

“THERE IS FEAR OF TOMORROW’: DISPLACED IRAQI WOMEN IN JORDAN
NARRATE THEIR PASTS AND FUTURES

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Iraqi women living in Amman, Jordan view the city as a temporary residence, and their lives there are characterized by uncertainty and isolation. Iraqi social history, Jordanian policies on immigration and citizenship, and economic hardship all contribute to the production and maintenance of this uncertainty. These factors also prevent the formation of a cohesive Iraqi community in Amman, and thus the development of a shared understanding of the violence and displacement that this group has experienced. Given these circumstances, the manner in which Iraqi women articulate their relationship to their country of origin is highly idiosyncratic and responsive to the demands of their daily lives in Jordan as they prepare mentally either to return to Iraq or to resettle in a third country.

What He Thought

(Heather McHugh, 1994)

We were supposed to do a job in Italy
and, full of our feeling for
ourselves (our sense of being
Poets from America) we went
from Rome to Fano, met
the mayor, mulled
a couple matters over (what's
a cheap date, they asked us; what's
flat drink). Among Italian literati

we could recognize our counterparts:
the academic, the apologist,
the arrogant, the amorous,
the brazen and the glib—and there was one

administrator (the conservative), in suit
of regulation gray, who like a good tour guide
with measured pace and uninflected tone narrated
sights and histories the hired van hauled us past.
Of all, he was the most politic and least poetic,
so it seemed. Our last few days in Rome
(when all but three of the New World Bards had flown)
I found a book of poems this
unprepossessing one had written: it was there
in the *pensione* room (a room he'd recommended)
where it must have been abandoned by
the German visitor (was there a bus of *them*?)
to whom he had inscribed and dated it a month before.
I couldn't read Italian, either, so I put the book
back into the wardrobe's dark. We last Americans

were due to leave tomorrow. For our parting evening then
our host chose something in a family restaurant, and there
we sat and chatted, sat and chewed,
till, sensible it was our last
big chance to be poetic, make
our mark, one of us asked

"What's poetry?"

Is it the fruits and vegetables and
marketplace of Campo dei Fiori, or

Introduction: Nineteen hills, one million refugees: the fabric of Amman

“Susan, where is it that you go to do research?”

“Susan has an appointment somewhere in the middle of nowhere.”

“In Marka? I don’t even know where that is.”

During the time that I conducted fieldwork with women displaced from Iraq living in Amman, I stayed with a Jordanian family. I was situated very differently in the social geography of Amman from the women who made this project possible, and they were situated differently from each other. My hosts and their friends often made comments like the ones above about my daily routine of shuttling around the city to conduct interviews. Their comments communicate the invisibility of the Iraqis flooding into Amman. Their presence in Jordan is apparent in numerous subtle ways, such as the number of new Iraqi restaurants, longer wait times for a taxi, and inflated prices on almost all commodities. Everyone is aware that Iraqis are now a part of Amman, and in that sense they are quite visible. The Jordanian government leaves their movement and settlement mostly unrestricted, though, so there is no one place in Amman where Iraqis can be found. There is no reliable count on their number and no typical trajectory for their resettlement after their arrival in Jordan. Iraqis in Jordan as a group represent an unknown element, and individuals or families fade easily into the backdrop of the city. They are acknowledged as a concept but invisible as residents.

“Displaced Iraqi women” is an evocative term, and when I bring it up here in the United States, my audience often assumes that I witnessed life in appalling conditions in refugee camps. In reality, while Iraqis in Jordan often maintain a lifestyle far beneath what they would have enjoyed in Iraq, their incorporation into the city makes their experience quite different from what they might have had in a refugee camp. Camps for refugees are nothing if not aggressively visible. Many a public relations campaign has been launched using photographs of tent cities with inadequate amenities. Iraqi refugees’ lives do not follow this pattern, and their partial and ambivalent absorption into the urban fabric of Amman is one feature that characterizes their experiences as displaced people.

Talking about displaced Iraqis – not all of whom are refugees, a term which in itself requires interrogation¹ – and about the common features among their often disparate experiences requires some notion of Amman and the kind of city that it is, some concept of the place that provides the backdrop to their ethnoscape (Appadurai, 1996). It was allegedly built on seven hills; now it sprawls across nineteen. Successive waves of migrants fueled and continue to fuel Amman’s expansion outward from the ancient center of the city, where the Romans left the requisite ruins of an amphitheater downhill from the Citadel. Almost three million of Jordan’s six million residents live in Amman, and according to the numbers the residents use in conversation, at least 500,000 and possibly as many as 750,000 of these residents are Iraqis.²

¹ Iraqis can enter Jordan at the border, without securing a visa prior. That visa can be extended up to three months, and after that they need to either seek asylee status through the UNHCR or establish residency.

² A Norwegian organization, FAFO, was commissioned to aggregate statistics on Iraqis living in Jordan in 2007 (“Fafo project Study of Iraqis in Jordan,” 2008). They initially

Amman is divided into East and West. The border between the two halves is a steep slope, at the top of which is neighborhood called Jabal Amman and the bottom of which is an area called Wasat al Balad. When Amman was named the capital of British Transjordan in the 1920s, the new protectorate's elite made their home in Jabal Amman, and today its stately stone houses with walled gardens full of bougainvillea make it a pleasant place to walk. The sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of the houses' former owners have since moved to newer neighborhoods further west, to Abdoun and to Swefieh and Deir Ghabar, and their connection to the Amman of these homes makes them appreciate this area in particular. They show their appreciation by commenting on how the area is being taken over by foreigners, here to work at the UNHCR or CARE or the British Council, who sit and smoke cigarettes on benches. The foreigners, in turn, complain that the teenage boys loitering in groups nearby are staring at them. Teenage girls in hijab weave through both groups as they walk down the street hand in hand with their boyfriends. A newspaper columnist, ruminating on Jordan's unique fusion of the modern with the traditional, would find a wealth of material in Jabal Amman³.

Down the hill, in Wasat al-Balad, Amman cosmopolitanism takes a slightly different form. Every bus in the city starts and ends its route in al-Abdali station,

estimated that 161,000 Iraqis lived in Jordan. Further discussion with government officials led to a revised number of 450,000-500,000. My informal conversations with NGO officials suggest that neither number is considered accurate, but the Iraqi population is so transient and so internally variable that coming across reliable statistics is very difficult. Some Jordanians (and Iraqis) estimate that as many as 750,000 Iraqis live in Amman.

³ A recent New York Times article takes just this sort of liberty in ruminating on urban planning in Amman (Slackman, 2010).

logically situated in the middle of the city. If one were in search of a Middle Eastern souq experience, it could be found here: pirated DVDs, colorful rayon hijabs, and cotton socks are all on display. Tourists visit primarily to buy their Middle Eastern souvenirs: scarves, hookah pipes, ornate jewelry. They sometimes disrupt the steady foot traffic in the streets to take pictures of particularly Arabic-looking signs. The King Hussein mosque provides the centerpiece, with the Arab Bank opposite; down the street from these landmarks is a labyrinth of bookstores.

Amman is a city populated by people from elsewhere, and its repeated stretching to accommodate these many different groups has made it cosmopolitan, a melting pot. Its social fabric is flexible, and its lazy sprawling out over the nineteen hills that it now covers makes it feel haphazard. Urban planning initiatives are a recent, albeit increasing, introduction. Several waves of Palestinian immigration, prompted by the creation and establishment of the state of Israel, fueled the initial spurts of growth. Now, Iraqis escaping the war in their country have assumed this role.

This work is based on the time I spent in Amman, Jordan during the summer of 2009 listening to displaced Iraqi women living in Amman detail the path that they took to arrive in their current circumstance, and the role that being Iraqi played in this progression. Over the course of the summer, I was able to spend several weeks speaking with Manal, Basima, Huda, and Ghazal, each of whom represents a different group of Iraqis. Of course, none of them offers an accurate representation of any group, as if such a model exists. They live in Amman but, like so many of its residents, are not of Amman. Each day, they negotiate a path for themselves and their families through the maze of this

sprawling city. While being Iraqi has proven so central to their experience, as it marks them as different from Jordanians, their integration into the city has also meant the absence of a specifically Iraqi support network. Thus, they are both entitled and obligated to formulate a notion of Iraqiness that reflects their personal experiences and priorities, and that may diverge from extant hegemonic narratives and even contribute to formulating new ones.

There are similarities and resonant themes that recur throughout discussions of the Iraqi experience distributed in popular culture, in both English and Arabic. Iraqi novelist Alia Mamdouh (2006) begins her book *The Loved Ones* with the phrase: “In airports we are born, and to airports we shall return.” (p. 1) Iraqis document this feeling of transience, this mistrust of any place promising security, in their writing in numerous languages⁴ and in numerous fora, and my fieldwork suggests that this shared understanding influences the way they tell their personal stories in complex ways. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been displaced, and of those that remain, some barely recognize the wartorn country of the present as their own. All Iraqis have, in some ways, been displaced. Amman, with its hills and valleys and suspension bridges tying together neighborhoods and communities and nationalities that expected to have nothing to do with one another, provides an apropos backdrop against which their stories can be told.

Manal, Basima, Huda and Ghazal come from different communities in Iraq, and they each have made new homes in different areas of the city. Visiting them in their respective neighborhoods involved considerable time spent in taxis shuttling from one

⁴ Iraqi fiction writers publish in Kurdish and Arabic, as well as in English and French to reach audiences where they have made new homes in exile.

location to another. The ride from their homes or workplaces to my own place of residence took twenty minutes or so, usually, but I often felt as if I were leaving their world of quiet struggle and moving into another, separate realm at the city's affluent center. These rides gave me an acute sense of their absorption by the city. There is no Iraqi neighborhood, no Iraqi camp. The Iraqis of Amman are woven in to the city as many refugees before them have been, and this layer of normalcy makes the stories of them as individuals particularly potent in keeping them tied to their memories of Iraq. It also directs their relationships to the future, which, they anticipate, lies elsewhere. Their relative isolation leaves them with the responsibility of endowing Iraqiness with meaning independently, relying on the limited support of their tenuous and temporary network in Amman.

Historical memory and competing agendas: Palestinian refugees in Jordan

Jordan navigates several competing pressures in taking on the Iraqi refugee “problem”, and each of those pressures has an historical and political story of its own that predates the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Jordan's longstanding entanglement with Palestine, and the lengthy story of Palestinian refugees' integration into Jordanian society, meant that policies to accommodate a large population of refugees already existed prior to the arrival of Iraqis in the country. These policies reflect Jordan's desire to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity while accommodating the essential transfer of a majority of Palestinians into its space, and thus established a pattern of

playing simultaneously to satisfy numerous competing interests. Satisfying the needs of the Iraqi refugees, meeting the expectations of the international community, and maintaining stability domestically all demand a slightly different approach on the part of the Jordanian government, and the ambiguous policy it maintains toward the Iraqis reflect its experience with the destabilizing force of Palestinian migration.

Jordan has confronted challenges to its population's integrity almost since its establishment as a British mandate territory in 1924. The British named it "Transjordan"⁵ and considered it a transit space for traders to pass through as they moved from Syria or Iraq to Palestine (Salibi, 1998). As Jewish migration to Mandate Palestine began in earnest in the 1920s, Palestinians began a parallel wave of migration into Jordan. The state of Israel increasingly proved itself an undeniable reality, in particular with the wars in 1948 and 1967, and the Palestinian population in Jordan increased accordingly. Jordan's attempts to maintain a sovereign identity, and to avoid being overwhelmed by the new Palestinian presence, were complicated by its close ties to Palestine. The founding monarch, Abdullah I, had included Palestinian ministers in his first government, and they have maintained a presence in the country since then (Salibi 1998, p. 99). Following the Six-Day War in 1967, Jordan's King Hussein devoted several years to suppressing Palestinian challenges to his sovereignty, and these challenges escalated to open military conflict in September of 1970 when Palestinian militant groups attempted to assassinate the King and exert their influence over the Jordanian government ("Black

⁵ The Arabic term, *Sharqi al Urdun* or East of the Jordan, does not suggest a borderland in the same way that "Transjordan" does. (Salibi 1998, p. 94)

September”). Tensions between Jordanians and Palestinians have not reached that level again, but the notion of displaced communities posing a threat is well established in Jordanian historical memory and continues to inform the government’s treatment of refugees.

Now, an estimated fifty percent of Jordan’s population is Palestinian or of Palestinian origin. Almost 2 million Palestinians who are registered as refugees live in Jordan, many of them in camps that have been present and growing since 1967 (United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 2010). Palestinians and those of Palestinian origin embody every class status present in Jordan, ranging from the unemployable refugees living in camps to the queen, Queen Rania, whose Palestinian family was displaced to Kuwait. The government necessarily takes this delicate balance of power between Jordanians and their now-permanent Palestinian guests into account as it formulates policy, and its approach to displaced populations is naturally informed by the history of Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

A new wave of refugees: Iraqi migration as part of a pattern

Palestinian migration to Jordan figures most prominently in discussions of non-Jordanian populations in the country, but Iraqi migration has also been longstanding. A 2007 report, widely considered the most accurate such census available, estimated the number of Iraqis in Jordan as 450,000 (Faf0 & Government of Jordan, 2007). Jordan has attempted to close its border to Iraqis, beginning in 2007, but numerous alternative ways of entering the country and absence of police interest in deporting Iraqi families means

the number of Iraqis in the country continues to increase (Fagen, 2009). The Iraqi presence, in combination with the Palestinians, makes Amman a decidedly diverse community. The Iraqi dialect – or dialects, as Iraqis of different regions and classes speak markedly differently – differs from the Jordanian/Palestinian way of speaking, and one can typically identify an Iraqi in a short conversation. There are few visual markers, though, to differentiate an Iraqi from a Palestinian or a Palestinian from a Jordanian, and this capacity to assimilate eases Iraqis' acclimation to life in Amman.

Iraqis also blend easily into the Jordanian landscape, visually at least, because their presence in Jordan is well established. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, as the Baath regime further consolidated its influence in Iraq and political repression was amplified, Iraqis have been traveling to Jordan permanently, for extended visits, or as a stopping point on their way to a third destination. Migration increased after the Gulf War in 1990, especially during the sanctions period, and since that time Jordan has worked carefully to design a policy that permits Iraqis to enter the country but limits the number that are able to stay (Chatelard, 2002; Fagen, 2009; International Rescue Committee, 2008). Chatelard (2002) terms Jordan a “transit country”, a temporary station on the way to a more permanent settling spot. She noted a commitment on the part of the Jordanian government to keeping this population as unknown as possible, gathering little data on them and minimizing public discussion of their presence, so as to diminish their impact on the Jordanian social system.

Since Chatelard's writing in 2002, migration to Jordan from Iraq has accelerated. Iraqis' visibility has increased as well, for two significant reasons. First, the number of

Iraqis in Jordan increased markedly following the American invasion in 2003, and a much larger group is simply harder to ignore. Second, the Iraqis who arrived in Jordan after 2003 are increasingly lower-income and infrequently able to meet Jordan's requirement for residency, namely depositing \$150,000 in a Jordanian bank. Their ability to sustain themselves in Jordan is limited, and often they require assistance from charitable organizations and NGOs. Moreover, as so much international attention has been trained on the American military campaign in Iraq, more international organizations like the UN, as well as the United States government, have taken an interest in providing services to these Iraqi refugees. For all of these reasons, Iraqis are much more visible in Jordan now, and the Jordanian policy of ambiguity no longer accomplishes the ends it was designed to meet. The subtle social consequences of this mandated ambiguity speak to its effective marginalization of a population whose growing size is forcing them into a spotlight of sorts.

The policies themselves, at least prior to the nominal closure of the border in 2007, dictate that any Iraqi be permitted entry into the country. Upon entry, he or she is granted a visa for 15 days, which can be renewed for a three month period. After that, Iraqis may register with the UNHCR as asylum seekers, or become residents at the price mentioned above. As of 2008, there were about 52,000 Iraqis registered with the UNHCR, which represents a very small percentage of the estimated 450,000 in the country. Quite a number of Iraqis, then, are living in Jordan illegally (International Rescue Committee, 2008). Jordan's policies toward refugees, originally conceived to contain the problem of Palestinian migration, now implement some of those same

containment agendas in dealing with Iraqis, and thus effectively legislate a degree of instability.

