OXFORD

Fadh, Sharaf and Respectable Passing as New Frameworks for Understanding Transmasculinity in the MENA Region: Case Studies of Transmasculine Refugees in Lebanon

Nisrine Chaer [ID] [1,*]

[1]Faculty of Humanities, Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University, Utrecht 3512 HJ, Netherlands

*Corresponding author. nisrine.chaer@gmail.com, n.chaer@uu.nl

Abstract

Centring transmasculine refugees in Lebanon as a case study, this article examines the role of the state and the patriarchal family in regulating the lives of transmasculine subjects. It does so by introducing and elaborating on the concept of *fadh*, defined as the practices of scandal and shameful outing, a move that provides new ways of understanding transmasculinity through analysing the imposition of womanhood onto transmasculine subjects living under *fadh*, in tandem with an attention to class, as well as citizenship status, instead of a narrow focus on sex/gender. The article offers the concept of 'respectable passing' as a way to account for how transmasculine refugees 'pass' by investing in markers of class, citizenship, and age over those of gender and offers *fadh* as a potential framework for understanding anti-trans violence and trans passing. The framework of *fadh* is an attempt to afford more complexity to transmasculinity as a simultaneously classed, raced, and gendered formation, avoiding the limited and often deceitful framing as complicit with hegemonic masculinity (or lack thereof), a narrative common in existing scholarship on transmasculinity and in recent debates in feminist/LGBT circles globally.

**Keywords:** refugees, transmasculine, Middle East, transgender, class, honour

Introduction

In a televized interview on 3 May 2020, renowned Egyptian actor Hesham Selim publicly revealed support for his transgender son, Noor Selim (see Figure 1). Within minutes, his announcement sparked an outpouring of both admiration and condemnation across Arabic language social media. The news gripped the LGBT community based in the MENA[1] region, who hailed it as an unprecedented moment and an achievement in representation for the transgender community.
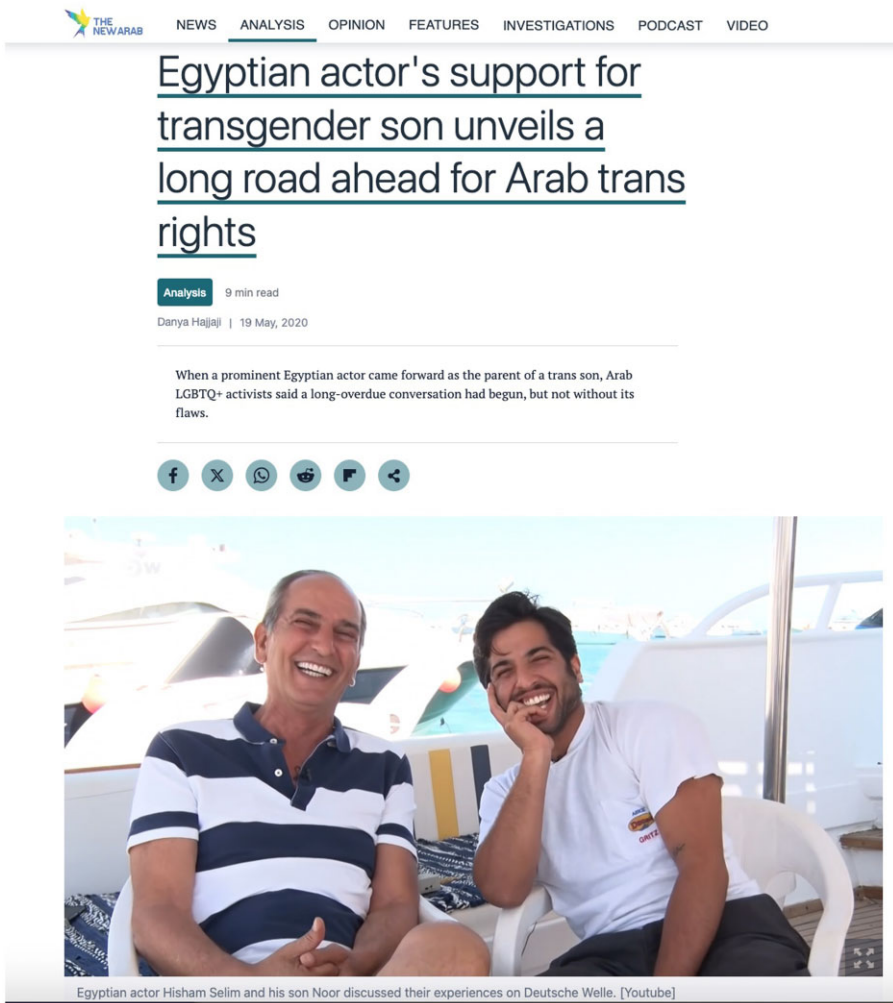
Figure 1. Hisham Selim and His Son Noor (Hajjaji 2020)

Later that week, in an interview watched by over 3.8 million viewers, a DW reporter asked the elder Selim how he would react if he had a trans daughter instead of a trans son. Selim answered that for him acceptance would be much harder and more of a challenge in this hypothetical scenario as men generally have a better status in society than women. His answer highlighted a common vein in transphobia and transmisogyny, with many MENA LGBT activists pointing out that the elder Selim was expressing a typical rationale that is more accepting of transgender men than transgender women because.

> a person assigned male at birth who transitions to female is viewed as 'waiving many privileges' and 'inferior'... [or] due to perceptions of transitioning from male to female being 'degrading'... [and the] social context in the Middle East [being] so unforgiving for women, that it almost seems like somebody transitioning from female to male is a step up in society. (Hajjaji 2020)

Due to Selim's fame and the unprecedented nature of this public announcement, his answer prompted a swell of commentary on social media from the transgender and LGBT communities within the MENA region and the interconnected diasporas; ultimately, this ostensibly pro-LGBT

news item was a moment of disenchantment and reiterated rejection for many trans women and their allies (Mohamed 2020).

The narrative about 'transitioning from female to male [as] a step up in society' alludes to a certain form of male privilege that trans men are suggested to gain when they transition and this trope has gained even more popularity amid Hesham Selim's public revelations, while continuing to be prevalent in contemporary debates in feminist and LGBT circles globally. As a result, this narrative features significantly in existing scholarship on transmasculinity, which thus far has focused largely on discourses of gender and trans men's complicity with the dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity or lack thereof (Rubin 2003; Aboim 2016; Saeidzadeh 2020; monakali and Francis 2022), an interpretation and lens which I hope to begin to complexify in this article. I build on the work of scholars who have addressed such narratives in different geopolitical or historical contexts. Rubin (2003), for example, has looked at how trans men in the United States reproduce and subsequently benefit from traditional forms of masculinity operational under patriarchy, and has explored the historical emergence of the 'FTM transsexual' category as separate from the category of butch lesbian. In her scholarship on trans men in the global South, Saeidzadeh (2020) has studied how trans men in Iran resist and/or reinforce dominant gender norms in society, suggesting that 'Iranian trans men are less marginalized than trans women insofar as they can more easily participate in society' post-transition given the 'nation's patriarchal gender regime' (303). And monakali and Francis (2022) have looked at how trans men in Cape Town perform masculinities in a way that is caring, and thus subversive, yet is also complicit with dominant discourses of masculinity. Building on this body of work, in the following article I introduce the concepts of imposed womanhood, *fadh* (exposure) and *sharaf* (honour) as a way to read and analyse certain classed and raced (trans)masculine embodiments in today's Lebanon. I do so in order to trouble and reconceptualize the framework propounded by existing scholarship that casts both transmasculinity and trans men as necessarily complicit in, or supportive of, hegemonic masculinity and its harmful attributes.

