CHALLENGING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
"LOCALITY" AND "PLACE" IN THE MUSIC OF CONTEMPORARY BEIRUT

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INTRO

The night before the war between Israel and Hizbullah started in 2006, Cynthia Zaven, a Lebanese pianist and composer, Catherine Cattaruzza, a Beirut-based graphic designer, and me, a Swiss ethnomusicologist, sat in an Italian restaurant in East Beirut. "Tonight Israel either bombs the airport or the electricity station, or the air force might just fly over the city and produce sonic booms. The sound waves might break your windows, the best thing is to keep them open," Cattaruzza explained. They made jokes full of black humour, and laughed a lot. For a Swiss, inexperienced in anything like war, it was not easy to fall asleep that night. The next morning, two deep booms came long before the wake-up call. The Israeli air force had bombarded Beirut International Airport, BBC world reported. The next night was even worse. Israeli planes produced one sonic boom after the other. Like heavy thunder, but louder, it sounded. Each explosion was accompanied by short cracking noises. It felt as if the sky would crash down on us. Immediately I became superstitious. Shall I go out on the balcony to observe what is happening? Definitely not! Shall I record those sounds? No! Don't force your luck! A "boom," very deep and aggressive, ended the spectacle: The first real bomb was fired from a ship into Southern Beirut. The city fell quiet. Birds sang.

For me, this looked like the end of my field research in Beirut. For the musicians that I had been working with, this was much more than just yet another war. It was a hurting departure into the memories of their childhood spent within the Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990. Whilst analysing their music, often in long discussions with them, they sometimes had mentioned the importance of specific *sonic memories* in their work. I did not force them into it. First, because I feared they could tell this as they thought the Swiss guy might find it interesting and exotic. Secondly, because I knew that I would never truly understand what they had experienced in their lives. Indeed, one year of fieldwork in Beirut had made them increasingly foreign to me. At the beginning, they seemed simply very warm, open and welcoming. The more I got to know them, the more disturbing they became. In short, they showed many of the socio-psychological effects that are discussed in literature on trauma (Sutton, 2002), and on post-stress symptoms of Lebanese society as a whole (Khalaf, 2002). "We have paid a heavy price for this community. Let those who would comment lightly on us beware," writes Jean Said Makdisi, the sister of Edward Said. Her writings seemed to warn me:

> We are unforgiving judges of those who have not shared our experiences. We are like
> a secret society. We have our own language; we recognize signs that no one else
> does; we joke about our most intense pain, bewildering outsiders; we walk a tightrope
> pitched over an abyss of panic that a novice does not even perceive, let alone
> understand. We are provoked to anger and fear by the smallest detail while suffering
> calamity calmly. We are, each of us, bundles of nerves wound up so tightly into little
> balls of extra-awareness that we bounce off the walls of our personal and collective
> catastrophes with an apparent ease. Every new battle, every new death, every new car
> bombing and massacre, every new piece of bad news is felt by each of us as a
> personal injury to be borne silently. (Makdisi, 1990, p. 211)

Despite the "warning," the musicians seemed to talk openly to me, the ethnomusicologist from Switzerland. Probably they enjoyed the fact that I did not understand all the hints and connections, and thus would not judge too easily or put them into the typical "Lebanese insider" categories. This is

mainly why I decided (after the 2006 war) to focus more on their war memories, especially on their sonic memories. Two of the research questions that took shape were: How do these artists remember their childhood years in war sonically? And: How are these memories translated into their artistic work today?

Beirut made it clear: Field research is essential for the study of music in a specific context. We cannot force a split between the music and the musician, and between the musician and the human being. However, we should not shy away from approaching musicians through discussions about their music. We should try to talk about aesthetics, and even discuss the qualities of their music. If we do not do so, we do not take them seriously as artists.

The musicians in Beirut offered me a lot of their time. Most of them I met many times, and sometimes we discussed things for more than half a day. I would like to thank them for their time, for their openness, and for their trust.

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INTRODUCTION

This research puts forward reflections about music and music making in our increasingly transnational and digitalised world. It analyzes contemporary musical aesthetics and observes how musicians situate themselves musically in local, regional, global, and transnational contexts. A number of key pieces are analyzed in detail, through interviews with the musicians (emic perspective) and through a listening test with non-Lebanese scholars, musicians, and music journalists (etic perspective). Altogether, these pieces of music are read as *sonic narratives* that offer access to a variety of meanings: some can be found inside the music itself; many get attached to it from the outside. The latter are discussed and defined inside the musicians' circles; they become cultural and social statements inside the mainstream society of their home country, or they speak of their position and positioning inside global and transnational spaces. The *sonic narratives* are thus significant from different academic perspectives. They let us analyse music and music making in today's world, and they allow us to read today's world through music and music making. As a case study, the results offer detailed insights into the *construction of ideas* and the exchange of *knowledge* in our world – according to Appadurai (1998, 2003) and other scholars working on cultural globalization and localization, these insights are truly needed: These scholars call for a *new ethnography*. They focus on the role of *imagination* in today's lives through which they aim to understand the variety of changes we go through on our planet.

Beirut serves as the host for this case study. The Lebanese capital, often associated with war, is the ideal urban and cosmopolitical centre: It builds on a long tradition of cultural activities and exchanges with Egypt and France, the Arab World and Europe, the USA, Russia, Canada, and Australia. The focus of this research lies in the generation of musicians and sound artists born at the beginning of the Lebanese Civil war (1975 – 1990): jazz, electro-acoustic musicians, free improvisers, rappers, rock and metal musicians, Arabic singers, oud-, qanoun-, and riqq-players. Through ethnographic fieldwork, several key pieces are selected. These pieces are analyzed with methods from ethnomusicology, popular music studies, and musicology, and are contextualized through interviews with the musicians/composers. Robert Walser's (2003) methodological approach inspired my own analysis. Walser (2003) encourages us to examine each piece of music in time and space, and consequently, it is therefore crucial to know all the references and quotations musicians use in their music. The analysis examines in detail how music is interlinked with local and global environments and how it is produced, discussed, and distributed via transnational channels and *knowledge communities*.

Summarized, the main research questions are:

1)   How do these musicians create and define *locality* and *place* in today's digitalized and transnational world?
2)   Do the new technologies of our digitalized world lead to homogenization, or to new artistic forms and aesthetics?
3)   What can we learn through these musicians' music about their position and positioning in the world?