Speech as a survival tool: Narrative and Iraqi social history

Displacement is an effect of violence and instability; all the women whose life stories I will discuss here left Iraq because it was and still is a dangerous place to live. This is not a recent development. Iraqi history is punctuated by military coups, wars, and genocidal acts by the Baath government against its own citizens⁶. Jordan offers a safe haven, where they can safely walk in the street at night and can expect all their family members to return home at the end of the day. They can take advantage of a kind of instability in Amman. Their integration into the city, though, has been far from seamless.

Iraqis confronting the reality of forced migration face the challenges of making a home in a new city with very few resources to ease their adjustment. Their belongings, and in many cases their extended family, remain in Iraq. These ties that they maintain, along with the short travel distance between Amman and Baghdad, keep the notion of return at the front of their minds. The Jordanian government prohibits Iraqis from working in the country unless they are residents, and becoming a resident requires an investment of \$150,000 in a Jordanian bank (International Rescue Committee, 2008). The government's qualified welcoming of Iraqis reflects the Jordanian population's

⁶ The inhumanity of the Baath government is well documented in a variety of sources. McDowall ((McDowall, 1996) documents the violence of the Al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds from 1986-1989. Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett (1987) present a narrative account of the various technologies of violence that the Baath government employed over time.

ambivalence toward the new arrivals in their country. Children experience bullying at school, landlords discriminate in choosing their renters, and Iraqis endure any number of subtle but insidious practices that mark them as outsiders in Jordan. All of these obstacles mark Amman as a temporary residence, and one that, while it provides a respite from violence, demands strength, forbearance and ingenuity from the Iraqis living there. Jordan provides them a respite from the violence of Iraq, but only a temporary one.

Scholars across the social sciences have observed the constructive use of narrative in enabling subjects' navigation of the obstacles of everyday life, from the mundane to the harrowing. Erving Goffman ((1972) observed the usefulness of creating specific versions of the self, reflected in stories that omit and include carefully selected excerpts from an individual's life. In the case of his participants, who represented widely variable social groups, explaining their present circumstances as part of a logical progression allowed them to understand their current situation in productive terms. Moreover, they often leveraged their presentations of self in different ways so as to inspire certain reactions on the part of their audiences. Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (1996) designate narrative as a central element of trauma victims' recovery and rehabilitation, of their moving forward from a period of change and rupture. Charlotte Linde (1993) notes that coherence is a central element in all life stories, which in turn carry real importance consolidating one's notion of self. Speakers include or omit certain details and often exclude entire periods and events in order to present sequenced, logical narratives of their lives.

The women with whom I spoke face a series of challenges in their present circumstances in Amman. They employ those techniques mentioned above in creating a coherent story of their arrival in the situation where they now find themselves, and their particular rendering of these tendencies that are so widely observed is of particular importance to their present and future prosperity. They left an unstable and unsafe situation for one where all the comforts and securities of a familiar place no longer apply, trading a difficult past for a difficult present. Moreover, they have become members of a marginalized minority, and they are responsible for protecting their families from the material and social consequences of this stigma. The narratives that they craft can be read as responsive to the circumstances in which they find themselves, and their incorporation of Iraqiness into them essentially a requirement of those circumstances. While their references to Iraqi cultural values and history index hegemonic discourses, their notion of national identity is also intensely personal, and I will seek to demonstrate here that the personal nature of this identification reflects their ambiguous social positions, outside the support network of a clearly defined community. Jordanian policies and recent Iraqi social history each present barriers to the formation of close relationships within the Iraqi community in Jordan.

Iraqis living in Jordan are separated by more significant circumstances than the mere absence of a refugee camp or their own section of town. They bring with them the impact of several decades of life in a police state, where sharing information about neighbors made them vulnerable to targeting by Saddam Hussein's regime. The divisions between Iraqis follow numerous lines: those between confessional or ethnic groups,

between classes, between urban and rural Iraqis. Iraqis of all different education and income levels, and from many different regions, now live in Jordan, and the social divisions of life in Iraq continue to influence the way that they form connections with other Iraqis in a foreign country. The tension of living in a regime where aggressive surveillance, which often resulted in punishment, operated as the norm had a profound impact on social relations between Iraqis. Now, in a community where Baath surveillance exists only as a memory, but a substantial proportion of Iraqis continues to live in Jordan without any protection against the possibility of deportation, Iraqis still hesitate to form close relationships. In many cases, communities draw closer together to provide a safety net in trying circumstances, and their closeness insulates them from some of the exigencies that families might experience as isolated units. Iraqis in Jordan are not banding together in this way, in part because of the way that their lives there are structured, and in part because the legacy of living in a fearful and repressive state still informs their views on social relationships.

Helping structures, politics, and invisibility: the role of NGOs

A complex and sometimes contradictory web of Jordanian policies regarding refugees plays a forceful role in delineating possible futures for the Iraqis living there. In Jordan, the NGO sector plays the role of mediator between government and refugees. Organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)⁷ often serve as the first point of contact between refugees and government. Given their privileged access to information about the Iraqi community, they act as the link between NGOs seeking to provide services to the refugees as well. Laurie Brand (2001) has noted the close relationship between NGOs in Jordan and the Hashemite monarchy, in particular through the cohort of organizations called Royal NGOs (RNGOs, or, as Brand observed others calling them, RONGOs). Thus, the Jordanian government exercises its influence on the lives of Iraqi refugees through several channels, none of them direct, and some of them working at odds with one another.

Many scholars have noted that nongovernmental organizations play an important role in the genesis and maintenance of governmentality. Governmentality, or, “the conduct of conduct”, treats social life as a series of problems that agencies of government, loosely defined, seek to solve through cultivating certain values and behaviors in its citizens (Foucault, 1991; in Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Nikolas Rose (1999) pointed out the role of civil society projects in this effort. As civil society organizations work to improve the lives of individuals by addressing their poor health, or low income, or inadequate hygiene, they contribute to the conception of service recipients as representing a social problem for government to solve. The creation and production of expert discourses (Mitchell, 2002) frames development as a solution to the problems that these communities represent. James Ferguson (1994) observed during his work in

⁷ Both the UNHCR and IOM are not, technically, nongovernmental organizations – they are intergovernmental organizations and represent the interests of their member states. IOM at present processes refugees’ resettlement to the United States as a representative of the State Department, as well as to Scandinavian countries, Australia, and Canada.

Lesotho that a whole textual world of reports and working papers contribute to writing a history of the country that makes it an appropriate target for development. This story distorts historical realities so as to better construct the extant problems as needing a scientific, rather than a political, solution. The development apparatus in Lesotho produces and uses this literature to define its work as apolitical, acting as what Ferguson termed “the anti-politics machine”. Tania Murray Li noted a similar phenomenon in Indonesia, where development agencies’ writing framed “less developed” areas as a social problem. Historical writing, which development agencies also produced, intertwined with research initiatives that provided politically neutral solutions. These initiatives typically “failed” when they were implemented. Agencies sought to explain their projects’ failures in ways that justified similar subsequent initiatives. The regeneration of solution-oriented discourses in the wake of failures created a constantly renewing and shifting notion of what a good development project should do. Thus, though the projects that Ferguson and Li observed often “failed”, their failures ultimately provided the ground for the design of the next development project. The close relationship between development, expertise, and the state is clear in this body of research on development agencies, and the philosophical connections that it establishes only strengthen Brand’s (2001) argument that the royal family and the Jordanian development apparatus are connected inextricably and messily. NGO work and state agendas in Jordan and elsewhere often represent converging interests.

In Jordan, this equation of the government with charitable foundations is compounded in many cases by the patronage of female members of the royal family.

Many of the RNGOs are named for a princess, or have Queen Rania or Queen Noor (the former Queen, wife of Abdullah II's father Hussein) as their founders or Chairwomen of the Board of Directors. The female royalty's visibility in articulating the desired aims of these organizations feminizes their agendas and in doing so shifts the emphasis away from the political implications that their work has. As they frame their missions so emphatically as humanitarian and maternal, they naturally target women as the primary recipients of services. Their preference for dealing with women has made Iraqi women the effective heads of their households, even when their husbands or fathers or brothers are alive and living with them. The manner in which services are delivered, however well intentioned and helpful, cannot help but shift the way that recipients manage their own social lives.

The development apparatus constructed to deal with refugees differs from those programs designed for recipients who are citizens, both in the Jordanian case as well as elsewhere. Lisa Malkki (1995) has demonstrated in her work with Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania that the management of refugees represents a development subfield unto itself. Her work represents the impact of governmental structures on historical narratives of community identity among Hutu refugees in Tanzania. The stark difference that she observed between the way refugees living in a camp outside the city of Kigoma talked about being Hutu, as opposed to the way that those who are integrated into the city addressed the same questions, demonstrates the influence of refugee management technologies on the subjectivity of those they seek to manage. As the migration of Iraqis into Jordan has been ongoing for several decades, the extant policies

have had considerable time to entrench their influence on the Iraqi population, and to establish Jordan's status as a "transit country" (Chatelard, 2002).

Iraqis who arrive there, then, cobble together sustainable lifestyles with the expectation that, in several months or years, they will resettle elsewhere. The policies of the Gulf War era are still in place, and they similarly influence the refugee community. As the number of refugees climbs, though, the scale of the problem changes. The possibility of return has also diminished as violence in Iraq has escalated, and Jordanians' consciousness of the Iraqis' presence has increased commensurate with their numbers.

Remembering as a speech act

As these women look forward, it also becomes incumbent on them to negotiate their pasts. First, the act of telling one's life story, at the request of an interlocutor, prompts and in fact demands retrospection and remembering. I asked these women to remember life in Iraq and to tell me about it, and they furnished me with stories that responded to this request. Butler (2005) has written on the nature of addressing an audience that characterizes the delivery an autobiographical account. When one shares the story of oneself, he directs it toward the person asking, and in shifting the content of the story to suit an interlocutor, establishes an ethical relationship with her. As an interlocutor, I represent many categories for the Iraqis with whom I spoke, among them American, researcher, and younger woman. As I was introduced to Basima and Lama, and by extension, Ghazal, with the help of the NGO that provides their livelihood, I also represented the interests and requirements of that organization. Their sincere impulse

toward acting as witnesses doubtless entwined with other conflicting desires as they addressed me.

Strategic desires, or perhaps fear of consequences, doubtless informed the testimony that these women delivered of their lives in Iraq. Their accounts also reflect a straightforward desire to preserve certain ideas about their abandoned country. When they remember their own childhoods, they remember them against a spatial backdrop that no longer exists as it did when they were young. Violence has changed the way that Iraq looks. For the women whose stories I represent here, the sites of memory (Nora, 1989) have been destroyed, and thus the act of remembering carries additional layers of significance. As a national collective, they are now burdened with the memory-work of making sense of their recent past. Displaced Iraqis, moreover, in remembering their experiences in the country, forge and reinforce their connection to their country of origin. They do so in the absence of material links to their prior lives, as they left their belongings, and without any expectation of returning.

Eric Davis (2005) outlines the way that the Baath government sought to cultivate an Iraqi public memory that served its purposes, and they worked to manipulate this public memory continuously and blatantly in service of their political objectives. Iraqis' memories, as much as any other aspect of their lives, were targeted in Baathist nationalist propaganda. Women's own acts of memory, both in diaspora and from within Iraq, sometimes take on a resistant quality as they seek to negotiate their Iraqiness and their attachment to their country, and at the same time acknowledge the atrocities and struggle that characterized life under the Baath party's rule (Al-Ali, 2007).

Myriad studies on groups of displaced people living in diaspora observe the ways that they make use of memory to distinguish themselves from their host societies and to maintain their connections to their place of origin. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (1999) have observed in their aggregated work on the Jewish diaspora that remembering as a community plays a central role in keeping diaspora Jews consciously Jewish. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (1996) have described life in diaspora as “a third time-space”, where the realization of the future depends on the construction of memory (p. 13). Andreas Huyssen commented that, in an age of unprecedented connectedness and mobility, memory helps us make our own stability. In his words, “[t]he turn toward memory is subliminally energized by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space.” (p. 65). This instability of time and fracturing of lived space is particularly vivid and pronounced in the Iraqi case, where violence has made familiar landscapes unfamiliar and forced Iraqis to make homes in new spaces. Migration out of Iraq began in significant numbers in the 1970s, with the consolidation of the Baath party’s regime, and since that time Iraqi artists and writers have looked back to their country of origin for inspiration in their work (Doumani, 2008; Mustafa, 2008). The onset of sanctions in 1990 prompted another wave of departures from the country (Al-Ali, 2007; al-Radi, 2003; Chatelard, 2002). An estimated one in six Iraqis lived outside of the country before the 2003 invasion, and the 2003 war created another two million displaced Iraqis (International Organization for Migration, 2010; Woollacott, 2002). A substantial industry of memoir literature produced for an American audience has emerged from this

community in the wake of the 2003 war. As the possibility of return is remote for so many Iraqis, the act of remembering carries particular weight. Affirming their Iraqi identity is one way in which these women take on the project of remembering their home country.

Liisa Malkki (1992) contends that the growing incidence of refugee and diaspora communities across the globe demands a new conception of nation and nationalism from anthropologists. The idea of nation as land is insufficient to capture the experiences of the world's displaced. Arjun Appadurai (1996) offers the concept of "ethnoscapes" as an alternative approach to the problematic of a "nation" made up of individuals dispersed over a wide geographic area, rather than the typical nation tied to a specific area of land. In both of these helpful critiques of typical nationalism, scholars are encouraged to think in terms of groups of people rather than areas of land. The relationships between people living away from their country of origin become the object of inquiry, and proximity ceases to be an assumed condition. The narratives of the women whose accounts are presented here indicate that remembering Iraq, and telling stories about it, is part of the active maintenance of their Iraqi identity, consistent with the abovementioned literature on diasporic identity. However, as their relationships with other Iraqis are complicated and in many cases strained by their solitary lifestyles in Amman, the act of remembering hews more closely to their personal stories than it does to established community or group narratives. As they explain Iraqiness to me, they are simultaneously articulating

their membership in this tenuously linked group and making this group look slightly more like themselves⁸.

Esra Ozyurek (2006) invokes J.L. Austin's (1975) notion of performative speech in her discussion of the narratives that Turks create in discussions about the early days of the Turkish republic. This speech, she says, not only describes the historical period in question but does something to and for those speaking and listening in the present. In this paper, I seek to expand on her leveraging of Austin's notion of performative speech in order to more accurately describe the role of retrospection and its productive function in the lives of Manal, Basima, Huda and Ghazal. The link that they articulate between their subjectivity and their national identity contributes to the active formation of Iraqi identity for those living outside the country.

Structures of fear

Each of the women I worked with presented her own story, and these stories reflect her specific circumstances. Their narratives are personal, and index dominant discourses without necessarily adhering to them. In electing to include or omit events and details from their life stories, Iraqis articulate a relationship both with the power structures of Iraq that existed in the past and the international dialogues surrounding the ongoing military conflict there. Mariane Ferme and Danny Hoffman (2004) noted in their work with hunter militias in Sierra Leone that the militias index international discourses about human rights in their communiqués with international mediation envoys and on a

⁸ The word "diaspora", it should also be noted, is not a native one; Iraqis living in Jordan would not use it to describe themselves. They are either "refugees" or simply "Iraqis".

national media stage. This self-conscious tailoring of one's discussion to suit a perceived expectation on the part of the audience appeared as well in my conversations with the women whose stories I record here, and I consider this tailoring further evidence that their stories are oriented toward my expectations as an interlocutor (Butler, 2005) and also represent a deliberate representation of Iraqi identity. Austin's (1975) notion of performativity attributes a creative dimension to talking that reflects the weight I observed these women attributing to the testimony they delivered here. In talking about themselves as Iraqis, they keep Iraq as a part of their Jordanian present. International discourses, delivered through television news and interaction with service-providing NGOs and refugee resettlement organizations, inform these women's perception of what it is that an interlocutor such as myself would like to hear⁹.

