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Coloniality, Erasure, and the Muslim Hijabi's Lived Experiences:
Lebanon as a Case Study

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Submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of Sussex, UK

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been, and will not be, submitted, in the same or different form, for another degree at the University of Sussex or another university. I also hereby declare that no material of this thesis has already been submitted as part of required coursework, at any university.

Signature: _____

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is anything but my work. It is, first and foremost, that of my participants and it is to them that it is dedicated. Their time, their effort, their support, their shared experiences, their generosity, and their pertinent insights and analyses that made my job so much easier were only some of the boundless ways they have made all of this possible. It is to them, eventually, that I owe the deepest gratitude and debt. I must here, additionally, extend my thanks to all those who facilitated and aided my fieldwork, it would not have been possible without you.

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To the ultimate source of all of my blessings, to my father and my mother, to my family.

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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Coloniality, Erasure and the Muslim Hijabi's Lived Experiences: Lebanon as a Case Study

Abstract

This dissertation analytically engages with the lived experiences of Muslim hijabi women in Lebanon, a small Mediterranean post-colonial land, building on data collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups with photo-elicitation across the country's urban and rural geography with 88 participants during 2018. Visibilising their subalternised racialised experiences of anti-Muslim racism in the Arabic-speaking world, it pursues a theoretical contribution presenting a series of conceptualisations and specific processes of erasure for the analysis of the coloniality of being and the erasure of modernity's Others.

The second chapter, after the introduction, begins with an exploration of the westernised academy's scholarship around the hijab and the lived experiences of hijabis in both the Global North and the Global South to argue that the hijab is an object of Empire, colonialism, and coloniality and a powerful site from where modernity can be theorised. From there, the third chapter sets the dissertation's theoretical framework where the Latin American modernity/(de)coloniality collective's work and that of relevant post- and anti-colonial scholars are explored. The fourth chapter moves to methodology, presenting, and arguing for the research techniques adopted while discussing a series of ethical issues faced. The fifth chapter develops a backdrop for the analysis chapters through a reconstruction of Lebanon's history and a sketching of its current socio-political scene.

The sixth chapter, the first analysis chapter, then conceptualises the experiences of the hijabi as those of an 'Arabo-belated difference in excess'; a specific racialised 'social form' experienced, enforced, and set for dehumanising subjugation. The seventh chapter subsequently builds on this to present how this form is lived in material daily interaction across the four spheres of the domestic, the public, work, and the state. A series of micro-processes of coloniality's erasure are here conceptualised. Chapter eight then turns to the 'hijabi kaleidoscopic spectrum' to explore the power effects of the various forms of hijab

commonly present in Lebanon. In this respect, it analyses these power effects as a process of the hijab's dilution and explicates this dilution as a 'hollowing mummification' for erasure. Doing this, it re-interprets the emergence and spread of what are termed fashion and modern hijabs under racialised and racialising modernity. The ninth chapter then explores discourses of *difa* ' (defence) deployed by hijabi women and the colonality of this resistance, to close with a brief discussion around delinking and its (im)possibility. Here, participants' conceptualisation of the dress' agentive role towards an Islamic *telos* are engaged with, highlighting the loss ensuing from colonality's erasing movement. The last chapter concludes by summarising the key findings and contributions across academic fields and disciplines, and beyond academic fields and disciplines, in the pursuit of an anti-colonality liberation.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Shortly after the 2006 war in Lebanon, one of my aunts began wearing a hijab. In a family with little to no religious observance, and ex-Maoist tendencies, the decision stirred much controversy. My first personal encounter with the Islamic dress was henceforth that of a large dispute in an extended family which felt harmed and scandalised by one of its member's decision to dress Islamically.¹ In 2010, I enrolled at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and, during my first week, met a hijabi to begin what was to be one of my undergraduate years' closest friendships. Having come from a Catholic missionary school, she was to become my first hijabi friend, ever. A relationship that brought forth many hitherto unknown realisations about a Lebanese Islamic lifestyle, it was also a friendship that birthed tensions and distaste among my (mostly Christian) circle of friends. As the years went by, my engagement with the hijab largely remained minimal as I, nevertheless, became increasingly acquainted with the dress as an identitarian object within and beyond religion and as a political being across social divides.

In 2015, as I began my graduate studies at AUB, I was enthusiastic to hear of a seminar titled 'The Politics of the Veil' in the Sociology department. Interested and intrigued, I enrolled in the class which offered an excellent review of the academic literature on the Islamic dress. By the end of the semester, I had come to realise the dissonance between the multiple assumptions and narratives underwriting the literature and what I had come to learn of the hijab and the hijabi experience. At the time, I was particularly taken by the literature's unsatisfactory engagement with, and analysis of, the political role and meanings of the hijab and its life in my own complex conflict-ridden country. Two years later, as I was considering PhD proposals, the hijab appeared to be a prime candidate for a critical contribution complexifying the distinction between the religious and the political and re-examining the theorisation of Islamic rituals' relationship to categories such as political activism, citizenship, and political behaviour. Indeed, conscious that no systematic study of the hijab in Lebanon had yet been conducted, and aware of the literature's many Eurocentric assumptions and failures, I developed a proposal focusing on the formation of political subjectivities through Islamic bodily ritual under complex multi-party 'confessional democratic systems'. As the project began and developed, I became increasingly intrigued by the presence of the hijab, and specific forms of it, as a

¹ My use of the terms Islamic and Muslim, and the distinction between them, is mainly guided by the way they are used in Lebanese Arabic.

marker of complex politico-religious identities and, most captivatingly, means of agentively developing one's own political identification and subjectivity. Seeking to analyse the emergence of the hijab as a visible Islamic symbol in Lebanese politics and the role this presence plays in developing the wearer's political subjectivity, the project sought to theorise the formation of varying emerging forms of political subjectivity within the Arabic-speaking world. In this respect, it revolved around the following research questions:

- 1- Does the Islamic hijab enter into the formation of the Lebanese Muslim wearer as a specific kind of political subject, and if so, how does it do so?
- 2- What are the constitutive features of this emerging political subjectivity?
- 3- Is there a relationship between the veil's political agency, the rise of political Islam in Lebanon and the resurgence of the dress under a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multiparty and somewhat modernized confessional democracy?

This dissertation resembles that project very little. In May 2018, having conducted a literature review around Islamic dress, gone through an internal annual review process, and secured ethical approval and fieldwork permission, I began data collection in Beirut. Within the first two weeks, I realised that my concerns and interests did not align with those of my participants as a significant discord plagued my interviews. As I asked about political parties and political participation, my hijabi participants recounted experiences of exclusion and marginalisation. As I asked about the Lebanese state and political behaviour, my participants explained the dissonance between the imagined ideal Lebanese woman and their suspect identity. As I collected data, I became increasingly aware of something I had been most oblivious to until then; a deep wound that imbued my participants' world and tyrannised their being while it remained unrecorded, unacknowledged, and unaddressed in both academic and non-academic circles. Indeed, putting aside some cries on social media and the occasional newspaper article, I appeared to be recognising a largely invisible(ised) predicament. The project needed to reframe its question, and to meet the needs of those whom it needed. Hence this dissertation.

In this introduction, I will begin by presenting this dissertation's research question as I explore some key issues ahead of the coming chapters. Then, I will briefly present the aim, discuss the intended contributions and explain the perceived value of this work. In doing this, I will attempt to signal the work's positioning within larger academic fields

and debates, as I explicitly delimit its scope and specify some of the key questions it is not addressing. I will then end with a brief overview of the coming chapters.

1.1. Working with the Hijabi: from Questions to Definitions

As I was told of exclusion and marginalisation, of pain and aggression, the question of the conditions which produced and structured such experiences emerged inevitable. This dissertation is, therefore, essentially, an attempt to understand, from and alongside my participants' subaltern standpoint, the conditions and the movements which create, establish, and reproduce the various experiences of the daily lives they shared. Accordingly, this dissertation asks the following question:

What are the processes structuring the Lebanese hijabi women's experiences of social life in contemporary Lebanon, as experienced by hijabis?

Engaging with the experiences of the hijabi in contemporary Lebanon as a geographic and temporal site of investigation, this project therefore sociologically enquires about the structures of power under which the Lebanese hijabi engages both social institutions and individuals. In this sense, it engages with lived experiences to develop a theoretical understanding of the processes that produce these experiences.

In the field, participants focused, and asked me to focus, on their racialisation as visibly Muslim subjects and the ensuing experiences of subjugation. In this respect, my data was loaded with instances, incidents, and debates around the hijabi's racial abjection within mainstream Lebanese society. This focus in the field swiftly revealed itself capable of generating a significant in-depth theoretical contribution theorising powerful structural processes of the modern world. It similarly revealed itself capable of contesting much of the sociological scholarship on Islamic dress and hijabi women. Accordingly, this focus was pursued during fieldwork, and in the latter stages of this project, and became defining of this dissertation seeking decolonial research based on listening to its subalternised participants and their requests and pursuing a theoretical visibilising contribution.² This dissertation accordingly revolves around the question of racialisation and approaches racialisation as the site from which to deduce theoretical insights about the structures of

² It is important to acknowledge that this focus participants insisted on was not external to this project's characteristics, including my own positionality as will be explored in chapters three and four. This does not undermine the value of this focus, particularly given the powerful theoretical and analytical insights it offered.

the modern condition and the processes through which this condition establishes itself, as well as the site from which to highlight the Eurocentric colonial gaps in the study of Islamic dress.

This racialised oppression surely exists in intersection/entanglement with other forms of oppression, including those based on gender, sexuality, social class, and even sect in Lebanon.³ Such forces, for example, structure the lived experiences of gendered patriarchal subjugation that compound the hijabi's life or those experiences of social class dynamics that may both alleviate or worsen the hijabi's dwelling, as will be explored in chapter two drawing on extant scholarship. Yet, while these other forces will be acknowledged, noted, and highlighted throughout the coming chapters, they will not be elaborately analysed and theorised in the analysis chapters as the focus will remain on the racialised dimension of my participants' experiences in line with the data my participants shared and the objectives of this dissertation. Such was what I have chosen to do as it was felt to be generative and significant.

It is important here to clarify the implications of this focus. First, this implies that the dissertation will not be an exploration and analysis of the hijabi's lived experiences *per se*, for which other systems of power such as gender, sexuality, and class cannot be set aside. Instead, this dissertation's objective will be to offer an in-depth exploration of the racialised dimension within the hijabi's lived experiences and, most importantly, pursue theoretical insights around modernity itself. Second, this focus also dictates that important aspects of the modern condition itself under which my participants dwell will remain under-analysed and under-theorised in this work. Most importantly, the significant forces of gender and class will remain under-explored, although I will make attempts to highlight their intersection with the racialised oppression on which I focus. This therefore means that this dissertation will not be an exploration of the entire structures of the modern condition, but rather conclusions drawn from the modern condition's racializing force that will need to be complemented by future research.

This focus also has its theoretical basis. As will be explored in chapter three, this dissertation adopts and is informed by the theorisation of the modernity/(de)coloniality

³ It is to be noted here that I use the term class in reference to socio-economic status throughout this dissertation.

collective as this has been found of great suitability to the data and the project.⁴ In this conceptualisation, the modern world is understood as a matrix of power, one where multiple forces function in the pursuit of domination. These forces, including those of race, gender, sexuality, and class, for example, in turn complexly intersect and entangle. Each one is itself deeply complex and can be argued to require an elaborate dedicated analysis for its unpacking in a given context, particularly considering the lack of research adopting a decolonial lens when exploring such questions at the level of lived experiences. Especially complex for this project is the study of gender given coloniality's entwinement with local and localised structures of power and its functioning across scales of being as well as the extant disavowal of modernity's patriarchy and sexism and the projection of this patriarchy and sexism unto its other. This means that a decolonial exploration adopting a gender lens would require a double movement of visibilisation: one against the patriarchy of modernity and its concealment, and one against the patriarchy of modernity's other and its misrepresentation. This is particularly the case when studying an object such as the hijab where scholarship and debate have long analysed the dress with a Eurocentric gender lens, one that, as Brayson (2019) evidences, has often been used to conceal the colonial substratum at play. Such a multi-layered, complex, and elaborate analysis of these forces or of their intersections/entanglements, within the confines of this dissertation, therefore risked diluting the pursuit analysing the racial dimension and theorising what it unveils of the modern condition. This indeed risked overwhelming this work's data, paralysing its analytical movement, and scattering its contributions.

Further, in line with the work of Quijano (2007) and Grosfoguel (2016), a racialised hierarchy of the human is posited to lay at the core of the modern order, to intersect/entangle with structuring forces such as those of gender and class, as will also be elaborated on in chapter three. A focus on the racial force is hence further warranted. Accordingly, the dissertation's objective will revolve around a theoretical contribution

⁴ During and after fieldwork and as I explored data loaded with terms and experiences of discrimination, difference, hierarchy, and dehumanisation, the decolonial work appeared to me as the most suitable position from which the collected data could be analysed and a critical contribution could be made while engaging the experiences of my participants, making sense of their world and situating this within the larger structures of a modern globalised order. Accordingly, this dissertation situates itself within the post/decolonial scholarship, as a post/decolonial contribution.

visibilising processes of modernity's ordering of the world through an engagement focusing on the racialising force in the Lebanese hijabi's lived experiences.

Surely, this position does not mean an ascription to neat, separate, or dissociable categories where the various elements of my participants' identity and subjectivity may exist. Being a visible Muslim cannot be dissociated from being a woman, especially as the hijab is itself gendered visibility, for example. It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that my participants' lived experiences are of course constantly structured by entanglements and intersections. As noted above, chapter two will highlight such realities based on present scholarship, and the forces of gender and class will be highlighted throughout the analysis chapters as I seek to complement, extend, and dialogue with the literature. Nevertheless, the necessary circumscription of this work means that a focus on what participants understood as being the lived experiences *as racialised hijabi* is analytically possible and, given the theoretical framing and pursuit the fieldwork and its practical considerations, is useful, valuable, and generative as future chapters will, I hope, showcase.

Working with this research question and theoretical framing, the key terms are 'Lebanese hijabi women' and 'structuring processes'. By taking 'Lebanese hijabi women' as a category, the project is seeking to understand the hijabi's experience *as a hijabi* and to explore this identity by working with hijabis themselves. Crucial to make explicit here is the dissertation's approach as one upholding the subalternised's position to speak of, and against, the conditions of their subalternisation, as will be clarified in chapter three. In this sense, this will be a decolonial listening exercise that will attempt to make 'visible the invisible' and analyse 'the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility' through an exercise of engagement with the 'invisible' people themselves (Maldonado-Torres 2010: 116).

As this project was limited in its duration and resources, as a need for an in-depth understanding of the hijabi experience existed, and as fieldwork was met with great enthusiasm from hijabis, as will be explored in chapter four, its population was limited to hijabi women. The arguments presented here, therefore, do not emerge from an analysis of how Lebanese hijabi women are understood, engaged, or perceived by/in mainstream Lebanon. These are rather arguments about how hijabis themselves experience their dress in mainstream Lebanese society. Accordingly, this dissertation does not claim to

represent an external reality it has identified or the conditions of what is, but rather to listen and work with how the subalternised experience a specific aspect of their reality and its problems to theorise the structuring of this reality. Surely, this is not to negate the value of projects seeking, for example, to capture the Lebanese scene through working with the different constituent groups in relation to the phenomenon of study, or ones pursuing an argument about the larger populations of which the hijabis may be a part. Nevertheless, as an attempt at immersion to engage with a subalternised experience on the darker side of modernity for its voicing and, consequently, a better understanding of the modern condition, this is not my pursuit here.

In line with this, it must be stressed that the project is not focused on an understanding of the hijab, particularly not on an understanding of motivations and/or meanings it holds for its wearer. Similarly, this is not a study of the emergence of the hijab in Lebanon, the factors structuring such emergence and/or an analysis of how this emergence unfolds. Further, this is not a study of Islamic dress itself as a material object or of the dress from an Islamic jurisprudential/legal lens. Ultimately, a vast number of different projects can be pursued around the hijab and the hijabi in Lebanon. The complexity of my participants' lives, Muslim women dwellers of the Global South in a multi-sectarian (post-)conflict post-colonial (in the sense of being structured by the colonial) patriarchal society during the contemporary moment, meant that such a clear circumscription of this project was needed to generate its valuable insights.

Before moving further, a few clarifications are due. First, the operational definition of the 'hijab' adopted here is that of any form of Islamic dress for women where the hair is covered. This includes the niqab, as it includes various forms of 'fashionable' dress. These differences will be explored in detail in chapter eight, but it must be realised that the word hijab is used as a non-homogenous umbrella term to refer to the various forms of Islamic wear practiced in Lebanon during the time of this investigation and identified by my participants as thus. In line with this, the word hijabi is operationally defined as the identity connoting those to whom such a term applies. The transliteration of the Arabic term, rather than the use of the word veil, for example, was of particular importance as to stir away from ascribing to any orientalist assumptions and connotations, loaded categories, pre-existing images, or circumscribed definitions which include specific forms of the hijab and exclude others.

Additionally, this dissertation is concerned with experiences in what it identifies as ‘mainstream Lebanon’, taken as an etic category offered by participants in the field. This mainstream, my participants stressed, cuts across sects, socio-economic classes, and geography without this meaning that it was unvaryingly standard throughout the country and its many divides or that it was not largely structured by a specific class, age group, sect, and geographic position. In this sense, the presentation of this ‘mainstream’ approach must not be taken to be claiming the homogeneity of Lebanese society or monolithic experiences of the hijab in Lebanon. There are, surely, differences across regions, religious groups, geographies, and a number of other variables. Yet, a ‘national’ view, a hegemonic standard discourse, was advanced by participants. The experiencing of this mainstream is the object of investigation in this dissertation, not disavowing, but also not examining here, other present competing experiences and constructions.

It must lastly be noted that the analysis and argumentation in the chapters to come must not be taken to imply an ascription to binary terms of any debate or to clear unproblematic distinctions, divisions, or oppositions. While this will hopefully become clear in chapter three, it is worth flagging that semantics here are dictated by analytical utility. For example, the terms west and western are used but such usage in no way implies an ascription to a monolithic west separate from the east, for example, as the ‘west’ and ‘east’ are themselves two Imperial western concepts that only exist in relation to one another. Yet, from the position of my participants, seen from the outside, the west’s internal differences, and its imagined coherence and projected unity, render this a useful analytical category. Similarly, Europe is surely a heterogeneous space with myriad differences and, most importantly, multiple internal Others upon whom coloniality exercises its movement, just as it exercises its movement on the rest of the planet. Yet, Europe is here used as a category not connoting a geography, but rather connoting a locus of enunciation and a self-fashioned imagined representation. Referring to hegemonic enacted epistemologies from culture to economy, its internal differences become analytically irrelevant. Accordingly, these are strategically mobilised analytical tools, as I hope chapter five clarifies.

1.2. Contributions: from Theory to Praxis and Back

This is a normative, political and engaged project, which ascribes to a clear position and pursues a visibilising disruption of colonial hegemonic power in the pursuit of the

liberation and empowerment of the subalternised, the colonised. The ultimate contribution it pursues is a theoretical one analysing modernity's structures of power and domination experienced plaguing my participants' lives so that these may be better understood and, ultimately, subverted and surpassed. Undoubtedly, the project will not be exploring the entirety of these structures of power, given the complexity of the modern condition and the limitations of this work, but will nevertheless be visibilising important processes within these structures, as a step toward resistance and redress. Engaging with under-researched and largely unacknowledged experiences of social inequality, both in the academic as well as the wider sphere, the project, therefore, will pursue theoretical insights around modernity's processes in its relation to its Other. Specifically, it will focus on the racialised and racializing movement in modernity's erasure to explore what this racializing movement can reveal about coloniality's processes of erasure. Doing this, it hopes to make visible and contribute to giving voice where speech appears impossible. In line with this, the dissertation's key contribution will be theoretical: to external critiques of modernity broadly, and decolonial theory specifically, consisting, mainly, in conceptualising a series of 'processes of erasure' as specific mechanisms through which modernity pursues the negation of all Others and the establishment of itself as the only real. Based on these, it will propose a number of analytical categories to fill a gap in the study of the coloniality of being which, I contend, could be useful across different moments and forms of subjugation without, of course, claiming that these transcend all boundaries or function universally.

It must be here noted that while the risk of violence is (always) present, listening is our safest option in the necessary pursuit of dismantling structures of domination and objectification. So, while modernity is a 'system that silences the Other, or better that produces the Other as silent, non-existent or as "pure representation"', this dissertation seeks to listen and, through listening, to better understand and let speak those who 'have been denied dignity and voice' (Vázquez 2012: 248). Importantly, this listening is oriented towards an analysis of modernity's functioning, and is therefore not approached as an undirected exercise.

While coloniality functions across the spheres of power, knowledge, and being, disproportionate attention has been given to power and knowledge at the expense of being, and this dissertation hopes to contribute to filling that gap by advancing theoretical and conceptual analytical tools for coloniality's establishment. By doing this, much is

offered towards understanding how coloniality can(not) be resisted, delinking can(not) be pursued and redress can(not) be achieved, even though a systematic elaboration of this remains for a different project. Doing this from the lived experiences of people in Lebanon, an added layer of innovation is offered by bringing together ‘empirical data’ from the ‘Arab/Islamic world’ with theorisation largely born from the Americas in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of global coloniality’s functioning.

In addition to this, the dissertation’s various components advance our understanding of the contemporary role of religious ritual practice in structuring the experiences of daily life and, particularly, colonial inequality and discrimination and the specific modes through which this unfolds. Consequently, it offers a contribution to the study of lived religion in the contemporary world, especially (Islamic) religious ritual, and seeks to further the bridging of the sociological study of religion with the study of (anti-Muslim) racism and modern/colonial social inequality. By specifically showcasing how religious practice is at the centre of experiencing an inequality along the hierarchy of the human (Grosfoguel 2016), the dissertation ultimately pushes for a centring of the religious as a key structuring force of the modern contemporary condition in the pursuit of a redress to dominant Eurocentric narratives particularly prevalent in the sociology of religion. Specifically, it will attempt and showcase Islamophobia’s prevalence through an exploration of how religion/spirituality is indeed excluded from modernity, not because the religious is lacking, but because the modern is incongruous with and excluding of the religious. Alongside this, the dissertation will contribute to the scholarship investigating the relationship between Islamic religious ritual and the formation of the self beyond Eurocentric categories further demonstrating the loss and the stakes of coloniality’s racial erasure.

The project’s contributions further include the rich empirical data around the hijabi experience it has collected from the Global South, specifically from Lebanon as an Arab nation, as little exists documenting and exploring the experiences of hijabis in the post-colonial country. Complementing this, the dissertation offers a pioneering lens through which the hijab may be studied and researched as it offers a reading radically breaking with much of the scholarship produced over the past years. Indeed, while the hijab has stirred much debate and scholarship in the west, I hope this dissertation’s findings will demonstrate that this debate concealed plenty, negated in its affirmations, and often remained trapped in its own sphere at the expense of engaging subalternised lived

experiences. Accordingly, a contestation of many dominant trends in the sociological study of Islamic dress will be offered throughout the coming chapters.

Moreover, this work highlights a number of facets of Lebanese life which are mostly eclipsed and erased in studies of the country, where topics of sectarianism, militarism, state dysfunction, and corruption, alongside questions of refugee governance, have long prevailed. In this respect, it also disrupts a number of assumptions, misconceptions, and problematic representations of Lebanese women, particularly Muslim Lebanese women, as well as wider Lebanese society, as will become clear in the subsequent chapters.

It should ultimately be clarified here that this work does not set out to directly explore means of subversion and will not present an explicitly policy-oriented analysis, for reasons related to this project and my circumstances as I will more fully explore in chapter four. Nevertheless, it seeks to contribute to forming the basis for such a future analysis and engagement by bringing to the fore the need for redress and an analytical understanding.

1.3. Outline: Dissertation Structure and Chapters

This dissertation is composed of ten chapters and can be conceived of as being divided into two main parts. The first part lays the groundwork of the analysis, while the second engages the data collected and lays out the dissertation's key arguments. This division, and the space allocated to each part, mostly results from balancing acts as the dissertation needs to make a lucid, in-depth, thorough, well-framed, and well-evidenced argument, as it obeys its fieldwork and engages both its institutional setting and its theoretical framing.

Accordingly, the first part begins with chapter two. In this chapter, I will establish the engagement with the hijab and the hijabi as a valuable and suitable means to think about modernity and analyse structures of modern domination. Accordingly, I will present specific works of relevance from the vast academic literature on the hijab to argue that colonialism and colonality are at the core of the hijab as an excluded and aggrsed gendered lived object in the contemporary world. In this respect, I will attempt to draw out the key themes, insights, and data provided by the literature which the dissertation's later chapters will engage with and sketch the scene of the hijab as an object of erasure in various geographies and time frames to put the data and the analysis I offer into perspective. Working with scholarship from both the Global North and the Global South,

I will explore the hijab in its relation to nation/state-building, as I present its construction as a gendered marker of difference, of subjugation, for erasure. In parallel, I will explore forms of legitimisation mobilised by hijabis and recorded in the literature, as well as some key conceptualisations of the dress under market capitalism across geographies. Through this exploration, several key gaps in the scholarship will become apparent and the innovative nature of this project's focus on modernity/coloniality will further be highlighted.

Having presented the relevant strands of the study of the hijab, I turn to a presentation, within the confines and objectives of this dissertation, to explore the theoretical framing it will engage with and develop its understanding of modernity's functioning. In chapter three, I present a series of conceptual categories and tools to be drawn on in the data analysis chapters; mainly building on the Latin American modernity/(de)coloniality collective and a number of key post-, anti- and decolonial intellectuals. In the fourth chapter, I will discuss the methodology adopted as I explore key issues such as my own positionality, the micro-ethics of the project and the larger framing of my fieldwork while exploring a number of the thesis' key methodological issues. The methodology was here accorded its separate substantial chapter as the project harboured a series of sensitive ambiguities and its different phases required a thorough process of reflexive and external scrutiny.

Chapter five, in turn, will present Lebanon, this project's case study, as I briefly reconstruct the emergence and founding of the Lebanese nation, as well as elements of its contemporary reality. This will specifically attempt to shed some light on the present-day conditions of the main religious groups in the nation, and that of Lebanese women, within their historical continuity. In doing this, I aim to provide the dissertation and the data it analyses a satisfactory contextualisation, especially for the unfamiliar reader, and lay the groundwork for a number of arguments to come. With chapter five concluded, the first part of this dissertation closes.

Chapter six, the first analytical chapter, begins by assembling how my participants experienced their marked identity. In doing this, I draw out the specific elements experienced as a hijabi racialised and racializing 'social form': a belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess. This social form, I argue, is lived at the nexus of modern time, post-colonial national imaginaries, and global hegemonic Imperial western secular-liberal

discourses entwined with patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny to produce and situate the hijabi at the bottom of the hierarchy of the human. With this, I propose what I will term a hijabi wounded habitus, as I attempt and sound the hijabi sense of her dehumanised positioning.

Chapter seven sketches some of the hijabi's experiences in daily life and brings to light ordeals of inordinate pain and suffering which have largely gone unrecognised. In presenting this, four key spheres are drawn – public, private, market, and state – to discuss the hijabi's exclusion and marginalisation and the various rationales and narratives felt to wound and erase. In doing this, I explore the incidence of each sphere as I analyse the variables playing into the experiences of marginalisation to offer insights and deduce specific techniques of erasure. Drawing out objectification, harassment and micro-aggressions, vulnerabilising, devaluing and impoverishing, spatialising difference and bordering, and invisibilising and cloistering, I attempt to extract each sphere's working in the post-colonial Mediterranean land.

In chapter eight, I explore the different kinds of hijab present in Lebanon – the hijabi kaleidoscopic spectrum – differentiated on the basis of the dress's perceived modernity to explore my participants' experiences with the various forms of the dress and their narrations of how these different forms dwell in the small country. Building on this, I propose 'mummifying dilution' as a mechanism through which alternative more modern forms of the hijab are invented, differentiated in shape and emptied of content and effect. These mummified caricatured practices, I propose, serve the coloniser through their inertia in the practicing woman's life, as they testify against the hijabi in rendering her an extreme excess while standing emblematic of the hierarchy of the human upon which she is positioned. This 'modern hijab', I conclude, defines the hijabi without appeal as a threatening belated difference; serving the reproduction of the conditions of her racialised and racializing erasure, and beyond.

Chapter nine is divided into two sections. The first section pursues an exploration of the discourses of *difa* ' (defence) mobilised by my participants in reclaiming their hijab and contesting their condition. Drawing out four key strands – parochial universalism, parochial secularism, modern science, and anti-patriarchy – the chapter explores how *difa* ' as resistance mostly unfolds within modernity's epistemic territory, mobilising its own terms and combatting it while and through ascribing to many of its underlying

assumptions. Away from a normative judgment regarding this resistance, the chapter explores how my participants' movement was itself structured by their oppressor, how it itself reproduced coloniality within and beyond the coloniality of their dress and how it, ultimately, rendered resistance a mechanism of coloniality's control over the real. In the second section of the chapter, I turn to reconstructed elements of my participants' accounts of their dress, and their relation to it, to offer the hijab as a pedagogical exercise in the Islamic civilizational model through which the hijabi may self-form in the image of Islam and establish a particular connection to Islamic ancestry. Identifying a number of specific traits resulting from this self-formation exercise, I argue that this understanding of the dress offered a blueprint of a delinked conceptualisation and a major basis of the dress/practice's value, worth, and meaning for hijabis, and beyond. The chapter closes by reflecting on the dissonance between what appeared to be the hijab's import to my participants and the discourses they drew upon to legitimise their practice. With this possibility of delinking from the border, the final analytical chapter closes to turn to the conclusion, chapter ten, where I summarise my findings and offer some final reflections on the journey which has produced this dissertation.

Ultimately, this is a project complexly motivated and concerned with a theorisation of modernity's aggression upon the lived experiences of the hijabi in Lebanon. It is a study with subalternised unacknowledged dwellers of the modern world, dwellers forced to inhabit a dehumanising locus to haemorrhage as modernity pursues its ultimate establishment, its secular horizon, its darkest coming. It is a study about coloniality and a study about coloniality's mechanisms of control and subjugation, establishment and racial wounding. It is a study which hopes that, through the experiences of the Lebanese hijabi, a better understanding of the modern condition may be pursued for its disruption, for its subversion, for its redress.

Chapter Two: Scholarship, the Hijab, and the Colonial

This chapter will seek to establish the need, value, and suitability of engaging the Islamic hijab to theorise modernity by arguing that the dress has been central in colonial and postcolonial modernity across both the Global North and the Global South. While doing this, it will showcase the gaps in the study of the hijab itself and raise the need for a (de)colonial analysis of the Islamic practice. In this respect, given this project's objectives, its limitations, and the dominant trends and issues in the study of the hijab – from questions of agency to questions of personal motivations and socio-political impact – this chapter will not set out to review the entirety of the scholarship on and around Islamic dress, a topic which has been researched and debated by a multitude of authors from a wide range of disciplines. Rather, it will present a series of key themes and works to lay the ground for arguments to come and, in doing so, showcase how the literature's attention has diverted the discussion away from the fundamental questions of modernity, coloniality, humanity, and erasure.

Importantly, it must be realised that neither the choice of works included nor the organisation adopted here suggest or ascribe to a clear-cut division of the literature or claim complete coverage. Especially relevant is that, while a number of Arabic and French texts will be engaged, the setting and limitations of this project have dictated that the chapter remains largely Anglo-centric as it leaves plenty unexplored. Further, no claim is made here to a presentation of the entirety of any work. In this sense, this chapter results from a series of choices made: which works to include, what to include from said works and where/how to include them, among many others. Eventually, this is merely one of many possible explorations, and organizations of explorations, constructed by a specific author to present a limited illustration from an extensive, rich, and complex scholarship for a specifically positioned dissertation.⁵

2.1. The Hijab in the Global North⁶

In the Global North, the Islamic hijab is a major topic of contestation. In this section, I will begin with a presentation of the hijab's relationship to both the western nation and

⁵ As I have limited space, I will be focusing on the argument, theoretical and conceptual contributions, of the works I explore. Consequently, many questions, such as methodology, will rarely (if at all) be engaged with.

⁶ The Global North-Global South divide is here used not to refer to a geographic division but to one relating to positions on the global divide of coloniality: the Global North refers to the position of the

state to then explore the exclusion and discrimination the hijabi endures in the west. While doing this, I will also attempt to shed light on attempts of resistance, as I allude to some dominant trends across the literature.

2.1.1. Hijab, Nation, and State

Under banners as varied as secularism, freedom, women's liberation, and national identity, questions of citizenship, belonging and national culture have entangled with Eurocentric normative liberal principles to produce the hijab as an intolerable object across the Global North. The hijab accordingly emerges as a complex question where 'overlapping representations of gender, class, ethnicity and race, and religious identity in the nation-state context' politically conflict as the struggle over the nation unfolds over women's bodies (Moruzzi 1994: 666; Medina 2014). Accordingly, this section will focus on the state's role and the nation's centrality in structuring the hijabi lived experience.

Imbricated in the western obsession to regulate clothing, particularly for women, dress has long been used to 'operate a visible differentiation, a boundary, a clear-cut dividing line, between citizens and foreigners and between the different classes of citizens' in continuity with the long Christian/secular tradition fixing 'nationality, geography and gender' (Baldi 2017b: 678). In this respect, clothing is transformed into a symbol, and fixed into a rhetoric. The hijab, which has connoted various things in European/western history with a long and complex genealogy beyond the scope of this chapter, has consequently now been powerfully confined to an Otherness and the marker of 'an intrinsic difference between the "east" and the "west"' in the ongoing imperial projects of western civilisation (Baldi 2017b: 681; Mancini 2012). It has, in other words, increasingly become a key instrument used to 'tighten the lines of social closure along racial lines and legitimate these hardening definitions of citizenship' (Iftkhar 2009: 6; Khiabany and Williamson 2008). Through this, the nation-states of the 'first world' 'establish a boundary between being and non-being' as the nation is offered as the embodiment of the 'western civilisation' being threatened and eroded (Ramírez 2015: 680; Ahmad 2001; Azam 2018; Davis 2011; Iftkhar 2009; Vakulenko 2007; Williamson and Khiabany 2010). Key is a realisation that the nation-state itself and the contemporary state form, both as a concept and as a material and lived entity with their various

colonialists/imperialists while the Global South refers to the positions 'that suffered, and still suffer, the consequences of the colonial wound' (Mignolo 2011d: 185). For an exploration of this, refer to Mignolo (2011d).

apparatuses ranging from the legal system to bordering, are ‘institution of modernity’ and an essential element through which modernity functions (Grosfoguel 2011). An analysis of western states’ engagement with the hijab must begin by realising the embeddedness in colonial, imperialist, and specific histories unfolding as gendered ‘claims are made over bodily comportment’ (Bruck 2008: 68; Ahmad 2001; Dhanda 2008).

Governed by a particular imaginary enforced by a particular sovereign where plurality is unthinkable, the hijab has today become the grand symbol of an abject otherness incompatible with ‘western values’ rendering its control and subjugation a “necessary” act of sovereign power [which] aims at creating a specific law and religious subject through the control of the visible in the public liberal/secular sphere’ (Baldi 2017b: 677-8; Ahmad 2001; Bi 2018). Here, the issue is not the article of clothing *per se* but rather the symbology attached to it and the role of symbols in the creation of the ‘imagined community’ and its circumscription as a unified and homogenous space with a clearly defined culture, identity, and belonging (Anderson 1991). In parallel, symbols also function to produce a series of both internal and external exclusions as they delimit the community and establish social differentiations and systems of hierarchy. In the case of the hijab, within the nationalist pursuit a ‘civilisational’ pursuit also unfolds. Structured around a polarised East-West and a dichotomised secular-religious, a reconfiguration of the religious and its regulation by the sovereign secular state unfolds (Asad 2003) to create a specific subjectivity and identity (Baldi 2017c). This, ultimately, is an erasing act that delimits the possible and the impossible and circumvents the realm of imaginable being.

This control is powerfully gendered where woman’s bodies are the site on which battles are mapped in societies governed by a ‘structural ambivalence of transcendence and immanence attached to the notion of woman, within a hierarchical order’ (Gressgård 2006: 336; Winkel 2018). The realisation that modern nation building projects are standardly patriarchal, misogynist, and paternalistic is key here (Anthis and Yuval Davis 1989; Hogan 2009; Mayer 1999). As Mayer (1999) explains, the nation itself in the modern world ‘has been imagined by men and has been designed as a masculine construct’ in a way where ‘patriarchal hierarchies have become the foundation of the nation as much as the foundation of both gender and sexuality’ (Mayer 1999: 18). In this sense, the focus of this control on women’s bodies finds its meaning.

Al-Saji (2010) evidenced how the hijab has become ‘the foil or negative mirror in which western constructions of identity and gender can be positively reflected’ as the west fashions itself in opposition to its other and conceals its own patriarchy and contradictions (Al-Saji 2010: 877). Disavowing its sexism and misogyny through this technique, modernity conceals its oppressive pursuit. Massad (2015) complements this by further showcasing the presence and entwinement with religion (primarily constructions of Christianity and Islam), ‘democratic’ imaginaries, and liberal universalisms where human rights are extended to an imagined oppressed women’s rights in the pursuit of western domination. Eventually, it is by using women’s bodies to project gender oppression and patriarchy unto Islam that western womanhood and the western space are projected as progressive, liberated, and emancipatory (Al-Saji 2010; Gressgård 2006; Massad 2015). In such movements, it is the hijab’s construction as an object of patriarchal oppression that dictates its intolerability on European soil as European states woundingly disavow their patriarchy and paternalism in pursuit of control and epistemic erasures (Vakulenko 2007).

This, in turn, leads to the ‘reinforcement of (real) gender oppression’ across western societies as ‘Western feminism reproduces the core flaws of Orientalism’ (Mancini 2012: 427; Slater 2008). In this vein, a specific liberal feminism has been nationalised across the west to be constructed as inherently European and a state project in itself as national projects pursued their patriarchal control of othered bodies and beings. Centred on an opposition to tradition and religion that are inherently constructed as patriarchal and misogynist, and produced through an imperial Eurocentric lens, this institutionalisation of a nationalised feminism has led to the normalisation a specific strand of feminism and to enforcing the impossibility of all other forms of feminist resistance and, consequently, subjectivity (Khader 2016; Mancini 2012; Massad 2015). In this approach, the multifaceted nature of the hijab becomes extraneous and views claiming, for example, that ‘the hijab conceals the gender and sexual dimensions’ and demands ‘respect as human beings’ under ‘human equality or equal dignity’ or advancing the dress as a performative act beyond western constructions are rejected as plainly false, never entering the mainstream (Gressgård 2006: 386; Abu-Lughod 2002; Mahmood 2004). The modern state here deploys a normalised hegemonized feminism loaded with its own concealed patriarchy, paternalism, sexism, and misogyny to oppress and erase its Muslim other and the possibility of her being and to control womanhood and being themselves (Ezekiel

2006; Mancini 2012; Navarro 2010). In this sense, one realizes that the control of women's bodies is an essential feature of ongoing western secularist nation-building projects, in the disavowal of its sexism, and in the sexist production of the west itself, as well as its other. Gender and nation therefore emerge as entwined under modernity producing powerful experiences of subjugation. Further, this subjugating control mobilises a Eurocentric feminism and erases other forms of feminist resistance thereby producing the western nation within the negation of its imagined other and the enforcement of its imagined modern subject.

France is a prime example where this can be observed. There, the republic's political community has increasingly turned hysterical where the anti-hijab discourse, explicitly and systematically, claims the gendered garment a statement against the European state, a highly charged political artefact, framing its rejection as necessary loyalty to the French nation (Hancock 2015; Moruzzi 1994; Terray 2004). Aware that France perceives itself as an indivisible nation, Barras (2010) explains that its governing principles, especially *laïcité*, are no simple legal issues but rather form a powerful governing ethos. Under this ethos, the hijab is necessarily constructed as a radical icon that strides in public spaces declaring the failure of integration, the adherence to pious tradition and the refusal of French *laïcité*, of belonging (Scott 2007). In an imperial state where missionary-ism has long sought to 'emancipate Muslims' from an ideologized and culturalised Islam, the hijab, therefore, finds itself the object of converging discourses for erasure, where the dress cannot be 'considered as a mere sign of feminine modesty or a simple religious garment but [rather] as a social danger causing a security problem', resulting in a French trend 'to somehow "criminalize" the hijab and to look at Muslim women wearing the veil as "offenders" or passive accomplices of radical Islamism' (Gessier 2010: 44; Beydoun 2008).

In 2003, for example, when the Stasi Commission published its recommendations turned into legislation with quite uncommon speed, the hijab was made a legal violation (with other religiously 'conspicuous' symbols) in public schools under the banners of the nation's, the civilisation's, principles (Baubérot 2008; Brayson 2019). When the issue of banning the burqa broke out in 2009, it was only a matter of 'a couple of weeks' before the dress 'had become the antonym, par excellence, of Frenchness, *laïcité*' as the dress's abject positioning was further sedimented and the 'difference' was further entrenched (Barras 2010: 230; Brayson 2019). Through such measures, the state fixed the hijab's

symbolism, mobilised it for its agenda and exerted its control. In this sense, with the manufactured threat of Islamic terrorism, the hijab has not only become a question of declaring a refusal of Frenchness but also an act of threatening that Frenchness, an act raising security concerns in the age of a declared Islamic menace. With this, one realises that the issue is that of the western nation and its Other, Islam. The vestment's construction and control, therefore, appear nothing but a symptom of deeper anxieties and a site for unfolding governmentality playing out, as often is the case in the modern world, on women's bodies and at their expense (Gessier 2010; Gressgård 2006; Jasser 2006).

Ultimately, this 'criminalizing [of] Islamic dress evidences the attachment of the colonial past to the present and future', where the sovereign's act of exerting control is but a strategy for neo-colonialism (Brayson 2019: 62). In this sense, nation-state building, Brayson (2019) advances, must be understood in continuity with the colonial past and as a strategy for the establishment of the neo-colonial present/future where the law, and wider political actions, function as facilitators of specific political imperial agendas. In this light, the literature's focus on the circumscribed nation-state with legal, gender, and security-based analyses is revealed to have diverted attention 'away from the neo-colonial substratum of the debate around Islamic dress' as the woman becomes an "avatar" in the public-political imaginary', eclipsing both the gendered colonialism and racialisation at play (Brayson 2019: 68; Crosby 2014). Accordingly, an analysis that incorporates the functions of the modern nation-state as a neo-colonising institution and that also surpasses it to examine the very structures of the modern world at play is revealed as key.

It is worth noting here that the French law banning the burqa was overwhelmingly endorsed in the French political scene and was not met with any opposition of significance, not even from the nation's Muslim organizations (Davis 2011: 119), in a clear manifestation of hegemony, power, and uni-versalisation. The Islamic Other, in this sense, did not speak as the western French nation pursued the criminal past in the present while it Orientalised and fixed the hijabi to reproduce western superiority and enforce its hegemony for the neo-colonial future (Brayson 2019; Crosby 2014).

While France is a prime example, the same logic unfolds across Europe and the west, as the state is increasingly demanding sovereignty over its (Muslim, women) subjects. Indeed, despite the fact that European countries have diverged in many of their policies in regard to Islam and Muslims, they are nonetheless all pushing for increased

privatisation of religion, with the hijab at the centre of the agenda as structures of gendered domination are produced and reproduced (Edmunds 2017). Throughout the west, we now see the potency, the harm and the destruction of the discourses which live in the realm of affect and which are ‘inscribed both discursively and non-discursively in the “rational” field of the political in societies that define themselves as liberal and secular’ (Edmunds 2012, 2017; Moors 2012: 295; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014).

In Germany, for example, the scene has been one where a significant section of the nation’s authorities have dubbed the hijab a political symbol of fundamentalism and, accordingly, called for its prohibition. This was most prominent when a schoolteacher in Baden-Württemberg, having finished her training, was denied entry into her classroom because she refused to ‘uncover’. Greatly similar to the French discourse, the concept of state neutrality was used to render the hijabi a symbol of threat and a sight to reject (Benhabib 2010; Ewing 2000; Partridge 2012).⁷ Yet, the debate in Germany never became anything like the one in France, especially since Germany is a federal republic with a distinct (colonial) history. Today, with the increase in Muslim migrants into Germany, the problematisation of the hijab continues to oscillate in and out of public debate. In more recent times, it appears that the hostile tone toward the dress has escalated, but no drastic government or legal measures have been taken, with Germany formally declaring itself a migratory state (Independent Commission on Migration 2001; Troianovski 2016). The state’s approach to the hijab stood contingent on its political elite and scene, on its political structure and, most importantly, on its political interests at any given moment in time, as powerful strategies of patriarchal Othering, inferiorising and secularising continued unabated (Aguilar 2018).

Before moving on, it must be realised that, across the western geography, these state practices have been co-constituted by non-state activism, particularly in the development of a national western liberal feminism’ (Ezekiel 2006; Massad 2015). In France, figures such as Elisabeth Badinter, Anne Vigerie, and Anne Zelensky have pioneered the battle against the Islamic dress-code to produce the ‘feminist’ discourse legitimising and fuelling exclusion. Badinter, for example, has long explained her civilising mission: ‘Putting on tom jeans, wearing yellow, green, or blue hair, this is an act of freedom with

⁷ In Germany, the state is not *laïque*. Rather, it self-identifies as belonging to the Western-Christian tradition where (only) the three recognised denominations of Protestant, Catholic and, incidentally, Jewish receive state funding (Benhabib, 2010).

regard to the social conventions. Putting a hijab on the head, this is an act of submission. It burdens a woman's whole life' (Moruzzi 1994: 662; Truong 2016).⁸ Throughout, it appears that western (and westernized) feminism, looking 'with an imperialist gaze through a prism of essentialized feminism', fails to see Muslim women as anything but 'less intelligent, oppressed, culturally depraved, passive, less likely to engage and succeed, and even dangerous (to feminism) due to tribal stigma' while the hijab continues to be 'seen as an "abomination of the body"' (Medina 2014: 878; Bullock 1999). In this respect, these movements are found to engage the state, demand the state and call on the state, which emerges as the central actor to rescue, enforce and regulate. Muslim women within Europe needed saving, both state and 'civil society' seemed to insist.⁹

Across the west, the combat against the hijab continues to rally activist feminism summoning the state, in a post-9/11 world, in a developing entanglement with the policing of Islamic bodies in an age of Islamophobia and (forced) migration for specific imagined 'civilizational' projects (Ho 2007; Lazaridis and Wadia 2015; Macdonald 2006). In this sense, the battle against the hijab is unfolding across both fronts of 'feminism' and 'nationalism' with both state and non-state actors as the French nation and the proclaimed western civilisation it belongs to, for example, are reproduced as intrinsically emancipatory, liberatory, equal, while the concealment of the gendered racial and the sexist colonial powerfully persists (see Brayson 2019; Hancock 2015; Moruzzi 1994).

Eventually, as state and non-state practices converge, one can conclude from the literature a condition of colonially structured sexist racism, with the modern state at its core and where non-state actors both complement and summon, as the hijabi is aggressed through a logic of domination which 'hides itself under the guise of anti-sexist and even feminist

⁸ Importantly, this position is not new and did not emerge in 'late modernity'. Rather, the hijab has long been a cornerstone in missionary work and in the way the Muslim woman is perceived in Europe and the west. For an illustrative example refer to the book by Van Sommer and Zwemmer (2008) titled 'Our Moslem Sisters: A cry of Need from Lands of Darkness Interpreted by those who Heard it', which was originally published in 1907 and (tellingly) re-printed in 2008, or to 'Harem: the world being the veil' by Croutier (1989).

⁹ Bilge (2010) situates this within the larger paradigms of western feminism and hegemonic conceptions of 'citizenship, nationalism and diasporic meaning-making, as well as conceptions of freedom and emancipation' (Bilge 2010: 10). In this respect, she argues that the feminist problematisation of Islamic dress, particularly under questions of western citizenship and nation-building, emerges from hegemonic Liberal/Humanist conceptions linking agency to notions such as rationality, wilful action and individual autonomy (Bilge 2010: 12). Proposing a different conception of agency, she argues for the need to move beyond the discourse of subordination and resistance to take religious motivation and subjectivity seriously, beyond modernist western constructions.

liberatory discourse' transformed into a European culture, a Europe civilisation (Al-Saji 2010: 788; Brayson 2019; Ho 2007; Massoumi et al. 2017; Volpp 2013; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014). With this, state national identities affirm themselves as ones entangled in politics of racism with a specific patriarchal sexist colonial history and present under a specific western episteme for the concealment of contemporary neo-colonial projects. Consequently, as Islamophobia, misogyny, stereotypes and nation-state projects persist, the hijab continues to be the cause of 'racial abuse' as it becomes increasingly entangled with gendered politics of race and whiteness across the western space (Al-Saji 2010; Brayson 2019; Franks 2000; Massad 2015; Mason-Bish and Zempi 2019; Moosavi 2015; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014).

2.1.2. Exclusion and Resistance: from Other to Amalgamated Islamic-Western

The assault on the hijab has greatly impacted the lives of hijabi women, and Muslims more generally, in Europe/the west. Yet, in academic literature, the 'specific nature, extent and impact of Islamophobic victimization experienced by veiled Muslim women and its consequences for victims, their families and wider communities' remains inadequately understood and under-researched (Zempi and Chakraborti 2014: 3; Allen 2015). Indeed, and intriguingly, insufficient attention has been given to the specific unfolding, the structuring, and the bearing of this assault through empirical study, as the conversation around the hijab often seems cloistered in (at many times extremely valuable, at others extremely harmful) theoretical and legal debates which revolve around questions of agency and oppression, on the one hand, and rights and duties, on the other. Meanwhile, hijabis find themselves forced into increasing marginality, violence, and precarity.

As Islamophobia has become ever more prominent across the west, Zempi and Chakraborti (2012, 2015) have worked in the UK to provide a gendered analysis of Islamophobia's lived effect, especially as the discourses around the hijab render hijabis "'ideal subjects" against whom to enact Islamophobic attacks' (Chakraborti and Zempi 2012: 276; see Mondon and Winter 2017). In their work, they conclude that Islamophobic attacks on women in Islamic dress produce harm 'far more than ordinary crimes', where 'it is victim's intrinsic identity that is targeted', as the wearer and their family are pushed into a detrimental state of isolation and exclusion (Zempi and Chakraborti 2015: 53). In this analysis, they identify 'perceived difference' as the crucial factor in the women's experiences of Islamophobia, experiences which are 'neither seen nor heard' in either

academia or public discourses (Chakraborti and Zempi 2012: 280; 2015). Allen (2015), focusing on experiences unfolding in the public sphere, similarly discusses the ‘demarcation of difference’ that plays out differently in different spheres to explore the gendered aspects of Islamophobia and offers a more grounded understanding of hijabi women’s experiences. In this work, he theorises the complex interplay of the hijabi’s condition trapped between ‘excess antagonising visibility’ and ‘silencing invisibility’. Doing this, the marginalisation and the precarity of the hijabi’s lived experience becomes apparent and the need to research it, Allen (2015) advances, is urgently evidenced.

This work further highlights the sexual and gendered dimensions of both the hijab and its assault. In this respect, Mason-Bish and Zempi (2018) argue that the lived aggression against the hijabi must be understood at the intersection of Islamophobia and misogyny. Accordingly, they showcase that it is this intersection of misogyny and Islamophobia that ‘hinders veiled Muslim women’s mobility, infringes on their access to public spaces and even forces them to alter their behaviour’ (Mason Bish and Zempi 2018: 556). Similarly, Spielhaus and Ast (2012) argue the anti-hijab movement and the ensuing assault on the hijabi cannot be understood as a result of an anti-religion movement only, as often is the case in European legal analysis, but rather as one resulting from an intersection of gender and religion. Subject to a nationalised Eurocentric patriarchy, the Global North’s hijabis are therefore realised to be victims of multiple oppressive structures that produce compounded experiences as multiple variables intersect.¹⁰

In France, to continue with the example elaborated on above, laws have increasingly excluded the Muslim population to result in what has been called ‘rejection by inverting’ – a ‘return’ to Islam as an identity and a practice – which in turn necessarily results in further exclusion from life, rights, and society within the ideological European state. In this respect, Parvez (2011a, 2011b) has worked with niqabi women to find that the politicisation of the Islamic dress and the ensuing legal measures have produced a condition where the streets, the schools and all other common places French citizens are entitled to freely roam were now off-limit to the practicing Muslim woman. Throughout, her dress is constructed and reproduced as an ‘ostentatious symbol’ rousing a systematic state strategy for control and domination. Many of these women, Parvez (2011a, 2011b)

¹⁰ It is important to note here that, as this dissertation is not pursuing an analysis of lived experiences *per se* but rather an analytical engagements with specific facets of lived experiences to contribute to a theorisation of modernity, it will not be adopting an intersectional analysis. This will be further elaborated on in chapter three.

explains, were left with nothing but ‘patience (*sabr*) in the face of suffering’, as they attempted ‘to find happiness in a life defined intrinsically by suffering (*la vie musibah*)’ (Parvez 2011b: 303). Ultimately, her participants were left to dwell on the margins of life, in much precarity and vulnerability, as they were unable ‘to access or engage the state’ which continued pushing the boundaries of its control (Parvez 2011b: 307). Analysing this experience, Parvez (2011a) adopts an intersectional approach while centring her participants’ Muslim identity, rather than their class or gender, to discuss their movement as an Islamic one as ‘subjects’ identities as women were not the focal point of their mobilization’ (Parvez 2011a: 135).

From a U.S. case study, Iddrisu (2019) similarly shows how hijabis in public spaces ‘encounter several discursive situations where strangers perform rhetorics of public spatialization that construct the veiled Muslim women as security and cultural threats’ (Iddrisu 2019: 78). Through intersecting discourses, a spatialised experience of exclusion and assault is here evidenced as emerging through biopolitical rationales of control and discipline (Iddrisu 2019). Such lived reality has been recorded across the west, with both immigrant and non-immigrant Muslims, where the racialisation of hijabis has produced a situation where ‘women who have for long worn a head scarf can no longer function in the societies where they have lived for a considerable time’ due to their aggressing production as the enemy within (Afshar 2008: 424). Accordingly, hijabi women today are standardly ‘facing the burden’ of anti-Muslim hate, as ‘their movements, their postures, their gestures, and their attire become objects of intensified surveillance’ and aggressive behaviour erasing their opportunities and forcing them into a position of abject subjugation (Magearu 2018: 136). In the public sphere, hijabi women are particularly prone to (spatialised) experiences of discrimination, as they are made to feel as outsiders through various forms of aggression and, in turn, appear to make others uncomfortable as they themselves are made ‘uncomfortable’ (Itaoui 2016; Lagasi 2013). Bowen (2008), in this respect, conveys how many in the French public perceive the hijabi and the non-hijabi Muslims differently, with the hijabi being assumed to have less autonomy, less ‘emancipation’. Indeed, both a sense of threat as well as a sense of ‘difference’ were felt by many ‘French people’ when seeing a hijab, as the mere wearing of the dress on a street was understood by white French participants as an act of ‘throwing their difference right at me’ (Bowen 2008: 212). In this sense, the very presence of the hijabi in the public

space elicited hatred and a sense of menace which, in turn, consistently led to Islamophobic and assaulting experiences.

On a similar level, hijabis – stereotyped with a host of negative attitudes – are documented as being particularly and increasingly subject to various forms of discrimination in the work-sphere (Koura 2018; Mahmud and Swami 2010). While emerging scholarship here, mostly focused on a North-American context, is rarely in-depth, it points to the lack of research on discrimination based on religious attire and presents ‘direct evidence for both formal and interpersonal discrimination and low expectations of receiving job offers among Hijabis’ (Ghumman and Ryan 2013: 692; Abdelhadi 2019; Ghumman and Jackson 2010; Strabac et al. 2016). This research suggests that, in the U.S. context, ‘demographic (age and ethnicity), human capital (education) and household composition (marriage and childbearing) variables’ mitigate the ‘hijab effect’ in excluding women (Abdelhadi 2019: 32). In France, similar results have been found where ‘laïcité, post-feminism and neoliberalism’ intersect and imbue education and the workforce to racialize and ‘erect barriers to Muslim women’s employment opportunities’ (Rootham 2015: 983). Aware of the patriarchal and sexist structures governing the western workforce, the compounded effects of this oppression emerge as needing urgent redress.

Revealing the centrality of ‘difference’ and the question of ‘Europe(aness)’, this literature offers the market and employment, alongside the public, as key arenas where gendered discrimination *plays out*, while the private, the family and the intimate social entourage do not appear as central in experiences of discrimination. Further, in this framing, both the public and the market are offered as the spaces where stereotypes and misconceptions are experienced, but rarely as the instrument through which these stereotypes and misconceptions are produced and reproduced. In this respect, this discrimination is often formulated as one of religious discrimination against a minority population with Islam’s visibility through the hijab in a western context. Accordingly, the quandary is said to require redress through challenging stereotypes and misrepresentation of Muslims and through policies that encourage multiculturalism, tolerance, and integration where questions of migration are central. The issue, in this sense, appears deeply related to the current demonisation of Islam and Muslims, as it appears a problematisation produced and reproduced by ‘political’ actors for (narrowly-defined) ‘political’ purposes.

While some hijabis in certain European contexts, such as France, have chosen to retreat, others have adopted various forms of reclaiming and enduring. Central to this, the literature suggests, is an argument of the hijab's modernity as hijabis sought 'inclusion' through attempts to self-present as 'modern' and 'emancipated' through self-essentialisation to navigate excluding aggressing societies (Afshar 2008; Bi 2018; Mango 2008; Read and Bartkowski; 2000; Van Es 2019). In this respect, the literature offers the hijab as an amalgamated western and Islamic, allowing hijabis to be 'simultaneously public women, young Americans, and good Muslims', for example (Williams and Vashi 2007: 286; Haddad 2007; Rootham 2015).

Indeed, Williams and Vashi (2007) showcase how the hijabi's legitimacy claim against exclusion in the U.S. pivots around the dress' compatibility, identity, with core 'American values' of 'equality, independence, and the establishment of autonomous personal identity', where 'cultural space for the development of autonomous selves' away from imposed social actors can be created through and by the dress. Rootham (2015) arrives at similar conclusions in France, where hijabis justify their choice through discourses of 'emancipation and achievement of individual autonomy' and 'laïque republican rationality', as they appear to firmly situate themselves within 'Frenchness' (Rootham 2015: 984). Yet, she clarifies, this strategy of resistance remains inefficient in the job market as stressing choice results in them being 'cruelly made the very agents of the mechanism through which they face severe discrimination in the workforce' and lays the basis for a requirement to either accept the consequences of what they have chosen, or choose otherwise (Rootham 2015: 983). In this context, discourses of resistance based around the claiming of a modern enlightenment liberal subjectivity did not suffice for inclusion, it appeared.

Almila (2014), in a similar vein but working in urban Finland, draws out a number of key discourses of resistance revolving around voluntariness, personal nature, and the practical benefits of the dress. Analysing these, she reflects on how 'the primary framework influencing their attempts to legitimise, justify and defend the hijab is an Enlightenment one, which stresses the free, rational choice of an individual' (Almila 2014: 241). Indeed, Almila (2014) concludes that the 'primary frame that women operate with is an Enlightenment one, and that all the other frames used are subject to this and its values, such as freedom of the individual, rationality, equality, and the common good' (Almila 2014: 246). This, she suggests, is structured by the western discourse and the European

setting of her participants as inhabitants of a Scandinavian European country. In the coming chapters, I will argue that the question here is more than just the autonomous liberal subject, that it is ‘more western’, and that it permeates those who have never been to the ‘west’ as it permeates those who have been shaped by their western dwelling. In any case, these discourses, she explains are complemented by practical steps for resistance.

Here, Almila (2014) explores how hijabi women negotiated their belief in the Islamic practice, with their dress’s construction as ‘discredited stigma’, in pursuing a sense of comfort when in the public sphere (Almila 2014: 111). Almila (2014) explores the complexity of this negotiation, and its failure, and records how a change in the style of dress and hijab worn was mobilised ‘to control others’ reactions through less conspicuous dress styles’, where ‘inconspicuousness was framed in terms of colours (avoiding black), a particular style (‘Western’) and the season’ (Almila 2014: 216). In her analysis, space emerged as a crucial factor that conditioned what women wear. Explaining that they change their dress depending on the neighbourhood where they are, her participants are offered as agentic architects of the modern sphere. Koura (2018) arrives at similar findings in the context of the U.S. where, she explains, her excluded hijabi participants chose to change their dress in an attempt at incomplete similarity to their environment: shifting to pants and shirts, for example. For Koura (2018), as for Almila (2014), these are framed as positive strategies through which hijabis resist their exclusion and co-create the space they inhabit, while both underlying structures and ensuing impact and losses are left unexplored.

Building on the critique of hijabi victimisation, Karimi (2018) pursues a parallel exploration of practical forms of defiance and empowerment in France to look at ‘questions of power, agency and the daily strategies of resistance to an unwelcoming political context’ and present ‘initiatives from the perspective of women exercising their agency to overcome the feelings of exclusion produced by ethnic and religious discrimination’ (Karimi 2018: 423). For Karimi (2018) this mainly includes attempts at negotiating the hijabi stigma in public interaction and, most importantly, the entry into the market through entrepreneurship. Eventually, this resistance is formulated as a result of ‘experiences of discrimination’ in the job market, where hijabis ‘in need’ find themselves ‘pushed’ into entrepreneurship as they combat their marginality (Karimi 2018: 434). Eventually, Karimi’s (2018) framing celebrates the open-endedness of the

neo-liberal capitalist market as ‘structural limitations, painful experiences of discrimination, and social exclusion become a driver of entrepreneurship’; a successful entrepreneurship yielding autonomy and power to the marginalised hijabi and her community (Karimi 2018: 434).

While little work exists specifically focused on a systematic in-depth analysis of the discourses hijabis draw on to legitimise their dress and counter this exclusion, one can note how most reclaiming of the dress, as Dhanda (2008) summarizes it, appears framed under either (cultural) identity, de-commodifying the body and/or rebellion/agency. As a choice to flag and foster a specific belonging, hijabis are indeed often recorded explaining how the hijab could not be reduced to the oppressive garment it is assumed to be and/or highlighting the centrality of practical advantages such as the demand for respect, the desexualisation of their public presence or the combat of consumerism (Le Gall 2003; Zempi 2016).

Throughout, resistance, often legitimised and often celebrated as agency and creativity in the literature, is formulated as largely conditioned by the western lived context of hijabis as it is shown to function within the patriarchal capitalist enlightenment liberal framework. Even in this, agency, autonomy, and choice are the only elements of this framework which are mentioned as other elements of the western paradigm go unrecorded, unidentified. Further, this resistance remains with little systematic exploration, as its specific elements remain unclear, its (erasing) effect goes unexplored and untheorized, and its structuring goes unproblematised.

2.2. The Hijab in the Global South

As in the Global North, the hijab in the Global South has long been a topic of debate and contestation. In this section, I will attempt to present a series of works and insights from the scholarship studying the hijab to continue laying the ground for the arguments to come, as I attempt to further identify gaps in need of redress.

2.2.1. Hijab, Nation, and State

In the Global South, the coloniser has long pursued the erasure of Islamic dress for control and hegemony. Aided by missionaries and various social institutions, the dress was particularly central across the Islamic world’s colonial experiences. In Egypt under British colonialism, for example, Cromer and others led campaigns to liberate the

Egyptian woman from her hijab, break down gender norms, and Europeanise the nation through various social, cultural, legal, and institutional means (Ahmad 2001). In this respect, Ahmed (1993) has identified a ‘colonial-feminist’ discourse produced by the British portraying Islam as a patriarchal religion and pursuing a westernising ‘emancipation’ of Muslim women through which colonial domination could be justified. In this sense, the deployment of gender was central in the colonial effort to subjugate and control, as the western Imperial concealed and negated its own patriarchy and invented its enforced imagined superiority.

In Algeria, a brutal and systematic French effort worked to eradicate the dress, where unveiling Algerian women became synonymous with French control over the land. Indeed, as the colonisers pursued ‘destroying the people's originality, and under instructions to bring about the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality directly or indirectly’, the efforts, resources, and forces of French colonisation seemed obsessed with eradicating Islamic dress (Fanon 1994a: 37; Fanon 1969). Through techniques as varied as staged unveiling ceremonies, collective hijab burnings, media propaganda, and enforcing (European) Islamic family laws, the French pursued a systematic effort to avow modernity through the control of women’s Islamic dress (Macmaster 2009; see Boittin et al. 2011). Accordingly, the movement against the hijab was ‘one facet of a much broader and repressive attempt to expand state power in the name of a particular kind of modernity’ loaded with patriarchy and gendered control (Cole 2012: 219). Here, it is important to highlight the sexual dimensions of this control and the fashioning of the colonised nation as a feminine space for the constructed masculine coloniser’s (sexual) gratification.

Baldi (2017c) argues that this colonial effort has fixed the Islamic dress and objectified its wearer, stripping away ‘the plurality of meaning and performative outcomes’ that had long imbued it for its forging into a ‘monolithic and static symbol of state/national identity’ (Baldi 2017c: 44). As a rhetoric movement, such nationalist birth in the post-colonial South is itself powerfully structured by the western gaze as women and their control become the obsession of a patriarchal and misogynist (westernising) nationalist thought (Baldi 2017c; Miller and Wilford 1998). ‘Islamic nationalism’, Baldi (2017c) further showcases, has taken this baggage forward to be shaped in the image of its western aggressor in the post-colonial epoch. Worth noting here is that this fixing has been directed at women’s dress to the exclusion of men’s wear, evidencing how it is women’s

‘body [that] emerges as the biological reproducer of ethnic/national group boundaries, the transmitter of ideology and culture, and as signifier of ethnic/national differences’ in the pursuit of the ‘imagined community’ and its imagined culture, identity, and subjectivity (Baldi 2017c: 45; Hogan 2009).¹¹

With the end of formal colonialism, this effort continued, rebranded under various banners and pursued through various actors, while anti-hijab discourses circulating across the Islamic world were re-mobilised (Ahmed 1993; Aljouhari 2007; Cooke 2010; Saadawi 1997; Shaaban 1995; Shaheed 2008).¹² In this movement to erase the hijab, the literature suggests the state as the most powerful and aggressive agent, as is the case in the Global North. Key here is a realisation of a powerful secular-religious binary that was introduced as an essential element of post-colonial nation-building, and an awareness that this binary was a gendered one (Al-Ali 2000; Kandiyoti 1991).