The foundations of my work are based on theories and methods from social anthropology and sociology on one side, and on ethnomusicology, popular music studies, and musicology on the other. Two key ideas are worth mentioning here. First: Influenced by the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz (Schütz, 1975), Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann (Berger, Luckmann, 1966), my focus privileges the concept of biography over that of culture - or cultures. It looks at musicians as individual human beings first. They are interacting with local and global social to political realities, but they are not "determined" by their culture of origin. Second: The research works with a broad definition of music that includes phenomena like *soundscapes*, *the sonic*, *noise*, and *sound*. Further, in order to explain specific phenomena, theories like psychology of sound, and trauma, socialization of music, media studies, philosophy of the body and the mind, and consciousness are introduced.

The analysis offers a mix of emic and etic perspectives – it is thus linked to important reflections of the ethnomusicologist Andy Nercessian (2002), who searches for a middle way between what he calls the aesthetical determinism of Kant and the social determinism of Bourdieu. The emic point of view aims to discuss and highlight how the decision taking of these musicians (or sound artists) interacts with exterior musical and non-musical forces and phenomena. The etic point of view aims to discuss the musical qualities in a critical way – through my own observations, and through a listening test (inspired by a method from Philip Tagg (2001, 2003)) that invites specialized scholars to listen and discuss the main pieces this book is built around. It is from these emic and etic analyses that this book first discusses the multiple meanings that are attached to these pieces of music. Second, it tries to answer all the key questions mentioned above.

As a last step, the research tries to index specific phenomena that are found to be important during the study. The operationalization of some of the findings seems important, as this research tries to offer a detailed empiric case study whose aim is to contribute to the study of localization and globalization in an increasingly digitalized and transnational world. The results have thus to give us the possibility for a certain comparison. The research operationalizes the concept of *place* and *locality* in music, and the concept of *cultural diversity* through music. Resulting from that, the book challenges the concept of *cultural difference*. One aim is not to look at the musical phenomena in Beirut that are different to the ones in (for example) Switzerland only, but also at phenomena that are similar: Thus, the focus is additionally on rock music, rap, and electro-acoustic music. The aim is to find cultural differences in similarities – and, let me mention this here already, it actually does so.

The findings stand in contrast to definitions of diversity used by many actors working in the field of music: Arts councils, producers of world music, et cetera. Many music lovers and so-called cultural experts fear that the processes of globalization and digitalization lead to a standardization and homogenization of music. They complain about many tendencies in music around the globe: about the four to four beats in most of the songs; the decrease of improvisation; the switch from acoustic instruments to laptops. "Welcome to Mac World," they say, when hearing Westernized music all over the planet. They see globalization as one-way streets: from the West to the South (and to the East), from the First World to the Second and the Third - but not back. Some become paranoid: Globalization to them is purely a monster.

In my research in Beirut and my daily work as an ethnomusicologist, music journalist, and cultural producer, I see a different picture. The accelerated processes of globalization and digitalization led to new musical phenomena around the globe, and possibly even to a change of the direction of musical flows – from a one-way to a two-way street at least. Directly or indirectly, this research thus takes an activist approach here, and enters the debate on cultural diversity that has

become urgent within the last few years, for example, through the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. It shows that the notions of *cultural diversity* here are too limited, outdated by the music from musicians and sound artists in Beirut and other places in the world.

In many of their pieces, we do not hear the locality or the *place of origin* at first hearing. The analysis reveals the importance of *sonic memory* for this musicians and sound artists from Beirut: Altogether they are creating alternative, often hidden, and non-essentialistic notions of locality and place. It is not necessarily the Arabic melody or the Arabic instrument that makes music authentic or local. A musician might choose a certain musical style or instrument just in order to reach a certain market, or to get international funding. In today's globalized and digitalized world where all kinds of music is reachable with one mouse click, we have to look at deeper levels of music making to get answers to what *locality*, *place* and *authenticity* could mean - this is one of the main points I intend to make in this research.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY (1)

1. Theoretical Approaches

1.1   Towards a Musicology of the Sonic

Music making has changed dramatically over the last hundred years. Starting from the first recordings on cylinder phonographs, to cassettes, to CDs, to the complete digitalisation of its production in the 1980s. The Austrian music sociologists Kurt Blaukopf (1996), and Alfred Smudits (2002), follow these *mediamorphosen* (as they name it) in detail, and show in their work how technical changes affected music making, the arts, and society. The digital *media-morphosis* alone again brought revolutionary changes like new possibilities for the production and distribution of music – and new musical aesthetics. Further, it positioned the musician differently, for example, as the sole trader of his own music. Rolf Grossmann in one of his many important articles, focuses on the laptop as the increasingly important device for musicians' for many (if not all) tasks. He highlights the changes laptop culture brought to music with a quote from Luca Princip: "It is a new mode of musicianship: fusing self-research, composition, innovation, performance and distribution in a single technological device connected to digital networks" (Grossmann, 2008). Having all these developments in mind, it does not surprise too much, that Tagg and Clarida (2003) argue that the different academic fields that study music have not kept pace with this dramatic technological change. They argue that "no musicology of the mass media exists at the turn of the third millennium," and that thus their aim is to help "establish a musicology of the mass media" (2003, p. 7). For this book I am not so much interested in mass media, but in new media. I do not intend to write on the kind of popular music that makes it into the charts, but on music that is often defined as *subcultural*, *experimental* or *avant-garde*, and that increasingly positions itself between popular music and art music. The situation, however, presents itself similarly: Music theory - from musicology, to ethnomusicology, to popular music studies, to media studies - seems overwhelmed by the changes, and the amount of new musical phenomena to study. The mainstream of the studies seem to walk behind, and the scholars who try analysing the contemporary developments seem to walk on slippery ground: They mix theories and methods from different academic disciplines, and try to adapt them to the new topics they study – this book is doing this as well.

In October 2008, I was lucky to attend a small symposium with the title "Musik und/als Medienwissenschaft!?" in the German city of Oldenburg. Susanne Binas had invited a small group of German, Austrian and Swiss scholars from media studies, musicology, systematic musicology, ethnomusicology, sociology of music, and popular music studies to present their papers, and to have long discussions across the frontiers of the different academic disciplines. The symposium was a great success, and we all decided to continue collaborating in this or that way. It seemed we all felt the necessity to do so, as we experienced in those two days how much the different disciplines could gain from each other. We all work on the music in the digital age, but we do so from different angles, or we often use different academic terms to explain similar issues. Overall, it showed how shy we all are in leaving the safe grounds of our academic disciplines - but we have to do so when we still want to