The more potent elements of their discussion, however, deal with shared experiences more penetrating than visits to the UNHCR. Iraqi history over the past several decades includes numerous periods of upheaval and violence, and the social climate in the country varied according to the specific nature of political repression and militarization that prevailed at any given time. The lives of my interlocutors reflect this instability. Consistent throughout these periods, though, were the threat of violence and

⁹ Sectarianism, and its perceived importance on the part of the media, prompted acknowledgements in my discussions with these four Iraqi women. Primarily, these references were meant to dispel the notion that sectarianism plays a role in Iraqi society. This refutation of received wisdom was often tangential to their stories about themselves, and I found myself having to review my transcripts to determine whether they were Sunni or Shia. I address sectarianism in the foregoing pages as it is relevant to their specific stories, but have not taken it on as a problematic here. Readers interested in the history of sectarianism in Iraqi politics can consult Dodge (2005), and those interested in Shia history can consult Nakash (Nakash, 2003, 2007)

the fear that it engendered in every Iraqi. They each reference the prevalence and force of fear in their stories. This engagement with an abstraction, one that was not discussed when it was being experienced but is now articulated with some frequency in memoir literature, is clearly a powerful element of each of these women's stories. Iraqi novels and short stories, those of Mahmoud Saeed (in Mustafa, 2008) in particular, record the choking presence of fear in Baathist Iraq, and my conversations confirm its force.

Building a life and maintaining a routine in the face of fear of this nature prompts communities to draw on reserves of strength that they build and maintain as a collective. Victor Turner (1974) noted that communities experiencing rupture essentially draw on shared social resources in undertaking reconstruction in its wake; he extends the concept of "communitas" to describe the depth of social connections that, if sufficient, can sustain groups of people through their reconstruction in the wake of trauma. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Linda Green (1999) document some of the means that communities employ to sustain themselves in the face of prolonged stressful situations in their respective case studies, and note the depths they are often willing to plumb given the nature of their exigencies. Veena Das (2007) notes the role of maintaining a routine in making these situations manageable; reducing trying circumstances to something to be negotiated rather than something impossible to navigate eases the burden of survival. Each of these works have noted that normalizing what is abnormal makes endurance possible, and social groups undertake this work as collectives, building narratives and practices of normalcy through social channels.

In all of these explorations of the way people adapt to fear and rupture, community reinforcement of and support for coping mechanisms plays a central role. The work of making the unbearable bearable, typically shared by the groups undergoing difficulty, takes on a different quality for the women with whom I worked. Their distance from their home communities and their dispersal throughout Amman, which hides them from one another as much as from Jordanians, makes them responsible for creating their own coping mechanisms. The particular nature of Iraqi displacement, and the way that Jordan has chosen to manage the presence of these refugees, makes reliance on socially reinforced means of survival a less viable option than it was in the abovementioned ethnographic environments. In this paper, I will explore the role that talking about fear and naming it as such contributes to the maintenance of a notion of Iraqi community. Moreover, I will discuss the different ways that they characterize its impact on their lives.

The incorporation of fear into one's story acts in two ways. First, it acknowledges and names one of the central elements of the Iraqi experience. Iraqis could predict very little about their lives in the country from day to day other than the experience of fear. Because this sensation was so prevalent, mentioning it in one's story makes that story an Iraqi story, and not merely the story of one individual. It enhances the value of a personal account as a representation. Secondly, the invocation of fear in a story of remembering serves to situate that fear in the past, leaving my interlocutors free to confront their lives in the present without that burden. Though they still confront unknowns on a daily basis, and their lives in Amman continue to be, at least in some ways, precarious, the anxieties of life in Jordan differ from the fear they experienced in Iraq in its material manifestation,

and thus in the demands it makes on them. Random violence cannot be avoided through industriousness or cunning, whereas poverty, at least in theory, can. Those things that cannot be avoided are equally as likely to strike any one member of the community, whereas one can exert a measure of control over the latter. The fears Iraqis experience in Amman are not perceived as shared by their countrymen and women in the same way that those they endured in Iraq were, and the fractured nature of the Iraqi community there compounds the individualized nature of their relationship to different sorts of fear.

In sum

In the foregoing pages, I will argue that Iraqi women living in Amman tell stories about themselves and about their country of origin in a way that intertwines their own personal experiences, struggles, and values with their presentation of Iraqiness. Although certain themes, like the importance of education, reoccurred in my conversations with all four of my interlocutors, the “Iraqiness” that they present varies. I observed that the content of “Iraqiness” in their delivery reflects the logic they impose on the stories of their own lives. Having taken place in Iraq, those stories are punctuated by seminal events that take place on a national level and include many references to wars starting, laws being passed, or sanctions being imposed. The closeness of the link that they each articulate between being Iraqi and their own personal stories, however, indicates a reaction on their part to the environment in which they are living. The fact that they are Iraqi exerts a powerful influence on how they are situated in certain social groups, under the purview of certain laws, and as the recipients of certain services in Jordan. Thus,

while they integrate into Amman society on certain superficial levels, they are always already marked as other, and being Iraqi means that this will continue to be the case for them. The tight link that they posit between their personal values and national culture indicates their attempt to articulate a meaningful definition of this undefined, unstable and yet pervasive concept.

Iraqis in Amman live in a constant state of uncertainty, with return to Iraq out of the question but settling in Jordan similarly unlikely. Those who have the good fortune to establish residence confront the opposite problem: while they are permitted to settle in Jordan, the remote possibility of return makes it seem a temporary residence. Registered refugees consider certain next destinations but, given the unpredictability of UN resettlement procedures, cannot begin to make plans for a future either. Their dispersal throughout Amman, also, changes the nature of this navigation process. The women with whom I spoke do not live in refugee camps, or in “Iraqi” housing or even neighborhoods. The city has absorbed them. When they articulate a story of themselves to me that includes within it a specific definition of Iraqiness, they are giving voice to their beliefs about what Iraqiness means in a manner that suits their current needs. Talking to me about themselves as Iraqis provides one avenue through which they can imbue their “other” status with meaning and content. In telling their stories, they articulate a notion of Iraqiness, giving voice to their own definition of this highly contested term and making it real as they share it with me.

It is quite popular to talk about “Iraqis” or to make general statements about the Iraqi experience, and there is evidence in my own fieldwork that certain experiences are

shared. In Chapter 4, where I share my conversation with Ghazal, who still lives in Iraq, I highlight the centrality of senseless violence to this notion of a shared experience. My work with these women suggests, though, that being Iraqi, in particular an Iraqi outside of Iraq, often means being socially isolated, thus giving rise to highly idiosyncratic narratives about the meaning of Iraqi identity. The act of talking about it to a foreign researcher, and inscribing its meaning closely into one's character formation, entrenches each woman's notion of herself as different because of her Iraqi citizenship. Speaking to me in the way that they chose to speak permits engagement with hegemonic and historically specific definitions of Iraqiness while at the same time shifting this definition to reflect their own approach to life in Amman. In voicing their ideas about Iraqi national identity to me, they are lending meaning to the empty notion of diasporic identity that so defines their participation in Jordanian society. In the absence of typically supportive community structures in which to make sense of experiences defined by rupture, their storytelling to me constitutes a substitute, albeit a weak one, for a process of the same nature.

Chapter One: Basima

Motherhood, alterity, and the speech act

In this chapter I address my conversations with Basima, a thirty three year old mother of five who arrived in Amman with her family – as well as her husband’s mother and father - in 2006. In sharing her narrative with me, Basima returned frequently to the idea of compassion and fellow-feeling. She considers these values central to her own character, and believes that Iraqis possess them in particular measure. In her rendering, this is due in part to the lengthy history and depth of Iraq’s cultural tradition. Iraqis have, she told me frequently, always had a high standard of education, and always been tolerant people respectful of diversity. I assert that Basima’s self portrait and her presentations of Iraqis as compassionate are layers of the same speech act, wherein she intends for me to understand her embodiment of these qualities as representative of all Iraqis. Moreover, she intertwines those traits on which she draws in her day to day life with her references to Iraqi cultural heritage, imprinting her own character with Iraqiness and simultaneously remaking the notion of Iraqi identity in her own image.

Al-Marka Al-Shamaliyya (Northern Marka)

Basima and her family live in an apartment in Marka, just off of a traffic circle known for the small model airplane that decorates the patch of grass in the middle. Their apartment building has a wide shaded porch in the front, facing a little grocery across. They are steps from a pedestrian thoroughfare, and during my visits she often takes advantage of this proximity by sending her elder sons to fetch Pepsi or toasted pumpkin

seeds for us to enjoy while we speak. (“Us” may be myself and Basima, but more often is myself, Basima, and however many of her family members choose to join our conversation). Their apartment is on the ground floor, and the side door off the kitchen opens out to a tiled patio where they sometimes hang clothes, let the younger children play in discarded refrigerator boxes, or – on special occasions – grill meat or fish.

When the door to this patio is open in the kitchen, the sunlight it offers reaches into the main areas of the apartment. When it is closed, or when the sun is down, the three rooms that the ten residents share are either shadowy or spotlighted by the solitary fluorescent bulbs that protrude nakedly from the ceiling. Basima shares this small space with her husband, their five children, his parents, and a cousin of his. This is their seventh apartment since arriving in Amman in 2006; it was not easy to find an inexpensive place in an acceptable area where ten people could live, especially since not all landlords welcome Iraqi tenants. Basima is the only one of the ten of them who can, and does, earn an income in Jordan. Her volunteer position with an NGO, for which she receives a small stipend, has made her the family breadwinner. When she returns from working, she joins her family to eat the food that she prepared the day or night before with them. (Her mother in law, always addressed as Hajja, assists as much as her stooped spine permits). She supplements her two year old son’s and three year old daughter’s nutrition by nursing them whenever they cry or whine.

“My friends say I am concerned with social welfare”: hardship and compassion

Basima repeatedly invokes her caring nature, her compassion for others, and her interest in others' well-being as she communicates her story to me. Her emphasis on these characteristics reflects the reality of her lived experience. She lives with nine other people, five of them her own children, none of whom can earn an income except herself. Caring for others is something she does as much out of necessity as out of volition. The source of her income, namely teaching low-income Jordanians and Iraqis how to be good parents, also draws heavily on her knowledge of caretaking and her conviction that it is a meaningful vocation. The trainings that she runs aim to educate women of a certain class on child development and proper parent-child relations, and in them she explains things like why children do not learn from corporal punishment and the importance of a good relationship between mother and father to a child's healthy growth. (As she receives a small compensation from the NGO that administers the trainings, and I met her through my connection to this NGO, it is likely that she saw speaking to me as in some way connected to her income). Teaching other mothers how to raise their children in a way that will make them successful and happy adults demands that she adopt an empathic and compassionate persona.

In her stories, the characteristics that she notes in herself are drawn from her experiences as an Iraqi, and are then projected on to the broader national collective. Being Iraqi comes to bear on her daily practices in so many ways. She lives a lifestyle far beneath what she once enjoyed, in a foreign city, because she is Iraqi. She receives certain services and benefits and opportunities, her job as an educator among them, because she is Iraqi. She regularly visits the UNHCR's headquarters to make sure that all

arrangements for her family's pending move to the United States or to Canada are in order because she is Iraqi. In telling me about her own experiences and Iraqiness side by side, she is able to attribute some content to the "Iraqi" label that suits her material circumstances as well as her idea of herself. She also affirms her refugee status to me, which she likely perceives as permitting her receipt of services like her job with the NGO that connected me to her.

Children's voices echo around Basima's apartment constantly, and my tape recordings document as many shrill screams as they do stories of life in Iraq. They also document her and her husband Haydar's tireless good humor with their sometimes unruly offspring. I recorded their patience alongside her frequent references to and explanation of her communitarian impulse. Her capacity and desire to care for others occupies a central place in many of our conversations. Becoming educated and expanding her knowledge are priorities of hers, as they might help her as she strives to contribute to the common good. She considers this interest in social welfare, which includes her own children, her friends, and strangers under its umbrella, one of her defining traits. She describes it here in those terms:

Susan: Who is Basima? If I asked your friend, or your sister, for example, what would she say?

Basima: You know ... I ask them a lot what they think of me, they say, some of them, you are ... my age, I am the same age as them, or they might be a bit older than me, but mostly they say that I am concerned ... my friends say I am concerned with social welfare.

Susan: You're interested in the well being of everyone.

Basima: Yes, the well being of many. They also said that you really like ... that Basima has... Basima has a lot of ideas, like ... and many friends. She is well-liked. They say ... we say ... one of my friends, she said that Basima is the mother of five children, but she cares about everyone's well-being a lot, and she loves to talk with us and to joke with us. [She says something else here, but, as is quite typical in her house, a whimpering child's cries drown out her words on the recording].

Susan: And is that true? Would you say your friends know you well?

Basima: Well, yes. These are my friends of maybe ... almost four years, four years. My very close friends, they are all from this neighborhood, you know. One friend, we were talking once, and I asked her – we talk like this – what are the things that you don't like about me? She asks me and I ask her.

Susan: What does she not like about you?

Basima: What are the things that are not nice about me. What are the flaws that I have. And she got angry, and she said that really there is nothing not nice about you. There are many nice things about you. I said, really, there is no person that doesn't have some bad things about them. For sure, in all the years with you, you must have seen something not good. No, she said, you are very pleasant.

Here, as she explains her interest in the well being of others to me, she puts it in very general terms: she is concerned with the well-being of all people, with society. This general concern for the interests of others often manifests in her attention to Iraqis' suffering in particular. Moreover, in her evaluation, not only are Iraqis especially worthy of a sympathetic gaze, they are also more capable of exhibiting this attitude in their view of others. In sharing her experiences with me, Basima not only represented herself as a compassionate, empathetic person as she does here, but also used herself as one example of the presence of these qualities in Iraqis. Hardship, in part, prompted them toward this way of being in the world. Of course, in referring to "them", her primary point of reference is her own experience.

Basima indexes the difficulty that accompanies being Iraqi both in her presentation of Iraqis' shared experiences and in her recounting of her personal stories. Iraqiness, to her, though, is not exclusively understood as a struggle. The characteristics she names as shared between herself and her countrymen and women are not confined to shared social memories of suffering but include an appreciation for education, open mindedness, religious tolerance, and a balanced worldview. These concepts have a longstanding presence in Iraqi public discourse; Orit Bashkin (2008) observed their occurrence in Iraqi public discourse during the 1920s. When we consider the historical moment during which Basima came of age, at a time when the regime's fraying legitimacy created the space for a national identity independent of the government (Davis, 2005), it becomes apparent that this reflection on the nature of the Iraqi character, the Iraqi spirit, is neither unique to Basima nor to the twenty first century. She re-crafts and re-deploys these same concepts here, though, in a fashion that reflects her particular circumstance and experience.

“The poor people in Iraq...”

This profound identification with the other that Basima communicates here through the mirror of her friends, and reinforces with her own affirmation of its truth, define her character. Her commitment is not merely verbal, either; her life story is punctuated by her different periods of investment in her community, her countrymen and women, and her family. When her father disappeared in 1991, she and her brothers and sisters were then expected to help her mother sustain their livelihood to the extent that

they were able. In learning to care for her family at a young age, sheIt is not only she that has this trait, though; she names this love for the other as a point of difference between Iraqis and Jordanians. She suggests that the trauma of life in Iraq pushed her and others who shared her experience toward a more empathic worldview, toward a more profound identification with the suffering of the other¹⁰. Her susceptibility to feeling the pain of others, in particular other Iraqis, comes from her recognition of herself as vulnerable.

On the first day that I spent with Basima, I observed her giving a training in a chapter of the Red Crescent Society on early childhood development, and afterward accompanied her home to meet her family.¹¹ I had anticipated a reticence on the part of my hosts to talking about their more painful experiences, but Basima gave me a detailed account of her father's disappearance in 1991, the initial terrifying days following the American invasion in 2003, and her family's arrival in Jordan in 2005 on our first afternoon together. Though her stories included considerable personal detail, as will be clear in the transcriptions reproduced here, she also maintained a close connection between those personal experiences and that of the Iraqi population generally.

¹⁰ I think it is important to reiterate here, though I hope it is apparent, that I am not arguing that suffering made Basima, or any Iraqi, more empathic. There is substantial evidence even in this one first person account that the link between suffering and compassion is complex, and to make generalizations from my conversations with Basima about the Iraqi population's capacity for sympathy and kindness represents her own interpretation of this social group, which may differ from scholarly or media accounts. Basima, however, presents these two things as related, both explicitly and implicitly, throughout our conversation, and it is her understanding of this relationship that is of interest to me here.

