring me up to speed for this new kind of place? The answer rests in the fact that the restaurant was a place where, in the words of Joseph, the maître d' and server, "anything goes." (*kul shii yasiir*) This phrase might be used to describe the way a worker slammed a tray stacked with delicate, fragile glass *istikaanaat* (tea cups) into an already overflowing sink. Or it might be uttered after a boss had yet again denied a worker his day off, leaving him muttering about the lack of "justice" (*'adaala*) in the kitchen. Either way, one had to accept the fact that this was a place where people must act quickly, briskly, and without pausing to consult the rules. This was my first, most obvious, but also most difficult lesson in restaurant work. Consider that after my first week on the job, Raed, the manager, pulled me aside to tell me, "The other workers have been talking

about you. They say your work is good, but very slow, like a university student. You are precise and you need to know the right way for doing everything." Kitchen work does require tremendous skill, but this aptitude is somehow different than the precise techniques acquired from authoritative sources. For, as the next lesson makes clear, the "precise bodily enactments" (Mahmood, 167) required by restaurant work manifested a practiced capacity to embody a particular relationship to one's self in the performance of difficult and dangerous tasks.

Lesson 2: "*Ajaanib* can't do this kind of work."

For most of my working day, I was put under the command of Haider, who cooked chicken and fish in the *tanoor* oven in the basement. Except for the occasional temporary employee hired during the holidays, Haider was the only Muslim worker at Anta Warda. Based on his name, his origins, and the fact that he had once fought as a member of the *jaysh al-mahdi* militia, I surmised that Haider was Shia, although, like most Iraqi Shia in Jordan, he never mentioned this fact directly. Under Haider's supervision, my duties quickly expanded from washing dishes to cleaning the surfaces on which the chefs slaughtered and prepped animals, schlepping coals and firewood to stoke the downstairs and upstairs ovens, and climbing to the roof of the building to bring down supplies. To access the roof, I would exit the basement kitchen through its only door, which opened onto an area in which coal, firewood, and spare tanks of propane gas were stockpiled near a stove on which Rami left huge vats of rice cooking throughout the morning. This area was outside the building, but an outer skin of canvas supported by steel poles had been erected around it, and this external structure rose all the way up to enclose part of the roof of the building. On the rooftop, there was an aluminum-sided shack that was stocked with spare paper towels, disposable trays, dry goods, cleaning products, other supplies. To ascend to the storage shack, I had to climb a ladder fastened to the building's wall with ropes. I never measured the ascent, but would estimate it at

about twenty-five feet. Haider had told me I would have to bring a load of disposable cardboard trays, used for large carry-out orders, up from the basement to the rooftop storage shack.

The trays were densely stacked in big plastic bags that could be lifted one-handed. As I assessed my climb, I put the sack of trays in one hand, then gripped the edge of the ladder with the other. I then hooked the elbow of the arm carrying the sack behind the edge of the ladder on the other side. By first extending my empty hand to grasp the next rung, then stepping up with my feet, and then quickly hoisting the bag and hooking my elbow into a new place, I could work my way up. However, this approach caused the big bag to swing back and forth with each step. During one of its pendulous movements, the bag's momentum caused my left elbow to slip from the place where I had wedged it in the ladder. My cheap sneakers had little purchase on the ladder's steps, and my left foot also slipped out of place. My whole body pivoted off of the steps and into the empty space to my right, and I crashed, back first, into the metal ventilation duct that ran up the wall parallel to the ladder. Hugging the edge of the ladder with my right arm, I was able to swing myself back around and into position on the ladder, and, after catching my breath, complete my ascent.

There were two more sacks waiting for me when I climbed back down from the roof. But I was already frightened and, suddenly, very angry. I reentered the basement kitchen and told Haider I would not try to scale the building with a bag in hand again. "This job isn't worth it," I exclaimed, "I don't want have my head broken for ten dinars a day." Haider face was impassive during my outburst. He told me he understood, then took me back to the wall. In the first of what would be many lessons in technique, he showed me how to attach the bags to a large metal hook tied to the end of a long, thick chord of climbing rope. One could ascend the ladder, then haul the rope up, then climb down and set the hook again, and repeat. This work was strenuous but much

less dangerous, and I completed the task. When I came back down to the kitchen, Haider was standing with one of the owners and Raed, the manager. Raed asked me how I was getting by in my job and Haider answered for me. "He's a bastard (*naghal*). What did you tell me, Zakariya? You wouldn't 'break your head open for a job?'" Raed began to laugh, while the boss looked serious and unmoved. "But he's right," Haider continued. "Non-Arab foreigners (*ajaanib*), they can't do this kind of work. They have rights (*huqooq*), they have rules. (*qawaa'id*)"

In the above incident, the notion that the restaurant is a place where "anything goes" is contrasted to the realm of rules, rights, and justice that obtain elsewhere. This was not the first and only time this distinction had been made in my presence. Locals who had spent time in the United States sometimes attempted to relate to me by denigrating their own society as one without "order" (*nithaam*) or "rules" (*qawaa'id*), usually by reference to nuisancesome behaviors like littering, bad driving, or smoking indoors. Iraqi investors, along with engineers, pharmacists, and other bourgeois professionals, had told me that they had no "rights" (*hoqooq*) in the Jordanian workplace. Of course, there are always differences of degree. As one kitchen worker put it to me, "If they see you making 250 dinars a month, they will do whatever they want with you." But the restaurant kitchen differed qualitatively from these other contexts insofar as workers saw the abandonment of rules as a precondition for the transformation of the body into a skillful instrument of action. Haider had suggested not only that my adherence to rights and rules marked me as sociologically out-of-place in the restaurant, but that it had actually gotten in the way of my ability to properly conduct my work. With this insight, weare entering the territory of those "technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being…" (Foucault 1988, 18) And yet, unlike some of the more sacrosanct practices that informed

the theorization of this notion, these new capacities are *not* directed towards "happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (*op.cit.*), but rather to getting the job done. To better recognize what positive capacities were achieved through a negative regard for the body, we need an example of how to act correctly in the kitchen.

Lesson 3: Catching it While it's Flying

In the previous chapter, we drew on Austen and De Certeau to describe café "sitting" as a distinct style of action, with its own characteristic tempos, postures, gestures, and attitudes. With this in mind, let us now consider the style of action in play in the kitchen. If one wanted to see how a real restaurant worker handled himself on the ladder, consider Younis. This nineteen-year-old employee had begun as a dishwasher eight months before I started my job. By completing his tasks as rapidly as possible, Younis gained some extra time to carefully observes how the restaurant's baker mixed the ingredients, formed ball of dough, and stuck these balls to the inside of the oven, which was located out in front of the restaurant. Once he was able to demonstrate that he could bake bread as well as the baker, the baker was let go, and Younis was promoted into his place, although he would receive 100 dinars a month less than the former baker had. Since starting in his new role, he had not lost any of the skills that had served him as a dishwasher. One day, when I was taking much too long hauling bags of eggplants up to the roof using the hook-and-rope method, Haider asked Younis to help me. At first, he resisted, saying this was no longer his job, but Haider threatened to hit him, so he went to work. He ascended halfway up the ladder in an instant, and then turned his whole body around, so his back was to the wall and he balanced on the soles of his feet. From this position, he looked down at Haider, who began to chuck sacks of eggplants up to him. He caught these sacks in mid-air, and, between catches, he leaned away from the ladder, then pitched each back above his head, so the sack landed on the rooftop with a thud.