As I followed the reactions of LGBT activists across the MENA region and beyond, two central observations solidified. First, I questioned why LGBT activists did not see or formulate Noor's experience at least partially through a lens of imposed womanhood, family honour and gendered violence, especially given that these are common experiences that trans men are subjected to across the MENA region, where they live under patriarchal systems that were legally, politically and socially produced under colonial rule and that remain operational today. Indeed, and as other scholars from Middle East studies have shown, it is through these systems that moral and sexual 'honour' is invoked and made equivalent to women's bodies and sexuality (Hammad 2017), as both women's bodies and sexuality are regulated by the state and by parastatal actors such as the heteropatriarchal blood family (Zengin 2019; Mikdashi 2022: 20). These systems are likewise shaped and are deployed against the bodies of women as well as individuals coerced into womanhood, such as trans men. Second, I found it notable that, as the son of a renowned actor, Noor has access to a significant amount of economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986), with much of this power being related to his passing as a cisgender male and his access to the global North. He is the legal dependent of a very influential, acclaimed and respectable father, whose public support and acceptance in a patriarchal system holds both classed and gendered currencies. Social stratification and class shape the cultural landscape in the Middle East as a whole (Deeb and Harb 2013). For members of the upper-class elites with powerful credentials like Noor's family, social prestige and success mark and inscribe their symbolic capital at the heart of these classed and gendered currencies in the eyes of the larger society. In my view, these currencies are associated with Noor's social class and they render the public revelation of a trans coming out on TV as less scandalous and less threatening to the established order of family honour and female sexual purity as dictated by the familial patriarch. Why, then, was Noor's identity and experience largely formulated, albeit differently, through the lens of maleness and male privilege by his father, by the larger society, and by queer activists? Why was this not instead understood through the lens of class affluence or through the role of the patriarchal

family unit (as headed by the father) in regulating and sanctioning the lives of trans men, which would necessarily include moments of discontinuity and rupture—as when the head of a family welcomes the transness of his transgender son?

I argue that recognizing Noor's socially imposed womanhood and its entanglement with the gender and class-inflected space of *fadh*,[2] which I mobilize to reference practices of scandal, shameful outing, scene-making, and 'making something legible by bringing it to the attention of others in a spectacle of invectives and exposure' (El-Ariss 2018: 71), results in new ways of understanding transmasculinity. Here the term *fadh* allows us to make sense of Noor's experience as a recognized trans man in Egypt by pointing out the integral support of his reputable and celebrity father, that is, a classed and gendered entity capable of protecting him from the threat of *fadh*, or the threat of being exposed as a deviant and disreputable 'woman', as well as helping him evade external forms of violence imposed on transmasculine bodies. The framework of *fadh* is an attempt to afford more complexity to transmasculinity as a classed and gendered formation, without having to rely on the limited and sometimes deceitful frame of complicity with hegemonic masculinity. In this article, I understand and use *fadh* to reference a practice of exposure and scandal that can be used as a normative weapon to slander and expose deviant subjects at the hands of state actors, media outlets (El-Ariss 2018: 71) and the heteropatriarchal family. Furthermore, I look specifically at the threat of *fadh* as a regime that shapes the lives of trans men in Lebanon specifically, and the MENA region more generally.

Whereas Noor Selim's coming out story is one that most obviously speaks to discourses on transmasculinity in the queer community, the stories of my interviewees speak to a broader socio-political context in which trans men live, both globally as well as within the MENA region and Lebanon. To this, I ask how does one make sense of the fact that the experiences of transgender men—a group whose bodies become caught in a regime of visibility wherein the embodiment of maleness is confined in the act of passing—become transposed into a form of political and public recognition that is successfully absorbed into majoritarian patriarchal society? How might analysing the imposition of womanhood onto transmasculine subjects living under *fadh*, in tandem with an attention to class and citizenship status in addition to gender, lead to different conclusions? What happens to our understanding of transmasculine embodiment when we shift our understanding of passing from a quality attached to gendered appearance to an experience of *fadh* by the state and the heteronormative family, an experience that is deeply marked by both class and citizenship?

To scrutinize these preliminary questions, I chose a case study about transmasculine refugees in Lebanon, an ideal site to examine transgender refugee-ness and the instrument of *fadh*. With a population of four and a half million citizen-residents, Lebanon is currently host to approximately two million Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Sudanese, and Kurdish refugees (Mikdashi 2022: 205), making it the country with the highest proportion of refugees per capita in the world.[3] In recent years, the Lebanese state has inflamed the so-called 'refugee crisis' discourse also popular in Europe and has propped up its security apparatus by stoking nationalist anti-refugee rhetoric and practices. This took shape in the form of military raids on refugee neighbourhoods, the proliferation of checkpoints, restrictive residency permit guidelines, and deportations, all of which led to increasing hardships for the refugee population. Against this backdrop, there emerged a new group in the global asylum system: transgender refugees. Transgender refugees are individuals who flee from neighbouring countries to Lebanon, migrate, and who may apply at the UNHCR for a claim for refugee status based on the persecution of their gender identity. Transgender refugees in Lebanon live simultaneously as 'refugee deviants', as 'transgender deviants' and as 'working-class deviants', embodying complex entanglements in their social existence, entanglements that 'neither the refugee experience nor the transgender experience [nor the working-class experience] can separately speak to' (Camminga 2022: 14).

In this article's analysis I draw on ethnographic data collected during my fieldwork in Lebanon between 2020 and 2022. I conducted interviews in spoken Arabic and used participant-observation in private and public sites with nineteen transgender and queer refugees in Lebanon, among whom

six were trans men. These participants identified using the transliterated Arabic terms 'trans man', 'trans', or 'shabb trans' (shabb translates as young man, lad), or, simply, as 'man', as well as using the Arabic term rijjeil (man) or dtakar (male) or shabb (young man, lad). To contextualize, the terms 'trans', 'transgender', and 'transsexual' have only recently arrived into the imaginary and language of the queer and gender-variant communities in the Middle East (Saleh 2020: 37). These include terms like 'trans man' and, to a lesser extent, 'FTM (female-to-male)' and 'AFAB (assigned female at birth)', all of which have been used in the U.S. context as an umbrella term that recognizes the full spectrum of transmasculine identity, ranging from transgender to transsexual. In this article, I use 'transmasculinity' to refer to a specific characteristic of an established gendered order, and 'trans men' as an umbrella term to refer to individual identities. One interlocuter in my research mentioned that he was often perceived as bint mustarjilah (mannish girl, girl who acts as a man, butch). Although he did not identify as mustarjilah, it is important to note that the term does have a historical resonance, found in one of the few historical-anthropological studies on transmasculine identity/gender variance in the Middle East.[4] In this, scholar Westphal-Hellbusch (1997) looked at the mustergils, women in Southern Iraq who dressed in men's clothing and lived as men, many whom were the primary breadwinners for their family (233). According to Westphal-Hellbusch, mustergils start living as men after their first menstruation or after the death of their husband, yet are expected to become women when they get married (237–238).