A key example of such a movement is Turkey, the Ottomans’ previous home. There, starting but not ending with Atatürk, the hijab appeared in political discourse as one of the central elements in an all-encompassing project of refashioning Turkey into a glorious and powerful nation for the future (Kasaba 2010). At the core of this project was a pursuit of modernity, explicitly understood as European and western, and a desire to distance the Turkish nation from Islam (Kasaba 2010). With this, a large question of public concern arose, with ‘Turkish’ history, law, and morals all colliding to construct the Islamic dress as a sign of the past which needed to be overcome. Indeed, in the post-Ottoman moment, the creation of a modern Turkish state became powerfully dependent on the bodies of women expected to be the site of ‘the formation of the enlightened, modern Western-style nation Turkey aspires to be’ (Shively 2005: 46; Saktanber and Çorbacioğlu 2008). From that moment on, those who chose the hijab were, in this frame, rejecting the state’s governing ethos and violating its core principle: these were hazards and ‘violations that require state regulation’ (Shively 2005: 46). Eventually, the dress emerged as a site of gendered nation-state control and affirmation as the new-born sovereign pursued a mimicry of its creator, spreading its control across its newly-found citizenry and

¹¹ See Federici (2014) for an analysis of the history of the body into modernity.

¹² These constructions are deeply woven with Christian, Eurocentric and imperial categories and understandings of matters ranging from the idea of women itself to self-formation and purity. An exploration of this nevertheless remains beyond the scope of this dissertation.

enforcing an agenda of modernity on and through the bodies of women. The newly found state inherited its European patron's sexism and patriarchy, it became apparent.

In the 1980s, the tides began to change in Turkey as a result of complex geopolitical and internal shifts, while state policy began to gradually pursue a project of religion's de-privatisation and re-valorisation (Yeğenoğlu 2011). Yet, it must be made clear, the hijabi stigma proved powerful and long persisted at the intersection of national belonging, women's emancipation, the security of the nation and its planned progress and modernity (Kasaba 2010; Shively 2005). Indeed, the hijab continued to be constructed and projected as a lacking, as a threat: a threat to the Kemalist legacy, the secular identity of the nation and, eventually, to the modern Turkish republic itself. In light of these realities, the re-legitimisation of the hijab was no smooth process (Turkmen 2012). It was only in 2010 that, for example, the ban on the hijab in universities was lifted, as new spaces where the dress was included complexly emerged in a manner which 'belies attempts to delineate clearly bounded spaces, subjects, and ideologies [regarding the hijab] that have become vital to secular modern, nationalist, and orientalist representations' (Gökarıksel 2012: 4).

In another example that has received major scholarly attention, Iran in the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a state-run all-encompassing program of Europeanizing the people by the *Shah*, with the hijab, again, at the centre (Chehabi 1993). Through 'sartorial social engineering', Iran, like Turkey, was taught by European colonisers that 'government could form new people' and sought to erect the modern nation-state through processes of standardisation and domination (Chehabi 1993; Sedghi 2007). To this end, 'civil society' institutions were invented and put in place with the 'Lady's centre' in Tehran being a prime example; producing a discourse of an inter-linked women's emancipation and a shedding of religious traditions where dress figured prominently, if not primarily. Meanwhile, the state relentlessly introduced laws, official bodies and various discourses pushing for a break with the Islamic and mimicry of the European (Chehabi 1993; Sedghi 2007).

In accordance with this, particularly post-1936, systematic state efforts sought to construct the hijab as backwardness, as tradition, and as renounced religiosity: all in opposition with the required civility, modernity and progress of Europe (Rajaei 2007; Zahedi 2007). Accordingly, the 'modernizing discourse' adopted focused on the emancipatory effects of gender heterosocialiation. Through its desegregation policies,

‘the state sought to modernize Iranian women and transform them into publicly visible citizens’ (Shahrokni 2013: 3). The modernisation of women, the narrative claimed, stood deeply contingent upon unveiling as official policy and law sought out a shift of dress ‘to modernize Iranian women—or rather, an attempt to exhibit them as signifiers of Iran’s modernity’ (Shahrokni 2013: 4). In reflecting on the period of the Pahlavi regime, Chehabi (1993) summarises the question as thus: “‘modernization’” was literally staged, with directors who had not fully understood the play and actors who had not volunteered for their parts’, in a movement erected on the ‘plight of ordinary people’ for a trifling return (Chehabi 1993: 229).

These policies, going against both established customs and religious beliefs, stirred great controversy and were met with significant opposition from the Iranian masses. Albeit varied across regions and classes – with urban populations, especially in Tehran, and the upper-middle-class appearing to accept the new rules – people throughout the nation mobilised in multiple forms and contested the imposition (Chehabi 1993; Yeganeh 1993). The issue soon turned into a grave security one with police raids, shootings and fatalities all occurring, as the effort to enforce the new code of western dress persisted (Amin 2002; Talachian 2004). Here, the state stood its ground and the crusade against the hijab was gradually institutionalised with the support of various non-state actors (Chehabi 1993; Talachian 2004). Eventually, constructed as a political contestation of the Pahlavi vision and programme of returning Iran to its past glory, the hijabi woman was criminalised and greatly confined as European wear became the norm.

Ultimately, this was nothing but a potent manifestation of Europeanisation forced on masses that attempted resistance, a resistance to be violently stifled by the colonially invented and sustained ‘sovereign’. While the question was not systematically or explicitly framed as being a question of women’s emancipation, the state did present its all-encompassing policy using the language of rights and claimed that its actions were to relieve ‘the plight of ordinary people’ through offering modernity and development (Chehabi 1993: 228). The result, as usually is in ‘modern’ projects of ‘relief’, was the wounding of large masses (of women) and the breach of the most basic of rights.

When Rouhollah Khomeini overthrew the regime and established the Islamic Republic in 1979, the dogma changed. Then, an entire system of modesty was to be put in place and, at the centre of it, laid the Iranian woman as ‘the hallmark of the new Shiite nation’

(Mottahedeh 2008: 2). The matter did not stop there, and the hijab was actually used, transformed, into an icon through which Iran would attempt to shatter the image of the downtrodden Eastern woman and present a hijabi political activist engaged in military exercise, demonstrations, social debates and public issues (Mottahedeh 2008). Of special relevance was the entry of the Iranian woman into the armed forces, presented to the world through a media overflowing with *chadoris* (hijabi wearing an Iranian style loose black cloak) undertaking military training. Nationally, the hijab became law and all women were required to cover their hair, or face legal repercussions. Here, the gendered European fixing of the dress under the modern state persisted (Baldi 2017c; Sedghi 2007). In either case, across the years, in Iran as in Turkey, the hijab stigma might appear to have been dismantled as the dress spread and reclaimed legitimacy and standing.

In Tunisia, as an Arab example, a highly similar process unfolded, building on the long colonial effort to push Tunisian women to abandon the hijab. Indeed, after ‘independence’, the state adopted a modernising project and pursued an anti-hijab agenda as the dress was constructed as being in contrast with the desired, and needed, modernity. The state, in this, followed the coloniser and adopted the strictest of measures enforced with significant violence and intolerance: ‘during this time wearing hijab in public, urban areas was unwise’ (Hawkins 2011). Indeed, as the Tunisian nation was being erected, its orientation was clearly ‘the West’ and the anti-hijab policy specifically sought ‘to show the West that Tunisia was committed to secularism and democracy’ (Cotton 2006: 3). In this respect, throughout Tunisian history since independence, the hijab has been constructed as, fundamentally, ‘a physical manifestation of Islamist support’ threatening both state and nation and requiring strict control and prevention (Cotton 2006: 4). Throughout, Tunisian women have been forced to navigate these conditions at the political, social, and domestic levels where both ‘localized structures of patriarchy’ and westernising modernising ones continue to aggress their experiences as they pursue ‘liberation beyond emancipation and secularization’ and the alienating ‘forced feminism’ they are pushed into by the Tunisian state (Cotton 2006: 37). Since then, and until the Tunisian uprising in 2011, an anti-hijabi public, policy, and legal structure remained in place with the pursuit of modernisation where ‘within the Tunisian state ideology of modernity, hijab by its very nature cannot be modern. It is something different’ (Hawkins 2011: 52). After the 2011 uprising, this again appears to have lessened to then re-emerge and remain contested and unsettled.

Another key example explored in the literature is that of Egypt, where a powerful unveiling trend during the first half of the twentieth century was inspired by the discourse of modernity, as unveiling became ‘an emblem of an era of new hopes and desires, and of aspirations for modernity’ and the hijab became a rare sight, even in rural areas (Ahmed 2014: 39).¹³ This, as ever, was preceded by a colonial and a pre-colonial phase, where Islamic dress was presented by colonial and complicit social actors, including missionaries, as backward, oppressive, and in deep need of reform (Ahmad 2001). During this time, the hijabi woman was stigmatised as a regressive person who refused to modernise, as the colonised, and then the post-colonial, nation pursued a semblance to Europe. This shift, data indicates, greatly unfolded through the introduction of European fashion, with newly introduced clothing stores across urban centres, to invade and control the Egyptian market. With this alteration in the norms and habits of dress, the veil was affirmed and reaffirmed as an object of ‘vulnerability or promiscuity’, while veiled women were increasingly harassed in the streets at the intersection of sexism and modernity (Baron 1989). The important role of the privatisation and control of both sexuality and religion under the modern post-colonial state, as Mahmood (2012, 2015) elaborates, is here essential.¹⁴ Consequently, and in a short time frame, the dress gradually disappeared from schools, institutions, and the public sphere, with public figure Huda Al-Shaarawi’s removal of the (face) veil in 1923 signalling the successful culmination of an urban elite-led era which had begun long before (Baron 1989; Fay 2012).

Yet, this was not to last, as it did not last in Turkey and Iran. According to Ahmed (2014), the veil returned in the second half of the twentieth century after multiple phases of its erasure, including a phase where the state and its Arab nationalist ideology heavily intervened. At this point, the era of unveiling was ‘being quietly erased from Muslim memory, and even Muslim history’, to be portrayed as ‘a secular age’ that the nation had awoken, and repented, from (Ahmed 2014: 74). These nations are said to have therefore come full circle: ‘all women (Muslim and non-Muslim) were veiled before 1925. By the 1950s, a veiled woman in the Egyptian cities was a rarity. In the 1970s, the veil started reappearing in the streets, but it was by then a strictly Islamic product. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, unveiled women became a one-off’ (Saleh 2010: 34). Here too, one is left with the impression that the hijab has been re-legitimised, normalised, even

¹³ For an excellent reconstruction of the history of women and their social conditions in Egypt under Mamluk rule, refer to Fay (2012).

¹⁴ Also see here Chatterjee (1986).

esteemed and rendered a requirement within the contemporary cultures of Islamic countries for Muslim subjects.¹⁵

The west and its shadow did not, it becomes apparent, (only) pursue the control of western citizenry by rejecting the hijab among its midst. Rather, much wider control was pursued, where the hijab figured as a central element in the enforcement of the western uni-verse across the Arab and Islamic worlds. Indeed, these examples illustrate how the newly established nation-states of the Global South in a post-colonial moment both sought to mimic and continue the sexist legacy of the Imperial powers, as they pursued the construction of their citizenry in the image of the imagined civilised, European and modern. In this sense, the hijab was a prime object of colonialism and, most importantly, of coloniality. Today, both literature and public discourse suggest significant (gradual) shifts whereby the situation of hijabis in the Global South has, and continues to, improve.

2.2.2. Exclusion and Resistance: from Tradition to Modern-Islamic and Fashion-Modern

While Islamophobia is at times assumed to be limited to the west, research indicates its global prevalence. Despite this, its study has been ‘largely dismissed in Muslim countries’, as it has been presented as a western phenomenon (Yel and Nas 2014: 568; El Zahed 2019).¹⁶ In one of the rare empirical works seeking to address this gap, Yel and Nas (2014) take the case of Turkey to explore the intricate workings of Islamophobia and how the ‘peculiar image of Islamic lifestyle, which is hierarchically positioned lower than the representations of secular lifestyle’, permeates Turkish society (Yel and Nas 2014: 569). Exploring this, Yel and Nas (2014) argue for the reading of the ongoing modernist, secularist, and capitalist Turkish project – regardless and despite of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule for many years – as one of systematic anti-Muslim racism in the cultural sphere and beyond, as they affirm Islamophobia’s prevalence in the Muslim-majority country. In this Islamophobia, they find, Islamic dress (for women) functions as a prime symbol, where its wearers ‘are considered as the signifier of Islam

¹⁵ See Kosba (2018) and Abdelkader (2018).

¹⁶ While this has been documented in various geographies, the focus here will be on exclusion within the Islamic-majority and Arabic-speaking world. For a non-Arab and non-Islamic example, refer to Eum’s (2017) theorisation of the intersection of ‘Islamophobia, ethno-nationalism, and reproduced Orientalism’ resulting in a complicated experience of exclusion and abuse for veiled Muslim women in Korea. Another example here is Zainal and Wong (2017) exploring the lived experiences of hijabis in Singapore.

and the anxiety that stems from it' (Yel and Nas 2014: 578). As a result, Muslim women are subject to various practices of patriarchal governmentality: from a ban on television screens to exclusionary policies in education and various public sectors.

Auerbach (2017), focusing on university students in Turkey, finds that hijabis are consistently disadvantaged in the labour market, consistently paid less, and forced to relinquish various social, political and economic activities and events if they choose to commit to the Islamic dress. In analysing how the hijab is combatted, Auerbach (2017) also identifies a key role for space where a 'policing [of] the borders of cultural territory and reinforcing the symbolic significance of a particular cultural orientation to a particular place' pushes the hijabi into a position of exclusion through 'neighbourhood pressure' (Auerbach 2017: 228). In the case of her participants, this primarily involved negative looks and comments from family, peers, professors, neighbours, and strangers (Auerbach 2017: 229). Despite this spread, the majority of experiences are reported to occur in public spaces, with strangers, as the hijabi is drawn out to be the object of much marginalisation. While Auerbach (2017) commits her work to a politics of liberal tolerance and 'mutual acceptance' fostered in 'neutral' spaces such as 'liberal universities', her data and analysis evidence the state of the hijab's rejection and the hijabi's subjugation.

At multiple junctures, such exclusions have been acknowledged as the 'trauma of forced unveiling' (Kahf 2008). Yet, eventually, little work beyond the Turkish context exists, especially in Arab countries, as the focus of the literature remains elsewhere and anti-hijabi policies, practices and lived experiences are left unexplored. Of great relevance here is that while a small emergent literature has begun documenting and voicing the hijab's racialisation and the ensuing wounded lived experiences of erasure and loss in the contemporary Global North, even such preliminary attempts remain largely absent in the Global South, especially in the *Mashreq* (the eastern part of the Arabic-speaking world) and in Lebanon. Despite this, some work seeking to answer other questions provides data and conceptualisations of relevance. From this scholarship, two key realisations can be made.

The first insight relates to a conceptualisation of the 'modern Muslim woman' where a 'new' hijab is advanced and presented as the symbol and/or the site of a 'new' generation of Muslim women combining 'both public images of virtue and dutiful religiosity, and the pursuit of economic, social and personal independence' consistently framed as

‘modern’ endeavours (Mouser 2007: 172; Kaya 2000; Rozario 2006; Wright 2011). The hijabi, this literature argues, must not be understood as a political agent rejecting modernity since the resurging dress is a phenomenon of urbanised, educated, middle-class women: these are, we are told, women produced, enabled and empowered by the very modernity that their dress is claimed to reject (Brenner 1996; Göle 1997; Kaya 2000; Sandikci and Ger 2001; Smith-Hefner 2007). Here, modernity is conceptualised as urbanisation, education, rationality, freedom and women’s rights, all entwined with Europe and the west, as the emerging hijab is fashioned as a tool through which the Muslim woman accesses modernity without relinquishing her religious/cultural identity, in line with liberal notions of the subject and claims for colonial multicultural orders. Eventually, modernity is claimed to have ‘been able to modernize its critiques or enemies’, as it has ‘enabled them [hijabis] through education and rationality, to question traditional Islam and traditional Muslims’ through their new hijab (Kaya 2000: 208). In this light, an observed shift in the shape of the dress is positively offered where modernity itself is reproduced as the horizon, a horizon the ‘new hijabi’ appears to ascribe to, ultimately reproducing the undesirability of the hijab as tradition and arguing for the legitimacy of the hijab as modernity.

Varieties of this framing seem to have long been implicit (or explicit) across works in the hijab scholarship. For example, El-Guindi (1981, 2000) frames the resurgence of the dress as ‘the beginning of a synthesis between modernity and authenticity’, whereby the women fashion, and control, a mode of life that brings together the western and the Islamic (El Guindi 1981: 465).¹⁷ Similarly, MacLeod (1992) speaks of the ‘re-emerging’ hijab as ‘a new form of hijab’ with a strategically shifted shape (MacLeod 1992: 545). More recently, the phenomenon labelled as ‘pink hijab’, in reference to colourful and exorbitant forms of Islamic dress worn in multiple Arab countries during and after the so-called ‘Arab spring’, has been considered ‘a declaration of activist intent’ where a particular colour and shape of the hijab affirms the wearer’s public engagement, as opposed to other forms of the dress where the hijabi remains ‘sequestered’ (Wright 2011).

Furthermore, similar framings can be found much closer to this dissertation. Deeb (2006) here explains that Lebanese hijabis are highly ‘modern women’: educated, urban, tech-savvy and rational. In this, she offers the hijab as a ‘pious modern’: a state where the

¹⁷ For an interesting postcolonial exploration of this ‘human rights’ vs. ‘Muslim rights’ debate, see Lee (2008).

Islamic dress forms an inherent component of modernity. In a similar vein, Deeb and Harb (2013) offer a conceptualisation of a developing amalgamation of modern and Islamic identities among middle- and upper-class pious Muslim women in Beirut's Southern suburb whose commitment is to a specific hijab synthesising the various elements of their unique identity. In this respect, hijabi women are argued to be modern women of a particular sort, as their inclusion into modernity stands on their traits of rationality, technological ability, education, and cultural practices.

Presenting an original analysis centring piety for both the understanding of the hijab and participants' subjectivities, Deeb (2006) also notes that the hijab 'stigma' in mainstream Lebanese society persists whereby 'the headscarf also figured into the stereotyping of Shi'is as backward and nonmodern, reflecting the discourses that link modern-ness with secularism' (Deeb 2006: 113). Yet, her work does not offer clear data about the materialisation of this amalgamation, nor does it take up the question of stigmatisation, nor that of its repercussions on participants' lives. Further, the focus of this narrative suggests a stigmatisation limited to non-Shia segments of the population, leading one to think that the stigma has been erased within the Shia community, perhaps within the wider Muslim one. Throughout, acts of lived discrimination are not presented or discussed and the hijabi's experiences of Lebanese society are left undocumented and unexplored. With a proclaimed 'modern' hijab both valued and advanced by a supposedly 'critical' scholarship, this scholarship largely ascribes to modernity as gendered erasure and loss remain invisibilised.

In line with this, the second set of insights that may be drawn relates to a parallel emergence of the category of 'fashion hijabs', and 'hijabistas' (Hassan and Harun 2016). Offered as a key factor for why 'modern women' decide to wear the Islamic dress (Hassan and Harun 2016; Indarti and Peng 2016), a 'fashion hijab' is suggested as a phase of increased modernity: one where the Islamic is quietened and the individualistic, capitalist and consumerist are amplified, while nevertheless remaining somehow 'authentic to religious tenets' (El-Bassiouny 2018: 303; Hassan and Harun 2016). Echoing and developing this, a body of work has emerged to explore the hijab's 'transformation' into an object of fashion, status and western-style leisure across the Arab and Islamic worlds (Al Qasimi 2010; Craciun 2017; DeCoursey 2017; Lindholm 2013; Moors 2007; Trainer 2017). Often framed through theories of globalisation, glocalization and cosmopolitanism, this scholarship frequently pursues a critique and a dismantling of

Orientalist narratives around the oppression, the reductionism, and the erasure of the Muslim woman. Yet, in doing this, much of this work ascribes to a logic of linear progress with modernity as its horizon. Accordingly, it consistently offers the Islamic dress as a key site where the 'Islamic modern' is pushed into a specific system of inhabiting the social world, with individualism, distinction, consumption, and capital at the core (Craciun 2017: Introduction).

For example, the fashion hijab has been proposed as a site of mergers allowing some Arab women to be 'simultaneously vain and modest, global and local, and modern and traditional', as they 'act upon envy' to the western lifestyle, 'one-up the envied' and 'provoke local others' envy' (Sobh et al. 2014: 408). The result of this is recorded as being a state which is 'a far cry from the original intent of covering for the sake of modesty and curbing envy within Islam', where a 'pursuit of modernity within an increasingly global consumer culture' unfolds through the dress which becomes a means of 'covering' modernisation, naturalised as a 'normal human' necessity (Sobh et al. 2014: 408). The ensuing losses are here left unexplored, and the entangled reproduction is left naturalised. Similarly, Sobh et al. (2014) record the attempts of hijabis to downplay 'religious obligation' as a factor for wearing the dress, which has become a 'powerful combination' of culture, modernity, and fashion (Sobh et al. 2014: 24). Indeed, the literature notes how women in Indonesia, for example, 'justified their veiling as following the current fashion'; as colourful hijabs with 'low-cut hipster jeans exposing part of their belly' are 'considered trendy and associated with an up-market life style' rather than through discourses of belief and religious ascription (Wagner et al. 2012: 532). Consistently, this is not analysed in the structural dimensions of what it produces or reproduces or in the ability to challenge assumptions prevalent in the scholarship.

The literature accordingly showcases the entanglement between this emerging form of Islamic dress, pivoting around the concept of modernity, and the formation of a neo-liberal capitalist society where social and economic class differences and distinctions are increasingly sedimented. Eventually, the literature has alluded to the shifts this emerging dress entails for norms, customs, social habits, and Islamic principles, even epistemology. Yet, throughout this scholarship, these shifts are largely positively viewed as the natural progression into modernity: from forms of emancipation to evidence of Arab and Muslim women's proclaimed liberation and to expressions of mobility and enablement. All else is left unspoken.

Based on the above, a crucial insight must be made explicit: there are various forms of Islamic dress, these forms are perceived differently and, most importantly, they are positioned hierarchically as they are entangled with a system of avowals and disavowals. Specifically, the literature may be the basis for affirming that a specific and ‘new’ form of the hijab is emerging as valorised and that this form is constructed in opposition to older forms while religion and tradition are, consequently, renounced. With this, one can begin to problematise the assumption claiming that the hijab stigma has receded in the Global South to an extent where the dress has been normalised and the claim that ‘in a majority Muslim context, a particular item of Islamic dress such as the veil is not a contested issue and therefore is not questioned’ (Wagner et al. 2012: 532). It accordingly raises the question of which hijab is ‘resurging’ and invites an exploration of the reproductions involved and the hegemonies affirmed through such a resurgence, a questioning of its structuring engine, pushing for an inquiry into the ensuing losses and the enforced affirmations.

Before closing, a few notes can be made regarding the hijabi women’s pursuit of legitimisation. Offering a somewhat systematic engagement with the question of legitimisation, Akbulut (2011) specifically identifies two discourses of resistance against the anti-hijab movement circulating among Turkish women. The first claims the need for civic forms of activism, through NGOs, demonstrations, and rallies. The second argues that this activism will not secure the right to wear the headscarf and that Muslim women should, instead, combat the exclusion of pious Muslim women through developing themselves at the levels of education and careers (Akbulut 2011). In both, resistance either unfolds through ‘civil society’ or through education and involvement in the market.

In addition to this, while the literature provides little, one can identify desexualising the body, combatting commercialisation, resisting material consumerist culture and an affirmation of identity as central throughout this scholarship. Further, the literature points to the drawing on the rights discourse by women as they made claims vis-à-vis the state and demanded that their dress be granted the legitimacy of existing. In Turkey, for example, hijabis have made claims ‘defining the headscarf ban in Turkey as discrimination, a restriction of their civic rights, and a violation of their individual freedoms’ (Ahmed-Ghosh 2015: 131). Indeed, through civil rights organisations and forms of collective action specifically anchored in a modern human rights-based discourse, Turkish women are said to have managed to advance their cause and push for

what they believed to be the only solution possible to the headscarf debate: ‘the democratization of Turkey and extension of freedoms to everyone’ (Ahmed-Ghosh 2015: 131).

Similar conceptualisations have also been found elsewhere, for example in Saudi Arabia, where women have justified and claimed their abayas ‘using the language of personal rights’ (De Coursey 2017: 24). In Egypt, Ahmed (2014) similarly remarks how claims-making was seeped in discourses of gender equality and ‘equality for minorities’, as hijabis pursued a demand through a rights-based discourse (Ahmed 2014: 133). Ultimately, despite its valuable insights, this literature often speaks with the words and grammar of ‘human rights’, premised on a Eurocentric ontology, as it fails to problematise modernity’s episteme, the structures producing a legitimisation through the discourses, and investigate the losses involved.

2.3. Conclusion

While the hijab has drawn much scholarly attention, it has done so as part of its construction as a social problem and the establishment of the Eurocentric regime of truth on the ontological, epistemological, and ethical levels (Bracke and Fadil 2011). Eventually, the west, including its academia, obsessed with a colonial privilege to represent, has largely remained incapable of listening, as it has proven itself patriarchal, sexist, and incapable of understanding other forms of being (Al-Saji 2010). In this respect, a brief survey of the literature on the hijab reveals how questions and answers are always brought back into the Eurocentric frames of reference, rendering all else silence and limiting contestation to the terms established by hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies entangled with the state, as much of the scholarship stands ahistorical and apolitical (Al-Saji 2010; Baldi 2016, 2017b; Dhanda 2008; Gressgård 2006).

In this chapter, I have sidestepped much of the academic debates around Islamic dress, as I have focused on specific issues of relevance to this dissertation’s commitments and pursuits. Exploring the nation-state-hijab relation in the Global North, I have argued that empire, neo-colonialism, and racialisation are central, as the patriarchal misogynist western sovereign pursues its uni-verse. I then turned to showcase the resulting impact and wounding, the seriousness of the aggression and its effect, as well as the hijabi’s systematic exclusion, oppression, and stigmatisation at the intersection of assaulting variables. This, ultimately, revealed a serious gap in a scholarship whose main interests

remained distant from the subalternised's lived experiences. In line with this, I attempted to explore some of the strategies of resistance mobilised by hijabis to showcase how they are largely structured by a European liberal paradigm, while noting the unsatisfactory account provided by the literature in this respect.

Turning to the Global South, I showcased how the erasure of the hijab was pursued by both direct colonial administration as well as subsequent invented nation/states, as I attempted to offer some of this movement's particularities. With this, the hijab evidently revealed itself as an object of gendered sexist global coloniality. I have also shown how the literature proposes this aggression as a historical process that has largely ended with the 'resurgence' of Islam across the world. Yet, through a shifted exploration of this same literature, I have explored how it itself showcases the persisting stigma in various geographies as modernity remains the pivot structure and concern. Drawing out the modern hijab and the fashion hijab in the literature as clear evidence of this persistence, with the entangled assumptions and normativity involved, I have noted the current scholarship's commitment to the western paradigm, and its failure to offer an analysis of the conditions and the structures under which hijabis live in the modern world. Most importantly, I have shown how the literature often frames lived experiences from within a Eurocentric episteme, while it systematically conceals erasures, losses involved and the implications of the phenomenon it identifies. Focused on what is and what is becoming, the literature neglected what was being lost, what was being erased, and the experiences of violence involved.

Based on the above, the Islamic hijab is shown to be a prime object of colonial and modern control, domination, and erasure. Subsequently, it offers itself as a key site through which colonial/modern control and erasure may be theorised and understood. In this respect, and as I contribute to some of the many gaps identified in this chapter and to a documentation of some of the hijabi's experiences of erasure and loss in the contemporary Global South as I seek to delve into this colonial/modern erasure, the next chapter will lay the theoretical foundation for this dissertation's decolonising pursuit.

Chapter Three: Theorisation and Decolonial Critiques

This dissertation aims at a theoretical contribution for a better understanding of modern erasure. Accordingly, theory forms both the tools which it uses to engage with its data as well as what it seeks to contribute to and develop. As a critical work concerned with the structures of the modern condition, it is critical theoretical traditions that are therefore of relevance. The westernised academy has a long and thriving tradition of critical scholarship: from Freud to Nietzsche and to the Frankfurt school. As valuable and insightful as this scholarship is, it remains born and confined by Euro-America and its experiences: from history and categories to its position as Empire (Ansems De Vries et al. 2017; Mignolo 2011e; Vázquez 2012). Trapped in a logic of uni-versalism and conditioned by a position of arrogance, the western tradition we have today is ‘inherently epistemically sexist and racist’ where even the left-tradition remains trapped in ‘a coloniality of knowledge’ (Grosfoguel 2012b: 101). With limitations that should, therefore, not be disavowed, these critiques are particularly problematic when they are made to travel outside of Euro-America.¹⁸ For myself, my participants, and my purposes in this dissertation, a different critique was required. I needed an external critique; born out of a different body and a different mind, out of a different epistemic location. I needed an external critique for this work to be itself a contribution toward external critiques.

First, I needed a theorisation which does not parachute Euro-America onto Lebanon: I needed a theorisation which does not arrogantly reproduce the academy’s eurocentrism, constructs, categories, and binaries. Rather, I needed one which challenges them. Second, I needed a theorisation which can interpellate the experiences of my own participants as it takes them seriously: I needed a theorisation which would, as best as possible, engage with lived experiences as they were experienced by those living them. Third, I needed a theorisation which connected the local with the global as well as with the historical: I needed a theorisation which made sense in an imperially interconnected world structured by its history. Fourth, I needed a theorisation which would be legible in the westernised

¹⁸ These traditions have much to offer. While many within these traditions have, especially of late, attempted to discuss the histories of Empire and global inequalities, they have often failed to escape the epistemological lens of colonialism. The Frankfurt school, for example, is loaded with Eurocentric categories and constructs as it commits to the Eurocentric Uni-versal. Nevertheless, this remains beyond the scope of this chapter.

academy and which I could, as someone trained in this academy, make sense of in line with the wider realities – social, economic, and political – of the contemporary world.

In recent years, a decolonial turn, external critiques, have begun to enter the westernised academic institution.¹⁹ Multiple, they represent an ongoing attempt to disrupt hegemonic discourses, challenge the terms of the conversation, and change its agents. Accordingly, I will draw on these critiques in this dissertation to ground, explore and conceptually engage with this project's data collected in Lebanon. While I will attempt and engage with various strands of this decolonial turn, the theoretical foundations I draw on can largely be located with the work of the Latin American collective who have produced an epistemic, academic, and political option that attempts to make sense of the globe's current reality to liberate humankind from the European horizon as fatality, as closure. Pursuing this, it must be realised that none of the choices made here implies a belief in final and universal conceptualisations, in internal necessities to my research question and/or topic, or in any given framing being the only possible one through which this exploration could have taken place. What I present in this chapter remains, eventually, a series of deliberate choices made by a specific researcher in a specific moment for specific purposes. Before exploring this further, a few notes are in order regarding what I have been referring to as internal and external critiques. First, it must be realised that the external-internal is not a binary. External critique means a critique born out of a different locus of enunciation than that of the Eurocentric coloniser, it means a critique which breaks with the 'Imperial being' and his (as it is regularly that of the 'white man') binaries, his categorical logic, his racism, and his unpositioned self-generated uni-versality. In this sense, external critique here is understood as a contribution towards 'decolonising knowledge and beings...to solve the problems in which the damnés have been placed as damnés' (Mignolo 2012: 19). Accordingly, it provides a view of the global 'mechanisms of subjugation' governing our contemporary world in the quest to abolish them (Vázquez 2012: 71). External critique, in this sense, does not mean a pure external that is romanticised or ideologised under either a 'relativism of "everything goes"' nor an epistemic populism where everything said by a "subalternized" subject is already equivalent to "critical thinking"' (Grosfoguel 2012b: 101). Further, this external is touched by coloniality, not 'pure not absolute' and 'not the ontic outside of Europe but the outside built into the process of building European "interiority"' (Mignolo 2018: 380)

¹⁹ See Maldonado-Torres (2011) and Issue 2, Volume 1 of *Transmodernity Journal*.

as it holds the ‘geopolitics and bodypolitics of knowledge of this exteriority or relative marginality’ from which decolonial thinking can emerge (Grosfoguel 2012b: 97). Identifying this exteriority means the identification of critical thinkers and knowledges that emerge from various (colonised) traditions of thought, with Other genealogies. These are what I refer to (interchangeably) as external critiques and decolonial critiques. The modernity/(de)coloniality collective is, in this sense, one of these.

Eventually, this project is a movement of thought which will build on decolonial critiques and listening to demonstrate and conceptualise how modernity/coloniality pursues subjugation, appropriation, and representation to better understand how systematic erasure is pursued, as I pursue my own decolonisation.

3.1. Decolonial Theorisation

Starting around the 1990s, the decolonial studies collective, also referred to as the modernity/(de)coloniality collective or the modernity/coloniality group among others, has pioneered a deeply influential theorization.²⁰ The collective’s work has sought to tackle questions ranging from ontology and epistemology to the daily lived: covering the coloniality of knowledge, the coloniality of power, and the coloniality of being (lived experiences). As a result of this scope and this dissertation’s objectives, this chapter will not pursue an exploration of the collective’s theorisation per se but will rather seek to present a series of tools of use for the coming chapters as it sets out this dissertation’s theoretical orientation.

As the modernity/coloniality scholarship is an oeuvre largely born out of the Americas and significantly inspired by the experiences of the Caribbean, it is important to note its applicability in Lebanon before moving on. This is, certainly, not in ascription to the mainstream assumption of Euro-American theory’s global applicability and southern theory’s parochialism (see Connel 2007), but rather in acknowledgment of the geo and bodypolitics of knowledge-making. I note here that, when I started working on this dissertation, the collective’s work was not the theoretical framework I had intended on using. Rather, the (different) work was to build on Butlerian (2006, 2011) performativity, Sara Ahmed’s (2006) phenomenology and Mahmood’s (2001a, 2001b, 2012a) bodily habitus. As I moved forward, and after the first phase of my fieldwork, the project shifted

²⁰ For a good presentation of the collective and its history, see Mignolo and Vázquez (2013) and Mignolo (2011e).

in focus (see chapter one) and, in light of my experiences in the field and the reorientation of the project, the modernity/coloniality collective's analytical tools were chosen: it was a powerful analytical fit, it beautifully echoed the narratives, even words, of my participants and it allowed me to make sense of what I experienced and perceived in the field. It is from the field, therefore, that its relevance emerges.

In further asserting this, it is useful to begin by noting that the collective's work is a speaking back to Euro-America and modernity which were, and are, the same agents in both the Americas and the *Mashreq*. In doing this, the collective has advanced a theorisation of coloniality, as a global structure of power, offering powerful analytical tools to make sense of the global contemporary world, rather than the experiences of a particular geography.²¹ On another level, the collective's theorisation is fundamentally concerned with exploring the local in its interconnectedness with the colonial/imperial global. Surely, this is the need in Lebanon the same way it is in Peru, without negating each case's particularities and differences. Indeed, while differences in mechanisms, techniques, histories, models, and formations do exist, the underlying logic and core of the mechanisms structuring these different regions is the same: modernity as the horizon, the avowals and disavowals involved, the appropriation and representation, the construction of Otherness, alterity, and racialisation where global dimensions are flagrantly visible. Indeed, this realisation can be firmly asserted by realising that the collective's work has itself largely been inspired by multiple authors from the Arab and Islamic worlds, as well as wider Asian schools and various African traditions, among others. From postcolonial scholars such as Said (2003), Spivak (2010) and Bahba (2004), to towering figures such as Fanon (2001, 2008) and to Césaire (2000), Albert Memmi (2016) and Ali Shariati (1980, 2005), the collective's work is certainly useful in analysing the colonised globe of our contemporary world.²²

That being said, had this thesis been an attempt to bring about policy changes and/or to make prescriptive or normative statements about what ought to be in Lebanon, matters might have been different. In other words, had I been trying to imagine alternatives for Lebanon, my usage of the modernity/coloniality collective would have been more circumscribed. For that, we would need a much more indigenous theorization that comes

²¹ For example, see Tlostanova (2015) on how it can be an option for post-soviet Asian countries.

²² For an excellent exploration of Postcolonial and Decolonial works and how, and where, they overlap or differ refer to Bhambra (2014).

out of the particular culture, ontology, epistemology, and reality of Lebanon through a local listening exercise with a focus on knowledges from the *Mashreq*, the Arab and the Islamic. But this is not what I wish to do here. Rather, what I wish to do is expose, analyse, make sense of, and critique the global order of modernity/coloniality for its redress.

In this respect, by empirically exploring the structures of modernity in a definite given case study, this dissertation is inherently remaining loyal to the specific context out of which it emerges. Further, it is here worth noting that I will not be relying exclusively on the collective's work but will complement this with a number of other critical works, especially in understanding some of the more micro-level processes I encountered in the field, as will become clear in the coming sections and chapters.

Before delving into the remainder of this chapter, a point ought to be made explicit regarding my positionality in theorising both in this chapter and throughout the remainder of this dissertation. As alluded to in the previous paragraphs, the west, arrogantly Imperial, has long sought to produce the myth of the 'god-eye view' in making knowledge and deciding for others (Grosfoguel 2012a, 2012b; Mignolo 2011a, 2009). It is of great importance to stress that this dissertation attempts to stay clear of such a position as best as possible. In this sense, I ascribe to the position that researchers find themselves in particular 'epistemic locations', which are not necessarily the same as their geographic or social locations, in which, and from which, they enunciate. Indeed, theorisation is contingent upon the situatedness of the enunciator within a particular space/place and body: the geo-politics and body-politics of knowledge must never be erased. This subject who speaks, who theorises, must not be erased. I must not be erased into an ego-politics of knowledge so as not to fall into the myth of a truthful universal knowledge produced from a detached abstracted positionless 'I' (Mignolo and Escobar 2009). This is not, in other words, a studying of the borders as a positionless observer. Instead, the theorisation elaborated in this chapter seeks a distance from my position, my location, without concealing that it is I as a subject of coloniality (with my race/ethnicity, my religion, my gender, my sexual orientation, my social class, my nationality, my history, my education and a myriad other elements that entangle to produce my locus of enunciation) who is theorising and without ignoring the geo- and body-politics of knowledge that govern what/how I theorise from and with the side of the colonised, from the Other side of the colonial difference, while being situated in the westernized academy (See Grosfoguel 2013; Mignolo 2002, 2009a). It is therefore worth noting here that I am, at the time of

this project, a 28-year-old able Lebanese male working from my own body as a racialised Shia Muslim from the Arabic speaking world, with brown skin, black hair and a short black beard. Coming from a nuclear heterosexual middle-class Shia family, with a standard Lebanese Beirut middle-class Arabic accent and academic and research work experience, I began to think alongside my participants and seek an understanding of the modern condition under which they live. With a French Christian school education, a French state high-school Baccalaureate, and a liberal arts university education at the American University of Beirut I worked with the data collected in the field. Eventually, these traits, and many others, had a great impact in both empowering and limiting this project, and in both making things visible while making other invisible. A fuller exploration of this, while of great value, remains beyond the limitations of this chapter.

Eventually, my position here, which I will return to in chapter four, is that of a particular subject arguing, to the best of my potential, alongside the perspective of the hijabi without claiming any monopolies, especially not one of representation, or conclusive Truths. Ultimately aware of the way thinking the locus of enunciation has been used by Europe to place knowledges, and humans, on a line of hierarchy (Grosfoguel 2013) and the fact such a concealment renders a pluri-versal horizon impossible and a true dialogue stillborn, such a trap is an ominous one that I am very cautious to avoid.

3.1.1. Modernity/Coloniality

Modernity here, it must first be clarified, is not understood as the latest stage in the long evolution of humanity which began, endogenously, in Europe with the reformation, the enlightenment and/or the industrial revolution. Rather, modernity as the current global order of power began in 1492, with the ‘discovery’ of the Americas and the establishment of a new world order, or better put of a world order of a new kind (Dussel 2000). As Granada fell and Islamic knowledge was being mass-burnt in Iberia, modernity began with the extermination of the Americas’ indigenous populations and knowledges with the pillaging of the continent to ‘develop’ Europe through a barbaric process of labour extraction and a sophisticated economy of slavery. Consequently, modernity is not a historical phase, nor an idea and not even a process. Rather, it is the western *project* of ‘civilization’ which only began with the ‘discovery’ of the Americas to then expand to the world. Civilisation here is an encompassing term that refers to the specific (contingent, non-hierarchised) epistemologies, knowledges, economies and social orders of colonising

Europe.²³ Hence, the ‘discovery’ of the Americas is centred as the historical and geo-political moment where the contemporary structures of power were conceived, ushering us into the current age. In this canon, modernity, seen from the outside of Europe, is the colonial/imperial pursuit of a uni-versal world where Europe is the present of history and the geographic centre of the world. Modernity is, ultimately, nothing but a rhetorical narrative concealing coloniality.

Coloniality has, accordingly, been developed by the group to refer to modernity’s movement revolving around appropriation and representation as a double negation pivoting around absencing and consumption (Vázquez 2012). In this sense, it ‘names something you do not see that works in what you do see’: something that is sensed through its effects (Mignolo 2018: 372). A movement built on an economy of exclusions in the metropole and an economy of erasure in the colonies it is, therefore, a series of techniques: from violence and genocide to epistemicide (the erasure of all non-European epistemologies) and earthlessness (the break with the earth and its consumption/destruction). Itself also far from being a historical process, coloniality is the concept used to refer to the reality of our contemporary world where ‘the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups [is exercised] by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administration’ (Grosfoguel 2010: 74, 2002). It is an epistemic lens that structures the social world (including the lived) and through which (provincial) knowledge continues to be produced and advanced as universal, essentially obscured by its normalisation in a western hegemonic discourse (Grosfoguel 2002, 2013; Mignolo 2012, 2018; Mignolo and Walsh 2018).

Modernity ultimately ‘designates the affirmation of “the real”, ranging from the material to the symbolic, whereas coloniality designates the denial and disavowal of all that belongs to the outside of that ‘reality’ (Vázquez 2012: 242).²⁴ Coloniality is hence the ongoing movement towards the affirmation of the world as modern and the erasure of all other worlds, towards the establishment of a monoculture and the negation of the pluriversality of the world (Grosfoguel 2012a; Mignolo 2012). Hence, Coloniality is not

²³ For a good brief exploration of the concept of ‘civilisation’, refer to Briand et al. (2018).

²⁴ By consequence, there is no room, with such a definition of modernity, for multiple modernities, alternative modernities or hybrid forms of modernity (see Bhabra 2007; Mignolo and Escobar 2009). Rather, room for alternatives to modernity is made.

colonialism: coloniality surpasses classical colonialism and the various forms of colonial administration and colonial presence. Coloniality is really nothing but modernity's darker side (Mignolo 2012: 17). The modernity/coloniality coupling is used to indicate this.

Here, a caveat must be stressed: the centring of 1492 with the 'discovery' of the Americas in no way means that the resulting theorisation is particular to the Americas or to the experiences of those in them. Surely, 1492 itself was a colossal year for the Islamic world with the Reconquista and the ensuing expulsions, collapses, and erasures as alluded to above. In either case, the fact that colonialism was a global phenomenon, with its expansive nature, means that something was put into practice with the Americas and then expanded, changing as it did, to the rest of the globe. Eventually, the experiences of the Americas, from their earliest days, would be inconceivable without the experiences of Africa and Asia, just as the experiences of Africa and Asia would be inconceivable had it not been for the events in the Americas. Accordingly, from the enslavement of Africans to the appropriation of various knowledges from Asia (from India to the Islamic traditions), the project was global from its very outset.²⁵ Even in itself, the 'discovery' of the Americas was a colossal event in the history of Asia, Africa and beyond as it shifted global geo-politics, altered commercial exchange, trade routes, resources, and commodities and disrupted global power balances.²⁶ Hence, the re-shifting of the onset of modernity to 1492 should not be read as a geo-centric move that comes out of Latin American centrism, but rather a global, analytical and necessary one for the understanding of our contemporary condition.²⁷

A few further points regarding modernity/coloniality are to be made before moving on. First, modernity/coloniality, also referred to as the global 'colonial matrix of power', can be said to revolve around four interrelated spheres: economy, authority, gender and sexuality, and subjectivity and knowledge (Lugones 2010; Mignolo 2011c, 2018).

²⁵ It must be noted here that this does not ignore the fact that colonialism in Africa began before the conquest of the Americas.

²⁶ Georges Saliba (2007), a historian of the Islamic civilisation, has argued that the 'discovery' of the Americas is the greatest event recorded in the history of humankind and one especially important for the Islamic world as it was a key element in bringing about its 'collapse'. Focusing on question of trade and the shifting of the global trade balance, the impact on the silk road and the loss of resources for Eastern civilisations, he argues that an understanding of the modern condition must begin with the discovery of the Americas.

²⁷ This is also found in some 'modern' literature. Stephen Toulmin (1992) for example locates the beginning of 'modernity' with 15th century humanists.

Accordingly, it is ‘a heterogeneous historico-structural node revealing the underlying structure that sustains and governs, in the larger sense of the word, the order of knowledge and manages the order of being’ (Mignolo 2018: 373-374). As elaborated on by Grosfoguel (2016) this is the matrix of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system’. On a second note, the colonial matrix of power must be understood as where the current form of capitalism and the corresponding capitalist world system were born, and materialised, in a (continuing) mutually forming process with colonialism. Third, and by consequence, modernity is here conceptualised as an inter-European phenomenon, instead of it being an intra-European one (see Bhabra 2007). The narrative of modernity as endogenous and European thereof becomes unsustainable. Modernity’s essence is thus conceptualised as a project of domination through the marking of all non-Europeans as ‘Others’ and the ‘subalternisation of the knowledges and cultures [of] those other groups’ (Escobar 2007: 184) for their ultimate erasure, the key issue of this dissertation.

Of particular relevance to this thesis, it must be noted that coloniality is a structure that is both Christian centric (in the sense of its political identity) and, simultaneously, secularising. In it, religion perpetually holds a key role. Indeed, with its narrative since the seventeenth century, coloniality has identified humanity with ‘being secular bourgeois’ where Christianity looms in the background (Maldonado-Torres 2014a, 2008; Mignolo 2009b: 14).²⁸ Moving from Christian modernity into a secularised modernity, ‘religion does not disappear altogether, but it acts in the complex union with nationalism and secularized racism, in fact, it acts through them’ (Tlostanova 2014: 97).

Indeed, religion and race, entwined and mutually constitutive, have co-emerged to play the most vital of roles ‘in the way peoples and societies have been depicted, conceived, approached, and organized’ as they have remained pivotal for coloniality’s movement (Maldonado-Torres 2014b: 690). In this respect, secularism, entwined with a specific understanding of history and the past, with a specific European set of experiences, with a specific definition of meaning and rationality, is a structuring component of coloniality

²⁸ It must be noted here that the Christianity I refer to throughout this dissertation is the European white Christianity of western Christendom transformed starting 1492 and turned into an identity, a locus of enunciation, a civilizational erasing project. See Mignolo (2009c) for an introduction of these transformations.

constantly accompanied with its Christian identity in the pursuit of the Eurocentric parochial uni-verse.

3.1.2. Colonial Difference

With its four axes outlined above, modernity is therefore understood as the means of the establishment of a particular world order which encompasses both the economic and the non-economic where non-Europeans, Othered and/or defined as ‘historical Europeans’, are expelled and excluded (Mignolo 2013: 326). Accordingly, the ‘European’, the modern, is constructed as the ‘pinnacle of a progressive transition’ colonising ‘space and time to create a narrative of difference’ (Mignolo 2013: 324) where other cultures could not be anything but inferior cultures and other people anything but inferior people. For Mignolo (2000), this narrative establishes the space of colonial difference: ‘the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories’ (Mignolo 2000: ix). In it, and through it, all Others are to be subsumed, enlightened, absorbed, changed, and eradicated by any and all means. In other words, modernity works through the delineation of a difference, marked by the non-European, to then declare that difference as a lack, exclude it, inferiorise it and dominate it, erase it (Mignolo 2007, 2013).

With the colonial difference in mind, modernity can be thought of as a project of ‘the redrawing of geographical borders and their simultaneous transformation into temporal stages of rationality and Modernity’ (Mignolo and Escobar 2013: 224; Mignolo 2011b). The result is situating colonial Europe in a locus of enunciation which allows it to fashion itself as the apex of reason, enlightenment, and civility and as the present of now while the rest of the world drowns in darkness, ignorance, and backwardness awaiting the European civility, science, and progress to erase their lacking (Mignolo 2011a, 2011b). This Otherness, this difference, becomes henceforth negatively marked as the before, as the less, as the dispensable. The result includes the creation of ‘ontological differences hierarchically organized in colonial forms as part of the modern civilizational order’ (Maldonado-Torres 2017: 123). Accordingly, the colonial difference is a foundational structure for the modern world and one which covers both fields of epistemology and of being: an ‘epistemic colonial difference’ and an ‘ontological colonial difference’.²⁹

²⁹ The concept of the imperial difference must here be noted as the extension of the colonial difference as applied to ‘Other Empires’ coexisting and competing with Europe’s empire. See Mignolo and Tlostanova (2008).

In this sense, the difference is the outside ‘that is constructed by the inside (civilized, imperial)’ in the process of hierarchical Othering – an Othering of the human – which began with the ‘discovery’ of the Americas and the reading of its inhabitants as Europe’s, and the human’s, past (Mignolo 2011e: 48).³⁰ A key concept here is the invented category of the human: ‘an invention of Western imperial knowledge rather than the name of an existing entity to which everyone will have access to’: controlled by some, always denied to others (Mignolo 2009: 11). Within this system of modernity/coloniality, the condition of becoming human is becoming modern. Without becoming human/modern, one has no right(s) to claim(s) and remains outside, ‘different’ and damned (Mignolo 2009). The question of rights here is central: being non-human or being classed into the zone of the non-human is not only a question of being aggressed upon, it is a question of being delegitimized from all forms of claims-making and resistance and being placed in a zone of non-existence to live a materiality of damnation (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 2017; Mignolo 2009). The lived implications of this are colossal where individuals are robbed of their legitimacy, their rights, and their dignity, and pushed in the service of specific imperial agendas, as this dissertation will attempt to show.

It is, indeed, a situation of all Others turned into damnés, damnés who are always ‘either invisible or excessively visible’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 257). In this sense, our world is a world where the ‘coloniality of being’, understood as ‘the production of ontological differences [between differently marked humans] hierarchically organized in colonial forms as part of the modern civilizational order’ is manifested through invisibilisation and dehumanization in the process of rendering the humanity of the non-modern subject, with whom a colonial difference is established, invisible (Maldonado-Torres 2017: 123, 2007). In this sense, from the coloniality of being, and the wound produced by the colonial difference, the Fanonian damnés, as a racialised subject, emerges (Maldonado-Torres 2010, 2017). This subject is here produced as a particular ‘social form’ (a term used by Grosfoguel (2016) which I will use in chapter seven), marked for erasure.

³⁰ It must be noted that the concept of the colonial difference has mainly been developed in discussions around questions of positionality in terms of knowledge-making. Accordingly, the term ‘epistemic Imperial/colonial difference’ is sometimes used to bring to the fore the fact that the question of knowledge was foundational for the hierarchy modernity sought to establish. This would then make clear the fact that by declaring that ‘certain bodies were inferior to others’, the statement was ‘that inferior bodies carried inferior intelligence’ and, by consequence, inferior knowledge (Mignolo 2011c: 20-21). Yet, the concept has far-ranging applications and infuses everything in the world: from the most abstract ontological debates to the most ‘mundane’ aspect of one’s life. It is this wider application that I make use of for this dissertation, in reference to the coloniality of being rather than that of knowledge or power.

It must be noted that ‘a definitional disposition is unfriendly to the collective’s introduction of the concept’ of the colonial difference and its entanglement with the colonial wound and the dehumanisation involved (Lugones 2010: 751). Indeed, in the words of Lugones (2010), as the concept ‘moves through Mignolo’s writing’ it shifts and morphs to arrive at an open-endedness (Lugones 2010: 751). Accordingly, in working with the concept, she offers the following caveat: ‘As I present some of the quotes from Mignolo’s text, I am not introducing them as his definition of “the colonial difference.” Rather, these quotes guide my thoughts on resistance to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference from within the complexity of his text’ (Lugones 2010: 751). I, here and for this dissertation, reproduce this caveat and affirm it for a number of the collective’s conceptualisations weaved through the chapters.

Before moving on it must be stressed that an essential element in the modern/colonial matrix of power’s establishment of difference has to do with its depiction of time. In the modern conception, time is a linear process moving from past into future. This past, which is, and must be, surpassed through the movement into the present, is transformed into history ‘inscribed in textuality’ and functioning ‘as a teleology of the modern hegemony of the present’ (Vázquez 2012: 248). This establishment of difference, it is accordingly vital to realise, is governed by an ‘idea of progress’ which had ‘always meant in modernity progress for a few’ as a movement always in reference to Others (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Doing this, modernity naturalises its present as the totality of ‘the real’, representing itself as the present of time, and negating all others as either ‘still in the past’ (where the orient usually falls as ‘the only category with the honour of being recognized as the other of Europe and the West’ (Quijano 2000: 542)) or, worse, outside of history (for most of Africa and the indigenous populations of the Americas, among others) (Mbembe 2016; Vázquez 2012).

Built on a past/present dichotomy, this concept of time has been crucial in the process of racialisation of the planet’s civilisations, peoples, geographies. By consequence, it has also been crucial for the functioning of the colonial matrix of power, a matrix where issues around ‘secularism, individualism, and racism’, among others, have rendered humanity a question of ‘degrees’ (Maldonado-Torres 2017: 131). The result is expulsion and exclusion echoing what Bhabha (2004) termed ‘time lag’: the categorisation of all others as behind, as backward, as under-developed.

The question of becoming modern, of becoming part of the now of history, is here the condition of becoming human. The understanding of the linear progression of history, and its making, is implied to necessitate moving forward, a moving away, from the past. This is usually presented as Europe's trait, while the rest of the world insists on futile attempts of 'turning back the clock', producing them as inhuman or subhuman.³¹ In this sense, the colonial definition of time is a systematic institutional power effort to dominate and 'sever the oppressed from their past, their memory' (Shariati 2011; Vázquez 2009: 1). Within this concept, the question of ancestry is affirmed as a central one for modernity/coloniality. By excluding the past from the 'real', it renders invisible those who insist on 'the past' and, by consequence, excludes them from the realm of the political, the modern, the human (see Sayyid 2014).

3.1.3. Race and Racialisation

The colonial matrix of power is a structure resting on a quest for the control of authority, sexuality, knowledge, and subjectivity, as explained above. Crucially, in the collective's theorisation, these four spheres are glued together by racism. Racism here is not 'a classification of human beings according to the colour of their skin but rather a classification according to a certain standard of "humanity"' (Mignolo 2012: 55; Grosfoguel 2016). Race is thus defined as a 'global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human' produced by institutions of modernity/coloniality 'politically, culturally and economically' (Grosfoguel 2016: 10). This 'humanity', as noted above, is not 'a transcendental and neutral essence that just anyone can appropriate and describe' but is rather a particular enunciation born out of the western episteme and 'based on epistemic and ontological colonial difference' (Mignolo 2009: 17).³²

³¹ Decolonial work with indigenous populations in Latin America has led decolonial theorists such as Vázquez (2009, 2012) to propose a 'relational' concept of time where the question is not of linearity or circularity, but rather of relationality: relationality to the world and all those in it. This concept of time includes ancestry and the worlds that precede, that have been erased, not behind the present, but in front of it. While western debates about time have revolved around questions of transcendence and immanence, relational time is positioned outside of these binaries, as one of precedence. Precedence is understood as a mode of being in the world which is not transcendental, but which is also not based on the immanence of reality. An understanding of time in which we become conscious we are what has preceded us and what precedes us exists in front of us. It is, therefore, a concept of people in relational worlds, who understand themselves as part of longer communities. These categories hold great echoes with the work of Ali Shariati, especially on martyrdom. This conversation remains to unfold.

³² The notion of humanity is powerfully entangled with the Christian. This is of particular relevance given Lebanon and its history. While an elaboration on this relation is beyond the confines of this chapter, see Asad (2003) for an exploration of the entwinement of human rights, and the human, with a secularised

Race is, therefore, the dehumanising ‘structuring process’ in the post-1500 world under the colonial matrix of power. Accordingly, racism is understood as ‘an instrumental term in which the colonial difference is built, and the colonial wound infringed’ (Mignolo 2012: 56). Produced and reproduced for centuries, it is upheld ‘by the institutions of the “capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system”’ (Grosfoguel 2016: 10). In this sense, racialisation is the ‘hidden logic’ of the colonality of power playing out throughout the world: it is the means used ‘to degrade whatever does not correspond to the imperial ideals of Modernity and to persecute and destroy whoever disagrees with the racial classification of the world’ (Mignolo 2012: 56).³³

Out of this, three points must be particularly stressed. The first is that race and racialisation revolve around *any* ordering of superior-inferior of human beings. It is, therefore, not a question of colour or skin pigmentation. The second is that race revolves around the questions of humanity, as any ordering of superior-inferior under colonality necessarily means that the inferior is less (or not at all) human than the superior. This realisation opens room for a multitude of consequences, including questions of rights and roles. The third point is that race is a structural issue that imbues the different spheres of life through the working of modernity’s institutions: the nation-state, the market, the financial sector, and its banks, the westernised institutions of higher education... Racism is, accordingly, never limited to ‘prejudice or stereotypes, but above all an institutional/structural hierarchy related to the materiality of domination’ (Grosfoguel 2016: 11).

Consequently, as seen from the position of the border, the question of race is the most pivotal question of all. Naturally, this should not be taken to mean that all other things are epiphenomena of the racial question, but rather that they are organised by the racial question, altered by it, without being reduced to it (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Further, as

Christian genealogy. As Williams (1985) has long noted, humanity, christianity and civilisation are deeply entwined concepts, and ones that emerge from a Eurocentric narrative and discourse. Also see Esmeir (2012) on how imperialist discourse was centred around the claim of offering the natives ‘humanity’ through colonisation in Egypt, a discourse that was continued into the post-colonial Egyptian state, as a key manifestation of this entwinement.

³³ This, it must be stressed, stands on the position that race is not a physical attribute, nor a social one, but rather a question of who can be excluded and dehumanised. Certainly, the answer to this question is multiple and changes with geography and history. To limit the answer to one variety of racism seems to me unjust. Therefore, this move is not one of a broadening, or one which risks making the concept obsolete, as I do not see an original definition of racism or racism declaring something which exists out there as a fixed entity, even a fixed social entity.

coloniality is global, this racialisation is global. Yet, in line with its definition, race is not uniform across the globe: we have ‘diverse forms of *racisms*’ which can be ‘constructed through various racial markers’ (Grosfoguel et al. 2015: 636). Within a decolonial framework, racism is specific to the local and always intertwined with the global as the colonial difference is itself where the global meets the local. These different forms of racism emerge out of the different, particular, past and present experiences of a given geography and people. Racialisation is therefore constructed through diverse markers that can include (and have included) ‘colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion’ (Grosfoguel 2016: 10). Therefore, while colour has been the prevalent form of racism in certain geographies and periods, it is by no means the exclusive one.

This racialised world of modernity, and building on the work of Fanon (2008), may be divided into two non-binary co-constitutive spheres: the zone of being and the zone of non-being. These zones are divided by a line where race is the constitutive factor: complexly separating the world into that of the human and that of the not-quite-human or nonhuman. Race separates the zones: ‘those subjects located above the line of the human, as superior’, dwell in the zone of being while those subjects below are in the zone of non-being (Grosfoguel 2016: 11). Race is, then, the transversal dividing line that cuts across multiple power relations such as ‘class, sexual and gender at a global scale’ which intersects/entangles with these other factors to situate each person within each zone according to the colonial matrix of power (Grosfoguel 2016: 11). Importantly, neither zone is homogenous and hierarchisation within each always exists. Further, these two zones each contain intersectionality/entanglement, whereby multiple factors influence the determination of the specific space one is allowed to inhabit.³⁴

Extending the Hegelian ‘I’ and ‘Other’ and engaging the world-system, Grosfoguel (2016) draws out how these conflicts play out differently in each of the two zones. In the zone of being, there are non-racial conflicts where the humanity of both parties is admitted. The ‘I’ in this zone, in the core countries (Europe, North America...), is the ‘Western, heterosexual, masculine, metropolitan elites’ (Grosfoguel 2016: 11).³⁵ The

³⁴ Intersectionality/entanglement is here used to refer to an extension of the intersectionality developed by black feminists in the late 20th century. For a good exploration of intersectionality and some of its limitation see Crenshaw (1991) and Nash (2008).

³⁵ Elite here is used to refer to the westernized segment of the population which, by virtue of its westernization, gains access, power and legitimacy. See Bayrakli and Hafez (2018) for an exploration of the entwining of Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies and the formation of Elites in these societies.

‘Other’ are the common people of the core countries racialised as belonging to it. In addition to these, ‘the Westernized, heterosexual, masculine elites in the peripheries’ also form part of the ‘I’ of the zone of being, while residing in peripheral countries (Grosfoguel 2016: 11). Similarly, westernised (but not necessarily heterosexual, masculine, metropolitan or elite) individuals in the periphery might be said to form another constitutive element of the ‘Other’ of the zone of being. In this sense, ‘there is a periphery outside and inside the core zones and there is a core inside and outside the peripheral regions’ (Grosfoguel 2010: 74).

Consequently, individuals from both the core countries and the peripheries (Asia, Latin America, Africa...) dwell in the zone of being: both ‘westerners’ and westernised non-westerners. Within this zone, these individuals live forms of oppression based on gender, class or sexuality, among others. Yet, all these oppressions are alleviated by the fact that their humanity is granted and that they, accordingly, have access and privilege within modernity and its institutions: their racialisation as ‘human’ alleviates all other oppressions. Those, on the other hand, racialised as non/less-human experience the aggravation of all other factors under which they might be oppressed.

Ultimately, even if the westernised elites of the periphery, who belong to the zone of being, do not qualify for the same rights as the westerners their humanity is nevertheless admitted. Racialized as human, they enter the definition of humanity, leaving all others as *anthropos* (non-human humans contrasted to *humanitas*, the modern human humans).³⁶ Hence, seen from the zone of non-being, they belong to the zone of being and are, therefore, agents of oppression and exclusion. As a result of this, one can analyse why, and how, particular individuals with particular markers are enunciated as belonging to the zone of being, while others are enunciated as belonging to the zone of non-being.

On the other side, the under-side, exists the zone of non-being. In this zone, there is no ‘I’ and ‘Other’ in their strictest sense, as this assumes a conflict between a difference within the human (which is negated here). In the zone of non-being, there are, however, various conflicts based on class, gender, language or other criteria, which are always aggravated by the fact that the people are in the zone of the non-human: that they are ‘Other non-beings’. But the core issue is that of their racial oppression: entangled with the multiple non-racial oppressions they are subjected to are the overarching oppressions

³⁶ For a good exploration of *humanitas* and *anthropos* refer to Osamu (2006).

of their very dwelling in the zone of non-being. These, in turn, are maintained, and exercised, on the global scale by the core countries and on the local scale by the westernised elites of the nation through modernity's institutions.

Ultimately, in the zone of non-being, there is the oppression exercised by the west as well as the oppression exercised by the westernised elites. These are the racialized oppressions. In parallel, there are various forms of non-racial oppressions, such as those of class and gender, exercised and stratified, but always organised around race. For example, a non-westernised heterosexual man in Lebanon, which is a country in the periphery, might exercise multiple forms of oppression on heterosexual women while having racialised oppression exercised on him by the machinery of modernity. Women also live under this latter oppression and, therefore, live the entanglement of these, and many other, forms of oppression.

The situation in this zone is the radical epitomization of what Maldonado-Torres (2007) termed the 'non-ethics of war' where the 'forgetfulness of ethics as a transcendental moment that founds subjectivity turns into the production of a world in which exceptions to ethical relationships become the norm' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 259). This situation, 'transformed into an ordinary affair through the idea of race', renders the kind of relationship to the 'Other that gives birth to human subjectivity' impossible and establishes the zone of non-being as a space of endemic violence, death and a hellish existence (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 257). Ultimately, in this zone, the form of life lived is a life of negation where a state of radical exception systematically pursues erasure.

Further, it must be realised that the two zones are themselves starkly different with each being heterogeneous and stratified, time-bound, geographically bound and non-static, always in the process of being made, always changing. They are, in reality, 'a position within racial structures of domination that operate at a global scale between centres and peripheries, but that are also manifested at a national and local scale against diverse groups considered as racially "inferior"' (Grosfoguel 2016: 12). As a result of this framing, the question of external and internal colonialism becomes of vital importance. External colonialism, as theorised here, is the functioning of this classification on a world-scale: the west racializing the rest. Yet, this runs parallel with internal colonialism, both in the west and in the non-west. In the core countries of the world, internal colonialism refers to the westernised elite's racial oppression against those subjects belonging to the

state. In the peripheral post-colonial countries of the world, internal colonialism refers to the racial oppression of subjects who belong to the nation by a westernised elite. This is in line with Quijano's argument where the colonality of power is theorized to function through an 'external domination, of an empire over a colony or neocolony, but also an internal domination, of the ruling elite over the rest of the society – precisely due to a differential racial construction' (Lynch 2018: 28). Although this analysis requires further elaboration in different geographies beyond the scope of this chapter, the case of an Islamophobic westernised elite in Muslim communities and outside of the west (See Bayrakli and Hafez 2018) can be considered as a prime example of this.

Indeed, Islamophobia is a prime example of this racialisation, and one of immediate relevance to this dissertation. Understood as a manifestation of this racialisation marked through religion, Islam, it is the structuring variable dividing into the zones of being and of non-being in many regions around the contemporary world. Present in both east and west, in Muslim communities as well as in non-Muslim communities, Islamophobia eventually needs to be understood in relation to the supremacy of the Christian, the secular, and the western established by colonality (Grosfoguel and Martín-Muñoz 2010). In this respect, it must also be understood in relation to Orientalism and self-Orientalism as a mechanism which produces the colonised as inferior in their own eyes as it situates them in a particular position and zone producing an internalised sense of inferiority and a desire to distance oneself from Islam constructed as an inherent deficiency, even by Muslims (see Bayrakli and Hafez 2018; Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006). Within this framing, Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim racism are used as synonymous terms (Bayrakli and Hafez 2018; Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006; Sayyid 2014). Eventually, understanding Islamophobia, particularly in the Arab and Islamic worlds, cannot take place without understanding modernity and colonality, their order and hierarchy and their secular horizon globalised and universalised through westernised elites across the globe (Bazian 2018; Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006).