come close to the phenomena of music in the digital age. One thing became very clear in those two days: In 2008 we are still at the beginning of the digital media-morphosis, and thus many phenomena around music are still going through rapid changes, they do not show clear features yet, and many consequences thus remain unclear. A first and obvious challenge for music theorists is to understand how the latest software and hardware works that musicians and producers use today, and thus how music is actually being produced. However, we scholars would need to master these technical aspects of sound production in order to deepen our understanding and knowledge if we want to be able to write about it. We would need to know more about the function of sound reproduction, multi-track mixing, mastering, audio editing, but also about sampling, interfaces, sound software like MAX/MSP, Live, Cubase, analog-to-digital conversion, and the historical possibilities and limits of music making (e.g., Hiebler, 2005). Inside ethnomusicology it is a common theme that many scholars feel the necessity to play non-Western instruments of the non-Western cultures in which they conduct their studies. But how many ethnomusicologists do actually master the instruments of the digital age? Some actually do, but it is a small minority. So, do today's music theorists need to become experts in laptop-culture, Dj-ing, sampling, and sound engineering? To a certain extent, I believe, yes. The fact that music theory overall – all the academic disciplines working on music – seemed to move away from the production side of music to concentrate on questions of its reception and meaning, might also be part of a flight from the enormous, revolutionary changes music production has gone through since the 1980s. In one of his articles, Rolf Grossmann, one of the participants in Oldenburg, opens up with a quote by Nicholas Cook: "The truth is that music is booming; but it is booming outside music theory" (Grossmann, 2005). The symposium showed clearly that the gap between theorists and practitioners has widened, and that there is a lack of focus towards the side of the production of music. So music theory has to catch up with recent developments. Possibly the best place to create advanced studies is no longer in conventional universities, but arts and music academies in which theory and practice come together. Grossmann (2005) argues along these lines, and mentions the importance of institutions like the KHM in Cologne, the ZKM in Karlsruhe or the HKB in Bern. Important here is, however, not only to show how music is produced and performed in today's digitalized world, but to analyse what kind of aesthetics these works create, and how these works deal with issues like *place*. Again, this became quite clear at this symposium: Not many scholars actually go to that stage, and if they do, they sometimes lack the theoretical background of the social and cultural sciences. Grossmann (2005, p. 1) says that Media sciences are still very open and undefined. Still, if we look into the avant-garde of the different discipline who do music theory - from musicology, to ethnomusicology, to popular music studies, to media studies - we find important discussions, and changes. Some of these changes are important and useful for my study of the music and the strategies of the sound artists and musicians in Beirut today.

1.2 Soundscape Theories

"Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school" (Cage, 1958).

An important development seems to be that an increasing number of scholars tend to widen the definition of music. Composers of *new music* or *musique concrète*, mainly based in Europe and the USA, have worked with *noise*, *soundscapes*, and *silence* for a while now, and the pioneers of

electronic music, electro-acoustic music, abstract noise, and other genres took these approaches up and brought them closer to the world of popular music. Thanks to that, not only specialized musicologists, but also the more popular music studies, started to reflect on broadening definitions of music. And ethnomusicologists like Steven Feld, and his work about the musical system of the Kaluli in Papua New Guinea (Feld, 1982), or John Baily (Baily, 2001), who worked on the liaison of music and the singing of the birds in Afghanistan, received more attention. These authors, among others, have been working on the discussion of music and non-music in foreign cultures for a while now. Today, music in many of these works is just simply defined as an organisation of sound - and it is no big surprise that the *International Journal on Music Technology* from Cambridge University Press is called *Organised Sound*. Some scholars define music as an *organisation of sound and time*, others introduce *pitch* (instead of sound), and silence.[4] Andy Nercessian writes a whole book on the topic: *Defining Music – An Ethnomusicological and Philosophical Approach* (2007). He brings forward a great variety of definitions of music from different regions of the world, and from different times, and from the different perspectives of musicians, composers, and scholars. The book is worth reading, and some of the definitions it reflects upon will become important in the continuation of this chapter. A rather radical definition comes from Jacques Attali, who speaks of music as the organization of noise, and argues that it is necessary "to imagine radically new theoretical forms, in order to speak to new realities" (Attali, 1985, p. 4, cited in Nercessian, 2007, p. 298).

Through these reflections on broader definitions of music, the term and concept of *sound* became fashionable. In one of her articles, Susanne Binas (2008) gives an overview relating to the huge number of publications that deal with sound: *The Sound of the City*, *Sound Signatures*, *Soundcultures, Sounds like Berlin, Sound-Art, Popsounds, Sound Alliances*, and many more titles. It seems that through "sound," music itself slowly seems to come back into the core of music theory – while, as a whole, the canon of ethnomusicology, sociology of music, and popular music has reflected about music and its role as a constituting force for specific social, taste, or knowledge groups. Often the focus lay on the members of these groups, and on the meanings they would attach to this music, but not on the music itself. However, the term "sound" is used in these works in a variety of contexts, and often in different ways: starting from "sound" as the most important stamp of a rock band, to further reaching reflections around sound – deriving from experiences in the field of sound-art, musique concrete and other genres. For my work, several of these approaches are important; for the moment, it is however necessary to reflect on the latter. It is based again on an observation of the widening of the sample databases of musicians and sound artists worldwide. In the Middle East alone we can observe a variety of groups, artists, and collectives that produce music and sound that would not have been possible ten or twenty years ago: The Palestinian collective, Checkpoint 303, mixes hidden recordings from Israeli checkpoints with electronic music; Mahmoud Refat from the Cairo-based label, 100copies, records his city with home-made microphones; the sound designer Rana Eid from Beirut records and collects an audio database from Beirut to put the *real* ambiance of, for example, a café, into the Lebanese films she works on. There are many more examples, and some of them I will discuss in this book. Worth mentioning is also the book of Hirschkind's, *The Ethical Soundscape* (2006), that works on the changing soundscape of the Arab World. In these musical works, and in books like the one by Hirschkind, a great range of all the audible phenomena we can hear in our environment becomes part of the music and research.