¹¹ I was introduced to Basima with the help of an Amman NGO. When I asked my contact there, Ayah, whether she had any suggestions for getting to know Basima and Lama, she suggested that I observe their trainings to witness the significance of their contributions to her organization's mission.

Basima: We got to Jabal Hussein, the first time we arrived, what did we see there? There was electricity ... electricity, water, security, people In Iraq, it was forbidden to go out from six o'clock in the evening. Six o'clock. So we came here, and at ten o'clock at night there are people moving around. We saw ... [my son], do you know what he said? He said, Mama, these people are going to die. Do you know why? Because in Iraq, people died in droves. So many people died. How were they not going to die? They were moving around. I told him, Mama, Mama, there's no war where they are. We saw the people, we ate ice cream...

Susan: You ate ice cream?

Basima: My God, it was so lovely. Really, Susan, it was lovely. [My son] and I went out ...

Susan: You were happy.

Basima: Yes, we enjoyed ourselves ... but what happened to us, Susan? Everything was nice, everything we saw, but the most important memory, that even if I try ... [UNCLEAR]. When it was evening, and everything was nice, the weather was beautiful, what did we say? We said, (she wails softly), the poor people in Iraq.

In sharing with me the stories of her own experiences, she maintains the awareness that her experience can be considered as part of a larger national narrative about the hardship that Iraqis, as a collective, have endured. Basima became pregnant with her second daughter in 2005, in the aftermath of the American invasion, and Basima and Haydar despaired of the pregnancy. They had so few resources to use to take care of the baby, and working was very difficult given the security conditions. I asked her whether she or Haydar was working then. As she explains to me why he couldn't work, she rapidly clarifies that his struggles were part of a larger story of struggling.

Basima: It was impossible to work, because at this time, there was no security – from the house, on the way to the place you worked, how were you going to get

back? There was no security. Because, there was the possibility that on the way, the groups would ask you ...

Susan: The groups?

Basima: The terrorist groups. What's your name, and where do you work. Haydar, he worked in engineering, as an airplane engineer. If, for example, they asked him when he was coming back from the airport, you work with the Americans? If he worked for the Americans, he would be killed. So, that was the end of working. [UNCLEAR]. Oh, Susan, thank God you are doing this project. The stories we have ... in every house there are stories, in every house there is a story.

As she voices appreciation for her own safety, which she of course sought in the interest of her family, Basima does not focus on her own relief but rather the other Iraqis who will not enjoy this same reprieve. The suffering from which she is relieved is not exclusively her own, but the suffering of an entire nation. She suggests that she cannot be fully present to the relief of her own safety because the others like her remain in the same trying circumstances. And, it must be remembered that her account is not immediate, it is the product of four years' reflection. When she looks back on this moment now, having survived the initial trials of her transition to Amman, she continues to remember this moment as one of mixed emotions. In reproducing it for me as such, too, she delivers the desired performance of Iraqiness that I have requested. Both my stated research goals and her relationship with the NGO where she works ask that she be Iraqi in order to meet our expectations, and her consistent return to this notion likely reflects a consciousness of those demands.

“...the parameters of what it means to be Iraqi ...”¹²

Basima’s deep identification with the people of Iraq in part reflects the effectiveness of Iraqi governmental outreach efforts; as Iraqi collective memory was consciously manufactured for a non-elite Sunni public, Basima and her family were their target audience, and her confident reiteration of Iraqis’ education, elevated culture, and tolerance in our conversations suggests that these discourses reached her. Their power derives, moreover, from their deep-seated role over time; these tropes predate the Baath regime, as Bashkin (2008) has noted. It also in part reflects the coincidence of her coming of age and the diminished hold of the Baath party on Iraqi society as military conflicts and sanctions carried on for years. Basima, born in 1976, grew up during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). During this period, the improvements in quality of life that Baath party social programs facilitated were rolled back as Iraq’s economy suffered from the burden of the long and expensive military campaign. At this time, any loyalty that Basima’s parents might have felt toward the Baath regime wore thin as their dislike for the regime’s flagrant militarization and the accompanying strain it placed on the economy grew. As Eric Davis (2005) writes, “The Baathist state found it increasingly difficult to follow a policy of “guns and butter” once it depleted its initial reserves and faced a recession in 1983. ... These changes were paralleled by a reduced focus on the populist dimension of state-sponsored cultural production ...” (p. 182). Basima’s analysis parallels Davis’: “The government fell [In 2003]. And we, we were – this was my family’s opinion – that the government deserved this. Why, because it started wars with other

¹² (Al-Ali, 2007)

countries, put people – many people – in prison – so, this was what the actions of that government deserved.”

Though Basima’s upbringing took place at a time when the credibility of the regime was in decline, the impact of its prior policies with respect to women’s education remained significant in her own formulation of her future goals.¹³ A commitment to learning and education was a central element of Baath efforts to “modernize” their female population, as many have noted (Al-Ali, 2007; Al-Sharqi, 1982; R. A. Fernea & W, 1985; S. Joseph, 1991; Rassam, 1982). It has its roots, however, in a much longer-standing historical investment in education generally. Iraqi elite women have enjoyed educational opportunities for several generations (Efrati, 2004; Zangana, 2007), and the expansion of these opportunities to women in the middle classes and tribal areas represented a recoding of these elite values into a more widely accessible vision of the Iraqi nation. (Al-Ali, 2007).

In the aftermath of the Gulf War and the thwarted Shi’a Intifada in the south, the Baath government introduced a series of new, aggressive techniques of surveillance and oppression (Fernea & Fernea, 1997). The Shia community in particular experienced the impact of these oppressive measures, but as social distinctions do not imply complete social separations, the impact reached Basima’s family in a profound way. In 1991, her father, who drove a bus from Baghdad to Basra, disappeared with a bus of Shia passengers. His absence, which meant, among other things, the loss of his income to

Basima's family, meant the end of her childhood and the beginning of her responsibilities as an adult as she and her siblings sought to assist her mother in supporting their family.

Nadje Al-Ali notes in her significant body of work on displaced Iraqis that women's autobiographies, as they are produced with a particular audience in mind, constitute one mode of participation in the contest over the legitimacy of certain narratives about Iraq over others. "... [T]he different accounts of the past," she writes, lay down the parameters of what it means to be Iraqi, who is to be included and who is to be excluded." (2007, p. 4). Basima, who grew up at a moment during which shared suffering and sacrifice coincided with a flattening of Iraqi class differences and a surge in nationalist sentiment, represents all of these imperatives in naming university attendance as the first and most important element of her vision for herself in the future as a little girl.

Susan: When you were a girl, what were your dreams for the future?

Basima: My dreams were the dreams of a normal girl. I wanted to continue my education, get a job, become a teacher, for example. Normal was nice ... most girls have these dreams, of a beautiful future. The second priority for me was to become a mother.

Susan: Education, and ...

Basima: Motherhood. And one day, it occurred to me, I mean, you think, it occurred to me, for example, to love a man.

In professing such an ardent desire to be educated, therefore, she joins generations of Iraqis in viewing learning as a path to becoming a full-fledged, participating member of society. Her ability to strive for that goal, as a middle class Iraqi woman, coincided

with the Baath party's dramatic expansion of educational opportunities for women and for the middle classes, as she indexes in her discussion. And her representation of this to me, as the cornerstone of her vision for the future, is one way that she maintains the link between her present and this longer nationalist history.

Storytelling as a speech act

As she delivers her story to me, Basima indexes numerous strands of hegemonic Iraqi discourse in articulating her values. Her esteem for education, in particular, makes use of cultural tropes that have played a role throughout Iraqi history in distinguishing Iraqi values and particularly marking Iraqi women as modern. Her commitment to caretaking, and to empathy, throughout her story plays an equally important role. In this case it is not Iraqi history that provides the basis for her holding these values but her own experience that provides the justification for attributing these values to all Iraqis. Thus, while she represents an inherited Iraqiness by indexing the importance of education, she makes this identity her own by adding the caretaking dimension.

Chapter Two: Manal

Discipline, self-reliance, and hardship

Manal, a thirty four year old unmarried teacher and Ph.D. student, makes discipline and focus a central element of her narrative. In her formulation, the things she did not have as an Iraqi taught her to look inward for her strength, her resolve, and her discipline. She was denied the luxury of a carefree four years of university, of doctoral work in an academic environment not strangled by political oppression and material scarcity. She became the person that she is because of these trials. In her formulation, though not every Iraqi has made of these experiences what she has, Iraqis do share a compassion and a fellow-feeling that she estimates as uniquely significant. In talking about herself, she follows two different strands of the Iraqi experience, the first of which is her personal orientation toward discipline and the latter of which is the general inclination of Iraqis to love one another. Her experiences in Iraq provided the foundation for her building the character she has now, though she believes herself to be different than others. Here, in her discussion of life abroad with her family during childhood, their return to Iraq after the Gulf War, and their accidental move to Jordan in 2005, she reveals the impact that this shuttling across the Middle East had on making her who she is. When she, her parents and her younger sisters came to Amman in 2005, they intended to stay only a few months. She has yet to return, and has had to rebuild her life from the one suitcase that she carried with her initially.

Like Basima, Manal articulates a relationship to Iraqiness that directly impacts her ability to perform tasks central to her daily life. Unlike Basima, though, she seeks to represent herself not as a paradigmatic Iraqi but as an exceptional one. The experience impacted her in a way dissimilar to how it might have impacted others. She absorbs the impact, but does not then transfer it to a broader discussion. Her performance of Iraqiness is notable for its individuation, for the clear role she sets out for herself in the navigation of it. She also, though, indexes a side trajectory of Iraqiness wherein compassion and fellow-feeling play a bigger role, suggesting some ambivalence in her understanding of the force of her experience.

“While I was sleeping I would be reading”: discipline, education, and displacement

Susan: How do you remember your country without your things?¹⁴

Manal: I always remember days that passed, me and my friends, or me and my relatives, what we were doing in the summer or what we were doing in the winter. How my room was, how our house was, how the guests were ... you always remember, you know. We haven't forgotten. When you remember, really you don't feel there's any way it could have been five years [since we left Baghdad]. Like, maybe it was five weeks or five months, not five years, because it passed quickly. But everything changed. Everything changed with time.

Susan: And how were your room, and your home?

Manal: Simple, but beautiful. (She laughs). The house was beautiful. My room was simple, you know, . It had some things in it, a television, Normal things. . A bed ... There were things, you know. Simple.

(We laugh together)

Susan: Were there any particularly distinctive things?

¹⁴ When Manal and her family came to Jordan in 2005, they left all of their belongings in Baghdad.

Manal: There was a library in my room.

Susan: Really?

Manal: Yes, there was a library, there were books there. Books on everything – religions, political science, storybooks. This was something distinctive, because you don't see a lot of people who want a room – want a bedroom with a library, full of books. But me, in my room there was a library, yes. And it was nice, I felt like while I was sleeping I would be reading, reading, reading.

Manal's description of her house in Baghdad may differ sharply from her living situation in Jordan; I never visited her there. She was my teacher at the language school where I studied in Amman, and we conducted all our interviews in our shared work environment. She taught our Arabic literature class, and each day she would come in to the room at 7:59 a.m. for our class and leave at 10:01 when it ended. She wore the same garment with long ivory sleeves under her jalabiyya every day, and I assumed that it was meant to cover her wrists. (I puzzled every day about whether it was a long sleeved shirt or handless gloves). She often fingered the elastic edges of the sleeves as she listened to us haltingly discuss the significance of Taha Hussein's *Al Ayyam*, her unsmiling face betraying neither her approval of our linguistic toils nor her disappointment. Her wardrobe, consisting of varying muted colors, was similarly dispassionate. Eventually, we developed the language skills to occasionally make jokes, and when she smiled at them she made a point of pressing her lips together, keeping her teeth hidden and her laugh muted. Her reserved manner led to intense speculation on the part of my classmates as to what it was that Manal so carefully kept in check. Everyone who described her noted her clear adherence to her boundaries.

In delivering her personal account of her journey from Baghdad to Amman, from her first days of primary school to writing her dissertation in Islamic studies, she hinted that she had developed this bounded character intentionally. Her upbringing, her circumstances in Jordan, and her intellectual aspirations intertwined in her story to demand and reinforce her disciplined carriage. Recounting the details that she shared with me here will highlight the importance of the historical period in which she was raised in lending coherence to her life story. Her formative years coincided with the imposition of international sanctions on Iraq, from 1990-2003, a time when deprivation in Iraq was such that taxi drivers shuttling passengers from Iraq stuffed their trunks with bread (R. A. Fernea & W, 1985) and children fantasized about receiving chocolates from their relatives living abroad (Al-Ali, 2007). Moreover, since she spent most of her earlier years in Egypt and Kuwait with her family, she observed life during the Iran-Iraq War during their visits home in the summer in temporary snatches.

The careful insight that she shares about the impact of this deprivation, and the upheaval that followed it in 2003, engages directly with theories on the way that restrictions impact the formation of the subject and the nature of each agent's role in that process. I will juxtapose her words with those of Michel Foucault here to explore the similarities between her personal narrative and his theories. Furthermore, I will discuss the weight that the act of sharing this insight with me carries when it is viewed as an instance of performative speech. Manal connects her own story to a larger Iraqi narrative in one sense while using it to differentiate herself in another. I will also explore the ways that her story reflects each of these strands of thought in this chapter. As a legal resident

of Jordan, a status earned (or, put less delicately, purchased) through either substantial in-country investments or a deposit of \$150,000 in a local bank (International Rescue Committee, 2008), Manal can work as legally as any Jordanian, and she does not suffer from the same pressure to move on to a third country that Basima and Lama experience, so her security in Jordan differentiates her from other displaced Iraqis.

Like Basima, Manal articulates an explicit link between her realizing her present character and her experiences in Iraq. Unlike Basima, she demonstrates a hesitation to extrapolate from her own perspective to generalize about the entire Iraqi population, except with very careful qualifications. When she describes being Iraqi, she explicitly and forcefully labels experiences of fear and hardship as shared, as the necessary accompaniment to life in the country. The results that she achieved within those constraints, though, are entirely her own. This reflects her temporal orientation to Iraq: as her future in Jordan is secure, her experience in Baghdad can be emphatically situated in the past.

“The idea of moving was harder than it was in real life”: personal resolve and the collective experience

Manal’s evident discipline figured as prominently in her own personal narrative as it did in our student lounge chatter about her. Her anecdotes, delivered candidly, repeatedly make note of characteristics like her tendency toward a reserved manner, and her ability to tune out distractions and immerse herself in work. As I learned more about her through our conversation, I saw that the image she projected as a teacher reflected this element of her character. As the school where we worked together presented a clearly

Islamic image, I had assumed that she took this inspiration from her faith. In her telling, though she referred to religion often, it was the difficulty of life in Iraq that had made her strong. She articulates that hardening in her resolve here, in discussing her family's second displacement from Kuwait in 1990.¹⁵

Manal: The idea of moving was harder than it was in real life. You know, if you are thinking about something, the reflection is harder than the execution. Because taking a decision, that is what is hard. Then, when you take it, you're finished, and there is no problem.

Susan: You are wise.

Manal: Ah, the opposite. You see, I believe that a person, generally speaking, who lives in difficult circumstances, or who lives a difficult life, he is stronger than a person who lives in easy circumstances, because experiences teach people so much. And they keep you living in reality. In my circumstances, my childhood was, thank God, good, but later, when I grew up a little, because of the war my thinking changed, and the environment changed ... you feel that, I am better than others like me, but the situation is so exhausting. The situation generally is not good, but some people are better than others.