After witnessing Younis at work on the ladder, I tried imitating the way he had balanced on the ladder, with my back to the wall, facing out into space. But I could never overcome the feeling of terror this position provoked, let alone master the stance well enough to start catching and tossing bags of eggplants.

Hayder al-Mohammad, the anthropologist, once told me that his American students differed from Iraqis insofar as the former group, "don't know how to catch it while it's flying." The metaphor strikes me as an apt one for describing how those accustomed to being guided through the steps tend to have trouble in situations that move faster than explanations can catch up. Realized in Younis' performance on the ladder, the idea that people have different capacities for thinking and acting on the fly, as it were, extended to a number of other tasks performed with precision and speed. Instruction was not given freely in the kitchen. Moreover, to master this style of action, one had to embrace a kind of recklessness or disregard for the wellbeing of one's own body. This attitude of controlled abandon recurred constantly throughout my short tenure as a dishwasher. If you stopped to contemplate it, simply working in the basement was a gamble, because of the large quantity of firewood and propane tanks all stacked outside the only exit next to a stove that was left on unattended for most of the day to cook rice. The hazardous nature of the site became all the more-clear after a power outage, which caused the ventilation system to shut down. Plunged into pitch blackness, my colleague and I did not realize that the basement was filling up with smoke from the *tanoor* oven. By the time the power came back on, the room had become so smokey that we could not even see one another's faces. Yet workers seemed to embrace peril with flair and enthusiasm. For example, heavy objects were yanked from the ground until backs and necks became so sore the worker might collapse. One day, while we hauling trash from the restaurant to the dumpster, Younis stopped dead in his tracks, paralyzed with pain in his back.

"Let me take that bin from you," I offered, adding, "This job isn't worth ruining your health other." Younis refused, and, gritting his teeth, started schlepping the bin again. "What job am I going to have that I'll need my health for?" he asked me. I could not think of what to say in response.

Here, because there is a real chance that the reader will misunderstand the point of these observations, I want to emphasize once again that it is crucial to maintain a distinction between the meaning that bodily practices might signify to certain audiences and the kinds of capacities and attitudes they inculcate within the person who enacts them. As I flagged above, this distinction breaks along class lines, with the notion of an essentialized working class masculinity informing interpretations given by bourgeois observers. Thus, a foreman on a construction site once remarked to me, "I would never wear a hardhat in front of the workers. They would think I was a pansy (*fercha*)." Likewise, when Haider took it on himself to fumigate the restaurant without a mask or gloves, and to sing loudly from within the haze of pesticides, Raed told me, "He's stupid. He thinks this makes him look strong." However, as soon as we abandon the contemplative standpoint and actually begin to do the work, we discover that there is more to this controlled abandon than wanting to prove a point for other people. All this became clear to me two days into the job, when I decided I would no longer wear gloves while washing dishes. The gloves that I was provided with were the cheapest sort available; I knew this because I'd accompanied Raed on his trip to the supplier. Loose around the writs, they could easily end up ballooning with water, or be cut to shreds by the knives and sharp-edged trays that I handled. Moreover, because I was constantly switching between scrubbing and schlepping, I would have to remove an old pair and put on a new one, which took more time than I had to spare. By not wearing gloves, I was able to work faster and more dexterously. However, this decision meant that my hands were constantly wet, making the skin pinkish and soft and slow to heal from the many small cuts that came with reaching into

the sink and exposing them to abrasive chemicals. After two weeks, I had developed an eczema all over the backs of my hands and my writs. My roommate, a pharmacist, held my tender hands with deep concern, and insisted that I let him treat me and go back to wearing gloves. But I was not trying to prove anything to anyone. I was trying to wash dishes as fast as possible.

Seeing that a good worker is able to work with a certain degree of recklessness and disregard for his own body helps us understanding why rights, rules, and appeals to justice might get in the way of capability. If one is to do this kind of work, he must dispense with any notion that the body, our most intimate possession, is entitled to protection. The gulf between the kitchen and the rest of the world widens from this point. However, we cannot regard this process as automatic, passive, or unthought. These workers are not "stupid." Rather, as the next two lessons suggest, their capacity for acting with abandon is something in which the body can be instructed at their own hands. To understand how this works, the next section introduces the profane pedagogical vocabulary of the body used in the kitchen. In many sacred traditions, proper training in techniques of the self implies a division between the self and the substances that compose it, a reflexive relationship between the seat of pure intentionality and the form through which it acts and is acted upon, conceived as quasi- or purely metaphysical organs like "soul" "spirit" or "heart." (Foucault, 1988; Mahmood 2005, 121) But in the kitchen, the pedagogical vocabulary of the body drew its substances from more profane and earthly regions.

Lesson 4: "On Friday, you will be torn."

Cleaning the floor was the worst part of my job. To do it properly, I had to spread soapy water everywhere, then coax the liquid down the drain using a squeegee, and, finally, attach a thick rag to the end of the squeegee to wipe it all down. Haider, my basement supervisor, would stand by the oven to watch me, occasionally urging me to go faster. While I was bent over the squeegee, he

would approach me from behind and stick his fingers into my ribs or armpits, causing me to stand up and turn reflexively. "You don't like kidding around (*shaakeh*)?" he would ask. Over the coming days, this teasing would become more frequent and more violating. Pokes to the ribs became open-palmed slaps on my back given while I was washing the dishes. These aggressions were followed by his extending a hand in between my legs and stabbing at or trying to tickle my perineum and anus with his pointed fingers. It was at this point that I realized I had to stop trying to ignore him. I turned on Haider and told him that, "This wouldn't go where I come from." If I was a helpless American made soft by the protection of rules and rights, so be it! It seemed to be the best defense I had. He did not respond at first, but went upstairs in the elevator while my anger and fear dissipated. He returned minutes later, and told me that he played this way with me because, "It strengthens you." (*yegawwek*) He asked me to try pinching his stomach with my fingers. I grabbed his abdomen and felt sold muscle. He did not flinch. Speaking in a conciliatory way, he told me that he knew I wanted to learn all about the restaurant, and asked me if I'd like to learn how to grill chicken. I told him I would, and he instructed me to put on his heavy oven mitts and pull the long-handled griddle in which the chicken was cooking out of the oven. I had watched him do this many times, and, imitating what I had seen, adopted a stance perpendicular to the oven's opening, ready to raise the end of the handle above my shoulders, so that it wouldn't bump into the fish tank that was only a few feet behind me. I managed to yank the griddle up and out, wobbling under the weight. As soon as I had done so, I began to feel the heat pour into my hands, easily overwhelming the ratty mitts. I hustled over to a nearby table and dropped the heavy griddle on it with a crash. Haider just watched. "This job is hard!" was I all could say as I removed the mitts to look at the reddened skin of my hands. "I've gotten used to it," he replied. He held up his own gloved hands, letting me inspect the yellow and white callouses that lay thickly on his palms.