This dissertation will accordingly specifically focus on an analysis of the racial oppression which is exercised on the hijab/the hijabi, as a marker of difference manifesting through islamophobia, for erasure.³⁷ In this respect, while affirming the value

³⁷ For a good discussion of islamophobia by Muslims and in Muslim societies refer to Bayrakli and Hafez (2018) and Issue 2, Volume 8 (2010) of the *Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* titled Islam: From

of an analysis taking into consideration intersections/entanglements, this dissertation will be limited to an exploration of its participants' racial oppression. This is further explored in section 3.1.5.

3.1.4. The Colonial Wound

The concept of the 'colonial wound' is one often used by decolonial theorists to refer to a defining feature of those who are racialized by coloniality: the consequence of their lived experience under the coloniality of being. Frequently defined in reference to Mignolo's (2009a) description of it as the damage done by 'the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally' (Mignolo 2009a: 3), the wound refers to a lived, sensed and felt experience covering our existence's various scales. A consequence of the process of racialisation, of the establishment of the colonial difference, the wound permeates the lives of all those on the 'other side' in coloniality's effects as a 'lived experience and not only in the mind' (Maldonado-Torres 2017). At its basic level, this wound refers to an actual wound inflicted by the structures of coloniality on those it subjugates and subalternises: 'physical and/or psychological, [it] is a consequence of racism, the hegemonic discourse that questions the humanity of all those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geo-politics of knowledge) of those who assign the standards of classification and assign to themselves the right to classify' (Mignolo 2005: 8).

Indeed, coloniality, reducing 'human beings to animals, to inferiors by nature, in a schizoid understanding of reality that dichotomizes the human from nature, the human from the non-human' consistently produces a wounded form of social ordering (Lugones 2010: 715). In this sense, wounding is an inherent component of coloniality and a vital element of its establishment. Further, in relation to the various forms of oppression established by the colonial difference, the various forms of racialisation, the colonial wound can manifest in different manners at different times and places. It is, in this sense, the effect of the aggression inflicted by those in the zone of being on those in the zone of non-being. In this study, inflicted on hijabis.

Phobia to Understanding. Also, See Tyrer (2013), Massoumi et al. (2017), and Mondon and Winter (2017).

Eventually, a wound bleeds and those who experience it feel the bleeding, while those who do not, if they look, can see it. In this sense, the colonial wound can be used to reveal, to identify and to call out: it acts as a powerful scandal challenging Eurocentric readings of modernity as civility, progress, and humanity. One does not need to be experiencing a specific wound to declare it, to object to it, or to battle against it. A wound is visible to others and can be the site of identifying the ailment, revealing the oppressive structure, nourishing empathy and advancing alliances for resistance. In this dissertation, it is this wound that I wish to look at, to bring to light.

3.1.5. Intersections/Entanglements and Gender

A key realisation in theorising coloniality is its gendered dimension. This is so in two separate, but interrelated, senses. On the one hand, coloniality is itself gendered: it is a patriarchal structure of power where women are constructed as objects of control, subjugation, and domination while the western man is situated in the position of dominant, legitimate, and knowing (Mignolo 2011c; Federici 2014). Mignolo (2011c) argues that patriarchy is a central force within the colonial matrix of power where its effects are epistemic chains that bound bodies and selves to modern subjugation. As Grosfoguel (2011) explains, key to modernity's formation is the establishment of 'a global gender hierarchy that privileges males over females and European Judeo-Christian patriarchy over other forms of gender relations' (Grosfoguel 2011: 9). In understanding this, one must realise that the Cartesian *ego cogito* at the foundation of the modern civilisational project itself emerged out of a patriarchal *ego* where, as Maldonado-Torres (2007) notes based on the works of Quijano, 'the ego conquiro is constitutively a phallic ego as well' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 248). In this respect, patriarchy is a pillar upon which modernity stands, and is reproduced. With it, sexism permeates the colonial matrix and its functioning, from the coloniality of knowledge to the coloniality of being, whereby the modern order itself is a sexist one (Grosfoguel 2011).

On the other hand, one must also realise what Lugones (2007, 2010) has termed the coloniality of gender on which this gendered coloniality is established. In this respect, decolonial feminists have argued that for coloniality's patriarchal sexist functioning to unfold, modernity establishes the Eurocentric gender system among the colonised. Lugones (2007, 2010) here argues that coloniality begins by erasing the various complex systems of managing gender and sexuality that have long existed across the globe and

that are beyond the confines of Eurocentric patriarchal sexist binaries and constructs. For Lugones (2010), the decolonial perspective therefore pushes us to ‘expand and complicate’ current approaches to understand the production of the binarized ‘modern colonial gender system’ (Lugones 2010: 371). She argues that a study of pre-colonial gender systems and a focus on colonialism allows one to expand the question of gender beyond that of the control of sex, realise the interconnectedness between capital, labour, knowledge, and gender as well as understand the ‘differential construction of gender along racial lines’ (Lugones 2010: 388). In doing this, she claims, one would find that, for example, the signifier ‘colonised woman’ to be an empty category as the category of women itself is complicated (Lugones 2010). In this sense, gender is theorised as ‘a colonial imposition, not just as it imposes itself on life as lived in tune with cosmologies incompatible with the modern logic of dichotomies, but also that inhabitations of worlds understood, constructed, and in accordance with such cosmologies animated the self-among-others in resistance from and at the extreme tension of the colonial difference’ (Lugones 2010: 748).³⁸ The need is for a decolonised feminism that ‘move[s] to read the social from the cosmologies that inform it, rather than beginning with a gendered reading of cosmologies’ (Lugones 2010: 749).

Accordingly, the western assumption that all human social systems are patriarchal ones and that western Empire could have, at worst, exacerbated pre-existing patriarchy is strongly contested and disrupted. Rather, the claim is that Empire brought forth patriarchy as well as the binary hierarchal gender system in many places and spaces. Indeed, Lugones (2010) argues that it was colonisation which created the categories of woman and man themselves in the Americas, whereby indigenous peoples did not have them in this sense. Further, this is not limited to the American context, as the practices of marginalised Muslim cultures in the Caucasus and Central Asia are further testament to the fact that ‘patriarchal binary structures were introduced by and with modernisation, together with the invented concept of tradition’ (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 129). The work of Oyewumi (1997, 2010) within the African context also brings forth such an awareness. Consequently, the anti-coloniality struggle and the anti-patriarchal struggle

³⁸ The works of Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997, 2010), Sylvia Marcos (2006) and Catherine Walsh (2016) are particularly insightful in this respect. For an excellent elaboration on much feminism’s entanglement with secularism and coloniality see Carrasco Miró (2020).

are understood as deeply entangled and inseparable: a movement against coloniality would need to be a movement against patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny and a feminist movement towards liberation would need to be a movement against coloniality.

A decolonial understanding is eventually one that realises how ‘race, class and gender are interrelated so that they cannot be understood as “parts” of a reality, but as a network where they dynamically interact, either in a supportive or in a contradictory and conflictive manner’ (Jiménez-Lucena 2006: 34). As the modernity/coloniality permeates and seeks to control the entirety of the contemporary, gender, as well as class and sexuality, are therefore drawn as key dimensions of being – as key forces – that intersect/entangle with racialisation as a hierarchisation of the human to either alleviate or worsen one’s position under modernity/coloniality. The internal heterogeneity of the zones of being and non-being are determined and structured by these intersections/entanglements, as are conflicts across the zones. Modernity is therefore understood as being constituted, and produced, by the intersection/entanglement of multiple forces that entwine to enforce the Eurocentric uni-verse.

This modern order, building on Quijano (2000) and as explained in previous subsections of this chapter, is therefore understood as a ‘matrix of power’ composed of multiple forces that move to establish the modern/colonial order. In this matrix, race has been argued to hold a central position as it forms ‘the transversal dividing line that cuts across multiple power relations such as class, sexual and gender relations on a global scale’ (Grosfoguel et al. 2015: 637; Grosfoguel 2016). In this analysis, it is the racialised hierarchy of the human that ‘organizes the world’s population into a hierarchical order of superior and inferior people that becomes an organizing principle of the international division of labor and of the global patriarchal system’ (Grosfoguel 2011: 10; Mignolo 2012). Accordingly, ‘gender and sexual hierarchical relations very much depend, in the modern/colonial world, on racial classification’ (Mignolo 2011c: 16). This, Grosfoguel et al. (2015) argue, is crucial to realise in order to analyse modernity’s structuring of the world as, within ‘the Western-centric imperial order of things, being an ‘Other human’ in the zone of being is not the same thing as being a ‘non-human Other’ in the zone of non-being’ (Grosfoguel et al. 2015: 640). As Quijano (2007) states, modernity/coloniality has rendered the ‘social category of “race” as the key element of the social classification of colonized and colonizers’ (Quijano 2007: 171). Quijano accordingly summarises modernity by explaining that it ‘is based upon

‘racial’ social classification of the world population under Eurocentred world power’ in a way that renders race ‘the cornerstone of this coloniality of power’ (Quijano 2007: 171).

As has been explored in chapter two, the hijabi’s experience is powerfully structured by patriarchal colonialism, modernity, and the west/westernisation. In this sense, it is crucial to acknowledge coloniality’s gendered nature, and its sexist, patriarchal, and misogynist dimensions aggressing the hijab and the hijabi. From post-colonial nation-state building projects to current global capital flows, coloniality’s sexist misogynist aggression on women and its pursuit for the control of gender and sexuality cannot go missed. Similarly, class hierarchies exist and wound. Further, hierarchies and conflicts around sectarian identities similarly exist, as do hierarchies of sexuality. Today, in Lebanon, these forces, as well as other forces, all intersect/entangle, wounding and infringing, and are worthy of ample in-depth analysis and theorisation for their redress.

This dissertation, although it will acknowledge and point to the intersections/entanglements producing coloniality throughout its chapters, focuses on the racial force within modernity/coloniality to explore what it reveals about coloniality’s processes of erasure. It will, therefore, not offer an elaborate analysis of either gender, class, or sexuality, nor of their intersection/entanglement. The basis of this is in the fieldwork and nature of this project, along with a theoretical foundation. Yet, crucial to reiterate here is that the legitimacy and value of this focus hinges on understanding this project’s objectives and the fact it is not a study of the hijabi’s lived experiences and their structuring *per se*. To do this, gender, class, and other forces would need to be analysed and their entanglements/intersections with race would need to be explored. This dissertation rather seeks, while offering a decolonising contestation of the literature on Islamic dress, to draw out key insights into how modernity/coloniality functions and is structured. Such a contribution to the understanding of modernity/coloniality is its ultimate objective, and the basis on which decisions within it have been made. This contribution can be done in various ways, including through research centring race, or gender, or class, or analysing these forces in their intersection, as these are all powerful entangling structures within the modern condition. It is also possible to generate valuable insights by focusing on one of these forces. The choice of what to do here was made according to the specificity of the project and its participants, as well as their choices, and

the sense that such a focus would be generative of valuable conclusions, as I hope the coming chapters will showcase.

The key factor in this respect is fieldwork: my participants overwhelmingly shared experiences that explored their racialisation and stressed that it was the hierarchy of the human that was of most relevance to them and what they wanted focused on. Indeed, my participants, during early interviews, specifically asked me to relinquish my inquiry into the presence of the hijab as a ritual in the political field and focus on the racialisation of Muslims and an inferiorisation of Islam in Lebanon, of which they identified the anti-hijabi hegemony as a part. This is surely influenced by various complex reasons, including both the questions I asked as well as my gender, but nevertheless points to the centrality of race for my participants and the value, even need, for this dedicated analysis. In other words, as the experiences my participants chose to voice within this project were those of their racialisation as Muslim subjects, and as these were found to be of great value and to hold ample potential to generate theoretical understanding, this dissertation circumscribed itself to a focus on this racialisation.

On a theoretical level, an analysis of the colonality of being can be said to start with an analysis of its racialising movement and the effects of this movement. While an analysis of how this movement intersects/entangles with gender and class, for example, is indispensable for a fuller understanding of modernity's functioning as well as of the lived experience it produces, these separate forces are not identical and cannot be reduced to one another. Indeed, these various forces each requires an elaborate exploration given the complexity of each of the racial, gender and class issues under modernity/coloniality. This is particularly the case given the gap in the colonality of being, especially in analyses based on empirical work. In this respect, the complexity of the racial hierarchy of the human and its functioning means that a dedicated work is needed to theorise it. On the other hand, the case of patriarchy and sexism in the Global South where coloniality's own structures of oppression exist and often produce and entangle with local and localised forms of patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny, is itself also particularly complex. Such patriarchal movements, at times, may even identify as anti-imperial or as belonging to different epistemes. Baldi's (2017c) analysis of modern Islamists movements and their mirroring of the West in fixing the hijab and seeking the control and subjugation of the hijabi, in contrast with the pre-colonial order, offers clear evidence in this respect. The ongoing disavowal of modernity's patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny and its projection

unto its others, as explored in chapter two, adds a layer of concealment to this movement, one requiring in-depth scrutiny to unpack and visibilise. Further, understanding the complexity of the role of the state, of ‘civil society’, and of other actors in producing this patriarchy through a decolonial lens is a labour that remains to be done. The production of private and public spheres and how these further enter into such constructions at the intersection of the global and the local are themselves also in need of ample in-depth research.

This entwines with a second practical reason for this focus on racialisation: the nature of this work and its limitations. As a dissertation with limited resources and time, and pursued by a specific researcher with a specific positionality as a Muslim male based in the Global North, it needed to focus on a precise question in order to robustly explore it. While an exploration of racialisation with its entanglements with gender, or class, sexuality, and sect, would offer plenty and would be invaluable, it was not possible, especially here given the complexity of each of these forces as outlined above. In other words, for this work to produce robust theoretical contributions towards the unpacking of the colonality of being’s racialisation and offering conceptual tools for its understanding and the understanding of wider modernity/coloniality, the focus on racialisation was found to be of significant worth and to protect the project from scattering its analysis and failing to generate the theoretical knowledge it sought. Further, for it to produce the contestation of the extant literature, such focus was found to be both sufficient and powerfully productive. This of course does not mean a complete side-lining of these other forces, and they will be highlighted throughout the coming chapters to note their presence, acknowledge their functioning, and evidence the need for their research.

Being aware that much sociological research produced around the hijab adopts a gender lens (Brayson 2019) also encourages this focus in attempting a novel original contribution by focusing on the racial force. In this respect, the focus on race my participants stressed powerfully visibilised dynamics that are often absent in sociological studies of Islamic dress and the hijabi experience, particularly in relation to the question of modernity/coloniality and the hierarchy of the human. Certainly, this does not mean a marginalisation of the gender question, one that is extremely important, but rather means a tactical choice to delve into the racial question within the confines of this work while raising the need for future research to complement it, as will be explored throughout this dissertation.

3.2. Theorising the Hijab

From art history to social psychology, many fields in the social sciences and the humanities have seen work on clothing and dress. While this literature lies outside of the scope of this dissertation and outside its theoretical framework, a few points are of use, particularly to pave the ground for the delinking exercise I will close this dissertation with. This section will, therefore, begin with a brief discussion of these points and then move on to a theorisation of how dress can function as a form of ritual in preparation for the coming chapters.

3.2.1. Clothing: Beyond Western Fixations under Coloniality

The academic study of clothing is often interested in the interaction between the self through dress and the social group or structure, or in understanding how clothing is an expression of norms and group values (Bohn 2004, Crane 2013, Crane and Bovone 2006, Gilman 2002). Often, sociological studies on clothing focus on the semiotic, perceived as a (controlled and selective) bridge between the ‘private realm’ and the ‘public realm’, imagining clothing as symbols of something else, something grander (Barthes 2006). In sociological terms, a ‘dress code’ is a normative set of rules within a given society that defines the way people are expected to dress, together with implications and sanctions for following or not following the rules. In semiotics, a code is a system whose elements – in this case, articles of clothing – function as message-conveying symbols with conventional meanings, subject to interpretation. In these models, semiotic systems – codes – are characterised by paradigmatic and syntagmatic features. Paradigms reflect the range of choices among the system's elements available to its users. The syntagmatic feature of a system consists of the rules by which select elements may be combined to form a message. Accordingly, we don individual garments according to semiotic as well as normative rules, and each garment functions as part of an ensemble, or outfit, the whole of which conveys one or more messages, simple or complex, about ourselves. And when we go forth, clothed in messages, other people evaluate our self-definitions unconsciously and consciously, as we do theirs.

This valuable theorisation must be situated within coloniality: the semiotics at play, the judgments, and the messages, unfold within the framework of hegemonic Eurocentrism. Specifically, clothing is made to manifest in the categorisation of different forms of dress into difference: each a sign, a mark, a social form, to be pushed into the imagined western

ideal where ‘western semiotic ideology’ forced around the world through coloniality (with, for example, the nation-state) ‘gives to images and signs a fixed meaning arbitrarily defined by social convention or by law’ (Baldi 2017a: 33). The result is the continuation of a longstanding tradition of the sovereign’s control of clothing as potent elements ‘in shaping the public sphere’ where clothes stand ‘at the margin of the body, they symbolize the boundary between the self and the external world’ (Baldi 2017b: 684). As discussed in chapter two, the hijab stands as a prime instance of this as it has consistently been turned into a specific sign to signify an intrinsic difference between the ‘east’ and the ‘west’ in the ongoing imperial projects of western civilisation. Embedded within a ‘Protestant semiotic ideology’, the western system of reading clothing eventually positions the wearer in an inferiorised fixed position to reduce the dress to a symbol of a pre-defined signifier (Baldi 2017a, see Keane 2007).

In other words, I am arguing that the enforcing of, and circumscription to, (western) semiotics emerges out of a specific Christian secularised genealogy which stands as the infrastructure for the consideration of clothing ‘as ‘expression’, ‘symbol’, and ‘sign’ of a (fixed) profound cultural meaning’ (Baldi 2017a: 36). This fixed meaning, in turn, functions to situate the hijabi on a hierarchy, forming the basis of her ensuing subjugation and erasure. In parallel, this means the concealment of anything beyond the fixed meaning enforced on the dress.

Eventually, I wish to contribute to the argument that clothing can do more than have a fixed meaning, more than just (in this case, inferiorising) communication. Indeed, I wish to contribute to the argument that it can create. This may be theorised in different ways.³⁹ Here, I want to draw on the work of critical feminist scholar Saba Mahmood, particularly as developed in *Politics of Piety* (2012a). Working in Cairo, Mahmood (2001b, 2012a) develops a theorisation of how an Aristotelian habitus is developed by an acting subject, her participants, through a pedagogical process: a self-teaching through Islamic ritual to construct a particular moral subject. Yet, to be able to fully extend Mahmood’s (2001b, 2012a) work to the hijab, as I will explore in chapter nine, I will need first to argue for the hijab as ritual.

³⁹ For example, see Edwards (2010) and Douglas (2008).

3.2.2. Ritual, the Hijab, and Habitus

In thinking through the hijab as ritual, I want to draw here on Asad (1993) who has argued that the academic understanding of ritual remained, and generally remains, entrenched in the western Christian legacy of the separation between sacred and profane, never breaking with a number of categories and binaries, including that of formalised and non-formalised religious activity. Yet, for Asad (1993), there is ‘no clearly marked differentiation between symbolic and technical activities’ outside the west (Asad 1993; Hollywood 2016: 112). Accordingly, ritual needs to be theorised by assimilating it with bodily practices.

The traditional academic understanding of ritual is that of ‘a visible behavioural form requiring decoding’, which can reveal much about the underlying world-view held in a particular community (Hollywood 2016: 77). Such is not the case of the world, and certainly not the case of Islam. Indeed, Asad (1983, 1993) argues that such is also not the case of older Christian approaches where ritual meant an act of discipline and was intertwined with questions of power and practice. Therefore, one can put forth an understanding of ritual as any meaning-generating act through the iteration and differentiation of signs where a relationality between object and subject is central, while also claiming ritual as containers of power and agency (Hollywood 2006: 268). Once this definition is taken, an act such as that of wearing the hijab easily fits under ‘ritual’.⁴⁰

Once the hijab can be accepted as ritual, we can return to Mahmood’s (2001a, 2001b, 2003) work. In line with Asad (1993), Mahmood explores questions of ethics and morality and understands morality not as being an abstract exterior to which the body must conform, but rather something the living human body develops, through a material embodied process of formation. Accordingly, Mahmood (2001a, 2012a) investigates how the body is managed so that the self acquires the required moral/pious habitus. Habitus here is not taken in the Bordieuan sense but is rather traced back to its Aristotelian framing. Concerned with the formation of a pious self, of a moral self/subjecthood using

⁴⁰ For an interesting, albeit at time problematic, discussion of the category of ‘ritual’ in anthropological work, its change in light of Asad’s work, and the potential implications of such a change refer to Bialecki (2017). Importantly, Bialecki (2017) explores the anti-foundationalist push in this scholarship and what it could mean for social research. For this dissertation, as what I am arguing to count as ritual is still strongly entwined with religious practice (rather than being something the academy has classified in the field of the secular) I evade many of the problematics that might be levied against arguments to include various actions and events under the category of ritual. For lack of space, this debate will not be explored here.

a ‘non-modern’ lens, Mahmood (2001a, 2012a) theorises a particular understanding of ritual’s formative power. While Bourdieu (1977, 1984) analyses how each culture has its practical mnemonics (dress, physical bearing, and style of comportment) and these mnemonics’ ability to reveal underlying fundamental realities as they embody and symbolise the doxa and the ethos of the group and become part of their habitus, Mahmood goes further. The Aristotelian habitus, she argues, refers to an acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, which must be learned through repeated practice; practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person. It is, in this sense, a pedagogical process related to ethics. In line with Aristotle’s distinction between intellectual and moral virtues, whereby moral virtues are to be learned by doing and intellectual virtues are to be learned by learning, she claims that the doing of piety as a habit turns it into habitus and renders it rooted in the character, unchangeable. Mahmood (2012a) uses the Arabic word *Malaka* to refer to such ‘habits’. Thus, a pious subject is made to be.

Although both Mahmood (2012a) and Bourdieu (1977, 1984) build on an Aristotelian basis, Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) renowned work excludes the intentionality, the ongoing nature of the process, the pedagogic element as well as the ethical dimension. Mahmood (2001a, 2012a) brings all of these in. Indeed, for Mahmood (2001a), the bodily form does not simply express the social structure but also endows the self with particular capacities through which the subject comes to enact the world. Hence, she claims that the significance of an embodied practice is beyond its symbolism: it can create (provides the self with capacities by which the world is acted upon), rendering it much more than a set of meanings and demanding the presupposition of particular forms of relationships.

For Mahmood’s (2012a) case study, the mosque and the practices of the women there are therefore a place/space where people’s *telos* is the achievement and harnessing of one’s rational and emotional capacities (which are not seen as contradictory or unrelated in contrast to hegemonic Cartesian dualisms), so as to approximate the exemplary model of the pious self. It is through practices, therefore, such as prayer, that the self is oriented, constituted and constructed; that it is trained, formed and forged. Mahmood’s (2012a) participants therefore consciously, wilfully, reproduce and emulate religious behaviour of piety that will lead to their constitution as pious subjects.

While Mahmood focuses on the ritual act of praying, and, to a lesser extent, fasting, she does mention wearing the hijab in this same context, albeit once and in passing.⁴¹ Topal (2017) takes this mention and further argues that the dress, just as prayer, functions for the formation of an Islamic subjectivity as she explores the entanglement of such practices with the public sphere and the question of agency. In line with this, but with a different framing and with a focus on the *telos* of this subjectivity, and with an expanded definition of the ethical, I wish to suggest the Islamic dress as an embodied repeated Islamic ritual practice which, consciously, leads to the formation of a non-western habitus in the Aristotle-Mahmood sense. In other words, as a practice where resistance to coloniality may unfold.⁴²

This does not mean, of course, that the Bourdieusian theorisation of habitus is obsolete. It rather means that there is another form that must also be considered. Indeed, I will also draw on the Bourdieusian conceptualisation of the habitus at specific points in the dissertation. Specifically, I will build on Silva's (2016) theorisation of the Bourdieusian habitus. Silva's (2016) conceptualisation of the habitus develops the Bourdieusian understanding to account for competing and contradictory fields across social scales where she proposes a non-deterministic *fragmented* Habitus. Building on this conceptualisation, I will propose that the Lebanese hijabi woman suffers from a "fragmented habitus" resulting from coloniality's aggression on her lived experience as a practicing Muslim in Lebanon under modernity/coloniality, as will become clear in the coming sections. In linking this to both the terminology of decolonial theory with the "colonial wound" (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013) and to my participants' expressions, I will term this a "wounded habitus".

It is worth noting, before moving on, that this theorisation of the hijab's power should not be understood as essentialism. I mean this in two distinct, but related, ways. First, although requiring further theorisation beyond my capacities here, I am not claiming that this creative power is exclusive or inherent to the hijab, religious ritual, or non-western forms of practice. Rather, I stand by the claim that being non-hijabi, be it for a Muslim or a non-Muslim, man or woman, is also capable of creation and self-formation. In this

⁴¹ Drawing on Mahmood, Jouili and Amir-Moazami (2006) argue that knowledge acquisition for Muslim women in France and Germany is itself a 'tool with which to become pious' (Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006: 635).

⁴² For a parallel attempt to think through the Islamic dress, also engaging Mahmood, outside of liberalism's fishbowl, see Kapur (2018).

sense, for example, the claim is that the practices of the secular – neither neutral, nor passive, nor what remains if the non-modern is taken out – can themselves be used to wilfully create a Habitus in this sense (Asad 2003). This would require the elaboration of a set of new terms, for a different conversation, all beyond the scope of this dissertation. Fadil (2011) has begun this conversation, applied to the particular case of non-present Islamic dress, to theorise the secular norm of being non-hijabi among Muslim women ‘as an aesthetic of the self that is intimately tied to the formation of a particular kind of moral (Muslim) subject, one that is primarily structured by liberal ethical grounds’ (Fadil 2011: 86). Second, the question is not that of an inherent potency the hijab holds per se, separately from the field which it inhabits and the structures which govern its life. Rather, the question is the hijab’s power embedded in particular discourses, power structures, knowledge, and practice. Even then, this power remains contingent as agency keeps it open.

3.3. Asserting Agency

Under modernity, the world today is a world touched by coloniality but nevertheless a world whose inhabitants cannot be fully subsumed under it. In other words, it is a world where an outside of modernity continues to exist, where Europe’s others continue to be: modernity is not a totalizing machine; it is not an irresistible successful totality that faces no resistance. Rather, modernity/coloniality is an aggressive machine that is constantly resisted, subverted and eluded in various ways across the globe. Yet, modernity, more than 500 years in the making, is a machine that has touched the whole globe. Hence, those who have, and continue to, resist it do not do so without being touched by it. In other words, there is no pure exterior to the condition of coloniality. Nevertheless, there is a border and in the border things are lived differently as the colonial difference persists, the otherness survives, and resistance thrives. In this logic, colonised people are agentic: they are not erased by coloniality and are not fatalistically structured by it in a way as to erase their subjectivity. Certainly not in a pure form external to the world order, these Others dwell in what is termed the border and, from there ‘border thinking’ can emerge and alternatives can be, and are, lived (Mignolo 2012). It is there that the hijabi dwells.

In line with the above, it must be stressed that the acknowledgment of agency – an acknowledgement which has been problematised in the post-modern academy – is central to this dissertation. It should be here made clear that I do not wish to enter the

structure/agency debate: I do not have the space nor the luxury. Rather, I merely wish to adopt the decolonial understanding of agency as a possibility. Indeed, Allen (2007), focusing on Foucault's later works on the politics of the self (1998) which Mahmood (2001, 2012a) draws on, re-reads Foucault's earlier scholarship to produce a narrative where room for autonomy and agency does exist, even for the post-structuralist most often accused of having killed the agent. Accordingly, agency, 'both in the sense of the capacity for critical reflection and in the sense of the capacity for deliberate self-transformation', becomes compatible even with power and a post-structuralist framework, as long as one accepts that this agency is never pure, never transcendental, always 'open ended and ongoing' through the process of taking – in a subversive way – the 'relations of subjection that have made us who we are' (Allen 2007: 173).

Surely, this affirmation of agency adopted, particularly in relation to the hijabi wielding the hijab as a possible tool of decolonisation, does not delve back into an autonomous liberal subject but rather adopts 'a model of agency that is far more sophisticated than that of the strategical, calculating subject that constructs its own reasons', where 'agency ensues not from sovereign subjects, but from trained and disciplined bodies' (Baerveldt 2015). In other words, agency, 'a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create' (Mahmood 2001a: 203) exists without simplistically and categorically belonging 'to the women themselves, but is a product of the historically contingent discursive traditions in which they are located' (Mahmood 2012a: 32). In this sense, a sort of agency that requires us to move beyond binary logics, without falling into a Eurocentric Othering, can emerge (Jacobsen 2011).

3.4. Conclusion

Coloniality, as the darker side of western modernity extending from ontologies to the minutest details of daily life, is a process of marking and erasure in the pursuit of a universal world. In this sense, it works through the establishment of a colonial difference where difference from the imagined European, from epistemology to pigmentation, means a hierarchy in humanity; a racialisation. This racialisation infringes and aggresses, producing a wound that allows one to identify coloniality and that anguishes for healing. In the (non-geographic) borders of modernity today, this wound haemorrhages and resistance thrives. The Islamic hijab, as a form of non-western practice and dress with the

potential of acting as an agent of resistance and delinking, is accordingly an object of coloniality's erasure functioning as a marker of inferiority in the human.

Eventually, my concern in this work is with coloniality, as a global matrix of power, violently structuring the hijabi's life in contemporary Lebanon, as a barbaric aggressive project. Specifically, it is with coloniality's racialisation for erasure. Chosen due to its ability to satisfactorily analyse what I had perceived and experienced on the ground, this framework allows me to identify a marker of Islamophobic racialisation, bring to light a colonial wound, and explore the precarity of lived experiences in the borders of modernity to sense life in the zone of non-being and theorise from it. The theorization elaborated on in this chapter, therefore, allows me to understand and analyse what is happening in Lebanon today in its connectedness with the global. Further, it allows me to contribute to a better, and disruptive, understanding of the modern condition.

As the first step in decolonisation is the awareness of the colonial matrix of power and its functioning, it is such an awareness that this theoretical elaboration heralds. Surely, the specificities of modernity's functioning are multiple, varying both in time and in geography. This project will, therefore, be interested in the particularities of its own case study with the hope that these can enrich this theoretical framing itself. Specifically, this will be an enrichment to the understanding of the coloniality of being and the modern/colonial processes through which its erasure unfolds. Ultimately, this allows an understanding so as to 'argue for justice and equality from the perspective and interests of those who lost their equality and have been subjected to injustices' (Mignolo 2009b: 11). Doing this through empirical fieldwork, the next chapter will explore the issues and questions of methodology raised and faced during this dissertation.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology: from Case Study to Techniques and Ethics

This project is an empirical sociological investigation based on fieldwork conducted in Lebanon during 2018. This empirical work aimed at the collection of data around participants' lived experiences. In this respect, it sought to document and explore narrations from participants' experiences, their opinions about these experiences, and their structuring, as well as their opinions and views about the relationship between Islam and mainstream Lebanese society with the purpose of forming the basis for the analysis to come. This formed a shift from the original aim of this project, with the original research questions as stated in chapter one, where the focus was to be on political experiences and the formation of political subjectivity by documenting and exploring experiences of engaging the Lebanese political scene across Lebanon's multi-party confessional system as a visibly Muslim subject.

Focused on the project's methodological issues, this chapter will begin with a brief mention of the epistemological underpinnings of this thesis. Then, it will discuss the methods, touching upon each of the techniques used, to close with a brief discussion of ethics.

4.1. Framing: Epistemology, Power, and Purpose

As an attempt to present an in-depth understanding and theorisation, this dissertation's methodological approach lays in the interpretive tradition: an inductive qualitative investigation that seeks an interpretive understanding of action. For this, a number of points must be clarified.

First, this project stands by the belief that meaning is multiple; that we, both as individuals and as elements in a larger structure, are a part of bringing forth the world we inhabit and that our interactions and iterations (without accepting a linguistic determinism) are vital to the constitution of the multi-faceted complex world around us. Therefore, this project sought to bring forth meaning, not reality, without this meaning any negation of the existence of a reality independent of our gaze. Accordingly, research is perceived as mediated discovery while the techniques used can be understood as the tools of this discovery. Fieldwork hence aimed at collecting the first-order-hermeneutics – participants' own self-understanding, as well as their understanding of the world they

inhabit – in pursuit of the ‘double hermeneutic’ interpretive process of knowledge production (Giddens 1976; Taylor 2006). Importantly, this required and stood on the rejection of a relativistic approach where ‘anything can mean everything’, while simultaneously not ascribing to the impossible ‘quest for the one and only true, objective meaning’ (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015: 277). Further, it requires affirming the possibility of a separation between researcher and data gathered. Eventually, without such a stance, I believe that research becomes futile. Instead, the tactic is one where I accepted, realised and did my best to surmount ‘myself’ as I sought to understand the meanings of others.

Research, at its most basic level, is consequently not a dispassionate positionless process of an objective detached observer but rather a process of involved meaning-making. By consequence, its output, which must nevertheless not surrender its political commitment to liberation, remains ‘partial, unfinished, and deeply informed by the particular historical, economic, and cultural configurations of the times’ (Darder 2018). Reflexively, starting with theory and an acknowledged subjectivity, and through sorting out and digging in, the methods to be explored here were my attempt at something of a close-enough approximation to how Lebanese Muslim hijabi women experience and tell about their world. Most importantly, stemming from the ‘certitude that the subaltern can speak’ (Mendoza 2016: 14), this research emerges from the position that participants are legitimate speakers about the conditions of their subalternisation, and can inform researchers about these conditions and structures (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 2010).⁴³

In this respect, the greatest challenge of the field was ‘to stop thinking and to start listening’ as a mode of discovery (Rossi et Al. 2013). Indeed, while the social sciences have long had their ‘focus on objects (culture, society, economy, politics)’, this dissertation ascribes to a project which ‘shifts the politics of knowledge toward problems and questions that are hidden by the rhetoric of modernity’ (Mignolo 2012: 20). In this sense, this dissertation does not seek to represent an external reality it has identified but

⁴³ While the debate between qualitative and quantitative research lies beyond the scope of this work, this project understands the qualitative/quantitative binary (and hierarchy) as an illusion: these are two complementary approaches to the formation of social knowledge (Pearce 2012). Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research is believed to be capable of producing both descriptions and explanations, both are equally (in)capable of making general universal statements. Instead of being competing versions of ‘science’, they are complementary ones (Burawoy 1998). By consequence, any research project is to choose the techniques most fit to answering its questions, regardless of how they are classified (Ridder 2017). For my purposes here, the questions asked are best answered through those techniques classified as qualitative through a case study approach. That is why they are chosen.

rather seeks to listen, to voice, the subaltern's lived and experienced reality of their problems. Fieldwork is, therefore, it must be stressed, the attempt to make 'visible the invisible' through an exercise of engagement with the 'invisible' people themselves where their experiences, their lived being, is the site from which modernity can be understood and challenged (Maldonado-Torres 2010: 116). It is crucial to stress the invaluable power of the subalternised to speak about and against the conditions of their subalternisation for this effort.

It is to be noted that, while this research is certainly about the participants' own expressed understandings of their realities, I uphold the role (and value) of the researcher's presence: this project does not situate itself as one where there is any monopoly over meaning (Brannen 2007). Rather, it is one where the researcher generates meaning through interactions with participants by weaving together bits and fragments to produce a whole, relationally, conversationally, contextually, and narratively going beyond the parts (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015: Chapter 7). For this to take place, I have attempted to build on 'sensibilities culturally groomed and sharpened within the subaltern context' possible through a deep understanding of the population and the context, here that of Lebanon and its Muslim dwellers (Darder 2018:101). For this purpose, I remained cautious as not to fall into any form of 'reflexive vanity' such as assuming that, being reflexive, I am exonerated from violence, power relations, and injustice (Kenway and McLeod 2004). Surely, power imbued my fieldwork and structured this project as I attempted to listen and voice.

A brief exploration of the question of power is in order before moving further. Importantly, a key axis of power in this project is gender: me being a male and the project working with women. While I will return to positionality later in this chapter, it is important to clarify a number of points here. In the literature, significant work has shown how women conducting research with men are faced with ample hurdles ranging from difficulties of access to harassment and misogyny where they are continuously challenged and vulnerabilised (Allain 2014; Vogels 2019; Soyer 2014). Contrasted to my own fieldwork, these issues were minimal as access and cooperation were extremely easy and as I did not face instances of threat. Indeed, given that modern Lebanon is a space of rampant modern patriarchy and sexism, male privilege surely entered and impacted fieldwork. This included facilitating access and mobility within the field where I was not faced with concerns and limitations on my movement, concerns of possible sexual

harassment or physical safety, or of not breaching social conventions. It also included a potential facilitation of recruitment whereby participants would perceive my gender as an added value to the project given assumptions of male objectivity and logical thinking capacities and the resulting potential to produce legitimate knowledge about their experiences. Further, it included a power dynamic within interviews themselves where my interactions with participants happened under wider structures of patriarchy, despite me positioning myself as needing their help, explaining my indebtedness to them for benefitting from their time and cooperation, or having interviews at times and places they chose, for example.

On another level, as a scholar based in the Global North, my affiliation to a UK institution and academic qualification itself also played a role in structuring the power relation between myself and my participants, and the resultant data, where I was perceived as an expert capable of producing robust high-quality research and knowledge. This facilitated my fieldwork, and could also have made some participants more comfortable. My class status, evident through my Lebanese accent for example, also entered into this structuring as it also could have added to perceived credibility.

Nevertheless, it is important here to note that I stand by the position that my participants were themselves also powerful agents within the field. Surely, this does not negate the power I myself held as the researcher, but it is important to resist against the trend of understanding participants, particularly Muslim women from the Global South, as passive and oppressed (Hapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004). Similarly, it is important to complexify the 'dualistic models of researcher and researched interaction which imply that manipulation and exploitation only takes place by the researcher' (Hapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004: 364). In this respect, a realization that the field is 'one of complex power relations where power is put into play by a number of actors' rather than just the researcher, is essential (Hapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004: 365). Further, while it is the researcher who goes about the analysis and the theorisation, Hapar-Bjorkert and Henry (2004) argue that this must not be taken to mean a negation of how 'experiences during fieldwork have a significant impact on the researcher and the research product' where participants could have exercised power in various complex ways that ultimately play major roles in how findings develop and are theorised and presented (Hapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004: 377).

Accordingly, I perceive my participants to have themselves exerted power before and during our interviews especially as they chose to share specific experiences, and not others, for a variety of complex purposes. During interviews, this was evident in those instance where they required a justification for the project's UK base and funding, in their clear attempts to orient interviews towards anti-Muslim discrimination as the issue they were most concerned with, in their explicit statements of what I should and should not be looking at to understand the hijabi's aggression, and in their suggestions for future research on anti-Muslim racism among migrants and foreign-educated people or on Muslim business-owners who have 'a sense of inferiority', as some examples of many.

Further, two key variable within my own positionality played a significant role in this respect. Most importantly, age was key: as many of my participants were older than me, and as age is an extremely important marker of authority within Lebanon and wider Arabic-speaking cultures, many participants held the authority of seniority. Indeed, at many times, participants expressed this by describing how I reminded them of their son or even grandson, from the fact I was a student to my physical appearance. This clearly situated me in the inferior position, and allowed my participants to assert their own authority. Related to this was what many perceived to be my limited engagement in Lebanese society: perceived as someone who had graduated from AUB and then travelled to live abroad, I was often told that I had too little experience in Lebanon, to know many of the things being described. In this sense, my knowledge of Lebanon was situated as far inferior to theirs as many participants affirmed themselves as being the experts on the subject matter of my research. Examples of this abounded, in both focus groups and individual interviews. For example, in one focus group, a participants told another that she would need to 'go easy on me' and explain things step by step as these were things I do not know. In this relationship, I was the one being explained to. My upbringing in the country surely balanced this, but its explicit articulation by many participants, including ones within my age range, indicates the power they held, and the power they mobilised, within interviews and meetings. Eventually, I remain an insider/outsider in this project: a male, but a Muslim, a Lebanese, but living in the UK.⁴⁴ This realization remains crucial for this project, and for a proper framing of its contribution and limitations.

⁴⁴ Surely, this project stirs far away from assumptions of the objective outsider and the subjective insider as can be. In this respect, see Denzin et al. (2008) and Smith (1999).

4.2. The Case Study, its Issues, and its limitations

Case studies are research strategies that can be used for both explanatory and descriptive purposes (Woodside 2010: Chapter 1). They are most apt at answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, in the quest for theory building, and are characterized by their in-depth investigation of a particular issue (Yin 2003). While a case study is an in-depth investigation, it is not an investigation that requires a long duration, nor one which requires the kind of detailed observational data found in ethnographic work, for example (Yin 2003). Similarly, while many ethnographies and comparable research strategies seek to go theory-free to the field, a case study makes no such attempt and can rather work toward theory-building (Dooley 2002).

The case to be chosen is usually expected to hold attributes that render it suitable to, and worthy of, such an in-depth investigation. In this vein, a ‘black swan’ is a case study researcher’s favourite swan. Further, to increase the rigour of a case study design, the inclusion of multiple cases with multiple methods is highly advised (Woodside 2010: Chapter 1). While researching multiple black swans would be a great feat, extra vigilance becomes necessary to preserve the in-depth nature of the investigation. As the research question of this project in Lebanon requires its own investigation and is in itself highly complex, a limitation to one case was adopted. For rigour and depth, multiple methods were here included, combining in-depth interviews and focus groups, as will be explored in the coming sections.

While case studies are commonly used, they are also commonly criticized. The most often cited criticisms of case studies is their inability to provide generalisability, in a statistical sense, and the fact that they are open to multiple interpretations; making researcher bias a significant risk (Flyvbjerg 2013). The first criticism only holds when the distinction between statistical generalisability and theoretical generalisability is not acknowledged (Yin 2003). As this research does not seek to make a statement about any ‘category’ of individuals but rather advance our understanding of lived experiences, it does not seek and does not need, statistical generalisability. To appreciate this, one must realize that qualitative research must be judged in accordance with its own paradigm (Burawoy 1998; 2009). As to the second criticism, it is one that may be levied on every research practice and which can be solved through systematisation and rigorous and transparent reflexivity (Kenway and McLeod 2004).

Yet, the question of bias requires ample attention. At the end of the day, I did not choose this research project for intellectual indulgence or out of a detached ‘scientific interest’. Rather, I chose this project as I found the literature failing to voice the experiences of my participants, inflicting much injustice and leaving much unsaid. I chose this project to make a motivated contribution. Therefore, several measures needed to be put in place to preserve the (academic and decolonising) ‘validity’ of this research’s findings. In other words, several measures needed to be put in place to seek a project which can voice what is silenced and bring forth its participants. The first of these is the research design itself through the integration of data. Second, for both interviews and focus groups, every effort was made to ensure that questions are open-ended, never leading, that interviewees do not know of my own biases, and that they are comfortable expressing their experiences and views, whatever these may be. Additionally, during interviews, focus groups, conversations about the project, and/or invitations to potential participants efforts to ensure that both phrasing and framing never seek to steer in any direction were also taken. The fact that the project shifted in focus shortly after entering the field, as explained in chapter one, reassured me that I was, at least partially, successful. Additionally, throughout the fieldwork, I had a memo where I kept track of anything which might indicate a lack of neutrality on my part, as well as reflections around my encounters with participants. Such a memo clarified and articulated my biases, and my emotions, allowing me to mitigate their effect on interpretation and analysis (Ahern 1999).

On the other hand, bias in drawing conclusions from data – particularly during the analysis phase – existed but was less of a risk. Mainly, it was dealt with by systematising analysis, making use of available software (NVIVO), incorporating all the data and making all personal biases and preconceptions overtly clear with a ‘profound respect for the complexity’ and ‘many contexts’ of the lives I was investigating (Mabry 2012: 217; Silverman 2013: part 3). Further, striving to make a clear distinction between what was being said/done by participants and my understanding/interpretation of it was key to allow minimal mixing between what counts as ‘raw data’ and what is considered ‘interpreted data’. Continual reiteration and analysis, starting on the first day of the data collection process, of all the data gathered, and the involvement of external scholars (my supervisors), as well as the many conversations with friends, colleagues, and people familiar with the context of this research, were indispensable for this effort (Richards 2014).

4.2.2. Sampling, Recruitment, and the Project's Participants

The sampling for this project is in accordance with its objective: theoretical sampling for a theoretical contribution. Purposeful sampling was therefore pursued to advance theory: looking for people who can give insights, both for and against expectations, to collect valuable data for the research question. This meant the inclusion of women wearing Islamic dress in all its varieties: from the fashionista to the niqabi. This, in turn, meant covering a wide range of different experiences, as these different dress forms produce a different lived experience for hijabis. This was greatly enriching for the project, as will become clear in the later chapters. Loosely, hijabi Muslim women in Lebanon can qualify, from certain angles, as a 'hard-to-reach populations, characterized by the lack of a serviceable sampling frame' (Handcock and Gile 2011: 2).⁴⁵ Keeping in mind the theoretical contribution this study seeks to make, and adding in factors of time and resources, fieldwork built on established connections and gradually expanded from there. This began with individuals I knew as well as schools, universities, institutions of religious education and Islamic NGOs. Throughout, effort was made to include participants from various social classes, educational backgrounds, and regions.

It is worth noting here that these established networks are research and/or professional networks, rather than personal ones. In this respect, interviewees were not individuals with whom I had pre-existing connections and were not people that formed a part of my social circles in Lebanon. They were not individuals with whom I would expect to become personally acquainted or who expected to become personally acquainted with me. Here, the fact I was pursuing a PhD and living in the UK seemed to be read by participants as situating me as an outsider, probably as a Lebanese emigrant, creating a distance. This was important in allowing them to feel comfortable during interviews as I was not someone who could compromise their status or image in their daily life, allowing participants to be at ease during conversations and not filter their expressions. Nevertheless, the fact I had reached participants through acquaintances meant that a potential impact and filtering of what they shared happened, and this needed to be acknowledged and incorporated during analysis.

⁴⁵ For these purposes, snowball sampling was used as a practical and efficient way allowing me to collect the data needed away from any specific branding of Lebanese hijabi women as vulnerable or marginalised groups.

During the first interviews, when I asked participants for their demographic details, they seemed uneasy in revealing much about themselves or in making themselves too identifiable. Although I confirmed that all data would remain confidential, a sense of vulnerability seemed to linger with some participants. A sense that I was bureaucratising and professionalising a meeting to discuss their lived experiences also seemed to emerge and negatively impact the interview. For these reasons, I decided to stop taking demographic data at the beginning of interviews and to limit myself to the data that participants themselves chose to share as the interview progressed. This was important to further ensure participants were at ease during meetings and that they felt they remained in control of what I found out and did not find out about who they were. While this meant I limited the data obtained about important details that could contextualise the experiences they shared, it was indispensable to ensure participants' comfort and their willingness to express various sorts of experiences, thoughts, and positions. Given that this work gradually began pursuing a theoretical contribution focused on racialisation, rather than a thick analysis of lived experiences, the damage from this loss of information was eventually mitigated.

Recruitment was specifically done in three different geographic regions: Beirut and its suburbs, the South of Lebanon and the North of Lebanon (including the Bekaa). In other terms, recruitment covered all of Lebanon's Muslim-majority regions. Throughout the fieldwork, the project was met with great enthusiasm from Lebanese hijabis. With significant initiative from participants, by its conclusion, I had received multiple emails and messages from people I did not know asking me to participate, I had had interviews which lasted for more than three hours and I had participants following-up to express thanks, sometimes with long voice-notes, pictures and links about additional things they wanted to share.

In both the South and the North, attempts were made to elicit participants in both cities and non-urban regions. By the end of the project, I found that the majority of my participants had been in Beirut and its suburbs, which is not too unreasonable considering the demographic distribution of the country and the nature and unequal distribution of my networks, as well as the limitations posed by the ethics committee (discussed below). As a result of this, an urban bias in this thesis exists and is one of the limitations of this work. Nevertheless, I have attempted to incorporate this and even bring out insights from it in the analysis chapters. In addition to this geographic triangulation of data sources, an

integration of two research techniques was used, elaborated on in the next section. As this project sought to analytically engage with the lived experiences of hijabis in Lebanon, the inclusion of non-hijabi women, as well as the inclusion of men, was (lengthily) considered. Yet, practical limitations, the lack of prior data and the sense that the topic itself was deeply complex requiring much investigation and reflection complicated this question. Having difficulty determining whether to include men and non-hijabi women, I decided to focus on hijabi women during the first few weeks of the fieldwork and, depending on how that went, consider the inclusion of non-hijabi women and/or men for the second phase. This was particularly important as I felt I needed to immerse myself in the experiences of hijabi women to begin unpacking its complexity. Yet, as I quickly realised the level of enthusiasm, and need, for hijabi women to share their experiences, and as I did not want to fall into the collection of more data than what I could work with, I soon decided to limit participation to hijabi women focusing my question on one of listening to a subalternised group and approximate an understanding of their experiences as they understood them. As I came to see the interviews and focus groups as spaces of venting and an opportunity of sharing experiences, of speech, this is a choice I did not regret.

On a similar note, fieldwork was limited to Lebanese hijabi women. As I sought an analysis including questions relating to the Lebanese imagined nation and state and the questions of identity, this implied that my participants needed to be themselves Lebanese. Further, resident non-Lebanese Muslims' dress habits and social norms are significantly, if not drastically, different from those of the Lebanese population in Lebanon and, as I will allude to in chapter five, they mostly live sequestered and separated from 'mainstream' Lebanese society, often in closed-off camps. Accordingly, and perhaps most importantly, they experience a far more complex world of entangling oppressions and exclusions. As this was a layer of complexity beyond this project, its incorporation would have been counter-productive and a focus on the experience of Lebanese citizens was pursued.

On another level, the age range of participants was set to anyone above the age of 18, as recruiting younger women would have stirred up unnecessary ethical dilemmas. Eighteen is also the legal age in Lebanon and hence presented itself as a reasonable benchmark. No upper limit was placed. Eventually, a slight majority of my participants were under the age of 35. This was incorporated in the analysis and was not seen as a distortion of the

data given the youth bulge present in Lebanon, and throughout the Arab world (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007). Nevertheless, this age imbalance is a further limitation of this project.

As to the number of participants, this was not set in advance but was rather dictated by constraints and a sense that enough listening had been done to allow some speech. The ‘saturation’ being pursued was accordingly understood as a judgment and a sense that the data gathered contained sufficient riches and had convincingly converged, with the emergence of clear, robustly founded, statements to-be-made. Eventually, the project involved 41 interview participants and ten focus groups with 47 participants, in a total of 88 participants. These included 22 Sunni participants and 18 Shia participants in individual interviews. It also included 26 Sunni and 21 Shia participants across ten focus groups. This information is more specifically given in annex 8. Three participants wore the niqab, all from the Sunni sect. Other participants wore a variety of dresses across the range of hijab forms commonly worn in Lebanon.

All interviews and focus groups were conducted in settings familiar to the interviewees, such as parks near their homes, university campuses, mosques, coffee shops, and NGO centres. Upon agreeing on an interview with participants, I specified that the interview could be held in a place of their choice, and explained that I would be willing to go wherever they felt was most comfortable or suitable to meet. In this sense, my strategy was to conduct the interview at a space chosen by the participants in a movement to ensure they were comfortable, solicit the free and relaxed generation of data, and make space for them to take the lead. Often, this was met with appreciation, and a location was suggested by participants. For example, interviewing upper-class Beiruti, I was invited to meet at a shopping centre in central Beirut. Interviewing a lower-class citizen from Saida who works as a teacher in an Islamic school and who is an activist in the local mosque, I was invited to meet in the mosque meeting hall. In some cases, I was invited to meet at their place of work. In the cases where interviewees expressed that they were comfortable with any suitable place and had no specific place in mind, I offered the educational or NGO centres I had contacted and had access to within the region where they lived and they then chose the space that was most suitable for them.

It is important to acknowledge here that this setting of the conversation played a role in the data collection. The two most important issues were the setting’s relation to Islam and

Muslims and its privacy. In terms of the setting's relation to Islam, mosques and Islamic centres seemed to allow participants to be much more at ease in discussing experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination. Interviews in cafés for example, places where my participants as visibly Muslim women often faced discrimination, meant that some participants were less comfortable delving into specific experiences. Holding interviews there was actually something some participants described as 'ironic', given that the space of the interview itself was one of discrimination. This is particularly relevant since, as Itaoui (2016) explains, certain spaces become Islamophobic spaces. Participants choosing spaces to meet which they then identified as 'unwelcoming', but not 'too unwelcoming', could be understood as an act of calculated resistance, but this would require an exploration beyond the confines of this chapter. On another level, the fact that these cafés were less private, where participants could be easily overheard, also appeared to negatively impact data collection as participants appeared less comfortable in discussing some issues. Specifically, this was most relevant in discussion that involved Lebanese politics and/or sectarian differences – highly contested issues in the Lebanese space. In this respect, some participants lowered their voices, or cut off sentences, as they seemed unwilling to develop their statements around such sensitive topics in such a place. On the other hand, conversations in empty NGO offices where high privacy was insured seemed to put participants at much more ease. When these were Islamic NGOs, participants there seemed the most comfortable and freely delved into a wide host of issues from the private to the most contentious political. While this was of course impacted by the identities and subjectivities of each participant, it was evident that space held much importance. This remains a complex issue, and a more complete exploration remains beyond the scope of this chapter given limitations of space.

It is worth noting here that interviews were not conducted inside the 'privacy' of participants' homes. Doing research inside participants' homes was considered inadmissible by the ethics committee and, by consequence, had to be sacrificed. I did, nevertheless, visit a number of hijabis in their homes in a private capacity for conversations about their experiences in Lebanon. With it, much access in rural regions was sacrificed while the age imbalance was further sedimented, significantly limiting the project. Despite raising the issue, the ethics committee, which seemed embedded in a liberal western understanding of the social world, could not understand that homes are an open space where new acquaintances are habitually engaged for many Lebanese, even

political spaces, and, consequently, did not grant permission to interview inside homes even after I formally applied for an amendment. Either way, an analysis of the ethics committee's decision is beyond the scope of this chapter but it is worth realising that the academic institution prioritised, in this instance, what it considered to be the safety of its researcher and insisted on the application of the western public-private divide at the expense of the project.

It is vital to stress here, before moving on, that this dissertation emerges from the data generated in the field. It is not, in this sense, arguing that it speaks to or voices the experiences of every hijabi in Lebanon but rather voicing common experiences of racialisation among Lebanese hijabis as conveyed by my participants.

4.2.3. Legitimacy and Feasibility: from Gender to Institution

A key issue with this project, as previously noted, is that of gender and the question of legitimacy in having a male researcher collecting, analysing and reporting data on a female-only object. While this is a complex issue, the basis of legitimising this work begins with the rejection of any essentialist binary understanding of gender and a commitment to advancing the conversation, and the empathy, between genders.⁴⁶ Importantly, sharing or not sharing a gender can have various impacts on research depending on the context (Banders 2008; Enguix 2012) as it intersects with other variables, including ones that may be of more importance in specific contexts (Mazzei and O'Brien 2009; Stanley and Slattery 2003). In this respect, gender is one (important) characteristic, yet it is not the only one: religion, race, ethnicity, class, and age, among others, highly influence the subject, their interaction with the world, their knowledge-making as well as their experiences and expressions. Evidently, researchers are not required to share all these characteristics with their participants to conduct legitimate research (Ladson-Billings 2003; Walker 2005). Rather, what is needed is the sharing of key characteristics to permit rapport and understanding (Puwar 1997). As Ansell (2001) argues, it is the project's setting that determines the key characteristics at play.

In the context of this study, I hold that the key characteristic was religion and, combined with multiple other shared attributes such as language and nationality, sufficient identity identification to generate key insights and analysis was present. In other words, as a Muslim with an identifiably Muslim name and a mostly 'Arab appearance', I shared my

⁴⁶ For a decolonized theorization of gender see Lugones (2010) and Wawzonek (2017).

participants' racialisation, despite the fact I did not wear a hijab given my gender. Additionally, I shared their ethnicity and citizenship as I was born and raised in Lebanon and am Lebanese. This includes sharing a language, an accent, and a cultural belonging, even though I was sometimes considered to have less of these than they did given the history of my education and my residence in the UK.

I perceived my complex identity in this project as the 'framework of credibility and approachability' (Adu-Ampong and Adams 2020: 591) in relation to both actual and perceived dimensions of my research positionality. Surely, the result is a complex insider/outsider balance where I both resembled and differed from my participants. Blix (2014), discussing the insider/outsider 'dilemma' in relation to decolonial research, explains that this must not be seen as a hurdle but rather 'an opportunity for the co-construction of new insights' where the researcher's performance can be constantly negotiated to understand the indigenous context at stake (Blix 2014: 182). In this sense, I argue that my own complex identity formed a key site where insights were generated, and where empathy and understanding were fostered (Gair 2012).

Ultimately, as Enguix (2012) explains, 'complete identity or identification with a subject of study is impossible, and it is not – and should not be – a prerequisite of knowledge or of understanding' inviting researchers to realise that the 'construction of difference and the status of insider and outsider are shaped in the process of research through punctual interactions and negotiations among the actors, and are not aprioristic statuses' (Enguix 2012: 91). Rather, this difference itself can offer valuable benefits to the research process (Tinker and Armstrong 2008). In this respect, Falen (2008) argues that the barriers to men conducting research with women 'loom larger than they are', insisting that much stands to be gained through such a labour if it is oriented towards understanding and critical reflexivity without negating the challenges and limitations (Falen 2008: 164), as I hope this project further shows.

In this respect, as Said (2003), speaking of horrid oppression, eloquently said: 'it is often the case that you can be known by others in different ways than you know yourself, and that valuable insights might be generated accordingly' (Said 2003: 94). Consequently, as a man conducting research thinking alongside the lived experiences of women, the potential of generating valuable knowledge exists (naturally, this equally holds in the case of women working with men on a gendered object, for example, as well as of women

conducting research with other women with whom they do not share some key characteristics such as religion). Applied to this project, the fact that I have not lived their hijabi experiences, do not share participants' bodies in a sense, allows me to listen, to hear, and to see their lives, to realise facets of it, in generative ways. Certainly, this means that certain facets will also not be seen, remain invisible, and such is a limitation of this work that does not, I contend, render it inadmissible. Accordingly, and without negating gender's key role but rather through acknowledging my own gender and the gendered nature of the object under study and with a focus on the attributes I do share with my participants, the project promised to offer plenty.

In the field, I framed this project in a way that appeals to Lebanese Muslim women, without any distortion. This played an additional role in facilitating the needed rapport. Participants are calculating individuals, and their performances of themselves are subject to one question: what is at stake? (Schostak 2006: Chapter 1) If that which is at stake is an attempt to understand and voice experiences that participants want to be understood and voiced, alongside a fellow Muslim Lebanese's pursuit of his education, then high cooperation is achievable. Aware that answers received reflect what participants assume I am searching for and what I will do with the information they share with me, an approach of simplicity, transparency and focus on the theoretical academic nature of this work were central in the phrasing of the questions, as in the presentation of the project (Foddy 1994).

Lastly, a note is due on the enthusiasm encountered by participants and their willingness to participate and share information. During fieldwork, this enthusiasm encouraged my pursuit of this project.. Nevertheless, this encouragement must be nuanced and problematized as it is important here to acknowledge that male privilege could very much have been key in the position they have taken, especially given assumptions about male objectivity and ability to produce knowledge that would be received as legitimate, as alluded to in previous paragraphs. Nevertheless, it is also possible that my participants were functioning in an epistemic framing and social context where they perceived sharing a religion, for example, as more important than sharing a gender. Ultimately, my participants were likely to have been influenced by both the structural patriarchy in Lebanon as well as the sense, stemming from their epistemic position, that religion, language, culture, and nationality could be as, or more, important than gender. While this raises complex questions, these remain beyond the confines of this chapter and will be left for a future exploration.

On another level, a major issue with this project being pursued in the western academy was the field's position in the Global South, working with women in the periphery. While this is a challenging question, its weight was alleviated by two main aspects of the project. The first is the project's questions and concerns while the second is my own identity and belonging. Indeed, this project asks questions my participants wanted and is concerned with voicing their racialised experiences. As Zahraa stated at the end of our interview, 'there is a lot to say, and to be told. Maybe these are the most important. There are things, that I would like to send'. The coming chapters will say, and send, what Zahraa and my other participants said and sent. In this sense, it is not a project shaped by western academia or born from it, but is rather one shaped and born in the field by a researcher whose own belonging, experience, subjectivity, and concerns have been shaped by a dwelling in the Global South. Further, as disfigured knowledge about the orient and a misunderstanding of the hegemonic dynamics governing the contemporary world overflow in western scholarship, a deep need for contestation becomes imperative wherever it may be possible. As the western academic environment is crucial in this, contestation from within it offers itself as a crucial opening towards redress. Committed to a more nuanced, reflective, reflexive, and honest voicing to expose oppression and exclusion is, therefore, a need, and forms a key basis of this project's legitimacy.⁴⁷ Yet, this positionality was also a threat to access, with western institutions often perceived with suspicion among some segments of Lebanon's Muslim population. To navigate this, a dual process needed to be used. In this case, my own position as being both a Lebanese Muslim and a student in Europe proved useful: I could draw on either one of the two categories to claim legitimacy and gain trust. With a name evidently connoting a Muslim identity, and given my colloquial Lebanese Arabic, my position in the European academy was of little consequence to many participants as my prior identity of belonging was brought to the forefront. For others, I would deploy my position within the academy to claim legitimacy and trust, focusing on the fact that I am pursuing a graduate degree and on the educational nature of the project. My prior belonging to the American University

⁴⁷ This must not be taken to mean that these are things my participants wanted to voice in the absolute, as the project and myself, among other things, surely influenced what they did and did not say, and what they chose to voice and what they chose to keep silenced. Reiterating this is important as not to fall into an assumption that the data collected holds absolute legitimacy, is complete, or is representative of a complete external reality.

of Beirut – mostly seen as a robust institution of knowledge – also helped alleviate any concerns when, and if, they arose.

Ultimately, my complex positionality held significant impact on fieldwork. Facilitating access, recruitment, and enthusiasm, it was certainly key in the success of this project and the generation of the rich and complex data it has collected. On the other hand, given its complexity and the gendered nature of the hijab, it has surely meant multiple issues have remained concealed and unvoiced by my participants as they navigated my, and their, identities and performances. This positionality was therefore both generative and limiting, and this awareness was taken forward into the analysis and writing of this dissertation.

It must be here noted that while respect for cultural sensitivities and local ethical practices is vital for ‘good’ research, this did not require much effort as my participants and I mostly belong to the same culture. For additional care, and as there are some differences across sects and geographies in Lebanon, I always asked any gatekeeper/facilitator/acquaintance if they were aware of anything I should keep in mind. In most instances, I was given answers in the negative and was told the interviews were bound to go smoothly as participants were enthusiastic. In some cases, I was told to be wary of discussing political issues and sectarian issues as that might jeopardise the meeting, which I obliged. In one specific case during a focus group in a mostly Sunni region outside of Beirut, my (Sunni) gatekeeper said that they did not share my Shia sect with the focus group participants, who had not asked. She advised I do not mention this unless explicitly asked as some participants might become suspicious of my motivations and objectives. When I said that my name suggested I was Shia anyway, she disagreed and said that I should simply ignore the issue unless explicitly asked, which I also obliged. Few issues beyond sectarianism and the entwined political conflict in the country were suggested in this respect. This suggests that Sunni participants who identified my sect could have filtered more of their experiences and answers, while Shia participants could have been more at ease in the discussion. In this sense, Lebanon’s sectarian conflict and political situation had a negative impact on the fieldwork, which must be acknowledged. Yet, given the nature of this work and its objectives, this was not a major issue as the anti-Islam question was one shared by both Shias and Sunnis.

A last point to be touched upon here is that of language. As an exercise in listening, this project involved, and revolves, around language and, undoubtedly, a key weakness of this

project is language. To mitigate the fracturing of reality that language rendered inevitable, interviews were conducted in the interviewees' (and my) native tongue and participants were asked to express in whatever manner they felt most comfortable with. Nevertheless, interviews were then translated and transcribed into English. Although I translated the interviews myself, at the earliest possible moment after they were collected, damage was inevitable as much is always lost in translation.⁴⁸

The question of translation is no small one and while there is no room in this work to elaborate on it, a few points are in order. The first point is that translations are, and have long been, a mode of modern violence as they 'have been instrumental for the epistemicide' of the world as 'a particular mechanism' of coloniality (Vázquez 2011: 30). In this sense, translation has been used as a mechanism of erasure to incorporate all difference into modernity's mode of intelligibility. Certainly, this stands equally valid for the translation of written works as it does for the translation of oral accounts. Hence, the risk posed by translating the words and expressed thoughts my interviewees shared with me posed a serious threat of betrayal: that of incorporating their experiences and expressions into modernity's intelligibility for academic intelligibility. While this was mitigated through cautious translation, and re-translation, it was mainly dealt with by a vigilant explicit attempt to prevent the act of translation from being an act of incorporation. In this sense, I attempted to convey the expressions in a manner that remains most loyal to the register and the framework in which they were expressed. The fact I am fluent in both Arabic and French from an early age immensely helped in this. Similarly, the fact that Lebanese colloquial Arabic contains both English and French words, and some of my participants expressed many of their ideas in English or French, further helped. Further, this impasse was eased by keeping some words in Arabic, as expressed, and attempting to convey their meaning, which has no single equivalent word in English, through a process of explanation. Although this proved complicated and could not be extensively done, I have attempted to deploy it in the places I felt it to be most important without unduly complicating the dissertation's writing or presentation. Eventually, I have attempted to use translation as a struggle: struggle to use translation to convey experiences unheard in an epistemic territory of Uni-versality and also a struggle to show that modernity, as an epistemic border, has not encompassed the experiences of

⁴⁸ I translated all material and data myself as I am fluent in both languages. For extra-care, I consulted with a Lebanese colleague at the American University of Beirut when I felt I needed a second opinion.

others and cannot reduce them to versions of western particularities. The extent to which I was successful in this remains to be seen, and judged. Eventually, the question of language was unsurmountable as the dissertation could not be written but in English. In this sense, this remains a major weakness of the project.