I conducted this research not only from the position of a researcher-observer, but also, as a trans man from Lebanon who has been involved in trans and queer organizing in Beirut—the city where I was born and raised—for more than a decade, and who is currently involved in a mutual aid group that supports queer and trans refugees in Lebanon. Over the years I have developed intimate friendships with many of my interlocuters and informants, and in the following I focus on the stories of two such transmasculine refugees: Ihab, a Palestinian-Jordanian, and Ahmed, a Kurdish-Iraqi. The reason I decided to study transmasculinity separately from transfemininity has to do with the nature of the argument I make throughout this article, which addresses specifically the imbrication of the state, fadh and the patriarchal family sphere as actors in the lives of trans men, who are subjects who are coded as women in the current socio-legal schema.[5] While Ihab's and Ahmed's experiences differ in terms of nationality, ethnicity, and class background, both indicate gendered formations that go beyond a narrative of complicity with hegemonic masculinity and that show transmasculine bodies that are regulated by the threat of fadh directed at women. And both cases foreground the classed and racialized aspects of transmasculinity as lived and embodied under the security-morality apparatus in Lebanon. Important to note here is that I consider citizenship/refugee-ness as a racial marker in Lebanon, as Syrian, Palestinian, and Iraqi refugees are considered to be racialized national outsiders that are highly securitized and subjected to extreme forms of racism and perceived as a threat to the nation (Mikdashi 2022). Furthermore, Lebanon is a class-stratified society. Although one's refugee-ness could be superseded if one were middle-class or cosmopolitan enough, it is important to emphasize that being a Syrian, Palestinian or Iraqi (refugee) in itself is a classed and racialized marker and could be a source of denigration regardless of one's actual class status. Speaking a Syrian, Palestinian or Iraqi Arabic dialect is often a source of exposure of one's nationality. Moreover, gender in this article mostly refers to perceived gender presentation (body appearance) (Beauchamp 2019: 9) by others (the state, the family, the police, larger society), and to processes of reconfiguring gender presentation (trans men investing in certain markers) as well as legal identity (gender markers on identity documents), and not simply to self-identified gender (how trans men refer to themselves or desire).

My first step is to explicate how fadh operates in the context of state securitization in Lebanon, as well as in relation to the patriarchal family. I tap into the debates on transmasculine refugee-ness using the experience of my informants as subjects regulated by fadh, reading both transgender refugee embodiment and gendered violence through the regulation of gender and sexuality by the state, in the example of military checkpoints, and by the patriarchal family and systems of honour codes. In terms of disciplinary contribution, in the following I hope to

highlight that the literature on gendered violence and honour that takes cisgender femininity as its subject should be expanded by attending to the case of transmasculinity; likewise, I also extend the existent research on honour within trans studies. In the second section, I show that transmasculinity and gender are racialized and classed arrangements. I look into the relationship between the security-morality apparatus and *perceived* identities, effectively classed and racialized embodiment, and, simultaneously, I address the experiences of transmasculine refugees and the counterstrategies they use to re-construct safety for themselves. In doing so, I highlight how class has a distinct position in determining trans sociality and mobility, alongside gender and citizenship. I offer the notion of 'respectable passing' to account for how transmasculine refugees 'pass' by investing in class, age and citizenship markers over those of gender. Adopting class and citizenship as optics adds considerably to our understanding of masculinities and their (re)production, a dimension that has been addressed in feminist, Middle East studies and refugee studies, but exclusively through the cisgender masculine subject. I thus add to this literature on masculinity by shifting the focus to transmasculinity, tracing the anxiety that pervades trans refugee subjects surrounding the possibility they might be outed and scandalized through *fadh* as disreputable women in a context of increased securitization against refugees in Lebanon. By discussing the potential of what I call *fadh* as a novel framework for understanding anti-trans violence and its subsequent trans passing, I hope to illuminate the limitations of the discourse of 'transphobia', which cannot capture violence emerging from systems of family honour, ideals of female seclusion, middle-class respectability, as well as citizenship-based racialization prevalent in contemporary Lebanon. By doing so, I hope to highlight the possibilities for alternatives understandings of transmasculinities as well as masculinities more broadly.

Transmasculinity, *Fadh* and *Sharaf* (Family Honour)
Fadiha/Fadh at a Checkpoint

In an interview I conducted with Ihab, a trans man from a Palestinian-Jordanian middle-class family who sought asylum in Lebanon, Ihab explained to me that having both the ID of a girl wearing the hijab and an UN refugee ID has shaped his experience of mobility when crossing checkpoints in Beirut as he was commuting by bus:

> If I see [checkpoints] I disembark [from the bus] before reaching them. If I get stopped I will *etbahdal* (be humiliated/scandalized) like it happened on a few occasions.

> What happened when you got stopped?

> Once with Hizb[6] once with Ouweit,[7] we were next to the house of what's his name Geagea,[8] the situation became a *fadiha*[9] (scandal), and they got confused when faced with someone like me once at the roundabout of Adlieh[10] and they caught me and they saw the ID of a girl, 'oh so you're lost and a runaway alone here, the girl who flees from her parents what is she?'

> What makes it worse is that because I have no papers and also I am a girl, 'Ya Sater (oh my God) is this the ID of your sister?' …they didn't believe it because it's with a hijab, so they were shocked and started to mock me, so what did I do in the end? I was laughing with them… the conversation became about 'what and how and where is your passport and how did you enter Lebanon'… and once a security officer teared down my UN refugee card and told me to go soak it in water and drink it.

In a country that lacks public transport, the private mini-bus services in Lebanon are used generally by working-class Lebanese and non-citizens. The reason why Ihab was stopped and harassed at the checkpoint has to do with the context of securitization in Lebanon which renders working-class and non-citizen men/boys more vulnerable to regulation and surveillance by security forces.

Since 2015, following the developments in Syria, and the subsequent rise of Daesh,[11] the Lebanese state has galvanized its stake in the global 'war on terror' by fuelling domestic discourse on the so-called 'refugee crisis' as a way to buttress its security apparatus and impose security measures on refugees (Chamas 2023). Laying claim to a nationalist Lebanese home and scapegoating the failure of the Lebanese state, the discourse of vilification of refugees intensified (Allouche 2017). This has led to an increase in securitization which took shape in the form of police, military and paramilitary raids, harassment, arrest, and checkpoints that target not only refugees, but also trans individuals, migrants, homeless persons, and drug users (Mikdashi 2022). It is important to note here that the sweeps against LGBT spaces happened alongside raids on working-class and refugee-populated areas throughout the country (Chamas 2023). Moreover, the crackdowns on LGBT spaces themselves took place in neighbourhoods where refugees, migrant workers, working-class Lebanese lived together.

Adding to this, Moussawi (2020) noted that in contrast to the case of Ghost, 'gender-nonnormative white men from the West and male tourists from the Arab Gulf are not harassed in the same manner because of their privileged class positions' (Moussawi 2020: 70). Ghost was a Beirut-based gay nightclub raided in 2013 by the Lebanese security forces, which resulted in the detention of Syrian men and a Lebanese gender non-conforming individual. This event occurred amidst a period of intensified crackdowns conducted by security forces on LGBT spaces throughout Lebanon with Syrians and working-class Lebanese individuals being disproportionally affected. These raids articulate the securitization of refugee, working-class and queer life (Mikdashi 2022: 156). The state conducted these violent raids on LGBT spaces in a context of increased xenophobia and classism, accusing people of practicing 'unnatural sex' or 'violating public morality', thus disciplining the dangers and desires of racialized and classed populations (Mikdashi 2022: 156). Here the instrument of *fadh* was weaponized by the state to discipline subjects who deviate from heteronormativity or from the norms of proper masculinity and femininity which are mutually constituted through other axes of social difference like citizenship and middle-classness. It is within this deeply classed, gendered, and racialized context of state-securitization that transmasculine refugees like Ihab are forced to live in Lebanon.