This incident brings together two different but closely connected themes of bodily pedagogy that we have to examine in order: first, the subjection of the body to violation and, second, the paradoxical increase in the body's capacity for work this violation engenders. Let me begin with the first, negative side. Workers do no only treat their own bodies with abandon, they also operate within a milieu of constant violence. In having my tender parts prodded and poke, I did not feel that I was being singled out. Workers, particular young and comparatively inexperienced ones, were subject to frequent slapping, choking, and poking, not only in the kitchen, but also in factories and other sites where manual labor is done. And it is not an accident that Haider's abuses gradually worked towards my anus. Jokes about anal penetration were common enough among younger, male interlocuters in other contexts. But in the kitchen, the penetrative idiom was put to use to communicate the idea that one must accept that the body must submit to the violation of its integrity and wholeness. To take an example from work, "Friday", by far the busiest day of the week at the restaurant, was the day on which "your asshole will be torn." (*aljum'a teezak ha-yinsheg)* In this phrase, the profane language of the body's "lower stratum" is made to "exercise a debasing function" and thereby to "materialize the world, lending it a bodily substance." (Bakhtin 1984, 187) Friday, the Muslim day of prayer and a secular day off from work for most people, is reinterpreted as the day on which one must acquiesce to being metaphorically raped. Note this turn of phrase implies the abuse of those who labor in the kitchen is for the benefit of those who get to enjoy the world outside. In the ordinary Arabic of my interlocuters, fucking is an idiom of misuse. Thus, to "fuck the mother" of a thing (*neech ommeh*) means to break or damage an object through careless and violent usage. The notion that the worker is "fucked" by being denied a day off or being forced to perform extra tasks extends this violent debasement to the objectified self. It accords with more refined complaints about the lack of "justice" and "humanity"

that prevailed in the kitchen. But it goes beyond noting the absence of rights and rules by metonymically expressing the whole body through the image of the violated, objectified orifice being made subject to another's (ab)use. The dyadic relationship of violator to violated, which could be extended downward along a chain of violence. Younis, being the youngest, and I, being the least experienced, were most frequently on the receiving end. For his part, Younis sometimes removed fish from the tank to stick his fingers in their mouths and snap their fins. Violation goes all the way down.

The hierarchical character of violence that finds expression in idioms of the "lower stratum" suggests a connection between the experience of exploitation in the kitchen and those of war and state repression. As Bakhtin notes, "the fighting temperament (war, battles) and the kitchen cross each other at a certain point. And this point is the dismembered, minced flesh." (Bakhtin 1984, 187-8) This resemblance is difficult to confirm, but also hard to ignore. Here, I need to clarify that most people did not tend to talk about being subjected to or inflicting violence outside of work. I might never learn a companion had been tortured had I not seen him wearing sandals and asked him why he was missing a toe. Euphemisms or jokes did sometimes take the place of more explicit accounts. One informant from outside the restaurant told a story of a childhood friend who was imprisoned by the Ba'athist secret police and had returned as, "Half a man." Others told jokes about the paradigmatic act of state violence under the Ba'ath regime: the forced insertion of a glass bottle into the anus. Citing an informant's darkly comic story of removing a Coca-Cola bottle from an officer, Al-Mohammad discusses popular Iraqi discourses of "the anus and its products" as critical responses to the brutality of Ba'athist oppression and to the sense of "moral collapse" precipitated by war and occupation, which left people in his field site of Basra wading through streams of feces-tainted water. (2007, 11-12) He pursues a

psychoanalytic analysis of these discourses, arguing that the obscenity of violence rests in the fact that it robs people of the “control or mastery” (14) that would in normal circumstances allow them to sequester the debased element of life. Going a step beyond his diagnosis, I would suggest that in the kitchen, as in soldiering, the capacity to violate one’s own and other bodies recuperates this command over the body’s functions. The grueling pace of restaurant work and lack of time-off in the kitchen was referred to by both workers and bosses as a “military regime.” (*nithaam ‘askarii*) And both Haider and Joseph, the *maître d’*, had been militia fighters. Haider, who had served with the Shia Mahdi Army in the early days of the American occupation, did not share stories of his time as a militant, except to one day explain to me that his decision to take up arms against American soldiers had been sanctioned by the Islamic precept to defend the homeland against invaders. Joseph, who fought with the Christian Nineveh Plains Protection Units against the Islamic State, was more open with his war stories. He would show me pictures on his phone from his time as a soldier, and call attention to his friendships with American mercenaries and military advisors. One of his favorite photos depicted an IS fighter who had been found dead on the side of a road, presumably killed in an American airstrike. Taking what was left of the body, Joseph and his comrades had positioned it on the edge of the asphalt road, pants around the ankles, its naked rear end exposed to the camera. Here we see that the idiom of violation extends downwards not only to animals, but also to the enemy dead.

These acts of debasement and dismemberment reflect a real situation, and, moreover, may be the only concepts adequate to grasp it. As responses to horror, they resonate with the “literary and artistic representations of the body’s violent dismemberment and mutilation [that] are a recurring feature of post-2003 Iraqi cultural production, from literature to the visual arts.” (Bahoora 2015, 186) In these works, the most famous of which deals with a reanimated body made

up of the stitched-together limbs of people blown apart in suicide attacks, authors and artists confront "spectacles of extreme and 'unreal' violence" through "recourse to the metaphysical whether dream-states that highlight the uncanny, nightmares and the subconscious…or through the supernatural, horror, and the monstrous." (187) It is through its reliance on a world of spirits and dreams that high art differs from the jokes of cooks and soldiers, which strike the bourgeois critic as grotesque and distasteful because they leave little to the imagination and make use of no other resources than those that are concrete and readily available to hand. As should by now be clear, the discourses of the "lower stratum" differ markedly, and indeed are self-consciously opposed to, those terms that might preside over exercises of the spirit. This negative side of the "debasing function" is complimented by the fact that the "rendering" of the body as a violated, objectified thing allows it to perform functions from which it might otherwise shirk. Haider was not just bullying me, although that might have been part of it. He was also trying to instruct me in what I would have to endure to be able to do good work. He insisted that I witness how unperturbed he was by my own blows, and invited me to truly understand the challenge of hefting a smoldering griddle without a brace of thick callouses earned by through hard toil. We will expand on this observation in the next section, which treats the object of violence as neither self nor other, but as a worldly substance that is both the instrument and the product of the worker's labor.

Lesson 5: "The Nerves were Burnt."

Figure 8: The fiery *tanoor* oven. [Photo by the author].

Haider was not alone in using the evocative image of burned and calloused hands to express the way hard work transforms the body's parts. One day, I sat outside on a stoop with another temporary worker, who had brought in to meet extra demand. The new worker was rubbing his legs and moaning softly to himself, and began to complain. "It's your nerves (*'asaab*)", Younis explained, standing nearby at the bread oven. He approached us and asked for a cigarette, then, after lighting it, began to explain. "You have nerves in your hands, around the finger." He traced one finger around and under the knuckles of the opposite hand. "When you burn them, oh, you'll really feel it. But now, I don't feel a thing when I grab hot bread from the oven. The nerves were

burn. (*'inharagow*)." Drawing our attention to the desensitized nerves, Younis referenced the existence of a bodily substance that appears in most popular discourse as the organ of sensitivity. In this everyday meaning, the "nervous person" (*mut'asab*) is reactive, quick to anger, extreme in his emotional response to life. I had betrayed my own sensitive "nerves" when I allowed myself to be provoked by Haider's pinches and pokes, and he constantly dared me to admit this fact, asking, even as he struck me, "Did you get upset?" (*dhujayt?*). Younis was teaching us to recognize the fact that these sensitives could be manipulated or deadened and, by so doing, that the hand's ability to perform its work would improve. Again, we note the seeming paradox between the debasement or abuse of the body, and the increase of its powers. And, more explicitly, we are being taught that this occurs because the rendered, objectified parts of the body serve as better and more efficient instruments of labor. When he first started baking, he explained, he could turn out about seven loaves in a minute, whereas now that he didn't have to wait for the loaves to cool somewhat before handling them, he bragged that he was up to twenty.