4.3. Data Collection Techniques

Triangulation is classically divided into four main forms: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. Due to the nature of this work, both investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation, assuming their feasibility and worth, were not really options. On the other hand, as noted above, data triangulation was used: a mixing of places, persons, and affiliations to deepen the analysis. In addition to this triangulation, and instead of using methodological triangulation, methodological integration, was adopted.⁴⁹ Methodological integration is similar to triangulation with the difference of it not being used in the pursuit of validation in its positivist sense and is not being understood as a means of increasing accuracy and validating findings. Crucially, integration is not related to the bringing together of qualitative and quantitative data for any sort of cross-checking. Instead, the required validity becomes the sound relationship between data and conclusions drawn; a process ‘embedded in every stage of the production of knowledge’, which does not deny the role of all those involved in the construction of the conclusions drawn (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015: 288). Integration is, accordingly, seen as an enrichment that allows a better understanding and a deeper contribution to theory, in addition to increasing confidence in the interpretations, by collecting data using more than one method (Hussein 2015).

As ‘every method constitutes the subject in a specific way’ integration, as a means of looking from different angles, is used for the formulation of powerfully grounded statements as to commonalities, and differences (Flick 1992: 178). Hence, Integration is here defined as the bringing together of two techniques to observe the phenomenon, in its complexity, from multiple angles (Cronin et al. 2012). It is worth reaffirming that this does not imply, as is classically the case, particular epistemological assumptions (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 199) but rather an equal amalgamation where the data from each method is analysed independently and, once done, brought into conversation,

⁴⁹ It should be noted that this is similar to some understandings of triangulation, albeit not the mainstream one. While I will draw on sources that use both terms, I use the term integration to prevent any confusion.

compared and contrasted to the data from the other method(s) to answer the same research questions (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006: 51).

Specifically, the two methods integrated here were chosen as to, in addition to the above, supplement one another's lacks. This first aimed at having the focus groups complement the data from the interviews to reveal group and interactional attributes. Equally important for this work, methodological integration allowed a widening of the frame of potential participants to include those who would not prefer to be interviewed alone and to decrease the risk of selective observation. Through following-up on unexpected findings, asking if-then, checking for rival understandings and explanations and weighing all data as evidence across both techniques, the statements to be made can be confidently said reflective of, emerging from, the field (Miles 1994). While this can be done if one is using one technique, its robustness significantly grows if one is performing such work and checking it across multiple techniques. Additionally, to complement this data, media sources were made use of to build a holistic understanding and cross-reference events of relevance. Yet, as answering the questions posed here does not necessitate the usage of textual evidence such as archives, official documents and similar sources of data and these were not systematically drawn upon.

In the interviews, two non-discursive issues needed to be accounted for: the embodied nature of the interaction and the influence of all that is non-human. As participation was determined by both gender and a physical characteristic of dress, an awareness of these issues was particularly important. Hence, during the interview, both my own body and that of my participants were given attention to avoid re-inscribing 'the power of scholars to speak without reflexive consideration of their positionality', as well as the loss of bodily signs and gestures which could offer plenty of insights (Ellingson 2017: 6). Similarly, the material setting of interactions was granted attention and recorded, as not to exclude important determinants of the interview's construction (Michael 2004). For example, I took notes of how secluded the space of the interview was as this was important in determining how private the interview was and how comfortable and secure participants felt. When interviews were being conducted in public parks, I took note of the park's visitors and its setting. Similarly, I sometimes took notes of other factors that could influence comfort such as seating, temperature, and light, whenever I felt these were relevant. This data was mainly used to understand reassurance and ease in participants expressing their experiences.

Three further key points require clarification: the hierarchy of methods, their relationship and their temporal distribution (Punch 2014). First, no hierarchy was assumed or applied, and both methods were treated as equal (Cronin et al. 2012; Moran-Ellis et al. 2006). Hence, no data from one method was used to operationalize or influence the other method. In terms of the temporal distribution of the fieldwork, both methods were concurrently applied. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the methods did not inform one another as none of them progressed in a vacuum. Also, the same sampling was used for the focus groups and the interviews, but participants were asked to take part in one technique only (Bloor et al. 2000: Chapter 1). While the same participant's input is likely to differ if the technique changes, widening the number of overall participants, yielding broader and more robust data, was considered more valuable. This was especially the case as there were so many women willing to participate and as the project was limited in its resources, time and potential for coverage. In terms of analysis, data from each of the two techniques was analysed independently and then a synthesis was made. By using a grounded thematic analysis, the initial analysis was generated, and then further analysis assembled these to 'produce an integrated story' (Boyatzis 1998; Corrin et al. 2012). Here, thematic analysis is understood as a theoretically flexible but robust and diligent approach to data analysis where research data is engaged to develop themes that arise from within (Braun and Clarke 2012; Braun and Clarke 2019; Joffe and Yardley 2004). This began by organizing the data in NVIVO, then coding it, then developing themes, then beginning the writing and theorisation process. In this, coding was inductive and research conclusions were then developed based on the codes and emerging themes. Throughout, the data was being re-visited and re-engaged with as themes became guides for further analysis. Ultimately, this sort of analysis allowed me to add the layers of complexity inherent in such a qualitative project to analyse codes and themes within the larger field of the project.

4.3.1. The Interviews

Interviews, a cornerstone of social research, are research techniques which can be, and are, used under multiple research designs and paradigms. In this, they range from rigidly structured exchanges to wholly unstructured narratives. For this dissertation, interviews were approached as interactive processes: a source of data that is constructed in the interview process and, therefore, always situated (Seale 2012). They offered a setting of directed but open interaction, where I had the opportunity to learn, through listening, about the participants' lives with the participants themselves, who are in turn active,

agentive, engaging. Using semi-structured interviews for a ‘balance between structure and openness’ and ‘roughly equivalent coverage’ across the different interviews, a productive and rich comparative analysis was possible (Gillham 2005: 79; Rapley 2007). This aimed at allowing the women to ‘contribute their insiders’ perspectives with little or no limitations imposed by more closed-ended questions’ (Chenail 2011: 255). Eventually, interviews were a ‘relation of active methodical listening as far from the pure *laisser-faire* of the non-directive interview as from the *dirigisme* of the questionnaire’ (Bourdieu 1993 as quoted in Schostak 2006: 59). Accordingly, this was a technique offering a confidential intimate setting where various topics were comfortably explored. Certainly, qualitative interviews have the potential of being powerful moments of openness and exchange, ‘recognizing the otherness of the other and in so doing not reducing this otherness to a sense of the same’ thereby rendering the encounter a space/place where research curiosities can be gratified (Schostak 2006: 11). For this, a pre-prepared interview guide was used and (non-rigidly) followed, mainly consisting of open-ended questions (see annex 5, 6) for a reflexive and flexible data collection.

Interviews, especially as they are used here, can be criticized for their inability to generate objective accounts (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). For this research, objective accounts are not being pursued. Indeed, I accept this criticism and align the work with the position that no such objective account can be generated: neither quantitative surveys nor unstructured interviews offer one. In any case, the potential for multiple interpretations, lack of potential for generalizability, and the inappropriateness to ‘hypothesis testing’, key in the criticism of interviews, become irrelevant if one does not abide by an empiricist and positivist definition of knowledge production (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Further, the issue is not about the technique: good craftsmanship and an awareness of the valid criticisms allow great knowledge production/making (Darder 2018). For this, I attempted to keep my own contribution to a minimum where I ensured that it was participants who were doing the bulk of the speaking rather than myself, where I refrained from expressing my own opinions on matters being discussed, avoided showing agreement and disagreement or judgment on contested issues while answering any questions participants asked me with honesty and preserving a reflexive awareness of the fact that much contribution was taking place anyway.

As the issue under investigation is of a material nature, a visual element was introduced into the interviews. While there are multiple ways of doing so, the one adopted here is

that of simply inserting photographs into the interview questions (Hogan 2012). Known as Photo elicitation interviewing (PEI), adding images to the interviews aimed to ‘stimulate new thoughts and memories prompted by—but not necessarily contained in—the Images’ in an effort ‘to glean insights that might not be accessible via verbal-only methods’ (Padgett et al. 2013: 1435; Harper 2002).⁵⁰ While using visual data has received its share of criticism, it has been witnessing a significant rise in the social sciences over the past years as it has proven itself able to enrich social research (Harper 2002; Rose 2012). Indeed, promoting ‘talk about different things, in different ways’ and registers (Rose 2012: 305), it allowed a more productive interview with more grounded and less abstract conversations by focusing the dialog, conjuring richer expressions and nuances and establishing a less hierarchical environment. Crucially, the photos developed the interaction between my participants and myself facilitating and enriching the meeting. In this respect, the photos often made participants more comfortable in the discussion, grounded our meeting, and improved our interaction. Further, they stimulated memories and experiences that participants shared as they felt the discussion was more focused. In this sense, they were useful in making participants feel at ease, enriching the conversation, and generating insights and nuances. As two pictures were related to Lebanese political figures, this also helped make the conversation around the contested issue of politics easier. It is to be noted here that these pictures were not used to discuss issues that are separate from the ones discussed in the remainder of the interview but were rather inserted to further supplement the conversation and the data around the same issues being explored in the remainder of the interviews and are therefore not considered a separate element of this project’s fieldwork.

As I am familiar with Lebanese society, and as the project is theory-driven where interviews are a space/place of exploring particular questions with the participants, the visual material comprised of pictures taken independently from the project that were present in the public domain (Annex 9). As using researcher-produced photos (be they taken directly by the researcher or obtained by the researcher from other sources and brought into the interview) is ‘an excellent way to conduct theory-driven research’ (Clark-Ibanez 2004: 1509) it was adopted here. As a means of stimulating the conversation, the photos were used to generate (verbal) data rather than being part of the data to be

⁵⁰ It is to be noted that PEI, especially as used here, is very distinct from photovoice techniques where action research and community empowerment is central. A discussion of this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

analysed. Hence, this technique was not used in the sense of asking participants to take photos, or in the sense of taking photos of the participants. These decisions were taken mainly because of practical issues (lack of resources, lack of time, absence of a sustained relationship with participants...), ethical issues (such as requiring the participants to work for no compensation), the fact I am not trained for such a technique and the fact that I believed this approach would be sufficient to provide the pursued insights.

The pictures used were initially chosen before the shift in the research question. Yet, as they proved of great worth and stimulated much conversation from the very first interview, they were not changed. There were five pictures in total, all shown to the interviewees toward the end of the interview. I specifically chose to keep the pictures until the end because their content vertically crossed multiple themes in the interviews, allowing a rich discussion building on what had already been discussed and revisiting themes from a different angle. The first picture was that of Bahia Al-Hariri, politician and sister of Rafik Al-Hariri who wore the hijab in 2005 after her brother's assassination. Bahias's picture aimed to elicit a discussion about the breaking of the taboo and the entry of hijabis into Lebanese politics. The second picture was that of Inaya Ezzeddine, as the Shia 'equivalent' of Bahia, chosen to elicit similar themes across sects, especially having entered the political scene in the hijab rather than wearing it after many years in politics, and also because public discourse associates her with a contestation of the traditional image of the hijabi (her higher education, language, fashionable dress...). The third picture was of four hijabi women, wearing different forms of Islamic dress, from the face veil to the headscarf, walking in a market-street. This was chosen to elicit a discussion about the role of the hijabi women in non-domestic spheres, about the contrast between the different types of the hijab, and about the association between the hijab and class as the picture was clearly taken in a poorer neighbourhood. Also, the way in which the hijab was worn suggests that the wearers might be Syrian, and this was also important to raise the question of nationality and hierarchy within the hijab. The fourth picture chosen was of a *takleef* ceremony: a ceremony held for young girls when they become of age and are henceforth expected to wear the hijab, pray, fast and fulfil other religious duties. This was chosen to elicit a discussion about the age of taking-up the dress, the fact such ceremonies have begun taking place in Lebanon (as they are generally associated with Asian and Iranian Muslim communities) with a continuous increase in the number of hijabis and the fact that the girls are all dressed, as is always the case in such ceremonies, in white robes

instead of actual hijabs raising questions of the hijab's shape and colour and entangled meanings. The last picture was of a seemingly Shia woman, wearing the full black abaya sitting on a street with a rosary in her hands. This picture was chosen to bring up the theme of 'Hezbollah's women', the different images projected of the hijab in Lebanese society and questions of religious practice and surrounding norms in Lebanon.

4.3.2. The Focus Groups

The second technique used was that of focus groups: asking a set number of hijabi Muslim women to assemble and engage in a collective conversation around their experiences to provide deeper insights and a more comprehensive understanding. As explained above, focus groups were approached reflexively and openly to foster a rich conversation where both discursive and non-discursive issues were given due care and where good craftsmanship was key. Similarly, PE was used in focus groups in the same manner as elaborated above.

While focus groups have flourished in fields other than sociology, they have been used by sociologists for a variety of different purposes (Belzile and Oberg 2012; Morgan 2001). Different theoretical models and approaches of what/how a focus group works exist across the different fields of social inquiry as the technique gradually shifts back to social research (mainly from marketing research) as a robust research method of its own (Morgan 2001; Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2011). Yet, focus groups remain often used as exploratory tools or as a follow-up technique. This is not how they will be used here. Rather, they are here applied as a core element of the project, on par with interviews, as they allow participants to bring their 'own priorities and perspectives' where 'a variety of opinions [can] be given and considered' with a rare 'depth of dialogue' (Smithson 2012: 368). The fact that the questions are ones of a lived common social experience rendered the technique extremely suitable. As such, focus groups were 'more valuable many times over than any representative sample. Such a group, discussing collectively their sphere of life and probing into it as they meet one another's disagreements, will do more to lift the veils covering the sphere of life than any other device that I know of' (Blumer 1986: 41).

The focus groups were accordingly meant to build on, and go beyond, the single interviews to understand norms and 'indicate priority concerns and areas of agreement and disagreement' alongside insights as to the 'range of views, attitudes, and experiences', all put in conversation (Gillham 2005: 67). Focus groups are therefore well

placed to allow the discussion of complex questions with little prior data (Longhurst 2016), such as the ones here. While focus groups do not provide the depth interviews do, they are very useful in identifying new insights and revealing agreements and differences within groups. Accordingly, I used probing, open-ended and follow-up questions to specifically explore drives, feelings, and reactions at the group level. To do this, particular focus was given to participant interaction and group dynamics (Belzile and Oberg 2012). A technique useful to ‘reveal group consensus’, or lack thereof, focus groups in this respect promised to unpack the collective understanding of the hijabi experience in Lebanon: revealing the uncertainties, ambiguities and group processes that lead to and underline trends and discourses. By observing the trends which go uncontested, the trends the women feel required to argue for, and those trends which are reticently mentioned or not mentioned at all, much listening and learning unfolded.

It should be noted that focus groups are not understood as group interviews; mainly with respect to the interviewer’s role. In the interview, I was (relatively) actively directing the conversation and asking questions. The focus group, on the other hand, was mainly a focused conversation between the women while I took the role of facilitator so that the conversation does not go off-topic as I attempt to steer the group into covering the main points of the topic guide (annex 6). Eventually, refusing a hierarchy of interview techniques, especially one presumably built on how natural or ‘naturalistic’ a technique is, and decreasing the structure found in focus groups (most visibly by decreasing the role of the moderator but also by decreasing structure during the design and analysis phases of the project) provided richer and more in-depth data (Morgan 2001). Nevertheless, my simple presence and ‘minimal’ interventions certainly influenced the discussion, an essential realisation for a sound analysis.

With much debate on focus group sizes being central, many factors have been identified as important: from the number of questions to the format of the session and its length (Krueger 2014; Tang and Davis 1995). While focus groups often aim at having 8-12 participants, this project aimed at smaller groups of 4-6 participants as they were seen to allow more interaction and permit better moderation. Indeed, as ‘smaller groups (say 4–8 participants) often provide an environment where all participants can play an active part’ and where a conducive, more relaxed and intimate setting for a rich discussion is easier to establish (Smithson 2012: 359). Especially given the complicated multi-faceted nature of the phenomena at hand and the questions being asked, smaller groups were

expected to hold more potential for the generation of deep, rich and diverse data (see Hopkins 2007). And, indeed, a lively and smooth discussion took place in all groups.

Yet, focus groups have several weaknesses, limiting what they can provide. Nevertheless, many critiques fail if one does not abide by an individualistic understanding of the human or a positivistic conceptualisation of knowledge (Belzile and Oberg 2012; Bloor et al. 2000). A key critique is the fact that focus groups are not very apt at providing data about behaviour: people do not tend to discuss their behaviour freely when in a group (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2013; Morgan 2001). As the issue being investigated here focuses more on experiences and the behaviours of others, this was manageable. Another important weakness is the silencing of dissidence (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2013; Morgan 2001). While this was inevitable to some extent, careful planning and a good moderation promised to alleviate its impact. Indeed, many other issues, such as participants inventing answers, performing to present a certain image of themselves or providing trivial responses can be minimized with a good guide and competent moderation, as in interviews. Indeed, while no method is perfect and while many risks in data collection are inevitable, a thorough design and good skill, coupled with a reflexive awareness throughout (and especially during analysis) promised, and delivered, plenty.

Focus groups here were formed by asking hijabi women who had expressed willingness to participate if they would be interested in participating in a group meeting. When they answered in the positive, and when a sufficient number of participants had agreed, I then contacted them to set a suitable times and locations. Focus groups took place either at NGO offices, including those of Islamic NGOs, or at university and school campuses. One was held at AUB, while one was held at a school in Beirut. One was held in a mosque hall, and six were held in NGO offices. One was held in a municipal events centre.

4.4. Micro-Ethics: from Anonymity to Violence

In terms of micro-ethics, this project, as a decolonial empirical social science research project, is steered by four broad guidelines: non-maleficence, beneficence, self-determination, and justice (see Denzin et al. 2008; Smith 1999). Non-maleficence meant that participants' right not to be harmed would be upheld and that the research would not negatively impact the participants or their life, be this at the physical or psychological levels. For this project, this meant not pressuring participants to discuss issues they were not comfortable discussing and ensuring participants' physical and non-physical safety in

planning and having the meeting. Beneficence meant that the research must yield a benefit and have a purpose, rather than being a theoretical indulgence that would be of little use for the community and/or their interests. As this project's purpose is theoretically-oriented, this benefit is mainly perceived as being in the better understanding of conditions of subjugation for their redress. Self-determination meant that individuals would not be forced or pressured to either participate in the research or in any aspect of the discussion they chose to refrain from once they have chosen to participate. All relevant information around the study was fully disclosed through both the information sheet and oral conversations so that participants could make an informed decision about their participation and be aware of its benefits and risks, should there be any. Justice ultimately meant that ethical guidelines were to be followed in an equitable way and would pursue a liberating knowledge rather than an oppressive or concealing one.

Practically, this research is based on the written informed consent and contribution of its participants. The hijabi Muslim women in Lebanon are believed to be fully competent and capable of deciding as to their participation and no issues of vulnerability, in this sense, required addressing. By virtue of the research questions, personal, private issues or ones relating to health (including mental health), as alluded to above, were not of relevance and did not figure in the work. Therefore, the possibility of harm was relatively minimal. Nevertheless, it remained a possibility and suggestions as to how such instances of harm were to be dealt with were presented when the ethics application for the fieldwork was made. Most importantly, I had specified that if such instances were to occur I would offer to terminate the interview and console the interviewee. Allowing her to leave, take a break or have a glass of water were also proposed. If appropriate, I planned to refer the interviewee to counselling services and provide the list of counselling services I had prepared (annex 7). If required, I promised to follow-up with the interviewees at some later time to make sure that they felt alright. Fortunately, no such instances occurred.

Moreover, all data was collected under participant anonymity (including all unique identifiers). The nature of the questions asked meant that the information did not present any serious risk of making the person identifiable. Focus groups presented, as they always do, a gap in this as I had no means of guaranteeing participants would respect the privacy of their fellow participants. This was made clear to participants and their approval was gained in signing. Additionally, the fact that participants did not feel obliged to discuss anything they are not comfortable with was especially stressed in focus groups.

Each participant was given a pseudonym in the written thesis and their data were recorded, transcribed, analysed and reported on (only by me) using that pseudonym.⁵¹ No problems in terms of recording were faced,⁵² nor in terms of gaining written approval. All this data was stored on my personal laptop where encryption of the files kept data extra safe. A backup of all the data was also kept on a protected external hard drive. While this does not fully guarantee the rights of the participants, especially those in focus groups, it presented a reasonable measure towards it.

Throughout fieldwork, I was cautious not to fall into a hierarchical understanding of researcher-researched, seeking to minimize ‘symbolic violence’ – understood as the non-physical violence resulting from power-differentials within the research setting – and engaging the field as a reflexive methodical active learner (Bourdieu 1999). Yet, all human interaction is power-laden, and good research is not necessarily one where that power asymmetry between researcher and participant is eliminated, as that is impossible. Rather it is one where this power is mitigated, realized and processed. In this regard, I took extra care to ensure my interaction with participants avoided any sort of hierarchy or harm. Eventually, I attempted my best to mitigate the effects and power imbalance and, for research purposes, I gave sufficient reflection and attempted to remain constantly aware of the power dynamics at play, as alluded to throughout this chapter (Kvale 2006).

Closing, it is worth noting here that reflexivity in this research project not only allowed me to better explore and understand the data my participants shared, but also to realise the coloniality under which I am myself dwelled. While this is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth briefly noting one example to illustrate the importance of this decolonising reflexive work; an example in relation to the autonomous liberal subject. Although I was well aware of the theoretical critique of the liberal subject before starting this project, an introspective reflexivity revealed the extent to which assumptions about autonomy and resistance still plagued my own understanding of subjectivity and liberation. When I began my interviews, I quickly realised that I admired participants whose hijab involved resistance against a disapproving social circle. When a young participant in her early 30s told me that she wore the hijab at age 9, I felt troubled. When

⁵¹ One participant who risked being identifiable given their public status explicitly consented to this. I have nevertheless not identified her here, and have only drawn on her data using a pseudonym and avoiding any information that could make this identification easier.

⁵² Out of all participants, three specified that they would be more comfortable if I do not voice record the interview and only take notes instead, which I obliged without asking for an explanation.

she, a few sentences later, told me that her parents did not want her to wear the hijab at such a young age despite the fact they were themselves observant, I felt slightly relieved. Despite this, my perception of her remained dissimilar from my participant of the day before who wore the hijab in her early 20s into a non-observant family who considered her choice scandalous. Clearly, I seemed to think, my rebellious participant was worthy of much more admiration as she had shown autonomy, independence and freedom. There was a clear pattern. Going through my transcripts, around three months into fieldwork, I realized that I seldom asked follow-up questions when participants told me they started wearing the hijab at a young age, with their family's support. Multiple follow-up questions always ensued when the case was one of 'resistance'. Attempting to make sense of this, I realized I was much more interested in resistance. Indeed, I realised I was programmed to consider certain things resistance and others compliance. Further, while my participants could have been resisting and complying with different social institutions around them, from family to schools and friends, I only registered certain forms of resistance as resistance: resistance was the movement towards coloniality while compliance was the acceptance of the inferior Other. Throughout, I was not only judging my participants (itself extremely problematic), I was doing so according to foreign categories. It was, by all means, catastrophic. I quickly realized I still had a long way to go and I began making a more concentrated effort to fight the urge, the normativity, and the assumptions which were all 'inextricably bound up with historical conditions under which agency is understood and some forms of agency become paradigmatic, while others are erased' (Bilge, 2010: 11). As I struggled against this, towards the end of my fieldwork, I began to become more at ease, and more interested, in what Mahmood had termed docility (Mahmood 2012a). I nevertheless realized the extent to which I needed to work towards my own decolonisation and the labour that laid, and lays, ahead.

4.5. Conclusion

As a decolonial project, this dissertation will attempt, based on a knowledge produced with its participants (including myself), to show, speak alongside and of, the modern conditions plaguing my participants' lives. With both Sunni and Shia participants, starting with pre-established networks and snowballing, the techniques used for this project were chosen with this objective in mind. While the techniques intersect and overlap, generating varying data and insights, each one has its particular strengths and weaknesses. Based on the conviction that participants, and the phenomenon being studied, are 'more than a

collection of objective, measurable facts' and are in fact living entities who 'are seen and interpreted through the researcher's frame', this dissertation ultimately seeks to debunk oppression, exclusion, and erasure to theorise it for redress (Mehra 2002: 20). To achieve this, I attempt to understand, formulate, enunciate, surpass, transcend, and make use of my own position, knowledges, history, and potentials, as I collected, analysed, and reported on data from across Lebanon's many divides.

Qualitative, interpretive, and reflexive, this case study of a small complex Mediterranean Arab ex-colony seeks to perform research outside of the western academy's binaries, violence, and oppression. In doing so, it abides by a strict code of ethics. Ultimately, and as social researchers, we cannot pretend or, even worse, be unaware 'that the specific characteristics' of our understanding are 'a point of view on a point of view' where we attempt to take the views of our participants and tell a tale about the world (Bourdieu 1999: 625), about my/their world. The most important challenge, perhaps, was not to fall into a failed listening where 'women's voices themselves, their oral histories, with rich subtexts and eloquent voids and silences' are misunderstood and appropriated 'by the interviewers zombified by Western scientific and scholarly principles' (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 143). For this, an adequate framing of the specific context is needed and, accordingly, the next chapter will turn to Lebanon to sketch the space out of which this dissertation's data emerged.

Chapter Five: Lebanon: Invention, Current Scene, and Others

Taking the case of a complex post-colonial territory in the Global South, this chapter will begin by briefly sketching the country's birth and history to provide this dissertation with the needed background and framing. Surely, this will not be a comprehensive retelling but rather one tailored to this project's objectives. Then, the chapter will make a few points regarding Lebanese identity and present a topography of the Lebanese sectarian socio-political scene with a significant focus on the country's Muslim populations given this project's topic of investigation. Lastly, the chapter will shed some light on women's situation in Lebanon to close with a few notes on the small land's internal Others. Throughout, it will not explicitly seek to analyse the issues it explores but rather to sketch out a general scene, a backdrop, for the understanding of the coming chapters. In this sense, much of what this chapter presents, particularly as it is oriented to the reader unfamiliar with Lebanon and its complexity so that the data and analysis could be situated and contextualised within the larger setting, remains largely descriptive and open to a nuancing and problematisation beyond the scope and aim of this dissertation.

5.1. Construction of a Nation: Colonial Invention, (Religion-based) Hierarchy, and Westernising Identity

Lebanon is a small multiparty confessional republic classified as a 'developing country' with high human development and a liberal (non-oil) economy located on the shores of the Mediterranean.⁵³ The nation is believed to house around nineteen sects; twelve of whom are Christian, and two (or three, depending on whether the Druze are included or not) Muslim (Shehadeh 2004).⁵⁴ In the words of historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, Lebanon, as a nation, 'never existed before in history. It is a product of the Franco-British colonial partition of the Middle East' (Traboulsi 2007: 75). Before the First World Wars, during

⁵³ A 'confessional democracy' is a democratic system where political representation is proportionally divided and distributed across religious groups.

⁵⁴ The Druze are a socio-religious group found mainly in Lebanon and Syria. While they played a major role in Lebanon's history under the Ottomans and during the days of the French Mandate, their numbers have greatly decreased, and their political relevance has waned. Further, the classification of the Druze sect as an Islamic one is a question of significant social, political and theological debate. In Lebanon they live mostly in closed off communities in the Mountains. Their form of hijab does not exhibit variety (a uniform black dress and white scarf), and it is only a particular section of women (those from certain families) who wear it. They have a complex social system where lineage plays a central role. For these reasons, in addition to practical limitation of access and scope, the Druze will not be included in this dissertation. For further information refer to Hazran (2009a) and Hazran (2010).

the days of Ottoman rule, there existed a *Muhafaza* (administrative division) within the Ottoman Sultanate called Mount Lebanon. Significantly smaller than the current country, Mount Lebanon was mainly a Christian governorate. The Maronites, the overwhelming majority of Christians in the *Muhafaza*, are a religious group particularly known for their great historical ties to Europe in general, France in particular.⁵⁵ Indeed, it has been argued that Maronite loyalty and identity, the only Christian group in the East having supported the crusades, had long been allied with Europe and the Pope rather than any local authority (Salibi 1998). With this, Maronite history is loaded with a contestation of Ottoman sovereignty and the pursuit of independence from the Islamic power with French support (Hakim 2013).

Historical evidence indicates that the *Mutasarifiya*, the name given to Mount Lebanon after the Ottoman nineteenth-century reforms, was itself a result of this power struggle as the Ottoman Sultanate ceded for a compromise: France would relinquish its project of an independent Christian principedom and the Ottoman Sultanate would relinquish its attempt to submit Mount Lebanon to its sovereign rule (Salibi 1998; Spagnolo 1971). As such, the *Mutasarifiya* was formed as a particular political unit of governance, with French and Christian missions dominating the socio-cultural scene as French influence was as political just as it was (heavily) religious and cultural (Harris 2012). Indeed, even during France's most anticlerical moments, missions and support to Christians in Lebanon never waned where French Laïcité ended once the borders of the Ottoman Sultanate began (Tejirian and Simon 2012).

The regions surrounding the *Mutasarifiya* were heterogenous: Sunnis as well as Orthodox Christians, Druze, Shias, and other religious minorities existed. Sunnis in both the *Mutasarifiya* and the surrounding regions had enjoyed a good position under the Ottomans, as the empire had a system which can be said to have culturally favoured them (Makdisi 2000). Information about the other religious groups, particularly the Shia, is scant (Abidor 2012). Nevertheless, it can be affirmed that the Shia were a marginalized group at the time (Abidor 2012). Despite this, notwithstanding political and legal restrictions, the sect's notables appear to have managed a fragmented form of localised power within, and perhaps through, their relegation (Winter 2010).

⁵⁵ The Maronite church is a church in communion with the Catholic church.

When the Ottoman Sultanate was broken down, Europe sought out a project of dividing it into small units in a supposed quest to create European-style nation-states. Accordingly, the idea of establishing minority-homes, that is states where non-Muslims are the majority, gained much zeal. Pioneered by the French, and with a 'Jewish' state being enforced nearby, a 'Christian home' was to see light. Yet, Maronite leaders wanted a state which would survive without the need for support from Arab neighbours, and so the head of the Maronite Church (the Patriarch) asked for the expansion of the *Mutasarifiya* to include a larger coastline, several major cities, and relatively large agrarian valleys.⁵⁶ As a consequence of the geographies included, this new land was to incorporate the Muslim populations of the surrounding regions, as well as a number of non-Maronite Christians (Firro 2002: Chap 1).

This 'Greater Lebanon' with its 'natural boundaries' was met with significant opposition from the Muslim populations (Makdisi 2000). Indeed, supported by a number of political actors throughout the Arab world, vast segments of the Muslim populations stringently refused this creation and much unrest, from protests to violent attacks on the French, strikes, civil disobedience and assassinations ravaged the land (Hakim 2013; Traboulsi 2007). The Sunnis with significant power, from politics to commerce, voiced a particularly stern 'Sunni nationalist' ideology and called for unity with Syria based on shared religion (Johnson 1986; Makdisi 2000).

Regardless, with European and expatriate support, Greater Lebanon was created in 1920 in spite of all opposition (Hakim 2013: 38). For the Maronites, Lebanon was seen as the natural product of the ties held between Europe and that 'distinct Maronite community' of the orient (Womack 2012). For the French, Lebanon was perceived as the beacon from which their 'universal' values of 'rationalism' and their project of enlightenment and modernisation were to spread throughout the Arab world. France's 'Lebanese project' accordingly came through: the metropole had obtained its 'valuable conduit for imperialist policy' in the region (Verdeil 2006: 23).

This new-born country, as part of the larger political bargains in the world, had been put under a commanding French 'Mandatory rule' (class A) (unlike many other realms of the previous Ottoman empire) after the end of the First World War, a mandate which did not

⁵⁶ The 'Patriarch' was, and still is, the head of the Maronite church. By virtue of this office, he exerted great political power, which has significantly decreased in more recent years. For a brief overview of the Marounite Church see Tabar (2014).

end until 1946 (Haddad 2002). Beirut was its (artificial) natural capital, a capital that had become a regional hub as it had been made into both a political and an economic centre in the region (Eddé 2013).

During the mandate days, the French attempted to establish a system of paternalism and to institute a bureaucracy and a hierarchy that would serve their interests, both in the region and beyond (Thompson 2000). To achieve this, different agreements were forged, and a multitude of oppressions took place. Most importantly, a hierarchized system of religious discrimination where the Muslims were placed at the lower end of the hierarchy was progressively and overtly institutionalized within the state's structure (Salibi 1998). This held especially true for the Shia, who lacked the regional support (political and other), as well as the historical infrastructure, Sunnis enjoyed (Hazran 2009b; Winter 2010).

Accordingly, the various Christian and Muslim sects had unequally become the Lebanese where, in creating the nation, religion and religious divisions were strongly entrenched in a system where the state was, from the cultural to the economic, political and constitutional, premised on Maronite dominance (Crow 1962; Firro 2002). Eventually, in their quest to establish 'a colonial civic order rather than solely a colonial state', the French ultimately laid the foundation for a heterogeneous Lebanese citizenship and much of the country's internal contradictions (Thompson 2000: 68).

The French mandate established a (persisting) classification where individuals engaged the state both as citizens and as members of a distinct (religious) group as inequality and difference became a defining feature of the Lebanese order. In this respect, this colonial state was based on a dual legal system whereby 'personal affairs' were referred to religious law, further enshrining injustices, clientelism, divisions and French paternalism (Mikdashi 2014, Zantout 2011).⁵⁷

With these movements, the mandate days were characterized by a mix of economic and social flourishing with tensions, resistance against the French (mainly from the Muslims), and political instability (Longrigg 1958). This complex mandate only came to an end after World War II and the ensuing global re-positioning which allowed for Lebanon's

⁵⁷ Note that this is not a critique of legal pluralism under one state. For a discussion of legal pluralism see (Possamai et al. 2014: Part 3). It is a critique of the way it was applied and used by the French and the subsequent regimes in the country. Also, see Mahmood (2015) for a discussion of what a similar system did in Egypt.

declaration as an ‘independent country’. In this regard, Lebanese independence was a complicated process, beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice to say that it was a result of larger political deals in the region in the wake of global shifts in power as well as local and regional politics. While the French had envisioned Greater Lebanon as part of L’Union Française, turbulence within the country and shifting politics in France, alongside the geopolitics between France and the United Kingdom (as well as the United States of America and the Soviet Union) forced the French to accept an independence, officially declared in 1943 (Clayton 1994). Naturally, it was only possible as a result of Muslim leaders accepting this new home (which they diffidently did largely for economic and pragmatic benefits) and Christian groups giving up their demands for ‘the annexation of Christian Lebanon by France’ (Traboulsi 2007: 82). Accordingly, this new country was awkwardly brought into being through compromises with multiple imaginaries coinhabiting the space declared as the Lebanese nation.

In 1946, a constitution was set in place, under French eyes and in emulation of French secular law (Abdallah 2003). Drafted by the French, the Lebanese constitution, which is mostly an (awkwardly) translated version of selected segments of the French constitution at that time, remains largely unchanged till this day, except for the adjustments of the Taif Accord (see below) (Hajjar 2009; Semaan 1999). From its bureaucratic ordering to its institutional structure, the new state was moulded on the European model with the Christian preeminent. There, for example, only a Georgian calendar was (and continues to be) observed, with European holidays (Saturday and Sunday as weekend and Friday as normal working day, Christmas and Easter as the long breaks...) and a capitalist westernized economic and social orders.

In the years following the Second World War, the now independent nation, at least formally, saw a period of relative stability where mass (western-style) educational, (liberal capitalist) economic, social and political modifications continued in line with the modifications of the mandate to reconstitute life for the Lebanese (Eddé 2013; Owen 1976; Salibi 1998). Yet, although the system put in place by the French remained mostly unaltered and the country was functional, the nation’s social fabric and demographic constituency had been changing, and so had the region around it (Salibi 1976). With Arab nationalism on the rise throughout the West Asia region, the old system was becoming extremely strained and the Muslim masses’ sense of marginalization was becoming ever more powerful (Harris 2012). Additionally, with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

escalating, the Lebanese system entered a particularly delicate phase. Soon, the systematic marginalization of Muslims and the rule of a Christian autocratic elite, which had turned to an alliance with the United States of America, was no longer sustainable (Traboulsi 2007).

With the 1967 Arab-Israeli-war, and as the number of Palestinians pouring into the country grew, small civil wars began to break out (Salibi 1976). Sectarianism already well entrenched, and with a minor civil war having taken place in 1958 over the nation's 'Arab identity', the country entered a protracted conflict that would not end until 1991 (Traboulsi 2007).⁵⁸ Beirut was soon split into Eastern Beirut, where the Christians gathered, and Western Beirut where the Muslims gathered, by a clear demarcation line. But, it is vital to realize, this was by no means the capital's only (or even main) line of division. Combat between various Christian militias, between Sunni and Shia militias, among Shia militias and among Sunni militias, were some of the many lines of division that ebbed and flowed throughout the conflict in Beirut, its surrounding regions and beyond. Further, the combat between Palestinian factions, and between Lebanese groups and Palestinians, was another major component of the conflict.

A complicated process, engulfing the vast majority of the Lebanese geography, the Lebanese civil war is certainly not to be reduced to combat amongst religious groups. The role of the economic cannot go understated in this, pushing some scholars to argue that it was a war of 'capitalists in conflict' (Hourani 2010, 2015). Yet, surely, much more than the economic was at play, from the geopolitical to the identitarian, where religious identity was a key nexus of conflict and battle. In this respect, Khalidi (1979) identifies the Palestinians, alongside more than five Arab countries and three non-Arab countries as major actors in the war. Eventually, it remains difficult to narrate what happened, especially as Lebanese history remains mostly under-researched and a topic of great contestation. As disentangling these narratives of the civil war is not of insurmountable relevance for this chapter, having pointed out some of the driving forces and not wanting to make an argument for the supremacy of one over the others (such as capital or political identity), I will move on.

⁵⁸ A Phoenician identity was invoked, particularly by Lebanon's Christians, before, during, and after the Lebanese civil war. This was present in fields as varied as literary production, media, social movements, and formal politics. For an engaging exploration of this see Zogheib (2014). For a historicization of this see Kaufman (2001).

In 1989, and under both regional and international political shifts, many, but not all, Lebanese faction leaders came together in Saudi Arabia and signed what came to be known as the Taif Accord (Abdallah 2003). The end of the civil war had begun. Of great importance is the fact that the accord established a new sectarian equilibrium, where power was to be equally divided between the Muslims and the Christians while ushering in the Syrian Army as a guarantor of stability (Abdallah 2003). While before the civil war Maronite groups equated Lebanese nationalism with ‘Maronitism’, the occurrences of the previous years, with their military defeat and shrinking numbers as well as regional and global geopolitical shifts, had forced them to relinquish this ideology and turn from a policy of domination to one of accommodation/compromise (Haddad 2002). As the accord asserted Lebanon’s ‘Arab face’ (but not identity), it left large segments of the Lebanese constitution unscathed and much of the nation’s colonially instilled structures, and cultural foundations, intact (Abdallah 2003).⁵⁹

Post-1991, all armed groups were disarmed, under the watchful eye of the Syrian army entrusted by the Americans, and most arms garnered from the militias were incorporated into the national Lebanese army with one exception: Hezbollah as a resistance movement which had not partaken in the civil war (Fadlallah 2014). The Accord, only possible considering a Syrian-US deal with Saudi patronage, had succeeded in ending the conflict (Abdallah 2003). The result was an amnesty, with the exile of Michel Aoun and the imprisonment of Samir Geagea, two of the country’s most powerful Christian leaders.⁶⁰ Here, Rafic Al-Hariri, Sunni business tycoon, emerged with the support of regional Sunni power Saudi Arabia, soon becoming Prime Minister, to usher the nation into the new age under the banners of reconstruction, modernization, and neo-liberal capitalism (Salem 1994).

With backing from Iran, which had by then become an ‘Islamic republic’, the Shia were pursuing their own separate empowerment (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008). Meanwhile, the Christians found themselves increasingly disadvantaged. The amendments to the constitution did preserve significant Christian privilege, but this was perceived as a great reduction of their power and the realities of their situation meant their ability to exert political dominance had become limited. Despite this, especially on the social and

⁵⁹ For the accord refer to <http://al-bab.com/documents/taif-accord>

⁶⁰ Samir Geagea was the only warlord to face trial for the Lebanese civil war. He was later released and pardoned after the Al-Hariri assassination.

economic scales, Lebanon's Christians held on to a diminished hegemony as neo-liberal modernisation pushed forth.

In 2005, Al-Hariri was assassinated, and the country entered a phase of serious instability. Two main political blocs emerged at the time: both multi-sectarian alignments, each affiliated with a regional/international axis (Salloukh 2017). The 'Cedar Movement', the political bloc aligned with the US and Saudi Arabia, managed to force the Syrian army out of Lebanon through protests, demonstrations and international pressure while the '8 March' bloc was mainly a reaction and contestation of the Cedar Movement, aligned with Syria (Geukjian 2014). As a result of the Syrian exit, a new phase was said to have begun in the country. Yet, this situation did not unsettle the sectarian ailment but rather reaffirmed it along new divisions, confirming Lebanon's lack of identity and instability (Geukjian 2014; Knio 2005). With the Syrian army outside of the country, both Saudi Arabia and Qatar increased their presence (Assi and Worrall 2015). Similarly, Europe, particularly France, and the United States were also overtly empowered (Kluttz 2009). Yet, the Cedar Movement crumbled within a few months and split over a multitude of issues, with no substantial changes (besides the exiting of Syrian troops) coming about (Shields 2008). The reverberations of this political instability, and the ensuing divisions, continue to this day.

Post-Taif, the Lebanese state is often described as extremely weak and incapable (Khalaf 2004), with some claims that it has completely broken down after the Lebanese civil war, riddled with corruption, of little relevance as it merely survives deconstruction and only of secondary importance (at best) to understanding lived experiences in Lebanon (El-Khazen 1991; Hermez 2015; Leenders 2012; Sirriyeh 1999).⁶¹ Indeed, the Lebanese state has never been powerful, never been autonomous, and had always been penetrated by the market, standing on a clientelist party structure with no centralised authority (Johnson 1986; see Hermez 2015). Eventually, the very structures in place meant that the formation of a strong capable state remains practically impossible. While this has been nuanced by some scholarship (see Egan and Tabar 2016), the positioning of the Lebanese state along the absent-present continuum is beyond my scope here, and I contend that, if the question is that of the micro-lived, the state, from very weak provisions to an inability to patrol the

⁶¹ It should be noted that this existence hinges on a number of different variables beyond the scope of this dissertation. For example, the UN peacekeeping forces in South Lebanon have attempted to play a crucial role in establishing the sovereignty of the Lebanese state. See Daniel (2017).

borders, is certainly not the architect of life. Indeed, I would argue that, for the larger segments of its population, the state is far from being a governing independent hegemonic entity, even a belonging or identity, as it remains largely alien and peripheral.

At the cultural level, Lebanon has no unified culture. As the Lebanese state is colonised by corruption, warlords, and inefficiency, Lebanon remains a country with distinct groups with vast differences in the dynamics governing their socio-political lives, their challenges, their hopes, and their dreams (Baytiyeh 2017; Cleveland et al. 2013; Farah and Samad 2014; Salamey and Tabar 2008). Nammour (2007) describes current Lebanese identity as ‘complex and perplexed’ where religious belonging, which is clearly distinguished from religious faith, rules supreme.⁶² Lacking a national identity or culture, the various factions of the nation have been argued to live under different ‘value systems’ which are in turn spatialised across the small nation as sectarianism remains powerful (Bray-Collins 2016).⁶³ Through a ‘Western-oriented Lebanese subjectivity’ where cosmopolitanism, tourism and the habitus of merchants are prime (Maasri 2016: 138), the Lebanese cultural scene can be said to revolve around a westernised set of practices across the country: from Zahle, in the Bekaa and Marjaeyoun, in the South to Jounieh, Anjar and Batroun among many others. The result is a Lebanese scene imagined as being *in* the Arab Middle East but not *of* it as ‘expensive cars line up behind one another in Beirut’s never-ending traffic’ where ‘restaurants and shops of Hamra bustle all day’ with extremely high prices ‘meant for those who can afford it’ (Nair 2013:11).

With this, and with decades-long systematic work by Christian nationalists, a distancing from the Arabs and a rapprochement to the Europeans continues to characterise the Lebanese founding myth and the Lebanese contemporary scene (Nammour 2007; Stone 2008).⁶⁴ Accordingly, the claim that Lebanon is not an Arab country but, rather, a particular nation in the Arab East, or a Phoenician one, for example, continue to be made (Kaufman 2004; Maasri 2016).⁶⁵

⁶² In terms of demographics, the last official census was conducted in 1932, meaning that no precise information on the Lebanese constituency exists. Nevertheless, it is estimated that around one-third of the population today identify as Christians (from Catholics to Protestants) while the remainder identify as Muslims (Faour 2007).

⁶³ This is not an ascription to the meta-narrative of a binary divide revolving around religion but rather an acknowledgment of the divides, negotiated and nuanced as they may be, within the country (see Peri 2014).

⁶⁴ In recent years, a certain Christian revival has been noted by the literature. See Felsch (2018).

⁶⁵ Certainly, the two identities are not mutually exclusive but rather exist in a complex relationship that differs across sects, regions, age groups and classes.

With a powerful ‘political desire to evoke Lebanon’s particularism in the Arab East’ as well as its linking to ‘ancient Phoenicia’, Lebanon’s capital Beirut itself continues to push for a reclaiming of its status as ‘Paris of the East’ where a tourism economy pursues a narrative of continuity with a cosmopolitan thriving civilizational past drawing tourists, investment, and Lebanese expatriates (Maasri 2016: 134). A ‘city of lines’ and material consumption, Lebanon’s capital, like the rest of the country, therefore, continues to be a space of boundaries: religious, sectarian, class-based and ideological where borderlines are mapped to keep the privileged in their privilege and the downtrodden at bay. Omnipresent and often unspoken of, these lines demarcate Beirut and its inhabitants with, for example, the movement from Beirut to its southern suburb being one Lebanese taxi-drivers ‘rarely agree to venture [in]to’ as it is a movement between two-places which appear ‘a continent apart’ (Nair 2013:11).

Before closing this section, a note on language is due. Arabic is Lebanon’s official language as the country remains a member of L’organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. Yet, formal Arabic is nearly non-present in the country as colloquial Lebanese Arabic continuously recedes in favour of French and English. Indeed, in Lebanon, language is a potent social marker and its historical and continuous role in reiterating the old Lebanese self-understanding of a country with a regional ‘civilising mission...as a Mediterranean country that looks both East and West’ cannot go missed (Salameh 2010: 187; Womack 2012). With it, the ‘the belief among many Lebanese, according to Suleiman (2003), in Lebanon’s civilizational mission in the East’ survives and persists (Esseili 2017). While Lebanese Arabic contains a large number of French and (to a lesser extent) English words, foreign language proficiency in the country today functions as a marker of religious affiliation (mainly the fact that Christians are francophone in both education and daily life while also being conversant in English, while Muslims, and particularly the Shia, are not). While the question of the Arabic language in Lebanon, from the claim that Lebanese Arabic is a language of its own to the calls for its writing in Latin script and its persistent decline in usage in favour of English and French (Salameh 2010; Shawish 2010), is far beyond the scope of this dissertation suffice to note its power. The colonial order clearly stood hegemonic.

Crucial to realise from this recounting of Lebanon is that the small country was established as a colonial project where hierarchisation through religion with a special connection to Europe were foundational. Institutionalised and imbuing the state’s

identity, this resulted in an exclusionary approach to citizenship where the nation's colonial founding largely stood on the disavowal of its Muslim population in favour of its (Maronite) Christian one. As the decades passed, the balance of power in the country has shifted to witness a gradual and eventually magnanimous socio-political and demographic emergence of its Muslim populations to become a nation of separately co-existing groups. Certainly not a homogenous place, it is a space where multiple groups (co)-exist in parallel, each with distinct competing founding myths and separate social spheres where a dominant westernising capitalist culture rules supreme. Segmented and fractured, the Lebanese, I would say, is a failed enunciation. This failure has certainly not been mitigated by Islamic ritual, especially the most visual of them: women's dress. Yet, before this is discussed, some notes on each of the three main Lebanese sects is in order.

5.2. Lebanese (Political) Leadership and Stakeholders

Given the Lebanese state's weakness, and the nature of Lebanese order and identity, the country's various political groups and stakeholders yield massive authority. As political leaders, they are also economic, social, and cultural elites with a vast impact in structuring the daily lived experiences across the small land. Accordingly, I will here present some notes on each constituency's governing scene. With this dissertation's aims in mind, more focus will be given to the Islamic sects, each of whom I will tackle independently. Importantly, it must be realised that this division is for reasons of presentation, and the structuring of the lived is influenced by much beyond the stakeholders I sketch to produce a reality far more complex, entwined, and co-constituted than this chapter can offer.

5.2.1. The Sunnis in Lebanon

The Sunnis in Lebanon, as explained earlier in this chapter, have never been the dominant group nor had they ever been a heavily marginalized one as, despite the fact that post-mandate Lebanon was a land of Maronite dominance, the Sunnis enjoyed a good standing where they were considered as the 'second most important sect' (Cvengros 1967: 41; Harris 2012; Tegho 2011). On the political level, the Sunni leadership post-independence and well into the civil war was liberal, moderately Arab nationalist and displayed very little religious affinity (Johnson 1986). Post-Taif, their hold on power was significantly improved, and their grip on state institutions, mostly as a result of Al-Hariri's grip on Lebanese politics, was heightened as they increasingly became involved in the 'Lebanese

project' (Kanana 2011). Specifically, political hegemony between 1991 and 2005 has been that of the Future Movement under the leadership of Rafik Al-Hariri.

From the earliest of days, Al-Hariri's system distanced itself from both Islamists and Lebanese Islamic institutions, forging its own identity as westernized, modern and Islamically moderate (Skovgaard-Petersen 1998). Building on sectarian politics, the Future Movement, whose current leader is Saad Al-Hariri (Rafik Al-Hariri's son) can be characterised as a secular, urban and modern political movement which seeks to link Lebanon to the west, affirm a Lebanese identity (instead of an Arab one), and turn the country into a Mediterranean (touristic and economic) hub (Hamdan 2013; Nammour 2007). With this, the movement's major source of appeal has long been its service provision through a system of clientelism which favoured and mainly catered for the Sunnis, although it also had a strategy of catering to out-groups (Cammet and Issar 2010).

Accordingly, the Future Movement can be said to advocate the separation between the political and the religious as its leaders and members never advance an Islamic program and do not promote or exhibit an Islamic way of life. Certainly, this must not be understood as a complete break from Sunni Islam, especially as Lebanon's confessional system renders such a break political suicide. Rather, it is a Sunni sectarian leadership while at the same time being a modern, westernised and secular national Lebanese political party. Here, links with Sunni institutions, such as Al-Makassed Foundation, are central to the movement as is an anchoring in the Sunni community while a moderate Islamic identity is advanced within the context of the Lebanese public. Of relevance to this thesis is pointing out that Al-Hariri the father's wife and daughters were, and still are, not hijabi. Al-Hariri the son's wife, and daughters, are not hijabis either.

On another level, and since the death of Rafic Al-Hariri in 2005 and the awkward emergence of his son, Saad Al-Hariri, the Future Movement's hold of Sunni representation has gradually weakened (Vloeberghs 2012). In addition to serious contestation by Islamists, it has faced powerful blows from various political actors (Salloukh 2017). These actors, such as Najib Mikati or the Karami family, have not, as of writing this dissertation, managed to pose a significant threat to the Future movement's leadership, rather remaining secondary to it, especially as they continue to be confined to narrow geographies and fail to make a breakthrough at the national level. While I will not delve into a discussion of these figures, it is worth noting that they generally remain

within the same paradigm as the Al-Hariri family: liberal capitalist, westernised and modernising.

Islamic movements amongst the Sunnis in Lebanon, on the other hand, have not achieved major political success, especially post-Taif. Historically, they never attained prominence in Lebanon, a country depicted in the literature as a great example of being ‘immunized against the various temptations of political Islam’ (Daher 2015: 211). Instead, the Sunni socio-political scene has long been a mix of Arab nationalism, Nasserism, communism, and Marxism, before it moved into more western-style forms of leadership with Al-Hariri (Itani et al. 2009). Today, the situation is slightly different, but not drastically. The Islamic Group, the Islamic Action Front, the Islamic Tawhid Movement, and numerous minor Salafist movements currently exist and operate in the country. Small and weak, most of them date their emergence to sometime during the civil war (Hamzeh and Dekmejian 1996; Imad 2006).

Broadly speaking, Salafist movements operating in Lebanon may be classified into three main strains: a quietist, an activist, and a jihadi (Rabil 2014). While the quietist fashion an apolitical identity, both the activist and the jihadi have sought a role in Lebanese politics. Indeed, from electoral participation to grass-root mobilization, various Salafist movements have episodically tried to influence the Sunni political scene (Daher 2015). The activists, since the time of Fathi Yakan in the later days of the civil war, faced serious questions in Lebanon’s multi-sectarian reality, lacked a clear identity, did not present a political project and were beleaguered by deep-rooted instability and fissures (Elsässer 2007). Their most important involvement was their work to destabilize Maronite hegemony in the country, and it might be claimed that it was their only one (Rabil 2013). Since then, they have mostly faded into the background. The jihadists, on the other hand, did have moments of emergence, the last one being in the wake of the Syrian civil war (Rabil 2014).

During the Syrian war’s early days, jihadi Islamist movements gained momentum, and many speculated that they were to emerge, especially with Al-Hariri’s decline, as a major player on the Sunni scene (Chiit 2012). Further, they managed to mobilize a number of Lebanese Sunnis to fight inside Syria against the Syrian regime (O’Bagy 2012). But, as they are ‘more a current than they are an organization’, as they entered armed conflict with the Lebanese state and were staunchly targeted by its institutions, and as they pose

a risk to the other groups in Lebanon, their socio-political sway was quickly confined and stymied (Imad 2006; Lefèvre 2014). Surely, this has been rendered possible by a regional and international decision to keep them out of the picture.⁶⁶ By consequence, the Sunni social scene in Lebanon remains largely distanced from Islamism as the Future Movement continues to pursue its project of a “modern” western-like Lebanon of tourism, corporations, and commerce.⁶⁷

Also of relevance here is the office of the Lebanese Mufti (Grand Jury): an office created by the French to advance Lebanon’s independence from the rest of the Arab world.⁶⁸ The Mufti of the Lebanese Republic is considered the highest Sunni religious authority in the country and is responsible for the issuing of fatwas. While the Mufti is a religious function, the office has never been separable from the political and an organized political body with the Mufti as its head appeared numerous times throughout Lebanon’s early history (Skovgaard-Petersen 1998). In more recent years, it has turned into an alliance with the Future Movement in the pursuit of ‘moderation’ (Lefèvre 2015).

In line with this, the current Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, is a scholar who presents himself as a moderate, vowing to fight religious extremism in many of his speeches and statements (Moussa 2014). In regard to women’s dress, no record of the Mufti (since he has attained his post in 2014) speaking of the Islamic dress could be found. The general ambiance of Dar Al-Fatwa and its associated scholars is that of affirming the value of Islamic dress in Lebanon without endorsing a particular form or specific rules around it. Nevertheless, between 2012 and 2015, Hanafi (2019) found the hijab and women’s dress to be a recurrent and central topic in Sunni Friday sermons throughout Lebanon, also finding that one of the sternest tones recorded was deployed upon the discussion of women’s dress. Nevertheless, this might be related to the weakening of Dar Al-Fatwa

⁶⁶ In Palestinian camps, where Jihadi movements exist, the dominant trend is that of seeking to keep military conflict away, turning pragmatic, focusing on providing for local Palestinian communities and deserting all engagement with the Lebanese polity (Haddad 2010; Knudsen 2005; Sogge 2014). The Palestinian factions in Lebanon, Post-Taif, have completely receded into closed-off camps, wholly excluded from Lebanon’s political life (Wennesland 2014). As refugees are both excluded and marginalized from mainstream Lebanese society, and as they cannot become political subjects in Lebanon (Palestinian and Syrian refugees cannot become Lebanese citizens), they are not included in this thesis. Certainly, this is not to say that their presence has not influenced the Lebanese community as it has but such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more on the Palestinian refugees, see Hanafi (2014) and Howe (2005).

⁶⁷ This is not to deny the persistent presence of such groups and the impact such presence had and continues to have on both the Sunni scene and the wider Lebanese scene. Yet, this analysis remains beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁶⁸ In terms of religious adherence, the Sunnis of Lebanon generally identify with the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, unlike Saudi Arabia and Qatar where the Hanbali school prevails.

over the past years and the burgeoning of a multitude of self-proclaimed religious authorities across the country, mostly with Gulf funding (Mawla 2016). An example of this would be the emergence of the League of Muslim Scholars, much more inclined toward the Salafi movements, through Qatar's funding (Lefèvre 2015). These dynamics, ultimately, remain complex and cannot be further explored within the confines of this chapter. Nevertheless, it might be, overall, said that while the Shia have been witnessing a homogenization of their leadership, commanded by Hezbollah as an Islamic party as I will present in the coming paragraphs, the Sunnis of Lebanon have seen a diversification in their leadership and the lack of any one unified project with the liberal westernized Future Movement remaining at the forefront.

5.2.2. The Shia in Lebanon

A large part of what is now known as South Lebanon and parts of what is now known as the Bekaa, where the majority of the region's Shia reside, were known as Jabal Amil: a historically regional hub for Shia prosperity, particularly with prominent institutions of knowledge and scholarly formation, incorporated into the state of Greater Lebanon (Chalabi 2006). Under Ottoman rule, the Shia community with its religious institution had fallen out of fashion as its stakeholders became increasingly marginalized.⁶⁹ Of great significance, a Shia clientelist system was established at the time but remained weak, while the masses were largely quietist as they lived under significant deprivation (Harris 2012; Winter 2010). Their subsequent incorporation into Lebanon did not alleviate their plight, as they were excluded and suppressed by both the Christians and large segments of the Sunni populations. Mainly composed of peasants in rural areas and the lowest working classes in urban areas, the Shia were the nation's 'most disadvantaged community' (Hazran 2009b). Indeed, for the greater parts of the 20th century, the Shia were 'ethnicized': a practice of their transformation into a distinct and rejected ethnicity beginning during the days of the French mandate, advanced by both the colonial regimes and newfound Lebanon's leaders, for imperial and capitalist interests (Firro 2002).

Prior to the mid-seventies of the twentieth century, this ethnicized group was largely pro-left, largely minor on the national scale, and largely subaltern on the socio-economic scene. Yet, with seeds planted by the activism of Musa Al-Sadr in the 1950s, changing

⁶⁹ As the twentieth century began, and with powerful Arab nationalism and Marxism, the Shia religious establishment was at an extreme low, with its scholars succumbing to 'beys': the nobles with the money, the guns and the land (Ajami 1987).

geopolitics as well as changing demographics, tides began to change (Abisaab 2015; Johnson 1986: Chap 7).⁷⁰ More specifically, and gradually, it was during and after the civil war, with a 'charismatic leadership, the perceived failures of the Lebanese Left in resisting the Israeli occupation, the successes of the Islamic Resistance, a general polarization of sectarian identities during the civil war, and the continued consolidation of those identities by post-war politics' that a turn to Islamic political parties, and an accompanying gain in power, witnessed a mass emergence (Deeb 2005: 243). Despite this, the ethnicization of the community did not wane but rather persisted, even within the community itself, with a discourse of grievances that affirmed their communal particularities and demands while allowing room for integration 'within pan-Arab nationalism as well within pan-Islamic movements' (Firro 2006: 756). This went in parallel with a growing 'antagonism toward the Shi'ites in Lebanon' across the nation's segments, an antagonism which persists into the country's most recent years (Nir 2014).

It was here that Hezbollah, a commanding pluripotent political party instituted and led by religious jurists, emerged to revolutionise life for the Lebanese Shia; shifting the balance of power and taking them from great exclusion to significant might (Steinberg et al. 2010: 691; Abisaab 2015; Abisaab and Abisaab 2014; Deeb 2005).⁷¹ Born under the watchful eyes of the Iranian revolutionary guard, who offered both religious and military training, the party has been consistently advancing a distinct strain of Shia political 'Islamism'. Starting as a resistance movement disinterested in Lebanon and its politics, Hezbollah has undergone multiple phases. The analysis of what some have understood as a metamorphosis, others as radical shifts, is beyond my interest here but suffice to say that Hezbollah has greatly increased, and continues to increase, its engagement with the Lebanese state, with other factions of Lebanese society, and with the wider Shia population.⁷²

The other actor on the Shia scene is the Amal Movement headed by Parliament speaker Nabih Berry. Although Amal is certainly not an Islamic movement the way Hezbollah is, it claims an Islamic identity and advances itself as the heir to Lebanese Shia authenticity (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008). Claiming the legacy of Sayyed Musa Al-Sadr, the movement has preserved an anti-Imperialist and anti-Zionist discourse in parallel with developing a

⁷⁰ Al-Sadr was a Lebanese-Iranian religious scholar who played an enormous role in Lebanese politics before and during the civil war up until his disappearance in 1978.

⁷¹ For informative data on Southern Lebanese women, see Chaib (2010).

⁷² For more on this, refer to Fadlallah (2014).

deep hold on state institutions (Abi-Saab 2015). Ideologically ‘reformist in nature’, and with little emphasis on its members’ religious observance, Amal combines the secular and the religious (Deeb 1988: 689). Overall, Amal does not hold mass popular weight and exists, through corrupt symbiosis with the state, in the backdrop of Hezbollah with whom it has increasingly become tangled over the past two decades. A note relevant to this work is that Randa Berri (Nabih Berri’s wife), a powerful businesswoman and public figure, wears a fashionable turban-hijab.

Here, a third actor warrants attention: Sayyed Mohamad Hussein Fadlallah. A graduate from the Shia Hawza in Al-Najaf in Iraq, Fadlallah was once considered as the godfather of Hezbollah (Deeb 1988). Later, the two went different ways with Fadlallah contesting the relationship with Iran and advancing a very Arab, and at times Lebanese, program. A staunch anti-Imperialist and a deep political ally to Hezbollah in the fight against Israel, Fadlallah has emerged as a religious scholar advocating for a progressive religious discourse (Habib and al-Kindy 2014). In regard to domestic politics, the scholar, who passed away in 2009, was cautious to avoid affiliation with any one political group as he saw himself more of a political theorist than a political actor (Almayyali 2011). The head of numerous institutions and establishments, from a network of schools to TV and radio stations, he managed great influence on the Lebanese socio-cultural scene and is often understood as advancing a more moderate, and for many a more ‘modern’, brand of Shiism than that of Hezbollah. Repeatedly speaking of women’s rights and rejecting patriarchal oppression, he was a public figure, a ‘public intellectual’, who exerted significant leverage on institutions, politicians, and masses (Sankari 2008).

On the socio-cultural scene, and with Hezbollah having secured successive military and political victories, the public space in majority Shia regions now overflows with Hezbollah and political Islam, leading scholars to argue that these regions have become an ‘Islamic milieu’ (Deeb 2006; Harb and Deeb 2011). This is a clear reflection of Hezbollah’s unparalleled popularity among the Shia, which spreads to extensive national and regional influence as other social and political figures all exist in the party’s shadow (Tegho 2011). From its educational institutions to its military victories and to its powerful welfare system servicing mainly the Shias (but also outgroups) Hezbollah’s grip on the Shia populace is unparalleled.

5.2.3. The Christians in Lebanon

While Lebanon was meant to be the Christian beacon in the orient, Christian power post-Taif is a shadow of what it was meant to be. Nevertheless, the country remains ‘not only a country with a significant and politically involved Christian community but also one intensely tied to the West’ as the Christian community stands with much power and privilege across social spheres (Baylouny 2013: 167). Today, the Lebanese president must always be a Christian, as is the head of the Lebanese army, the governor of the central bank and the deputy of the Parliament speaker, as well as a large number of high state functionaries.⁷³

In terms of political elite, the Christian scene is mainly divided into two main players: The Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese forces. The Free Patriotic Movement, with a history of right-wing Lebanese nationalist west-oriented politics, was revived in 2005 after the assassination of Al-Hariri with the return of its Leader, General Michel Aoun, from his French exile. Yet, within a year of his return, Aoun signed a Memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah’s secretary-general in 2006 and shifted his political party’s alliance from the United States and France to Hezbollah. This memorandum, which came as a political shock, as well as its motives and impact, remains beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Hezbollah and the Aounist movement have turned into a significant vigorous allegiance since, an alliance which proved crucial in Michel Aoun’s election as President of the Lebanese republic in 2016. Nevertheless, the Free Patriotic Movement remains deeply right-wing, nationalist and exclusionary. This has been evident, for example, in the party’s official and practiced anti-Syrian discourse where xenophobia and racism against Syrians have been enforced and normalised across state institutions and beyond.

The other actor on the Christian scene is that of the Lebanese Forces. Also a right-wing group, the Lebanese Forces was one of the civil war’s bloodiest militias. After Al-Hariri’s assassination, its leader Samir Geagea was released from prison and returned to re-invigorate the party which was largely maintained through his wife Strida Tawk Geagea’s leadership over the years. Since then, the party has been consistently growing and gaining in political might and popular support among Lebanon’s Christians whose feelings of

⁷³ For an interesting analysis of the Maronite Church in Lebanon and the Maronite patriarchal council see Tabar (2014).

disenfranchisement have only been on the rise. In addition, several smaller parties scatter the Christian scene, such as those of the right-wing Phalangist Movement. Throughout, these parties mostly ascribe to a modern, neo-liberal and westernising project with clear practices of superiority and exclusion as well as a pursuit of a return to past glory. In either case, for the purposes of this dissertation, and of space, I will not pursue their sketching and will limit myself to these brief notes.