In listening to Manal deliver her story, one is prompted to reflect on both the formative power of restriction and deprivation in her account and on her acute self-consciousness of it. Her formulation of the impact of hardship on her prompts an engagement with Foucault's observations on the productive nature of power (1995). Saba Mahmood (2005), who draws on Foucault's work in her discussion of female participants in Cairo's piety movement, summarizes his views on power as follows:

“... the subject, argues Foucault, does not precede power relations, in the form of an individuated consciousness, but is produced through these

¹⁵ Manal's family's first displacement would have been their move to Kuwait in the mid-1980s because of the Iran-Iraq war, and their third their move to Jordan in 2006.

relations, which form the necessary conditions of its possibility. Central to his formulation is what Foucault calls the paradox of *subjectivation*: the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent (Butler 1993, 1997; Foucault 1980, 1983). Stated otherwise, one may argue that the set of capacities inhering in a subject – that is, the abilities that define her modes of agency – are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power but are themselves the products of these operations.” (p. 17)

Manal's discussion of the way that life in Iraq impacted her worldview and her character are, on one level, affirmative of the general sentiment that power is not simply a repressive force but in fact enabled her present character. In another sense, though, it demands a further dimension of this analysis, as she articulates a clear consciousness of this process and in fact frames this evolution as resulting, at least in part, from her choices. Articulating the meaning of Iraqiness to me in this formulation serves to further entrench its reality for her; in naming the impact on herself as positive, she ultimately enables her continued discipline. Her chronological recounting of the events in her life that preceded and determine her present character serve to naturalize the outcome. Charlotte Linde (1993) and Ochs et. al (1996) observed this human tendency toward formulating a logical narrative in their work on life stories. Manal's narrative reflects her ambivalence between interpreting the impact of life in Iraq on her character as inevitable and seeing it as the result of decisions she took independently.

Manal's comment toward the end of the excerpt above, that she is better than others like her, indicates that she does not consider her experience in Iraq to be entirely determinative. Others like her lived through the same trying political and economic period that characterized the country, first under international sanctions and then in the

aftermath of the American invasion. However, it pressured her to further develop her natural inclination toward discipline, which in turn constitutes a central element of her working life as a teacher and a scholar. Her comment that some people are better than others suggests that she views her personal characteristics and agency as influential in enabling her to move beyond the trauma of life in Baghdad. Her statement that experiences teach people so much indicates the profound impact of her trying experiences on her own subjectivity. The solitude that she attributes to this process runs against the grain of scholarship on social memories of trauma, in particular Alonso's (1988) work on the emergence of coherent narratives from chaotic individual accounts mediated by sharing among community members. Manal protects herself from the detrimental effects of hardship largely by looking inward. Her life with her parents in Amman lets her remain connected to an Iraqi community, but as the only Iraqi in her workplace, many of her social connections are outside the Iraqi network entirely.

“Everything was expensive, and there was so little money”

The manner in which Manal chooses to frame her character development reflects the reality of the sanctions period, during which she would have become aware of the political issues in the country. The historically specific circumstances in which her character was formed, namely in Iraq during a period of crippling international economic sanctions, would have also been a moment during which Iraqis had an acute sense of living in abnormal circumstances. Sources outside of academic syntheses highlight the desperation of the sanctions period; Mahmoud Saeed's short story “Bitter Morning”

details a marital quarrel about whether a man should sell his kidney to buy milk for his baby daughter, or let his wife give her away to a wealthier family who could feed her (Mustafa, 2008). The baby cries from hunger as her parents debate their two unsavory options. As the legitimacy of Saddam Hussein's government waned, it adopted increasingly desperate and cruel measures to maintain its hold on power, and the widespread poverty in the country during the 1990s compounded the wearying quality of life in Iraq. Manal's family did quite a bit of traveling to limit their exposure to the trying situation in Iraq. She spent her fourth and fifth grade years in Cairo, and then her sixth and seventh grade years in Kuwait, and then returned to experience the sanctions period from 1990-2003. The country as she knew it best would have been a place of scarcity, deprivation, and fear. The memories that she shares confine that impact explicitly to the home.

Manal: Of course [I remember my first days at university]. They were so nice. The environment was new, the university was great, there were important teachers, all of them learned, and doctors. There were so many students, and diverse, and the classes were big and there were big chairs and so many of them... They were so nice, my four years at university. The nicest days of my life.

Susan: How was the situation in the country at this time?

Manal: Sanctions. There were sanctions. It was so expensive, and there was so little money. But people lived, they lived their lives, and there was no problem – there was a problem in the house, but when you went out, to university, that's it, you forget. There you had school, studies, education, and culture, and that's it.

[... shortly thereafter, in the same interview]

Manal: The difference between the environment at home and the environment at university? It taught me a lot. Before university, I wouldn't get involved in discussions. I was reserved. Thanks be to God, when

guests would come, my mother and my elder sister would talk to them, and I would just listen. Unless someone asked me a question, then I would give an answer. Yes, no, and why, and that would be it. But in university I started to love to discuss, I started to love to get involved in discussions, to talk. I had a bigger character, a new character ... like now. And it was really nice.

Manal entered university in Baghdad when she was eighteen, in 1993. At that point, she and other university students began to observe shifts in Iraq's educational system because of the stark limitation on resources and on freedom that marked the sanctions period.¹⁶ She stayed in school for her four years of university, and took one year off before she started her Master's degree in 1998. During that year, she studied independently at home, with the guidance of her father, a learned man who expected all of his children to do well in school and attend university. In 1998 she began her Master's degree in Islamic studies, and worked continuously on her M.A. and later her doctorate throughout sanctions, the American invasion, and her move to Amman. When we spoke, she was planning to return to Baghdad to defend in October of 2009, the security situation permitting.

As al-Jawaheri (2008) describes in detail, the scarcity and instability of the sanctions period negatively impacted the university as it negatively impacted all other areas of society. Corruption surged, mistrust infiltrated community relations, salaries

¹⁶ For an in-depth discussion on the adverse effects of sanctions on women's education, see al-Jawaheri (2009), Chapter 4. Her detailed recounting of the period addresses the rise in corruption throughout the country that infiltrated the education sector, the 'brain drain' that took place as academics left the country, and the pervasive mistrust that changed the nature of the university community. Manal occasionally referenced her perception that perhaps her studies would have been better if the situation were not what it was, but for the most part leaves these unpleasant elements out of her recounting of details to me.

evaporated to token amounts and pencils were considered a luxury. Manal's four years of university, though, as she describes them, provided a space where these stressors could be ignored. She quite evidently maintains this ignorance, though, in the face of quite powerful distractions; maintaining her studies requires intense concentration and direction.

The distracting forces Manal confronts appear in numerous accounts of life in Iraq during sanctions. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Robert Fernea (E. W. Fernea & R. A. Fernea, 1997) recount a story of their visit to Baghdad in 1996, where they mistakenly ask their elderly taxi driver to pull over to a curb where stopping is not allowed. A policeman approaches the driver and threatens to take away his permit to drive a taxi. In their anecdote, the elderly man is reduced to tears, kissing the hand of the police officer when he agrees to overlook the minor traffic violation. (p. 488). They conclude with a comment on how easily one can forget that Iraq is, in fact, a police state. Manal's rendering of this fear suggests a further depth to this experience, which suggests the constant prevalence of the sort of anxiety that lends traffic violations such an urgent, tense quality. For her, life in Iraq felt as she describes it below.

Manal: But there was nothing stable. Maybe today you would have something, maybe tomorrow everything would change. There is fear. There is fear of tomorrow. But fear of tomorrow inside the self. You have to live in this situation, and every person who lives in this situation has fear inside himself of tomorrow. Every person holds this in himself, it isn't let out, this fear. But I know that you have fear of tomorrow, and you know that I have fear of tomorrow, but this is only inside the self. In reality, we are living a normal life.

For her, this fear is pervasive such that it becomes a structuring force. Its potency, though, is such that one cannot simply move through her life without awareness of it. Its insidious omnipresence evokes, precisely, the Panopticon. The Baath government, in seeking to eliminate not ninety percent or ninety five percent of transgressions against its authority from occurring but one hundred percent, thus magnifies the brutality of their operations (Foucault, 2010)¹⁷. Its vacillation between numerous political rhetoric programs, and consequently between targeted groups, adds to the uncertainty on the part of Manal and her fellow citizens. Linda Green (1999) described political repression in Guatemala as follows: “My own experiences of fear, and those of the women I know, are best described as swinging wildly between controlled hysteria and tacit acquiescence.” (p. 59) She goes on to say that “Repression is used selectively: to threaten, intimidate, disappear or kill one or two labor leaders, students or campesinos is to paralyze everyone else with fear. If one crosses the arbitrary line, the consequences of which are well

¹⁷ Foucault’s discussion of the economy of law enforcement in *The Birth of Biopolitics* argues that, once an evaluation of cost and benefit became a part of the way we chose to enforce our laws, the optimum level of crime ceased to be zero. Therefore, the law enforcement system in a liberal, twentieth century society would look very different from the one extant in an eighteenth century society. “... the objective or target of a penal policy will not be the same as that of the eighteenth century reformers when they developed their system of universal legality, namely, the total disappearance of crime. Criminal law and the whole mechanism of Bentham’s dreams had to be such that, at the end of the day, there would be no crime, even if this could never happen in reality. And the idea of the Panopticon – the idea of transparency, of a gaze focusing on each individual, of a scale of penalties sufficiently subtle that every individual in his calculation, in his heart of hearts, in his economic calculations, could say to himself: No, in no way, if I were to commit this crime, the penalty I would incur is too significant, and so I am not going to commit it – the idea of having this kind of general nullification of crime in its sights, was the principle of rationality, the organizing principle of penal calculation in the reforming mind of the eighteenth century.” (p. 256). Iraq, though, had a disciplinary system in place much closer to eighteenth century European mentality in its effects than to the modern disciplinary structures that Foucault envisioned.

known; the problem is that one cannot be sure where the line is, nor when one has crossed it, until it is too late.” (p. 67) The unpredictability of repression’s consequences and the arbitrary way they were applied, made their impact ubiquitous in the Mayan community where Green worked. The fear that Manal describes follows a similar pattern.

“People should love one another”: narrative’s use and force in Austin’s conception of the speech act

Manal’s qualified and limited discussion of the challenges that face university students during the period she discusses indicates that she her story represents a synthesized, coherent narrative that follows constructive logic. It is not that she omits difficulty; in fact, the opposite is true, as is evident in the prior section. She makes the navigation of difficulty a central element of her discussion. In discussing education, though, she omits it. She relegates difficulty to the home. If we understand her story not as her representation of a complete truth but as a performance with certain illocutionary intentions, then it appears there is a logic to her inclusions and exclusions. The circumstances of my conversation with Manal essentially require that she deliver a performance of Iraqiness: I have requested that of her. This performance requires repeated references to fear, to violence, to uncertainty. These elements, though, are not in themselves the makings of a coherent narrative; in fact, they are the opposite (Alonso, 1988). Thus, a meaningful delivery of this performance requires synthesis with her own experience and identity, which carries its own implications for the formation of a diasporic community.

J.L. Austin's (1975) attempt to pin down what, exactly, constitutes performative speech devotes twelve unique lectures to assembling and then dismantling two different typological grids for identifying, and distinguishing, performative speech from other speech. In this attempt to isolate what he calls "explicit performatives", he finds himself repeatedly struggling to draw a clear line between those specific speech acts and others, which represent performatives in some permutation but not the explicit ones that he seeks to identify. The distinction between locutionary (descriptive) and illocutionary acts (ordering, promising, or warning) is the *force* that the speaker puts behind them. Perlocutionary speech acts (those engendering action in others) entail certain effects in the audience that the speech itself does not directly cause.

Austin purposefully avoids prescribing a use for his theories in *How To Do Things With Words*; he concludes by saying, "I have as usual failed to leave enough time in which to say why what I have said is interesting. ... I leave to my readers the real fun of applying it in philosophy" (pp. 163-164). Manal's speech, like all speech, is locutionary in that it includes a series of grammatically sound sentences woven together to create a coherent product. Its illocutionary element is its clear orientation toward educating me on Iraq and its people and history. Its perlocutionary element lies in its reflexive impact, in the weight that it carries for Manal herself (Hirschkind, 2006; Esra Ozyurek, 2006). Jonathan Culler (2000) glossed the application to Austin's work to literature as follows: "The notion of literature as performative contribute to a defence of literature: literature is not frivolous pseudo-statements but takes its place among the acts of language that transform the world, bringing into being the things that they name." If

literature's creative contribution can be understood as bringing into being what it names, then the stories that Manal and the other deliver is similarly constructive, perhaps more so as they take lived reality as their inspiration. As Manal gives voice to a construction of her experience, with the explicit intention of delivering that message to me, she reinforces her own ideas about the meaningful events of her life. Goffman (1972) takes up this reflexive element of performance in his work with respect to the construction of the self. I assert that in the case of the Iraqis whose stories I share here, since their national identity is so contested globally, and their status within Amman so ambiguous, it is not only their individual selves that are in flux at this moment, and their families, but the abstraction "Iraqiness" as well. In speaking with me, they can momentarily stabilize both their own identities and the group heading under which they fall.

Since the act of storytelling consists primarily of reported speech rather than speech whose force inures in the moment of telling, the application of speech act theory to literature comes to bear on my discussion Manal's and others' stories. A joke, in Austin's (1975) formulation, is not a speech act, and nor is a poem (p.9). Telling a story about oneself falls in a gray area between literature and everyday speech, as the action of the story took place at a different time. Pratt (1977) quotes Ohmann on the suspension of illocutionary forces in literature: "... the suspension of normal illocutionary forces [that characterizes literature] tends to shift a reader's attention to the locutionary acts themselves and to their perlocutionary effects. (p. 17 in Ohmann, p. 90 in Pratt). She takes issue not with Ohmann's assertion that the illocutionary elements of literary speech are somehow neutralized or that this "encourages us to respond aesthetically and

emotively to literary texts.” (pp. 90-91). Rather, she contests the notion that these characteristics are somehow unique to literature. As I mentioned in the prior paragraph with reference to Culler (2000), scholarship on speech acts in literature seeks to affirm the “active, world-making use of language” that characterizes performatives (p. 96). My view of Manal’s narrative, and the other narratives presented here, takes a similar view of their autobiographies as world-making. Here, the moral conclusion that Manal offers to her personal story underlines her own conviction that relating her experiences to me is meaningful.

Susan: That’s your life, yes?

Manal: That’s my life. (We laugh).

Susan: It’s 2:45.

Manal: Khalas, God willing there is discussion here that will be helpful for your research. God willing.

Susan: Of course there is. Is there anything you would like to add?

Manal: Anything in particular?

Susan: On anything. Anything that you like.

Manal: Anything that I like.

Susan: Anything additional.

Manal: Anything additional that I like. (She pauses) ... umm, for me, the most important thing in my opinion is that people love each other. And that we, as the human race, as human beings, forget about dealing with people arrogantly or with our differences.

Susan: Differences?

Manal: Differences, differences. There's no difference between Arab and non-Arab, between East and West. There's no difference between black and white. There's no difference between Christian or Sunni or Jewish or Shi'i. There's no difference. I try to ... whomever a person is, I deal with him like he is a person, and he should deal with me like I am a person, and anything other than that is something particular. And if we try to deal with people in that way, then I think that life would be a little different, because we need some of this. But me, I try to, whenever I get the opportunity, to do this. And I will do it, God willing.

At the conclusion to our conversation, Manal sought to present to me a synthesizing message derived from the linked and coherent progression of events in her life. In Austin's formula for perlocution, *by saying something we do something* (p. 109). Manal, by telling me her story, meant to teach me this lesson; ultimately, though the impact on me is unknown to her at this point, she has reminded herself of that fact. She reveals here both the evidence of an illocutionary force, a desire to reach me with a point of view, and proof of the ultimate perlocutionary impact that arose from the telling of this story.

Manal remarked in our conversations together that life in Iraq, for her, often was without a future. She could not make plans for the upcoming years, could not expect certain results from her education, because the arrival of tomorrow was in question. Now, unique among my participants, she has a future in Jordan. Her decision to incorporate Iraqiness so explicitly and powerfully into her formulation of her present and its direction of her subsequent steps represents not a mere resignation to her Iraqi status but a wholehearted embrace of it, characterized by fierce resolve and a melancholy sort of pride.

Chapter Three: Lama

Child of Iraqis, mother of Jordanians: national identity as a solitary undertaking

Lama, a thirty eight year old widow living in Amman with her four children, tells a story of isolation and separation. I met her through the same NGO that introduced me to Basima, but the similarities between them did not extend much beyond their shared nationality and mutual participation in this program. Her move to Amman was just one of her many experiences as an Iraqi living in diaspora in different countries, and her story highlights how misleading a phrase like “diaspora community” can be. While demographically she fits this category, her experience indicates less an affinity with any particular community than it does a series of alienating and lonely experiences as an outsider. She, in the inverse of Manal, does not posit a link between Iraqiness and her own character. Rather, she extrapolates from her own experience to make generalizations about all Iraqis. Though the direction of the influence that she posits is reversed, she makes reference to the same equation of what is true for her personally as being true of all Iraqis. She complains of loneliness, of being cut off from her family, of speaking a different language than her children. All Iraqis, she will tell me, changed to be more like this because of the wars. They keep to themselves, they like their privacy. Lama projects many of the same qualities that she notes in herself, the same themes that recur in her own life, onto the Iraqi population. Like Manal and Basima, she takes the fear and violence that Iraqis endured as a starting point for her analysis, but her synthesis of this

information and her extraction of meaning from it is similarly entwined with her personal experience.