This pedagogical moment was reinforced in countless small ways throughout the course of my brief tenure in the kitchen. I had watched in amazement as other workers rubbed undiluted bleach into bloody cutting boards with their bare palms, or plunged their fingers into scalding hot eggplants to extract the flesh used for making babaghanoush. When I asked them how they did it, they told me that they "had learned" (*'allimit*), the same word they might use for describing how they were able to chop parsley or clean a teacup. The deadening of sense could be achieved in other ways, too, like playing extremely loud music in the small kitchen, working so hard and so fast that you collapsed, or dancing giddily while cleaning the dining room during the period between lunch and dinner. Always, we sought to throw our bodies into rapid motion in order to overwhelm, and thereby deaden, their capacity to feel. Younis' image of burnt nerves puts flesh to

this sensed of estrangement from the body. For my own part, I could only stare at my hands after work, counting their cuts, inspecting them as if they were a thing belonging to another. As with the idiom of violation, the burning of the nerves is an act of debasement and dismemberment, through which the worker comes to regard his parts as apart from himself. You are not your nerves, nerves are a substance you possess, and may in fact act upon by your own will, like any other object of violation. But the burning of the parts suggests an active, intentional, and reflexive relationship of self and body, internalizing the the dyad of passivity and domination that makes up the idiom of violation and bringing it under the will . "The body", Mauss asserted, "is man's first and most natural instrument." (1973, 75) And the notion of the body as instrument allows us to see "a mutually constituting relationship between body sense and body learning." (Asad 1993, 77) The worker, in doing his work, must learn to make a part of himself into his own best tool.

But when seen from the outside, this transformation of the living body into an objectified part that might serve as an instrument of labor is, too, a kind of profanation or debasement, and determines the stigmatized character of bodily labor within the society. To better articulate this effect of estrangement, let me revisit Arendt's analysis of "the labor of the body and the work of the hand", which is here both useful and limiting. Above, we accepted Arendt's assertion that societies across space and time distinguish bodily toil, or a she puts it, labor, from other sorts of work. This argument acknowledges certain existential conditions of human being and action in the world. (1998, 80-81) Ultimately, she claims, this distinction rests in "the worldly character of the produced thing: its location, function, and length of stay in the world." (94) On the one side, labor produces "the least durable of tangible things [,which] are those needed for the life process itself", (96) and, on the other, work makes things, "the proper use [of which] does not cause them to disappear" and "it is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence

from men who produced and use them." (136-7) In other words, the (debased) laborer is distinct from the (valorized) worker because the former simply offers "abundance" for necessary human consumption, while the latter offers works, "Whose very permeance stands in direct contrast to life" as nature and therefore makes this life "human." (135)

On what ends of this distinction does restaurant work fall? Certainly, those who butcher and prepare meat are involved in producing that which is necessary for the life process itself and is made to be consumed almost as soon as it is produced. But the workers' very capacity to meet the demand for these products arises from his work on the body as a laboring instrument, which in being worked upon becomes an objectified substance held in his possession. This is not quite the same as Marx's polemic accounts of bodily alienation under industrial production, in which the worker is utterly and fully absorbed as "a part of a specialized machine." (547-8) Rather, like a craftsman performing what Arendt terms "work" on a "worldly" object, the distinction between subject-agent and object of work persists, and the transformation in worldly substance is long-lasting. But, unlike the craftsmen, these transformations do not furnish "a home for mortal men." (173) Instead, the body that has been remade in one context will follow the worker across all other domains of his life. Recall Younis, unable to move from back pain while hauling out the trash and registering the fact that the job he was working while displaced was forever altering his life through its effects on his body. Later, we will note that neither do these products vanish in their being consumed, (*cf.* 102) but instead remake the bodies of those who consume them in durable, public ways. Arendt's distinction between work and labor, then, is useful insofar as it helps us understand the importance of duration to the immediate process of production and the heterogeneity of use-values consumed therein. But it is limited insofar as it rests on an absolute distinction between the vital yet transient character of life in general and the specifically human capacity to fabricate the

world we inhabit. If we accept this opposition, we cannot understand acts of reflexive objectification, of auto-dismemberment, of the nullification of sense for the enhancement of ability, of, in other words, alienation. Constantly drawing our attention back to the profaned matter of the lower stratum, the "traditions of grotesque realism" (Bakhtin, 1984, 104) so familiar to those acquainted with slaughter, death, and dismemberment insist on the reversibility of life and world, human and thing, and even living and dead matter. And, on further analysis, this impolite truth gives way to what is, according to bourgeois convention, an even dirtier secret: Tool and body, the living and the dead, have been rendered equivalent as exchange values in their being transacted with a buyer of labor.

Lesson 7: "If they don't see you tired out, they won't love you."

Rami had developed a sharp pain in his neck, and had to miss a day of work. This was a remarkable occasion, for workers at *Anta Warda* were expected to show up every single day, with the possibility of getting one day off about every two weeks. When Rami returned the following day, he had a foam brace around his neck. He explained that the doctor had told him to wear it, and to stay home from work. "Why did you come to work, then?" I asked. Rami just shook his head, then asked me if I wouldn't mind helping him throughout the day. I was happy for the excuse to leave the sink, and spent the day threading cubes of meat onto skewers, chopping tomatoes and parsley, preparing the huge pots of rice, roasting eggplants, and filling the grill with coals. I told him how much I appreciated the chance to learn new skills at the restaurant, and he told me he wanted to help me with cleaning the floor that evening. We descended into the basement, and got to work, splashing water all over the floor, then squeegeeing it back down the drain. Rami then told me he wanted to help me clean the little area just outside the restaurant, where the wood and propane and coals were kept, along with the ladder that could be used to access the roof. He began bending

over and moving these objects around to access different parts of the floor. Then, he would take his long-handled squeegee and hold it so tightly his knuckles became white. As he pushed the dirt around, he began to sweat and his face reddened. "Rami," I told him, "Isn't making kebabs difficult enough? Let me do my job and you do your job." He kept on sweeping, and his words came between short, pained breaths. "You must tire yourself out here (*tit'ab nafsak*). If they don't see you tired out, they will not love you." I asked him who he meant. If not for the brace around his neck, he might have inclined his head upwards, but instead only rolled his eyes up and to the side, up, that is, towards the upstairs dining area. "Who?" I asked again, "the owners?" "Yes," he told me, "Yes, and not just here. Anywhere in this country. They will love you only if they see you have tired yourself."

"And what happens if they don't love you?"

"They will fire you. Goodbye!"