5.3. Women in Lebanon: Notes around the Social and the Political

In terms of women's presence and rights, Lebanon has long been hailed as a (relative) beacon of freedom and empowerment (Fleischmann 1998; Keddie 2012).⁷⁴ In this section, I will attempt to sketch a brief overview, past and present, of how women's conditions in Lebanon are portrayed in the literature and in public discourse to form a backdrop of the discussions to come.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christian European missions composed wholly of women, and only targeting women, flooded Lebanon and exercised a significant 'influence in shaping ordinary individuals' notions of identity', norms and culture (Fleischmann 1998: 307). In 1924, around the time of Lebanon's invention, a women's union was formed to advocate women's rights under an Arab nationalist ideology in the French colonised region of the 'Levant' (Thompson 2000). Despite opposition, the movement persisted and achieved a number of advances for the women of Lebanon and Syria (Thompson 2000). Women's activism, therefore, has been an institutionalised practice both during and since the country's establishment.

Post-WWI, the politicisation of women's rights powerfully emerged, taking the form of charities in the early days and, then, of educational establishments; mainly through French missionary schools where girls began receiving a westernized secular education (Keddie 2012). In the second part of the twentieth century the small nation 'pioneered in the Middle East with an Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World', opening in 1973, with a journal and training programs for women's empowerment (Keddie 2012: 60). In major cities, a serious change in social and ethical norms, such as pre-marital cohabitation, gradually took hold (Keddie 2012). The younger generations, especially, began adopting a largely westernised set of social and cultural practices (Kikoski 2000).

⁷⁴ For an interesting, albeit somewhat problematic, discussion of Lebanese women in the political see Khatib (2008).

In education, public presence, media, and labour women in Lebanon today perform relatively well with a significant margin of autonomy, freedom, and independence (Fox et al. 2016; Harb 2010; Keddie 2012; Stephan 2014; Welborne 2011). Nevertheless, post-colonialism and the enforced nation-state (see Zantout 2011), multiple forms of patriarchy and oppression, particularly in relation to citizenship rights and private law, remain in place while women's socio-economic mobility remains greatly heterogeneous, influenced by variables as varied as class, ethnicity, age, appearance, and geography (Hashem 2017). Eventually, rampant patriarchy and flagrant gender inequalities; from Lebanon's colonially inherited legal system to its imperially maintained political and economic scenes, remain extant while attempts at redress continue to develop (Stephan 2012).

Discussing women's participation in contemporary Lebanon, from a feminist perspective, Hashem (2017) states 'class, ethnic affiliations, age, and appearance, not to mention the characteristics of whatever neighbourhood or region they come from' as important factors in determining women's mobility in the Lebanese public sphere. While her article is interested in a different question and pivots around gender, her inclusion of 'appearance' is extremely telling. Indeed, the realisation that women's appearance, which includes their beauty, the colour of their skin and hair, and whether they are wearing a hijab or not, cannot be missed throughout the Lebanese territory. Certainly, the image of the Lebanese woman as the epitome of Mediterranean beauty propagated through music and fashion icons as different as singers Fairouz and Haifa Wehbi, or Miss USA 2010 Rima Fakih, is a very powerful one both at home and abroad. Ultimately, the projected status of liberated and empowered required a nuancing and did not apply equally to Lebanese women, it appeared.

In terms of political participation, Lebanese women gained equal voting rights in 1952 (Welborne 2011). Despite this, none had reached parliament until the early 90s, and the situation in other political and public institutions was not much different (Helou 2001). Until 2010, only 17 women had ever served in the country's parliament (Abdul-Latif and Serpe 2010). The vast majority of these women entered parliament 'in black;' i.e. after the death of their politician father, husband or relative. This is even though research has shown Lebanon to be, for example, the only country in the region where there was no majority belief that men are better political leaders than women (Fox et al. 2016). Which 'women' this research was referring to remains unclear. In any case, these views seem not to play into practiced political presence. The factors behind this are multiple and

complex, from historical to economic ones, and they remain beyond the scope of this chapter (see Harb 2010).

As to feminist politics, an explicitly ‘feminist agenda’ remains weak in Lebanon (see Kaedbey 2014: Introduction). Despite this, multiple groups and organisations do classify themselves as feminist groups as they attempt to balance the political, social and religious make-up of Lebanese society and make use of international trends advocating gender equality (Stephan 2012). Stephan (2014) divides Lebanese feminism into four waves. The first is that of the 1920s, with elite women whose interest mainly revolved around established charitable organisations. The second was that of the 1940s, corresponding to the nation-state building exercise of the Lebanese republic at that time. The third wave, receiving inspiration from women’s movements around the world, especially around the “third-world”, started in the early 70s and continued organised work to claim women’s rights in the various spheres of life until the mid-90s. The fourth wave, starting in the late 90s and gaining zeal in the post-2005 moment, saw the establishment of new (largely westernised) organisations and the re-invigoration of old ones to now make claims of more relevance to women’s ‘private’ lives: domestic violence, marital rape, sexual diversity, and abortion, among others. *Nasawiya* and KAFA are prominent examples of such movements. With this wave, a number of movements working on LGBTQ rights, such as *Helem* and *Meem*, were established and began various activities throughout the Lebanese territory. Their work ranged from self-empowerment activities to legal action and claims (Stephan 2014). In all of these phases, movements have been faced with a ‘multilevel interlocking set of obstacles’ and forced to carry out their activities under unfavourable circumstances ultimately leading to their unaccomplished aims and inability to make major or structural changes in Lebanese society (Stephan 2012: 113).

While the question of Islamic feminism cannot be explored given the limitations of this dissertation, it is important to note that, alongside the westernised feminism that has long existed in the country, signs of the emergence of an alternative form of feminist liberation do exist.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, while feminism as political activism (weakly) exists, groups explicitly identifying as ‘Islamic feminism’ do not have a significant presence; neither as

⁷⁵ For a relevant discussion, see also Deeb (2009b). The history of feminism in Lebanon is extremely interesting and calls for its dedicated investigation, particularly in terms of exploring its westernisation and the emergence of a contestation to this westernised feminism involving ‘visibly expressed piety’. This remains for future work.

political activism and hardly as academic/intellectual activism (Steger 2017).⁷⁶ While no contemporary social research focusing on the women in the Sunni Islamic milieu was found, the little research investigating women in the Shia Islamic sphere does indicate high degrees of social agency and impact. Deeb (2009a) argues that as a result of a particular living of specifically Shia religious beliefs, Shia women uphold that the desirable status for a woman involves an incorporation of ‘education, employment or volunteering, social-welfare work, and visibly expressed piety’ (Deeb 2009a: 250). In this respect, Deeb (2009a) notes ‘a stark contrast with the ways gender roles have been described in many anticolonial and nationalist movements’ with an ‘inversion of those classic roles’ whereby Lebanese Shia women, and not men, are expected ‘to lead the community into the future’ and assume the role of ‘representatives and agents’ of progress and development rather than preservers of ‘religious and cultural tradition’ (Deeb 2009a: 250, 253).

As to Islamic dress, one of the first known references to veiling in Lebanon comes from an Assyrian text, dating back to the thirteenth century, showing that the dress was a sign of social status: it was worn by certain women and prohibited for prostitutes (Keddie 2012). The secondary literature seems to go quiet on the issue of the dress in Lebanon and little can be found about its status before the late eighteenth century where, in contrast, calls for the abolition of the hijab were being strongly made under modernisation agendas with the echoing of ‘male “feminist” Qassim Amin’s advocacy from Egypt in his book *Tahrir Al-Mar’a* (The Liberation of Woman)’ (Dhanda 2008: 54). In 1928, a young Druze, later accused of treachery, published a book about (face) veiling to condemn the attire as a patriarchal tool, asking the French high commissioner to intervene and save the region’s Muslim women.⁷⁷ The book caused much debate, but nothing more (Thompson 2000). Despite this, Zeineddine, the book’s author, continued writing and advocating for the ‘liberation’ of oriental women from Islamic and oriental practices and customs.

Particularly interesting is the fact that Islamic dress for women was not significant for the struggle towards Lebanese independence, at least not as it was, for example, in Algeria.

⁷⁶ For an exploration of ‘Islamist modern feminist women’ working as part of ‘Islamic political parties’ while living ‘modernity’ in Lebanon, see El-Bizri (2014). I will return to this ‘modern Islamic’ at multiple points in the coming chapters.

⁷⁷ The fact that Zeineddine was Druze is certainly interesting. Nevertheless, exploring this is beyond both my field of work and my thesis.

Indeed, no question regarding the ‘liberation of women’ seems central during the twentieth century, either from advocates or resisters. In any case, it appears that the question of the hijab faded into the background with Lebanese independence and I have found that there is little to no record of a significant public debate around the dress since.

On the political scene, only two hijabi women have ever been parliamentary members or ministers (the same two women have been both). The first was Bahia Al-Hariri, sister of Rafic Al-Hariri, who was not hijabi when she entered politics but began wearing a light scarf on the head, which gradually became more hijab-like, after the death of her brother in 2005. Interestingly, it was Bahia Al-Hariri who introduced the hijab to Lebanon’s political sphere as the first hijabi woman to hold public office in the country’s history. The second is Inaya Ezzeddine who became a minister for the Amal Movement in 2016 (Rizk 2016), then becoming a member of parliament in the 2018 general elections.

Beyond politics, reports claim that the number of hijabi women in Lebanon have been on the rise (Le Thomas 2012: 10) and, simultaneously, that around half of the Lebanese population thinks that women should not wear the hijab in public (Moaddel 2013). While the hijab is now common among both Sunni and Shia communities, it is more widespread, and more stringently practiced, among the Shia. With this, the dress has been recorded in local media outlets as a serious handicap for employment in several economic sectors, particularly in state-run administration, the banking sector and security forces (Abou Ammo 2012; Mereeb 2017).⁷⁸ This is also the case in spheres such as the media sector, where a number of news agencies refuse to employ hijabi women, especially as broadcasters (Kassem 2013). Some academic work has alluded to or mentioned the hijab as an object connoting a lack of education and ‘backwardness’ for mainstream Lebanese culture (Deeb 2006; Itani 2016). Despite this, no in-depth academic study has explored the dress in the small country.

⁷⁸ On February 1, 2018, then prime minister Saad Al-Hariri publicly demanded all state institutions to ‘commit themselves to accepting the applications of citizens having the necessary conditions as specified in the law, including veiled women, and that the veil not be a handicap in their taking-up of a public position, under the auspice of responsibility and accountability’ (direct transcription). This came after debates regarding hijabi women’s entry to municipalities, internal security forces and the Lebanese army had been taking place in the country for several years. Also, this came three months before the 2018 Lebanese elections.

5.4. Internal Others: a Site of Exclusions

Lebanon, not a signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1951 nor to the 1967 protocol, is host to over 1.5 million refugees: from Palestinians to Syrians and Iraqis, among others.⁷⁹ From their earliest expulsion from Palestine, the Palestinians became Lebanon's first internal Others, strangers, and protracted refugees, to be excluded and marginalised in the only Arab country which 'treats Palestinian refugees as foreigners in terms of the right to work and to own property' (Hanafi et al. 2012: 43). Indeed, treatment of Palestinians in Lebanon has been debunked as persecution 'through a thousand forms of exclusion and subordination' (Soukarieh 2009: 20) and as 'legal and institutional discrimination' which produces a situation of 'multi-dimensional social exclusion' alongside political and economic marginalization (Hanafi et al. 2012: 51). Lacking 'basic human rights', with an unfavourable history and faced by larger questionings that plague the country itself, the Palestinian situation has long required, and not received, attention and care (Suleiman 2006). Currently, around 400, 000 to 500, 000 Palestinians live in Lebanon under severe marginalisation, subordinated as abject Others by the Lebanese masses, in closed-off communities where a state of exception rules to dwell separate, in parallel, to mainstream Lebanon (Hanafi 2014; Knudsen 2009; Thorleifsson 2016).

Alongside the Palestinians, and long predating the Syrian civil war, Syrians have lived in Lebanon as a marginalised, subjugated, exploited, and excluded group (Chalcraft 2009; Thorleifsson 2016; Yasmine and Moughalian 2016). Post-2011, the number of Syrians in the country has dramatically increased as they have fled their country's civil war to enter a growing 'plight' where they are 'subject to exploitation and abuse' of an immense scale across social spheres (Saab 2014: 94; Harb et al. 2019; Usta et al. 2019). This ranges from physical violence and assault to various forms of micro-aggression and to state policing, oppression, and violation. In continuity with a long history of exploitation and scapegoating "a new category of exclusion" has recently emerged for Syrians to be "increasingly consolidated as Lebanon's 'internal other'" and the country's source of misfortune and difficulties (Thorleifsson 2016: 1079).

⁷⁹ According to UNHCR, there is a little under 1 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon as of February 2020. The number of unregistered refugees remains unclear with anecdotal evidence placing it at around 500,000. See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71> There are also Palestinian refugees and a number of Iraqi, Bangladeshi and other migrant workers and refugees.

In addition to Syrians and Palestinians, a number of other refugee groups exist, including Iraqis living in a state of significant exclusion and lack of support (see Trad and Frangieh 2007). Further, a large number of foreign women working as domestic workers live in the country under conditions of extreme oppression and violence (see Haddad 1999; Moukarbel 2007; Pande 2012, 2013). From the complete lack of any rights to abject subordination with practices of great dehumanisation, their condition has been claimed as one of ‘contract slavery’ loaded with ‘abuse, violence and the threat of abuse and violence; denial of basic freedom of movement; and exploitative working conditions’ (Jureidini and Moukarbel 2013: 603). Eventually, Lebanon reveals itself as a land with a systematic culture and policy of exclusion, subordination, and hierarchisation. Multiple groups from across the Global South and of various backgrounds have suffered the toll of this Lebanese ethos, and continue to do so under global coloniality.

5.5. Conclusion

From its awkward birth to its awkward growth, Lebanon is a country with a complicated history. Originally meant as France’s beacon in the Arab East, it is now a complex space inhabited by multiple and different groups with no unified identity or project. In this, the country’s various communities dwell unequally under an absent state and a systematic ongoing westernisation with a dominant culture of liberal consumption and capitalism. Eventually, as a country built on the ideology of western superiority, as a country where such calls continue to be made, the projects of modernisation and westernisation, of coloniality, continue relentlessly.

With religion having long been a key site of the Lebanese hierarchy, different religious communities have developed distinct imaginaries, identities, and horizons. With multiple layers of division and living in parallel universes, each religious group in Lebanon has its own sectarian leaders, spaces and practices. Broadly, while Christians have lost significant power, they remain economically and culturally commanding. The Sunnis, on the other hand, having enjoyed a period of domination extending from the Taif accord until the assassination of Al-Hariri, find themselves weakened. They, too, are now a shadow of their previous might while the Sunni sense of disenfranchisement, despite their hold on economic power, continues unabated. The Shia, on the other hand, with the rise of Hezbollah as a social, political and military regional force, continue their ascent. Socially and economically, their (recent) appearance on the landscape of Lebanese

mainstream society and state has allowed significant gains with a movement contesting their status of second-class citizens.

Lebanese women, on the other hand, are said to enjoy significant freedom and autonomy and live in a cultural system that somewhat limits, but ensures the survival of, modern patriarchy and sexism. Most importantly, they live in a system that ensures this unfolds in line with the modern hierarchy of the human where their rights and privileges are determined by numerous factors; from religion to appearance and from region to economic status. Eventually, they too, alongside multiple internal refugee and migrant Others, dwell unequally with Islamic dress figuring as a key nexus of this differentiation, as I will come to explore in the coming chapters.

Chapter Six: Experienced Marking and the Invention of a Social Form for Erasure

This chapter will set out to explore the hijabi's invention as an Other and her marking to argue that her experience is one of dehumanizing subalternisation, of racialisation, as a 'social form' produced by and for modernity/coloniality. While multiple Others of difference dwell where this research was conducted, from the Syrian to the unemployed, the hijabi stood-out as a religiously marked Other and the prime "Lebanese" (citizen) Other across multiple divides. This chapter, as the first analysis chapter of the data collected in the field, will specifically explore this marking and its entanglements. Marking, here, is used to refer to a process of delineation as a specific (inferiorised) subject-position imbued with specific (inferior/ising) traits: the construction of what Grosfoguel (2016) termed 'social form' as a mode of instituting the colonised as an (inferior) object for modernity's control and establishment (Grosfoguel 2016: 10). In other words, and through the lens of the hijabis themselves, I will attempt to identify the specific construction of Otherness unfolding in Lebanon, through marking as a process of discursive production under and through coloniality's episteme, as a foundational move towards erasure.

In analysing this, I will group the experienced characteristics and traits into two sets: those of an Arabo-Islamic difference in excess and those of belatedness. The first section of the chapter will explore the first set, while the second will turn to the question of belatedness and modernity. Together, they draw the experienced hijabi social form; a form with a clear profile covering both abstract associations and material qualities and extending from an expulsion out of Lebanese citizenry to an expulsion out of the human. By exploring this form, I will argue that the issue must be situated in the realm of (de)humanisation.

With this, it must be particularly stressed that the various elements of the hijabi social form are interconnected and overlapping, often messy, as the chapter in no way implies that the constituting elements are separate, nor that they do not co-constitute one another. In doing this, the chapter will be limited to an exploration of what my data suggests are the two key elements of this social form. In this regard, in no way am I claiming to have captured the entirety of this form's experienced constituting discourses. Further, the organisation of this chapter is an analytical move to echo a complicated and multifaceted construction: it is not the only way this could have been done nor is the complete one.

6.1. Experienced Exclusion from Citizenry as an Arabo-Islamic Difference in Excess

I will begin with what appears a straightforward note: the prime marking of any hijabi in Lebanon, according to my participants, is the assumption of her being a practicing Muslim and an association with Islam. ‘They see a hijabi and they think of a practicing Muslim’, as Hanin, a Shia middle-aged middle-class participant explained. What might appear as an unproblematic assumption to many was expressed in interviews with much disapproval and irritation. For a significant period of time, I had much difficulty understanding the objection to it and could not comprehend why participants grudgingly opposed people thinking of the hijabi as a Muslim and a ‘religious, a very religious person’ [Salma]. Eventually, I realised that the issue was not in the assumption itself, but in its persistent corollary. As Naila, a young upper-class Shia translator living in the Southern suburb of Beirut, and an older Shia participant in a focus group in Dahieh clearly explained:

Lebanon is different from all others: plenty of sects and religions and all. And the social, there’s a ladder: people hierarchised, and are perceived that way. Regardless of whether this is right or wrong. So where the hijab comes from, what religion it belongs to, this definitely influences the way the hijabi is perceived. On this ladder of hierarchy, the hijabi is...she’s...this is not something I normally like to talk about...but you have Christians and Muslims and the hijab means Muslim. And then Muslim means follower of that [hand gestures to indicate inferior] group...⁸⁰ [Naila]

Hijab means Muslim, and they don’t want any of this. That is why we have all this [discrimination]. [Markaz focus group 2]

Being visibly associated with Islam was a lack. My participants were all religious subjects, and they were nothing but religious subjects, subjected to religion. Indeed, subjected to the lowest religion on the hierarchy today under modernity; subjected to Islam. Accordingly, the very identification of the hijabi as Muslim was where the problematisation of the hijab begins as being associated with Islam meant being placed low on the hierarchy. It was, at its core, a series of disavowals: disavowed from being Christian, disavowed from resembling the Christian and, consequently, disavowed from desirability under the ‘Western-centric/Christian-centric’ world order.

⁸⁰ The issue of this being something that participants ‘do not like to talk about’ came up in many interviews. While it is a complex issue beyond my scope here, it is important to link it to the erasure of Lebanese history and the avoidance of engaging in conversations that could stir sectarian conflict. As this issue is not my explicit aim here, and with limited space, I will leave it open.

Further, the question was not just in Islam as a lack, it was in the hijab, as practiced Islam, as a problem. What might appear, at first, as an ambiguous frustration of being identified as Muslim thus becomes clarified, even called for: it was being, (just) as a hijabi, an excess of Islam. As Reem and Madawi, two older lower class Sunni Beirutis, explained

Reem: They don't want the hijabi, they want girls that show off their bodies and all that...

Madawi: Like now with the whole terrorism thing too, they're scaring people. That someone hijabi is too committed, a zealot...

Reem: They simply don't like Islam! [Reem and Madawi]

As this excerpt indicates, it was a question of zealousness and of being 'too committed'. Islam had become Islamicness: a quantifiable good, a light dose of which could be digested but a stronger one becomes too much to handle in a complete echo of what has been documented in (Europe-based) Islamophobia research (see chapter two). This, in turn, was an evident manifestation of the secular liberal ethos and its universalism dictating 'that neither culture nor religion are permitted to govern publicly; both are tolerated on the condition that they are privately and individually enjoyed' (Brown 2009: 21). The global evidently structured the local, my participants made clear, as global hierarchies and discourses of racism and xenophobia wounded across the small land.

Further, Reem and Madawi's retelling clearly evidence the intersection/entanglement between this aggression of the hijabi and modern sexism and misogyny whereby the imagined woman is the one who is objectified, sexualised, and paraded for men's gratification. For Reem and Madawi, the hijabi, which does not provide this sexism with its demands, is therefore ostracized and expelled.

Explaining how her professor at a university in Hadath near Beirut had studied in France and was 'so influenced' by that culture, Sara, who is a young middle-class Sunni, for example, stressed that her professor's problem was with the hijab as a practiced Islamic object and recounted stories of his overt expression of refusal and disdain:

When I first put [the hijab] on, he expressed resentment, very bluntly. Like he would come to me and say: 'what have you done to yourself, what is this', and all that. And then, after a while, I told him that I stopped shaking hands and he said that it was too much: 'you keep deteriorating', he said, 'instead of developing, forward, you keep getting worse'. [Sara]

Explaining that his issue related to 'the Lebanon he wanted', Sara affirmed that this kind of treatment was 'quite common', especially among faculty members 'trained in Europe'. It was, I came to understand, the westernised elite (Grosfoguel 2016) performing its

colonising role. In this role, the imagined horizon of Lebanon and its construction as a beacon of French civility as explained in chapter five loomed large.

Already, by simply wearing the hijab and becoming visibly Muslim, a Muslim presence, my participants seemed to enter a grim space of being in excess. In that space, they would be constructed as an object of dislike, an object of repulsion and an object in decline. Additionally, they risked falling into being an excess of excess. Not shaking hands, with the hijab, was ‘too much’. The hijab meant the looming risk of one becoming intolerable. Rima, a middle-class Shia participant from Beirut, was among those who echoed this:

Let me give you an example, I wear this [fashionable hijab] usually, but sometimes if I’m just jumping to go somewhere I quickly put on the *khaliji* cloak. The same person, Christian, when I was wearing this [fashionable hijab] they were Ok with me. When I went in wearing the cloak, she said please don’t come this way. She said: ‘please don’t come this way, please you look too Muslim like this’. That’s exactly what she said. It’s even worse than that. Once I was putting on Oud [with the hijab], someone said: ‘that is too Muslim, please don’t put that smell on’. [Rima]

Rima, working in Beirut’s central district at a UN agency, the ‘first and only hijabi’ as she explained, came from an upper-middle-class background and had to live the hijab’s marking: if it is accompanied with social practice, if it becomes too loose, if it is worn with an Arab perfume, it becomes ‘too much’. It should be noted here that while Rima spoke of being ‘accepted’ in her fashionable hijab, the shift to a rejection so extreme as to reach a formal and urgent request of change reveals that the case was one of tolerance, rather than of acceptance (see Brown 2009). But tolerance can only go so far in the modern space of metropolitan Beirut. It was here that I realised the veracity of the Islamophobia that, for example, Zempi (2014) and Ramírez (2015) exposed in Europe or the one Eum (2017) and Yel and Nas (2014) explored in nearby Turkey. The question, eventually, appears to be one of difference, of a colonial difference, where geography no longer matters under globalised coloniality.

Shariati (1986) explains that this question of excess is crucial, a key means through which colonisation works ‘to overcome the influence of religion’ where a movement against ‘fanaticism’ was invented and propagated so that the religious may be ‘crushed and humiliated’ to forcefully produce a state where ‘the one who identifies himself with it feels also crushed and humiliated’ (Shariati 1986: 63). It was, as Sayyid (2014) has well elaborated, an Islamophobia of rendering the Muslim subject position impossible. And so, indeed, were my participants.

In post-colonial Lebanon, and particularly in its urban, upper-class and/or Christian regions, this difference was further exacerbated by the hijab's Arab connotations, as Rima explained:

Look, we can't deny that the hijab is not yet part of the image of the Lebanese woman [...] We are hardly an Arab state: we are a state with an Arab face. There are portions of the Lebanese who don't see themselves as Arabs but as Phoenicians. There are many Lebanese who if you ask them about who they are, they wouldn't say Arab. They wouldn't even accept to be compared to Arabs. Like an Arab like the Syrian or the Iraqi or anyone like that. We are the Lebanese, the Phoenicians, we are very different from all Arab countries. We live among them, but we are different. And this continues to exist. And this isn't just about Muslim and Christian, I know Muslim families who don't accept the hijab. [Rima]

There are stereotypes, expectations, she's hijabi so they think she is interested in eastern things or stuff. But it's not true! [Marah]

[The Lebanese woman] is that person who's...first...they think you have coloured eyes, super pretty, very funny, very outgoing, partying all night...The Lebanese is coloured, hair, eyes, they are different from the other Arabs, they are very fashionable. This is the ideal Lebanese woman you hear about all over. The hijabi is [outside]. I don't know why...I guess it's from the mandate. It's the French system, that we're not like the Arabs, that we are developed, that we are Phoenicians, that we are all these things and not that. It must be that. [Maya]

Looking back at these quotes, I am intrigued by the oppositions my participants drew and, then, drew on. While I had made no mention of 'race', skin colour or eye colour, and no mention of ethnicity (i.e. being Arab or Phoenician), I found that many participants referred to such labels when trying to tell of mainstream Lebanese society's construction of the hijab. To understand the dress, it appeared, I needed to think of phenotypes and ethnicities as these questions consistently made their way into my interviews and focus groups, despite the fact they did not figure in my interview schedule or plans, not even in my expectations.

The entry of phenotypical features complicated my understanding of the circulating discourses and pointed to a construction of the hijabi as an equivalent to a phenotypical category which stands in contrast to that of non-Arabeness: lighter skin and coloured eyes. Eventually, it appeared that, for my participants, the will to distance Lebanon from a particular set of races, ethnicities, and cultures was central in the problematisation of the hijab and the ensuing racialisation of the hijabi as the country pursued its colonial invention under global modernity. In this sense, to explain why the hijabi is not the 'ideal Lebanese woman' as imagined by the larger Lebanese community, my participant drew upon the very imagined nature of the Lebanese nation, as explored in chapter five. While

the hijabi is an Arab, a Lebanese is not. At least, she is not 'that Arab'. The persistent imagined nature of the Lebanese nation as a secular liberated beacon for the Arabo-Islamic world to follow here intersected with global discourses of Eurocentric Empire and (white) superiority. It was this differentiation, which extended into a differentiation between the Syrian and the Iraqi for example on the one hand and the Lebanese on the other, that made the hijabi an outsider to the small country. Lebanon's heterogenous citizenship was far more complex than much of the scholarship suggests, it appears.

Further, this phenotypical distinction is linked to an ethnic and cultural belonging: from fashion to parties. These, in turn, are contrasted with another ethnic-cultural belonging: an interest in 'eastern stuff' (which my participant was swift to reject). Accordingly, this juxtaposition of the hijabi on the one hand, with her Arab phenotype, ethnicity and culture, and the ideal Lebanese woman on the other hand, with her western phenotype, ethnicity, and culture, reveals a major nexus of the hijabi's experienced social form. Just as the hijab was produced as a symbol of Otherness in the west, so too it was produced as a symbol of Otherness in Lebanon. Consequently, the hijab connoted both loyalty and belonging to the Arab East, which automatically negated the belonging to the imagined west. In other words, the hijab connoted the (rejected) placing of Lebanon within the Arab world and its distancing from the western one. It is in light of this that stories such as Maha's, a young Sunni, came to make sense to me:

And then at university [we were looked down upon], and then when I did an M.A I did it in Ashrafieh. We used to hear a lot of talking. A lot of scorn and sneering. When they first saw that we were hijabis, there were a few of us [hijabis] in class who came together, the Christian girls were really bothered. At first, they would not talk to us at all. When we try and talk to them, they would speak to us in disgust [chucks]. Yeah....it stayed that way. We tried to break the barriers many times, but unfortunately, that's how human beings are. Whenever we would want to do a research project they would go like: 'Oh you want to do a research project in Arabic, of course, right? Are there books in Arabic? Are there references in Arabic? Arabic is backwardness!' And Arabic this and Arabic that. [Maha]

Ashrafieh is a predominantly Christian region. Maha, who is from Beirut, went on to explain how her exclusion in Ashrafieh was not one she was unfamiliar with in Beirut, but it surely was more intense. Ashrafieh, it seems, was more aggressive in preserving itself from the hijabi pollution, and more powerful in enforcing its imagined image.

Here, the assumption that hijabi students would want to work in Arabic (which was the case in this instance, as Maha explained), and the fact they were scorned for it, reveals

the constant production of the hijabi as ‘Arabeness’. It was, I would claim, a question of threat to the difference: the presence of the hijabis in the university and their practices, especially in a majority-Christian region, threatened the space, pushing it from being a sphere of sophisticated French-domination into one of Arabeness as backwardness. The hijabis, who dared not enrol in the university until they knew they could go together, were the embodiment of this hazard: a source of disgust, of worry, and of threat. Just as the hijabi had been produced as the ‘enemy within’ across the west (as explained in chapter two) and just as France’s Indigènes de la République have been excluded from citizenry despite often being formal citizens, the hijabi was produced as the enemy within in Lebanon.

Throughout, the multiple, varied and complex reasons for which Lebanese women chose to wear the hijab appeared irrelevant, inconsequential, in my participants’ experiences of mainstream Lebanese society. Eventually, the gendered patriarchal misogynist and sexist European mobilisation of clothing to operate ‘a visible differentiation, a boundary, a clear-cut dividing line, between citizens and foreigners and between the different classes of citizens’ in continuation with a long Christian/secular tradition (Baldi 2017b: 678) appeared to have been globalised with coloniality producing a differentiation in the Global South with a continuous colonially structured conflict over national identity.

Ultimately, what might first appear to be a straightforward association of the Islamic Hijab with Islam and with the Arab world comes to represent a huge branding of inferiority for hijabi women, a branding they tire to struggle against. This branding was first imbricated in the global order of inferiorising Islam as it was imbricated in the colonially founding myth of Lebanon and its identity. The association of the hijab in contemporary Lebanon with an Arab profile, which implies a phenotype, an ethnicity, and a culture, consequently, racializes the hijabi as an inferior Other, and the basis on which her exclusion and marginalisation begin to play out. In this sense, the argument I wish to take from this is that the hijabi experiences a production as an Islamic excess and as an Arab; a difference, an Otherness, in an inferiorisation that must be understood within the attempt at distancing Lebanon from particular (disavowed) affiliations, which, in turn, gains meaning in light of Lebanon’s founding myth and imagined identity explained in chapter five, as structured by both formal colonialism and coloniality. Here, as explored in chapter two, it was the production of the post-colonial nation-state’s patriarchy and sexism that mapped the nation’s invention on the bodies of women, and at their expense.

Here, it became clear that the shift in political power discussed in chapter five and the rise of Hezbollah in both domestic and foreign spheres, for example, failed to disrupt the hegemonic discourse of defining Lebanese identity: the hijab was still not Lebanese, the hijabi was still a hazard. In other words, the post-Taif changes to Lebanon and the ensuing limiting of Christian dominance with the rise of Sunni and Shia political and economic force, has not, at least of yet, disrupted the colonial order and the country's imagination. The colonial construction withstood change in material and political conditions to strive despite them. Having established religion as the problem, this aggression, this anti-Muslim racism, eventually revealed itself as an adamant global phenomenon under modernity/coloniality beyond national politics' sphere of control or influence. The modern nation/state, it appeared, was not as hegemonic as might be assumed. In the coming chapters, I will return to the issue of this perceived improvement itself to interrogate its qualification as 'improvement' and further underwrite this point.

6.2. Experienced Expulsion from the Modern through Islamic Belatedness

The Arabo-Islamic difference in excess discussed above does not encompass the entirety of the delineation of the hijabi social form and its racializing construction as an inferior Other: there were many more traits, many more detailed tangible traits. Through a selection of illustrative quotes, taken from a vast number of interviews, I will try to draw some out in the coming paragraphs:

[They say] backward, retard, know nothing, [stuck] in history, if she speaks then it's like 'Oh shame on you why are you speaking'. What, do I not have a voice? [Maha]

In Lebanon, as a hijabi, for example, there are assumptions that have to do with hygiene. There are people who think the hijabi does not care for herself, or her looks, does not go to aesthetic and care places. In Dahieh...like there are people who have these ideas, I go to a place in Ashrafieh to take care of myself. I am giving you details about my life but it's useful. As soon as they see a hijabi entering the institute, it's an anomaly. They all stare. They start asking [questions]. There are people who really don't accept. They ask the institute owner 'Why is she here?' She is my friend, she told me. They keep saying; 'Why is she coming here?' [Rima]

'They all stare'. They do not ask her questions; they ask the beauty institute owner. They do not engage her in speech, they engage the institute owner. In Ashrafieh, with her, all they do is stare. But the stare was more than sufficient. Loaded with import, and directed at a body already 'saturated with significance', they were no different from the stare

directed at the black body: ‘not one of nonengagement but rather one that already positions the black body as unworthy’ (Bogues 2010: 44). These stares were, therefore, not expressive, but productive. It was her production as unbefitting, as unclean, as a stranger in the land of beauty and self-care. As Nadine, a young Sunni from Beirut living in an upper-class urban neighbourhood, explained:

And then, if they see it [the hijab], they will have these stereotypes: these are ignorant people, these are poor people. They would assume less educated, less achieving too. Someone whose priorities are her husband and kids, which is not necessarily a bad thing! Someone who is old-minded, traditional, not modern, not progressive. [Nadine]

The Lebanese society, I think, really sees it as a symbol of oppression. This is the only word, like I always really feel that people have this way of looking at it. That it’s oppressive. Like they ask you: ‘why did you put it on’ and ‘was it your parents or your husband?’ Like it’s always this thing that is necessary and oppressive. This is how I see people looking at it. They express that she’s oppressed. And you feel it’s full of mockery a bit: these are the people still in their cocoons, and stuff like that. [Sara]

‘Your parents or your husband?’ Sara lived in Tarik El-Jdide, a predominately Sunni Muslim region, who echoed Nadine’s argument. Despite her residence and work in a region that is claimed to be the archetypical lower-class Sunni area of Beirut, there was no choice of her being the one who ‘put it on’. Autonomy was not her trait in a clear echo of global discourses on the hijab as an object of oppression, subjugation, patriarchy, and Islamic misogyny (see Grace 2004; Okin 1999; O’Neill et al. 2015). Often, my participants told me how people they met would rarely believe the hijab to be their choice: from parents to partners, the agency was never to be found in the hijabi herself. As a symbol of oppression and subjugation, the hijab could not be reconciled with agency and will: those belonged to the modern subject, while the hijab belonged to the pre-modern self that is ruled by tradition. In this sense, the hijabi was always already ascribed a position of subjugation, weakness, and humiliation.

The word modern in these quotes is not my translation. My participants used it, expressing it in either English or French. Indeed, the word modern emerged and re-emerged, in both these colonial languages, to delineate what the hijab was not.

A2: There will always be that understanding, maybe outside of our community a little, that the one wearing a abaya, or wearing a hijab like this [points to conservative dress], that she is unlikely to be educated, or has a career, or is cultured. She is treated as that ignorant simple old lady. We really feel this, even inside of our society.

A4: The hijabi is seen as backward, has nothing to do with civilization, development or progress or culture. Hijabi means limited culture.

A3: Well put, limited culture. This is even in our environment, regardless of Lebanese society. Take your son to a doctor, see how he speaks. We live this thing. He speaks to you as a *hajje*, as an ignorant woman, he speaks in that way. If, later, for some reason, he discovers you have that [good] job or you do that [important thing], his way of speaking changes. It becomes different. Once I asked a doctor a question and he said: 'Like the question you are asking me, now if I answer it, will you understand?'

A1: 'Do you know?' I left a doctor for that word.... [It was] 10 years ago now. He said: 'Like, what can I explain to you? Do you know?' I was in an abaya then. [Markaz focus group 2]

As this focus group with mostly middle-aged Shia women conducted at an Islamic NGO centre in Beirut's southern suburb reveals, by pushing any and every hijabi into an Othered collective, practicing Muslim women felt mainstream Lebanon, as well as their own inner 'societies', to have a clear understanding of who they are: they all, always, belong to that Arabo-Islamic difference in excess, as their social form has a clear set of traits. Uncivilised, oppressed, dirty, unclean, smelling, stupid, unlawful, mono-lingual, lacking education, illiterate, monolithic, barbaric, and backward were some of the traits echoing, in various forms and shapes, throughout my interviews. Indeed, my transcripts contained all the narratives one could think of; from intelligence, civility, and merit to hygiene. The hijabi as a social form manifestly experienced a clear set of descriptors; derogatory and loaded with offense, as she was subject to the coloniality of being. The ensuing dehumanization imbued my transcripts, my notes, and my direction: from participants in tears to participants at a loss of words, passing by women who could not forget what was said to them '10 years ago now', their being was subjected to massive coloniality. Under this wounding coloniality, the hijabi haemorrhaged as she continuously experienced being (re)produced as a historical Other which must always be rejected.

Indeed, in one sense or another, the majority of the hijabi's characteristics had to do with the past: these were traits from the pre-modern past, a past the hijabi belonged to and resembled. Eventually, they were words from the fallacious imagined pre-colonial past lacking in bathrooms, formal education, freedom, and science later exported to salvage the East. From being unclean to lacking in education, I would argue that 'backward' was not a trait among others, but was rather the trait that subsumed all others. It was Bhabha's (2004) time-lag in its full might. It was this realisation which allowed me to make sense of retellings such as these:

S3: There is that thing of ‘oh, hijabi and you have a Facebook page?’ But what is wrong with it!

S4: Or the hijabi who speaks English!

S2: Or being a niqabi and going to a restaurant, they think all this is not ok. But why?! [Saida mosque focus group]

W: Well first, it [the hijab] gives this back-off message. One, because it’s associated with sadness and grief, you’d feel it’s someone strict. Before you see them or get to know them or even look at the face you feel this is a strict person, frigid, has many walls around him. That the circle is big, in terms of stay-away. And then there is this horrific contrast walking in the street...it’s very powerful...it’s something black and long...not just black...even if you’re wearing full black, you feel like you’re different not like everyone else just as a colour, so what if it’s a colour and a shape...the shape is very different...[Maya]

In the Saida mosque focus group – constituted by a combination of older and younger women with one participant wearing the niqab – I was told of how Islamic dress was loaded with assumptions and labels that the hijabi seemed incapable of escaping from, regardless of her attempts and efforts. If a hijabi represents a historical ‘pre’, a backwardness, it is only normal for people to express surprise when she displays knowledge or tells of her (even basic) use of ‘modern technology’: the example of communication and social media (Facebook) is a stark illustration. Further, it was this logic that explains the situating of the hijabi as the stay-at-home housewife with no career, no self-fulfilment and, consequently, no joy. Such was the presumed pre-modern norm. It was only normal, it appeared to be believed, for someone made to live such a life to be ‘frigid’. The sexist assumptions inherent here became evident, as coloniality’s gendered nature emerged and re-emerged. This frigidity, it is worth noting, was not unique to Lebanon. Bowen (2008), for example, has recorded a similar sense in France as a key element of the white French citizens’ reactions to hijabi women wearing black in public spaces.

They think they [hijabis] are vulgar, they eat with their hands, don’t speak French...they [the Christians] like really really are not exposed to Arabic language and things like that...it’s seen as a taboo...the Christians, they stereotype the hijabis like that... [Marah]

While there was no reason for Marah, a young Sunni middle-class Beirut woman, to jump from vulgarity and descriptions of ‘primitive’ habits to an issue with the Arabic language, she did: a clear example of coloniality’s rendering of Europe as the real and civilised, and all else as the negation of this, and the role of language in this process.

Clearly, such is only possible in light of a very specific understanding of time, and of the past. Fanon (2001) had explained that ‘colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it’ (Fanon 2001: 209). Here, this distorted, disfigured and destroyed past haunted the hijabi and powerfully structured perceptions and practices. Ultimately, this data, thinking through modern time, its linear narrative, and its obsession with futurity (as elaborated on in chapter four), gains different traction.

Leen, a middle-aged Sunni participant, told me that even her best attempts at the most fashionable hijab in the northern city of Tripoli could not be tolerated by those around her: as long as it was a hijab, it was rejected. Instead, she was advised to ‘wear a hat’ and would consistently be told: ‘you don’t need to go into religion that much, there is no need for that. Stay normal like people’. The hijab fell outside of the natural, the normal. Indeed, within the context of linear time and Islamic belatedness, the hijabi’s inferiorisation meant it fell out of the human:

The hijab in general, in general, for those people who are not committed, they see the hijab as backwardness. As soon as they see a hijabi, she is classified as a backward person. When they speak to her, and start knowing she is cultured and knows things, they get shocked and don’t believe it. That she has a thinking mind, no way. But why? We are human beings, like you. [Maha]

They see the one without a full hijab, she might be normal, like other humans, not from another planet [laughs]. [Fatima]

I would love for them to realise that I am not a human being that different from what you are...that I am like you. But it’s done for them, they consider that I am not like them. I do not dress like them, I do not speak like them, I do not act like them. You know? [Hanin]

Fatima is a middle-aged Shia Islamic activist living in Beirut’s Shia southern suburb while Hanin is a middle-aged lower-class Shia living in the southern town of Haret Saida. Maha was younger than both, Sunni, and middle-class Beiruti. The difference between Shia and Sunni participants, across social classes, in lived experiences of discrimination and subjugation appeared negligible, as stories echoed across Lebanon’s divides.

The layer upon layer of Othering amassed to produce an experienced marking, a social form, of colossal wounding: a dehumanised social form. In this sense, erasure here was not (only) a lived feeling of rejection based on an expulsion from the potential of being

Lebanese: it was a lived expulsion from being modern and, by consequence, from being fully human. It was the production of a clear 'them' and 'you'. The 'you' was an Otherness, an Otherness of inferiority and lacking in humanity: a lesser mind, lesser ethics, less knowledge, lesser culture... It was the marking, the consciousness of their subject position. It was being made to feel 'like someone else, like not a human like them'. The resulting wounded consciousness is one of difference, of being from another planet and from a different world, as perceptions and epistemes are systematically colonised. Beginning with the expulsion of the Arabo-Muslim from the Lebanese imaginary this lived experience swiftly arrived at its expulsion of a belated Arabo-Muslim excess from humanity: it was not (only) a rejection based on an expulsion of the potential of having a Lebanese identity, it was an expulsion of being modern and, by consequence, of being fully human. The rejection needed to be understood under a different paradigm than the one offered by the literature in analysing Lebanese identity and identity politics, it appeared.

In this respect, it was the experience of a sealed subject-position: a religious pre-modern self with a specific habitus located at the very bottom of the hierarchy, at the very bottom of the colonial difference. A position my participants clearly abhorred, expressing pain and cynicism, they felt they had little power in changing the status quo as they expressed their intent to continue trying. Nevertheless, the ruling sense here is that of the hijabi, as long as she is hijabi, constructed as a lack in humanity that cannot be mended: it was not a question of things they did not have, but rather a question of things they could not have as a consequence of their totalitarian marking:

A3: Now there is more acceptance yes, things have changed from what they were yes, now despite their beliefs, like they [still] consider us to be backward, retarded in this hijab, or not, whatever. They accept us.

A1: It's only because of politics!

A3: But there are still many places where the hijabi would go and she would draw looks. To this day.

A1: We would definitely draw looks.

Me: Is she still considered as different?

A1: Oh, I did not say she is not seen as different! But they acknowledge her existence, that, yes, there are hijabis who exist.

A4: And the looks are different.

A1: Even the abaya [is sometimes acknowledged to exist].

[Markaz focus group 2]

They think like they can't come close to me. That I am associated with terrorism or something. This has happened to me. I had friends, like from another sect, and

they thought this. They stayed away from me. In Lebanon, you get this all the time. They think that they can't come near us so that they don't become contaminated. Even the parents, they think like this and they tell their kids to stay away. It happened to me. Of course, this influences everything [in life]! [Bana]

...but if I imagine myself walking in there [Lebanese government building] in a abaya, I would feel it would be...VERY...odd...very. Even if people appear OK with it, you'd feel...like...like when I told you about having one hijabi only in a group of 25 people you'd feel like one out of the whole circle and I would be, like very happy if someone can do this because it doesn't take away your qualifications or anything, but it's a very strong...contrast...exactly...the contrast is huge... [Maya]

The abovementioned quotes from Maya, a highly-educated upper-middle-class urban planner from the south of Lebanon now living in Beirut and Bana, a young lower-class university student from the North of Lebanon, illustrate the sense of difference which has become a part of the hijabi's daily life. The focus group with middle-aged and older Shia women with a majority lower-class and two middle-class participants further evidenced the commonality across age groups, sects, regions and social class. Surely, this is not claiming a homogeneity of experience, as will become clearer in chapters seven and eight, but is rather arguing for a commonality that forms the basis of a shared experience, a shared social form that cuts across divides.

Here, the hijabi's marking pervades and looms, felt and encountered in myriad ways and in myriad places. Such is the impact of the experienced social form: its delineation was so hegemonic that many of its elements were internalised by the hijabi body. In this sense, her branding has become a structuring component of a hijabi wounded habitus: being different is not something the hijabi realises by being hailed as different, it is not something the hijabi comes to discover by being interpellated as less, it is something she has come to sense and internalise irrespective of direct external stimulation. The hijabi, raised and socialised in Lebanon, is not like Fanon who comes to discover his blackness: her hijabiness has long been inscribed into her. This habitus of difference and lack by women who adhere to Islam and who inhabit the modern world in Lebanon becomes inevitable, tyrannical, from the youngest age, producing a fragmented wounded habitus for the hijabi.

There, she was joined by those who resemble her: marked as closer to specific groups and, by consequences, as farther away from specific groups. It was not unlike the Negro brought closer to 'animals' in an anthropocentric world, drawn farther from the civilised:

Fadia: Outside [the committed community], oh yes [there are assumptions]. In the company [I work at], they all have that idea that all Muslims are the *m'atarin*, they have no money, each one gets 15 kids

Manal: Like beggars, lowly vagabonds, *shrarih* [derogatory Lebanese term connoting uncivilised people]

Fadia: Yea really, we were talking about his, how you see all these hijabis on the street begging each with 4-5 kids. The Christian one I was telling you about, she started telling me that they should do, like...*uhh*...awareness campaigns, for the Syrians, how they shouldn't get kids because they're turning them into beggars. [Fadia and Manal]⁸¹

With Fadia and Manal, two older lower-class Sunni women living in one of Beirut's poorer areas, unsurprisingly, perhaps, the Syrians systematically made it into this conversation as they did with so many others. Throughout my fieldwork, Syrian refugees emerged and re-emerged as the most present personification: the epitome of disdained Arab marginality in all its lack, ugliness, malignancy and nuisance (see Thorleifsson 2016; Yasmine and Moughalian 2016). Given their status as (one of) Lebanon's internal Others, as explained in chapter five, I should not be surprised. Often, they were accompanied by the vagabonds, the beggars and the scroungers: those groups embodying what is to be rejected, what is to be prevented from proliferating.

This, in turn, had a clear class dimension. It was evidently the attributes of those belonging to the lower classes: the hijab was a garment of the poor and the hijabi was to be marked as lacking in economic status. This was further nuanced: the degree of conservatism was directly proportional to the level of poverty, my fieldwork indicated. Indeed, in the field, I encountered stories of families claimed to have chosen the abaya because it makes life cheaper: 'you only need one abaya, you wear it every day and you save a lot of money'. So, the dress was no object of religion, no object of agency, no object of piety, and not even an object of social accommodation: it was a simple materialisation, by-product, of a lowly economic status.

Deeb's (2006) description of the hijab as a stigma in Lebanon, which was eventually a stigma of nonmodernity, can be affirmed as being much wider than she had held, much stronger, much deeper, much more rooted. More than 15 years after her fieldwork, it stands firm, perhaps firmer than ever, as it strived both within and outside of the Shia (and Sunni) communities both within and beyond the questions of cultural, political or

⁸¹ Surely, much can be said here, particularly in relation to the questions of population control and, to some extent, even eugenics. Nevertheless, this is beyond my scope here and remains for another work.

even civilizational backwardness to, aggressively, wound in humanity. With this, the absence of the hierarchy of the human in the analysis of phenomenon such as the hijab reveals itself as a major gap in the scholarship and the centrality of racialisation is raised to understand lived experiences and the modern condition producing them.

While some data presented here points to some form of lessened discrimination, subsequent chapters will return to this to explore and interrogate its meaning. For my purposes here, it must be realised that overwhelmingly, systematically, and pervasively the hijabi experienced a delineation as an Arabo-Islamic subject of the past. Worse, she is constructed as a threat to the coming of the present: the present of the west in Lebanon, the present which is the future. Such was her mark: an inexorable branding of racialised inferior humanity mobilising global discourses and constructs, fertilised by colonially invented national(istic) patriarchal and sexist imaginaries.

The hijab connoted an identity; I knew that from the literature, as indicated in chapter two. I did not know that this is what an identity means. Maybe it was because the literature left out coloniality. Maybe it was because so much of the literature was thinking of ethnic or religious majorities-minorities. Maybe it was because so much of it missed the experiences of being and living, of being pushed into experiencing, a colonially invented identity. Maybe it was because it did not understand identities and their production as a strategy of coloniality, as a strategy of marking which produces and reproduces a specific ordering of the world through the production and reproduction of racialised and inferiorised social forms, dictating the structuring hegemony of daily life. It should have thought about westernisation. It should not have made us think that Islamophobia was a question of being different because one was *in* the west, as a migrant. It should have told us that it was a question of being different *from* the imagined (Christian secular) west, as a lesser human. It should have told us that it was a question of practicing Europe's Othered religion, as an insistence on depriving Lebanon of the European secular horizon. It should have situated the patriarchy and sexism it identifies within coloniality. It should have told us that it was a question of practicing religion, as a remnant of a past that must be overcome for the future to come.

6.3. Conclusion

The experiences of my participants that I have engaged and reflected around in this chapter showcase the forced movement towards the negation of the hijab for modernity's

necessary, violent, secular, sexist, unequal, coming. This exclusion, I have advanced, is lived through an experienced racialised social form as a belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess: a foundational process of coloniality's establishment. This, in turn, reveals a hijabi wounded habitus produced by a series of disavowals and expulsions. Accordingly, this chapter has shown how, through an unrelenting assault, modernity's Islamic Other is lived and erased at the violent intersection of post-colonial national imaginaries, global hegemonic Imperial western secular-liberal discourses, patriarchy, sexism, and modern time. Most aggressively, this was a racialised hierarchy of humanity. With these accumulating experiences, my participants were victims of a stigma that both preceded and followed them. The result is severe aggression, uncivil violence, inflicted on the hijabi body, on the hijabi mind, on the hijabi soul, by patriarchal sexist 'civilisation' targeting women's being. Additionally, this data has shown that the lived subordination of coloniality's Other was not undone through the shift in political power within the nation, as it has shown that this subordination is far more pervasive, profound, and wounding than is suggested in both scholarly and public understandings.

I am here ultimately presenting an argument which is not about the hijab but rather about the conditions of Arabeness and of Islamicness, about the hierarchy of belongings and of human beings and about the experiences of erasure which can be unravelled through listening. In this sense, I am arguing that the hijabi must be understood as a racialised subject inferiorised along the hierarchy of the human through a complex social form. Produced for these women and lived by them, in a small post-colony, this social form dictated social anguish and suffering across life's various fields. In the coming chapters, I will continue exploring how this marking manifests itself and materialises in the lived daily of the hijabi across these different spheres to theorise how this racialisation pursues erasure and modernity's establishment

Chapter Seven: Domestic, Public, Work, and State Spheres: Lived Erasure and its Processes

In this chapter, and building on the conceptualisation of the hijabi social form developed in chapter six, I will pursue an exploration of the hijabi's lived experiences in the various spheres of her daily life.⁸² In doing this, I will argue that the hijabi dwells under lived exclusion and material aggression across social spheres for erasure in continuity with her marking. This material aggression, I will argue, is a second process of coloniality's establishment that mobilises a series of techniques for erasure.

For purposes of presentation and analytical clarity, I will divide this exploration into four interrelated spheres: the domestic, the public, the market, and the state. Demonstrating violence that ranges from micro-aggressions to institutional discrimination, the aim will be to thinking alongside and explore the experiences of the hijabi in modern Lebanese society to analyse and deduce theoretical insights as to how coloniality functions at the level of the material lived across spheres of social interaction. In this sense, the purpose of this chapter is not to analyse the hijabi lived experience across these spheres itself, given the objectives of this dissertation, but rather to analytically explore and engage with these experiences to arrive at a theoretical understanding of coloniality's workings. It must be noted here that, while I will be presenting these through four sub-sections, as four spheres, the lived is certainly more tangled and the trends I extract greatly overlap, diverging and converging.

7.1. Domestic Sphere

Across fieldwork, the hijabi's experience of exclusion began inside homes, in daily interactions with families and within one's most intimate relationships. As one participant with young lower-class and lower-middle-class hijabis working in the aid sector in Saida, explained:

Some people wear the hijab in a supportive environment. Some find an encouraging environment. But I didn't. For me, it was a fight to wear it. When I did, no one in the family spoke to me for a week. My dad didn't speak to me for two weeks. So it was this atmosphere where everyone was saying: '*Uf*, why? What happened? What are you doing? How will you even find a job? How will you get married?' How and how...I had, for three years, this was in 2002, I kept thinking

⁸² It is to be noted here that this chapter will not deal with hijabi womens' experiences in the online or virtual world. While this is surely an important space where to explore the hijabi's lived experiences, it was beyond the remit of this dissertation.

about it for 3-4 years before I could take the step. And that wasn't because I was thinking about it. I knew I wanted it, but I was thinking about how I can do it without getting into a confrontation with the community around me. But I did end up with a confrontation. And to this day, it's ongoing [confrontation]. [Saida NGO focus group]

As my participant went on to explain, her family considered her choice to wear the hijab one which will 'doom' her to failure and, simultaneously, one which will be understood by the community as a manifestation of failed parenting. In this sense, her choice harmed her family and, at the same time, harmed her own future and prospects. Her family's behaviours, she explained, were only a result of the 'ideas they had' and their will to protect her, to salvage her. Ghada, an older lower-class Shia woman living in Lebanon's South, explained:

...So I wore the hijab...I used to be beaten every day at home. Not once, multiple times. My mother would take off my hijab, and I would wear it. She would take it off and I would put it back on. She used to say: 'I don't have girls who wear the hijab'. I stuck to it by force...And I kept suffering...Yes, I went through a lot with my mother. A lot, a lot, a lot of suffering with my mother because of the hijab. Generally in the family, they don't like the hijab, they see it as backward...[Ghada]⁸³

Ghada, like many other participants, explained how her experiences were 'justified' by her mother through an insistence on the inferiority of Islam and the East and on the need to look like 'Europeans and Christians' and 'civilised people' if one is to 'progress in life'. The hijab, she believed, doomed her daughter's future and negated what she herself had strived to build for both herself and her household.

Distinguishing between other 'private' religious practices such as prayer and fasting on the one hand and the public hijab on the other, many told of how their parents asked them to practice their faith 'as you like' but to 'keep it between you and God'. The family sought, in other words, the (enlightenment inspired) privatisation of religion for the protection of their children, of their daughters. Young student participants at the American University of Beirut clarified:

S: I come from a family that's not very religious. I always get comments like 'Now if you take it off and wear a hat what difference would it make?' I'm like,

⁸³ These observations raise multiple questions: from questions regarding the relationship between the hijab and 'tradition' to questions regarding the relationship between the hijab and agency, social change and the role of Islamic parties. Most of these questions fall beyond the arguments I wish to make in this dissertation and for limitations of space I will not comment on them. Suffice to point and reiterate this data's potential to problematise much of the literature on the hijab as it challenges the dominant mainstream narratives on Islamic dress and 'culture'.

why don't you guys drop it, I'm happy, just leave me alone. But they won't, they're always saying things like 'it's prettier if you wear a hat', and 'you should wear a turban instead'. But I'm happy the way I am!

A: Like thinking of my own experience, every day, every day, I hear a comment. Something like: 'When will you take it off already?' Three or four times, a day. And things like 'it's enough now [take it off]'. Or things like 'give her a year and she'll give up'. Or like: 'what is it [the hijab] for?' These are from my own family, and also neighbours and friends. Daily, every day, 3-4 times. At first, I would be really nice and make an effort and I would try to explain that there are reasons for it, that I was not forced to wear it, that I am convinced and all that. But now my reaction is: just go away. There's no point. You have to keep justifying and each time you need to find convincing reasons, which are stronger than what you said before because what you said before did not convince them.

S: They're never going to be convinced, that is it.

A: They really aren't. [AUB focus group]

Argumentation and reasoning were stillborn, especially when faced with an evident and unquestionable reality of the hijab's harmful effect on the hijabi's life. From parents to close friends and neighbours, the hijabi's error was eventually both manifest and palpable, pushing her concerned social circles to seek redress. Wounding, therefore, began with the family and the closest of social circles.

With the hijabi social form established under a modern world of secularity, the rejection of the hijab becomes a practical need, a necessity, an inevitability. Coloniality was here care, exclusion was motivated by love, erasure was benevolence. Coloniality accordingly began by utilising the responsibility of parents to equip their children with the necessary forms of capital, with the necessary norms, codes, and practices that could render them successful dwellers of the modern world. Exclusion, this immersion in the experience of the hijabi revealed, begins with one of the key agents of socialisation as coloniality mobilised, infiltrated, the Muslim family in a mechanism which remains often absent and neglected in the literature.

Here, most participants expressed the impossibility of seeking support when faced with exclusion or discrimination as that would only lead to further accusations along the lines of 'you have done this to yourself' and requests of removing the hijab. The hijabi was in this sense deprived of family and close support if (or when) she faces discrimination or oppression on the basis of her hijab's marking in 'public' areas, at work, or in the state. The hijabi subject-position, it appeared, had much loneliness to it.

In addition to the parental home of the nuclear family (which is the standard hegemonic norm in Lebanon), the aggression persisted throughout the hijabi's life. Particularly, it

moved to one's marriage. A middle-aged lower-class participant in a focus group in an NGO in Beirut explained:

Me, you know, in my husband's family, I'm the only hijabi. There were many problems and a lot of fights with their side, for me not to wear the hijab. I got married and I wasn't hijabi and then later I wanted to wear it. There was the explosion in the Iranian embassy and I had just been on the [same] street and I didn't die. So I felt that life is empty and immediately thought that what am I waiting for to become a hijabi and all that. So yes. My husband's mother went hysterical. To this day she wears sleeveless shirts and things like that and keeps telling me things like 'what have you done to yourself?'...My husband at first was not convinced at all...he left the house for over a week...because I put on the hijab...and then with time things rebalanced. But I don't know where God gave me all that strength from. I was so insistent, I said there was no way for me to take it off. No matter what. No matter where I was going to reach, even if it was divorce. I hung in there. [Khaled association focus group]

The question of husbands concerned about their image was omnipresent throughout the field. Indeed, even beyond my own interviews, I encountered myriad stories about women who wanted to wear the hijab but could not as it would 'destroy their marriage'. Their choice, in a modern patriarchy, was not theirs, it appeared. This further seemed to hold a class dimension where, particularly, middle and upper-class men's social standing, social circles, and even occupation could be threatened by a hijabi wife. A complex matter requiring research beyond the aims of this chapter, this too seems largely overlooked in the literature.

Ultimately, it appeared that the hijabi social form was carried on into marriage where a colonial patriarchal system transfers 'responsibility' from parents to husbands. Throughout, the need to preserve social status and prestige, playing out and aggressing hijabi women and their will, ruled. The result is rejection, prohibition, and violence where, under a world of modernity/coloniality, the hijab transforms into deviance and the hijabi into a wilful subject to be leashed by her colonised and enforced guardians for erasure.

Looking at these accounts, one realises that the wearing of the hijab, in a society which marks the hijabi in the way discussed in chapter six, is a constant battle and struggle: inside one's westernised home, within one's westernised family, across one's westernised life.⁸⁴ It was not, it appeared, only the work of a westernised elite, but rather that of

⁸⁴ It is to be noted here that these findings further raise the question of patriarchy and sexism in their relation to coloniality and how they structure and unfold within the hijabi's personal, familiar, marital, and other relations. Especially relevant in the domestic sphere, such an analysis is of great importance to

westernised kin across divides. For some, this means physical pain: a process of daily beating that would reach the extent of ‘fainting’. For others, it was psychological: an ostracization where family members simply ignored one’s presence, or left. For many, it was a combination of both, complemented by a bombardment of aggressive and hurtful comments, attacks and insults. Modernity/coloniality’s patriarchal mapping of itself on the bodies of women was a violent and aggressive process. Eventually, as a calling laying outside western modern discourses, the hijabi requires a divine force to keep the hijab as her unconcealable marking constantly triggers serious and severe harm and injury. While the psychological effect of this is beyond my scope in this dissertation, it cannot be understated. In the following sections, this will be further evidenced.

7.2. Public Sphere

While many families seemed to want the hijabi to stay at home, invisible, the hijab was a public object by its very definition: its exclusion necessarily moved into the ‘public sphere’. In this sphere in Lebanon, Islamic dress is a powerful object of ostracization. I hope I will be excused for listing quotes, but these must be voiced:

The other day I was driving and someone was driving in the wrong direction. I opened the window and simply said: this is the wrong direction. Then I got [yelling]: ‘Hijabi and talking!’ What, do I not speak? And then they said: ‘Hijabi, be quiet!’ This always happens, they say this or they say: ‘Oh you have a voice!’ It’s not like I had cussed at them or anything, I would have just pointed it out. Yes. Yes, there is this. [Hoda]

A lot [of discrimination]![painfully] Like out of the things I’ve heard is: ‘Oh you’ve put on the diaper!’ For example... ‘So, you’re diaper-wearing now’...you hear that. [Markaz focus group 1]

There is this small café shop, very nice, at night it flips to a bar. Not a full-fledged bar but just a bit. But if you go there you will hear talk. Once my sister went and stayed for [just] a bit late, she got swear words, for her hijab. [Salma]

I4: A few years ago, like before the Syrians came, I used to go to Bliss street, where AUB is, I would really feel as if I was in another planet when I’m there, really. People would be ‘What is this? Who is she and what is she doing here?’

I3: yes, of course, you feel like a total stranger! [Iman focus group]

The other day they had this march, for women. And all the organisation went to march together demanding women’s rights. But one of the signs they were holding, said something like ‘You will not oppress me with your hijab’, like

understand all the spheres of the hijabi’s life. This remains for future work to explore and develop to arrive at a better understanding of how coloniality intersects with gender, patriarchy, and sexism in its erasure.

saying be free of the hijab, you are oppressed, something like that. We're outside.
[Maya]

Not long ago there was this public beach that prohibited the burkini, in Lebanon. I'm not talking in Niece, in France where this can happen, no, it happened in Lebanon. And people started saying that no, there wasn't a municipal decision, and yes, there was a municipal decision and there was a debate about all that. Regardless! This is outrageous for me! Me going to a beach, public, and having one of the municipality workers come to me and say: 'No, Syrians and hijabis are not allowed'. This happened! So this is something. And then even private beaches. If someone is wearing a burkini, she can't go to most private beaches in Lebanon. So, no. there are many things, rights, many things missing. In terms of rights.
[Sara]

Hoda is an older upper-middle-class niqabi from Beirut, Salma is a young middle-class Shia from the South of Lebanon while Maya is an upper-class Shia architect from the South as well, living in Beirut. The Markaz focus group 1 was held with middle-class Shia living in Beirut's southern suburb, while the Iman focus group was held with lower-class Sunnis from Beirut. As these quotes from across Lebanon's geography, social classes, and sectarian differences, powerfully illustrate, saying that Islamic dress is not accepted in much of Lebanon's public sphere would be a dire understatement.⁸⁵ Going over them, I could not but remember Parvez (2011b), Zempi (2016) and Bruck's (2008) participants, among others: it truly was a global phenomenon. France, in particular, powerfully loomed. The practices of the coloniser were, today, continuously reproduced in the (ex)colony: from burkinis and beaches to marches and social movement mobilisations. Going over these quotes, I was also reminded of women in Turkey and in Pahlavi Iran during the past century as well as various parts of the Global South today as explored in chapter two: it truly was an ongoing historical phenomenon, a phenomenon that would not yield to the modern logic of linear progress. While much had changed since the post-war period in Lebanon, the Arab world and beyond, it appeared that coloniality's control of the real had not.

From streets to shops, the hijabi is consistently subject to insults and disrespect, to harassment and rejection, subtle and explicit, overt more than covert. Objectified and degraded, the hijabi is always at risk. Unable to participate in the demand for 'civil rights',

⁸⁵ It should be noted that Muslims are prohibited from buying homes in a number of Christian regions across Lebanon (through official municipal decisions). This issue came up in interviews where women expressed how Christians did not want their sight 'polluting the scene' and recounting stories of how they tried to buy houses in some regions but were barred from doing so. Nevertheless, this was a question which had to do with Muslims (hijabi or not). As my focus is on the hijab-specific experience, I only mention this as a note.

unable to practice in leisure activities, unable to complain when she is wronged, the hijabi lives in paralysis. As Mira told me, as a abaya wearing woman, she could not become a teacher at the Lebanese University, she could not get employed, she could not even exercise on the street because 'I was considered not to have the right'. Indeed, the hijabi lives with very few rights. She lives 'outside'. Unable to tread on some streets, with her habitus of Otherness, horrific insults and words that wound, the hijabi in Lebanon would appear imprisoned by, and in, her social form. The hijab was indeed a prison, but not because of Islam but because of modernity. To speak of a breach of human rights would be an irony, dwelling in the Fanonian zone of non-being as she does.

This rejection was not homogenous but was rather subject to two main variables: geography and perceived conservatism of the dress. For geography, my participants explained that there was a limited number of regions (among those regions where the majority population is Muslim) which have acquired a certain degree of Islamic identity and that, as one moves away from them, discrimination aggravates.