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[4] *Andy Nercessian devotes a whole book on definitions of music (Nercessian, 2007).*

Many of these ideas have their origins in the *soundscape movement* of the 1960s. The main ideas were coined by R. Murray Schaffer in his book *The Soundscape – Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. In this book he wrote about noise pollution, about how the soundscapes of the world turned from Hi-Fi to Lo-Fi, meaning the transition from rural to urban soundscapes. "The hi-fi soundscape is one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level," Schaffer writes, and continues that "the country is generally more hi-fi than the city; night more than day; ancient times more than modern. In the hi-fi soundscape, sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective – foreground and background" (Schafer, 1994, p. 43). From this first glimpse, already we feel that Schaffer and other soundscape theorists took a rather activist approach. They spoke of *noise pollution* and *acoustic ecology* and were involved in projects of cleaning the soundscape of the world. According to Schafer: "Modern man is losing touch with the suprabiological rhythms that make the sea so notorious as a trembling presence in art and ritual. Do all memories turn into romance? If so, the sea is the first example" (Schafer, 1994, p. 171). The main weapon of the soundscape activists was to raise awareness of the dangers the sound pollution put us in. They started to flee into sound memories that turned into romances: "The more quickly new sounds are hurled at us the more we are thrust back into the wells of memory, attractively fictionalizing the sounds of the past, smoothing them out into peaceful fantasies" (Schafer, 1994, p. 180). The nostalgia for the hi-fi was one of the reasons for many artists to search for the sounds of the desert, and record it – an intercultural dimension that was based on the nostalgia of sounds that the West had lost. The soundscape movement further stands at the beginning of the phenomena that we today fight against; the noise near airports, or putting walls alongside a highway. Within the academic field the soundscape theories did not get into the mainstream, as the activist approach often went too far.

Today, parts of the soundscape theories are back in the research of music and music making. Terms like *klanganthropologie*, *kulturgeschichte des hörens*, *auditory space*, or *psycho-acoustics* are not that unusual in today's conferences on music theory. Most of the scholars who work on these ideas of soundscape are specialised in analysing electro-acoustic music, and, for example, publish in the journal *Organised Sound*, or on different online platforms. Most of these scholars are producers of electro-acoustic music themselves, so they seem to have a practical advantage over the small number of scholars of popular music and ethnomusicology who now try to go along the same path. One of the interesting questions to approach here is how these auditory spaces and digital music (or music in the digital media-morphosis) are actually interacting, or if they actually do so? The theories, situated around the earlier soundscape movement, are used to possibly find new *aesthetics* or a new understanding for *place* in the music of our digitalized world. Before we go into the topic of place, and then introduce a transnational or cross-cultural dimension to these new phenomena, we first have to clear up some basic and crucial points. One of the main problems is that sound is very difficult to describe and analyse in an objective way. According to Binas, it offers a lot of possibilities for music theory; it is, on the other hand, very difficult to catch (Binas, 2008, p. 9). David Toop seems to agree with her when he writes that "a greater understanding of how human perception and psycho-physiology works runs in parallel with the fascinations of the sounds that surround us yet lie beyond our conscious awareness" (Toop, 2004, p. 3). To get close to these new phenomena is a task taken up later in this book.

For now it seems important to introduce the human being as the crucial factor in working with sound. The definitions of music as an organisation of sound seem to lack this human element.

Christopher Small therefore asks a crucial question in his book *Musicking*: "What is this thing called music, that human beings the world over should find in it such satisfaction, should invest in it so much of their lives and resources?" (Small, 1998, p. 2, cited in Nercessian, 2007, p. 51). Today, an increasing number of scholars agree with him. "Sound" thus becomes highlighted as an ideal phenomena through which a variety of musical and non-musical elements become clearly connected. For example, it is immediately clear that the sound of a recording, or the sound of a band, is linked to sound technology. Sound technology itself is developed in a complex interaction between overall developments of technology, the human urge for progress, and for the new, and the changing needs and wishes from insiders like musicians and producers. Overall, to work on sound signifies that the scholar intends to analyse music as a phenomenon that goes far beyond its musical structure that used to be written down in musical notation – for example, by musicologists. The phenomena of sound includes the overall acoustical and non-acoustical factors that together form the sensual character of music, Wicke argues (Wicke, 2001). When working on sound and soundscapes, on perception and production of sound, we come to the crossroads between the cultural, the social, and the aesthetical. And we introduce the human being - the body and the mind - as the central point for the music analysis.

1.3 The Body and the Mind

Let me just open up two dimensions in which we see how the human body and mind interact with sound and music making. There are many more dimensions, but I work on those two only, because they deal with the production of music and with the interaction of perception and production; and this is what this book tries to explore. The second will lead us to many unanswered - or unanswerable - questions. Some of them I try to answer not here, but in the final chapter of this book. The first dimension simply shows us that we should focus primarily on the body, and not on technology. It further tells us to work on the final result of complex musical and non-musical interaction. In doing so we are probably able to reduce some of the complexity and find at least some clear results. The best strategy seems to be to start from the musical results - in this book, from pieces of music made in Beirut (see chapter 6). We can try to analyse if we hear specific aesthetics, that might be linked to phenomena from the musician's environment; and we might try to ask the musicians themselves - however, we have to be careful here, because often the musicians would either not be conscious themselves, or they might respond unreflectively. To reduce the complexity in focusing on the music itself, and on the human being that produced this music, seems a valuable option. This again seems not only true for this interaction between the musician with his audible surroundings, but also between the artist and his surrounding market forces, or the artist and his interaction with sound technology.

At the symposium in Oldenburg, Werner Jauk presented parts of his interesting speculative theory (Jauk, 2008). Jauk, who is both a multimedia performer and a scientist, reduces, in his academic writings, all phenomena to an interaction between the human body and the environment. He puts the body in the centre of his research, and shows how it becomes instrumentalized and mediatized by outside forces; technological change, for example. According to Jauk, technology sometimes advances fast and moves away from physicalness. If it wants to "survive" however, it has to bend back to the practical usage possibilities of the body. Sound and media artists, especially when they perform live, will always try to find and use interfaces between human and machine that they can

steer in a comfortable way - or better still, in a way in which their body can move and introduce the sounds into the machine. DJs today use software like Traktor or Serato Scratch through which they can still play their DJ-sets on turntables. They can scratch like in the "good old days," but they actually play WAV or MP3 files from their laptops - so after the gig, they do not have to carry a heavy bag with vinyl on their way home anymore. Tarek Atoui, one of the sound artists from Beirut, works on the sound software MAX/ MSP. He steers it, however, through a joystick, so he can move his body freely to the sounds and beats of his music; similar to the way a rock guitarist moves his body during a solo. It is the human being and his body that is always at the centre of music making, on the side of the input, but also on the output. In the end, no-one is actually interested what happens inside the computer: A musician or sound artist constructs his music in a way that it finally moves him, and hopefully moves others. It is the final result that counts, the sound that we hear. In his paper held in Oldenburg, Jauk defined music as the "formalised logic of the auditory, and thus an adequate survival strategy of our body in an environment that is constantly changing through technical innovations." For academic research these reflections seem important: We need to know how contemporary sound tools work, but should not rest there. We should always look to the artist, the human being that works with these tools in a specific way. And we should combine the studies of sound technology and mediamusic with the qualitative research methods of social and cultural studies (Grossmann, 2008, p. 10). The specific way a musician or sound artist works with these tools tells us a lot about his or her knowledge, and it leads us to a specific sound aesthetic that is worth reflecting upon.