After we had finished in the basement, we went back upstairs and found one of the owners, whom I will call Omar. Omar was a short, round-faced man who wore neat, white dress shirts. He split his time between Amman, where his wife and children lived, and Iraq, where he owned a company that built specialized equipment for extracting oil. It was common to find Omar or another of the owners who traveled between Amman, where he also had a tahini factor, and Mosul or Erbil, where he had other business interests that he never specified, sitting in the dining room with a friend or associate. Today, Omar was joined by Abu Zigayir, or "the cigarette man", a journalist for one of the Iraqi television channels headquartered in Amman, and, as far as I could figure out, a small-time smuggler. Rami and I presented ourselves to the boss, and Rami told him, "Look at Zakariya here. Do you see that he's tired himself? Do you think he can go home early?"

I was touched that Rami had decided to further return the favor after I'd helped him throughout the day, and also interested to see if what he'd said about the bosses was true. Omar looked me up and down, then said that yes, if the other workers agreed there was no more work to be done, I could go home with him, for he was just about to get in his car and go. As I went around asking everyone what else needed doing, they asked me about my schedule. "How long do you go to sleep?"; "When do you eat?"; "When are you coming back tomorrow?" But there were no more teacups to clean or skewers to degrease, and so I was allowed to head home after working only ten hours, as opposed to the usual eleven.

What are we to make of Rami's lesson in exhaustion and rest? Here, I need to signpost a shift in standpoints. We have seen that, as the worker renders his body insensate, he increases his capacity for toil. Working through injury and exhaustion, he builds up a reserve of strength with which to conduct his work. Yet it would be the most absurd kind of error to read this cultivation of bodily capacities as a kind of resistance to, overcoming of, or excess beyond the reach of exploitation. Focusing on how the worker mixes his intentional action with natural substance in order to affect a lasting and useful change in the latter, the previous sections have considered *"*the labor process independently of any specific social formation.*"* (Marx 1977, 283) Treating the body as the object of labor simply reflects the fact that the "living body" in its "materiality" serves as a durable repository for acts taken upon it. (Asad 2003, 89) And while all this is very obvious, it is worth restating, for it reminds us that we cannot leave off with interpreting *what* the body signifies, but are instead interested in *how* particular practices transform the subject-agent in specific, intentional, and thoughtfully articulated ways. (Mahmood, 2005) But the worker knows full well that, in making himself into a worker, he debases himself as a person. And so, we must turn from observations about the body in general to the role of the laboring body within specifically capitalist

social relations. After all, it is only by situating action within the long view of intentionality that the full significance of bodily practices become apparent. (Asad 2003, 90)

Under this system of relations, we are speaking of a class of persons who do not possess the means for realizing the value of their own "labor-capacity." (Marx 1990, 272-3)[5] In an fittingly gustatory analogy, Marx writes that, "When we speak of the capacity for labor, we do not speak of labor, any more than we speak of digestion when we speak of capacity for digestion. As is well known, the latter process requires something more than a good stomach." (277) To see its value realized, this labor-capacity, "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being" (270) *must be brought to market and sold as a commodity* to a capitalist, in whose ownership rest the material means for producing goods. And, in exchange, the worker receives wages through which he might secure the means of reproducing his own existence. The worker knows full well that, in making himself into a worker, he is debasing himself as a person. And yet, if he wants to continue to exist as a person in all other moments of his life, he must be a good worker for those hours he has alienated. The materiality of his body must, in order to realize its value, be subsumed within social relations of production, "what confronts the subject of labor in 'the working day.'" (Ebert 1995)[6] This is because labor-

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[5] Both "labor-capacity" [*arbeitsvermogen*] and "labor-power" [*arbeitskraft*] were used interchangeably by Marx before "he finally settled on 'labor-power' in the published version of *Capital*." (note p. 960) Here, I have substituted "capacity" for "power", because I want to emphasize that which the worker exchanges in the wage transaction is not the already realized use of his labor, but the potential, the capacity, that as yet remains embodied in his own worked-upon corporeal substance.

[6] Although addressed to feminist scholars, Ebert's (1995) critique of the Foucauldian approach to the ethics and politics of bodily practice is germane. Simply because the materiality of the body is a kind of outside or excess to discursive conditioning does not mean that the materiality of the body is a site for overcoming domination through a politics of performativity. This is because the discursive conditions established by the liberal episteme are themselves constitutively unable to grasp the real nature of exploitation, which go on behind liberalism's back as it were. By way of example, recall that bourgeois observers could not imagine the fact that workers treated their own bodies with a kind of reckless abandon in order to cultivate their capacity for work, and instead interpreted these acts by reference to the meanings they signified as performances of an essentialized masculinity. The fact that bourgeois consciousness has a hard time understanding the instrumentality of these practices to the labor process does not mean that these practices arose outside of or in resistance to the domination of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

capacity is not like other commodities – it possesses its own "peculiar nature." (Marx 1990, 274) And this nature must be elaborated to understand the centrality of time, love, exhaustion, and rest to working in the restaurant.

Leaving out questions of labor's role in "the valorization process", labor-capacity's peculiar nature rests in the fact that, "Given the existence of the individual, the production of [labor-capacity] consists in [the worker's] reproduction of himself or his maintenance." (274) Consider a negotiation over wages that I witnessed between Omar, the owner, and a new employee. Omar controlled the flow of conversation in a series of pointed questions: "How much is your rent? How much is your phone bill? How much do you pay each day to take a taxi here?" A smartphone rested on the table between them, opened to the calculator application. As the new man answered each question in turn, Omar typed the cost into the phone. "Are you paying that much for rent?" he'd ask, "Are you sure you need that much data for your phone?" The new man nodded along and I got the feeling that Omar was used to putting his people on the ropes this way. "Here is how much you need from us every month," he said after he had summed each expense. "You don't need more than that from what you've told me. I'm saying this to you as your brother. And not as an owner of money (*abu maal*)." There are several factors for keeping the actual cost of purchasing labor so close to the formal value of labor-capacity, defined as the sum of the values consumed in its ongoing reproduction: that the displaced worker is simply working to maintain his and his family's livelihoods for so long as they await resettlement, that the worker, through his artful manipulation of his bodily substance, provides for his own "special education or training" (276), that the worker's subsistence is to some extent subsidized through religious and humanitarian institutions, that he has no recourse to negotiate the price of the commodity he sells collectively, and that both of the workers' daily meals are provided out of his own product, in the

form of a kebab for lunch and a quarter-piece of chicken, plus rice and pickle salad, for dinner. All of these factors remind us that "in contrast, therefore, with the case of other commodities, the determination of the value of labor-[capacity] contains a historical and moral element." (275) Second, in contrast to other commodities, labor-capacity, "does not in reality pass straight away into the hands of the buyer" at point of sale. (277) Instead, the exchange is a kind of promise for "the subsequent exercise of that power… in time." (*op. cit.*) To ensure that this promise is honored, the owning class have turned to all sorts of technologies for disciplining the worker's use of time, understood as the homogenous, abstract quantity of potentially realized labor-capacity. (Thompson 1967) Indeed, the abstract, homogeneous, quantitative sense of time that potentiates the peculiar exchange of labor-capacity for wages is the distinguishing innovation of capitalist societies. (Postone 1993) There were no clocks in the basement, and no regularly scheduled breaks. Of course, real situations never quite reach the limit to which, we might say, formal impulses drive them. But the lack of technical "time-discipline" was rectified by a moral accounting of exertion and rest, centered on replenishing the needs of the body as a biological organism and the feelings of love and compassion this nourishment played upon.