Ihab's experience echoes similar stories I heard from transmasculine refugees harassed at checkpoints by security officers, scolded for being refugees and gender deviants. Indeed, in Lebanon, queer people's mobility experiences in public space are shaped by the militarization of everyday life wherein the workings of security and state power are interwoven with class, sect,[12] and citizenship, as well as gender (Merabet 2014; Monroe 2016; Moussawi 2020). The ability to pass through security blockades is dependent on one's class presentation, 'which emerges from visible markers of class such as clothing, hairstyle, grooming, and means of transportation, along with behavioral disposition and accent or language' (Monroe 2016: 12). Subjects who do not have the visible markers of Lebanese middle-classness, including working-class men, as well as Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian refugees get profiled along classed, gendered and raced lines, as they receive 'extra scrutiny by the state police and armed forces as they move around the city' (Monroe 2016: 73). Similarly, Moussawi (2020) talks about how one of his informants, a Lebanese working-class bigender/gender-variant person, who has performed a mastectomy and who drives a scooter and as a result gets read as a working-class man in Beirut, leads her/him to be regularly stopped at checkpoints (78). Thus, Ihab's inability to pass through the checkpoint reminds us here that having spatial mobility in the city of Beirut is indeed a feature of Lebanese middle-class disposition and lifestyle (Monroe 2016: 73).

As many of my interlocuters have expressed to me, it is indeed their *perceived* identity that is at first being surveilled as they cross checkpoints. This finding stands in contrast to much research that has been conducted within trans studies that has studied the trans category through the lens of identification. It corroborates the argument presented by trans studies scholar Toby Beauchamp who suggests that 'surveillance of gender-nonconforming people centers less on their identification as transgender per se than it does on the perceived deception underlying transgressive gender presentation' (Beauchamp 2019: 9). Beauchamp has thus shown that,

bodies, identities, and behaviors may be read as gender deviant in relation to perceived or actual racial identity, religious affiliation, nationality and citizenship status, class status, disability, or sexuality. (Beauchamp 2019: 7)

Yet, Ihab's story cannot be captured simply based on how Beauchamp conceptualizes the securitization of trans bodies highlighted above. That's because, although the initial interception in the example above was directed at Ihab's *perceived* working-class and non-citizen masculinity with the intention of surveilling it, the reaction of the security forces and their subsequent humiliation, was provoked by his deviant womanhood following the revelation of *fadh*, or his exposure as a girl who had gone against her parents' wishes. This experience which Ihab himself referred to as *etbahdal*, was one of public scandalization and humiliation. Importantly, and adding to this form of shameful outing, the police tore down his UN refugee card, illustrating that refugee-ness, gender deviance and enforced womanhood are deeply intertwined.

The story of Ihab's experience of *fadh* as a transmasculine refugee is inextricably linked to his outing as 'a runaway', and a 'girl who [fled] from her parents' [house]'; neither perceived masculinity nor perceived working-classness nor refugee-ness can capture the complexity of his social existence under surveillance systems of *fadh*. This is how enforced womanhood on trans men works. Ihab was generally seen and treated as a girl who should be brought back to her family, ostensibly based on the belief that a girl doesn't belong in the public realm but rather in the familial domestic sphere. He himself named this experience *fadiha* (scandal). In order to understand more deeply the relationship of *fadh* to transmasculine bodies in securitized spaces which frames the conditions under which Ihab was perceived as a girl who ran away from her parents, let us turn to the question of the familial sphere vis-à-vis gendered violence and women's sexuality as well as the debates surrounding them. To this end, I will take a brief detour in the following section, away from the specific context of Lebanon.

Fadiha and *Sharaf* (Family Honour)

When the term *fadh* was evoked by my interlocuters during our conversations, it was done to signal how the lives of trans men and women were regulated not only by the state, but also by the patriarchal family (including the extended family). This was evident in my conversations with Ihab. In the Gulf state where he grew up, Ihab's parents kept transferring him to different schools whenever he was outed as trans, due to their fear of social retribution. This caused him to do poorly in school and fail to achieve higher education, despite coming from a family where almost everyone had university degrees and placed emphasis on education as a strategy for resisting the Israeli occupation. From the age of 17 to 21, he was not allowed to leave the house, and had a *Wali* (Islamic legal guardian) who would report him to the police if he chose to do so. After fleeing to Jordan and getting severely beaten for supporting a trans friend, Ihab travelled to Lebanon to apply for asylum in Beirut. Ihab relayed stories of his transmasculine acquaintances who were forced by their families to marry and be confined in the family home as women. He also highlighted how (middle-class) trans men in the MENA regions are not able to travel or study abroad in the West—given their confinement to the family home and subjection to female seclusion—and potentially submit an asylum application, unlike some of his middle-class gay men or transfeminine peers.

When Ihab and I discussed the meaning of home and belonging to him, he said that those who diverge from what is normal and what is expected of them in society are often ostracized, just like him. When I inquired if this was because he was trans, he replied:

> Because of many things that are not related to being trans, because let's be real… what is a 'trans man'? It's someone whose birth certificate says *bint* (girl). In my context, being a girl translates to 'there is no going out of the house' (*tlou' mnel beit*), 'we have to know where she is', and 'if she loses her virginity, then 'goodbye'… it's does it matter that the group I associate myself with is men, or what I say about myself. They see a girl that stepped out of her parents' house (*tol'-et*)… fled and… who Allah knows where she is, what she is doing, what happened to her… and

with whom she is sleeping. *Sharaf* (honour) means that whatever I say, if I say I am a man, but the framework/gaze (*el-nazra*) that defines me? A girl.

This quote lays bare the power of the institution of the family and the conditions for violence against trans men in numerous ways. First, Ihab is invoking the form of authority held by the familial order that subordinates women to the domestic sphere of the house, thereby inscribing the boundary of the public and private, and valuing the family over the individual (Joseph 1999). Sheltering is a materialization of the 'ideal of female seclusion', a particularly middle-class ideal that aims at preventing casual interactions between men and women, and protecting women's social and moral position in society, as well as their family reputation, sexual honour and marriage prospects (Hammad 2017: 378).

The reaction of Ihab's middle-class family to his gender variance is a result of the seepage of the 'private' into the public sphere and the moral calamities it produces. Ihab speaks and brings to forth the invisible violence of normativity, middle-class ideals of respectability, female seclusion and family honour on gender-variant subjects and on women in particular. He traces the meaning and the practice of negotiating the boundaries of public and private realm because the concern of the family is the public avowal of the *fadiha* (scandal) as the honour of the family must be safeguarded. As invoked by Ihab, speaking the language of sovereignty—attesting to his masculinity—was not possible for him because he is coded as a 'girl' in the eyes of the family and the state, a girl whose honour must be protected. Displacing the expectations of kinship, entering into the realm of the public and achieving political recognition as a non-woman remains inaccessible to a subject who is coded as 'a girl.'

Here I would like to point out that, in his emphasis on how being 'a girl' socially and legally crafts the gendered arrangements of transmasculinity, Ihab disarticulates his experience from the hegemonic project of transness and its associated transphobia, and articulates it within discourses of gendered violence, honour codes and unruly womanhood. In this sense, gender/sexual non-normativity in the case of trans men is better addressed through the lens of construed female misbehaviour and dissident womanhood, which Ihab talks about. This intricacy cannot be accurately captured by a simplistic notion of 'transphobia'. While the optics of gendered violence, misogyny and honour may seem to suggest a kind of congealing of the category 'trans man'/the transmasculine subject into a so-called womanhood in an essentialist and TERF-y[13] manner, the point I am making in this article is different. Ihab illuminates the importance of defying transgender essentialism, which is the tendency to locate transness through an assumed boundary between sexual and gender identity, or between homosexuality and gender variance. Transgender essentialism conceals the affinities and the tacit overlaps between lesbianism/butchness/female masculinity on the one hand, and transmasculinity on the other hand (Chiang 2021: 41; Galarte 2021: 105), which ultimately denaturalizes 'the transgender-cisgender divide' (Valentine 2007; Saleh 2020; Chiang 2021: 209).

Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to another dimension which is revealed when we consider the notion of *fadh* through discourse on family honour. Ihab not only congeals the gendered contours of transmasculinity in the territory of defiant womanhood, but also at the site of colonial violence:

My belonging to [my Palestinian family] could get me killed because I am a girl that stepped out (*tol'et*[14]). If I say I'm Palestinian they will ask me 'you are the son of whom? From which town specifically?' In Palestine people are identified by their last names, and the town they come from... people keep track of who married whom ... who gave birth to how many children and daughters... That's because of what happened to Palestinians... the [Israeli] occupation... [Palestinians] don't trust anyone and they memorize names.... If I were to return home, a man in the family may choose to protect the family honour... and kill me.

In his quote above, Ihab invokes the Palestinian-ness of those forms of familial violent intimacies that are embedded in the history of occupation of Palestine. In Ihab's narrative, issues of

women's oppression in Palestinian society are not to be occluded but simultaneously are not taken at face value nor established uncritically as a foundation to explain honour killings.

The question of honour as a defining feature of female subjectivity and gender violence in Muslim-majority societies has been widely discussed and complicated by scholars. Several scholars have argued that the seductive power of the honour crime has emerged in the attribution of gender violence to timeless cultures and the patriarchal morality of the Muslim world (Koğacıoğlu 2004; Abu-Lughod 2011; Savcı 2021). In the context of Palestine, Nahla Abdo analysed the political and social dynamics that enable honour killings among Palestinians by addressing the relationship between honour crimes, Israeli colonialism and violence against Palestinians (Abdo 2004). Israeli colonial policies of expropriation of Palestinian land, which has displaced 80% of the Palestinian population from their historic land, has affected the Palestinian familial form in ways that were not present in previous colonial rule (Abdo 2011: 29). To exert control socially and politically, and despite its claim of bringing the 'civilizing mission' to backward Palestinians, Israeli policy has directly intervened to buttress the patriarchal institution of the *mukhtars* (the heads of the village), the *sheikhs* (the heads of extended families) and traditional leaders, for example by putting runaway women escaping domestic violence under the custody of *sheikhs*, who would return these women to the same families they are fleeing from (Hasan 2002: 21; Abdo 2011: 29). Israel's policies have thus reshaped the institution of the Palestinian family and increased women's exploitation and dependence on their male family members. Israeli state structures and policies have also contributed to the production of family-planning discourses amongst Palestinians, discourses that have in turn configured Palestinian nationalist pronatalism (Kanaaneh 2002: 106).

Ihab reminds us how Israeli policies have moulded Palestinian nationalism that is obsessed with family-planning, heteronormative kinship structures, and construction of memory. He prompts us to understand that honour should be analysed through family status laws and the relationship of kinship to the state (Joseph 1994; Zengin 2019) without disposing of the concept of honour altogether which helps us in recognizing honour as an overarching structure regulated by public morality (Parla 2020).

Next, I look at the regulation of (trans)masculinity, especially in its classed and racialized dimensions, and I subsequently explore the strategies through which my informants navigate the threat of *fadh* in Lebanon.

Racialized/Classed (Trans)Masculinity and Navigating *Fadh*

Ahmed is a Kurdish-Iraqi post-op transmasculine refugee in Lebanon with a working-class family background. He previously worked as a baker with his family in Iraqi-Kurdistan. Although Ahmed was not allowed to complete his schooling, it was not his parents or siblings who forced him leave, but rather, the men in the *achira* (kinship-based community) he belonged to. His parents were supportive and helpful when it came to his transition. However, after their deaths, the larger *achira* began assaulting him and pushing him to de-transition. His siblings were not able to successfully confront the *achira* over this, but nonetheless helped him escape Iraqi-Kurdistan.

I was introduced to Ahmed through Charbel, who is a transmasculine refugee from Egypt residing in Lebanon with his transfeminine partner Hoor, also from Egypt, both who are seeking asylum. After hearing that Ahmed was facing threats at home, Charbel and Hoor advised him to come to Lebanon, where they could provide him with shelter—an obstacle often difficult for refugees to overcome in Lebanon. When I went to pick up Ahmed from the Beirut airport, he had fully feminized himself. I took him to my apartment in Beirut so he could change his clothes before heading over to Charbel and Hoor's house. In order to pass through airport security in Beirut, Ahmed had no option but to feminize himself so he looked like the female figure on his ID card. He wore makeup, a hijab, a stuffed bra, and trained for months to feminize his post-Testosterone masculine voice. He had even planned what he would say if he was questioned by Lebanese

security officers—that he was coming to Lebanon for a procedure to femininize his deep vocal cords, so they were consistent with his female gender. These are strategies of disguise adopted by gender deviant subjects like Ahmed while travelling through public space and airport security checks. Despite illustrating the anxious experience of having to navigate the threat of *fadh* and the overall lack of bodily sovereignty, Ahmed was successful in disguising himself as a hijabi woman and passing through the airport checkpoints and border controls. However, what happens when disguises fail and gender deviance is no longer concealed? How does *fadh* operate in the regulation of transmasculine passing? In order to unpack these formulations, I turn to the analysis of the regulation of proper masculine subjects in social space.

Masculinity

Scholars in feminist studies have produced a theory of 'patriarchal masculinity' (hooks 2004), or 'hegemonic masculinity', that divorces maleness from masculinity and from the dominator model under the political-social system of patriarchy, and presumes 'the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846) based on 'the interplay of gender dynamics with race, class and region' (839), thus underlining the importance of class and race for the construction of masculinity. For instance, hooks (2004) explains that in contrast to working-class women who are often aware of the pains of the men in their lives, middle or upper-class women 'perpetuated the notion that men are all-powerful, because often the men in their families *were* powerful' (90).

Recent work in masculinity studies in the Middle East have shown the dynamism and the embodied changes in Middle Eastern manhood (Joseph 1997; Inhorn 2012) and have looked into 'the cultural and social formation of masculinities within national(ist) projects and class formations, popular religiosities and insurgent cultures' and have studied them through the incitement of discourses of 'secularizing, Western influences and impositions' (Amar 2011: 43–44). For example, in her article 'Can Palestinian men be victims? Gendering Israel's war on Gaza', Mikdashi (2014) draws on the trope 'womenandchildren' and applies it in the context of Palestine to think through '[t]he massifying of women and children into an undistinguishable group... and the reproduction of the male Palestinian body (and the male Arab body more generally) as always already dangerous'. What differentiates Palestinian womenandchildren from Palestinian men is 'the circulation of [their] corpses within dominant and mainstream discursive frames that determine who can be publicly mourned as 'victims' of Israel's war machine'. This is a perception of racialized/classed men as already suspicious, as holding the potential for violence. It is reminiscent of the distinction between manliness and masculinity, the first of which was generally attributed to property-owning civilized middle- or upper-class white men, and the second of which was commonly interpellated as a trope of sexual excess, marked by poverty, criminality, race and coloniality (Amar 2011: 45).

This notion of classed and raced masculinity developed by feminist and Middle East scholars, however, rests on studies done exclusively on cisgender masculinity. My findings in this article similarly attest that masculinity, specifically in the case of refugee transmasculinity, is shaped by class and citizenship (a racialized marker in Lebanon). Yet, my research pushes the conversation forward in a new direction by shifting the attention towards how masculine subjects are regulated by systems of family honour and *fadh* directed at cisgender women and gender deviant subjects, aspects that have hitherto been overlooked in the literature due to a lack of research on trans men in the MENA region, as well as globally.