Loneliness and self-reliance: diaspora with no community

(Lama, alone among my interviewees, spoke English. She would switch between Arabic and English in our conversations, and I have preserved her English here in its original formulation. All Arabic – hers and the others' - is translated into grammatically sound English).

Lama: Here, I was have a lot of friends. Sometime, like that, we speak with everything. I told them, I wasn't happy woman, I was very sad with my husband. Next day, I see another friend, she knows all my story! Really, is make me feel very sad. All the, all the women, Iraqi women, they know my story. I am unhappy. I am very sad. It makes me feel ... I cut off all the relationship with the friends. Really, I don't like anybody, you know, talk about me, you know, outside of my house. Now, Suzi is my friend, we talk about everything here. When she go, Suzi, it must be she don't speak anything about me. Is that true?

Susan: Of course.

Lama: I see another friend, oh, Lama, you are not happy. You are very sad. I say, who told you that? She says, this one, you know, any name. She told me you are unhappy, or another one, oh, Lama, sweetheart, I heard your story. I feel very sad of you. You know, it makes me feel really very sadly. They make me feel very bad. You know everyone, he knows your story. I don't like that. This makes me cut all of the relationship. Now I am happy. Really, it's better. Sometime, if you can't find a good friend, it is better to not have a friend.

When I am first introduced to Lama, whom I met along with Basima at the NGO that employs them both, she was about forty minutes late. Basima and myself and Ayah, the employee who had coordinated our meeting, sat and made small chat for that entire

time, Ayah waiting to do her introductions until Lama arrived. When she did make it to the office for our meeting, she sat down right away but kept her purse underneath her arm and sat on the edge of her seat, as if she were about to get up again. She listened to Ayah's explanation of my project, and nodded. Ok, she said. Yes. She had been told this before. It was ok, yes. I could meet her in her house, it was better for her. We made an appointment for me to visit the following week. She looked at her watch. We had been sitting together for perhaps 15 minutes. Ok, she said again, in English. I will see you next week. She rose from her chair, nodding her goodbye to me. Nice to meet you, she said, and left.

Next week, when I visit her home, she escorts me past some couches arranged around a television near the entrance to a more formal sitting area in the back of the apartment. We sit on stiff yellow couches, hers perpendicular to mine, with a picture of a stern, bespectacled man wearing glasses on the table between us. I learn later that this is her late husband. A sleepy silence fills her apartment, so I assume that no one else is at home, but as our time together passes first her youngest daughter and then her eldest daughter come out to meet me. They sit shyly on the edge of the couch and giggle nervously when I ask them questions. Though I visit her home several times, I am never introduced to her son. My seat shifts, though, from the formal sitting room to the girls' bedroom, to Lama's bedroom, or to the seats in front of the television. Before I leave Amman I return to the formal sitting room, this time to help Lama re-hang the shiny gold curtains after a wash.

The formal room, with the exception of my occasional visits, typically remains empty, waiting for worthy guests. Lama and her children keep their bedroom doors closed, muffling all sounds other than our conversation. Lama carefully managed my gradual evolution from formal guest to slightly less formal in a manner that reflects the cautious attitude she maintains toward all personal relationships. Her comment about sometimes preferring not to have a friend at all reflects her measured attitude toward sharing intimate details of her life with others. Beginning with her engagement at thirteen, her marriage at fourteen, and her move to Britain for her husband's doctoral studies at fifteen, she learned to mediate her expectations. Here, she explains how her vision of marriage differed from the realized reality:

Susan: How were you [when you got engaged]? Were you excited, or happy ... how were you?

Lama: I didn't understand anything. I was thirteen years old.

...

Lama: In our area, it was very normal ... also, I was huge, huge. Not thirteen years old and little, no, I was big, and I was fat, like this [she holds her arms around her body to show how big she was]. So when his mother saw me, she thought, thirteen years old, no, she must be seventeen or eighteen. That's how it was.

Susan: Were you happy in your marriage?

Lama: I didn't understand anything. I thought I could just ask for things, like I want chocolate, I want honey, and he would bring them for me. After that, I got to know things, and no, I didn't like it.

Susan: This was throughout your marriage?

Lama: (Shakes her head).

Susan: Would you want to get married again?

Lama: No, no. You are free. It's better.

Lama's quiet home in Amman is one of a long list of places where she has lived. She was born in Ramadi in 1971, and then moved Britain in 1986, where she had first her eldest daughter, and then two years later her second daughter. From there, they moved to Yemen, back to Iraq, to Libya, back to Iraq, to Amman, back to Iraq, until finally she returned to Amman alone with her children after her husband's death in 2007. More so than any of the other women whose experiences I share here, Lama experienced displacement and exile in its varied forms as a part of her adult life. The absence of a clear rootedness in one place throughout her life appears to have engendered a specific attitude on her part toward self-reliance. This alienation from those social groups of which she might have been a part influences her view of the Iraqi experience in Amman, to which she relates in two different ways.

In speaking about her individual experiences, Lama seems uninterested in demonstrating an affiliation with anything Iraqi. However, when given the opportunity to discuss the present war, her attitude shifts slightly, such that she asserts vocally the damage that it has done to a society that was once vastly better. Observing Lama's ambivalent negotiation of her Iraqi identity raises historical questions about the relative closeness, or distance, of the Iraqi diaspora community. These historical questions, in turn, point out the confusing nature of the relationship that now-residents of Jordan navigate in both their day-to-day lives and that they incorporate into conversations about their own identities. Lisa Malkki's (1995) work on Hutu refugees in Tanzania drew a

distinction between the way refugees living in an urban context, and thus seeking full integration into that urban community, and those living in a nearby camp constructed and articulated notions of their national and ethnic identity. I assert here that, while the same strategic approach to the construction of identity applies to the Iraqi population in Jordan, the categories that Malkki uses to differentiate her two groups of participants – those in town versus those in camp – represent a category too wide to be transferred to the Iraqi context in Jordan. Lama's emphatically solitary rendering of the Iraqi experience, and her complementary stridence on the subject of violence in the country, are profoundly idiosyncratic on the one hand while overwhelmingly generalized on the other. She constructs her subjectivity equally as strategically as do Malkki's Hutu refugees, but without the same clear orientation toward membership in any present social reality. The Iraqi identity with which she chooses to affiliate exists primarily as something that made its imprint on her in the past, and that clings to her in the present only because of the political circumstances.

The NGO connection, performing Iraqiness

Lama's arrival in Jordan, as one of numerous such arrivals to a liminal "elsewhere", did not signal the last of her migrations. She, like many Iraqis, registered as a refugee with the UNHCR when she came here, and her resettlement is imminent. She simultaneously anticipates it, worries about it, and seeks to avoid it. Her in-between status in Jordan makes her feel as if she has no roots, and thus provides a space wherein Iraqi identity serves a specific purpose. Lama describes her mercurial relationship to the idea of moving to Canada:

Lama: We lived [in Yemen] for two years and then we left.

Susan: And then you went back to Iraq?

Lama: Yes, then we went back to Iraq. Four years, and my husband was in Libya. Then we came here.

Susan: You have been busy.

Lama: Mmm. And now, maybe to Canada. Maybe.

Susan: You'll decide, or you're waiting?

Lama: Sometimes decide, ok, I'll go tomorrow, give them the passports in the morning, and no, I don't. (She laughs). I don't choose. I am very worried. If I say no, if I say yes. I don't know.

Susan: But you lived all over the world.

Lama: Mmm. Maybe it's easy for me. Maybe. Maybe it's easy. But for my children, maybe it's very difficult for them. Because she has a job, her sister she is in college, another one he wanted to go to college. Maybe this make for me problem. Here in Jordan I know everything. Nine years is, is a long time. I know everything, I know all the streets, I know all ... you know, anything I want I know what's the place I am going to. But in Canada, I don't know anything. Maybe just the language, maybe they can explain for me. This makes me ... I can't take a choice.

Indecision is an integral part of life for those Iraqis living in Amman who choose to register with the UNHCR, as Lama and Basima. There is a general perception, reflected in NGO literature, that members of this Iraqi community avoid this registration, since it makes them known and therefore vulnerable to deportation, to punishment, and any other real or imagined consequences the government and the nonprofit sector are able to impose. This registration, though, also makes certain avenues of income generation available to them. For example, the trainings that both Lama and Basima give through the foundation where Ayah works provide income only to Iraqis who are registered as

refugees with the UNHCR. Official statistics suggest that this group constitutes only a small percentage of the total refugee population in Jordan; a report from the International Crisis Group named the number of registered refugees in Jordan as 51,559 out of 450,000-500,000 Iraqi residents (2008).

NGO literature typically assumes that fear keeps Iraqis away from the UNHCR, keeping the proportion registered refugees low (Fafu & Government of Jordan, 2007; International Rescue Committee, 2008, 2010). Organizations like the IRC and Fafu, though, struggle to gather accurate data on Iraqi refugee community. The refugees' invisibility, their constant mobility, and their uncertainty about their own futures all make them poor candidates for survey research. The gap between the number of Iraqis registered with UNHCR and the total number of displaced Iraqis in the country may be much smaller than government statistics suggest. If, in fact, as Fafu's report originally found, and as I discussed in the introduction to this work, the number of Iraqis in the country is closer to 160,000, then the choice to register with UNHCR may carry entirely different significance. As Lama communicates here, she fears life in a country where no one speaks her language and where she must again rebuild her routine and her social network as much as she fears staying in Amman as her income dwindles. Neither Lama nor Basima mentioned experiencing any fear in dealing with the UNHCR, either. They experienced it primarily as an inconvenience, and worried instead about the stresses of life in a new country. In sum, to label Iraqis as afraid of government structures because of the threat of deportation represents a gross simplification of the web of fears they negotiate daily.

I mention this facet of the Iraqi experience in Jordan not because it was necessarily represented in my interviews. Rather, I include it because it demonstrates the extent to which governmental apparatus in Jordan perceive their Iraqi guests as an unknown commodity. The structures in place deliberately avoid singling out Iraqis in any way. Jordan, by keeping Iraqis as an unknown and undefined abstraction, delays the formation of a collective Iraqi identity. This process makes the members of the diaspora responsible for maintaining their connection to Iraq in personal ways, and so it is increasingly intertwined with their personal story. For this reason, the opportunity to respond to my implied question, what is it like to be Iraqi, represents an opportunity for self-definition.

Being in an in-between place is a political and economic burden as well as it is a personal one. Jordan manages the impact of the conflict in Iraq so that its ability to garner international aid is maximized. Often those funds are diverted into programs that benefit Jordanians. The specific restrictions they place on their Iraqi “guests” reflect their domestic priorities, and in doing so keep Iraqis at the margin of Jordanian society. Poverty is the main threat they face, not their physical safety or refoulement (forced repatriation). Lama’s hesitation to accept resettlement to Canada stems from her balancing of the fear of the unknown with the fear of running out of money. Her constant sense that her (relatively) stable reality could change at any moment makes all of the structures of her life subject to scrutiny and mistrust. This instability makes her assertion of membership in a whole community situated in the past particularly prudent. Her

strident assertions that Iraq was a lovely place before 1990 are framed so as to render Iraq in the past as the precise opposite environment of her present in Jordan.

Susan: When did you start working?

Lama: Two years ago, after the death of my husband.

Susan: You never worked in Iraq?

Lama: No, no, never. But there, the situation was very good before the Gulf War. The situation was very, very good. Everything was cheap, vegetables were cheap, meat, chicken. Until 90, 92, our house was ours, we owned it. There was no paying money for rent. But there's a difference between there and here. Here, there's something to rent a house. Something to pay for water, electricity, the telephone. You had none of this in Iraq.

Lama's connection to Iraq is, moreover, not something that she maintains with her family; she remains a foreigner in Jordan, while her children's connection to Iraq is at best tenuous. Her parents and all of her siblings still live in Ramadi, where she grew up. While she was shuttled from country to country, her brothers and sisters remained in the same village. Her children, in contrast, have adapted to life in Amman and now consider it home much more than they do Iraq. Her eldest daughter was engaged to a Jordanian when I left Amman, and her second daughter planning her move to Kuwait with her fiancé. She explains the progression of her children's language, and in doing so reveals how they left their Iraqiness in the past.

Lama: We came here, back to Amman, because the situation was very hard. Amman was much better than Iraq, much, really. At first, though, it was almost as hard, because the children had real difficulty at school. Because of the difference in dialect, the difference in the school curriculum, the difference in their friends. All these things affected them. The first year was very tiring.

(...)

Lama: At this time [in 2000], Iraqis were new in Amman, we were still new in Amman, and they weren't familiar with our dialect, not like now, where they know and understand everything. Our dialect is very heavy. Really, for a year, we would talk and they wouldn't understand us.

Susan: Really? Before, Jordanians understood less of the Iraqi accent than they do now?

Lama: They started to understand us really well. When we came, we would speak to them, and they would say, Aish? Shoo?¹⁸ We had to speak with them in a different dialect. We learned to speak like them, from 2000 to 2009, we speak very differently.

When she and her family initially came to Amman, they struggled to acclimate because their way of speaking was so different. They and she were isolated from Jordanian society because no one understood them. Now, the situation is reversed:

Susan: So you learned the Jordanian dialect.

Lama: Yes, we learned over the years. We've been here almost nine years, since 2000.

Susan: So now, you're Jordanian in your dialect? You speak Jordanian dialect?

Lama: In sha allah. In sha allah.

Susan: And your children as well?

Lama: Absolutely, absolutely the children. If we took them to Iraq now, they would have difficulty understanding the people there. Because our accent is very thick.

For herself, though, the transformation is incomplete. She questions her own ability to speak as Jordanians speak, and refers to the Iraqi accent, which her children

¹⁸ These are the Jordanian words for "what". Iraqis use different words.

would now be unable to understand, as “our dialect”. Her Iraqiness, here, is the nexus of the divide between herself and her children. Her experience differs dramatically from theirs, she sees herself as speaking a different language. She sees her Iraqi family, though, as equally distant, and herself as more foreign to them than her children are to her. She situates herself in the middle of these two identities, not Jordanian like her children nor truly Iraqi like her family remaining in Ramadi.

Susan: Do you feel lonely?

Lama: Sometime, yeah. Sometime cry, sometime happy, sometime sad. I don't know why. What about the future? I don't know what is going on in the future. What will happen to my daughter, she is going to Kuwait. What's happen if I go to Canada, what's going to happen for my children, you know, without father, it's really very heavy. The responsibility is huge. I think that. I don't know what my daughter ... is she going to be happy, or sad, is this a good choice, or not, I don't know. That's what makes me very sad sometime. Even my family, they don't talk with me all the time. They talk with me very little. I'm the one they call them. I'm the one ask about them. Where are you, what you doing. If I cut, if I am ill, I don't make any telephone, nobody, nobody asks about me, nobody says where is Lama, where she is go. She didn't call. No one.

Iraqiness makes her different from her own children, but her connection to Iraq itself is tenuous. She is conscious of her middling Iraqiness, and she sensed it would not suit the project I am seeking to conduct. Ultimately, this consciousness led her to introduce me to Ghazal, who will be a better informant for a project on the war. Ghazal's own story is the subject of the next chapter's inquiry, and I will delay that discussion until its designated place, but Lama's introduction of her indicates a clear expectation on her part regarding the information she thinks I am interested in hearing about Iraq. She anticipates, also, that she will not be able to provide it, and thus engages with particular zeal in making generalized arguments on the nature of life in Iraq during the war.

Alienation and the diaspora experience:

As Brian Axel (2004) argues, theorizing diasporic identity involves a delicate rendering of the connection between the self in the present and the historically grounded and complete, determined past. He posits an approach to the study of diaspora that rejects any notion of a stable, complete history and instead regards the construction of these notions as of a piece with the assembling of one's identity in a new, and often unfamiliar, environment. Individuals living in diaspora ultimately write the history of their points of origin as they cultivate a new identity as a foreigner living in a new place as the exigencies of their new circumstance inform and shape the history that they write.