First, because the schedule was encompassing and total, time spent not working became a thing that is so precious it was shameful to enjoy it. The worker has, by the time he comes to work, sold nearly all his waking hours to the boss. The normal length of a shift at *Anta Warda* is eleven hours long, and the Syriac workers spent about another hour and a half each day arriving from North Hashemi. Days off come only once every two weeks or, in the case of Younis and Haider who worked without days off to earn extra money, almost never. Holy days, birthdays, days on which you are sick, and days on which you feel well, all of these are spent at the restaurant. People worked themselves into a frenzy not only to further numb their bodies to pain, but also to

demonstrate to the bosses and to one another that they were honoring their obligation to put their labor-capacity to use during working hours. Rest was, in most circumstances, only ever gotten out of sight. Haider usually hid himself in the storage area to take a break, even when sales were slow and there was no work to be done anyway. One day, Younis ran away and no one could find him for about an hour, until he was discovered napping on the roof. Joseph and Raed once got into a tremendous fight, and afterword Joseph told me, "He [Raed] is a thief. When the boss sends him out to buy supplies, he takes his time not working. He's stealing time." Suspicions surrounded reasons for taking time off even when one had received the boss' sanction, as the surprise and curiosity that followed my being sent home early suggests. Time, totally in the hands of the bosses, can only ever be given back to the workers through an act of what Rami called "love", a discretionary, moral offering given in exchange for the worker demonstrating that he has given the utmost of his capacities. Already, we see the moral element of time discipline emerging out of the power of discretion given over to the owner by the nature of the commodity sale of labor-capacity. Because time was so precious, fights constantly broke out over who deserved to take a day off, particularly as Easter neared and Christian workers wanted more time to go and get haircuts, buy new clothes, attend services and celebrations with family, and otherwise participate in the ritual life of their community. Mistimed breaks, especially the secret breaks that workers took by hiding, could create a backlog in orders, forcing Joseph, who was responsible for keeping track of telephone orders, to come down into the basement and begin a screaming match. Or, a worker might exhaust himself and still receive nothing in exchange from the boss, who could sometimes press their luck trying to squeeze the worker for every last ounce of his ability. I will return to this point below.

Second, there was one case in which taking a rest was permitted, and indeed sanctioned, by others. Both lunch and dinner were provided to workers for free, and one was not expected to work while eating. Lunch came in the form of a greasy length of kebab wrapped in day-old bread, and I ate it on my feet, as quickly as possible before starting in on the day's first tasks. Dinner, however, was a real break in the day. The food itself was a delight after a day of toil: hot pieces of coal-grilled chicken came apart with a delicious warmth in my wet and wrinkled hands, a small pile of rice and pickles adding bulk and sharpness to the meal. Still better was the fact that no one had the right to interrupt your dinner. On one occasion, other workers physical held me in place besides my plate so that I would not answer the screamed commands coming from upstairs as if, were the newcomer to heed this call, the seal of convention that protected time spent eating might be broken. There was no precise time at which the workers ate, but I usually ended up taking my meals with Younis and Joseph, after we had cleaned the dining room and before the dinner rush began. People did not tarry with their meals, however. Younis ate his so fast that he always finished it off with a glass of water mixed with baking soda to prevent indigestion. In addition to these two daily meals, there were other ways in which free time could be given in the form of consumable commodities. On rare occasions, the workers were permitted to take a water-pipe (*nargeelah*) onto the street corner and smoke together. Haider, for his part, seemed to have an exclusive right to provide his own tobacco. He smoked only Galoise cigarettes, brought from Iraq by Abu Zigayir, because, he explained, "they take longer to burn." When I'd done a good job mopping the floor, he would give me one of these objectified measures of time to enjoy from tip to filter. But the most frequent way in which extra time was given to workers was through gifts of food that came from the bosses to us. These gifts were usually made up of leftovers from meals that the bosses had commanded we make for their friends and associates. The fish came picked of their best parts, and

the bread might be soggy and cold. Nevertheless, workers gathered to consume these unwanted parts because, as with lunch, dinner, and tobacco-smoking, they could, in consuming them, realize the time-off that was crystalized within these objects. It was as if, having rendered their bodies into instruments of production and alienated this capacity to the bosses, the workers then received fleshly renderings of value that contained the time that had been put into producing them.

What, then, do the bosses want with all this food? In the previous chapter, we discussed he circumstances in which a large belly manifests a person's "symbolic capital." For the stranded professional-class migrants who lacked access to the paths through which they might to realize their symbolic capital as real wealth, this overfed body is simply so much dead weight. For the owners of Anta Warda, however, who constantly moved between Jordan and Iraq, where the real source of their wealth lay, the ability to feed and be fed was very important for opening up new and potentially profitable paths of exchange. Raed, who operated the cash register and dealt with suppliers, told me flat out that there was no way the restaurant was making money, but he also denied that it was a money laundering operation. Still, the restaurant was a place where the owners could meet with associates to work out deals on untaxed cigarettes, illicitly sub-leased cars, international tahini distribution, and other hidden forms of circulation. In the next section, I turn to the way in which some workers perceived the fact that their hard work was what made it possible for the bosses to sit back and make their deals.

Figure 9: A dish of *mazgoof* prepared for guests of the bosses. [Photo by the author].

Lesson 8: “The Arab only cares for his stomach.”

The more time I spent with the workers of *Anta Warda*, the more I was made intimate to their hatreds. When the boss denied time off, when the manager acted condescendingly, or when another worker shirked his obligations, bitter complaint followed. I myself could feel a hot rage

seething through me at moments when I felt too harried to focus or was commanded to perform a task that put me at cross purposes with another employee, like having to clean the floor by one worker while another was tramping through with dirty feet. Anger and recrimination formed a spider's web of intimacies, contradicting the fraternal ethos that was asserted so loudly by workers and bosses alike. And, as I was drawn more deeply into these entanglements, bigotry crawled out of the place where it had hidden and began to creep across the threads of resentment. When the boss refused to advance money for a worker's brother's medical treatment, it was because "the Arab only cares for his own self-interest (*maslaha*)." When I invited friends of mine, an American woman and a Jordanian man, to come and eat at the restaurant, I was interrogated, "Is it normal for Muslim men to take Christian girls in America?" And when Joseph showed me the cruciform stick-and-poke tattoo in the space between his thumb and index finger, he told me this brand was required for all the soldiers in the Nineveh militia to show they were not Islamic State spies, and because, "All the Arabs are spies and can't be trusted." These statements were often followed with a question, "Don't you agree? Isn't it like that?" Confronted by these tests of solidarity, I kept my arguments to myself.