1.4   Intercultural Dimension: Between Kant and Bourdieu

As an ethnomusicologist, my intention is to work on the concept and theories introduced above on a *cross-cultural* level. This brings, again, another set of problematic issues that we have to solve first. Ethnomusicology is traditionally positioned between musicology and cultural and social anthropology. If we want to work on the production side of music, we have to overcome some of the theoretical obstacles. It is Andy Nercessian in his book *Postmodernism and Globalization in Ethnomusicology – An Epistemological Problem* (2002) that leads us to the crucial points best. He starts from a similar observation as we made above: Ethnomusicologists, at least in recent years, have been focussing mainly on the meanings of music, on its perception and cognition in a specific culture, but not so much on the music and its characteristics in themselves. According to Nercessian, this is not so much a reaction to the overwhelming developments in music in recent years (as we argued before), but to one of the basic credo of ethnomusicology: It says that music has different meanings in different cultures, and that its "qualities" have to be explained by members from one culture for other members of the same culture. Thus, Nercessian argues that "ethnomusicologists believe that the context is at least as important as the music being analysed. Often, the greatest space and energy is devoted to context rather than the music itself." He continues comparing ethnomusicologists to musicologists: "Ethnomusicologists have a better all-rounded view of music, being able to see the broader picture of its position in culture and society. They are able to see it, so to speak, from a distance," while musicologists "are so close to music that they cannot step back to see it as a whole, placed within a larger whole, and cannot therefore define it objectively" (Nercessian, 2007, p. 26).

Nercessian argues that the differences between musicology and ethnomusicology go back to the different approaches, concepts and theories of Kant (2006) and Bourdieu (1984). Kant divides

music and meaning. He measures through absolute and universal aesthetical criteria like "beautiful." Bourdieu, on the other hand, analyses music from within a specific social or cultural setting. In *"Distinction - A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste"* (1984) he argues that music cannot be separated from its meaning – It cannot just be "beautiful" or "ugly" by itself. Its qualities or non-qualities are discussed and defined by the members of a specific circle, society, or culture. Nercessian offers a helpful example:

> We believe that Mozart is great because we are told through a variety of sources including books, individuals, connoisseurs, etcetera, that Mozart is great. The possibility that the work and how it affects us might have something to do with Mozart's greatness is not ever considered. Further, the belief in the value of the work of art is equated with the value of the work of art. If, due to its position in the field, I believe that Mozart is great, then he is great. There is no difference between belief in the value and the value of the work. (Nercessian, 2002, p. 49)

 For Bourdieu, music thus has no universal qualities - in contradiction to Kant. Bourdieu even goes one step further, as Nercessian shows through his analysis of Bourdieu's reflections in *"Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception."*[5] His thesis is that the entire essay rests on three major premises: "First, that every work of art is dependent for its existence on its capacity to be deciphered by the receiver. Second, for any such decipherment to be possible, there must be not only a familiarity with the cultural code in question but a mastery of it. Third, the artwork cannot be separated from its meaning" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 51). These three major premises lead us to the debate on music and meaning, through which we can see some of the central theses of ethnomusicology very clearly. However, it is these central theses of ethnomusicology that become increasingly problematic in today's increasingly globalized and digitalized world, as we are going to see.

A central thesis of ethnomusicology is that meanings of music cannot be found in the music itself, and this is, according to Nercessian, one of the main differences between ethnomusicology and musicology (Nercessian, 2002, p. 69). John Blacking argued in his influential book *How Musical is Man?* (Blacking, 1976) that comparison between different music from different cultures cannot be made on purely musical grounds, because music means different things in different cultures. Interesting here are at least two things: First, since Blacking, most of the ethnomusicologists do actually read music in context. They do not, for example, analyse music from afar, from the etic perspective and see what it could mean from there, the outside. Today, where music travels between local and global contexts, and our sample-databases are filled with sounds from everywhere, this could be an interesting approach too. Second, most ethnomusicologists try to find the "true" meaning of the music in a specific context. This is also what Blacking did. Nercessian is very surprised from the conclusions Blacking has drawn from the premise that music has different meanings (or, what he sometimes calls structural interpretations) in different contexts/cultures. "Instead of trying to study the many different meanings and how these interact with context, however, Blacking's goal was to discover the single all-important one" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 69). So, why do we need to reduce the number of possible meanings that are attached to a specific piece of music? Why should we not show the range of music's polysemy, its capacity to mean many things? Nercessian summarizes the discussion as follows. According to him, it is:

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[5] In Bourdieu 1984: The Field of Cultural Production*: Essays on Art and Literature*.

the idealism inherent in ethnomusicological thought, which has a tendency to reduce musical phenomena to their meaning, claiming that the separation of music from meaning can result in a sort of Western ethnocentrism. If we cannot see a music in terms of its role in society and, therefore, its meaning, we cannot see it at all. If we try to separate music from meaning, then we run the risk of imposing Western concepts and analytic criteria on a music whose existence has depended on a fundamentally different conceptual system. (Nercessian, 2002, pp. 11-12)

We should probably find a middle path between Bourdieu and Kant: First, we should not put a sociological imperialism on art, but we should re-ask many actors in the field what a particular piece of music really means in a certain context. Second, we should risk going into the debates of musical qualities and aesthetics, but we should allow the debate to happen, and not merely put forward our own ethnocentristic view. Let me invent a possible example: A singer from Lebanon tries to sing Arabic maqam scales over jazz chords. He lives in Lebanon, but he performs at home, in the Arab world, the USA and Europe. If I, the Swiss ethnomusicologist, hear, or think I hear, that he has certain difficulties in adapting these maqam styles to the jazz chords, am I "allowed" to focus on that delicate point? Am I even allowed to reflect on musical qualities and criticize musically? Or do I need to stand back and state that this kind of use of maqam scales over jazz chords is typically Lebanese? Is it a question of taste, and not a question of not knowing, or even of bad quality? Thus, should I restrict myself to a description of what I hear, and not raise a critical debate on musical qualities and on aesthetics?