Let me tell you this story. Once we were, in the summer, in Zahle. So my kid and I got out of the car to get some ice cream from [shop name]. When I first walked in, I asked for ice cream. He said they don't have any. And the ice cream was right next to me! I was like: 'But it's here, that's ice cream'. He just repeated that they don't have any to sell me. [Iman focus group]

A: Like in Ashrafieh or Dekweneh, if you're a hijabi and walking on the street...like...

N: That's not accepted... [AUB focus group]

Once I was doing fieldwork in Ashrafieh and there were some Syrian refugees [sitting] on the street there, hijabis. They have some there, apparently. Everyone there insisted that I was Syrian and treated me in a way that was not acceptable. Like not acceptable at all, at all! They said they wanted to call the police, that I was taking pictures. And this guy, who had nothing to do with anyone, like a nobody, took me to the notary, and he started...like in a very unacceptable way...He insisted I was Syrian. I was like, 'What is wrong with you? I don't have a Syrian accent to begin with!' And I feel that if I weren't hijabi, he wouldn't like...never said I was Syrian! Right or not? But maybe for him, the hijabi in that region is Syrian. You know? Maybe because the Lebanese hijabis don't go there. [Rabab]

There is that discrimination. You find it. It's especially obvious in some regions. Like even the way people stare at you and give you looks. Even though I don't wear that [conservative] clothing, I wear modern [hijab]! [Saida NGO focus group]

In many regions, your mere presence, the simplest act of walking on the street, was 'not accepted'. Ashrafieh, the archetype of Lebanon's right-wing Christian regions, emerged

and re-emerged. Zahle, another archetypical Christian-majority town in the Bekaa, was similarly aggressing. Not unlike 'Black ghettos', space had plenty to say in discrimination.⁸⁶ This rejection was not subtle: it was vocalised, expressed, enforced by everyone; from shop owners to pedestrians, as the association with Syrians echoed throughout.

This colonisation, it appears, did not yield to the logic of the capitalist market, for example, as the hijabi would not be admitted as a client in commodity exchange. Similarly, the hijabi was not innocent until proven guilty where she could not be detained with no evidence, she was evidently guilty until proven otherwise, marked with as many markers as possible, in great echoes of exclusionary migration regimes and bordering practices. Here, 'good citizens' felt a strong moral responsibility, a duty, to police the hijabi into erasure and preserve the purity of the common space, of the street. Here, erasure was rarely mobilised under the banner of preserving the hijabi, but was rather advanced under the banner of preserving the space from the hijabi's stigma, contamination.

As presented in chapter five, Lebanon is no homogenous place but rather one where religious difference is largely mapped on geography, with distinct majority regions for different religious groups. These different groups have different histories, different imagined horizons, and different relations to both westernisation, imagined Lebanon, Islam, and the Arabic-speaking world. As the hijabi moved throughout the Lebanese space, she entered and exited areas where she was different, and where she was differently engaged. She moved across gradients of exclusion and marginalisation, from spaces where she would be inconspicuous in public to ones where she could be asked by the municipal police to leave. As shown through these quotes, Christian regions in particular, and touristic and central Sunni ones as well, were ones where coloniality was most violent, most blatant. The hijabi experience was accordingly a spatialized one where different regions, and different religious communities, approach and engage with the hijab and the hijabi in different ways. Whereas in Zahle the hijabi could not be allowed to buy ice-cream, and in Ashrafieh and Dekwenh she could hardly walk on the street, this level of expulsion was not standard across the Lebanese space. In some other regions,

⁸⁶ The comparison with ghettos and racial segregation promises great insights, for example with the work of Wacquant (2008) specifically in terms of space and spatialization. Yet, a specific exploration of this is not possible within the space of this dissertation.

the hijabi's abjection meant being badly spoken of, or receiving 'kind advice' to remove the dress, for example. In yet others, the public sphere caused little aggression on the hijabi, as its erasure remained concealed from the public space, and rampant, across the domestic, the work and the state, as later sections of this chapter will continue to explore.

These regions, as Itaoui (2016) explained, had become Islamophobic spaces themselves. Under such an order, encounters between different communities were aborted as communitarian borders were drawn keeping the hijabi at bay and reproducing the nation as a space of difference, as different spaces. This spatialization was indeed reproducing Lebanon's heterogenous citizenry, inventing its separate communities, and enforcing the hierarchy of belonging. As the hijabi could not move across the Lebanese space, she could not belong to the Lebanese space but rather needed to be cloistered in her belonging to the specific – inferior – community of which she was a part.

In chapter six, I have clarified that the hijabi is subject to a social form that cuts across divides, including sectarian ones, but that it did this in a heterogenous way. The case of geography is a prime example of this heterogeneity, one that appeared to function in line with the heterogeneity of citizenship in Lebanon. In this sense, the hijabi in different geographies, and among different communities, did not experience the brunt of her social form in a uniform way but rather dealt with a complex variety of its lived and material manifestations. In this respect, an exploration of the spatialised dimension of the hijabi experience reveals that this social form manifests itself differently in different geographies where some geographies have become overtly Islamophobic ones, while others remain far less aggressive. Surely, this itself entangles with a number of other factors, such as class or education, to produce a complex lived experience beyond the scope of this dissertation. In either case, for the hijabi, where she can and cannot go, as part of her wounded habitus, is clear. The exclusion the hijabi faced established what Itaoui (2016) has called mental maps of exclusion which had great impacts on the hijabi's mobility and ability to navigate space and place. In the case of the Lebanese hijabi, as many of my participants elaborated, the 'can areas' are well-known, everywhere else is 'cannot'. Such a learning was not, my participant explained, to my horror, 'too difficult' to understand and was 'to be expected' given Lebanon's religious 'make-up'. As Zahraa, an older Shia resident of Beirut's southern suburb (Dahieh) explained:

Of course, I have been through harassment! But not inside Dahieh, once you're outside of it. You hear words, *toltish* [*degrading cusses*]. [Zahraa]

In this spatial ordering of discrimination in Lebanon – a spatial ordering that echoed the spatial ordering of hijabi discrimination across the west as well as the spatial separation and ordering of indigenous and colonists in conventional forms of direct colonial regimes – those (very few and very well defined) regions where the Muslim religious community has established a strong presence were offered by some participants as havens of acceptance. Here, I am mainly referring to Dahieh, some regions in the North (Tripoli and some surrounding villages) and scattered villages in the Bekaa and the South of Lebanon.

I would like to argue that this spatial dimension of the hijabi experience – one documented in various other settings as explored in chapter two – does not make the scene in Lebanon any less horrid. On the contrary, it aggravates the sense of entrapment, of cloistering, and of imprisonment. With narrow space, the hijabi is pushed to suffocate in her social form as her difference becomes enshrined, physically mapped and codified, and her contrast accentuated.⁸⁷ It is important here to return to the exploration of the different communities in Lebanon explored in chapter five. Given the historical dominance of Christians, Christian regions in the country are generally far more affluent, developed, and preserved. The hijabi's spaces were, on the other hand, often ones of the lower classes, often being underdeveloped and lacking in planning and infrastructure, often being overpopulated and marginalised, given Lebanon's unequal construction and development and its history of enforced urbanisation and Israeli aggression. This spatialization of the hijabi experience was a powerful means through which her social form was reproduced.

In a situation where the hijabi and those around her are pressured to exert much effort to learn how to navigate the space, learning 'their limits' (otherwise, they would only have themselves to blame, I was told), this space of tolerance was itself a tool, a technology, socialising her into her marking for erasure. Through this, the sight of the hijabi in 'mainstream', 'cosmopolitan', touristic, or most upper-class regions was further anomalised, and her absence was further standardised. It was a clear incident of absencing, of invisibilising the hijab and the hijabi, of control, of discipline, of discipline for erasure.

On another (entangling) level, a second factor that plays into this experience is the position of the dress on the spectrum of modernity. The rule appeared simple: the more conservative the dress was deemed to be, the more extreme the incidents were. For

⁸⁷ The specific unfolding of this specialisation, and how it relates or differs to other instances of mapping differences, is a complex issue relating to multiple variables that remains beyond the scope of this dissertation. For useful analyses in other contexts see Itaoui (2016) and Schmitz (2010).

example, a woman choosing to wear a Abaya (long black cloak) in a focus group with Shia women living in Dahieh recounts:

We would pass by places and people would yell: ‘Look at the ninja!’ Or things like: ‘Look at the black garbage bag!’ The words would be that harsh, they would say those things to us. [Markaz focus group 1]

Of insight is the fact that the insults, the words, were often not about the hijab. They are about the hijabi. She was not wearing a black garbage bag. *She* was a black garbage bag. This was objectification at its most vicious. Maybe this is what Fanon meant when he wrote ‘then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects’ (Fanon 2008: 82). For those wearing the face-veil, the situation was drearier, as Hoda, an older Beirut niqabi, and a niqabi lower-class participant from the focus group in Saida, explained:

[chuckles]...they still don’t accept me. I would be walking in the street, the stares, it’s unbelievable. Especially when I drive...Like, they would look in this way, and they almost get into a car accident just because they keep staring at me and giving me looks. And this is the easy part. There are those who say things...I used to stay quiet, but not anymore...Like ‘ninja’, this is the least [bad] word, ninja. And they swear at me. Some have even tried to run me over when I’m driving. There was this one time, here, I was crossing the road and there was this woman, old, like really old, and I was driving, so I stopped for her to cross the street, it was a turn and I felt that no one was going to let her pass, so I stopped to let her pass, and then she just stood there and started yelling at me and threatening me. She said: ‘You know just wait, tomorrow they are going to take it off your face, they will force it off your face!’ I looked in shock, I was just letting her through, I hadn’t said anything! And then she crossed while she kept giving me bad looks. [Hoda]

Loads of times, I’d be walking on the street, and I see kids yell out and start screaming to their moms [scared of me]. But who is behind this? Why is he scared? I take him to the side and show my face, or give him a lollipop. Or anything. Just to show him that I am human like him... [Saida mosque focus group]

With stories of how people would, upon seeing a niqabi, move to the other side of the street, exit shops and change their seat in a bus to ‘sit next to the window’, the situation held powerful affective elements as it held practical ones. The similarity to, for example, Mason-Bish and Zempi’s (2019) or Zempi and Chakraborti’s (2015) explorations in the UK was resounding: the experiences were the same as the movement from ‘first world’ to ‘third world’, from North to South, changed little. It was not, it again appeared, simply about migratory status or a threat to the west by foreigners. It was about a difference from the imagined European. It was a threat to the globalised European horizon.

As a threat, the hijabi was a subject of hate, of hate crimes. Stares, as they did with Fanon,

figured powerfully. While walking on the street aware that people are rejecting you is one thing, walking on the street aware that children are frightened by merely seeing you is another.⁸⁸ The niqabi was, by walking, experiencing herself as a source of fear and pain, whilst also experiencing fear and pain. The last recount mentioned above had happened on the streets of Saida: one of the country's most conservative Sunni cities in the South of Lebanon. I left that interview with the unequivocal sense that the question was not of safe regions or safe cities and towns. It was not even a question of safe neighbourhoods. The best that can be said is it being a question of some parts of some streets where the situation is likely to be better than others.

The condition, strongly reminiscent of pandemic apartheid, of systematic hegemonic racial segregation as a global phenomenon, revealed coloniality as a material and lived experience which functions by ostracising the Other from presence, mapping her movement, controlling her being and signalling her exclusion. Mobilizing the specific context and its unequal development, this spatialization itself reproduced the social form and its inferiorising characteristics. Marked, the hijab became the threat, the subject to be aggressed, wounded, erased, by social actors and agents across 'public life' where all citizens become responsible (anticipated) agents towards the achievement of this erasure in an ironic form of citizen and civil collectivist behaviour. Accordingly, coloniality functions by mobilising a multitude of social actors, from vendors to civil society organisations and to random citizens in a crusade, fought in the invented public sphere against its Other. The more difference, the more brutal the attacks. With this, a (physical) space of accommodation was thus established where the hijabi was (relatively) permitted to roam in a powerful mechanism of control for anomalisation, for the establishment of the public non-appearance, the absence, of the Islamic dress and its Muslim wearer.

7.3. Work Sphere

While hijabi women were subject to hate speech, micro-aggression and blatant discrimination, under various justifications and in different spheres of life, the question of employment emerged as particularly prominent and pressing. Accordingly, and aware that the market is often drawn out as a distinct social sphere with its own logic, and with

⁸⁸ This can surely be linked to the questions of ISIS, terrorism and the production of Islam as terror. Yet, my data does not allow me to explore this, especially in terms of the emergence and spread of such occurrences in Lebanon. This therefore remains for another project. See Bayrakli and Hafez (2018), El Zahed (2019), Sayyid (2014) and Tyrer (2013) for relevant explorations and theorisations.

the magnitude of experiences shared by participants focusing on the labour market, I choose to explore it in a separate section reflecting on the insights it offers regarding coloniality's processes of erasure:

And then about work! When you apply to work it's the same thing. They look for you to be non-hijabi. I studied psychology. And some of the things, when you apply, you hear: 'How can you be a psychologist in a hijab? They don't work, no way, we won't have our psychologist be hijabi' Why? No. [Bahia]

S1: And there is more. There are companies and job ads, they put a flagrant specification: not hijabi.

I2: Yes, yes there are those. And there are places when you call them, they immediately ask 'Are you hijabi or not?' And if you say you are, they would say 'No that doesn't work for us'.

[verbal agreement]

I3: I applied to a school once. From the start of the interview, she said to me: 'Look, miss, to say this as it is, we don't hire hijabis'. And that was that. [Iman focus group]

The hijabi was filtered out of employment in clear continuity with her branding as a belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess in Lebanon. The racialisation destroying women's employment opportunities across the west discussed in chapter two was a global phenomenon, my data powerfully suggested. In a country where state provisions, welfare, and social security are foreign concepts, this exclusion from the workforce is suffocating, pushing the hijabi into myriad challenges. In some respects, particularly given the small country's economic realities, the effects of Islamophobia here appeared to be more harming than they were in the west.

Me as a hijabi, I suffered so much to find a job, and you can't not...I once applied, a C.V., to go work in the Gulf, in a company, through a Lebanese recruitment agency. I arrived before my appointment, and sat there. And then my appointment time arrived. People were sitting in there, one by one going and having their interviews inside and my time came and passed. And I was still sitting, waiting. She didn't call my name for the interview. And I just kept sitting there, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes...and then eventually I went up to her and told her I had arrived before my appointment time and it had passed but my name was not called for an interview. And she said: 'Apologies but you are a hijabi, and they don't take hijabis'. [Maha]

Later, Maha told me that the recruitment agency was 'Christian' and that she knew they would never employ her. Yet, she was hoping that the fact the recruitment was for a company in the Gulf meant she would have a chance. It appeared she did not. This was because 'Lebanese people are controlling this', she explained, and Lebanese people would never want others to 'see them as hijabis because such was not how they wanted

their nation to be'. The post-colonial imagined identity of Lebanon, discussed in chapter five, powerfully aggressed. As Fatima, a middle-aged Shia Islamic activist, stated:

They specify 'non-hijabi', on job applications or advertising jobs. They write: non-hijabi as a condition. The hijabi does not go well with them, the Lebanese. [Fatima]

The issue here was that of post-colonial Lebanon, and the Lebanese, who had obstinately decided that hijabi women were always already disqualified from obtaining employment. Both within the country and in sending skilled labour abroad, particularly to the Gulf, the hijabi was being excluded and expelled.⁸⁹ Here, the invented nation was drawn on again and again as global discourses imbricated in colonising racist structures dominated. Rabab, a young upper-class Sunni living in central Beirut, recounted:

I was already [working] in the same company in the Qatar branch, where I didn't see this [discrimination] at all. The human resources department in specific...their treatment was really really different with me. And my manager explicitly told me that, because you are hijabi, they didn't want to get you, but I forced them to recruit you, but they didn't want to get you because you are hijabi. He [the human resource manager] even lowered my salary. I had an agreement, with the company owner, my relationship was with the owner and I had agreed through my manager with the owner to a salary, and I came to Lebanon on that basis. When I went to sign the contract I found it was 400\$ less. That's a lot. From 2000\$ to 1600\$. I asked why and he said he didn't know me yet. And I was like 'What do you mean you don't know me, I work for you! You are the regional human resources, not just for Lebanon, for both here and Qatar! You can't say you don't know me'. He said he wants to try me. Eventually, I said no and that I won't accept it. Then he said he could add 100\$ and I wasn't going to accept it, but the manager spoke to me and said that it would just be for a while and that it was because of the hijab only, and that they'll fix it, but it never got fixed, of course. [Rabab]

Prompting research on wage inequalities in Lebanon, Rabab clearly evidenced the role of the labour market in reproducing the colonial order, an order in which the hijabi's labour held less value. Gupta (2008), studying Canadian racism, explains that devaluing labour is an essential technique of racist social ordering where powerlessness is established and that, in this technique, 'the labour of women of colour is evaluated in a doubly negative manner because it is based on an intertwining of sexist and racist ideologies' (Gupta 2008: 15). Theorising this, she explains that it occurs in continuity with the history of slavery and is based on 'reinforced common notions about 'race', 'racial difference' and 'racial

⁸⁹ Such a realisation stands in clear continuity with practices explored throughout this dissertation where women's bodies become key sites for the stigmatisation of wider communities and are instrumentalised to embed a social hierarchy.

inequality' (Gupta 2008: 15). In Lebanon, there was no such history of slavery. Indeed, the issue at hand is one of a recent emergence as the hijab appears to have figured little as a contested issue in the country's history. The question was, nevertheless, one of difference and manufactured inferiority for inequality. The modern order of subjugation, it was evident, was not contingent on the west's history. The establishment of powerlessness, it became clear, was a global(ised) phenomenon that could be manufactured in any place and time under coloniality and in relation to the colonial difference; any difference from the European, to establish dwelling in the zone of non-being.

As with the exclusion in the public sphere, this colossal subjugation, exploitation, and alienation was again subject to variables. In this instance, geography, the identity of the institution, as well as the conservatism of the dress, all figured prominently. The level of employment was similarly there.

First, in terms of geography, participants expressed a sense that this exclusion is eased in Islamic regions. Zeinab, a young Shia student in Beirut, articulated this clearly:

Most of these banks, if I go to their Hamra branch, there's no way I can get a job. If I go to the Dahieh branch, they've started leaning a bit to reality: no, you find one hijabi. Of course, there are particular clothes only allowed, so yes, it's a baby step, but it's a step. It's still that a girl in a abaya; no way she can work in a bank, this is a big X. A girl in an *isharb* [conservative hijab], no way. But they have gone past their hijab phobia there. It's a good thing. [Zeinab]

I once applied to a job and the guy flat out told me that 'you are hijabi and I want someone who's not'. It was a car sales exhibition. And I have a friend who went to a real estate office and he told her that it just doesn't suit him to have a hijabi. [Abbesiye focus group]

A participant in the Abbeseiye focus group, held in a municipal centre in the town of Abbeseiye in the Lebanese South, recounted this incident and insisted that this phenomenon existed across the Shia-majority Southern towns of Lebanon. Islamic regions, it must be restated here, are not regions where there is a majority Muslim population. Rather, they can be thought of as regions where Islamic political movements have established a strong presence and where the cultural norms have shifted. Ultimately, these are regions dwelling on the margins of the country, on the margins of modernity. Practically, when it came to employment, this definition seems to further shrink to extend very little beyond Beirut's southern suburb. But, as I came to know, even there, it

appeared that this mitigation was minor. As Zahraa, an older Shia resident of Dahieh, and both Shia and Sunni focus group participants, identified:

The question of work, there is a serious problem there, it's very rare for them to accept. In Dahieh, you find both [acceptance and non-acceptance]. But there are harassments when it comes to work everywhere. Like if she wants to work as a saleswoman [in Dahieh], there is a particular dress which is forced, or banks. And the make-up, and the tight clothes and the pants...even when they accept the hijabi there [in Dahieh], they accept her on their conditions. And a abaya wearing? It's beyond rare for her to be accepted. And if we see her we get surprised: 'Oh, she really got that job? It's so good they accepted her!' [Zahraa]

M3: There are even institutions in Dahieh that are not accepting. Not outside only. They are requiring that she be non-hijabi. Why? Because they are considering that the employee needs to be presentable and chic and the hijab is ruining that. There are institutions, in our regions, having it as a condition. It's a policy thing. [Markaz focus group 3]

A3: Even our religious community, inside of Dahieh, would prefer that she not be wearing a abaya because it is more comfortable for him.

A1: It always happened, once she arrives at an interview, they go: 'We apologise'.

A2: And we had this centre for children with special needs [in Dahieh] and this girl wearing the abaya, they told her: 'We accept you but you must take off the abaya because this appearance reflects something negative on kids...' [Markaz focus group 2]

Even in Tripoli, which is this very conservative Islamic place, you don't see hijabis in the banks. All those at the bank are non-hijabi. Where did they find them? Really, it's so bad. [AUB focus group]

In the countries' most conservative space (Dahieh), some Lebanese hijabis were so excluded as to be made to feel a 'negative' sight for children to see and a tarnishing of the employer's reputation. The marking of a belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess pervaded and rendered the hijabi a form of contamination, pollution, which threatened the employer and their image, their success, their belonging. The hijab was not presentable, it was not tolerable. Hezbollah had failed to construct its 'Islamic milieu' (Deeb and Harb 2011), it appeared.

Mira, an older psychologist living in the Shia-majority Haret Saida town, for example, told of how 'committed Muslim men [employers] choose non-hijabis' because they feel 'they simply cannot' choose otherwise if they wish to attract customers and preserve their commercial interests. Surely, sexism was a powerful factor in this as the hijabi was excluded as the intersection of sexist ideologies and Islamophobic forces, as Mason-Bish and Zempi (2018) had shown in the UK. Accordingly, her exclusion was not only normalised but also rendered necessary, an inevitable strategy dictated by Lebanon's

‘diversity’ and ‘economic interests’, as Mira explained. Diversity here, it appeared, meant the concealment of difference and a push to homogenise the shared space into the European universe. Employers, regardless of their identities or their beliefs, needed to yield to this logic if they are to preserve their economic interests. The market had an omnipotent invented racialised and imagined logic that cannot be understood independently from coloniality’s establishment across the various spheres of life. When it came to employment, vulnerability and exploitation yielded very little, I came to conclude, to geography.

The last quote above also brings to light the second variable: the nature of the institution. First, there are particular institutions, primarily banks and tourism-related ones (hotels, travel agencies...) where it appeared nearly impossible for the hijabi to find employment. Such work, that of the major sector of the Lebanese economy (the services sector), was simply not for the hijabi. Such work, which represented modern Lebanon the tourism hub, Lebanon the golden days, Lebanon as dreamed, was not for the hijabi.⁹⁰ The image of the ideal Lebanese echoed again and again as the policing of who belonged in ‘modern’ spaces such as banks and hotels wounded.

The question of an institution’s position on the local-global spectrum also emerged as important: ‘international’ institutions were seen as more likely to reject hijabis than local ones. The following quotes from a focus group with older Shia women living in Dahieh, Sunni women living in Saida, and a young Sunni from Beirut living in an upper-class city neighbourhood illustrate these trends:

A4: And there are shops [names shops], in Bir-al-abad [neighbourhood in Dahieh], they don’t take hijabi employees. And this is in our region!

A2: Yes, yes of course.

A4: I think it’s because it’s an international firm, they wouldn’t take her there. [Markaz focus group 3]

The [hijabi] lady is facing many obstacles in some places, like in the mall...like the places which are not from Lebanon, the international ones, the ones with brands in many places around the world. [Saida mosque focus group]

The hijab is a problem, in any place, except in Dahieh or Tarik eljdide. But even there, all international chains, even ones like [names restaurants]...I don’t know...But all those shops [they don’t take her]. [Nadine]

⁹⁰ See Maasri (2016) on the role of tourism in the invention of the Lebanese post-colonial modern imaginary.

In Lebanon, a prime instance of the neo-liberal order, the marked hijabi is perceived to be unfit, below the standards set by modernity, to reside within the global neoliberal market. The mall, as a space of modern globalised consumption and leisure, as a space for the modern subject, was naturally unwelcoming. The hijabi was better off trying her luck in ‘shops’ and ‘small places’ as she was largely excluded from many erudite or socially respected professions. Echoing direct colonialism and North-South economic colonisation, those places deemed to be ‘not from here, the international ones, the ones with brands in many places around the world’ were here key agents for the hijabi’s erasure.⁹¹

In the market, both the dominant logic of exclusion encountered in the home and the dominant logic of exclusion encountered in the public sphere converged where the role of globalised consumption in reproducing coloniality was astounding. This data, accordingly, points to the complicity of global consumer capital through its institutions in the colonisation of lived experiences, in the coloniality of being.

Among local institutions, there was also the question of the relationship to Islam: was it an overtly Islamic institution? From the literature (such as Le Thomas 2012), and from hearsay in the country, I was aware of incidents where Islamic schools, in particular, required teachers and students to cover their hair as part of their uniform, and of how ‘backward’ and repulsive the practice was thought to be. With such incidents in mind, I was under the impression that ‘Islamic institutions’ would be safe havens for the hijabi. Expressing similar thoughts, many participants suggested that hijabi women should, and do, feel comfortable ‘there’:

I feel [the hijab cannot find a job] in banks too. It’s very rare [for a hijabi to find employment]. Unless it’s an Islamic bank, yes, you get a hijabi there. But other banks they prohibit the girl from the hijab [Saida NGO focus group]⁹²

In communication, it is hard for me to find a job in communication because I am hijabi. I don’t even work in communication now. I feel most hijabis work like in Islamic institutions, like that keeps them in the same circle, so they don’t fit in society. [Nadine]

⁹¹ These insights invite an engagement with different strands of work critically exploring the modern condition. A key example here would be Lefebvre’s (2000) classic thesis on modernity’s ‘colonisation’ of the everyday through the state where space is commodified under specific power structures. Nevertheless, such an engagement remains beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁹² It is worth noting that Islamic banks, in 2012 (latest date for which reliable data could be found) held assets standing at less than 1% of the Lebanese banking market (Jouni 2012).

Nadine expressed a clear reading of this invention of a labour space to cloister the hijabi as a mechanism of control, of erasure. It was, as she very well explained, absencing through concealment: of ‘keeping’ hijabis away from ‘society’, of keeping society beyond hijabis, as inferiorising attempts to (exploitatively) make use of some of their labour were made. Nevertheless, she went on to express a sense of comfort, of relief, in the welcoming space these Islamic institutions offered. Yet, as I gathered data, the conditions under which this unfolded revealed themselves to be not as favourable as I thought, as some of my participants thought.

First, I soon came to realise that ‘Islamic institutions’ only meant a very narrow subset of those institutions self-identifying as publicly and unequivocally Islamic (mostly some local NGOs and schools). In Lebanon, these are a frail minority. Further, I soon realised that the embrace was ambivalent, even in the most Islamic of these institutions. The following quote from a middle-aged lower class Sunni teacher living in Beirut is an example:

Even me, as a casual hijab but long dress, if I went to an institution...like this is a personal experience: I went to an institution, an Islamic one [names institution], a while back, they told me you are wearing a hijab which is the dress of nuns. I told him this is my Islamic dress and you are free to hire me or not, but I will not give it up. And they didn’t take me. And this was an Islamic association! [Farida]

The institution Farida named is one of the country’s most powerful ‘Islamic’ networks. While she was wearing a long plain dress during our interview, Farida’s dress was very dissimilar from both the abaya and the niqab. With a casual bright headscarf that was put under her dress, her plight struck me as exceptional. In either case, this experience was, I came to realise, not too exceptional.

While this applied to the various forms of hijab, my data clearly evidenced that the degree of exclusion was correlated to the degree of perceived conservatism. In this respect, the niqabi was the most wounded:

But the niqab, the Lebanese Muslim society, in particular, rejects it. [With much pain, in tears] How do we know this? I first came as a niqabi to the school. They said ‘Yes sure, but inside the school, you must take it off. Ok, for young kids, I take it off, but when I am asked that even in parent-teacher meetings I need to take it off? You, as an Islamic institution you did not help me, you hurt me! And this isn’t new. This has nothing to do with ISIS, it has to do with the profile of the school. Parents are registering their kids, if they see a niqabi, they won’t like it, they’d get scared. The purpose of the school is to gain, gain students. [Farida]

In tears, Farida, who had given up the niqab completely by the time of our interview, told me of how she was asked to remove her niqab, and her ensuing sense of violation. The Islamic institution, I realised, was wary of excess in excess. The Islamic institution, I realised, did not want to be too Islamic. Women's bodies seemed the evident space on which its 'moderate' Islam could be projected outward.⁹³ The patriarchy at play, and its reproduction, resounded. This, I came to find, was a trend in the country, a trend echoing global patriarchal Islamophobic trends as explored in chapter two across both east and west. Discussing employment opportunities as I was conducting a focus group at an Islamic NGO in the city of Saida, one of the participants confided:

Us here, the institution, one of the girls who work here, she applied to wear it [the niqab] and we had something like...like...not reservation but...like what would others think of us? We are a centrist institution, we work with different groups to serve society and we admit that in this region there is cultural variety, and even sectarian [mentions examples of groups they work with]. Ok, we have our [Islamic] personality, but we can't go to the extreme. Also, once we had a niqabi who applied, we really discussed it for a very long time and dragged on and in the end, it was that she had applied to a job where there were so few candidates, so I told them to just accept her and eventually we did... [Saida NGO]

As a 'centrist' institution, they could not go to the 'extreme': the construction of a 'moderate' Islam and its opposition to an 'extremist' and 'threatening' Islam (see Haddad and Golson 2007; Khandaker 2017) was, again, clearly not limited to the west. Indeed, in this quote, the hegemony of the rejection of Islamic dress manifests itself in full might: even women wearing a conservative form of the hijab, even Islamic institutions in 'Islamic regions', have great difficulty and trouble accepting the niqab due to its powerful social stigma: It was the impossibility of the Islamic subject position (Sayyid 2014) at the level of market institutions.

The niqabi accepted in this incident was fortunate to have obtained a clerical position – a position my participant described as 'in the back job', a job where the niqabi would not be seen – to which 'very few' other candidates had applied. With all of the above in mind, by the time I left the field, my take on 'Islamic institutions' was quite indecisive. Not only did these institutions represent a marginal part of the sector but, even within them, the acceptance of the hijabi was adulterated, incomplete.

⁹³ A conversation with the work of Federici (2014) to explore the role of the body in modernity/coloniality's capitalist dimension can here offer important insights, but remains outside the scope of this chapter.

Ultimately, this mitigation of the hijab's exclusion by geography, by the nature of the institution, and by the appearance of the dress, was violently creating a segregated space for the hijabi, establishing the rest of Lebanon for the non-hijabi. Further, it was creating a space that regulated, disciplined, and governed the hijab/i. Feeling that they themselves are part of the reproduction of the dominant norms, of the constraint of the hijabi, of her appeasement, my sense was, again, of imprisonment, of circumscription. It was, as in the public sphere, the demarcation of a very narrow space where the hijabi is pushed to suffocate in her social form.

Further, in exploring my data, a most worrisome observation overwhelmed me: many participants expressed an 'ability to comprehend' why hijabis are not given jobs where there is interaction with others, where 'she would be seen', but not why she is rejected even in those jobs where 'no one would see her'. For example, refusing the hijabi any employment in any bank seemed unacceptable, while rejecting her employment at the front desk seemed much more fathomable for a great many hijabi participants. Hearing those words, I wondered what it meant for someone to accept that they were not good enough to be seen, that the best they could fight for was to be given a job in the backstage, that they were not 'presentable'. Fanon's words plagued the field: 'Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea.' (Fanon 2008: 88).

Across both east and west, as explored in chapter two, the hijabi was discriminated against in the work sphere. Lebanon was no different, as the hijabi's invisibility becomes normalised and her subjugation becomes justified for erasure. Here, by preventing the hijabi's appearance, by pushing for her non-presence, the image of Lebanon was preserved and the imagined identity could be (re)produced, enunciated, perpetuated in/through the labour market. This was, I would argue, a powerful instance of absencing (Vázquez 2012) in the realm of the coloniality of being (rather than power/knowledge) where the non-modern is concealed as the modern claims itself the totality of the real. The conclusion to be drawn from this for the purposes of this dissertation is that physical concealment is a process of absencing in the material and lived coloniality of being.

Before moving on, a final factor must be highlighted: the nature of the work being done. First, this related to the degree of interaction with clients, as was illustrated and explained in many quotes presented above where the hijab was subjected to practices of concealment which became more extreme as the dress' perceived conservatism increased.

The second was regarding, quite expectedly I would say by now, the rank of the employment. The following quotes present this:

I4: Some companies accept hijabis for certain jobs.

I1: At AUB hospital, all the cleaning people are hijabis. When my mother was in the hospital. All of them, one after the other. Very rare to have a non-hijabi cleaner.

[agreement]

I3: You feel like that, that inferiority.

I1: Maybe we're over-sensitive, but you feel it! [Iman focus group]

Like now you go around, you might find hijabi people, but even if you look at faculty members at universities, you don't get many hijabis. Very few. The ones who work and are hijabi are the cleaners, or security. Like it raises questions...Of course there is a hijabi who is qualified to be, like an administrative assistant! I don't know. I think, I don't know. In general, they think it's more presentable [not being hijabi]. [Nadine]

I do not know why Nadine, a young Sunni from Beirut living in an upper-class neighbourhood, paused before giving her example. I do not know why she said 'I don't know' twice. I do not know why she said 'administrative assistant'. Yet, I would claim that the way she expressed her idea and the fact she did not pursue her example and say 'qualified to be a university faculty member', for example, is highly indicative of the hegemony of the discourse inferiorising the hijab/i. As Maha, a young Sunni participants, evidenced:

The hijab is really a 'no', in so many organisations and companies. And if it so happened you found a hijabi in a particular [good] position, it would be that she was not a hijabi and then wore it while she was already there. She might get fired, they might stay after her until she leaves, they might postpone or demote her. This happened to my brother's wife. She wasn't hijabi and when she wore it they kept after her. She used to work in a bank. She was the assistant to the director and they kept demoting her until they eventually appointed her as data entry. So she got upset and left. And this is despite the fact that she has no work with customers, she is not in the front! [Maha]

In this sense, if an employee decides to wear the hijab, the employer did not need to fire her as he could, among other micro-strategies of erasure, simply keep devaluing her (by demoting her) until she, of her own will, left. The depiction of women's presence across public and economic spheres in Lebanon, as noted in chapter five, required ample nuanced debunking to reveal it as the concealing narrative it is. My Shia participants in a focus group in Dahieh confirmed:

A1: Even if you have the brightest student who worked with the greatest doctor and got a PhD, universities wouldn't appoint hijabis. [I have this friend] they told

her that if you wear the hijab, you can't stay here [employed as a professor in a university]. They felt it, at [names university]. So she didn't wear the hijab. They still don't take the hijabi as a doctor, in many places. They can accept her as a student, or maybe as a researcher or something, but not a doctor. [Markaz focus group 2]

The hijabi, it appeared, when employed, must be employed in a position of weakness, in a position of subjugation. The hijabi, it appeared, cannot, should not, occupy the master position. The student hijabi can be tolerated, she might even be accepted as a subject to be emancipated. The hijabi researcher can even be tolerated. But the master hijabi cannot. It was, it is, institutional and systemic racism (and sexism) at its finest (see Carter 2003; Khattab and Hussein 2017).

Consequently, while this prohibition of the hijabi was not (mostly) codified in law, it was a de facto hegemonic control pushing for erasure. In facing this reality, it was claimed, many women who wanted to wear the hijab did not, could not. In parallel, many of my participants expressed how they had to settle for unemployment to keep their dress. The market as both a site and a process of erasure worked magnificently, I was told. Indeed, many participants claimed that employment, more than any other factor, was keeping substantial numbers of women from wearing the hijab in Lebanon. Bana, a young lower-class university student from the North of Lebanon, affirmed:

Work, for example, in banks, they don't put a hijabi. They think it's a shame. They don't give opportunities. Many girls don't wear the hijab just so that they can find a job they would like and which would suit them. [Bana]

I have many friends who work who wish they could wear the hijab, but they can't because they work and don't want to lose their job.

Me: There is a chance they'd lose their job?

Ne: [It's] not a chance, of course they will, of course. I have many friends in Lebanon, from Beirut, Sunnis, like they would really love to. They are very committed, don't wear revealing things, only go to women's beaches, don't wear short things but wear long sleeves and long things, but they can't become hijabi. They know that they'd lose their jobs. They tell me I am so blessed because I don't work and could put it on. That she couldn't, she'd lose her job. One is in an insurance company, one in a software company, they sell...so, yes. And there are many hijabis who can't find work because they are hijabis. [Maryam]

Maryam is a middle-aged upper-class Sunni from Beirut whose husband is a well-off businessman. She has the luxury of not working. In her narrative, she said it was that luxury that allowed her to wear the hijab. It was also that luxury which made her choice difficult: she was seen to be giving up on 'prestige', becoming an object of 'spooking people' and having to go through significant changes in lifestyle. Despite these, she did

make the choice, execute it and now continues to struggle to show most people around her that, in her words: 'It's enough, it's not that big of a deal, it's normal. Like you can talk to me [if I am hijabi]'. It was a clear example of the relationship between privilege and power, privilege and capital. Yet, here, it was also a clear example of privilege with a colonial (and patriarchal) curse.

In any case, the non-inclusion of non-hijabi Muslim women in my fieldwork means there is very little I can say about this. I would, nevertheless, note that some informal conversations with non-hijabi Muslim women confirmed these statements. Still, an additional point can be made here: in none of my interviews was the abstaining from wearing the hijab for a need for employment condemned by my participants. Rather, it was always justified, presented as an acceptable solution to an intolerable condition. Additionally, some proposed a compromise in the face of coloniality's attempts at concealing and invisibilising them: wearing the hijab outside of work and removing it within. Religion needed to be privatised, the labour market needed to be secularised, coloniality dictated and some hijabis had no choice but to yield. And indeed, such was said to be something some women have chosen to do. As Leen, a middle-aged Sunni participant from the North, acknowledged:

There is a huge problem for the hijabi in getting a job. I know a lot of people who take off their hijab, go to work, and then go out of work and wear it. This is here in Lebanon, here in Lebanon yes. I've seen this with my own two eyes. Especially if they are working with people. I've seen this. Yes, yes, yes, yes. And they [the employers] know she is doing this. Especially the ones in contact with customers, like not behind offices or working in administration or that, no, the ones at the front. Of course, there are types [of employment] more difficult to get into [than others]. [Leen]

None of my participants held that this was their own experience, or that they had to do this at any given point. I do not know if that was because none of them had, or because none of them felt comfortable speaking about it. I never asked the question explicitly; it was not a question I was willing to ask. Either way, they did tell me that such an experience cannot be anything but 'devastating'. Hoda phrased this as 'nakedness' saying 'the feeling of nakedness would be unbearable'. Additionally, it was presented as a problematic phenomenon, as the hijab is something to be practiced, to be committed to. It was presented, ultimately, as extreme oppression and erasure. What does it mean when someone is not allowed to practice their belief, forced to feel naked, violated for display

to resemble the imagined Ideal, because they need a basic income to survive? Modernity/coloniality had a different set of priorities, it appeared.

Coloniality's ordering of the world was therefore evidently being (re)produced by the labour market based on, and through, a variety of motivations, to mobilise precarious economic conditions, the need for employment, and the necessity of being 'employable'. Those who, despite this, choose to wear it, enter a never-ending struggle, a constant battle, which aims at the eventual exhaustion of the hijabi pushing her into removing the dress. In this manner, the wearing of the dress is systematically combatted, averted and obstructed through the work sphere where techniques of material concealment and invisibilisation enforced the social form for erasure.

7.4. The State

Beyond the domestic, the public, and the work spheres, the Lebanese state was offered as equally excluding by my participants. The following quote from a discussion among lower-class Sunni hijabis in Beirut illustrates this:

W3: Of course, because the state here is not an Islamic state. It's a state following something else...

W1: Even the army, the security forces. Everything. You can't if you're hijabi. I know a lot of people.

W2: You know, but the other day I saw a woman wearing the military clothes, the army, hijabi.

W1: She would have worn it during...like after she joined. If she had already joined they might accept. But before joining, no way. Like I know a relative, she's excellent, great in the university, tall and a great body, but because she was hijabi, there was no way for her. [Khaled association focus group]

For my participants, the state's exclusion was an evident facet and a core element of its very constitution. As a state 'following something else', Lebanon was presented as a structure that was itself inherently incompatible with the hijab. Tala is an older lower-class Shia social worker while Maryam is a Sunni upper-class Beiruti. They explained:

[The state is] so excluding. Like now, where have they opened [employment opportunities]? In the military, internal security, it is only now that they have started allowing her to wear a hijab. But what is happening in there? What kind of dress does she have to wear? What have they opened for her? As a soldier? As what? [Tala]

Now, the hijab doesn't really fit well with them in the Lebanese state. Like they can't hire her. [Maryam]

In this respect, variables again influenced the exclusion of the hijabi with the question of the dress' conservatism and the shape of the hijab which can be accepted emerging as key. In continuity with the market and the public sphere, both the level of the employment and geography figured. In this sense, the heterogeneity of the hijabi lived experience emerged in the state, a state structured around heterogenous citizenship since its colonial inception as explored in chapter five. Throughout, the practice of the state was one of denial and negation. As a focus group participant in Lebanon's North asserted:

R: The Lebanese state wants the non-hijabi Lebanese woman. Why do you exclude me? Why do you discriminate against me? I am Lebanese like you! The people in Tripoli don't want the state, don't engage with it, don't belong to it. People are very marginalised and disadvantaged by it. [Tripoli focus group]

It was a cry of pain and wounding, it was a serious statement of homelessness, of statelessness. The state and its institutions were not welcoming of the hijabi, particularly as an employee. My participants felt the weight of this. She was, certainly, not their intention, not their hope. These women, unlike Zempi (2016) and Le Gall's (2003) participants with migratory backgrounds, were being aggressed by the only state they could claim belonging to.

The question of this post-colonial state of the Global South and its institutions, in their relationship to the hijabi's social interaction and life, is worthy of a serious and systematic exploration that is beyond my scope in this dissertation. For reasons of focus and space, and especially as the methods used, the nature of the data I collected, and who my fieldwork included meant I had interviewed very few women who had sought work in the state, I will not delve into this issue. Rather, I will limit myself to making three points.

The first point to be made is that the state, which might be theorised as the institution to protect hijabi women from the discrimination they face in other spheres, is, to the contrary, an institution that magnifies their racialised oppression and marginalisation, indeed one which underwrites it. With this, none of my participants mentioned the police, the law, or any state institution at any point in our interviews as a source of protection, of rights, or of any form of claims-making. It was a clear sense of expulsion, and a fracturing of the relationship with the nation, where women expressed an inability to belong in a space where they needed to struggle to be considered human beings. Coloniality was here revealed to work by neutralising sources of legitimacy, of protection and of resistance, and by building on the imagined patriarchal nation to further establish its exclusion

through state apparatuses and institutions. As a Shia focus group participant from Dahieh said after a long debate about feelings of belonging and the relationship to both the nation and the state: ‘This country has rejected me. With all due love...How much can I belong to it after that?’ [Markaz focus group 1]

Second, it can be inferred that the state, through its various apparatuses, rejects the hijab and the hijabi in terms of employment, with similar trends to those encountered in the market: geography plays a role, the conservatism of the dress plays a role, and the type of state institution plays a role. For instance, a moderately hijabi woman can find employment at a state school more easily than she can in the army, for example, while one in more conservative forms of the dress has little chances in either. If, and when, she is accepted, she is accepted on the terms of the employing institution, with the senses of debt, deficiency, and threat looming large. The presence of political parties emerged as a significant element here, one that is separate and distinct from the state:

The hijabi is excluded, in her relationship with the state. Us, if we did not belong to these [political party] institutions, and had jobs, the state gives us nothing. [Khaled association focus group]

Eventually, although my participants stressed the harm they lived as a result of their exclusion from state institutions, many expressed that this exclusion ‘is not very present’ [Markaz focus group 3] and that they only feel it in those instances when they had to be in direct encounter with the state, which are not too frequent. Indeed, some of my participants stated that the state’s exclusion is mainly felt by those who attempt to, or wish to, join its institutions and that this was a small minority of hijabis. The remainder of the hijabis, I was told, lived with little interest or engagement with the state, be it in regard to the hijab or the vast majority of other issues.

In this sense, the public sphere and the family and, most importantly, the market, were vastly more wounding while the state’s absence resounded. Accordingly, a reconsideration of some key conceptualisations of the unfolding of racist politics where the state structure is central require interrogation, especially when exploring lived experiences outside of the west. Simultaneously, a reconceptualization of the role the state – an apparatus of coloniality – can play in reclaiming the rights of the colonised is raised. These, nevertheless, remain for other projects to develop.

The last point I wish to make here is that the state’s position has been undergoing challenges and contestations, mainly through the rise of Hezbollah and its newly found

growing presence in state institutions. Yet, this in itself is a very complicated question beyond this dissertation. Nevertheless, one can assert some impact. While I was conducting fieldwork, the Lebanese prime minister issued a televised call asking state institutions to stop discrimination against hijabis, especially in terms of employment. While this resonated very well with my participants, it was felt to be the beginning of a long struggle and the kind and shape of hijab, the conditions and extent of its existence, and its continued denormalization remain to be seen. Indeed, aware that Hezbollah has failed to produce the normalisation of the hijab within its Dahieh ‘stronghold’ and cognizant of escalating global Islamophobia, the scope of this resistance’s success in subverting colonial structures and discourses remains to be seen. In developing this, in chapter eight, I will explore the emerging acceptance of the hijab, and its power effects in Lebanese society within the scope of this data and dissertation.

Ultimately, in respect to the state, the hijabi-state relationship is structured by many elements beyond the dress itself: from corruption and underdevelopment to a lack of provision and a history of war and sectarianism (as explored in chapter five). When one of my Sunni participants yelled that ‘I am not politically active, I do not vote, I do not believe in this Lebanese state!’ [Mona] or when another said ‘The state is long dead’ [Tripoli focus group], I understood these within a much broader context. I would expect similar answers from many non-hijabi women, as well as many men. It was the ‘people in Tripoli’, in this example, not only the hijabis, who did not want the state. Raising extremely valuable and complex issues, these again require an analysis that is beyond the scope of this dissertation, especially with ongoing challenges to the Lebanese order with the October uprising and the country’s struggles, and will, therefore, need to be left for another project.

Based on the above discussion, what I would like to assert in this respect is that the state was not the source of protection many might expect it to be. The judiciary, the rule of law, were neutralised by coloniality through the very establishment of the Lebanese imagined nation-state, established in a way as to never be mobilizable by modernity’s Other, as explained in chapter five. Within this, the state’s oppression did not appear the key element, the most pressuring agent, in coloniality’s processes of the hijabi’s exclusion and marginalisation in this small nation of the Global South. Here, the state appeared to complement the erasure, rather than be its core. Nevertheless, it did reveal itself as a site of exclusion and marginalisation: the state itself appeared to be an apparatus of

coloniality. Eventually, while the issue went well beyond the question of the hijab, it certainly engulfed it, as state institutions, from within the logic of coloniality, joined the market, the public, and the family for erasure.

7.5. Conclusion

The coloniality of being unfolds across social life's various spheres, structuring the hijabi's lived experiences in line with her invented racialised social form, Lebanon's imagined identity, and the logic of Eurocentric hegemony. In practice, my data suggests four key spheres where coloniality's experienced erasure through a process of material and lived aggression takes place. The first is the home where coloniality ravages under various pretexts, including care and love, to preserve prestige and guarantee the family's, and the women's, interests. In the public sphere, a collectivist bottom-up aggression unfolds, mobilising everything from civil society institutions to random citizens, to preserve the country's image and push towards its colonially projected future. In the work sphere, pragmatic economic motives as well as ones relating to Lebanon and its desired image, pervade with rampant structural Islamophobia. The state, as an institutionalisation of the imagined Lebanese post-colonial nation, was produced as an additional institution of exclusion; unimaginable as a source of protection. Thinking through these four spheres and the data collected, the market is suggested as the most potent agent of coloniality and the most valued aggressor, while the state is suggested as a complement to the market's functioning in an exemplary manifestation of the neo-liberal logic (see Brown 2015). Further, across these various spheres, the same variables emerged as structuring: the geography, the conservatism of the dress and the social status attached to it. These structuring variables, in turn, revealed themselves as mechanisms of control, of discipline. In this structuring, the colonially enforced social form mobilizes different spheres in different ways and to different extents in different spaces.

Based on this, a number of techniques through which coloniality functions can be suggested, and research developing these techniques is raised as necessary. The first is the omnipresence of cumulative converging pressure through various forms of harassment and micro-aggression and directed from various social institutions, actors, and spheres. The second is systematic vulnerabilising, devaluing, and impoverishing the objectified colonised at both material and non-material levels. The third is a spatialization of difference and the establishment of invented imagined borders for cloistering across

both geographies and institutional spaces, in continuity with established colonial practices of past decades. Here, epistemic absencing meant material and lived physical concealment; a cloistering away from the public eye in negating existence. In this respect, the zone of non-being revealed itself as painfully heterogeneous and, as this data shows, its heterogeneity was even within the same (one) marker. As with the difference with the non-hijabi, a difference between the different forms of hijabi pivoting around similarity to the imagined west dictated the degree to which hijabis had a semblance of 'life'.

Eventually, coloniality reveals itself as not only a structure of power at the epistemic level but as an epistemic and material structure of power which reproduces itself by mobilising everything around the contemporary world's dwellers subsuming all difference under one logic, that of coloniality. The ultimate result is a deep wounding, a deep haemorrhaging wound, social and psychic, inflicted on the hijabi being. My literature review, especially works such as those of Deeb (2006), had prepared me for a Lebanese field where the hijab was deeply stigmatised, where hijabis were considered backward, inferior. In the field, the situation revealed itself as far more complex. Indeed, my own experience in the country would have, I thought, helped prepare me. Yet, during data collection, the experienced revealed itself as far more challenging. In fact, I came to realise that I was profoundly unprepared. Ultimately, coloniality was forcing what it constructed as a hijabi social form, and the women on whom it was forced, into the zone of non-being, towards erasure, in a manner I could not have been prepared for. Both my participants and I, as Lebanese Muslims, ultimately experienced 'a feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of nonexistence' (Fanon 2008: 106).

Chapter Eight: Dilution, a Kaleidoscopic Spectrum, and Hollowing Mummification

In chapter six, I explored how a hijabi social form, as a racialised belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess, is experienced by my participants and how it revolves around a negation of, a lack in, modernity. This social form, in chapter seven, was revealed to be greatly structuring of the hijabi's lived experiences of aggression across social spheres. In exploring these, it has become apparent that there are different forms of the hijab in Lebanon, that these different forms are aggressed to different degrees, and that the difference in the degree of aggression is contingent on the proximity or distance from the social form.

In this chapter, I will begin from these realisations to interrogate the very presence of the different forms of hijab and explore their power effects in producing the hijabi's racialisation. Particularly, I will here explore what I will term the hijab kaleidoscopic spectrum to explore how its existence and ordering around a measure of modernity functions to reproduce colonality's hierarchy of the human and its ensuing erasure. To do this, and in line with my data, I must first briefly present how my participants drew out the kaleidoscopic spectrum where modernity functions as the pivot axis. From there, I turn to interrogate the resultant dilution, its import, and its power effects.

It must be reiterated here that, in exploring these effects, I am not stipulating the effect of any given form due to its material form/shape – essentialised or claimed to hold intrinsic effects – but rather due to its situatedness within larger structures of meaning. In other words, the hijab shape, which is here classified as modern in line with its classification as modern by my participants, could play very different and opposing roles in other contexts where it is considered non-modern by hijabis. In this sense, it is the social consideration in relation to the social form that sets the power effects I am exploring. Consequently, these can differ from one context to another while the power effects themselves persist, shifting from particular shapes of dress to other shapes.

8.1. The Kaleidoscopic Spectrum

In drawing out the scene of the hijab, I will not be interested in developing a typology or a cartography of the various forms of Islamic dress present and practiced across the Lebanese space. Indeed, in the field, I rapidly realised that the multiplicity of forms, shapes, sizes, and associations in which the hijab came meant any classification or

typology was difficult, if not counter-productive. I will also not be pursuing an exploration of the reasons, motivations or underlying rationales that structure the multiplicity in hijabi forms. I will rather, be interested in the meaning and role the current scene of hijabs holds in relation to colonality as the wounding structure of the hijabi's lived experiences.

In line with what has been explored in the previous chapters, an overarching sorting, based on 'conservatism' and modernity as a distance from the invented hijabi social form, emerged and was often explicitly articulated by my participants to draw out the scene of the various forms of hijab practiced in Lebanon.⁹⁴ As Rima, a Shia participant from Beirut, and a Shia participant in a focus group in Dahieh, presented:

There is a degradation. In general, we speak of two [main] categories: very committed: abaya, then *shar'e* and the long shirt and scarf, these are the really committed where there are certain habits forced vs. the less [committed], the more modern, the one who shows the neck with pants for example and tighter clothes. And it keeps going. [Rima]

P3: What counts [is that] you have the fashion, the *shar'e* and the abaya, which is the full cover.

[Group verbal agreement]

P4: And all [different shapes] in-between. [Focus group Markaz 3]

Hijabs could be sorted, placed on a sort of spectrum of hijabi forms going from most conservative, and unmodern, to least conservative and most modern while passing by the various degrees of what appeared to be measurable modernity. On this spectrum, the abaya-wearing woman emerged at the conservative pole, while 'fashionable hijabis' wearing pants, a shirt and a headscarf (or, sometimes, a turban) emerged as the least conservative.⁹⁵ In between, a variety of shapes, forms, sizes, colours, and cuts existed. The *shar'e* was one of these, connoting a form of dress wearing a long skirt and a long covering shirt with a long loose headscarf in a mostly conservative manner.

⁹⁴ It is important to note that the differentiation my participants offered, and the ensuing conceptualisation presented here, do not suggest a straightforward linear and methodically sequential variation from a specific form into another specific form. The scene is, rather, a complex and multifaceted one composed of many elements. The movement differentiating the hijab is, ultimately, influenced by a large intricate number of variables that will remain unexplored given the limitations of this chapter and my data.

⁹⁵ Terminology here was at times contested by some participants and this analysis should not be understood to suggest a monolithic reading of how conservatism, modernity, and/or fashion are understood across Lebanon. Rather, this analysis is meant to indicate the dominant trend encountered as it offers significant insights for analysis and conceptualisation.

Thinking through the multiple dimensions of this spectrum, while also wary of falling into ideal-type fallacies and circumscribed or clear-cut categories (see Bhambra 2007) and while attempting to convey lived experiences which are never fixed, always in process, I will refer to this as a kaleidoscopic spectrum to acknowledge the complexities, multiplicities, and entanglements at play.

In discussing the relation between the modern and fashion hijabis and the growing public appearance of hijabis in Lebanon, Maha, one of the Sunni participants from Beirut, said:

The contrast is huge...that's why...maybe...like what I said...what is getting the hijab to be accepted more is that it's become diluted more. You are now wearing the clothing of casual people but with the hijab on your head. It's becoming more, like...these are hijabis and these [women] are not and the difference is that [only] one specific thing now...but if you were to see someone wearing the abaya, you're seeing someone completely...like...different. [Maha]

Casually stating that a abaya-wearing woman cannot possibly be imagined walking into, or even standing in front of, a government building, Maha explained that this very differentiation of the hijab away from its conservatism and into 'normal' dress was constitutive of a different, improved, social experience precisely because it was a decreasing in the difference and contrast between the hijabi and the modernised woman. The result, she went on to explain, was the spread and proliferation of this modern hijab, replacing the 'old hijab'. It was, in Maha's words, a question of dilution: the hijab and the hijabi needed to be diluted in Lebanese society because they were too different, too Other. It was this dilution, she explained, which formed the core of this thriving kaleidoscopic spectrum's emergence and structuring, and the resulting shifts in social experience. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will explore what this dilution is and, consequently, what its power effects are.

8.2. Hollowing Mummification: the Process of Dilution

In presenting this kaleidoscopic spectrum, participants in conservative forms of the hijab, as well as the majority of participants in more modern forms of the hijab, spoke of the modern and fashion hijabs using the language of loss and of injury. In this section, I will attempt to explore the main elements of this loss to theorise the fashion hijab and the entanglement of its flourishing with coloniality.

At the first level, this loss related to the hijab's material dimension. As a lower-class Sunni participant from a focus group in Saida and an older lower-class Shia participant living in a town in the Lebanese South concurred:

It's become the short and tight thing and all that. Plus, we need to realise it's a scarf on the head but with tight pants, showing legs, tight clothes. You look and you find no difference between the hijabi and the non-hijabi except for that [head] covering. Sometimes you have one hijabi and one not hijabi, you find that the dress of the non-hijabi is more modest than the hijabi! [Saida mosque]

Many people wear a really horrible hijab. The other day, I saw this woman wearing these super tight clothes revealing everything and I felt so hurt and ashamed. I felt like I wanted to take off the piece of cloth she had on her head. [Nisrine]

My participant here explained a burden and a pain: the hijab was no longer an Islamic dress in accordance with Islamic jurisprudential rulings or traditions. It was, rather, a dress that required the woman's body to 'be [physically] all out there' in a dress, as Bayan, an older lower-class Shia woman living in a southern town described. In Lebanon, my participants affirmed, the hijab has attempted to resemble 'normal' dress to the extent that it has contradicted its own meaning and often surpassed 'normal' dress's 'normality'.

Salma explained that, to understand this, one has to realise that the more the hijabi 'resembled' the dwellers of the zone of being, the better she would 'manage to live'. In this sense, the invented kaleidoscopic spectrum offered the potential of an improved social experience so long as the hijabi is willing to forgo conditions of her material religious code and its requirements as she strives, with an effort that must be significant, to mimic the European in the form of dress she wears and dissolved into its order:

There are types, we call it the '*mode*' hijab. The '*mode*' hijab is itself now differentiating, becoming degrees and levels. In one level there is coverage with some [attempt at] attraction, and then another level tighter and not non-baggy clothes, and then the next level...a *vusson* [tights]...It's catastrophic. Wearing black in Ashura [mourning commemoration of the prophet's grandson] but it [the dress] shows and describes [your body]. It's just physical head covering, nothing more or less. We are in a world, the world of internet, with high divorce rates, degraded movies, porn... [Tala]

For Tala, an older Shia social worker living in Dahieh, the '*mode* hijab' was continuously differentiating to become more and more distanced from the 'proper and legitimate hijab' she had described earlier in the interview. The catastrophe, Tala explained, was because the emergence of this dress and its propagation directly meant a decrease in coverage, decreased modesty, and decreased virtue in 'every detail' of what is worn. It was, for Tala

as for many of my participants, a gradual loss directly linked to ‘the world’ and ‘the age’ we are in where the family has ‘broken down’ and where the media is an ‘institution of social deprivation’. Indeed, it was a change in the hijab as to render it in harmony with this degraded age, this modern time. Eventually, the required dilution meant a decreased ascription to Islamic jurisprudential conditions of the dress’ shape as a specific manner of covering the body in line with specific Islamic religious standards of modesty and virtue so that it resembles non-hijabis, the age, and its ‘un-Islamic soul’. Eventually, in attempting to rid itself from its stigma and ease the hijabi’s subjugation and exclusion, the hijab had become an antinomy of/in its own being.

In colonisation, especially in the colonisation of culture and religion, there has long been a process whereby ‘the customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths’, as Fanon had explained, were deemed unfit and were pushed into being cleansed ‘by a dose of Christian values’ (Singh 2007: 346). With contemporary coloniality, the situation is mostly similar: Islamic religious practice was deemed unfit and required, for its cleansing, a dose of secular modernity; a dose that meant a ceding of the dress’ physical and material Islamic conditions.⁹⁶ Through this dose, it would further resemble ‘normal’ dress and, consequently, be distanced from Islamic dress to better fit in the desired secular modern society. Through this ceding, the hijabi lessened her depravity to begin a pursuit of assimilation.

The spectrum was, therefore, far from a benign cultural movement or the result of natural and innate diversification within a given society that is external to power. It was, rather, an invented and constructed spectrum with a clear orientation – away from the Islamic and toward the European – and with a clear function – negate the Islamic and affirming the European – to arrive at erasure and construct a modern secular space/place.

Accordingly, modernity’s artificial and enforced kaleidoscopic spectrum was a hierarchy: it was a manifestation of modernity’s hierarchy of the human coded by the religious practice’s dose of secularity where hijabis were ranked in accordance with their

⁹⁶ The understanding of the secular adopted here is in line with the work of Asad (2003) whereby the secular is not the withdrawal of the religious and what remains thereof, but rather the sovereign’s power of governing religion and the religious to be regulated in line with a specific modern order that controls life and being. In this respect, the secular must be understood in its entanglement with modernity, and with the nation-state that brings it about. As Mahmood (2009) frames it, the secular is ‘the rearticulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance’ (Mahmood 2009: 837).

appearance's proximity to that of the European. Here, and in line with the logic of the world's division into a zone of being and a zone of non-being, mobility, rights, and acknowledgments were offered in accordance with that appearance.⁹⁷

Speaking of the colonised, Fanon has explained that 'insofar as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated' (Fanon 2008: 224). While it was difficult for the Black man to dose his material black skin with physical European whiteness, the nature of the hijab meant that this stripping could begin with the dress, at the level of the material. And so were my participants, deeply alienated, where their dress increasingly no longer resembled itself and where the practice no longer practiced its function. Yet, there was more to this alienation.

Alongside the movement towards an erasure of the hijabi shape, dilution similarly assaulted the hijabi's Islamic behaviour and conduct whereby acceptance into the mainstream only came at the high price of the hijabi adapting to the norms, habits and social customs of (westernised, unconservative) mainstream society. Fading into the social landscape to become unrecognisable, absent, was not sufficient. One had to declare themselves modern in conduct. In this sense, being allowed to draw nearer to the zone of being meant being required to have its habitus in addition to physically resembling it. Such was what Nelly, a young Lebanese Shia hijabi who appeared on a Christian-affiliated Lebanese media station (one of the first-ever hijabis on such media platforms) specified: the hijabi which can be allowed on television was the one mainstream society felt 'looks a bit like us, in the way she dresses and acts and all that'. From Arabic accent and the mixing of Arabic with English and French to codes of physical conduct and to manners of bodily comportment, Nelly explained she not only needed to wear a different hijab but also needed to perform a different habitus. This, I came to find, was a norm:

Reem: He [employer] accepted to give her [my daughter] the job, he saw her in a hijab, he told her that religious rituals...like you might have a meeting and there is alcohol on the table, you would sit. You can't say no. She said ok.

Madawi: She was forced.

⁹⁷ It must be noted here that, in line with this dissertation's decolonial theorisation as explored in chapter three, the zones of being and non-being are not understood in binary form or as separate or distinct categories. Rather, these are co-constitutive zones in constant oscillation whose dependence is itself co-generative. Within them, and across them, heterogeneity and complexity rule. In this sense, my exploration here refers to the production of the hijabi as a dweller of the zone of non-being, and her forcing into its subjugation, as a process that itself produces and reproduces the dwellers of the zone of being and allows them to be situated within it in a manner that makes this production co-constitutively dependant on its opposite. For a fuller exploration of this, refer to Grosfoguel (2011) and Oso et al. (2018).

Reem: Forced, yes, she accepted. So this is a part of what's happening. She accepted. She has to go to places, I tell her 'look away, don't look'. [Reem and Madawi]

Reem's young Sunni engineer daughter, who wears a modern unconservative form of the hijab, had a story that resembled many stories I encountered in the field. She was offered employment at a Christian owned engineering company after many months of waiting and following-up. Yet, before being offered this employment, she was invited to meet the company manager where she was explicitly asked to consent to the norms and habits of the employing institution, to the non-Islamic lifestyle. Accepting, she entered a space to perform a habitus that was, according to the mother, 'deeply hurting' at both the individual level and that of the family. Reem further went on to explain that the daughter, who was constantly scrutinised, often complained from a sense of being monitored in her personal behaviour 'to find a mistake and then hold it against [her]'.

The situation of the hijabi who had chosen to modernise her form of dress accordingly held significant semblances to Fanon's Black man who was pushed by his society into a situation where he had to constantly 'furnish proofs of his whiteness to others and above all to himself' (Fanon 2008: 215). For my participants, this meant they had to pass 'tests' of their modernity, or of their 'light Islam', as they had to completely avoid any association which would declare them too Arabo-Islamic different, too belated, too excessive, too damnés. Fanon declared: 'I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness' (Fanon 2008: 112). Many hijabis subjecting themselves to objective examination – while already well-aware of their hijabiness – were pursuing an unavoidable (colonised) 'emancipation', as I will more fully argue later in this dissertation.

Indeed, in a movement with great parallels to immigration regimes, the hijabi was assessed, tested, and profiled to be deemed either fit or unfit, to be denied (De Genova 2016, 2017; Mayblin 2017). In a world where 'the colonized subject is always presumed guilty' (Fanon 2001: 16), such was no easy feat and itself produced wounds that were meant to become scars as the hijabi moved towards the zone of being. Such a reality, Fanon (2001) affirmed, produces an inferiority complex which, in turn, leads to neurosis. While nor my training nor my data allowed me to pursue such an affirmation, it stands probable.

Maryam, along a similar line, told of experiences across social spheres where she was expected, because she ‘didn’t wear *shar‘e* or something’, to be ‘lax with Islamic rules’. From shaking hands to prayer and to forms of leisure, she was constantly called to practices that evidently breached the Islamic but which many believed she was willing to undertake. The result, she said, was ‘disturbing’, ‘exhausting’, and ‘infuriating’. Yet, it was common. Indeed, in many interviews, participants explained how an aggressive set of social norms dictating acceptable and unacceptable practices from the modern hijabi were set in place. Conduct socially considered to be ‘very committed’ was unacceptable and, most powerfully, when women who are wearing the modern forms of the dress choose such conduct they were reprimanded and ostracised:

For sure [different forms of the hijab are different]! Because the look, for example, the *jilbab* [long uniform dress] is different from me. The *jilbab* wearing [woman], it’s impossible for someone to put their hand out to shake her hand. But I got into a situation and a fight with someone actually because he put his hand out and I said, ‘Sorry, I don’t’ so he said: ‘Put your hand on your chest!’ and yelled and stuff like that and then started saying ‘You work in [names humanitarian organisation], how do you even hold a patient?’ and things like that. [Saida NGO]

My young lower-class Sunni participant then further explained the situation had arisen because her dress did not ‘give off that idea’ of someone who is ‘fully committed’. As she was wearing a more modern form of the hijab, she was eventually expected to be more lenient with religious rulings, and to shake the man’s hand. She was expected to have been more liberated, more adapted. She had proven, she felt, that she was unbecoming of the assumption he had made of her, and of her inclusion in a civil society humanitarian organisation; of being permitted to climb toward the zone of being.