The question of ethno-sectarian hatreds is too enormous to address here in full. However, in one of my final lessons at the restaurant, I was given a chance to reflect on one aspect of the problem: how the body, as the enduring material repository of action and appetite, comes to be read as the external sign of an internal nature. This lesson concerns a phrase used on several occasions to speak ill of the bosses: "The Arab only cares about his stomach and his money," and, it was sometimes added, "his cock." In this phrase, the person, much like the animal, is rendered as a body of bodies, each of which can be dismembered from the whole. I have already noted that the gifts of left-overs that returned to the workers were picked clean of their best parts, which were

offered to the bosses' associates, or sold at a premium price. The lamb's *liyya*, the fatty deposit that forms above the tail, was added to the kebab mixture and rendered into liquid form to add to the rice. But a portion of the *liyya* was also cut into cubes that were added to the skewer whole for special customers. In the former case, the fat dissolves into the finished product, in the latter, it is the unadulterated and maximal concentration of valued substance. Fish, too, were divided into fatty and fleshy parts, although in this case the extractive operation was performed by the diner himself through the conventional technique. A single carp, the beloved Iraqi staple of *semech mazgoof*, is split through the skull and down the belly, emptied of organs, then grilled with its insides facing the flame. By the time it arrives at the table, this cooked interior is spread wide, round, and inviting. Steam rises from the meaty disc as the diner separates and discards the spine, revealing the glistening fat beneath. The edges of the fish, where the heat has caused the scaly skin to curl up like the rim of an upside-down frisbee, are another place where fat is concentrated, and one learns to run a finger inside this curve, gathering it up in abundance. The tougher, drier parts in between might, however, go uneaten. In addition to the delicious and sought-after *dism*, the animal's reproductive organs were another high-value part. Metal bowls brimmed with sheep testicles, and *mazgoof* could be ordered with *halolo*, or roe. The male fish's reproductive organs were sold all on their own in plastic bags as a kind of folk remedy. And in all cases, the consumption of the animal's reproductive parts was meant to increase what Raed demurred to call "production" (*intaaj*) and "energy" (*taaqa'*), the seminal potency and sexual stamina that brought pleasure, power, and offspring. Through this medium of animal parts, the worker's alienated productive capacities are consumed by the boss or customer, in whose own body the lively potency of flesh is realized. And this circuit of production and consumption leads back into elite networks through the reconversion of symbolic capital into material capital. It just so happened to be the

case that most of the men offering up this product were Syriac, while most of the ones consuming it were Arabs.

The owning classes, too, perceived the workers through the lens of stereotypes that linked ethno-sectarian identity to specific capacities for labor. The Iraqi Christians' reputation for loyalty and politeness was a matter of popular discourse, in which Christians workers themselves might take a certain amount of pride. Joseph once told me a story about the Pope wanting to take all of the Christians out of Iraq to spare them the depredations of the sanctions, and Saddam Hussein replying, "Why should I give away the most beautiful flowers in my garden?" Among the bosses, the good-natured and conciliatory attitude associated with Christians took on an obsequious and subservient character. "I love the Christians", said one of the bosses, "They never complain or question, and they will work any kind of job." Another explained, "I hire so many Christians because they are loyal. They will not steal, and they will do what you tell them to do." We could track down the origins of these stories, and trace their genealogies from the moment of inscription onward. But this genealogical investigation into the origins of a trope does not explain why the notion takes such a firm hold of the present. And so, I want to keep our sights on how, just as the fat and potency that accumulate in the body of the owning classes are read as signs of an innate ethno-national character, the owners of money read the capacity for toil gathered in the body of the worker in a like manner.

The embodied, objectified forms in which the processes of labor and consumption are materialized are draped in the discourses of ethnicity and sect; genealogical fetishes that dress these notions in seeming fact. And, ironically, the superficiality of these essentialism is never lost on the people who make use of them. "What happened to your beautiful white complexion?", Joseph asked me on my last day of work, when my face was besotted with coal dust, "When you

came to us, you lit up the place (*nowarritna*). Now, you've turned Egyptian! It's no good for Americans to do this kind of work," he added, "You are the leaders of the world, and the thieves of the word." Never mind that the dust would wash off when I returned to my life as a scholar, and never mind that the Egyptian's suntan comes with laboring outdoors in jobs he has been consigned to take by Jordan's guest worker program. What the comment reveals is that a few weeks of work is all it takes to appear as another kind of person. The reification of ethno-sectarian identities is just that: reification, the transformation of a process into a thing. And it proceeds in parallel with the objectifying, profaning, and dismembering processes we have been considering so far. Relationally-produced qualities of the body appear as attributes that are treated as if they emerged from the deepest part of the person, and the appearance of distinct kinds stands in front of the social processes that have set them apart. This fetishization of labor-capacity extracts one aspect of a complex, changeable, and living human being as a commodity that, like all commodities, is discerned as different from other commodities by reference to its *use* within the labor process. (Marx 1977, 126) "Ethnicization in general, then, would have to be understood as the positing of a structure of surface particularity overlaying a universal substance, a relationship that not only applies to person and thing alike but can also govern that distinction." (Bush 2007, 86) This process is *de-humanizing*, to render the body is to profane the integrated totality of the person by reducing it to a single member: stomach, hand, face, ass, or cock. Meanwhile, the possibility of class consciousness of determining social relations is swallowed up by the seeming depth of these relations' form of appearance.[7]

[7] This is not to deny the possibility of such a consciousness. Iraq's 2019 October Revolution (*thawrat at-tashreen*) aimed to end institutionalized sectarianism in favor of a more universal vision of a nation-state for all. The revolution was put down through a combination of tremendous state violence against citizens, the absolute disinterest of the international community to become involved, and the assassination of Qassim Soleimani, which let the sovereign classes on both American and Iranian sides of the issue drive a wedge into the coalition of revolt.

Conclusion: Time after the Fight

In this chapter, we have foregrounded the living, working, sensing body as an embodiment of value through which the experience of displacement is reciprocally mediated. Across a series of pedagogical moments, I argued that the worker trains himself to regard his body as a rendered, objectified, and desensitized instrument of production. It is this manner of relating to the body as a commodified and alienable thing that stigmatizes the workers of Anta Warda, for performing this kind of work means submitting to violation and profanation in a place beyond the reach of rights, rules, and authority. Workers perform this labor of desensitization on themselves and others in order to build up sufficient capacity to perform dangerous and demanding work. And they perform this work for the sake of the bosses, who have purchased the right to enjoy the products of the workers' labor-capacity over the working day. Drawing a parallel between commodified, alienated human labor-capacity and the value-bearing animal parts this labor produces for the bosses' own consumption, we saw that, in both cases, the linked processes of producing and consumption transform the body in durable ways. And, finally, we noted that the transformations in the body brought on by highly unequal positions within this process are interpreted as evidence for innate natures, proclivities, and appetites in a manner that accords with existing ethno-sectarian prejudices.