Recent studies on transmasculinity and butchness that have looked at the 'female masculinities' of butch lesbians, tomboys and drag kings in the US (Halberstam 1998) and the 'contingent masculinities' of tombois in Indonesia (Blackwood 2009) have produced a theory of masculinity that detaches men from masculinity and which conceives of the transgressive potentials of masculinity when it is detached from the white heterosexual male body. For Blackwood (2009), tomboi masculinity 'takes into account the culturally dictated positioning attached to female bodies and the material effects of that positioning' (474). My findings agree with Blackwood's approach

to masculinity as contingent. Her conceptualization emphasizes everyday social interactions and cultural embedding in the production of tomboi masculinity, a form of masculinity that upholds kin relations and performs versions of femininity and proper womanhood, which are typically imposed by the family. Although my findings are similar to those of Blackwood, the majority of my interlocuters did not receive acceptance from their families or extended relatives. Additionally, and in distinction to Blackwood and Halberstam's works and the larger body of scholarship on transmasculinity, my research points to the primacy of class, citizenship, and state securitization in the regulation of transmasculine bodies.

My findings on the intersection of class and transmasculinity align with Savcı's (2021) conclusions in her ethnography of a lesbian club in Istanbul where she demonstrated how queer activists critiqued behaviours by trans men and butches that were markers of working-class and uncivilized masculinities and cultural practices of manhood (115). These inappropriate behaviours included 'carrying *tesbih* (worry beads), which are seen as markers of unsophisticated, rural, and sometimes religious masculinity, carrying cigarette packs in their socks, or acting like *kamyoncu* (truckers) [and] frequent fighting' (2021: 115), as well as 'their lack of cultural capital regarding current theories of gender and sexuality' (2021: 115–116).

Fadh and Racialized/Classed Transmasculinity in Lebanon

Having traced (trans)masculinity in different scholarly works and shown how my sites of engagement and conceptualizations are both resonant and distinct, I now return to the context of Lebanon through the stories related by my interviewees to more clearly show the raced and classed domains of masculinity in relation to *fadh*, before finally inspecting the practices of passing.

Refugees in Lebanon are excluded from social, political, and economic life and are likewise subject to exploitative labour policies and practices, which impose restrictions on the legal rights of Palestinians and Syrians, including prohibitions from owning property, from working in thirty-nine different professions, and from accessing state-provided social services such as healthcare and education (Qubaiová 2019). Furthermore, Lebanon does not recognize UNHCR refugee status, so in addition to having limited access to jobs, healthcare, and housing, refugees are exposed daily to the threat of incarceration and summary deportation without the legal residency[15] status granted by the Lebanese state. Although having legal residency or national identification is important, such documentation is not always the only requirement to attain housing. For instance, Ahmed was unable to use his Iraqi ID due to it containing a picture of a hijabi woman.

Yet in other cases, having an identification document with a photo congruent with one's current gender markers and physical appearance is not the most important requirement. Simply being Syrian or Palestinian or Iraqi (regardless of one's residency status) can be an obstacle to finding housing. As was the case of two Syrian transgender women acquaintances of mine who sought refuge with and were welcomed by, a Christian Lebanese family who were willing to host them both in their vacant house in Beirut knowing that both were trans until they found out that their guests were Syrian; upon discovering my acquaintances' nationality, the family refused to provide them accommodation. One way to read this story, which epitomizes anti-refugee and anti-Syrian racism, is through identifying and considering the anxieties of Christian populations in Lebanon, who experienced the hyper-securitization of their communities under the tutelage of the Syrian regime,[16] as well as a more generalized fear around the potential naturalization of the Palestinian and more recently arrived Syrian refugee populations, which has always been grounded in demographic fears constitutive of Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system and has likewise been shaped by xenophobia, classism and racism (Mikdashi 2022: 35–36), fears that can be ascribed to the 'great replacement theory[17]'.

When I interviewed Ahmed about his experience with housing in Lebanon, he recalled an incident that had occurred a few months earlier:

I was staying at my friend's place, as you know, I arrived here without any money... the UN wasn't providing me with cash assistance. Then, when the landlord found out, he got into a fight with my friend... he asked 'how could a stranger live with you?' he had indecent ideas, because I am Iraqi, 'you are married and your wife is with you, what is this guy here doing with you?'

Ahmed was expelled from his friends' house after the landlord became aware of his Iraqi nationality and the fact that he was residing with a married Egyptian couple, which prompted the landlord to presume Ahmed was engaging in indecent sexual practices. This exemplifies how moralizing discourse is employed to regulate working-class racialized/migrant masculinities (Amar 2013), as well as to (re)centralize the conjugal family unit. After this occurrence, Ahmed faced challenges in finding housing with another landlord, as he recounts:

One time I gave [the landlord] my ID, he said 'I want your ID what is this?!', 'brother, it's my ID, I am telling you I am like this [implying that his gender is not what is written on his ID]'. He gave me back the ID and said 'get out of here before I get you General Security'. He thought I was a terrorist... you know a Iraqi man without an ID with nothing to prove himself.

Ahmed found housing and moved into a room he shared with someone he met on the street. He said of another incident:

After a couple of months, I don't know how he saw my papers, possibly he looked through my possessions while I was in the shower... he sexually harassed me, unaware that I had undergone surgeries... I defended myself in a physical fight, but I'm a stranger here, and I can't prove my identity, if the issue escalated or the occupants in the building heard of it, I would be the one held responsible, the one who will *bonfadah*[18] (scandalized)

Ahmed believes that the assailant had seen the female identification which he was attempting to conceal. This incident illustrates *fadh*—in the exposure or scandal evoked by Ahmed saying *bonfadah*—as well as the lack of privacy and encroachment on private belongings (Beauchamp 2019) that many working-class trans men are subjected to. This incident is also evocative of how assault, violence, and hate crime should be rethought through

the logic of distribution of uneven life chances by neoliberal capitalism, the state, and what [Savcı] refer[s] to as deep citizens, who [Savcı] define[s] as civilians who distribute violence following what they understand to be state ideologies. (Savcı 2021: 81)

Furthermore, and as Ayşe Parla suggests, because migrant women are 'both culturally and legally outsiders... as "foreigners" their honour is always already suspect and as undocumented they have virtually no legal protection' (Parla 2020: 94). Ahmed was coded as a migrant woman when he was outed; his 'undocumented and "foreign" status contribute added layers of vulnerability, increasing the likelihood of sexual violence and the likelihood of impunity for the perpetrators' (Parla 2020: 94).

Similarly, Ihab was afraid of becoming pregnant if he were to be raped while living on the street, further emphasizing the physicality of female embodiment in the construction of transmasculinity. He also recounted how he dealt with menstruation as a homeless trans man:

I used to walk 3-4 hours per night... I walked to the places that were open 24/24 particularly if I had my period, I knew where their bathrooms were, where they put the Kleenex, which I could grab and turn into pads.

Echoing Ihab, a Syrian post-op trans man informed me that he was once stopped by the security forces in Beirut who bullied him for having pads in his pockets. In fact, he was menstruating because he was not able to purchase testosterone after leaving Syria, which caused him to bleed again, a story I heard among several precarious trans men. With such references to

menstruation is evidence of how my interlocuters' transmasculinity is often defined by the physicality of their female embodiment. Navigating the weight of menstruation and femaleness, in combination with poverty, is constitutive to the experience of transmasculine refugees. This offers a counternarrative to what is (at the surface) understood as transmasculine embodiment. Through this lens of imposed womanhood—imposed female embodiment in conjunction with the threat of *fadh* directed at raced/classed (trans)masculine bodies—it becomes starkly clear how complicity with hegemonic masculinity (or lack thereof) as conceptualized in scholarly works on transmasculinity (Rubin 2003; Aboim 2016; Saeidzadeh 2020; monakali and Francis 2022) is not the sole nor primary actor which reinscribes sex and gender onto the transmasculine body. Moving beyond the frameworks of complicity with hegemonic masculinity in this way allows us to disrupt the logics that have defined the contours of transmasculinity in recent scholarship as well as within popular debates in queer and feminist activist spaces, some of which have attacked trans men by accusing them of benefiting from the patriarchal dividend and consolidating/deploying their newly acquired male privilege. Such accusations are dangerous as they generally disavow the complicity of the state and the family apparatus in regulating the lives of trans men through gendered violence, they pit trans men and trans women against each other in a hierarchy of oppression, and they function to reproduce a liberal second wave feminist tendency that fails to attend adequately to the material conditions under which transmasculine (and all other) subjects live.