Lama's particular version of Iraqiness is a lonely one. She prefers to distance herself from the community of other Iraqi exiles in Jordan, feels as if she is different from her children because of their tenuous connection to Iraq, and laments the fragility of the link between herself and her family still in Ramadi. The solitude of her experience in this way represents an aspect, a perspective that differs in its nature from the other stories that I explore in this project. In its uniqueness, it offers a different sort of insight into the confusion that characterizes the Iraqi experience in Jordan, as well as the challenge of the construction of diaspora identity more generally. In the previous two stories I discussed, I focused on the ways that Iraqi women living outside the country sought to imprint their personal experiences and selves with the stamp of Iraqi collective experience. In Lama's case, this desire does not seem to exist – rather, she seems resigned to the notion that her experience is solitary, that she confronts the challenges of life in Britain, in Yemen, in

Amman and, hypothetically, in Canada simply by drawing on her personal reserves of strength. Being Iraqi is something that she picks up and puts down at will in her construction of this story, and her invocation of it in her own service is highly variable and contingent on the audience. In the next chapter, as she appears alongside Ghazal, her opinions on Iraqiness shift, reflecting a very different orientation than the one she demonstrated in front of me and her daughters.

Regarding Lama's story, we can see easily and clearly the performative dimension of Iraqiness, and the strategic manner in which she invokes it. By noting the manners in which she directs the deployment of this national identity and any distinction it might offer her, we can derive some sense of her perception of its usefulness. In tracing the links between the technologies of governance that constrain the social and economic space available for Iraqis in Jordan to operate in and the notions of Iraqi identity that Lama articulates, I have sought to outline how her narrative and these structures might work in tandem. We must also confront another layer of confusion in the conception of the context in which this sort of identity is constructed. While of course the process of identity construction has a social dimension, it is inadequate in this case to simply point out that fact. The social dimension may vary dramatically from person to person in a case of such profound dispersal like that of Iraqis, as Lama's case illustrates. When one's identity differs so clearly and emphatically from both her children and parents, discussion of a concept like "social construction" must be approached with caution.

Malkki's (1995) discussion of the so-called "town refugees" that she worked with in Tanzania noted that, as adherence to a collectively reinforced Hutu identity brought

them little benefit, they attributed only a minimal role to their Hutu-ness in constructing their notions of self. In her work, this dismissal of Hutu identity was notable in part because it differed so much from the ways that refugees of the same demographic living in the Mishoma refugee camps constructed their identities. In Mishoma, an isolated and self sufficient camp, membership in the Hutu group carries an entirely different meaning than it does in the town, and as such is invoked by the refugees in an entirely different manner. “In Kigoma [in contrast to Mishoma],” Malkki writes, “the play of identities operated on a more individual basis and was thought of as responding to the practical needs of the immediate, lived present” (p. 169). Lama’s speech reflects a similar sort of tailored approach to the invocation of national identity, though she does so in absence of the social support structure that Malkki’s town refugees enjoy.

When one hears Lama tells her story, and contrasts it with Manal’s and Basima’s, it seems quite evident that while the present political and economic circumstances impact the way that she frames and invokes her national identity as Iraqi, the idiosyncratic dimensions of each woman’s experience play a significant role in shaping the notion of Iraqiness that she presents. Her prior personal experiences, and the other kinship relationships in her life, inform also the manner in which she incorporates Iraqiness into her personal story. In Suad Joseph’s (1999) formulation, “the self is always situated, contextualized, and embedded in relationalities” (p. 3), and this applies to the Iraqi self as to any other. Lama’s ambivalent relationship to Iraqiness is in part a result of her thin family connections to Iraq, given the death of her husband, the distance of her family, and the assimilation of her children.

In Sum

Lama's life story is characterized by her outsider status in the numerous communities where she has lived. Being Iraqi differentiates her from her children, from Jordanians, from British, from Yemenis. Being displaced differentiates her from her family in Ramadi, from her country and community of origin. In this case, we see that her invocation of Iraqiness often brings her some benefit when it comes to bear on political and economic decisions such as registering with the UNHCR or receiving compensation for her work with an NGO. She also, interestingly, takes it up with some emphasis when it becomes an issue of political representation, as it is in my project. Her example indicates her awareness that being Iraqi has meaning to different sorts of interlocutors for different reasons, and her application of it reflects this awareness. The content that she attributes to the essentially ambiguous notion of "Iraqiness" is linked closely to her individual experiences. Navigating the latter layer of this concept involves a more nuanced relationship to social pressures, and suggests that diaspora community's collective project of formulating a narrative of its origins will confront numerous fissures as it evolves and solidifies.

Chapter Four: Ghazal

Ghazal, Lama's twenty eight year old sister in law, came to Amman from her home in Ramadi to undergo in vitro fertilization. Lama arranged for her to be present during my visit, though she was staying with another relative nearby, so that she could deliver for me the information I was expected to be interested in hearing. Lama assumed that I was interested primarily in hearing stories of the current war, and as she had very few to share with me, she offered Ghazal as an alternative. My interaction with her was of a slightly different nature, and I did not have the opportunity to record a life story in the same explicit format that I did with the other three women I name here. Thus, the absence of references to the power of Iraqiness in her story are best not considered as evidence that she does not hold those views; it may be that she does. I include her story here to communicate how profound the impact of life in such violent circumstances has been on her, and because her experience of insecurity and uncertainty so clearly comes to bear on the stories of the other women that I discuss here as well. In acknowledging the reality of this experience, one can understand more clearly the experiences from which the diaspora community is now responsible for extracting coherence from as they craft narratives from their new vantage point in Amman. The details that Ghazal shares here suggest the profundity of the experience of violence on one's view of the future.

“Do you want to talk to her about the war? She lived the war.”

Lama: Are there things you want to know from her about how people lived during the war? Because she can tell you right away, since she lived the war.

Susan: If you'd like to talk about the war, I am here and I am ready and I want to listen. I am interested in stories, the stories of women from Iraq about their experiences with women's rights. But if you don't want, it's not necessary

Ghazal: No, sweetheart, what do you want? Ask me any question you have.

Susan: I am interested in women's rights in Iraq.

Lama: There are no women's rights in a war.

Susan: The war is just a part of what I am interested in.

Lama: Women lost most of their rights in the war. Her husband is gone and she has children, so most of the responsibility is on her. A lot of responsibility. And if she has small children ...

[a series of comments from the four women in the room follow, interrupting one another].

This was my introduction to Ghazal, and to Lama's bedroom. I was escorted to the room in the very back of the house, where Lama's guest sat on her king-sized wood framed bed. Her dark hair and the dark circles under her eyes stood out against the pale cotton of the pillows propping her upright. She smiled weakly at me when I entered the room, letting Lama introduce her and explain my purpose in interrupting her convalescence. Lama's youngest daughter lounged on the bed next to her, and Lama stretched out on the bed alongside them to listen to my interview. Ahlam, Lama's middle daughter (and my fast friend after I complimented her profusely on the photos of her engagement party), sat on the bed facing me. Later, she would translate Ghazal's commentary into simpler Arabic for my benefit. I alone did not join Ghazal on the bed for her presentation of the circumstances of the war, which Lama's introduction all but required she deliver.

The circumstances under which Ghazal shared her stories with me differ from those of the other instances that I discuss in this piece. The bed she lay in during our conversation is not her own, and she had the unique task of delivering her story in front of an audience with members in addition to myself. Most significantly, Ghazal is not a displaced Iraqi woman living in Amman. She is an Iraqi woman living in Iraq, whom I met while she was on a temporary visit to Amman to undergo in vitro fertilization. Lama brought her to her home for me to interview since, in her understanding, I had come to Jordan to hear the stories of women in Iraq who had lived through the war. As she perceived herself as having only limited experience with these circumstances, she provided an alternative source of this information. Ghazal, her sister in law, generously acquiesced to deliver for me an account of the horrors of war.

The foreign gaze: presenting others' experiences

Given that Ghazal's demographic characteristics place her somewhere in the margins of the stated parameters of this study, my choice to include an account of our afternoon together here merits some justification. My discussion here is orientened, specifically and explicitly, to an analysis of the diaspora experience, and Iraqis still living in Iraq are not necessarily included in this category. Ghazal, though, fits into many of the categories that the other women whose stories I include here do. She will be in Jordan for a very short period of time, but Basima, Lama and Manal similarly see their residence in Jordan as temporary. Iraqis like her, in Amman for a long visit or a temporary residence, are certainly included in Fafó's survey (2007). Moreover, a discussion of the experience of Iraqi refugees in Jordan at this historical moment is meaningless without a

complementary treatment of the political environment in Iraq at the same time. If not for the violence and instability of life in Iraq that began in 2003 with the American invasion and continues to this day, none of the other women with whom I spoke would be in Amman, and the stories of Ghazal and others like her continue to be a part of their lives remotely. Iraqis in Jordan traveled a very short distance to get to Amman, geographically speaking, and they typically maintain connections with family members still in the country. Their connection to the prevailing violent circumstances there is often mediated through conversations with family members like Ghazal.

Second, demographic realities aside, the importance of stories like Ghazal's in the representation of Iraq's reality to me, the outsider, clearly carried significance in Lama's estimation. When I told Lama that I wanted to learn about Iraqi women and their stories, and do oral history, she understood that to mean a chronicle of the war. What other history could there be? My intent here is to complicate the simple equation of Iraq with war and violence, and my interlocutors pointed out the inadequacy of that equation through their active insertion of their own personal experiences into their ideas about Iraqi identity. Fear and violence, however, remain important first principles in all their navigations of the intricacies of carrying this label. To omit these elements from the discussion would be to overlook the single most influential force in each of these four women's stories. Fear, violence, war and displacement all demonstrate their impact on Iraqis. What I seek to problematize is the notion that this impact can be adequately summarized in any one account.

Finally, I consider the ethnographic data included here an extension of my work with Lama as well as an independent story about Ghazal. Lama's – and sometimes, her daughter Ahlam's – interjections into the conversation reveal as much about her interest in representing certain realities to me as do her statements that I reproduce in the previous chapter. Her desire to corroborate Ghazal's story about the difficulties of life in Iraq at present suggest a need on her part to remain connected to these accounts of unspeakable violence, despite the fact that in her story they are in the past tense. In exploring both the nature of this desire and its impact on the notions that Lama constructs of herself in relationship to it, we can observe one instance of the link between those living in diaspora and those who remain in the country of origin. This avenue of thought informs not only our understanding of Lama's and Ghazal's (now-intertwined) stories, but adds a dimension to my discussion here of the way that Iraqis living in Amman depict their connection to Iraq as they represent their stories to a foreign and American interlocutor. It also sheds light on how they seek to reconcile these representations with their notions of subjectivity and their presentations of themselves.

As I did not have the opportunity to speak with Ghazal over several sessions, my recounting of her life story will necessarily suffer from an absence of crucial details, which I had no opportunity to address through repeated visits. I make a concerted attempt to treat her story in a vein similar to the manner in which I treated the others, but as our interaction was of a different nature, that method does not always serve the discussion. This section deals with one woman's story and includes her voice. It is also simultaneously a representation of the violence and upheaval that all Iraqis, within the

country and outside, navigate. It is an inescapable element in their crafting of their personal stories and in their carriage of the Iraqi label, and sometimes provides the hinge between those two practices. In presenting the memories of violence that Ghazal articulates so forcefully, I seek to acknowledge this foundational component in the discussion of Iraqis' displacement that I undertake here. As Iraqiness has become evocative of hardship and violence, it would be remiss to sanitize a discussion of that group's experience by omitting those details.

The Great War: a history and a present of violence¹⁹

Initially, I planned to record displaced Iraqis' reflections on women's rights at present in Iraq and prior to the invasion. Ghazal and Lama rapidly dismissed any expectations I had that those issues would be addressed, or that they would be of interest to the women with whom I sought to work. The conversation reproduced earlier in this chapter continues here, with some repetition:

Lama: Women lost most of their rights in the war. Her husband (something) and she has children, so most of the responsibility is on her. A lot of responsibility. And if she has small children ...

Susan: And this is because of the war.

Lama: Yes, because of the war.

Ghazal: Not a small number. Not thousands. Millions, who lost their husbands. And all of them have children, and they were left without any salary, without any income from him. And they have to take care of their children. It's so, so, so much, the destruction from the war.

¹⁹ The terminology here, where I use "the Great War" to describe the American military campaign in Iraq, is borrowed from the timeline that Basima drew for me of her life, where she labeled 2003 the year of the Great War.

Lama: In this situation, she isn't thinking about her rights. She is thinking about the rights of her children, and how her children are going to live. Because there is pressure. Am I right or not?

Ghazal: And it isn't just her husband that she lost. She lost maybe her father, her brother, her husband. The doors are all closed, her life is destroyed. There are circumstances where she would have lost her husband, but her father would still be there or her brother would still be there. And there are circumstances where she lost her whole family. And it's millions, millions, you know, millions. Millions who have lost their husbands, millions of children who lost their fathers.

Susan: Millions of what? I'm so sorry.

Lama: Millions of women who lost their husbands. Millions of people who died and who were fathers of children. Now there are so many children who are orphans, with no fathers.

Susan: What a tragedy. (We pause). And how was the situation in Iraq before the war, with respect to women's rights?

Lama: Oh, the situation was very good. Salaries were good, and everything was available, there was security.

The literature that helped me frame my inquiry still comes to bear on this discussion; my initial framing, wherein I focused on the instability of discourses about women's rights, noted the absence of coherent progression in that one narrow arena over the course of modern Iraqi history. This work seeks to communicate that the instability of women's position represents not a unique and separate strand in the nation's progression but a persistent theme in the concept of "modern Iraq", as it inures both within the country and outside. Substantial academic inquiry confirms that the violence in Iraq has impacted women in painful ways, and Lama and Ghazal's commentary indicate that the literature and the lived experience align closely. The expansion of educational opportunities that prior decades witnessed, which I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3,

suffered as a result of UN sanctions (Al-Jawaheri, 2008) and then all but evaporated in the aftermath of the 2003 war (Al-Ali et. al, 2009). Deterioration in quality of life was a constant, although the forms it took shifted depending on the political aspirations and agendas of the Baath government. This combination of dwindling resources and opportunities and unpredictable shifts in the prevailing climate of political repression which kept the Iraqi population in a state of uncertainty in which even the development of coping mechanisms proved a challenge. The fractured environment that these displaced women escaped in coming to Jordan, temporarily or no, provides the basis for the highly individualized narratives that I observed in this work. As the broader picture eludes coherent synthesis, the narrower picture provides a more manageable unit of analysis.

While Manal and Basima both spoke about their resolve hardening in these difficult circumstances, Ghazal in contrast names them as diminishing her expectations for the future.

Susan: When you were small and you dreamed of your future, what did you envision?

Ghazal: When I was little, I thought ... I thought I would finish in medicine, finish my degree. But when I got older, I was ... it was wartime, and ... and sanctions began after the war in Kuwait, and they impacted us, the sanctions. But we endured it. But we dreamed lots of things, and the reality was that in 2003, really we saw so many tragedies. Since 2003, to 2009 ... people say that since then, 2009 is better. But you see, we lived so many tragedies during that period. I have dreams, you know, to finish my studies. I have dreams to get my master's degree. But the circumstances were like ... I can't leave the house. I got an acceptance to a university in Baghdad, but the situation in Baghdad was such that if you left the house, you would be killed. I couldn't finish. Lots of students had to leave their studies. And the dreams that we dreamed, to finish university or to finish a master's, the circumstances wouldn't allow us.

Her statements here indicate a resignation on her part to the reality of life in a war zone: if one cannot leave the house, how can she possibly get a university education? Ghazal, having exited Iraq only a few weeks prior to our interview and planning to return in a few short weeks, does not have the benefit of several years' reflection on her Iraqi experiences from the safe haven of Amman. Her narratives reflect a coherence of a different nature than that of women whose future is situated emphatically elsewhere. These references to trauma, however, are also meaningful in Basima's and Manal's narratives, and Lama's choice to enable Ghazal's inclusion in my work indicate that she attributes a similar importance to the commemoration of this violence in any record of life in Iraq.