Hijabi women changing conduct in order to gain acceptance into society has been documented in the west. As explored in chapter two, a variety of practices have here been mobilised with changes in both dress and behaviour so that the hijabi’s practices may be perceived as a less ‘extreme’ form of veiling (see for example data from Almila 2014; Koura 2018). A quite similar mechanism was unfolding in Lebanon where the hijabi needed to tone down her social form through both shape and conduct which would work to evidence her modernity, her dissociation from the Arabo-Islamic difference in excess. Islamophobia in Lebanon, therefore, functioned similarly to Islamophobia in the west as the hijabi across North and South was being pushed to resemble the European, to dilute into coloniality. Dilution, ultimately, appears to refer to an ongoing assimilationist effort

under a homogenising impetus inherited from Eurocentric Empire that required the erasure of all difference to enter whiteness (see Singh 2007).

Even in the hijabi's relation to herself, I was told, the modern or fashion hijab was the antithesis of the conservative hijab. As Nibal, a young lower-class Sunni participant from the North of Lebanon explained:

I feel it [the shape of the hijab] is definitely changing in that it's now more like fashion, you know? It's like if you look at Instagram, there are these hijabi bloggers everywhere and there's this term hijabis everywhere and then...now you have people who design for hijabis...designers that call themselves, who design for hijabis, a lot of people are now...Loosening it... [Nibal]

Continuing her narration of the 'way things are now', Nibal extensively spoke of the role played by social media, as well as other media forms, in bombarding the hijabi with hijabi models, fashion, and trends to create wants and desires. The result of this, Maya, who is a young Shia upper-class participant, strongly affirmed was 'a lot of time and effort and interest' as the hijabi herself 'was changed'. Explaining that she had gone through 'a phase like that' herself, she quickly asserted that she 'fought it' and 'stopped' because 'that's not who I want to be'. Salma, who is a young middle-class Shia from the South of Lebanon, summarised this by explaining how the hijab was meant to work towards 'stopping materialism from you' but was, rather, forcing the hijabi to spend extra time 'shopping for an acceptable attire' and becoming 'obsessed' with how she looked. Here, the hijab was being commodified as a tool of consumerism and as a means through which the hijabi is invented as a consumer: capital was evidently foundational for coloniality. In this respect, the fashion hijab was further asserted as a negation of the conservative hijab as it fostered a consumerist culture and a set of interests and occupations that my participants declared foreign to their dress. With this realisation, one can uphold that a significant value of the hijab for hijabis explored in chapter two – de-commodifying woman's bodies – is aggressed through the fashion hijab.

The required dilution did not cease, it was revealed, at the shape, at the sign, but rather permeated the content, the signified, and produced the acceptable hijab with its predefined conduct and ethos: it was dilution erasing Islamic subjectivity. Wearing the less conservative hijab, the modern hijabi was required to be, and was made to be, a less Islamic subject. Soha, a young lower-class Shia living on the outskirts of Beirut, formulated this as being the creation of a hijab and a hijabi which 'had the looks of what might look like a semblance of a hijab, but was not a hijab or a hijabi at all'. As Tala, an

older Shia social worker, had put it: ‘They’re emptying the hijab, inside out, they’re hollowing it’. Diluted and emptied out, the remainder was ‘a piece of cloth on the head’, as Maha explained, in a manner which resembles Europe where mainstream Lebanese society ‘might not [even] think she is hijabi if she is in a turban. They might think it is normal, fashion or something’. Eventually, what was unfolding in Lebanon appeared to be no other than the old European policy of ‘subsume, dilute, and assimilate all particulars under the hegemony of a single particularity’ (Grosfoguel 2012a: 95).

Fanon (1994b) has theorised mummification. He explained:

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal (Fanon 1994b: 34).

In this sense, my understanding of mummification is that of a process of colonisation which creates the practices of the colonised along a different image, along an image which would render them an alterity at coloniality’s service. Discussing institutions, Fanon (1994b) explains that this creation of mummified institutions meant ‘the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor’s supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions’ (Fanon 1994b: 34). Shariati (2011) similarly outlines:

In summary, in this swamp, colonisation was struggling to consolidate, maintain and extend its roots to the depths of the society of Eastern nations, their thoughts and their tastes, by reversing their cultural and historical values as well as their moral and religious personality by way of a caricature preceding their erasure (Shariati 2011: 45, own translation).

Accordingly, I propose mummification occurring at the level of religious practice, closing religious practice and forcing it into agony, and contend that the colonisation of the hijab in Lebanon functions through the creation of mummified caricatured practices. This mummification, I would further propose, unfolded through a process of ‘emptying out’ as a systematic movement enforcing coloniality’s order by changing the practice’s shape and negating the Islamic subjectivity and conduct meant to accompany it.

Shariati (2011), in discussing imperialism and the processes through which modernisation pursues its assault on native cultures, proposed the concept of the ‘emptying of the self’

whereby ‘cultural imperialism’ pursued a systematic attempt at destroying the habits, traditions, and practices of the colonised. Fanon (1994b) had similarly adopted the concept in his objection to the colonialist push erasing the Arab when he writes: ‘Well, don't you have the impression that you are emptying him of his substance?’ (Fanon 1994b: 13) In line with this, I suggest here a conceptualisation of this emptying as a process where the practices of the colonised themselves, who are made to ‘endure’, are fractured away from their iconography, symbolism, meaning, role, and impact. Emptying is, therefore, the technique of mummifying, as it has long been.

Eventually, the dilution Maha, a young Sunni participant from Beirut, for example, referred to was the disappearance and fading of the hijab into a semblance of colonised mainstream society through its emptying mummification into a proclaimed ‘modern fashion hijab’ for colonality’s control of the real.⁹⁸ Diluted and emptied out, this hijab which ‘did not resemble itself’ in shape or in content was inconsequential: it was not Arab anymore but European-like, it was not Islamic anymore but secular-like. It was not it anymore, but a colonised being which played no role, even performed Europe without ever being it, without ever becoming it; a shadow version of a soulless self. Such was what colonial emptying of the native’s practice entailed: emptied and mummified was the modern fashion hijab’s darker side.

Yet, alongside this mummified hijab, the conservative hijab existed. Indeed, unlike colonialisms where the coloniser might establish a monopoly of institutions, micro lived religious practices hold much greater potential for survival, for persistence. Here, an additional movement unfolded. As the mummified hijab was expected to be less-Islamic, less conservative and less religious, the conservative hijab was expected to be Islamic, conservative and religious in an augmented and amplified manner. In other words, hijabis refusing to ‘ascend in their non-being’ by diluting into the coloniser’s shape and practice, as explored above, are expected to be the complete Muslim subject and the infallible idol in their lives’ various spheres in a movement which compounds social expectations of them and places them under constant scrutiny for an (unrealistic, always already failed) religious, Islamic and ethical demeanour:

⁹⁸ While there are differences in what some participants offered as modern hijab and fashion hijabs, many participants used these interchangeably or merged them into one category. Given that these difference are not of vital importance for my purposes here, and with the limitation of space, I will use this as an umbrella term to connote the non-conservative hijab.

The sister not wearing a abaya, whose hijab is sporty, like regular, the same as everyone else...you feel that the religious requirements are low, they don't wait for great things, they don't expect them. The one wearing *shar'e*, you feel they expect more. The one in the abaya, they require the maximum. As I said, she needs to be carrying the *Tahrir* [Islamic jurisprudence book] in her head and walking in the street. [It is] that much. Like my husband's family call me *shaikha*. That reflects what is demanded [of me]. So you feel if someone makes a mistake and she is wearing the lowest level of the hijab, there is no problem, it is normal. The mistake that comes out of the one wearing *shar'e*, there is something there. If the one in the abaya makes a mistake, like that's really huge, and it's on everyone [all abaya-wearing women]. [Fatima]

Shaikha is a female conjugation of the word *sheikh*, commonly used to refer to a male religious scholar in Lebanon. For Fatima, middle-aged Shia who is herself an Islamic activist living in Beirut's Shia southern suburb, by choosing to wear the abaya, she was promoted to the standing of a religious scholar with the expectations of being a religious expert and a representative of Islam anticipated to be, she clarified, versed in Islamic rulings, philosophy, and history, among others. This included, I was told, an expectation of the complete ethical subject: in terms of temperament, respect towards others, material and non-material purity, and myriad traits taken to be those of the idealised ethical being. The result of this was, my participants argued, the burdening of the conservative form of the hijab/i with a heavy weight that, in most instances, was doomed to failure.

Povinelli (2002) had identified this as a key mechanism of colonisation in her study of Australian 'multiculturalism' and its 'cunning of recognition' imposed on indigenous populations forced into an 'impossible standard' of an imagined authentic indigenous culture. In this mechanism, by enforcing this impossible standard, the colonised subject would be forced to collapse under 'impossible desires: to be this impossible object' consequently subjugating this authenticity to the politics of the colonised present (Povinelli 2002: 6). This cunning, Povinelli (2002) concludes, renders multiculturalism a mechanism of the colonial order's reproduction. Such was, I contend, the mechanism unfolding in Lebanon: burdening the hijabis with a weight under which they were doomed to collapse as they were forced to perform an impossible authenticity under colonial structures pursuing their own recognition as different.

In this sense, the coloniality of being in Lebanon worked through a double mechanism. The first, and more prominent one, was the push a la Fanon (2008) where the colonised dwelled under the gaze of the coloniser in pursuit of recognition in a condition where the colonised were 'under the obligation of matching the idea one has of them' (Fanon 1994b:

17). The second, on the other hand, was one where a specific segment of the colonised – comprising those who seemed to, in their practice, refuse this gaze – were forced into the gaze of an imagined idealised proclaimed authentic culture of their own to collapse under an impossible weight.

As a woman under a patriarchal structure and in the zone of non-being, a zone where ‘class, gender and sexual oppression as lived by the “Non-Being Other” are aggravated due to the joint articulation of such oppressions with racial oppression’ (Grosfoguel 2016: 14), the compounded strain from entangling markers of subjugation unfolding through this movement emerged as most agonising, most wounding. Soha, a young lower-class Shia who wore a conservative dress, lamented:

It’s a terrible thing [wearing the abaya]. It’s like being on a mission all the time, through behaviour and actions. It’s like the infallible whose actions are law. It’s not right for it to be this way, but that’s how society treats it. And if one [abaya-wearing woman] makes a mistake, everyone [abaya wearing] gets attacked. [Soha]

By doing this, the hijabi in conservative dress was being deliberately over-burdened in a process designed to exhaust her into self-dilution, self-erasure. It was, in this sense, a process where the hijabi functioned as a case in point to others; as cautionary signalling of the dangers ensuing from choosing the conservative hijab.

This, I was told, was a major reason why many hijabi women chose to practice a more diluted form of the dress. Nisrine, an older Shia woman living in the south of Lebanon who is a social activist and a religious preacher in the community, does not wear the abaya. In explaining why, and affirming she would have ‘loved to’, she said that the abaya is ‘perceived as more perfect’ and ‘too much of a responsibility’ for her; something she ‘cannot live up to’. Further, it was surrounded by ‘gossip and taboos’, my participants explained. Tala, in a similar vein, told of how ‘if you ride with a bus or taxi driver, you hear all the talking there: that ‘[the] abaya-wearing woman she rides with me and then gets somewhere and takes it off’, that they were ‘no good’ and that ‘people should know what they were really like, beneath it’. It was, in this sense, a ‘difficult, difficult choice’. Forced into an impossibility, such was the unavoidable outcome. Ultimately, this movement worked, it appeared, where the hijabi in a conservative hijab is pre-emptively created as an image of unbearable idealised conduct to abort the conservative form of the dress and produce those wearing it as always already a failure.

In line with this, the mistake of the conservative hijabi could never be pardoned as she was not framed as an individual whose errors – strictly ‘religious’ or otherwise – relate to their own self. Forced into an impossible display of authenticity, the conservative hijabi was treated as a reflection of the religious community, even of Islam. This was, in this sense, a movement extremely resembling that of western discourses where white violence is individualised, pathologized and excused as a discrete constrained error while Islamic violence is rendered symptomatic of the wider religion’s inherent ailments (Boulila 2019; Patel 2017).

Eventually, it became clear that erasing the hijabi in Lebanon did not require the removal, prohibition and/or outright complete rejection of any piece of clothing covering Muslim women’s hair. Rather, a specific diluted form, emptied and mummified, itself was rendered a site of an erasure stemming from two positions, two enforced gazes. In chapter nine, I will attempt to briefly discuss the role of the hijab for the hijabi which will hopefully further develop an understanding of the ensuing loss discussed here. Before doing this, I will turn to further explore the power effects of the mummified hijab and explored this modern fashion hijab’s testifying role.

8.3. The Power Effects of the Mummified Hijab: Wounds and Anomalisation

Throughout my interviews, as previously stated, my participants affirmed that the non-conservative forms of the hijab were exponentially increasing in Lebanon. In this respect, Maya explained that they have not only become common within the religious community but were also the only ones, as ‘not so different’ hijabs, which were making progress into mainstream Lebanese society. Nelly, the young Shia media presenter participant, explained that her ‘light hijab’ allowed her to use the media industry’s simple financial need, dictated by capital, through external funding she had provided and make a breakthrough. In retelling this, her explanation arrived at its conclusion: ‘we [the TV station] can have the hijabi. But this hijabi looks a bit like us, in the way she dresses and acts and all that’. As someone with a reputation of beauty, fashion, and appeal, Nelly’s resemblance to the hijabi social form was significantly diluted; hence her ability to succeed. Through her diluted dress, a dress of much elegance and apparel, the modern fashion hijabi could resemble the modern/secular/Christian, distance herself from its Other and be relatively allowed into the space of mainstream society. Once the show aired, Nelly left the channel and moved to a non-Lebanese (online) media network.

Nelly further explained that this dilution was exclusive: it was the necessary condition through which the hijabi could advance. Indeed, the more the modern and fashion hijab spread, the sterner its requirement became:

There's a problem, and I'm going to tell you this, if you watch the news, go to a company, you might [now] find hijabis, but which hijabis? Make-up, fully dressed, very elegant, me as a female I have that urge to look at them. So they're there as propaganda.... Why do they impose so many conditions on their dress? And their behaviour? [Farida]

[If the hijabi] wants to blend into a certain atmosphere, or [if] she wants to get a certain job or something, you find she decreases her hijab a bit. She has to, in our day. She just has to. [Nibal]

Explaining that this dilution had become a necessity exacerbated by a 'dispensability' greatly evocative of neoliberal capital market logic where 'if she [the hijabi] doesn't, they'll simply go for someone else', Nibal who is a young lower-class Sunni participant, lamented the enforced situation and the reality of 'their [certain hijabi's] readiness to take off [their dress]' placing all other hijabis in a 'difficult' situation.

Soha, of similar age and social class but Shia, was quick to affirm the impossibility of a abaya wearing woman 'making it into the Lebanese state' when reflecting around the image of Inaya Ezzeddine, the first Shia (modern) hijabi woman in Lebanese politics (and government):

People were really happy that a hijabi made it to the state and got that far. It was really spoken of. But, like, if she was wearing a abaya, of course it wouldn't have been possible. [Soha]

Soha's retelling immediately slipped into a qualifier: the joy experienced at this 'breakthrough' was mixed with sorrow as 'everyone knew' that she only succeeded in a specific kind of hijab and that, had she been wearing a different kind, she would not have obtained such a position. Indeed, she explained, everyone knew that she could not choose to 'move higher' into other forms of the hijab if she wanted to. Further, Soha explained, this modern image pressured hijabis as the 'old' hijab was increasingly 'forgotten'. In this sense, I would argue, a feeling of increased alienation was established where the 'very presentable' hijabi in Lebanese politics, for example, dwelled as a constant reminder of the (only) kind of hijab that could be worn if the hijabi wants to lessen her stigma, and

the (many) kinds of hijab which could not.⁹⁹ In this sense, a process of coloniality can be suggested: the very presence of this modern hijab further meant that hijabis dwell under an added burden to self-dilute, in a self-perpetuating loop. Exerting great psychological pressure and harm, wounding those hijabis who don't, and many of those who do, this further advances the loss and erasure of the Islamic practice, as discussed in the previous section.

While not negating the achievement my participants spoke of, and while acknowledging its significance and worth for their lived experience, I am here arguing that this very breakthrough was productive of coloniality's processes.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, and in addition to this added pressure, two further processes can be identified.

First, there is the (entangling) process of the hijabi's anomalisation: with the presence of this hijab, the 'contrast' between the conservative hijab and 'normal' wear is further accentuated, further affirmed in the eyes of wider society. In this respect, my participants explained how they have come to increasingly see, to 'sense', the Islamic in their dress as a problem in society, and the 'modernity' and 'fashion' in their dress as a 'solution':

For example, the full true hijab, the abaya with jilbab, we won't wear it, we don't want to commit...people might look at us as terrorists [now], so no, we won't commit to it. So we would want to be more modern. This is playing a big role influencing [what we wear], being fashionable. We have that [way of wearing it]. [Bana]

This risk of being perceived as a terrorist, Bana, a young lower-class university student from the North of Lebanon, explicitly confirmed existed within the Muslim community just as it did outside of it (see Bayrakli and Hafez 2018). This fear of the excess, I was told, permeated the Lebanese space:

And even Islamic institutions, they fear the niqabis. They have long conversations with them to know the reason of the niqab. They want to know it's from them, and not a commitment to any extremist group. This is emerging, with ISIS...they wonder why she would wear it, it raises questions, why wear this specifically. [Farida]

You might see it, the niqab in Lebanon, God help her. That complete hijab is seen as terrorism. Even me, if I object to some of these things [non-conservative

⁹⁹ While I did not interview Inaya Ezzeddine, and while these statements remain hypothetical especially given the nature of my fieldwork, I contend that their spread among participants suffices to indicate the trends I will argue for here.

¹⁰⁰ Surely, these must be understood alongside other elements which have allowed the modern hijab's advance in mainstream Lebanese society, including pressure from the Muslim community, particularly that of hijabi women themselves, in addition to shifting demographics and geopolitics.

Lebanese cultural practices], they immediately call me ISIS. It's happened so many times. [Maha]

As Farida, who is a middle-aged lower class Sunni, lamented the degree to which coloniality had established its reality, the presence of the modern forms of the hijab's role became further evidenced: if the hijab was a practice of faith which could be met in a 'normal' form of dress, the choice of an 'extreme' shape was necessarily cause for concern. Indeed, many participants had explained that people constantly used a discourse of 'why this hijab when you have that modern hijab as an option'.

Accordingly, the presence of this modern form of the hijab is constitutive of the conservative hijab's inferiorisation and stigmatisation in a manner highly similar to the invention of good (secularised, westernised) Muslims to be opposed to bad Muslims (see Maira 2009). Good Muslims were invited to join, required to join, the battle against bad Muslims, to exorcise Islam (Mamdani 2004). It is not impossible to suggest similar movement in Lebanon, albeit my data only weakly indicates such an unfolding and any assertion here would require further research.

The appearance of this dress, it can nevertheless be argued from my participants' position, co-constitutes the complete abjection of the conservative forms of the hijab, such as the niqab, in wider Lebanese society rather than being a synthesis of modernity and Islam as suggested in the literature (for example, see Harb and Deeb (2013) on Beirut, Abaza (2006) on Cairo and Houston (2001) on Istanbul). Consistently circumscribing the zone of being's qualities and the zone of non-being's characteristics, this was ultimately productive of the gazes discussed in the previous section, and underwriting of the experiences discussed in the previous chapters.

In this sense, Inaya Ezzedine, for example, is an instance of the Lebanese state displaying a dweller of non-being adjoining its border as an act of modernity's hegemony where Lebanese politics 'assimilates' this specific form of the hijab to subsume it under modernity and further establish the anomalisation of the conservative forms of the dress: a disciplinary move to demonstrate what kinds of hijab in their Arabo-Islamic excess will not be tolerated and to create the possibility and the conditions of toleration – rather than acceptance – under the hegemony of coloniality. In this, colonising recognition unfolds 'through the production of colonised subjects' (Balaton-Chrimes and Stead 2017: 8).

Nelly, in a similar vein, is the instance of the same process in Lebanese media and cultural scene where a television appearance reproduced a specific normativity and chosen ideal thereby reaffirming the anomaly of the abject difference further sedimented in the conservative hijab. Consequently, this mummified hijab is a colonised being that reproduced an inferiority and stood as a powerful symbol declaring what the superior is and what the inferior was and remains. Thus, I assert, a crucial component in the mixed feelings of joy and sorrow amongst participants.

There is, additionally, a third movement: fieldwork indicated that this modern European-like hijab further functions to socially legitimise the discrimination against its opposite while it allows mainstream society to proclaim itself as increasingly inclusive. Here, as my participants explained, the few places where (European-like) hijabis are allowed to dwell celebrate themselves as beacons of acceptance and render any accusation against their exclusionary practices unimaginable. They are not excluding of Islamic dress, but are rather the pioneers of its acceptance, challenging Lebanese mainstream society's outright rejection. Pioneers of inclusion could not be racist xenophobes. Yet, under modernity and by (only) accepting the modern hijab, they are reproducing the complete rejection of the conservative one and further enshrining its colonial difference, legitimising its ostracization and perpetuating the ensuing wound as they push for the European-like hijab.

In the presence of this 'alternative', of this form of Islamic dress which could relatively blend with a modern society, the complete ostracization of the conservative hijab, therefore, becomes justified and legitimate: the presence of the European-like hijab in (relative) proximity to the zone of being legitimises the drowning of all other forms of the hijab deep into the zone of non-being as they are increasingly anomalised. The ultimate result is the complete inability of the hijabi who refuses to modernise to make accusations or claims, her complete subalternity, the impossibility of her position (See Sayyid 2014).

What remains of the hijab, therefore, remains as a testament of what must be defeated and what must be born. In this sense, it is a remainder which must always remain, which serves and creates, which erases in its existence, in its proliferation, as structures of oppression become concealed in a move greatly similar to that of post-racial and 'anti-racist' claims (see Ahmed 2012; Lentin 2011).

While fashion hijabs have been recorded to reproduce exclusions among hijabis within Muslim communities (see, for example, Robinson 2015), an analysis of the fashion hijab's power effect within wider society, especially in the Arab world, appears missing from the literature. While this work only explores this question from the perspective of the hijabis themselves, its findings highlight the need for further research in this area: research that centres coloniality and the processes this chapter has attempted to make visible.

Before closing, a final realisation must be made explicit. Describing the condition of the Negro, Fanon (2008) writes:

The Negro's behavior makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis. In the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. (Fanon 2008: 43)

In this explanation, it is useful to draw out two key characteristics of the colonised. The first is an obsessive effort where the Negro must consistently, fanatically, strive and labour to be recognised. The second is that of a movement away from his individuality toward an erasure of his own self. And so it was with the Lebanese hijabi, as I have explained throughout this chapter. These characteristics, Fanon (2008) explains, are ultimately structured by the Negro's condition as pursuing whiteness yet being, as a Negro, inherently incapable of attaining it. This cycle, he goes on to affirm, is at the core of the Negro's neurosis. The point to be made here, before closing, is that despite the movements alluded to throughout this chapter, the impossibility of whiteness persisted for the mummified hijab as, ultimately, even the most modernised hijab never grants entry into Lebanese society – in those space where such entry is granted at all – as an equal, does not grant assimilation and, in most instances, grants nothing. While this must be nuanced, and while it applied to different extents depending on a number of variables (including those discussed in chapter seven), I here contend that the hijabi, in other words, is never admitted into the zone of being but is rather allowed to climb the hierarchy within the zone of non-being, never to leave it and reproducing the oppression on which the very existence of the zone stands. Participants from across the sectarian, age, and class divides asserted:

Even if the girl is hijabi presentable, neat, chic, nice looking and all, but no, that's it. [If she is] Hijabi [she] is looked at as closed. [She remains] different from someone who has done her hair and has it loose. That [will always be] the more prestigious [state]. [Maryam]

If you go to Christian regions, even if you're modern and wearing tight clothes and all that, you'd still feel a [different] thing. [Iman focus group]

Eventually if one has a turban and one a hijab like me, they are both not represented [in the state]. As long as there is a piece of cloth on the head, she won't be represented. [Marah]

Nelly indeed explains this when she describes her experiences at the TV station and across related spaces; from her interactions with co-workers to her perception even by security guards as 'something *waw*, a scarecrow'. The Negro's impossibility of whiteness was not, it appeared, due to material or biological inevitability.

A score of anti-colonial thinkers have realised the 'impossibility of assimilation' and equality among the coloniser and the colonised where 'assimilation/integration essentially means two things: first, that by it the white man means "be like me"; second, that the white man is convinced that the black man can never be as good as he is' (Singh 2007: 345). The situation of the hijabi women is no different. In striving for assimilation, the hijabi dress was diluted. Yet, the hijabi, any hijabi, can never be the same, can never be an equal. She is, rather, left in a diluted hollowed mummified caricatured dress to live her inferiority, to create and constitute the subordination and wounding I have explored in the previous chapters. Coloniality, it ultimately appeared, mobilised hijabis.¹⁰¹

8.4. Conclusion

Writing about the Black man arriving in France, Fanon (2008) explains his dilemma as one where he strives to become white: 'confronted by the dilemma turn white or disappear' (Fanon 2008: xxi). To do this, much has to change in the Black man, from his language and mode of speech to his bodily comportment and norms. The hijabi expressed a very similar dilemma: turn modern or disappear. It unfolded, as I have attempted to argue in this chapter, by a turn less Islam, in both shape and conduct, and turn to more 'mainstream'. Somewhat unlike the Negro, it was both material shape and conduct that

¹⁰¹ It is important to explicitly note here that this analysis reveals how the different forms of the hijab function to produce different forms of hijabi subjectivity and how this is greatly structured by the social expectations enforced under modernity/coloniality. In this respect, the bodies of women are here again found to be the sites of both the formation and the representation of the different levels of religiosity within the public and social realms. This understanding complexifies the analysis of the hijab as a performative act forming a specific form of subject by inquiring about the specific form of this hijab and evidencing how such performativity is dependent on multiple factors revolving around the social meaning attached to a specific form of dress in a given socio-historical context. The centrality of lived experiences is here evidenced, and modernity's sexism and patriarchy whereby these experiences are not paralleled for men is further showcased. See, in this respect, Baldi (2018), Yuval-Davis (2006) and Mahmood (2012).

were to be ceded here. The hijabi, I was told, was forced to oblige. Under constant scrutiny, and perpetually threatened, a diluted modern fashion hijab was established: an emptied hollowed caricature. The resulting dress, eventually, serves the coloniser by being inert in its role in the practicing woman's life. With this, hijabis are to cede to the colonial order by being present as an emblem of the hierarchy of the human upon which the hijabi is to be positioned as she is defined without appeal as a threatening belated difference. Further, by testifying against the hijabi in rendering her an extreme excess, this mummified hijab functioned to pressure hijabis into self-dilution as those who refused were increasingly anomalised and a justification of exclusion was produced. The mummified hijab ultimately produced and reproduced coloniality's order and the racialisation of the hijabi. Such is what I have attempted to argue in this chapter to visibilise modernity's processes of racialising erasure.

It must be stressed that the analysis presented here, emerging from the data my hijabi participants shared, does not mean a normative judgment or value statement regarding the presence of the modern fashion hijab, particularly given the evident usefulness it offers hijabis. Rather, it is an argument that this is an ambivalent phenomenon imbricated in the production and reproduction of coloniality. The ultimate normative judgment to be made here remains for the hijabis themselves to make.

In chapter two, I had touched on the question of the fashion hijab and echoed the trends and frameworks through which it has been analysed. There, I explained how the more critical corpus of literature depicts the emergence of hijabi fashion and its proliferation as an 'attempt to modernize the form of a modest style while maintaining the essence of traditional and cultural views' by offering a 'refreshing contemporary feeling of elegance and vitality', where hijabis blend 'fashion with their Islamic faith' (Hassan and Harun 2016: 477; Bouvier 2016; Ghani 2011; Gökariksel and Secor 2010; Wilson 2015). I have here proposed a radically different reading of the fashion hijab. Through it, the concealment of coloniality can be undone and the resultant losses can be declared to counter reductionist dominant trends loaded with an eclipse of power and a focus on the Global North from a Eurocentric position. In the following chapter, exploring the meaning of the dress for the hijabi woman, I hope the significance of this will be further underscored.

Chapter Nine: From Colonised *Difa'* to Delinked Practice

I did not ask participants to argue for their hijab. I did not challenge their dress or seek to explore how they countered such a challenge. Yet, as I conducted fieldwork, participants consistently argued to (re)claim the legitimacy of the hijab in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways, through what appeared to be mastered narratives comprising a variety of different elements. This chapter will argue that this resistance/defence, as my participants called it in Arabic, using the word *difa'*, is itself largely structured by coloniality and, consequently, reproduces the colonial order. In this sense, it will argue that much of the colonised's resistance is itself a process of coloniality's establishment. In the second section of the chapter, I will turn to explore a more delinked form of resistance identified during fieldwork to close this dissertation.

9.1. *Difa'* under Coloniality

Throughout fieldwork, my participants referred to their need to defend, and defended, their hijab with practices revolving around discourses of universality and Christianity, of secularism, of science, and of anti-patriarchy. Often, this was referred to as *difa'*, and a duty, to resist against their racialisation along the hierarchy of the human. *Difa'* is an Arabic word meaning defence. It generally connotes a form of action that is taken as a reaction to a particular attack or assault, and is often used to refer to military defence against military aggression. Further, it has held associations with the defence of religion and the religious community, both militarily and non-militarily, in Lebanon over the past few decades. Its usage to defend the hijab is therefore significantly telling. The following sub-sections will accordingly explore the formulation of and drawing on these discourses in the quest to resist colonising subjugation.

It must be noted here that this presentation emerges from data collected in a data-collection setting. While the interlocutor was often myself, I hold that these trends are significantly representative of standard and common conversations circulating in Lebanese society today. This is based both on my interviews (where participants identified these as reflective of conversations they have in their daily life) and my more general observations in the field before, during, and after fieldwork. Yet, ultimately, this does not mean that the entirety of the relevant discourses, or a fully developed conceptualisation of them, is presented here. Rather, I will focus on elements and what I

managed to collect and collate to draw out a sketch in pursuit of this dissertation's exploration.

9.1.1. A Parochial Universality

As my participants sought to reclaim their hijab from their assailants, they aimed at the core of their racialised social form and argued that the dress could not be encompassed under the mark of a culturally specific Arab or Islamic object in the contemporary world. Instead, the hijab was drawn out as a particular manifestation of a universal urge, 'beyond differences'. As my Shia participants in a focus group in Dahieh, and Naila, a young upper-class Shia, specified:

A1: I would like to point a note that this [the hijab] is not an Islamic concept. This is a concept of the mind and logic...

A3: I see this heavily related to *fitra* [nature]. God made it in the human *fitra* [nature]: modesty. And this is something we do: we either develop it or it dies out. Otherwise, it is a question, chastity for any girl, is from *fitra* [nature], when there are the right conditions and pedagogy, the girl will accept the dress with all enthusiasm because it is part of her *fitra* [nature]. That is the deal.

[Group approval by nodding and affirmative words]

[Markaz focus group]

The hijab didn't start with Islam, and it is modesty...Now the hijab might not be the typical person covering their hair. It could be any modesty. In other religions, they don't wear this, but they wear an equivalent to the hijab, so that would be the hijab for them...The hijab didn't come up yesterday, it has its roots, which go back long before Islam. [Naila]

The hijab was henceforth rendered an abstraction which manifests the same core differently in different geographies, religions, cultural settings, and times. The hijab was no longer a signifier for the specific signified of Islamic dress but was rather the signifier of any form of dress which manifests the drive towards morality, both in the self of the wearer (as an act of self-formation) as in society (as a sign of public piety). It was, in this sense, redefined as a question of human morality, away from the stigma of Islam and Arab, as one form of material incarnation of a set of 'values in all communities, for all groups and religions', as Tala, an older lower-class Shia participant elucidated. The result was a remarkable 'inclusive' definition of the hijab, as one among many, all to be accepted.

This universality, as expressed in the quotes above and as echoed in many others, was also presented as having a clear basis: it was rooted in the 'mind and logic'. Further, in a most striking move, one of my participants (in the Abbasiye focus group) specifically

traced this to Greece and claimed that covering dress was a ‘thing of civilisation’: civility, explicitly associated with Greece, required covering as it drew the human away from the (uncovered, naked) animal, as my participants explained. The group of young, middle-aged and older Shia women from the South, met this with great approval and affirmed that the hijab was a ‘normal and natural’ component of ‘civilisation’. In other words, the claim was that of the hijab as the expression of an innate human urge towards civilisation, and that this urge and this expression were ‘reasonable’ and ‘logical’. Doing this, eventually, participants were drawing on the liberal (exclusionary) notion of universalism and its roots in Greek democracy, arguing for the ‘inclusion’ of the hijab in a Eurocentric universalism (see Heit 2006; Shohat and Stam 1994: chapter 2).

My participants further presented the hijab as a phenomenon of particular relevance and prominence ‘across all religions’. Insisting that the hijab was ‘something which had to do with people who want to be close to God’, a key focus was on rendering the hijab a nexus of meeting for the ‘various religions of the world’, as Nelly, a young Shia participant, said. By doing this, my participants were making significant strides, of great relevance in the Lebanese space, for the hijab’s legitimisation.

Yet, it was particularly noteworthy how, in developing these arguments, Christian beliefs and practices held a central position.¹⁰² Of clear and evident direct relevance to the (colonial) invention of difference within Lebanon given the country’s history as well as contemporary scene as explained in chapter five, participants claimed that had Christians been practicing their religion ‘no one would be able to distinguish us from each other, she would be a hijabi too’, as Sara, a middle-class Sunni, put it. With Christians, it was not only the same universalised core but the hijab was also the same material manifestation. Bayan, an older Shia lower-class woman, argued:

Christians are completely different. [They have a] different culture and different everything. But the hijab, they wear a hijab too, for them they can’t enter a church without a hijab, but the practice is lax and no one watches over this. But it feels like it’s a different country for Christians. [Bayan]

¹⁰² While some interviewees did mention Jewish practices, this was always presented as ‘Christian and Jewish’, never Jewish alone, and remained secondary, with no other religious system mentioned. The exploration of this, and the construction of a Judeo-Christian tradition and its entanglement with modernity, is beyond my scope in this dissertation. For an interesting exploration of the ‘Judeo-Christian’ refer to Nathan and Topolski (2016).

In thinking through this, I better understood my participants repeatedly urging others to understand that many of their behaviours, such as not frequenting places where alcohol was served, are ‘not for religious reasons, not necessarily’ [Salma]. If Christians are being said to wear the hijab, they cannot be said to refuse places that serve alcohol. Therefore, they needed to instil a separation between the hijab and other behaviours which come with it, behaviours which were less problematic, carrying less social significance and playing a smaller role in the production of social difference. My participants’ *difa* appeared quite elaborate.

Further, this was rarely a claim that the hijab *was* historically practiced by Christians. Rather, the claim consistently focused on the fact that the hijab still *is* practiced. Here, participants powerfully circumvented the claim that they resembled historical Christianity, countering their construction as a belatedness. In doing this, both Christian nuns and ‘laywomen’ on Sunday mass and on religious occasions, especially in rural regions, were offered as key demonstrative examples. While El Guindi (1981), for example, had long argued that the ‘veil’ of the Muslim is different from the veil of the Christian nun since the Islamic dress does not entail the seclusion of women from worldly life and sexuality, for example, my participants advocated in the reverse while, simultaneously, advocating for the entry into worldly life and sexuality, for example.

Eventually, it appeared that participants were developing a carefully thought-out argument of overlap and resemblance with Christians who, *still*, wear the hijab. They were clearly conscious of modernity’s linear time.

If [the Christian nun] has pretty hair or something, she would be showing beauty [by showing her hair]. They would summarise it as all wanting to be the same. That I do not want to appear as a woman. Amongst women! In the covenant they are all sisters, all sisters, this is a concept of the mind, of *sitr* and chastity. We apply it in Islam [in the hijab].

A4: Lady Mary peace be upon her how is she portrayed? Always with her head covered! [Makaz focus group 2]

...for Christians, Our lady Mary was covered, there isn’t one image of her not covered. Even when they enter the church. It’s not just a Muslim thing. It wasn’t us Islam that came up with it. To the contrary! It’s everyone! [Marah]

Through these quotes, retrieved from Marah, a young Sunni middle-class participant, and a focus group with Shia participants, one further notes that Christianity is not (only) presented as the sole example of universality but that it was rather an example perceived to hold sufficient legitimacy to claim universality. Explaining how Christians practiced

and valued the headscarf, my participants found it easy to move to an argument of *everyone* practicing the hijab, at least ‘everyone civilised that is’ as Ghada, an older lower-class Shia woman living in the South nuanced. In other words, the Christian was not (only) the relevant example but was a key nexus, a logical basis, upon which the claim for the universal stood. If Fanon’s Black man could never become white, hijabi women were claiming the hijab to be universal-Christian, modern.

With this, I was told, the objection to the hijab could not be legitimately made and the hijab could no longer be perceived as a threat. It could, further, no longer be classified as different, as inferior, as uncivil, or as backward. In this sense, an (alternative) Lebanese identity, a collective Lebanese identity drawing on Islam and Christianity as oneness and on a universal normative ‘civility’, appeared to be proposed.

Surely useful in advancing their cause, particularly given the nature of coloniality’s order as well as the standard imagined identity of Lebanon and that of many interlocutors they engaged, the point I wish to make here is that this manoeuvre was nonetheless complicit in the reproduction of coloniality as it accepted its epistemic space and worked from within it, thereby reproducing its categories, hierarchies, and constructs – from anthropocentrism to the construction of barbarians and savages – leaving its disavowed in its disavowal, its delegitimised in its illegitimacy.

While this was allowing participants to ease their marker, it involved a movement towards recognition, assimilation, through a claim of commonality. Assimilation can here be understood, as defined by Shariati (2006), as the long term movement of the colonised to ‘distance oneself from all personal and social or national characteristics in order to identify with the other to overcome one’s inferiority and enjoy the feeling of honour and superiority sensed in the other’ (Shariati 2006: 3). Ultimately, the claim to universality here was a specific claim to the mind and logic over experience and the lived, to a Greek-based civility, to a semblance of Christianity: It was a ‘universal narrative’ which was centred in Europe (see Mignolo 2012).

In this respect, this strategy of resistance was not reclaiming the label of the Arab or the Islamic, but was rather manoeuvring around that label of inferiority to retrieve the wearing of the hijab, dissociated from the larger set of beliefs, practices, and formations of which it was a part. By doing this, my participants had begun the hijab’s reduction and

its transformation into a surface (common) cultural artefact which floated with no identity, outside of power, with no power.

The argument I am making here is that this *difa*‘, by centring the (colonised) mind and logic and by pivoting civility, was speaking of the universal which seemed to be defined as the Eurocentric. The result is the necessary reproduction of the colonial order in Lebanon, as well as the reproduction of the underlying principles upon which this order stands: this resistance reveals itself as a reproducer of wider colonial structures beyond the colonality of dress.

It was evidenced colonisation of epistemologies with a complete inability to escape the language, categories, and thinking of Eurocentric liberalism, the man of the Greek demos (Mignolo 2002). Accordingly, while the presence and emergence of the hijab might be claimed a sign of the ostensible failure of colonialism and colonality in Lebanon, my data grates against this and suggest that the subsumption of resistance into liberal language demonstrates the success of the project of epistemological colonisation, even its colonising reproduction by that who is claimed to be its antithesis.

I must stress here that my interest is not in the content of the claims being advanced by my participants. Nor am I pursuing a normative judgment of these attempts. Rather, I am seeking an exploration of the effects of my participants’ form of *difa*‘, the meaning of the act, and its power effects, as I attempt to analyse what it reveals regarding the conditions under which they dwell, regarding colonality’s processes of erasure. In this, my argument is that the mode of resistance adopted in claiming the hijab as universal where Christianity holds a central position reproduces the hegemony of colonality as it attempts to subvert its effect, dwelling under the colonality of epistemologies and knowledge. This does not render such attempts illegitimate. Such a conclusion is beyond my right to make.

9.1.2. A Parochial Secularism

In chapter three, I presented colonality as both a ‘Christian’ and a secular project. I had not come to that theorisation through theory. I had, rather, come to that theorisation when

my participants insisted their oppression was structured by both secularism in Lebanon and, concurrently, the country's Christian identity.¹⁰³

Throughout fieldwork, the secular in Lebanon presented itself, as experienced by my participants, as a marginalising apparatus where the hijab is met with 'no respect', a flagrant 'unfair' violation 'of rights', as Nourhan, a young Shia participant from Dahieh objected and as a key component in the structure of power pushing for the hijab's erasure:

When I first went to work, and then, sorry, but it's at the border of Dahieh, [where] my work [is], these people had some seriously weird ideas. I would get surprised: are there people who still think this way? They think the hijab should not even exist, especially the secular atheists. I am dressed like this, consider I am just wearing this, apologies it's bothering you so much Mr secular. But I am dressed like this! If you remember that thing last year with the AUB professor. Like just stop. That simple. It's like being so bothered by a dotted shirt. Stop. This is something personal between the wearer and God only...It's just that! [Naila]

In making her argument, Naila, a young upper-class Shia, was objecting to the secular rejection of her dress by claiming it a private matter, the equivalent of a 'dotted shirt', and something which should be unproblematic. In the previous section, I presented the attempt to draw out the hijab as a not-only-Islamic practice in the pursuit of a legitimisation of the non-Christian dress. In the pursuit of this same legitimisation of the religious, i.e. non-secular, dress my participants seemed to perform a similar move: secularising the hijab. In doing this, my participants did not reject secularism or attempt to reclaim a different form of social order whereby they can practice their dress. Rather, they seemed to accept the secular as they argued for a de-problematisation of the hijab under it. As Maha, a young Sunni participant, exclaimed:

Mind you, I understand it [secularism] as accepting everyone, that is how I understand it and see [it]. That someone wants to speak secularism, they should accept the Muslim and the Christian and the Jew, each in his own particular things. That is how I understand it, and that is how I am secular. But they understand it differently, that we [hijabis] are breaking secularism in Lebanon. Says who? [Maha]

The English word itself, the French word of *Laïcité* or, at times, the Arabic translation of *'Ilmani*, were used while arguing that a secular order did not necessitate the current state of exclusions. In inquiring about specificities, or about how they defined the term, answers consistently revolved around a separation between religion and state, religion

¹⁰³ A number of my participants had explicitly stated that secularism in Lebanon is Christian, giving examples of secular institutions observing the Christian calendar and Christian holidays (but not Muslim holidays). A fuller exploration of this, while extremely valuable, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

and politics and/or religion and ‘public life’. Secularism was, it appeared, the depoliticization of religion, its privatisation and its removal from the helm of governance. This was, I was told, the state where the plural of beliefs and belongings can coexist without either one infringing on the other. Secularism was therefore offered as the guarantee of equality, rights, and a proper citizen-state interaction; as the means through which Lebanon’s religious plurality could thrive. Nadine, a young Sunni from Beirut, and Nelly, a young Shia, explained:

[Lebanon] is trying to go towards secularism, now you have a very big generation in Lebanon, my age and less, like from 35 and less, people going not to communism but to secularism and secularism does not contradict with religion. It has become part of you. Today you can be secular and go to the mosque and pray. What stops you? Secular in terms of rights of the state, of citizen, of equality and all that. But I want to be religious, go to the mosque and pray. [Nelly]

Because I feel even secular people...like secular people should be accepting of all people, like that is the secular ideal...But the secular in Lebanon is someone who fights religion, not someone who accepts it and wants it separate from the state, someone who fights it. [Nadine]

Ultimately, the claim was that the secular did not contradict with the hijab and that the hijab should not be problematised under a secular state where religion is depoliticised and privatised. In making this argument, some of my participants (although not all of them) stated that they agreed with secularism’s broad postulates and that they believed that religion should only be practiced in the home, ‘between the person and their God’. Yet, they said, ‘what can I do with this hijab? It’s just the way the hijab is, I have to wear it, it doesn’t work for it to be done only in the home. That shouldn’t be such a big problem, though, should it?!’ [Maha]. In this, the hijab’s public nature and its presence in the social world were presented as necessities, realities, which the hijabi who wished to commit to her religious practice lived under.

Much of my participants’ conceptualisation and discourse was, based on the manner in which these arguments were formulated, and in which secularism was defined, heavily structured by a Eurocentric enlightenment-based debate around religion and its place in a democratic social order.¹⁰⁴ More specifically, much of my participants’ definition of

¹⁰⁴ For an exploration of how the secular narrative is foundational for modernity/coloniality refer to Mignolo (2011c). Also refer to Yountae (2017), Maldonado-Torres (2008) and Carrasco Miró (2020) for a good exploration of the entanglement of the secular with coloniality and a theoretical framing and basis for secularism’s colonial entanglements and effects. Also refer to Asad (2003) for a critical reflection around ‘the secular’ and secularism and their entanglement with the modern and its institutions.

secularism heavily drew on, specifically, French *Laïcité*, as Lebanon's coloniser, as they distanced themselves from the threatening Islamic.

In France and in Lebanon, this was evidently not the secularism practiced by mainstream society. Ghada, an older Shia lower-class hijabi, was one of my participants who explicitly addressed the discrepancy: a distinction between an imagined ideal form of secularism to the secularism exercised was needed as she explained that secular people in Lebanon are not really 'democratic', 'accepting' or 'welcoming' of others but rather have a 'problem with religion' and want its 'removal'. Therefore, a clear separation between the ideal and the practice was established, as Ghada then drew on that ideal to argue for the redefined secularism outlined above.

In the case of France, where similar exclusionary applications of secularism unfolded, many participants straightforwardly offered the case as an example of 'bad secularism'. Sara, who is young middle-class Sunni, elaborated:

...like for example, the example of France. Because you had something which was focused on having all the state be secular or liberal the hijabi was no longer allowed, like being on the beach. This is their own perception of what is secular. They invented something....they defined the secular. But look at someone else and they would tell you that liberal and secular means that the person has the right to do what they want and the hijabi can be secular for them. So for me, this is what I follow more. Like even within one word and term, secular, you have viewpoints.
[Sara]

This act of condemning the French secular and of claiming it illegitimate might be taken to be a potent instance of the colonised speaking back. Yet, as I examined the few cases where such acts of speaking back were found, two key assumptions appeared uncontested. The first was that the 'good secularism' hijabi women were advancing itself originated in Europe. Here, the claim was that of surprise that Europe was practicing 'bad secularism': as secularism 'is Europe's...they should be accepting', as Fadia, an older lower-class Sunni objected. In other words, the assumption was that this was a model 'discovered' in and by Europe, albeit currently ill-applied in *some* European countries. The second assumption, on the other hand, was that Europe had, despite its bad secularism as applied to Islam, reached an advanced stage in that good secularism in managing other forms of difference. While political reasons, many of my participants claimed, rendered Islam a subject of 'bad secularism', 'good secularism' was common across the west and was evidenced by, for example, the plurality found in Europe's cosmopolitan cities. Further, many participants further claimed that secularism was also the only way globally with the

advent of globalisation and communication where ‘secularism allows everyone to co-exist’. Secularism seemed, at least for many of my participants, to be the ultimate, inevitable, European global horizon. The act of speaking back revealed itself as an act of speaking from within coloniality’s epistemic territory.

When I asked participants if they were making this argument because they felt this was the best option they had to change the status quo in Lebanon, or if it was their belief, most affirmed that such was their belief. A few, on the other hand, stated that they would have preferred had a ‘religious state’ been possible but, given Lebanon’s situation, a secular state was the only ‘realistic option’. This was further explained with the inability of expressing any alternative in mainstream society. A Sunni school-teacher participant lamented:

If I say I want an Islamic state, then people will go mad in mainstream society and they will start calling me names...like backward, crazy...things like that. You can’t say this in Lebanon, in Beirut for example, you can’t even think it. [Iman focus group]

Evidently, the claim that a religious (Islamic) alternative to the secular was an option existed outside of the realm of intelligibility in mainstream Lebanese society. The possibility that it would provide for non-Muslims was even more inconceivable, it appeared. Islam’s, and religion’s, epistemic and socio-political inferiorisation eventually went unchallenged, even reproduced as the secular was presented as the necessary horizon.

This was, therefore, the perceived inevitability of the (European, parochial) secular and the attempt to salvage a singular element of a now fragmented Islamic practice so as to render it enunciable, imaginable, under the modern. Yet, as Fanon had made quite clear, ‘culture must be lived, and cannot be fragmented. It cannot be had piecemeal’ (Fanon 1994a: 41). In this sense, by making room for their Islamic practice dissociated from its epistemological and ontological wider order and situated under a secular regime, my participants’ attempt might offer advances towards salvaging the surface materiality of the dress, but appears incapable of advancing its continued existence as an element within a non-western ‘culture’ and, indeed, a non-western cosmology. It was not, eventually, the claiming of the term so as to allow *their being* to exist under a world of coloniality. The ensuing result would be the survival of the garment in shape, but its annihilation, and theirs, in content.

Further, throughout, religion's, Islam's, disavowal was left unscathed. In parallel, the avowal of Europe was reproduced. This was, therefore, the salvaging of a hijab which would/could no longer be the hijab: instead of being an element within the Islamic system (as I will argue later in this chapter), it becomes the expression of a privatised individualised practice of a 'personal faith'. It could not, under such a system, attain its *telos* as it remains confined to a subordinate position, subject to the gazes discussed in chapter eight. It becomes, in due course, a secularised practice which can only be a colonised practice, if it is at all.

Accordingly, the argument I wish to make here is that by adopting the secular as a term, and by accepting its European claimed postulates and framing, from privatising religion to depoliticising it and from its European origins to its global coming, and aware that the secular can only be a part of a larger structure which includes, for example, the liberal, and, ultimately, the colonial, my participants were reproducing the structure underpinning their exclusion and were, eventually, contributing to the reproduction of coloniality.

The colonised, I felt, could not speak as, ultimately, their very acts of *difa* 'not only radically paralysed and erased the hijab beyond being a material inactive dress but also reaffirmed coloniality: from the offered and accepted secular, to reproducing Europe as both centre and horizon, to leaving the disavowal of the non-European (Islamic) as firm as ever. In fighting for the singular hijab, the wider structure of coloniality was being reproduced.

9.1.3. Modern Science

During an interview mid-way through the fieldwork, I was offered a most intriguing piece of knowledge: the hijab is attacked for being 'unhealthy'. Although captivating, I did not, at the time, give this much attention. Yet, as fieldwork progressed, it appeared that a particular line of argumentation against the hijab in Lebanese society was its health risks: by covering the hair and so much of the body, the woman was preventing her body from exposure to sunlight, damaging both skin and hair, even putting her immune system at risk. The hijab was not accepted, this argument went on, because it went against 'scientifically proven' health risks. Here, it appeared that details of how sunlight was essential for a healthy body, about vitamins, about the influence of cloth on the skin, among other argumentations, were central to the hijab's expulsion.

Nisrine, an older Shia woman living in a village to the South of Lebanon, for example, told me how people constantly talk about the hijab's 'according to them scientific bad influence on the head', and how the hijab is claimed to 'cause headaches and migraines', to argue for the banality of such claims and to say that, if a health concern emerged, then the kind of hijab which is being worn can be changed without having to give up the entire dress. Indeed, revealing these arguments to me, my interviewees were always swift in presenting their *difa*, their counter-arguments. In the Saida focus group with young and older Sunni participants, the debate unfolded:

S2: And many [people] say that the hijab causes hair fall and things like that. For your information, hair fall does not, it does not, happen because of the hijab! To begin with, you are not hijabi 24 hours. This is one. And two, the sun rays, it is harmful more than useful. Modern science has proven that hair fall is due to a loss of vitamin D, and iron. You can get this from supplements, you can get sun inside your home. They keep talking like this. But no! the hijab is keeping your hair from external factors, like pollution and the like. So even medically, the hijab is preserving you.

S4: Absolutely! It's [the sun] destroying the hair!

[verbal agreement]

Me: And these debates happen in society?

S3: Yes, of course, all the time. And there are disagreements, and people fight and stop talking to you. They don't like advice. [Saida NGO focus group]

And this whole thing about the need for sunlight and all that medical thing, it's just them using medicine. The hijab has scientifically medically proven benefits! [Reem]

It was, henceforth, not only that the hijab was not harmful, but it was proven by 'modern science' to be 'preserving', as Reem, an older lower-class Sunni, and many others, objected. Ironically, it was presented as preserving against the pollution modern science and technology had brought about, although none of my participants made this connection. While for Nisrine, the results of 'modern science' were unquestionable, and a change in the kind of hijab could be required, for Reem, 'modern science' proved the hijab's worth. Throughout, participants stressed that they were themselves building on 'modern science' and 'experiments' (the words consistently used by my interviewees) evidencing the dress' health advantages.

To refute this health risk, the hijabi appealed to 'scientifically proven' health benefits, rendering the counter-argument not about the nature of the claim but about its content, its truth-value. While these comments need to be contextualised as refutations of specific arguments against the hijab present in Lebanon today, I wish to make the point that the

entry of the health question into the debate about the hijab, and the terms on which it did with the figuring of the word ‘modern’ and with a dominant presumption of a very specific sort of empiricist knowledge inquiry, is indicative of the hegemony of a Eurocentric power discourse. Indeed, ‘modern science’ appeared as a form of unquestionable truth to which any individual must yield: the only way to refute an argument based on this science was to draw on the same science with counter-arguments. In parallel, the illegitimacy of other discourses to contest that of science, i.e. the silence, resounded.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, even when discussing other facets of *difa*‘ and counter-argumentation, the discourse of modern science made it into the conversation. The following is an example:

[A student in a class] goes up and says: ‘Oh...we...I...I think the reason for backwardness is the hijab they wear’. I looked around the class and realised I was the only hijabi. I was a sophomore and it was a senior class. I was the only sophomore with everyone else a senior...I [later] spoke and said that if we give this comparison, I can simply give you an Arab country and a non-Arab country, the hijab is in both and we have different results, this means that, by science and experiment, that the hijab is not the factor [of backwardness]. [Shirine]

Shirine, who is a young Shia from the South of Lebanon, went on to explain that progress, here, was scientific and technological progress where ‘nanotechnology’ and ‘stem cell research’ are the criteria presented for measuring human advancement. This comparison, she said, was in reference to Iran, contrasting its ‘progress’ to that of Arab countries. The result, I would say, was the clear acceptance of the Arab as backward and the clear separation between the hijab and the Arab culture. The result, I would say, was (again) the disavowal of the Arab while ‘science and experiment’ are instantiated as the supreme legitimate mode of making an argument. In either case, in resisting this argument against the hijab the hijabi was once again speaking from within modernity/coloniality’s epistemic space where, as Asad (1993) had long explained, ‘religion is indeed now

¹⁰⁵ While I am here not making an argument as to the necessary coloniality of modern science *per se*, but rather an argument about the coloniality of the way the discourse of modern science entered the debate on the hijab, my understanding here is nevertheless informed by a larger discussion around the entanglement of modern science and coloniality. This, nevertheless, remains beyond the scope of this dissertation especially as it remains a relatively under-theorised question. For interesting studies on science, coloniality, and imperialism see Ideland (2018) and Volume 12 issue 4 of *Postcolonial studies journal* Science, colonialism, postcolonialism. Also see Mercier (2016) for a discussion around the dichotomy between western ‘science’ and non-western forms of knowledge and Boisselle (2016) for an exploration of ‘what is science, and how this standard account of science seems to represent a colonized (i.e., globalized) conception of science that is Western, modern, and secular’ (Boisselle 2016: 1).

optional in a way that science is not' (Asad 1993: 49).

Especially aware that the discourses of science have long been foundational for Europe's claim of superiority (see Saliba 2007; Sonn 2001), and that the question of science has long been that 'of the commercialization of nature and of food and the assault to human health in the name of science with the purpose of capital accumulation' for coloniality's reproduction (Mignolo 2007: 160) where 'secular science' plays a foundational role for modernity (Mignolo 2018) I hold that my participants' resistance was producing and reproducing the structures of coloniality, well beyond the coloniality of the hijab, in the very kind of *difa* 'they made.

9.1.4. Anti-patriarchy

The questions of feminism, women's emancipation, and patriarchy were rarely absent from my interviews and focus groups. Given the role of westernised liberal feminism' in the anti-hijab assault, as discussed in chapter two, and the westernised feminism present in Lebanon, as discussed in chapter five, this did not come as a surprise. Before exploring how my participants engaged this question of women's empowerment in arguing for their dress, I must reiterate that my attempt here is to explore and reflect not on the substantive content of the arguments being made, but on what they reveal in regard to the hegemonic structures of Lebanese life and, consequently, modernity/coloniality's processes of erasure.

For my participants, the hijab worked for 'a true Islamic community' where men and women are equal outside the home and only exist as 'sexual beings' within it:

If the hijab's main purpose was simplistically to cover the women up, it would simply be that God asks her to stay at home. You have that idea, that the woman is meant to be at home. But these are completely opposite ideas! Because the basis of the hijab is to push the woman towards society, so that she can be engaged with [society] as a human being, only. When I reach society...when the woman is not sexualised in society...Sexuality is an internal differentiation within the family, but should not go beyond that. In the community, this margin is mutual between the men and women and whoever is more competent is worthy of being in a position or a responsibility, whatever it is...this is what the hijab is about...what Islam is. [Shirine]

I cannot demand the hijab without there being modesty. And even Islamically if I go and look, this modesty is so central and it's not just for women. And the Quran isn't like this. In so many places, it addresses the men with this [modesty] before the women...And there's this big misunderstanding about the hijab, that it's differentiating [between men and women]. That the woman has to do everything

and the man doesn't have to do anything. But no, he can't do whatever he wants. And I don't like to use this word, but sometimes one feels one has to because there is this patriarchal element in the cultural discourse we produce. That the man wants to limit the woman but does not want to limit himself, so you get the male scholar telling the woman 'yes it's you, it's your fault, you are the devil, you are all that', but he doesn't, he keeps everything allowed for him. No, it's not like that. In our hadith [narration from the Prophet and his household], in our tradition, it's not like that. Even in *fikh* [Islamic jurisprudence], and the ruling... [Zahraa]

Zahraa, an older Shia resident of Dahieh, then went into a lengthy exploration of Quranic texts and examples from Islamic jurisprudence to showcase how both the 'hijab's core' and its 'general application', from modesty to the construction of the self, applied to both men and women. The simple difference of 'a little bit' of added clothing on the basis of gender, put in place to desexualise the woman in public and allow her to be engaged as 'an equal human being', does not change that and render the dress a tool for women's subjugation, she explained.

In what might be considered a more radical move, a number of my participants explicitly claimed that the hijab was not a form of dress specific to women. In a focus group with Shia participants in Dahieh, I was told:

And this dress, covering the head, is not special to women. If you look at Jews, in the temple, or any religious group...it's like something which has something to do with religious people, with a relationship to God. I don't know why. You must search, I am not the researcher. They wear, above their clothing, which is already [covering], and before Islam and after Islam, there was wide clothing too, so this piece above the clothing was worn, like to cover a part of the head and face and the hips to somewhere and then it evolved and became a design with a abaya like this with a button and all that. There is no difference, it is the cover with different names...Like the *sheikh* [scholar] always covers his head. [Markaz 2 focus group]

In this explanation, which was met with great approval from everyone in the focus group, my participant expressed many of what I had termed the universalising trends, and their consequences, in her depiction of the hijab: from it being something 'any religious group' exercises to it being de-problematized 'clothing to cover' and a core which manifests itself in multiple manners. Yet, very interestingly, she included gender: citing the example of Jewish men, of the Muslim sheikh/scholar and of Arab forms of dress where covering the head for men is the norm. Strengthening the argument by drawing on Islamic jurisprudential rulings which specify that it is highly recommended for men to cover their head in many instances, such as during prayer, she later claimed the hijab has been misread 'because of the west'. In other words, many participants argued that the strict gendering of the hijab was misplaced, and that society's patriarchy is un-Islamic.

In building and elaborating on this, a number of participants lamented how ‘Islam is misunderstood’ and taken to be a patriarchal religion. Rejecting this reading of Islam, my participants offered their ‘belief system’ as one where patriarchy is combatted and a strict gender hierarchy is untenable. Maryam, a middle-aged upper-class Sunni from Beirut, confirmed:

For us, as Muslims, the Muslim woman can do anything and everything. She can do all activities. She can work, she can drive, raise her kids, take and bring and do everything while she is hijabi. God did not say become hijabi and sit at home and do nothing! [Maryam]

There were Islamic women who have long participated in war, no one told them to sit at home! [Iman focus group]

In addition to this, examples from Muslim countries around the world today were mentioned. Here, Iran consistently figured, as did some South Asian countries. No Arab countries did.

I am not interested in evaluating this conceptualisation, or in engaging its claim of being anti-patriarchy. My participants presented this as the anti-patriarchy they pursued. I am here mainly interested in the fact that, despite this conceptualisation and presentation, or perhaps regardless of it, participants continuously affirmed that one of the key factors ‘working against the hijab’ in Lebanese society was its claimed patriarchal nature as it appeared that changing the stigma was impossible, regardless of what my participants had to argue.

In this sense, the hijab, conceptualised as a dress with a clear aim of women’s empowerment and presented as thus, it was affirmed, was ‘not something people [in Lebanon] were willing to listen to’, as Fatima, the project’s middle-aged Shia Islamic activist from Dahieh, announced. The idea that Islam, or Islamic practice, would actually be and work for the empowerment of women, particularly in the contemporary world, I was told, was nonsensical, laughable, in mainstream Lebanese society.

Incapable of proclaiming the hijab this tool of liberation they perceived, participants explained they rarely discuss this in society. Rather, in arguing against the hijab as patriarchy, they focus on ‘attacking’ the current order’s patriarchy where, as they said, what is being presented as liberation actually had a darker side and held women’s objectification within it. In other words, in making their counter-argument against the claim that the hijab is a patriarchal form of dress designed to subjugate women, they

reverted the accusation to claim that the ‘attacks against the hijab’ were actually attacks meant to disempower ‘women and render them sexual objects for the pleasure of men’ [Nisrine].

As serious judgments were passed on those who choose to ‘parade their bodies for men’s sexual gratification’ in Lebanon, my participants declared themselves the (already) liberated ones. With examples ranging from how much time they spend ‘on the mirror’ to the psychological pressure of ‘pleasing men’, the hijab was accordingly offered as a source of relief in the consumerist society of Lebanon and as a source of empowerment for the woman to actively counter her ‘objectification’ under the current conditions of subjugation, without delving into the ‘Islamic ordering’ they believed in. Nada, a Beiruti Sunni, explained:

Our society is a materialistic society, and unfortunately, the biggest seller is the woman’s body. Every man who does not hire a hijabi, wants a front, a toy, to receive people. [Nada]

It appeared that, eventually, it is not fathomable for mainstream Lebanese society, loaded with modern patriarchy and misogyny, for emancipation or liberation to come from religion, particularly not Islam. In a time and space of hegemonic coloniality, the only ‘progress’ could come from futurity. While my participants held a belief and an argumentation that redeemed Islam and pushed for its avowal, this avowal was unenunciative, unintelligible, unspeakable, and the hijabi women resorted to a critique of the current model without being able to openly offer what they perceived to be an alternative.

Carving out a position they presented as rooted in Islam, my participants were here not accepting Islam’s disavowal but rather harboured and expressed beliefs and views which clearly articulated their rejection of this disavowal. In this *difa* ‘, resistance meant an attack and a critique of the current status quo, and was limited to critique. Although this itself is structured by the fact that this disavowal was being combatted by attributing to it a position which European representation also claims as European (anti-patriarchy and feminist emancipation), and must be understood as enunciative under such a hegemony, it nevertheless unfolded with the avowal of Islam.

It here became apparent that my participants’ claims held the potential of shifting Eurocentric assumptions. Although much of what my participants expressed could not be spoken, it could be listened to. For the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to push

this listening to begin sketching a delinked conceptualisation of the hijab as it emerged in my fieldwork before closing this dissertation.

9.2. Reframing the Hijab

Based on the way the hijab was presented to me in the field, when I inquired about its role and when I did not, in the way it was spoken of, the language used to refer to it, and the experiences narrated with it, I came to realise that the hijab was a practice, rather than a dress, which was agentively used by the wearer in a process of self-forming an Islamic subject which resembles Islam's ideal figures. Accordingly, I came to realise that a delinked conceptualisation of the hijab existed, waiting to be listened to. While fully constructing such a conceptualisation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this section offers some preliminary insights into it. Its key value is in rendering the risk of coloniality's establishment apparent to highlight what is at risk, what is being lost.

As my participants narrated experiences from their daily lives, the hijab was presented not as an object which is only worn in obedience to a particular religious scripture, to gain particular social advantages, or to become identifiable as belonging to a particular religion and sect. The hijab was not limited to being a religious duty, obligation, which needed to be heeded for one to avoid the wrath of God, or of society, for example. While not negating these dimensions, and while not attempting to make a statement as to *why* hijabi women wear the hijab (a statement with a kaleidoscope of possible answers) I would argue that my participants overwhelmingly understood the hijab as, fundamentally, the tool through which the moral self, ordained by this religious belief, is developed, acquired. In this sense, the idea of practicing the hijab was the idea of 'living it' and allowing it to imbue one's daily life and to shape one's mode of being in the world. As something which is worn on a daily basis, constantly felt on one's body, my participants explained, it formed a potent tool through which the self can be 'moulded':

Like, let us ask: what is the hijab? What does it mean? It's not me covering my hair, or covering my body, wearing it and nothing [of my body] is showing and that is the hijab. No. Not at all like that. Even in our *hadith*, or models, how they represented it... it does not stop at the body, there is a way to it, criteria, the way I speak...the way I interact...there, my voice...And here you get levels, how much you can improve, the upward you go...how much you can get that in all your dimensions. That is it. The hijab encompasses all these things. Even with yourself, your environment, your kids. You can widen it as much as you want, get to the bigger circle. What is the perfect hijab? That is what you reach. On the outside, it is the *abaya*, but then you get the inside where you need to start with.