Let me end the chapter with one final point. In systematizing the process of rendered transactions, I risk making it appear smoother than it actually was. The fact is that fights between workers and bosses, and within each group, broke out constantly in the restaurant. When workers insulted or, on one occasion, physically assaulted someone in charge, a ritual of reconciliation would take place. The offending worker was physically isolated by his fellows until he cooled off and apologized. This could go on for hours after the workday had ended, during which time no

one seemed to be allowed to leave the restaurant to go home. Workers sat with workers, bosses and the manger in their own group. After enough time had passed, the worker would get up and offer his apology to the boss in front of the assembled group. The boss, not content with being made whole, unusually asked pointed questions, "You know I am the boss? You know you can't do that?" to which the worker would have to answer in the affirmative. Everything about these incidents spoke to the idea that a social order had been ruptured and that everyone in our little community had to hang around long enough to witness its restoration. As an exception that proves the rule, Raed, the manager, and one of the owners almost got into a fistfight, and in fact grasped each other by the shirt collars with raised fists, but no ritual took place afterward their conflict, because it had not involved someone of lower social standing confronting his "better." No one wanted violence to escalate in these cases – other workers would plead with the angered party to calm down, to apologize, to smooth things over so that everyone could keep their job and go home to their families. What else is there to do but wait for the anger to reduce into resentments and put on a loving face? On this side of dispossession, the diremption of intention and expression, the discontinuous identity of what is hidden and what is manifest that characterizes life in a class society, comes into self-consciousness as a practice of everyday life.

Conclusion: Resituating the Displaced

From the prominent heights of a luxury hotel to the hidden world of a basement kitchen, this dissertation has led the reader across the different position from which people perceive a single social field. This movement allowed us to see how moments in time and space reveal different aspects of a larger situation that is arises from relations which cannot be reduced to what is reflected in any one of those moments yet can only be grasped through them. To avoid a reductive theorization that would read these data as the outcome of totalizing discourses, I offered the idea that experiences of displacement and the forces which produce this condition are reciprocally mediated through the commodity form, which is in different moments both a quality and a magnitude of value, a crossroads of concrete and abstract time. This dialectical materialist approach to ethnographic data allowed me to identify the specific ways in which a class's degree of ownership over specific commodities shapes it experiences of displacement. It also permitted me to show how these experiences are constituted in relation to reified impressions of other people who appear from the standpoint of any one actor to inhabit different class positions within their impression of the totality. Finally, I showed how consciousness of these differences is fundamentally temporal: it is projected onto an imagined trajectory over time, giving displacement its sensed temporality. To return to the trope of "waiting on embers", from which we began, I conclude that the pain of displacement is a mode of living class relations in time.

To interpret the experiences and practices of displaced people in this way goes against the grain of prevalent academic approaches to the topic. Put all too briefly, the displaced person is typically situated on the outside of our society as a figure of exclusion, abjection, exception, or abandonment – as the one who is left out of consideration by our liberal values and laws. Resituating the figure of the displaced within regional circuits of trade, labor, and expropriation

(that is, within capitalist society) has allowed me to show that this impression of utter exclusion is itself an artefact of a certain class-specific standpoint. For the professional class migrants who sense that they are undergoing dispossession, the figure of the poor and the pitiable (*al-masaakiin*) appear as boundaries to experience and knowledge, as the very limits of what can be imagined as the future. Yet when we cross the boundary from professional work to manual toil, we discover that the latter group is entirely capable of making sophisticated evaluations of their condition in practice and, through what I have called the rendering process of dismemberment, cordon off the parts of the body that are felt to be violated from the person as a whole, a person who can be said to be in possession of these violated parts as alienable property. Here, the reader might be tempted to think that this latter group is itself not truly abject, and point to even poorer, more desperate refugees who in comparison with the laboring migrants are far worse off. But this would simply be a case of the reader allowing their own impression of essentialized abjection to take their interpretation by the hand, to cover its eyes, and to drag their thinking away from what it has been shown. For even if this study included cases of refugees who do not have jobs, who are utterly dependent on humanitarian aid, and who are confined to camps, it would be wrong to regard this yet still unhappier group as existing outside of capitalist society. After all, the camps are themselves generative of wealth for the countries that host them and the professionals who tend them (Morris 2019), and the confinement of a great number of people to a small space allows academic researchers to build careers and entire industries around extracting information from these sites. (Sukarieh & Tannock 2019) And were ethnographers to approach the issue in these terms, I have no doubt that even the poorest refugees would have many important things to say about their inclusion within these enterprises. My point is not, therefore, that a certain group of migrants are or are not truly abject, but that the notion of abjection is itself a kind of resistance on

the part of the observer to think through the situation that embrocates them with the observed, a situation which unfolds behind the back of bureaucratic reason and with which the law is only ever catching up with and attempting to excuse after the fact.

Resituating the figure of the displaced person within capitalism also has helps us avoid some of the more simplistic ways in which capitalism has been used an explanation for what we observe. Taking up the standpoint of people who are undergoing dispossession generates insight into the fact that insofar as it is a system, and not simply a collection of values and tropes, capitalism operates through the parting of people from their means of existence on a recurring basis. We have seen that groups which attain a level of comfort and security in their conditions of life remain vulnerable to depredation. But we also see that, in ethnographically engaging with the ways in which dispossession is lived by real people in real situations, the classic categories of the social analysis of capitalism – class, the commodity, labor, property, and so on – are wrenched out of the positions they have hitherto assumed as static, independent factors in explanations and enter into motion through practices, relationships, and human projects. Throughout the dissertation, I have cautioned the reader against the impulse to interpret these projects as politically consequential acts of resistance, or as radical alternatives to hegemonic conditions. Taking the practices of everyday life as both the scope and method of my inquiry, I have instead consistently insisted that the words and acts of my interlocuters reveal knowledge of the world as it is. However, in unfolding this thought through the whole of the dissertation, I have realized that these practices do not simply reflect life as it is.

For although I have rejected the method of critique which contents itself with identifying the gap between modes of representation and that which they represent, I have also returned again and again to the notion that reality, as it is socially constituted in practice, is itself riven with

contradictions and dilemmas, and that a world that is at odds with itself has no room in it for unalienated subjectivities. Nevertheless, there remain moments in which the people who welcomed me into their lives made gestures towards values of humanity, rights, and justice that transcend their dirempted situation and to which, by completing the act of migration, they hoped someday to enjoy. But in a world that is increasingly closed to itself, and especially form the standpoint of the American academic witnessing the closing-off of his society, the aspirations of these revolutionary dreamers to transcend the brutality that served to enforced their country's position with a world system that demands that some places become sites of exploitation and violence may appear anachronistic. For although the United States remains a safer place to live than many other parts of the world, the very same agents of imperial terror who were set loose in Iraq have been brought home to roost, and are at the time of this writing being employed by our own government to dismantle the political opposition at home. (Mazzetti & Goldman 2020) In their aspiration towards transcending an increasingly common situation, these interlocuters challenge us to take our own politics far more seriously. At present, there are too many clever thinkers who simply throw up their hands at aspirations towards embodying freedom and rights, and chose instead to burden their interlocuters with the full weight of developing and implementing a radical political alterity. This gives academics permission to resist thinking through what their interlocuters' demands might imply for our own practices and to avoid the difficult task of confronting the actually existing structures of domination that stand in the way of realizing them and which are located much closer to home. What would it mean to instead accept the challenge that our interlocuters' hopes present to and for us? Perhaps we might begin by refusing the impulse to reduce our own political agency to the content of what we produce in our work and, knowing that we are no more excluded from the capitalist world system than our

interlocuters, come to consciousness of our embrocation within a mode of production that is essentially inadequate to the task of realizing human freedom. The luxury that we academics do, at least for now, enjoy is that our day jobs do not utterly dispossess us of the time and energy we might commit to a future in which the world can offer a better welcome to those who continue to hope for justice. But this is a challenge that cannot be answered in writing.

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