According to Nercessian "any claim of the sovereignty of the emic perspective in our understanding of a music is (….) not at all valid" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 97). He thus puts the music-meaning debate even one step further by challenging the concept of culture. He draws his attention to the differences inside a specific society (or culture) and highlights the importance of contexts and milieus. It seems clear that the inner circle of tarab musicians and listeners (see 3.1.4) have a different knowledge about their music than the average citizen in the Arab world has. And it also seems clear that the ethnomusicologists, for example, around Jihad Racy at the University of California in Los Angeles, have more knowledge about tarab music than, again, the average citizen in the Arab world. It is further highly realistic that the tarab musicians feel closer to the scholars from L.A. than to the average Arab citizen; at least when the topic is music. The meanings that are attached to tarab music are thus probably more diverse inside a specific culture (for example the Arab world) than inside a context: a transnational knowledge community (of Tarab scholars). Nercessian agrees on that: "The meaning of a music is dependent on context (among other factors) but not really (…) on the culture" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 80). Nercessian even goes one step further; and here the claim that the meaning of music should be analyzed from an emic perceptive becomes almost absurd. He writes that "the fact remains that I can no more get into the mind of Afghans using the term music than I can get into the mind of someone in my own culture speaking of classical music" (Nercessian, 2007, p. 263). "Each piece of music has different meanings for each listener, and the question now is how much bigger the differences between individuals are than the differences between cultures?" (Nercessian, 2007, p. 259). Is a trumpet player like Mazen Kerbaj (see 6.2) more determined by his Lebanese culture, by his foreign colleagues working in the field of *free improvised music*, or is he just an independent, individual human being? These are questions, I believe, that ethnomusicology today should help in trying to answer. In this book I try to do so with the help of phenomenological

approaches in sociology. The focus lies on the concept of *biography* as it acknowledges that all our behaviours are probably influenced by cultural, contextual, and individual forces. We do things out of a certain position, with certain knowledge. Nercessian concludes as follows:

> People perceive things according to their cultural backgrounds, and all cultural backgrounds have to be respected equally. As things exist only according to people's perceptions of them, most of the things in this world, that is all those things that do not belong to our culture, cannot be intelligible to us since they do not exist for us. Yet their existence has to be acknowledged since they exist for others. (Nercessian, 2002, p. 19)

And: "There is clearly not one, but many positions from which a culture and a music can be understood. Each position, I believe, has much to offer, which makes the limitation problematic" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 25).

I believe we should find a middle ground: between the analysis and the discussion of the music itself, and the meanings attached to it. This is what I intend to do in this book. I try to observe out of the perspective of the music as to how a single musician can create a specific aesthetic and what meanings he attaches to it. I observe further how this aesthetic intervolves with the biography of the musician, his position in Beirut and the world, and his social networks.

First and foremost this book is a cross-cultural case study of the diversity of aesthetical approaches in a digitalized and globalized world. It looks at the different aesthetical approaches musicians and sound artists in Beirut come up with, and it searches for differences and similarities in musical approaches in other places of the world. Nercessian here makes, again, an important point: "The culture of the Other cannot be viewed entirely in terms of those elements that we cannot immediately understand, as is the case with the dominant perspectives in anthropology and postmodernism in general. It must be viewed as a spectrum that ranges from inappropriable elements to appropriable ones" (Nercessian, 2002, p. 20). The journal Organised Sound (Cambridge University Press) works on these topics a lot – in August 2008 it dedicated a whole issue on cross-cultural aesthetics. I try to find those aesthetics through analysing these pieces of music by myself. Further, I organised a listening test for scholars from Switzerland, Europe and the USA. All of them are experts in either different styles of Arabic music, or metal music, rock, free improvised music, or electro-acoustic music. I analysed how they hear these pieces of music, and whether they hear certain specialities, or not.

If we go one step further, we actually see that the phenomenon (the music) and its perception (the meaning) are inseparable - even if this would make things easier. On the other hand, this is actually the fascinating thing in working with sound. Binas sees *sound* as an instrument for musical analysis that leads directly to the process of music making, and the interaction with aesthetical, cultural, social, and economical forces, and/or actors of the outside world. According to Binas, it would be a task for ethnographers to reconstruct the interaction of these forces and to focus and to reflect on the aesthetical ideas that result from it (Binas, 2008, p. 11). Thus, one goal of this book is also to study the interrelations between the two. This again fits to George Lipsitz' call for a theory the helps us understand how cultural production interacts with politics (Lipsitz, 1999, p. 62). And analyzing these interactions we enter the important discussion as to whether these sonic narratives and the discourses around them actually do speak about the world: about possibilities and challenges,

changes, et cetera. Is it possible to use music as a signifier through which we understand a specific context? What can the social and culture studies gain when they use music as a source? Ethnomusicologists and music theorists have stressed for a long time now, that it is possible to read culture through music. John Shepherd, for example, argues that music evokes the textures, processes and structures of the social world out of the perspective of an individual social subject (Shepherd, 1992*).* So why should it not be possible in a digitalized and globalized world to read about this digitalized and globalized world as well? For sure, we would not see everything, but we would see it from a specific perspective, and it is actually these perspectives that today's theorists of cultural globalization and localization are interested in.

1.5   Imagination in a Globalized World

Bourdieu and Wacquant state in their work "Reflexive Anthropologie" (1996) that it is neither the individual nor the collective that social sciences should focus on, but the various interrelations between the two. In order to catch this *in-between world* of Bourdieu and Wacquant, Appadurai (1998; 2003), and other scientists (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1996; Beck, 2002; Giddens, 1995; Hall, 2008, 2007, 1996), focus on beliefs, ideas, reflections, and visions of human beings. It is in these thoughts and ideas where important theoretical concepts like identity[9], ethnicity, and hybridity find their living, often contradictory expressions. And it is through these thoughts and ideas that scholars hope to gain knowledge about the conventions, restrictions, realities, and possibilities of specific social contexts. Appadurai defines imagination as a social practice that becomes increasingly important in our globalized and digitalized world. Imagination is capable of crossing borders easily, it creates what Benedict Anderson called "imagined communities", and it is therefore a "key component of the new global order" (Anderson, 2003, p. 31). Appadurai's focus on imagination is based on his conviction that the globalized world does no longer function according to simplified models like "centre and periphery" or "push and pull" (Appadurai, 2003, p. 32). He calls for a "new ethnography" that is capable of evaluating the role of imagination in today's lives, and is thus able to understand the variety of changes we go through on our planet (Appadurai, 1998, p. 24). Appadurai and other scholars observe the new financial, economical, political, and cultural networks and bodies that are created on a daily basis; they study the unresting flows of people, money, and goods across continents; and they reflect on the question on how attached or detached ideas, reflections, and dreams are from specific places. One of the crucial questions of the time would be: What does place mean inside the globalized world? To answer this question, Appadurai (and others) suggest to introduce films, theatre plays, novels, travelogues, and other cultural expressions and forms of art into the ethnographical research; but not only as side elements, but as its sources (Appadurai, 1998, p. 37).