Navigating *Fadh*, Strategies for Passing: Lebanese Middle-Class Boyhood Masculinity

When Ihab fled to Lebanon, he spent some time homeless living on the streets of Beirut. He explained it was important for him to maintain a respectable physical appearance for his safety/invisibility:

> The most important thing is to keep walking at night, if I stay in one place, an asshole or a security officer could hurt me.

> You were able to sleep?

> No, I waited till the morning. You will laugh at me, but I had a backpack with a coloring book and colors and a 2L water bottle and I looked like a young adolescent boy … rarely any security forces would approach someone who is coloring. If they do come, they would say 'you're coloring!' and they would laugh and leave. This was a way to protect myself… People would see me taken away by the act of coloring and they would just leave me alone. Another important thing, I had to look physically presentable, because when you look like you've been sleeping on the street, they will intercept you, so I knew places or friends' or [sex work] clients' houses to use for showering… When you look *mrattab* (decent/respectable), rarely any security forces would intercept you… If you look *mbahdal* (disrespectable) and clearly tired, they will know that you're homeless and that no one will check on you, that's when they arrest you.

Many trans men, especially pre-Testosterone[19] trans men, pass as younger boys—something that I have experienced in Beirut as a Lebanese transmasculine person in my mid-thirties, particularly when wearing a backpack. As well, having access to some form of bathing was essential for Ihab, even if they were accomplished by showering with the bottle of water and soap he carried with him everywhere. Cleaning himself and presenting as a *mrattab* housed non-working-class schoolboy enabled him to avoid suspicion and subsequent arrest due to his incongruent gender markers and lack of legal residence in Lebanon, wherein such arrests are common practice by the state security apparatus. As Ihab noted, it is being *mbahdal* (vulgar) that will expose trans men. Ihab, similarly to many refugees in Lebanon, tried to speak with a Lebanese accent as much as possible, although he did not always succeed. Adapting this way of speaking is why he has tried to surround himself with Lebanese friends when crossing checkpoints or more heavily securitized locations. Additionally, as Ihab and other transmasculine people (including myself)

have experienced, trans men are sometimes read as feminine boys or transgender women if they do not have facial hair or are not physically bulky, placing them in a different category of gendered surveillance which can likewise lead to further risks of violence.

Performances of respectability are often done by working-class individuals through investments in bodily signifiers and behaviours that indicate middle-class belonging (Skeggs 1997). With these insights on the politics of visibility and gender passing in Beirut, I read transmasculine practices of 'respectable passing' as practices that enact the dialectic of disguise and surveillance (Mourad 2016: 161) in their classed, racialized and gendered dimensions, to circumvent the possibility of being outed as a transmasculine refugee. The figure of the non-citizen working-class racialized man (including Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Sudanese, or migrant men) in Lebanon is already seen as exceeding the borderlines of proper masculinity. This means that passing as a man, and possibly as a working-class man, does bring in more scrutiny. That's why Ihab used to carry a colouring book to sleep on restaurants' tables, carrying this book is a move away from racialized adult masculinity. Camouflaging as a teenager boy, and more precisely as a middle-class teenager boy, and if possible as Lebanese, functions to protect Ihab against possible interrogations.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown that transmasculine refugee-ness allows us to more adequately explore the complexity of (trans)masculinity and trans maleness beyond the framework of complicity with hegemonic masculinity. This analysis and reframing pushes us towards the realization that female or male appearance *and* socialization are always mediated by class and citizenship, by the state, and by the family. As well, this article has attended to the regulation of (trans)masculinity through an analytic that captures classed and racialized embodiments and *perceived* identities rather than simply identities/identifications (Beauchamp 2019).

The stories of trans men above go further than showing how *perceived* identities operate: they illustrate how the institution of the family operates in tandem with the modern state and has a pivotal role in regulating the body and maintaining the norms of heterosexuality (El-Ariss 2013; Zengin 2019). I have shown how my interlocuters demand an analytic that properly addresses family honour and *fadh* as enforced upon female and transmasculine bodies in the context of both Lebanon and their communities of origin. The concept of honour, as Parla (2020) suggests and as my interlocuters appear to understand it, is not necessarily colluding with forms of cultural essentialism that instrumentalize honour for harmful ends. Rather, my claim here is that there are ways to tell and understand stories of trans or queer subjects, including those of my interlocuters, 'that do not rely on frameworks of honor killing [and] outness... and that do not rely on alleged alternatives that end up reifying custom, tradition, locality, and cultural authenticity' (Savcı 2021: 79).

Gendered honour, imposed womanhood, class respectability, and refugee-ness are inextricably linked and they are enforced through the instrument of *fadh*—the threat of being exposed. While in this article I limited my investigation and analysis to transmasculine subjects, both my claims and my analytic extend beyond identitarian belonging or the formal categories of queer/trans individuality, pushing towards an untangling of the concept of masculinity and, more generally, of the systems of gender sustained and propagated under state surveillance and morality regimes.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Middle East and North Africa.
2. In Arabic grammar, the word *fadh* (exposure, shameful outing) is a verbal noun, a noun that has the power of a verb (El-Ariss 2018: 70). *Fadh* is premised on the notions of *Ayb* and *Sharaf*. *Ayb*, the word for shame in Arabic, is closely linked to fadh (exposure/scandal), since fadh implies an exposure or an outing of something disgraceful or shameful. *Sharaf* (honour) is about the preservation of sexual and gender codes and the protection of what is morally sacred and the renunciation of what is profane; all which revolve on preventing a scene of *fadh* that could lead to a shameful exposure.
3. Syrians and Palestinians are currently the largest groups that constitute the refugee population in Lebanon. While Palestinians fled to Lebanon following their ethnic cleansing from Palestine during the Nakba (the Catastrophe) of 1948, Iraqis fled the Gulf wars in the early 1990s and during the American-led invasion of Iraq in the early 2000s, and most recently, Syrians fled after the 2011 Syrian uprising which devolved into an ongoing civil war.
4. Importantly, gender variance, gender nonconformity, and transness have a long history in the Middle East (Zengin, 2022). Najmabadi's (2014) historical research on gender norms and transgressions in Iran has shown that women living masculine lives in Tehran in the mid-twentieth century were perceived as women who had failed to accomplish the modern marriage ideal, which has led them into the path of living as men (123). Other societal explanations to their choice of living as men were associated to economic destitution under patriarchy and the inhospitality of many professions to women (123). Najmabadi explains that 'To really get out of the marriage imperative, a woman would have to enact a surfeit of resistance; that is, a degree of over-performance of masculinity by a woman could let her off the hook, with the family giving up on her as a woman. This usually means losing familial protection; it means possibly being shunned and feeling forced to move away and to actually live as a man, to make a living as a man, and possibly to live in men's clothes' (2014: 124–125).
5. For more on Syrian transfeminine refugees, see Saleh (2020).
6. In reference to Hizballah.
7. In reference to the Lebanese Forces party and former militia.
8. In reference to the leader of the Lebanese Forces party.
9. In Arabic grammar, *fadiha* (scandal, scene) is the noun version of the verbal noun *fadh*. I use fadh and fadiha interchangeably.
10. A roundabout in Beirut.
11. ISIL (Islamic State in the Levant).
12. For more on sectarianism in Lebanon, see Mikdashi (2022).
13. In reference to Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists.
14. Interestingly, the term *tol'et* used by Ihab in both of the quotes above, which means stepped out in Arabic (conjugated in the feminine singular), comes from the same root word as *Tal'at* (stepping out conjugated in the feminine plural). *Tal'at* is the name of a grassroots Palestinian feminist movement that emerged in 2019 in response to the femicide of Israa Ghrayeb, a Palestinian woman from Bethlehem brutally killed by her family (Marshood and Alsanah 2020). *Tal'at* has brought attention to the relationship between Israeli settler-colonial policies and the buttressing of patriarchal kinship structures, thus articulating the multilayered colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal nature of gendered political violence in Palestine.
15. The vast majority of refugees in Lebanon do not have legal residency
16. From 1976 till 2005, which was the date when the last Syrian troop left Lebanon. It is important to note that these anxieties are not justified because Syrian refugees are fleeing from the Syrian regime.
17. Racist and xenophobic fears about being replaced demographically by non-white populations.