How much have you let the hijab influence you? How has it influenced you? Jurisprudence is there to control your behaviour so that you can reach a purpose. God is wise and we are born for a reason, and this reason is different from one person to another. There is the general reason and then a reason for each person. So in reality what is your role and what is mine? [Fatima]

Speaking of the dress, Fatima took very little time to delve into the question of our existence's very reason. It was a material object which is meant to 'influence you' so that you achieve 'your reason', 'your role'. It was an 'encompassing' practice which was meant to express itself in the way one sits, speaks, and interacts, as examples. It was something which was to be lived inside your home and outside of it, when alone and when in the presence of others, when wearing it and when not wearing it. In the pursuit of the 'perfect hijab', defined as a state of both the material dress and the inner self (sometimes referred to by participants as the 'inner hijab'), the wearer was someone placing herself under the influence of the worn.¹⁰⁶

Accordingly, the hijabi was not like any other Muslim, not even like any other practicing Muslim, she was rather a Muslim who has taken it upon herself, in a commitment to herself, to God and to society, to become a 'complete Muslim'. The hijabi no longer perceived herself as a hijabi only when she is wearing the hijab. She was *always* a hijabi:

The hijab becomes who you are, your identity. Always. [Nada]

...[you are hijabi] Even in the private gatherings which are between sisters [where the hijab is not worn]. Me as a hijabi, who understands the meaning of the hijab, the nature of it, the purpose of it as being the preservation of society and its chastity, this chastity goes with me wherever I go, not just where there are others...So if I want to be really understanding what the hijab is, committed to all its conditions, that it exhibits my identity, that I am someone committed, Muslim, Shia, I know this hijab has led me to having chastity and modesty [and] this will be my behaviour [everywhere]. [Markaz focus group 2]

For me, [to be a hijabi] I should be getting up, even on morning prayer, praying, never missing that. I don't do this all this much. For me yes, the hijabi, to be honest, should be like this. Even my mother, I wanted to become a hijabi before, but she didn't let me because she used to say: I want to see you praying on time and then think about this [wearing the hijab], and take your time and don't act hastily. For her, I had to reach the spiritual before the appearance. But it's also the other way around: it really encourages and helps the person to reach the spiritual. Both are fine. There is no rule... So these things, practices, I can improve. And the

¹⁰⁶ While this may be related to the invented enforced authenticity destroying the hijabi discussed in chapter eight, I will keep these distinct as my participants kept them distinct and affirmed them as separate movements. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to suggest their entwinement. Such an exploration nevertheless remains for another project.

hijab, it can really teach you, a lot. I felt I grew up like 5 years [after I started wearing it]. [Sara]

While the hijab aimed at ‘the preservation of society’ and its betterment, it simultaneously aimed at the preservation of the wearer herself and her betterment. In this sense, the argument I am making here is not a negation of the hijab’s various possible roles: from creating the public sphere as an ‘Islamic space’ to allowing the woman to perform a ‘calling to Islam’ through dress and preserve the chastity of the community, among others. Further, it is not an attempt to define these roles, or claim that there is a set of homogenous roles that my participants agreed to. Rather, it is that another role, delinked, thrives alongside these other dimensions in a parallel entwined position.¹⁰⁷

As a method of learning, as a ‘teacher’, the hijab was engaged in a sort of dialectical relationship with the ‘complete Muslim subject’. In other words, the hijab was an element to gain the qualities, traits, and characteristics which Islam has ordained, as it was a space where these qualities, traits, and characteristics exhibit themselves and affirm their presence. It was not an exteriority which declares or expresses an interiority, but rather an exteriority which plays a role in forming the interiority. In this sense, the hijab was a sort of self-addressed speech act: an instance of performativity where the wearing of the dress can be thought of as an act of naming oneself a hijabi, enacting oneself a hijabi. It was, ultimately, enacting oneself as different from the modern subject.

It was here that I came to understand why the hijab was not a dress: the traits it sought were to become ‘a permanent feature of a person's character’, in the sense of the practice being ‘a teleological process’ which is ‘aimed at making moral behavior a nondeliberative aspect of one's disposition’ (Mahmood 2012a: 135-16). It was, ultimately, the formation of an Aristotelian habitus, as developed by Mahmood (2012a). As a daily act, oriented, it

¹⁰⁷ It is useful here to distinguish between personality, identity, and subjectivity and to note that the dress clearly functioned across these levels. The distinction between identity and subjectivity adopted here relates to power whereby identity is understood as the outward projected dimension of the self that oscillates in relation to its Other while subjectivity is understood as both the internal/ised forces and dimensions of power and the complex agentive work of the person on these power structures for their hybrid constitution as bound and binding, but not subsuming, work. Refer to Allen (2002, 2007) on subjectivity and Treacher (2005) for a useful discussion on postcolonial subejctivity. For a decolonial analysis of subjectivity and identity, refer to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013). Importantly, it must be acknowledged that these questions of identity and subjectivity are themselves categories that are greatly dependent, and productive of, the modern condition and that the dress’ functioning at the levels of both identity and subjectivity highlights both the coloniality at play as well as the possibilities of resistance harboured within it. This discussion remains, nevertheless, beyond the scope of this dissertation. For a useful reading on this, see Zima (2015).

was a powerful exercise yielded by my participants in the pursuit of the Islamic civilisational model.

9.2.1. The Hijab's *Telos*

It is important to reflect on the *telos* of this act: the 'improvement and growth' of the wearer, in 'all dimensions'. Inquiring about the specificities of these dimensions and how they come to be lived, I received a variety of answers which can be, at the risk of reductionism, collected under the title of becoming a 'moral person', where morality exhibits itself in *all* aspects of one's life:

She can make use of it [the hijab] to learn. I am a person who before wearing the abaya, my parents were telling me to postpone it. I wore it at 16 and they said that I should wait till I finish High School, to have grown more, got more awareness, they really focused on that idea of awareness, and that I needed to have more traits [to wear it]. But I insisted and really wanted it. Anyway, I did wear it and then it added things to my personality. I wasn't aware of things, didn't realise them, and then I did [wear it] and started developing them. Like what? Like my self-confidence. I still don't know the link, but it really gave me huge self-confidence. Even my relationship with others changed. There are many traits it added to me. [Markaz focus group 2]

The group later went to discuss how, and where, this 'chastity and modesty' were to exhibit themselves. Examples included how one speaks to neighbours and those 'at work', how one selflessly gives their time for social and political activism, as well as who one chooses as friends, companions and even spouse:

This hijab, if I am to benefit from it, knowing that I have chastity and have modesty, this must be embodied in every position, in every gathering anywhere, in all my behaviour, wherever I am. [Markaz focus group 2]

Like as someone who is too humorous, laughs all the time...I am a joyful person, but the hijab balances it, make me poised. It's not a dress, it's like something which teaches you. It's more than a dress. It's a code of conduct. [Nourhan]

Both Nourhan, a young Shia participant from Dahieh, and my older Shia participant from a focus group in Dahieh, concurred. It did not have a code of conduct; it could be the code of conduct. The hijab was not a material object which reminded you to be poised, to be balanced. The hijab could be the object which balances you, makes you poised (under certain conditions, as explored below). The hijab was an object to be engaged, as a tool of knowledge, through which a particular set of behaviours is to be developed and acquired. Engulfing both ritual practices, such as fasting and praying, as well as social ones, such as being poised, the hijab covered both the 'religious' and the social, the political and the economic. Its scope ranged from being spiritual and non-materialistic to

being wise and reflexive, including ‘political worldviews’ and one’s ‘belonging’. From not sitting at a table where there is alcohol and not entering a nightclub or a casino to not speaking about others behind their backs and not throwing garbage on the street, it is very difficult to entirely delineate, based on my data, what many of my participants presented as the hijab code of conduct.

In this sense, I was told that the hijab was a means towards the formation of an ethical self and, crucially I would say, that this ethical self is the self which, as an ethical self, goes to work, to the marketplace, votes and participates in political rallies. In this sense, the formulation of ethics I encountered drew great resonance with that which Mahmood (2012a) had drawn out of the field as ‘the careful scrutiny one applies to one’s daily actions in order to shape oneself to live in accordance with a particular model of behavior’ (Mahmood 2012a: 187) with, perhaps, a more expansive scope given my participants’ insistence on both ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ direct political participation as part of their ethical conduct. In other words, while my participants affirmed that their dress was a means for the achievement of what might be termed ethical qualities, these qualities must not mistakenly be thought of as belonging to a sphere separated from the daily, the economic or the political. Ultimately, the dress revealed itself as a pedagogical exercise which imbued all aspects of one’s life. Participants living in the Lebanese South were unequivocal:

W4: And it’s not just about behaviour. Even the spiritual, to speak of the spiritual, at the level of the spiritual it changes the girl in a weird way. Me, now, if I want to speak to a guy on WhatsApp really late at night and I think that I am a hijabi, how can I do that? These small details...if I want to like something [on social media], I think I am a hijabi, how can I do that?

W3: It really disciplines.

W4: Small details, but of course we think them small but they are much bigger and have a very strong influence. It is *wikar* and *wikaya* [dignity and preservation] for the woman.

W5: Even the way one speaks. It’s not the same at home.

W3: There is more poise, the way one interacts.

W4: It makes us be more patient with one another. I am a bit like that. If someone contradicts me or disagrees with me, I get agitated and would want to jump, but when I am wearing the hijab, it stops me. When you’re wearing a hijab, it makes you more alert.

W2: It really stops the person [from doing those things].

[agreement] [Abbesiye focus group]

Saying ‘it’s not the same at home’, one must realise that what my participant meant, as she later explained, was that she ‘wish[ed] that it was’, that she was working towards it

being, but that she was ‘not there yet’. In this sense, while the hijab was exerting significant influence over her conduct ‘outside’, this conduct has not yet been fully internalised. She considered herself, she was, in the making, in the becoming.

This was, therefore, a performative transformative act which required accumulation, sedimentation, to enact that which it names. With practice, with time, with effort, these traits, whatever they are, become a part of you and the hijab elevates, progresses, to develop other traits, higher traits, within you. The practice was, therefore, a clear illustration of how bodily behaviour ‘endows the self with certain kinds of capacities that provide the substance from which the world is acted upon’ (Mahmood 2012a: 27).

The hijab could consequently be said to be an object with two distinct entwined dimensions: it was oriented towards one’s self, to form one’s self, as it was oriented toward society: to form society.¹⁰⁸ Further still, the hijab did more, as Shirine, a young Shia from the South of Lebanon clarified:

There are traits it [the hijab] develops. The hijab needs to be a means...like prayer. A way of building up your potential to control, to endure. It teaches you deep philosophies. But people don’t think of it like that. They think if you are hijabi, you should be there already. But it’s your way of getting there! They say if you are hijabi and doing this [bad thing], then the hijab is not doing what it’s meant to do for you. [Shirine]

Knowledge, more piety. The hijab can do 20 things, but it depends on how you approach it and that is what it will do to you. [Mona]

The hijab offered ‘knowledge’, taught ‘deep philosophies’. The hijab, I would say, was contributing towards the formation of the hijabi’s episteme despite coloniality. It was, in this sense, producing a hybrid, wounded, fractured, episteme between coloniality and its Other.

In line with this, Mona, who is young and from the North, explained that the hijab unequivocally moves you towards a ‘much larger whole’ where you are no longer an individual but rather part of ‘something bigger’. While Shirine agreed that some of these traits, such as developing one’s ‘potential to control, to endure’ are linked to the particular experiences a hijabi goes through in Lebanon, she insisted that such was not the whole

¹⁰⁸ It is to be noted here that a distinction and a conversation can emerge here with Mahmood’s (2012) analysis in regard to the (western, secular) public-private separation and an internal-external distinction in such formative practices and their telos. This, nevertheless, remains for future work to explore.

story and that there was a ‘deeper dimension’, having to do with the meaning one finds in belonging to Islam, which allows this to unfold.

Before moving on, a note is worth making explicit: thinking of the hijab as an object which pushes the hijabi to commit in obedience to the social gaze as not to be accused, as might be suggested, would be misplaced. The hijab is not, or at least should not be for my participants, a social performance. Yet, in a performative reading of the hijab, such a performance is not deemed illegitimate. Rather, such a performance can be the starting point, as Shia participants in a focus group in Dahieh explained:

Me: Is this [commitment to the hijab’s code of conduct] because I don’t want people to talk about the abaya? Or to talk about the people who wear it?

A4: This can be a reason, but it is not the main reason for me. I don’t know, but on the personal level, I feel it is simply not befitting [in itself] to break it. As a way of sitting, as a hijabi woman, wearing a abaya, you are meant to sit in a particular way. I see another way as not befitting. But even if I did not see it this way and saw no problem in it, another main reason I would take into consideration is ‘does this thing influence the reputation of the hijabi?’ Because we hear a lot of this. But really I don’t do it because I don’t accept it.

A2: Agreed agreed.

A1: It starts like that [for others], it is not wrong, but it starts like that and then it becomes [more]. [Markaz focus group 2]

In this sense, the wearing of the hijab could be an act which was ‘not so much as manifestations of their will but more as actions that produce the will in its particularity’, where ‘the pious subject does not precede the performance of normative virtues but is enacted through the performance’ (Mahmood 2012a: 162).

Yet, this performative act was far from unconditional and its success far from guaranteed. While any iteration always holds the possibility of failure, three conditions particularly stood out in my data, for my participants. The first and most important of these was intentionality: anyone forced to wear the hijab, anyone not doing it out of will, is not, could not be, a hijabi. This was said to be because one cannot learn if they do not want to learn. The second is knowledge: anyone who does not know what the hijab means, and does not realise what the hijab is meant to do in one’s life, cannot be a true hijabi. In this sense, a perceived increase in ‘awareness’ in Lebanon, mainly brought about through the spread in religion classes and religious activism, was key. The third was perseverance. This was particularly important in a society where the hijab was unwelcome, but it was also claimed to be important even had the society been welcoming of the dress. Here, my participants stressed that becoming a true hijab was no easy feat but was, rather, one

which required huge labour and much determination in the pursuit of a cumulative self-formation. It was only with time, patience and insistent hard work on one's character that the hijab can manifest itself throughout one's life. Participants at the AUB focus group, young, Sunni and upper-middle or upper-class, and Nisrine, an older Shia woman from the South of Lebanon, concurred:

So back to the reference point question, what is this girl's idea on the hijab and why is she wearing it? If it's a religious reason, it would be a reminder all the time. you are doing this for God, how can you do this [thing]? Or, is this right or wrong? But if it's culture, or she was asked to at home, it becomes nothing. Just a dress code of her culture. And if she is forced, it will be suffocating and have a counter-reaction. so it depends. Like prayer, if you pray just because you're used to it from being a kid, and you don't understand or feel what it is as a relationship and speaking to God, if it's just a casual cultural behaviour, it won't do anything. But when it's not like that, it will make all [the] difference. [AUB focus group]

The hijab definitely plays a role shaping her personality and who she is, who she becomes. But there is one condition: she must have knowledge and be wearing it out of awareness. It will take a lot of hard work, and a lot of determination for her to make it. It is not easy, not here [in Lebanon]. [Nisrine]

The hijab was something which must be 'respected', which could be 'offended', which could be 'tarnished', which one can develop a 'relationship to' and which, most importantly, one 'learns from'. Just like any teacher, if one is to follow Islamic ethics as I was told, one must heed it, obey it, and engage it. For many of my participants, the dress was about the 'entire lifestyle' and the 'very identity' of who the person was, rather than being about a limited set of religious behaviours with a clearly circumscribed sphere. It was, my participants explained, about being a 'true Muslim' (despite coloniality), with the hijab an element of that 'entire system'.

In this sense, and based on the above, the hijab is a tool of resistance against modern subjectivity allowing the wearer to inscribe herself in a different field, to move towards a delinking from modernity's subject and to fashion herself, her subjectivity, her habitus, her dispositions, in line with a different cosmology, with a different code of conduct and a dwelling in the border. It is, consequently, an act which enacts the Muslim subject and pushes for the establishment of a different social order. Crucial here is the relationship to ancestrality, which I will explore before closing this section.

9.2.2. Ancestrality

While my purpose in this dissertation, the lack of space, the nature of my data, and my own positionality mean there is much beyond the scope of this dissertation to be explored

in regard to the hijab as a practice and the dynamics of such a performative act, one point raised in the field is of particular relevance: that of ancestry. It must be noted here that this topic was rarely raised by my participants. Rather, it was I who had to inquire about it. I will return to the significance of this at the end of this section.

In the hijab as practice, a clear presence of Islam's key figures, the Prophet and the members of his household (*Ahl lbayt*, in other words), were presented as pivotal. Often offered as the *telos* reached, they were deeply entwined with the hijab. Both as representatives of this *telos* and its actualisation, my participants spoke of their dress as a practice which connected the wearer to Islam's key figures. Leen, a middle-aged Sunni participant from the North, and a niqabi Sunni participant living in Saida explained:

This is the first thing, to become like *Ahl lbayt* peace be upon them. To respect how they were, to love and to do like they did. The hijab is behaviour plus dress. You can expect ethics. Like the hijabi must always have, like manners in speech, poise, to know how to answer, the way she looks, there are many things. Like Islam's ethics. One must, as much as he can, know Islam's ethics...There are things you get...then you have to go and apply them, with people. [Leen]

S2: And it's the same thing with the niqab. To give you a personal experience, when I first wore the niqab, I wore it out of love. I loved it, it was an emotional thing. This was seven years ago. I had the knowledge and knew this is the dress of the prophet peace be upon him's wife. [Saida focus group]

Clearly presenting the hijab as something which 'teaches by doing' rather than by 'learning', Leen placed this act of doing in direct emulation of *Ahl lbayt*. Central to this process of teaching were learning 'respect', 'love', and what to 'do', in sync with *Ahl lbayt*. The hijab was, accordingly, the material object allowing the wearer to establish, preserve, and 'live' a 'link' to these model beings.

In this sense, the hijab brought the past into the present: 'this is *Ahl lbayt* peace be upon them, right here...If you ask me...it [the hijab] is sacred for it', Tala, an older lower-class Shia declared. As Tala explained, it ultimately 'allowed' the women not to fall into oblivious forgetfulness as to 'who they belonged to and who they needed to be'. It was, further, this means of building and expanding on the relationship with these individuals: if one commits to the dress, if one respects it and heeds it, then one is bound to develop their relationship with these individuals, an identification with these individuals. That, in turn, will develop one's similarity to them.

Through this relationship, I was told, one belongs and becomes. Through this relationship, one learns and develops to resemble. In other words, it was by bringing these figures into

the present, and by placing what many of my participants claimed as their embodiment onto one's own body, that both a relationship is developed and built upon to *become*, as a middle-aged lower-class Sunni participant expressed:

Oh, this idea [of the relationship to the Prophet and his household]! How present it is [sighs]... for me, it wasn't there all that much at first. But after I wore it [the hijab] and committed to it, and I started loving everything which linked me to the prophet peace be upon him and God. So that idea really grew with me. It grows with the person. But did we have this awareness? No. Before, no. [Farida]

Similarly to the 'traits' which the hijab develops, this 'relationship' and 'link' to ancestry were themselves developed by the hijab: it was an element of the hijabi's growth. The link was performed, enacted, brought into being, by being hijabi:

H: ...They [*Ahl lbayt*] are the whole role [in the hijab].

Me: How do they play a role?

H: Through influence, when someone is touched by them, by how they were, their purity, what she [the prophet's granddaughter] went through and kept her hijab, not like lost control, stayed strong. Not like...when we keep hearing their stories, their ethics, their knowledge and how much they knew, not like a hijabi that doesn't know anything, in everything they are on top, education, socially, economically, you're touched, the girl is touched and the woman. And you have to do like them. It's not like you can do and cannot do. You have to. Because they are the perfection. That is how a woman should be. It's not that she can be hijabi and doesn't know, or hijabi and sitting at home. What they do, she should be. Their personality most importantly, their knowledge. [Hanin]

Jumping between economic wealth and political steadfastness, Hanin, a middle-aged lower-class Shia, was referring to the incident of Karbala: the slaughtering of the prophet's grandson and his family members in 680 CE. After that incident, the prophet's granddaughter, Sayyeda Zainab, took centre stage to become one of the Shia community's key figures. As a political leader and a public figure, as well as an 'idol in worship', her image echoed throughout the field (particularly, but not only, in interviews with Shia participants, and particularly in identification with the abaya) as the ultimate subject, the complete *telos*. Zahraa, an older Shia resident of Dahieh, and a Shia participant in a focus group in Dahieh, confirmed:

The outer hijab is not sufficient. It is required, but there is something more important that we must work on. The abaya is this thing, the perfect dress, the Sayyedas' dress, peace be upon her, so I must stick to all the ethics, all the manners, all the details. There are things, the abaya is not a black piece I wear and that is it...It's not a duty, it is more perfect and this must come with ethical perfection, and behavioural perfection, and understanding and knowledge for me to stick to this. [Zahraa]

Linking the hijab to the household takes it out of the mind and makes it emotional. Like besides the logical thing of understanding what it is [the hijab] and why it's important, if she links it to them she would have that emotional relationship. We would be covering both the mind and the heart like this. [Markaz focus group 3]

In a relationship that required both a conviction in 'the mind' and a relationship at the level of the emotional, the role of *Ahl lbayt* in the hijab's performativity was unmissable. Indeed, its role in delinking was unmissable. The reference was to the insufficiency of a theoretical conviction in achieving the perfect hijab. There was, rather, a need to have an emotional connection to human figures, idols, where the emotional and the 'logical' complement one another. It was through this that the hijab could become the tool and the object.

Mahmood (2009) had explained that the 'Muslim's relationship to Mohammad is predicated not so much upon a communicative or representational model as an assimilative one', where a 'labour of love' was necessary to shape one's self in that image (Mahmood 2009: 847). Echoing this, and expanding it to include figures from various religious traditions, my participants eventually drew out a line of 'perfect individuals' (rather than communities) to be presented as the history, the ancestry, the hijabi wished to be a continuation of, as the 'linearity' to which the hijabi wished to ascribe. Yet, such a central question for the hijabi was often unspoken, unmentioned, until it was brought up. Brought up, it revealed itself as 'the whole role'. In trying to understand why this is the case, I could not think but of coloniality's aggressive nature, its delegitimization, and the effort to negate under which my interviewees dwelled. With this, that which is not, and perhaps cannot, be researched is brought to the fore.

A last point to be made here, in brief, is the clear separation between this ancestry and 'history': the hijab was not to be retrieved from Lebanese, or regional, history. Further, the hijab was not to be retrieved from a past 'society' or era in any geography. It was, rather, to be retrieved from specific persons who 'transcend time'. Perhaps similar to what Deeb (2006) had titled 'authentication', a concept of time, very unlike that of modernity, was at play. It was a time where there was no linearity between past, present, and future and where there were specific subjects who represent 'completeness', to be connected to, scattered beyond what modernity termed past, present, and future.

Coloniality, as presented in chapter three, seeks to erase 'the past, turns the future into the teleology of progress and holds the present to be the only site of the real' (Vázquez 2009:

3). Based on the above, I would argue that, for the hijabi, a different concept of temporality was advanced where the past was not degraded and where the future aimed at the subject's reformation in an image in the 'past', an image which is not 'past'. Indeed, where *Ahl lbayt* were the 'real', the hijabi ascribed to a real which transcended coloniality's temporal logic, even delinked from it. In such a system, the Eurocentric obsession with futurity becomes untenable. In such a system, the subject holds different relationalities and acts upon them for an alternative becoming.¹⁰⁹

While coloniality has long attempted to delegitimise this link, the hijab has stood the 'test of time', resisting erasure and allowing hijabi women 'never to forget', allowing the subaltern to 'link' with their past, their memory, to aspire to living their past in their future. I cannot pursue a larger exploration of the concept of time that can be learnt from the hijabi's engagement with her dress in this dissertation. Indeed, many questions remain and the shifting of modernity's temporality is but one illustrative example of the delinking potential harboured within the non-western practice. In a time where the modern project has been identified to aim at severing 'the oppressed from their past, their memory', in pursuit of their domination (Vázquez 2009), the hijab can, accordingly, be identified as a tool of resistance, of decolonisation.

The hijab could not be read beyond it being a symbol. As Baldi (2017a) identified, the hijab could only be a 'sign of' and this does not only 'not take into consideration the plurality of meanings and practices of veiling and the historical and cultural context within which the will and certain practices and desires develop, but it also imposes a specific semiotic ideology on different cultures' (Baldi 2017a: 36). Under such an imposition, it was not by claiming it as more that it could be claimed as legitimate: this pedagogic role of the hijab did not figure in my participants' *difa*. Rather, my participants were left to accept their dress, in the arguments for legitimisation, as a fixed symbol to then argue for what that symbolism was as they sought to create space for its existence.

¹⁰⁹ This is not to claim that the Islamic tradition or that the hijab are the only forms of dress where a set of rules accompany the dress or where dress can perform such functions. To the contrary, such an understanding might have existed, and might still exist, in a multitude of places, including in Europe. Nevertheless, this is to claim that this understanding of clothing is not part of modernity's project and does not figure in how clothing is understood within western modernity today.

9.3. Conclusion

As I wrote this chapter, my reflections were dominated by one idea: it did not make sense. Its two sections were incoherent, dissonant. How can the same fieldwork, conducted in the same place at the same time with the same people and by the same researcher, produce data, often from the same participants, where the hijab is claimed a simple ‘dotted shirt’ as well as an all-encompassing self-forming exercise? How can this same researcher, how can the same people, claim their *telos* as perfected all-encompassing Muslim moral subjects and, at the same time, express a belief in a European secularism and in the privatisation of religion? Indeed, how can the same participant, in the same interview, insist on science, futurity, a secular horizon, and a Eurocentric universality of the hijab, while claiming her dress an exercise in the pursuit of an Islamic ordering of the world?

Such was not incoherence. Such was the state of double-consciousness, of a wounded self, of a self dwelling in the border of modernity. Such was the lived experience beyond western binaries, beyond neat categories, and beyond linear narratives. With a deeply fractured habitus, with a deep colonial wound, my participants were both: deeply colonised and deeply different.

Subjected to marking, exclusion, and discrimination, subjected to coloniality’s erasure, the Lebanese hijabi women I interviewed pursued *difa*’. Their resistance revolved around negating the hijab’s Arab and Islamic identity, a parochial universalising, a redefining under a naturalised privatising and depoliticising secularism rendered a European horizon, drawing on ‘modern science’ to argue for the legitimacy of their mode of being as they pushed for its conceptualisation as a tool against patriarchy. The result was unequivocal: the reproduction of coloniality, the concealment of coloniality, the disavowal of Islam and Arab affiliation and the working from within the colonial epistemic framework. Indeed, it was the reproduction of coloniality well beyond the coloniality of the hijab as a result of the colonised attempts at resistance. Consequently, this chapter affirms a key technique within coloniality’s erasure: Resisting coloniality’s attempts at erasing a singular element of the indigenous self circumscribed by coloniality’s epistemic territory produces a process through which coloniality (well beyond that of the hijab) is instilled.

Yet, a delinked conceptualisation of the dress dwelled, even if it could not be enunciated in the pursuit of legitimacy. Indeed, it dwelled in the background, further affirming

coloniality's aggressive nature and pursuit of erasure. Presenting, and engaging, the material garment as a pedagogical exercise in the Islamic civilisation model, my participants offered a conceptualisation of the hijab which would render it a tool of resistance, a tool of delinking, to construct the perfect Muslim subject's self and connect it to its ancestry. Shifting coloniality's linear time, shifting its *telos*, shifting its episteme and its norms, the hijab was a means through which the hijabi could still be, outside, beyond, in the border. In this sense, through listening, delinking remains a possibility and a fractured Otherness continues.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

Fanon identified a core element of the Negro's predicament: 'For some time there has been much talk about the Negro. A little too much. The Negro would like to be dropped, so that he may regroup his forces, his authentic forces' (Fanon 2008: 186). This dissertation has attempted not to talk about the hijabi, as, like the Negro, there has been too much talk about her both within academia and outside of it. Rather, this dissertation has attempted to listen to and voice the hijabi's racialised lived experiences as a contribution toward the regrouping of her forces and, ultimately, the dismantlement of the wounding and destructive structure abjecting her into erasure.

To conclude, this chapter will begin with a brief summary of this attempt to then discuss this work's main contributions. Closing, it will explore some of the project's confines and a number of avenues for future research.

10.1. The Dissertation

In the first part of this dissertation, I began with a selective review of the literature on the Islamic hijab. There, I sketched the scene of the hijabi's life across both Global North and Global South, both in the contemporary moment and over the past decades. Focusing on the relationship between the hijab and the nation/state and the relationship between the hijab and lived experiences of exclusion and discrimination with the entwined forms of resistances, I argued that the Islamic dress is – and has long been – an object of imperialism, neo-colonialism and post-colonial constructions. Specifically, I argued that the literature reveals the hijab as a prime object through which coloniality controls, subjugates, and erases: through which modernity/coloniality may be studied. Here, the need to research both the concealment of coloniality and the persistent stigmatisation of hijabis across the globe, among other significant research gaps, became apparent. In this regard, I showcased how the westernised academy's scholarship remained confined and lacking.

Consequently, I moved to a presentation of the theoretical basis of this dissertation and the decolonial scholarship to which it seeks to contribute. Presenting the decolonial studies collective's work complemented with that of key post/decolonial authors, I explored the dissertation's understanding of modernity/coloniality, the colonial difference, race and racialisation, the colonial wound, intersections/entanglements and gender. Then, I briefly presented a theorisation of clothing and ritual to be built on in the

subsequent chapters. In this respect, I established the theoretical apparatus to be both engaged and developed, as I advanced a number of conceptual categories for the project's data analysis.

With the theoretical framework established, I moved in chapter four to present the methodology adopted and explore a number of challenges and dilemmas faced and dealt with. Starting with a brief epistemological framing of the project's research process, I explored the choice of a case-study approach with the questions of sampling and recruitment. I then discussed legitimacy and feasibility with a focus on issues of gender and position in the westernised academy. In this respect, I presented both a theoretical reflection as well as some experiences encountered in the field where the project's legitimacy and feasibility became most apparent. With this clarified, I then moved to a specific presentation of research techniques, and the mode in which these techniques were adopted, arguing for the combination of in-depth interviews and focus groups with photo-elicitation. Closing my methodological discussion, I briefly elucidated the project's micro-ethics, particularly given its dilemmas.

Ending this first part of the dissertation, chapter five offered a brief re-construction of the Lebanese scene as the project's case-study and site of analysis primarily aimed at the reader unfamiliar with Lebanon. This began with the exploration of Lebanon's colonial invention, with a focus on the hierarchies and identities involved. Then, I moved to elaborate a sketch of the small country's political elites and key socio-political stakeholders across religious groups (Sunni, Shia, and Maronite Christian). I subsequently went on to offer some notes around the lived reality of women in Lebanon and their presence across social spheres. The chapter closed with a concise presentation of Lebanon's many internal Others to argue that the land is one of multiple systematic exclusions and hierarchies.

In the second part of the dissertation, I turned to a substantive analysis of the data collected during this project's fieldwork. This began with chapter six, where I conceptualised the construction of the hijabi social form as one of a belated Arabo-Islamic difference in excess. There, I argued that coloniality's Other is invented at the intersection of post-colonial national imaginaries, global hegemonic Imperial western secular-liberal discourses, patriarchy, sexism and modern time to begin with an exclusion from citizenry and arrive at an exclusion from humanity. With this, the hijabi was shown to live an

inferiorisation that persists regardless of internal politics and contestations. In this chapter, the construction of a social form for subjugation, a racialisation, was itself proposed as a process of coloniality's establishment. Similarly, the categories of belatedness, of difference in excess, and of wounded habitus were articulated as key conceptual tools for the analysis of the coloniality of being.

In chapter seven, and building on this experienced construction, I presented and analysed what my participants shared from their material lived experiences of coloniality functioning across social spheres. In the domestic sphere, the family was shown to be a site of erasure and aggression, under banners of protection and care, as the hijabi is socialised into the illegitimacy of her stigmatised form of being. In the public sphere, a collectivist effort mobilising myriad social actors functions to aggress and enforce subjugation. In the work sphere, this aggression is further underlined as the hijabi faces structural Islamophobia and is pushed into erasure. The state, additionally, was demonstrated as a space of assault, neutralised as a potential source of protection. In this scene, I argued that the market is the most prominent space of aggression, rather than the state, as geography, the conservatism of the dress, and socio-economic status entered as variables in structuring the hijabi's racialised lived experiences. Throughout, Lebanon's imagined identity entwines with a global discourse of Eurocentric hegemony to enforce a colonising uni-verse of being. In this respect, a series of micro-processes for erasure were identified. These include cumulative converging pressure through micro-aggressions, systematic vulnerabilising, devaluing and impoverishing, spatializing difference and the establishment of borders for cloistering within and beyond geography and institutional spaces.

In chapter eight, and building on the impact of the dress' conservatism on the hijabi's lived experiences identified in chapter seven, I turned to explore the variety of hijabi forms present in the Lebanese space. Conceptualising this as a hijabi kaleidoscopic spectrum, I proposed that the different forms of the hijab offer a different social experience based on the degree to which they have been diluted into mainstream Lebanese society. Dilution, I argued, is a process of coloniality's establishment which consists of a hollowing mummification through an emptying out where the practices of the colonised are systematically disrupted in both material shape and entangled meanings to negate the Islamic subjectivity and conduct they are meant to foster. This, I contended, is the modern and fashion hijab: a diluted dress and practice that distances itself from the hijabi social

form and advances a semblance to the imagined European under the coloniser's gaze. In parallel, I identified a second mechanism co-constitutive of this dilution's erasing effect: the establishment of an imagined idealised proclaimed authentic gaze forced upon those hijabis who refuse to turn to the modern or fashion hijabs. Under this gaze, I explained, the hijabi is pushed to collapse and self-dilute as she is faced with the impossibility of an enforced authenticity.

Building on this, the chapter further explored the power effects of this diluted hijab's presence in the Lebanese space. This mainly involved a process of further anomalousing the conservative hijab and underwriting its difference, legitimising and justifying the abject exclusion of women in conservative hijabs, and forcing the hijabi into an augmented sense of alienation. These, I argued, are disciplinary moves establishing coloniality's hegemony on the conditions of tolerance. The diluted hijab, I concluded, is essential for the erasure of the Islamic practice and the movement towards the establishment of coloniality as the only legitimate and real. Closing this exploration, I maintained that this diluted colonised and colonising hijab is, despite the improved social experience it might be said to offer, a marker of the zone of non-being: the impossibility of whiteness persists while the establishment of an anomalousing and multiply wounding alternative reveals itself as a process of coloniality's functioning.

In chapter nine, I turned to explore the discourses of *difa'*, defence and resistance, mobilised by hijabis to argue for their dress in Lebanese society. I began by identifying a parochial universality seeped in 'rationality', Europe, and Christianity and a discourse of a provincial secularism offered as a horizon which originates in Europe and which holds the potential to protect difference and ensure rights in a globalising world. Broadening, privatising, and individualising the Islamic practice, I argued that these discourses work to disavow the Islamic and the Arab as they naturalise the European parochial as universal. Further, a discourse of 'modern science' was identified where questions of health, medicine, and even technology are central in the hijabi's effort to reclaim her dress. Reproducing this 'modern science' as irrefutable truth, my participants' reclaiming further disavowed the Arab and the Islamic while establishing coloniality well beyond the hijab. In discussing the question of patriarchy and resistance, my participants explained how they perceive the hijab itself to be a tool of women's liberation in complex and multi-layered ways. Yet, they also explained, this claim's unenunciability in mainstream Lebanese society meant they were limited to an argumentation objecting to

the current model of western neo-liberal consumption as patriarchal subjugating aggression. Consequently, I argued that coloniality largely controlled resistance, rendering it a process of its establishment.

In the second section of chapter nine, I turned to explore some elements of the hijab as a delinked practice laying outside of the concealing logic colonising its analysis. There, I identified the hijab as a tool of self-formation wielded by my participants to attain the complete moral Muslim subject they seek. Through this performative practice, a habitus of Islam is developed as a relationship to ancestrality is both nurtured and mobilised for a non-modern *telos*. Reflecting on the discrepancy between the colonised resistance observed and the evident delinked conceptualisation present, I closed the chapter affirming that the dissonance between its two sections evidence the hijabi's double-consciousness and wounded being.

10.2. Key Contributions

Through a direct engagement with Lebanese hijabi women's shared experiences across various scales – from their experience of a discursive invention to the materiality of their damnation, and from their toleration to the (im)possibility of their resistance – this dissertation has sought to bring to light the plight of being Muslim in a modern world pushed into secularity with a Christian ethos of superiority.

From its empirical data, the project contributes a series of 'processes of erasure' and conceptual categories focusing on the under-researched coloniality of being. Drawing these out, I have shown how coloniality functions through various modes paralleling the movements of what are known as settler and non-settler colonialisms practiced across different geographies at different periods. While these are not advanced as conclusive, complete, or universal processes, I do nevertheless suggest that they may be useful in analysing coloniality's establishment across geographies both within and outside of the 'west', as well as across various forms and dimensions of Othered being.

From its specific case-study, this dissertation showcases the value of empirical research with subalternised communities – through the pursuit of listening with the subalternised themselves as a method – to reveal the inadequacy of Eurocentric analyses where the subalternised are erased. In this respect, this study has shown the deficiency of analyses where the epistemic categories of neo-liberal enlightenment are imposed, the nation-state is centred, and where the (delusional) promises of modernity are committed to. In the

pursuit of delinking, it, therefore, advocates for a theorisation of modernity through empirical data from the Global South for a better conceptualisation of the conditions that structure our modern dwelling.

On a similar level, this dissertation underscores the need to centre religion, particularly Islam, as a persistent marker of racialised inferiority, of exclusion, and of erasure within and outside the west. Accordingly, it empirically evidences the need for a recognition of anti-Muslim hate or Islamophobia as a global form of racism – particularly as a gendered phenomenon, with great parallels to anti-Black racism – which is foundational for modernity's homogenising effort where issues of forbidden excess and aggraving moderation are central. In doing this, the data and analyses presented push for a reconsideration and a critical politicizing re-examination of many current assumptions and trends in the understanding of the 'Arab and Islamic worlds' generally, and that of Muslim women and the Islamic hijab within them particularly. Indeed, this work suggests that the Arab region is one of rampant and structural exclusions and violences, born out of modernity/coloniality, rather than lingering due to modernity's incomplete achievement.

I have also advanced a better understanding of the racial dimension in subalternised Lebanese Muslim women's lived experiences of social interaction in contemporary Lebanon through what they themselves shared. Specifically, I have offered a voicing and documentation of their concealed dwelling of subjugation and erasure as racialised visible Muslim hijabis in the zone of non-being. In this respect, I have strongly argued that the racialised Muslim hijabi dwells wounded and fractured at the borders of modernity – in what Sayyid (2014) had identified as the impossibility of the Islamic subject – across both Global North and Global South. I have accordingly argued that much of the literature has failed to convey the degree, scope, extent, and depth to which the hijabi experience is one of violence and oppression, haemorrhaging with ordeals of erasure in negation and representation as scholarly interests rested elsewhere. I have shown how the academic study of the hijab has largely remained colonised, even colonising. From failing to centre the concerns of hijabis to failing to understand the dress as a delinking practice, the need to think with, from, alongside, through, and for the non-west pungently emerged.

More specifically, this work pushes for a reconsideration of what are termed the 'modern' and 'fashion' hijabs, as my data suggests that the incorporation of Muslim women into

modernity is stillborn, unachieved, as modernity/coloniality conserves its hierarchy. With this, the dissertation pushes for a reconsideration of a major trend in the literature studying the Islamic world where a 'synthesis' between modernity and Islam is advanced and where, with this synthesis, an amalgamation of modern and Islamic identities – especially among middle- and upper-class individuals – is celebrated. Indeed, this project and its participants also demonstrate how the post-secular 'pious modern' (see Bracke 2008) is not ultimately possible as modernity, rather than the pious, could not be but exclusionary, solely emancipating to those constructed along its image. In this sense, I suggest, a rupture, rather than a synthesis, is needed: a delinking.

Further, this project has shown how patriarchal and sexist post-colonial national imaginaries are key pillars of gendered exclusion and subjugation, as it has shown how these imaginaries entwine with global discourses – from violent secularity to modern time – for the establishment of hierarchies in humanity and uni-versalising erasures. In this, it has offered instances of modern institutions' terrorising normative commitments across social spheres and, ultimately, of nation-state's tyrannising structures. Throughout, a multitude of erasing marks became apparent: from the pollution of Arabeness to the outrageousness of being a terrorist. These, in turn, are revealed as markers thriving under the hegemony of global coloniality rather than being markers governed by the national or regional contexts they are in; hence the persisting possibility of Arabeness as a stigma within the Arab world.

Applied to Lebanon, I have evidenced the need for the land to 'work through its history' and radically break with its invention and ongoing global entanglements if it is to move in the direction of justice. I have also challenged many assumptions present in the literature portraying Lebanon as a beacon of freedoms in the Arab world, especially when looking at those who are erased when such assertions are made. In this respect, I showcased how the country exists under a structure of violent hierarchies not because of its Arabeness, but because of its modernity. Further, I have challenged the narrative portraying some regions in Lebanon, mainly Dahieh, as an 'Islamic milieu', as I have complexified the understanding of Lebanon's Islamic practicing populations' social world and invited a reconsideration of 'Islamic milieus' across the 'Arab and Islamic worlds'.

Eventually, as it sought to advance the ‘hijabi cause’, this dissertation has especially sought to advance the anti-coloniality cause. Understanding coloniality as a global phenomenon, it has evidenced how empirical work in various corners of the world unveils coloniality’s cunning complex functioning at different scales, appropriating and concealing through a monopoly of representation. Ultimately pursuing a decolonial redress in the pursuit of decolonising horizons, I hope this work has demonstrated the need for a different sort of research: research where listening is adopted as a methodology to, radically, investigate, identify, and espouse what is being silenced, lost, and erased.

I started this dissertation thinking that Lebanon was a unique case. From its historical links to France to its current religious and economic make-up, I was inclined to understand the hijabi experience as a Lebanese experience. Surely, there is truth in this. But there is concealment as well. Speaking to colleagues in Egypt, and reading on Egypt, I came to realise that similar trends unfolded there through narratives of a Pharaonic identity, for example. Visiting Tunisia, fieldwork across Lebanon resonated on the African end of the Mediterranean grave. Asking Jordanian friends and Syrian colleagues, I was told that both the Jordanian and Syrian states have long displayed trends that ‘are just like’ what I have described in Lebanon. Presenting at conferences, I was made to realise that what my participants shared was a global phenomenon. Surely, this unfolded with specificities, differences, and many complexities. Yet, it unfolded under the same logic, as coloniality pursued its global establishment, its global uni-verse.

10.3. Avenues for Future Work

As a case-study of under-researched and under-theorised complex lived experiences, this dissertation has necessarily left a number of avenues unexplored, as it has raised a series of questions for future research. In raising these questions, as Mignolo clarified, I write ‘hoping that what I will say will not be taken as the report of a detached observer but as the intervention of a de-colonial thinker’ (Mignolo 2011c: 5) committed to transformative anti-coloniality agendas.

First, the intersections/entanglements of modernity/coloniality from gender to class and sexuality, have not been explored in this project. For a fuller understanding of modernity’s structuring, and for an analysis of the hijabi’s lived experience beyond its racial dimensions, these forces require substantial research and theorisation. Emerging as significant at multiple points during this project, an intersectional analysis of these

various markers and associated social actors and institutions manufacturing the hijabi's dwelling in the zone of non-being, is sure to offer plenty. Here, a deeper exploration of how the hijabi's dwelling is both improved and alleviated by these various markers and their entanglement can help both our understanding of the hijabi's experiences as well as developing our understanding of the zone of non-being's structuring, especially in terms of a better conceptualisation of the hierarchy of markers and the articulation of the colonial difference in lived experiences within specific epistemic and cultural settings. Based on this, a better elaboration of an agenda for an anti-coloniality resistance may be further advanced.

Similarly, the spatial dimension of the hijabi experience emerged at multiple points of this project. Yet, a complete exploration of the spatial in the hijabi's erasure and its entanglement with urbanity as a social phenomenon of modernity remained unachieved. In this respect, Lebanon's post-colonial geographic mapping based on sect and religious affiliation indicates the potential of such an analysis to offer significant insights. Here, questions of the state and state sovereignty, of identity and citizenship, and of borders and walls, offer themselves as potent avenues for future research. In line with this, this dissertation's various chapters call for a more systematic focus on the omnipresent questions of capital, neo-liberalism, consumer societies and markets in the production of coloniality and the erasure of its Other. Such work remains to be theorised elsewhere.

Further, at the level of methodology, this dissertation limited participation to Lebanese hijabi women. While this was essential for this work's approach and objectives, and while a wider population of participants might have jeopardised the ability to arrive at this data and this analysis, working with both hijabi and non-hijabi women, working with both men and women, with Lebanese and non-Lebanese citizens, among others, is sure to offer data that can enrich and complement the conclusions of this thesis to further complexify and nuance the structuring of the hijabi's social life. The parallel exploration of the visibly religious Muslim males' lived experiences are here also raised as a valuable avenue of research. Such work remains to be done.

On another level, in recent years, a stigma of non-hijabiness has itself begun emerging within the conservative community in Lebanon. This, in turn, has been sedimented through the advent of institutional practices and social norms rejecting non-hijabis within religious circles, especially those affiliated to Islamic religious parties such as Hezbollah.

Yet, this remains outside ‘mainstream Lebanese society’, as it remains limited, circumscribed, and subordinate in comparison to the stigma of the hijab. In either case, this remains a separate phenomenon requiring its own critical investigation. Indeed, a phenomenon deeply entwined with the colonial logic of hierarchies, exclusions, governance, and homogeneity being mimicked in the religious community and with its effects on the production of mainstream Lebanese society, it is surely a valuable research project which remains for another space.

In a similar vein, Lebanon is a country where there are over 1.5 million non-‘citizens’, co-inhabiting the geography with around 4 million ‘citizens’. This dissertation has not systematically engaged with this presence, nor its effects. From limiting participation to Lebanese hijabis in a pragmatic move to side-lining an extensive incorporation of migrants and refugees’ presence in an analytical move, the analysis drawn throughout this dissertation does not address a major component structuring all of Lebanon’s dwellers’ daily lived experiences. Exploring the effect of this existence on the hijabi’s dwelling, therefore, further offers itself as a promising avenue of future research.

In line with this, the need to (re)-explore the lived experiences of other subalternised and racialised groups in Lebanon, such as refugees, is raised by this dissertation’s conclusions. Specifically, the need to examine these experiences through the lens of racism, of the colonial difference, and the colonial wound, is urged. Indeed, the need to rethink a number of conceptual tools used to analyse experiences of subjugation in Lebanon, such as theoretical frameworks of sectarianism or conflict and competition based on nationality, emerges from this project. Moreover, subsequently building on such work, comparisons between Lebanon’s various racialised groups under coloniality can in turn surely offer an enriching conceptualisation and understanding of both subalternised experiences and coloniality’s erasure. Finally, comparative work with other case-studies, especially from across the Global South and the Arabic-speaking and Islamic-majority worlds, can further develop this.

On 17 October 2019, an overwhelming wave of mass demonstrations mobilised by severe economic grievances erupted across Lebanon. With unemployment, increasing poverty rates, widening gap between rich and poor, currency devaluing and inflation, the Lebanese state had become unbearable. Indeed, following months of austerity with a collapsing economic system, this movement emerged as a cross-sectarian leaderless

revolution protesting a largely westernised capitalist oligarchic ruling elite. It has now come to be known as Lebanon's October Revolution, or Movement. It has not, nevertheless, turned into an anti-colonial(ity) revolution. Both the reasons for this as well as its implications for modernity's various Others are the latest avenues of research that can further develop this project and its analysis in the pursuit of liberating redress.

10.4. Closing and Impact

This thesis remains a fake, a forgery. It is not authentic. This is not because there is an essentialised category called 'Muslim woman' and I do not fit within it. Nor is this because there is an absolute subaltern that cannot be voiced. Not even because it was being authored in the prosperity of the English South Downs while Lebanon burned and witnessed a radical mobilisation in which the hijabi remains disavowed. It is, rather, counterfeit because these are not my wounds. It remains fake because I have not lived, loved, hated, been weighed down or been elevated by, the hijab. I do not hold the scars I speak of. Nevertheless, it is a legitimate forgery, a fake of commonality advancing a subaltern cause, fostering radical empathy, building bridges across colonial wounds, to debunk the ultimate forgery of our time: modernity.

To do this, this dissertation must be turned into an explicitly political work with its participants; this closing must be a beginning and this project must have an impact. Nevertheless, the question of impact here is not without its complexities. My training and situatedness in the Anglo-Saxon academy, as well as my gender and class among multiple other characteristics, ultimately mean multiple limitations. I certainly cannot transform into a researcher who informs hijabi women on how to emancipate themselves, even if this is in the struggle against coloniality. Nevertheless, much remains possible, particularly as the hijabi struggle is a part of a wider anti-colonial struggle.

On the one hand, given the decolonial nature of this project, its impact will begin at the epistemological level: shifting understandings and visibilising modernity's darker side. On a more grounded level, re-connecting with as many participants and gatekeepers as possible to share the analysis generated here for this epistemic effect will need to be done. Since many participants were fluent in English, this means that this work and its findings can be shared with participants. Nevertheless, many participants, as well as concerned people more broadly, are not sufficiently fluent in the imperial language in which this dissertation is written. This means that work to translate the thesis into Arabic and make

it available to participants, hijabis, Muslims in Lebanon, and Lebanese people more broadly, will need to be done. Further, dissemination through public writing across media channels in Lebanon as well as through academic and non-academic seminars and presentations will help to feedback these conclusions and findings to participants and those concerned. Preparing an effective summary or an accessible policy brief and making this available would also assist in this respect. In this sense, public engagement with the community, with gatekeepers and people of influence in Lebanon more broadly, and with those concerned within and beyond both Lebanon and the region, will be essential in the coming stages.

These findings could also be provided to a number of anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisations working in Lebanon. Such findings might indeed push these institutions to include the hijabi, and Muslims more broadly, within the radar of their anti-discriminatory works and pursuits. This will nevertheless require careful study to identify suitable institutions and avenues of work and remains to be explored. A struggle against the Lebanese legal system might also be of relevance here, should the community feel it so. Yet, it must be realised that this nation-state legal system remains limited in its ability to generate a decolonial liberation (Kassem 2019). Nevertheless, collaborative work in this respect can labour to impact the state, its legal system, and its institutions by engaging with key stakeholders as well as the relevant communities.

Eventually, impact here will revolve around an exercise returning the analysis and contributions of this work to my participants and the community of which they are part, as well as to other subalternised and marginalised communities both within Lebanon and beyond, so they may lead in employing these as they desire, so they may lead their liberation. In this sense, the impact of this project must develop in conversation with the hijabi community, and the Muslim community of Lebanon more broadly, and under their direction in conversation with other subalternised and abjected groups across the globe. In this, I must take a clearly circumscribed and defined side-role. Grassroots and collaborative, it is hoped that such work can pursue a decolonial horizon, rather than delve into a recolonising movement.

Advancing the ‘hijabi cause’, this project’s most valuable politicisation will eventually be in rendering coloniality’s violent erasure visible to advocate and develop means of delinking resistance by advancing a liberatory agenda ‘with respect to thinking, being,

knowing, understanding, and living' as it 'encourage[s] venues of re-existence' – of non-modern existence (Mignolo and Walsh 2018: 4).

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Annexes

Annex 1: Participant Information Sheet for Group Interviews

The Hijab in Lebanon

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (focus group)

You are being invited to take part in a research study that explores the role of the hijab in the development of political identities in Lebanon. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. *Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.*

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of a PhD project at the University of Sussex, U.K. It seeks to understand if and how Islamic headscarves play a role in the political role of women in Lebanon. This study will help academics and policy makers better understand the role Muslim practicing women play in their wider community, particularly in regard to their relationship to the state.

Why have I been invited to participate?

A range of Muslim women from different Muslim sects, age groups and backgrounds have been chosen to participate in the research in order to include a variety of views and experiences and produce in-depth research. As a Muslim woman living in Lebanon, your experience is highly valuable and will allow us to understand the dynamics and mechanisms we seek to investigate.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. You may also ask for your contribution to be rescinded, up till 1st May 2019, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a group interview which should not take more than 90 minutes. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed location. You will be asked to answer a series of questions relating to your experiences of veiling and what it means to you and to those around you. The interview will be audio recorded if you grant us your permission to do so, otherwise we will only take hand-written notes. All group interview material will be treated as confidential. While the research team cannot guarantee that group interview participants will respect the privacy of their fellow participants, confidentiality between group interview members will be agreed upon at the start of the group interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We cannot pay you to take part in this study. Participation will involve some of your time (not more than 90 minutes). If you have had traumatic experiences, there is the risk that

the interview could bring to the surface painful memories. We can assure you that you will not be pressurised to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and that regular breaks can be taken during the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation will greatly help us better understand the headscarf and women's social and political roles in Lebanon. We also hope that you will personally benefit from the opportunity to talk about your experiences in a friendly, non-judgemental environment.

Will information About me and the information I give be kept confidential?

All information collected in this research will be kept confidential. This confidentiality means that we will not share any of the information you tell us with anyone, except if we are faced with an extreme situation where we feel you or someone else is at risk. In this case, we will always talk to you before talking to anyone else' Participation will be on an anonymized basis. All data will be stored on secured computers, and data will be password protected and encrypted. All project information will be kept in a safe, lockable location to ensure that participants' full confidentiality is achieved. Data will be kept for a period of six years after data collection has ended (December 2018) and will be destroyed afterwards.

All data used in this project will be protected under the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that no data will be obtained illegally or for purposes other than the research project, no data will be used for any purpose other than research purposes, no unnecessary data is sought after, all attempts to keep data accurate and updated will be taken and the data will be not be kept beyond need and beyond what you have consented to. Additionally, the processing of the data will be done without any infringement on your legal rights and all measures to protect the data against unlawful use (through anonymization, encryption and not sharing it with anyone outside of the project, for example) will be taken.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used to complete a PhD project at the University of Sussex. Beyond that, they may be used for other publications and conference papers.

Who is organising, funding and approving the research?

The study is being carried out by Ali Kassem, a postgraduate research student at the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex. The research has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process at the University of Sussex (Approval No. [ER/AK689/2](#)).

Contact for Further Information

Please contact Ali Kassem if you would like more information about the study: Email: a.kassem@sussex.ac.uk, Telephone: +96176160798. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the C-REC who reviewed the project (c-recss@sussex.ac.uk). The University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Please feel free to pass this information to anyone you know who might also be interested in participating in the project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, 1st April 2018.

Annex 2: Participant Information Sheet for Individual Interviews

The Hijab in Lebanon

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Individual interview)

You are being invited to take part in a research study that explores the role of the hijab in the development of political identities in Lebanon. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. *Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.*

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of a PhD project at the University of Sussex, U.K. It seeks to understand if and how Islamic headscarves play a role in the political role of women in Lebanon. This study will help academics and policy makers better understand the role Muslim practicing women play in their wider community, particularly in regard to their relationship to the state.

Why have I been invited to participate?

A range of Muslim women from different Muslim sects, age groups and backgrounds have been chosen to participate in the research in order to include a variety of views and experiences and produce in-depth research. As a Muslim woman living in Lebanon, your experience is highly valuable and will allow us to understand the dynamics and mechanisms we seek to investigate.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. You may also ask for your contribution to be rescinded, up till 1st May 2019, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview which should not take more than 90 minutes. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed location. You will be asked to answer a series of questions relating to your experiences of veiling and what it means to you and to those around you. The interview will be audio recorded if you grant us your permission to do so, otherwise we will only take hand-written notes. All interview material will be treated as confidential.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We cannot pay you to take part in this study. Participation will involve some of your time (not more than 90 minutes). If you have had traumatic experiences, there is the risk that the interview could bring to the surface painful memories. We can assure you that you will not be pressurised to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and that regular breaks can be taken during the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation will greatly help us better understand the headscarf and women's social and political roles in Lebanon. We also hope that you will personally benefit from the opportunity to talk about yourself and your community in a friendly, non-judgemental environment.

Will information About me and the information I give be kept confidential?

All information collected in this research will be kept confidential. This confidentiality means that we will not share any of the information you tell us with anyone, except if we are faced with an extreme situation where we feel you or someone else is at risk. In this case, we will always talk to you before talking to anyone else' Participation will be on an anonymized basis. All data will be stored on secured computers, and data will be password protected and encrypted. All project information will be kept in a safe, lockable location to ensure that participants' full confidentiality is achieved. Data will be kept for a period of six years after data collection has ended (December 2018) and will be destroyed afterwards.

All data used in this project will be protected in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that no data will be obtained illegally or for purposes other than the research project, no data will be used for any purpose other than research purposes, no unnecessary data is sought after, all attempts to keep data accurate and updated will be taken and the data will be not be kept beyond need and beyond what you have consented to. Additionally, the processing of the data will be done without any infringement on your legal rights and all measures to protect the data against unlawful use (through anonymization, encryption and not sharing it with anyone outside of the project, for example) will be taken.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used to complete a PhD project at the University of Sussex. Beyond that, they may be used for other publications and conference papers.

Who is organising, funding and approving the research?

The study is being carried out by Ali Kassem, a postgraduate research student at the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex. The research has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process at the University of Sussex (Approval No. [ER/AK689/2](#)).

Contact for Further Information

Please contact Ali Kassem if you would like more information about the study: Email: a.kassem@sussex.ac.uk, Telephone: +96176160798. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the C-REC who reviewed the project (c-recss@sussex.ac.uk). The University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Please feel free to pass this information to anyone you know who might also be interested in participating in the project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, 1st April 2018.

Annex 3: Consent Form for Focus Groups

CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – GROUP INTERVIEW

PROJECT TITLE: The Hijab in Lebanon

Project Approval Reference: ER/AK689/2

Please feel free to say yes or no to any of these questions.

- | | Yes/No |
|---|---------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the attached Information Sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project (including the right to ask for my participation to be rescinded up till 1 st May 2019) without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. | |
| 3. I consent to the processing of the information I give for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. | |
| 4. I am aware that researchers cannot guarantee that the group interview participants will respect the privacy of their fellow participants despite the fact that confidentiality between group interview members will be agreed at the start of the group interview and I consent to this. | |
| 5. I allow the interview to be audio-recorded. | |
| 6. I agree to be quoted in project publications anonymously.
I would like this pseudonym to be used: _____ | |
| 7. I agree to the re-use of my interview for future research and analysis by the researchers of this project. | |

Name: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 4: Consent form for Individual Interviews

CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

PROJECT TITLE: The Hijab in Lebanon

Project Approval Reference: ER/AK689/2

Please feel free to say yes or no to any of these questions.

- | | Yes/No |
|---|--------------------------|
| 8. I confirm that I have read the attached Information Sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project (including the right to ask for my participation to be rescinded up till 1 st May 2019) without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I allow the interview to be audio-recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to be quoted in project publications anonymously.
I would like this pseudonym to be used: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to the re-use of my interview for future research and analysis by the researchers of this project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 5: Topic Guide for Focus Groups

Topic guide for focus group

Pre-group interview steps

- Agree on time and place.
- Ask for any health, accessibility or other requirements.

Introduction

- Introduce the project, the researcher and the objectives.
- Go through information sheet, ask whether they have any questions about it/ the project.
- Distribute consent form and then collect it.
- Be clear about time; how long it will take. Clarify that they are free to leave at any time.
- Stress that this is a safe space for people to share experiences that they may find upsetting or traumatic, so everyone is asked to be polite, respectful and sensitive to one another.
- Confidentiality agreement within group – make participants aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, but will be requested from all participants and will be maintained on the part of the research team.
- Give guidelines: Turn off mobiles, friendly environment where everyone gets to say what they think, recording, so please speak one at a time, moderator will guide the discussion, but you will be doing the speaking, no right or wrong answers, presence of assistant (if any) ...

Discussion points:

I. The Hijab in Lebanon:

Setting the scene:

- Do you think that the number of Hijabi women is increasing or decreasing in Lebanon?

Associations:

- How does the Lebanese population view you as a Hijabi?
- What are the traits/characteristics they associate with you as a Hijabi woman?
- Do these traits/characteristics apply equally to the different types of hijab?

II. Understanding the hijab

Definition:

- What is a hijab?
- Do you think the hijab plays a role in how the hijabi's personality develops over the years? How so?

History/ancestrality:

- What is the hijab's relationship to Islamic history?

- How important/present is this history to the Hijabi women today?

Ending

- Thank the participants and remind them of confidentiality agreement.
- Ensure that consent forms have been signed and filed safely.
- Ask participants if they know anyone who would be interested in participating in the research. If so, provide research mobile number so that they can contact us.

Follow-up

- In case there were signs of distress during the focus group, ask if it is alright to alert support group (where relevant) or any other entity or person to offer support to the participant. Provide list of support centres available if needed.

Annex 6: Topic Guide for Individual Interview

Topic guide for individual interview

Pre-group interview steps

- Agree on time and place.
- Ask for any health, accessibility or other requirements.

Introduction

- Introduce the project, the researcher and the objectives.
- Go through information sheet, ask whether she has any questions about the project.
- Give consent form and then collect it.
- Be clear about time; how long it will take.
- Stress that this is a safe space for her to share experiences and opinions.
- Stress confidentiality.
- Give guidelines: Turn off mobile, recording, no right or wrong answers, presence of assistant (if any) ...

Discussion themes:

I. The Hijab in Lebanon:

Setting the scene:

- Do you think that the number of Hijabi women is increasing or decreasing in Lebanon?

Types of veiling

- What do you think are the different types/styles of hijab present today in Lebanon?
- What do these types/styles connote?

Associations:

- How does the Lebanese population view you as a Hijabi?
- What are the traits/characteristics they associate with you as a Hijabi woman?
- Do these traits/characteristics apply equally to the different types of hijab?

Change:

- We have seen a number of changes both in the Lebanese state (new legislation, Hijabi women politicians...) and in the Lebanese community (more jobs, less harassment...).

How do you think these changes are coming about?

II. Understanding:

Definition:

- What is a hijab?

Power to construct:

- Do you think the hijab plays a role in your daily-life decisions?
- Do you think the hijab has played a role in how your personality has been developing over the years?
- When deciding what to wear, do you take into consideration your behaviour?
- When deciding what to wear, do you take into consideration your beliefs?

History/ancestrality:

- What is the hijab's relationship to Islamic history?
- How important/present is this history to the Hijabi women today?

Private/public:

- Where is the Hijab to be worn and where is it not to be worn? What do you think determines this?
- When do you put the hijab on? What does that moment mean?

Clothing:

- Is the hijab different from other clothing? If yes, how is it different and what differentiates it?

Ending

- Thank the participant
- Ask her if she knows anyone who would be interested in participating in the research. If so, provide research mobile number so that they can contact you.
- Ensure that you have the consent form signed and filed safely and electronically.

Follow-up

- In case there were signs of distress during the interview, ask if it is alright to alert support group (where relevant) or any other entity or person to offer support to the participant. Provide list of support centres available if needed.

Annex 7: List for Potential Support

The Hijab in Lebanon

Support Centres

This is a non-exhaustive list of potential support centres compiled for this research project. If you feel that anything you experienced before participating in this research project, during your participation or afterwards has caused you distress, alarm, worry or any other form of psychological pain you can make use of any of the below mentioned centres.

List of selected support centres:

1. Strides coaching, counselling and training services (provides counselling, support sessions and therapy sessions)
Blue Bldg., 4th floor, Abdel Aziz street, Hamra, Beirut, Lebanon.
Mobile: +961 3 686958
2. Al-Hayaa Al-Souhiyaa Al-Islamiya (provides support and therapy sessions)
Beirut office: +961 1 273390
Baalback office: +961 8 200118
Sour office: +961 3 952659
3. Al-Hariri foundation social health organization (provides support, therapy sessions and psychiatric medical treatment)
Beirut office: +96-1-379370/1
4. American University Hospital-Psychiatry unit (provides psychiatric medical treatment)
Building 56, 3rd floor, Hamra, Beirut
Tel: +9611350000 ext.: 5650/1

Annex 8: Table of Participants with Participant Information

Pseudonym	Geographic location of meeting	Age range	Sect
Mona	Tripoli	25-35	Sunni
Maha	Beirut	25-35	Sunni
Marah	Beirut	25-35	Sunni
Rabab	Beirut	25-35	Sunni
Shaza	North	18-25	Sunni
Fadia	Beirut	45-55	Sunni
Hoda	Beirut	55-65	Sunni
Maryam	Beirut	35-45	Sunni
Sara	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Yara	Beirut	25-35	Sunni
Nadine	Beirut	25-35	Sunni
Fadwa	Beirut	35-45	Sunni
Farida	Beirut	45-55	Sunni
Nada	Beirut	35-45	Sunni
Nibal	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Mada	North	25-35	Sunni
Mala and Maris	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Reem and Madawi	North	65-75	Sunni
Bahia	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Marwa	Saida	45-55	Sunni
Leen	Beirut	45-55	Sunni
Bana	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Sahar	North	18-25	Shia
Salma	Beirut	18-25	Shia
Maya	South	25-35	Shia
Shirine	South	18-25	Shia
Hanin	Beirut's southern suburb	35-45	Shia
Nourhan	Beirut	25-35	Shia
Tala	Beirut's southern suburb	55-65	Shia
Rima	Beirut's southern suburb	35-45	Shia
Naila	South	25-35	Shia
Soha	South	18-25	Shia
Mira	Beirut's southern suburb	55-65	Shia
Fatima	Haret Saida	55-65	Shia
Zahraa	Beirut's southern suburb	45-55	Shia

Nisrine	South	55-65	Shia
Bayan	South	45-55	Shia
Ghada	South	55-65	Shia
Nelly	Beirut's southern suburb	45-55	Shia
Focus Groups			
AUB (3 participants)	Beirut	18-25	Sunni
Khaled association (3 participants)	Beirut	18-45	Sunni
Saida Mosque (4 participants)	Saida	35-55	Sunni
Saida NGO (5 participants)	Saida	25-45	Sunni
Tripoli (6 participants)	Tripoli	25-35	Sunni
Iman (5 participants)	Beirut	25-45	Sunni
Abbesiye (6 participants)	South -Abbesiyeh	25-55	Shia
Markaz 1 (6 participants)	Beirut's southern suburb	18-45	Shia
Markaz 2 (5 participants)	Beirut's southern suburb	25-45	Shia
Markaz 3 (4 participants)	Beirut's southern suburb	25-55	Shia

Annex 9: Photo-elicitation Pictures (in order shown)