This is exactly what this book is about; as we perhaps understand by now. It focuses on music, because human ideas and visions are not expressed in words only, but also in cultural and artistic forms and styles. Musicians choose local and global styles, sounds and beats, and thus express their connection to the world. They create their own taste cultures (Bourdieu, 1987), and offer musical tools of interpretation that enable others (fans, listeners) to express attitudes, values, and lifestyles. The many works on popular music and subcultures, deriving from around the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS) in Birmingham in the 1970s and 1980s, showed that artists or

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[9] Cultural identities, collective i., multiple i., transnational i., post-colonial identities, et cetera.

musicians, as members of subcultures (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1981, 1991; Slobin, 1993; McRobbie, 1999; Bennett, 2000) sometimes help to work against the hegemonic structures and towards social change. Today it is clear that music is one among many creators of social bonds.

The main difficulties many of these culture and social scholars who deal with imagination have, is that they often do not have the right tools , for example, to analyse a film, or a piece of music with. They tend to talk about the film or the music in a rather anecdotic way, and do not analyze it in depth. They focus mostly on the positions an artist, for example, attaches to his piece of art, and not on the piece of art itself. They often fail to see the subtleties through which, for example, music talks about lived experiences and realities in a globalized world. This book wants to act as a case study that goes deep into the music, and one that does not *only* deal with narratives and discourses about music. And it is a must to look at the deeper structures of music and music making to gain knowledge about our world today. Let me finish this part with a short hypothesis that we are going to follow up in the book:

The analysis of music and the discourses around music offer us detailed and nuanced insights into the local and global contexts, their structures, and social to economical conditions, in which the specific musicians are living and acting in. Hence, a systematic, empirical ethnomusicological research thus offers a vital contribution to the debates on worldwide processes of globalisation and localisation.

2.   Methodology (1)

Analyzing how music and music making interacts with the nearer and further environment is highly complex. The best approach to handle this complexity seems to me to be to analyze it from two sides, from the music itself, and from the musician as the first point of view. The first side sees the musician as a social subject, the other looks very deeply into how he produces music - how he works with his instruments, software, and hardware. The methods to analyze the part of the music are presented in chapter 5 just before the different pieces from Beirut are actually analyzed. To analyse the musicians as a social subject, puts theories and methods from phenomenological philosophy into the foreground. Phenomenology works with similar guidelines as I do; it thus becomes one of the most important sets of ideas this book is based on. It therefore seems necessary to introduce this theory here briefly.

2.1   Phenomenology

Phenomenology deals with the study of phenomena. Basically, the discipline studies different forms of experiences like seeing, hearing, imagining, thinking, feeling (i.e., emotion), wishing, desiring, acting, but also the embodied volitional activities of walking, talking, or cooking. It describes these experiences and actions from the *first-person point of view*. Hence, to observe and describe closely how a musician creates his music is a typically phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was launched by Edmund Husserl at the turn of the twentieth century. Husserl "integrates a kind of psychology with a kind of logic" the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* writes. His phenomenological approach "develops a descriptive or analytic psychology in that it

describes and analyzes types of subjective mental activity or experience, in short, acts of consciousness." *Consciousness* is again a crucial element of phenomenological studies.

In the 1960s and 1970s, phenomenology was introduced to sociology, mainly through Alfred Schütz (1975), and through his students Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann (Berger, Luckmann, 1966), and Aaron Cicourel (1974). According to Schütz:

> …all social sciences take the intersubjectivity of thought and action for granted. That fellowmen exist, that men act upon men, that communication by symbols and signs is possible, that social groups and institutions, legal and economic systems and the like are integral elements of our life-world, that this life-world has its own history and its special relationship to time and space. (Schutz, 1975, p. 55)

Schütz tried to integrate the issues of intentionality of Husserl (1984, 1986) with the *Theorie des sozialen Handelns* from Max Weber. The conscious, intentional actions of an actor were put into a specific *habitat* or *life-world*, an environment this actor acts in. In our increasingly globalized world this habitat can be a closer or further, smaller or bigger environment, with its specific framework of possibilities. Through repeated actions, the actor learns to know the enabling conditions of his environment and thus gains *experience* - experience is yet another important term in phenomenology. Some types of actions are, however, transported via the actors' parents, grandparents, and further generations. According to Schütz, our world of daily life (the intersubjective world) existed long before our birth:

> All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handed down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of 'knowledge at hand' function as a scheme of reference (Schütz, 1975, p. 72).

These *types of actions* (another important term) are thus sedimented through time, put forward mainly through the society and its traditions. They include embodied skills and reactions (like fear, for example).

Phenomenology approached the complex issue of meaning as well, and basically links it to experience. It addresses the meaning things have in our experience: the significance of music, objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others - all things we experience in our life-world. "Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity." Phenomenologists further reflected on the term knowledge, and observed conditions and possibilities for knowledge. This again leads to the core of this book: In trying to see exactly how these musicians play music, I hope to find traces of their knowledge, or non-knowledge. I am going to argue that this knowledge is closely interlinked with their biography. It is, to a high degree, dependent on their social position inside of Lebanon, and on the places the musicians and their families have lived in. Biography is yet another important term. Schütz argues further that man finds himself at any moment of his daily life in a "biographically determined situation", this means **"in a physical and socio-cultural environment as defined by him, within which he has his position, not merely his position in terms of physical space and outer time or of his status and role within the social system but also his moral and ideological position" (Schütz, 1975, p. 72). Basically, Schutz is interested in the world of daily life as a whole, "which the wide-awake, grown-up man who acts in it and upon it amidst his fellow-men experiences with the natural attitude as a reality" (Schütz, 1975, p. 72).

Last but not least, another point has to be mentioned: In phenomenology we classify, describe, interpret, and analyze structures of experiences in ways that answer to our own experience. This means that phenomenological studies are highly aware of the importance of the observer, in my role, the scientist. Alfred Schütz even says that the scientist creates the world - in a humoresque moment, he even compares the scientist to God (Schütz, 1975, p. 287). Hence, the first person becomes the puppet of the scientist.

> His destiny is regulated and determined by his creator, the social scientist. (…) What counts is the point of view from which the scientist envisages the social world. This point of view defines the general perspective framework in which the chosen sector of the social world presents to the scientific observer as well as to the fictitious consciousness of the puppet type. This central point of view of the scientist is called his 'scientific problem under examination. (Schütz, 1975, pp. 287-288)

To Schütz however, this is not the end of academia, as we are going to see later. In my case, these statements by Schütz (and by other writers, especially in social anthropology) convinced me to not only show clearly that I write about these musicians in Beirut from my own perceptive. It also convinced me to try to analyse their music and music making with my own and critical point of view. The analysis is mixed: etic and emic. The interviews and conversations with the musicians do influence my interpretation of their music.