18. Another way to conjugate the verb *fadaha* from *fadh*.
19. Testosterone masculinizing hormone therapy is used by some trans men.

References

Abdo, D. N. (2011) *Women in Israel: Race, Gender and Citizenship*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Abdo, N. (2004) 'Honour Killing, Patriarchy, and the State'. In Mojab, S. and Abdo, N. (eds) *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges*. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi UP, pp. 57–90.

Aboim, S. (2016) 'Trans-Masculinities, Embodiments and the Materiality of Gender: Bridging the Gap'. *Norma* **11**(4): 225–236.

Abu-Lughod, L. (2011) 'Seductions of the "Honor Crime"'. *Differences* **22**(1): 17–63.

Allouche, S. (2017) '(Dis)-Intersecting Intersectionality in the Time of Queer Syrian Refugee-Ness in Lebanon'. *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* **3**(Summer): 59–77.

Amar, P. (2011) 'Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of 'Men in Crisis,' Industries of Gender in Revolution'. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* **7**(3): 36–70.

Amar, P. (2013) *The Security Archipelago*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Beauchamp, T. (2019) *Going Stealth*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Blackwood, E. (2009) 'Trans Identities and Contingent Masculinities: Being Tombois in Everyday Practice'. *Feminist Studies* **35**(3): 454–480.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The Forms of Capital'. In: Richardson, J. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CN: Greenwood, pp. 46–58.

Camminga, B. (2022) 'Competing Marginalities and Precarious Politics: A South African Case Study of NGO Representation of Transgender Refugees'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 1–18.

Chamas, S. (2023) 'Lil Watan: Queer Patriotism in Chauvinistic Lebanon'. *Sexualities* **26**(1–2): 230–251.

Chiang, H. (2021) *Transtopia in the Sinophone Pacific*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept'. *Gender & Society* **19**(6): 829–859.

Deeb, L. and Harb, M. (2013) *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'i South Beirut*. Princeton: University Press.

El-Ariss, T. (2013) *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political*. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press.

El-Ariss, T. (2018) *Leaks, Hacks, and Scandals*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Galarte, F. J. (2021) *Brown Trans Figurations: Rethinking Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Chicanx/Latinx Studies*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Hajjaji, D. (2020) 'Egyptian Actor's Support for Transgender Son Unveils a Long Road ahead for Arab Trans Rights', *The New Arab*, 19 May. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/egyptian-actor-supports-trans-son-activists-see-timid-step. Date accessed 16 November 2023.

Halberstam, J. (1998) *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hammad, H. (2017) 'Disreputable by Definition: Respectability and Theft by Poor Women in Urban Interwar Egypt'. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* **13**(3): 376–394.

Hasan, M. (2002) 'The Politics of Honor: Patriarchy, the State and the Murder of Women in the Name of Family Honor'. *Journal of Israeli History* **21**(1–2): 1–37.

hooks, b. (2004) *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*. New York: Atria Books.

Inhorn, M. C. (2012) *The New Arab Man*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Joseph, S. (1994) 'Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon'. *American Ethnologist*. **21**(1): 50–73.

Joseph, S. (1997) 'The Public/Private–the Imagined Boundary in the Imagined Nation/State/Community: The Lebanese Case'. *Feminist Review*. **57**(1): 73–92.

Joseph, S. (1999) 'Introduction. Theories and Dynamics of Gender, Self, and Identity in Arab Families'. In: Joseph, S. (ed) *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, pp. 1–18.

Kanaaneh, R. A. (2002) *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press.

Koğacıoğlu, D. (2004) 'The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey'. *Differences* **15**(2): 118–151.

Marshood, H. and Alsanah, R. (2020) 'Tal'at: a Feminist Movement that is Redefining Liberation and Reimagining Palestine', *Mondoweiss*, 25 February. https://mondoweiss.net/2020/02/talat-a-feminist-movement-that-is-redefining-liberation-and-reimagining-palestine/. Date accessed 16 November 2023.

Merabet, S. (2014) *Queer Beirut*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Mikdashi, M. (2014) 'Can Palestinian Men be Victims? Gendering Israel's War on Gaza', *Jadaliyya*, 23 July. https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30991. Date accessed 16 November 2023.

Mikdashi, M. (2022) *Sextarianism: Sovereignty, Secularism, and the State in Lebanon*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mohamed, M. (2020) 'Matha Kont Taksoud Bilthabt Ya 'Am Hesham?' *Transat*. https://transatsite.com/2020/05/07/%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b0%d8%a7-%d9%83%d9%86%d8%aa-%d8%aa%d9%82%d8%b5%d8%af-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b6%d8%a8%d8%b7-%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%b9%d9%85-%d9%87%d8%b4%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%9f/. Date accessed 16 November 2023.

monakali, e. and Francis, D. A. (2022) '"I Get Fire Inside Me That Tells Me I'm Going to Defy": The Discursive Construction of Trans Masculinity in Cape Town, South Africa'. *Men and Masculinities* **25**(1): 3–23.

Monroe, K. V. (2016) *The Insecure City*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Mourad, S. (2016) 'The Boundaries of the Public: Mediating Sex in Postwar Lebanon'. PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania.

Moussawi, G. (2020) *Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Najmabadi, A. (2014) *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Parla, A. (2020) 'Revisiting 'Honor' through Migrant Vulnerabilities in Turkey'. *History and Anthropology* **31**(1): 84–104.

Qubaiová, A. (2019) 'Cross-Bracing Sexualities: Hedging "Queer"/Sexual Non-Normativity in Beirut'. PhD diss., Central European University.

Rubin, H. (2003) *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*. New York: Vanderbilt University Press.

Saeidzadeh, Z. (2020) '"Are Trans Men the Manliest of Men?" Gender Practices, Trans Masculinity and *Mardānegī* in Contemporary Iran'. *Journal of Gender Studies* **29**(3): 295–309.

Saleh, F. (2020) 'Transgender as a Humanitarian Category: The Case of Syrian Queer and Gender-Variant Refugees in Turkey'. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* **7**(1): 37–55.

Savcı, E. (2021) *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Valentine, D. (2007) *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Westphal-Hellbusch, S. (1997) 'Institutionalized Gender-Crossing in Southern Iraq'. In: Murray, S. and Roscoe, W. (eds) *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History and Literature*. New York, NY: New York University Press, pp. 233–243.

Zengin, A. (2022) 'Gender Nonconformity and Transness in the Middle East'. In: Joseph, S. and Zaatari, Z. (eds) *Routledge Handbook on Women in the Middle East*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 636–649.

Zengin, A. (2019) 'The Afterlife of Gender: Sovereignty, Intimacy and Muslim Funerals of Transgender People in Turkey'. *Cultural Anthropology* **34**(1): 78–102.