The mournful edge (and sometimes more than merely an edge) that each of my interlocutors attributed to Iraqi national identity is not a new addition to the hegemonic narratives of Iraqiness that have accumulated over the past century. Orit Bashkin (2008) dates the notion of regret among Iraqis to the 1920s; among other sources, she examined a school newspaper published in 1929, where a sixth grade boy contributed the following:

My present country is the country in which we live, full of oppression without justice; cruelty with no mercy; bribery and hardship without impartial judgment and integrity; diversity without integrity; diversity without unity; hostility without brotherhood This is a state where the strong kills the weak, the rich robs the poor, and moreover, a brother kills his own. (p. 256)

Bashkin notes that, while the students writing in the newspaper come from middle class families, they continually invoke the experiences and trials of the lower classes in their critiques of the Iraqi nation. In her reading, this represents the pervasive influence of

mainstream cultural production such as literature, poetry, and the media on even twelve year old boys' conception of the Iraqi nation. Her study of one school newspaper reflects a deliberate integration of widespread discourses about the nation into micro-level discussions of individuals' contributions similar to those that I observe here. There is historical evidence that Iraqis have carried their national identity in highly personal ways since long before the 2003 war.

However, in rebuffing my attempt to discuss women's rights in this context, Lama and Ghazal also point out that the specific discourses to which they are responding differ dramatically in the present moment from those that Bashkin's school boys were addressing in 1929. Women's rights discourses figure prominently in modern Iraqi history, and nationalist discourses draw upon them frequently. The Iraqi upper classes took pride in the advanced state of women's education in the country as early as the 1940s (Efrati, 2004), and references to powerful women in ancient Iraqi history inform current popular literature (Zangana, 2007). Representatives of the Iraqi government and outside critics alike pointed out the Baath government's preoccupation with women and their role as indicating a certain relationship to modernity (Al-Sharqi, 1982; Rassam, 1982). Later, this attitude shifted to reflect the demands of increased militarization during the Iran-Iraq War (Rohde in Ouzgane, 2006) and continued on this trajectory to eventually produce an Islamicized, moralistic perspective on the appropriate role of women in the family during sanctions (Al-Jawaheri, 2008; Bengio, 1998). The United States military campaign in the country similarly invoked women's rights in their justification for the invasion as the validity of their claims about weapons of mass

destruction were called into question (Al-Ali, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2000; Al-Ali & N. C. Pratt, 2006; Zangana, 2007). In an arena where there existed a clear set of discourses worthy of opposition, in this case American military and diplomatic rhetoric on the importance of the military campaign for women's liberation, Lama's and Ghazal's comments represented sweeping opposition ("there are no women's rights in a war").

This brief recounting of the nonlinear trajectory that women's rights discourses followed in Iraqi history makes it evident that characterizing women's status in Iraq as adhering to any one set of principles or values would be to ignore whole periods of its history. While women's rights often played a prominent role in public rhetoric, the role it played shifted with the political climate. Rather than arguing that any one ideology prevails over the others, I suggest here that choosing to look at these discourses as constantly unstable provides the most constructive grid of intelligibility for the history of Iraqi women²⁰. This instability, moreover, offers very little in the service of narrative coherence, which human beings typically create and on which displaced individuals rely with particular urgency. The more entrenched hegemonic narrative of missed opportunity, of prolonged and unjust suffering, provides a more compelling basis for a narrative of Iraqiness than does any discussion of such a malleable and alienable concept as women's rights. Thus, while Lama and Ghazal demonstrate a clear interest in and willingness to respond to my question about women's rights, and the commentary they offer is detailed and direct, their orientation toward it is of a different nature than that of their discussion of difficulty, hardship, and violence.

²⁰ "Grid of intelligibility" is a Foucauldian term, taken from *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2010).

The force of the collective: violence, war, and the pronoun “we”

Ghazal: There is no home in Iraq where nothing bad has happened, where they haven't lost one of their relatives. A husband, their mother, their father, a brother. And there are some who lost everyone because of the war. And in the past, the war was outside – during the war with Iran, we didn't see war, you know, we heard that there were clashes between an army and an army. But in Fallujah, we lived, we saw dead bodies left on the ground. There were bombings, there were attacks in the night until the morning. Your neighbors' houses, really, would be flattened, bombed. There were bodies ... in my sister's house, when it was hit, she told us, the dead bodies, I saw them in the sky.

Ahlam: She means, the dead bodies were flying in the air.

Ghazal: The circumstances were really hard, really hard.

Ghazal's description of violence here is potent and upsetting. She chose to introduce this material here, during our first meeting together, when I have known her for less than fifteen minutes and I am in her bedroom as she rests after in vitro fertilization. This choice suggests that when she considers what it is that I should hear about the war, this is the primary image she wishes to impart. She cannot be ignorant of the impact stories of this nature have on their listeners, as likely their reflexive impact is equally as intense and as powerful. Her choice to keep the discussion general reflects her understanding of my question as general, as interested not in her unique experience but in the Iraqi experience more broadly. When I indicate an interest in her personal experience, she willingly obliges. Ghazal also avoids making any sort of emphatic pronouncement on the impact of this experience. Her reflections and discussion indicate less resolve and ownership in favor of exhaustion and resignation. When I ask her whether it changed her to have this experience, she offers the following.

Susan: So do you feel that your character has changed over the past six years?

Ghazal: I feel, personally, that the things that I have seen made me stronger. Before, if I had seen these sights, this killing, this war ... at the very least, I would have cried. I was weak, weak. (She laughs). Now, (still laughing), I am ... a bit stronger.

As she told me this, she stopped frequently to sigh, and could not make it through the latter bit without laughing. Her shrill laughter contrasted sharply with the gravity of her statement, underlining the absurdity of someone gaining anything from so much loss. While her words parallel Manal's and Basima's, her delivery of them suggested that she does not see this development in the same positive light that they do. As Ghazal's temporal orientation to the Iraqi experience is different nature than Lama's (or Basima's, or Manal's) her witness to violence has a raw quality. Self-descriptions of her character do not include any references to the forging power of experiencing violence; she simply notes that she has made the minimal adjustments of which she is capable to let her endure the exhausting circumstances.

Susan: Are you scared to go back?

Ghazal: Of course. If my husband goes out, and he is late, I am scared. If he is late by half an hour, or an hour, I worry. A lot, you know. Because I know it's not secure. Many people died, some people have lost their whole families, and the reason – what? There's no reason.

Susan: Is the situation better now than it was before? In your opinion, in your experience?

Ghazal: You know ... It's a little better, you know, but the most important point is that there still isn't any security. The situation is better but there still is no security.

What kind of representation: collectivity and detail

Ghazal's story reflects the pervasive and constrictive reality of Iraq's material circumstance in a potent fashion. Above, she discussed the deterioration of her ambitions when the war started; having grown up wanting to go to university, she ultimately surrendered that aspiration when she saw that she would no longer be able to leave the house. She and her father had once looked forward to her career as a doctor, but circumstances dictated that she pursue a less prestigious version of this same path as a physician's assistant, working in the hospital but without a white coat.

Susan: Why did you choose [to study biological sciences]?

Ghazal: I had hoped to become a doctor.

Inas: She wanted to be a doctor.

Ghazal: I got the necessary average, that I needed to study medicine. But one of the conditions wasn't available, and I like medicine, and this specialty would be close to medicine.

Susan: So this study was close to the study of medicine.

Ghazal: Yes, yes, very close. There are levels.

Susan: And why did you want to become a doctor?

Ghazal: I don't know, you know, but I had always wanted to.

Susan: Your mother encouraged you?

Ghazal: My father encouraged me, and it was something I thought I would like.

Ahlam: Her father wanted her to become a doctor. And she also wanted to become a doctor.

She met her husband through this job, and they are now working on starting their family together; her choice to pursue a pregnancy suggests that she has not entirely abandoned hope for her future. Her differentiation between different moments over the past several years, and her emphatic insistence that slight improvements do not mean that problems have disappeared, indicate her specific attention to the incremental changes in the domestic security situation in Iraq. This reflects her own future's close link with the country's. In contrast, for the other women I spoke with here, their future is elsewhere. Iraq, for them, is in the past. They are not Jordanians, not fully, and no longer bound by the constraints that characterize Ghazal's life in Iraq and that characterized their own when they were in that situation. Their inward-looking attitudes, their self-reliance, constitute a response to this divorce from their country of origin and from their pasts as much as it constitutes a reaction to their ambivalent and invisible status as guests in their host society. The resignation and uncertainty that Ghazal articulates in talking about her life in Iraq are also indexed in Manal's, in Basima's, and in Lama's stories; the difference lies in their temporal orientation toward this sentiment. For Ghazal, it is a present and material reality. She literally does not know when she will be able to leave her house in safety. For the others, it is a memory. It imprinted their characters but they need not relive its exigency every time they run out of bread or tomatoes and need to visit the market. Thus, the awareness of the existence of this narrative continues to inform the way that Iraqis living in diaspora represent their stories to outside interlocutors, both because of the perception that this element of the discussion is the important and interesting part

and because of the indelible impact that it had on them. Its safe containment in the past, though, shifts its relationship to their notions of self in a meaningful way.

In conclusion

Ghazal's story takes place in the present moment, and is characterized by immediacy. Both she and Lama note this in their presentation of her story to me. Observing the ways that this urgency informs her story makes it clear how absent this rushed feeling is in the narratives of the other women with whom I spoke. Though they index it in memories, they do not refer to it as shaping their decisions in the same fashion. Noting the contrast between her relationship to these experiences and the others' relationship to the same notion adds another layer of significance to the "displaced" status of Iraqis living in Jordan, and further informs answers to questions about what it is that makes narratives of exile different from those narratives produced inside the country.

Conclusion

The character sketches that I share here represent my experiences with the four women who enabled this project. I was able to learn about each of them over the course of the summer, and as our working relationships developed, they included greater depth and nuance in their stories. Our encounters took place among their families and in their workspaces, with others sometimes eavesdropping, observing or contributing. Mine was not a traditional ethnography, though, where a researcher examines a community in its clearly defined physical space. For that reason, I did not have the opportunity to see how the reflective musings they each shared with me impacted their daily practices and their social relationships, and the moments in their lives that I impart here suggest a solitude that reflects only one aspect of their lives. These four women, each of whom was born in Iraq and three of whom have since relocated to Jordan, conceive of Iraqiness profoundly differently, and the differences in each woman's conception correspond to both her past and current experiences.

Numerous scholars whose work comes up at different moments in this text have written on the challenges that ethnography in dispersed or sometimes geographically dispersed "communities" poses for the observer interested in drawing conclusions about a group of people (Appadurai, 1996, 2003; Axel, 2004; Marcus, 1995; Rabinow, Marcus, Faubion, & Rees, 2008). A splintered group of people does not share practices or narratives in the same way that a cohesive group does, and to force an analysis of Iraqis in Jordan into the model of ethnography designed for the Trobriand Islands (to

paraphrase Marcus and Rabinow (2008) is to describe the former group inaccurately. To describe them as a-social, though, and existing outside the network of pressures that friends, neighbors, social norms and governing structures exert on them is also to misrepresent their existence. Their relations with others organize their realities, whether those relations are conducted within the same apartment, over the phone, or through memory and imagination. Any one of these four women could board a ninety minute flight from Amman to Baghdad if she chose, and the knowledge that Iraq and the family members that remain there are so close destabilizes the close connection that social groups had to places in the past (Malkki, 1992). The independent, and in some ways isolated, environment in which I encountered them does not present a fulsome picture of their lives, as it often omits the social dimension. Its centering of the women as individuals, though, responsible for representing their own stories and experiences, expresses the fragmented nature of their social lives. They must, in so many ways, be self reliant, and their independence in taking on this interaction with me is just one of the many ways in which they are now responsible for acting as advocates for themselves and their families as they navigate life in Jordan.

I have attempted to demonstrate here that a close examination of the different notions of Iraqiness that Basima, Manal, Lama and Ghazal present, and where they diverge from one another, has the potential to shed light on how individuals participate in abstract and unorthodox “imagined communities” for whom geographical rootedness is a thing of the past. I have sought to demonstrate here that as these women craft a story of their national identity for delivery to me, they do so in dialogue with what they perceive

outside expectations to be. Meeting those expectations often included a discussion of the fear and violence in Iraq that drew – and continues to draw- international attention. In addition to drawing attention, it serve to justify the targeting of this community, in particular its female members, for services. My affiliation with an NGO that distributes these services could certainly have compounded their notion that telling certain kinds of stories to me would serve them more so than others. As their narratives unfolded, the links between the Iraqi collective and their character appeared as increasingly more entrenched. The vocalization of this close identification with an experience situated in the past constitutes their meaningful participation in the ongoing formation of an Iraqi diasporic identity, and thus an instance of performative – or, as Culler (2000) put it, world-making - speech.

Jordan's policies toward the Iraqis who have migrated there keep this population on the margins. Jordan has elected not to designate a specific area for Iraqis, to grant them legal status in the country as either residents with permits to work or "guests", and to essentially delegate the work of managing a refugee crisis to international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration and the UNHCR. In doing so, they have created a population of Iraqi families that live in Amman cheek by jowl with Jordanians but who cannot fully integrate with this community because of their uncertain futures, that is to say, their pending departures. Even Manal, who has established residency and has the privilege of working in Amman, plans to return as soon as Baghdad is safe. They reflect an understanding of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) and its influence on their lives in Jordan in the way they choose to manage their

simultaneous insider/outsider status.

Iraqis' dispersal throughout the city of Amman, and thus separation from other Iraqis, leaves them at liberty – or, in an alternative formulation, obligates them - to infuse Iraqiness with content that reflects their experience. At the same time, their present circumstances represent a departure from prior living arrangements. Remembering Iraq also means, in some cases, remembering one's extended family or a neighborhood community. Often, it also means recalling received wisdom about Iraq's national history or rhetoric from prior political campaigns. Typically, it includes reflections on fear and violence and the ways they shaped daily life and interactions. Generating a coherent narrative from these reflections requires considerable synthesis, wherein certain details are omitted or forgotten entirely and decisive themes brought to the fore. As Iraqis are dispersed throughout Amman and left without their cousins, neighbors, and other grounding presences, they do this memory work in small groups or as individuals. Benefits, in terms of social services typically, accrue to them as well through their representation of themselves as members of a victimized and suffering population.

Here, I characterized their articulation of a connection between themselves and Iraqi identity as a speech act. As Axel (2004) pointed out, diaspora communities create the master narratives and founding myths of their home country in an environment distant from that country. In choosing to communicate their Iraqiness so explicitly to me in the manner that they did here, my participants are contributing to this process of creation. The nature of their contribution, moreover, carries real implications for the genesis of the Iraqi community in Jordan and how it may transform over the next several years or

decades. As those Iraqis who will leave for homes elsewhere are gradually resettled, and those who will stay establish themselves further, “Iraqiness” may become a less personal commodity for this population in Jordan. It may come to have less to do with one’s personal circumstances and background than it does with entrenched and widely distributed master narratives. The current instability of the concept “Iraqi” as well as the individuals giving voice to it here may be the primary – or at least a significant – enabling factor in this idiosyncratic formation. Further work on these questions with this population will yield a clearer picture of the way that various (and varied!) moments of instability have impacted the way that members of this community conceive of themselves.

As the material circumstances for refugees in Iraq will undoubtedly change in the immediate future, it remains to be seen whether those changes will permit any sort of stabilization for the Iraqis now living there. NGO employees in the country have shared that budgets for international organizations and charities that assist Iraqis have already been reduced, and they anticipate further cuts. This downsizing means that Iraqis will be not only less resourced but also less visible as donor attention wanes. Moreover, it has no relationship to the demand for these services, which remains high and is likely increasing. As competition for support increases, and stories about “being Iraqi” diminish in their evocative power, the stories of Iraqis living in Jordan may develop a different notion of national identity to accommodate the interests of different audiences.

It is evident in my work, though, that while governmental structures have the power to inspire narratives of differing orientations about the meaning of being Iraqi, the

connection these women feel toward their country of origin is complex and entrenched. Their loyalty to their roots, coupled with the pain of their experiences, demands a nuanced reflection on the challenges of being Iraqi in diaspora. Further investigation into the way that they patch these different elements together into a logical, and useful, narrative will inform subsequent work on splintered, diasporic or refugee communities in any number of contexts.

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