2.2   Ideal Types, -Scapes, and -Cultures: The Methodological Framework

Through a set of methodological approaches this theory enables us to put forward far-ranging theses without ignoring the complexity, inconsistency and the process-oriented nature of human (and artists') behaviour and strategies. This, however, is a typical task for every ethnographer in the field who uses a set of mainly qualitative research methods that are, for example, described in *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1996): different forms of interviews (structured, semi-structured, informal /theme based, biographical /with single informants or groups), participant observation, and systematic observation (Beer, 2003, p. 119; Hauser-Schäublin, 2003, p. 33) of the musicians in their daily life and during concerts. The goal has to be to know the life-world of these musicians as well as possible. Schütz offers us good criteria on how to actually describe and write about these musicians from Beirut. The descriptions of all their actions should have the highest degree of clarity and distinctness, and should try to explain the logical consistency behind it (Schütz, 1975, p. 278). From these individual actions, the scholar should extract model types of actions and behaviours (Schütz, 1975, p. 279). This last step alone shows two things: First, that social phenomenology gives the researcher a certain freedom: He is allowed to choose these model types of actions and behaviours. Second, it is interesting in creating models. For this book this seems an ideal approach: As mentioned before, it is meant as a case study, that intends to put forward and highlight significant musical aesthetics and meanings. And as we further learned from Nercessian, it is permissible today to write about music and its meaning from a balanced, but rather personal perspective. In constructing these model types of actions and behaviours, I, as a researcher, create a scientific model of human action of musicians born during the Lebanese Civil War, living in Beirut today. According to Schütz, this scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way "that a human act performed within the life world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor

himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life" (Schütz, 1975, p. 279). The model does not exclude variants; it thus gives credit to the fact that the behaviours of individuals are often not predictable. Schütz proposes to reflect on these variations as well, and to construct "several models or even sets of models of rational actions" (Schütz, 1975, p. 281); this is what I intend to do as well. The different *models of rational actions* show us how the musicians in Beirut act or react in or to a certain situation and constellation, for example, the 2006 war. I agree with Schütz, that it is useful to look at these variations from the perspective of a model, so that the research offers the possibility for a certain comparison. All in all, the model and the variations lead to the construction of *ideal types of subjective conduct* (Schütz, 1975, p. 282). This approach seems close to academic works by Goffman (1967), who, for example, searches for the variety of ideal responses to *stigma*.

> Schütz further distinguishes between two ideal types of human behaviour:
> The concept 'ideal type of human behaviour' can be taken in two ways: It can mean first of all the ideal type of another person who is expressing himself or has expressed himself in a certain way. Or it may mean, second, the ideal type of the expressive process itself, or even of the outward result, which we interpret as the signs of the expressive process. Let us call the first the 'personal ideal type' and the second the 'material' or 'course-of-action type. (Schütz, 1975, pp. 283-284)

From this model of the life-world I intend to highlight models and types of actions of these Beiruti artists (in Chapter 4); again, this is inspired by Schütz, who argues that the researcher has to find models or types "of human actions and behaviours" (Schütz, 1975, p. 279). These models of types of actions and behaviours I put together out of my overall knowledge and experiences about, and with these musicians in Beirut. Schütz describes the creation of those ideal types as follows: "The process consists essentially of taking a cross-section of our experience of another person and, so to speak, 'freezing it into a slide'" (Schütz, 1975, p. 283).

> In this book the latter, the *material* or *course-of-action-type* is more important. I intend to see how an artist acts under certain conditions; and not how Ghada Shbeir or Cynthia Zaven (two of the artists) might act today or tomorrow. The book will, at the end, put forward several ideal types of actions and behaviours of Lebanese musicians, and should thus offer data that can be compared or reflected upon in other contexts as well. However, the personal ideal type and the course-of-action types are interacting. So, even if we are more interested in the course-of-action types, we have to know about the personal ideal types as well. Schütz writes that "in the process of understanding a given performance via an ideal type, the interpreter must start with his own perceptions of someone else's manifest act. His goal is to discover the in-order-to or because-motives (whichever is convenient) behind the act" (Schütz, 1975, p. 285). Still, we can analyze from two sides: "I can begin with the finished act, then determine the type of action that produced it, and finally settle upon the type of person who must have acted this way. Or I can reverse the process and, knowing the personal ideal type, deduce the corresponding act" (Schütz, 1975, p. 284). In analysing from this or that direction we have to deal with two different problems: "One problem concerns which aspects of a finished act are selected as typical and how we deduce the personal type from the course-of-action type. The other problem concerns how we deduce specific actions from a given personal type" (Schütz, 1975, p. 284).

> The theoretical approaches of Schütz go much further than this. He, for example, distinguishes between habitual ideal type, and characterological ideal type (Schütz, 1975, p. 288), and

he introduces *ideal types of collectives*. These, to him, are for example "The working class," "NGOs," or even nations. To Schütz, every action of a state can be reduced to the actions of its functionaries. This, again, is an important point that we have to keep in mind when we, for example, work on music and music making in Beirut: the music market and the arts councils define their policies and criteria through individual human actions that get, however, standardized and impersonal.

2.2.1   *The Concept of -Scapes*

Appadurai (2003) brought up the concept of -scapes to mark the areas where these *ideal types of collectives* are situated. The -scapes show spheres of influences that altogether constitute the life-world or habitat in which a musician acts. The concept of -scapes is, however, to be understood as a model; all the borders highlighted are not fixed, and always in flux. Still, these -scapes help to orient us.

Music, however individualistic and revolutionary it might be, is always produced, distributed, and discussed within different -scapes of the outside world. It is produced and distributed in highly contesting finance-scapes between multinational companies, that aim to control global and local cultural markets, and independent networks, that benefit from new possibilities in music production and distribution given by multimedia and communication industries (techno-scapes). Global and local media-scapes influence music production by creating cultural tastes and standards (Enzensberger 2002*; Horkheimer*, A*dorno*, 2001*; Luhmann*, *2002*), and subsequently by constantly reproducing those standards with their choices. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkeimer (*Horkheimer & Adorno, 2001*) took, in the 1970s, a very pessimistic standpoint when they talked about culture and music in times of mass media. They warned of the levelling and commercialisation of music, and declared that the musicians and artists would become exploited by the mass media industries. Other scholars brought up counter arguments. Walter Benjamin (1977) wrote about the importance of new technologies for the arts. Others followed his arguments and started to define the new audio-visual technologies as "democratic", an integral part of the aesthetics (Wicke, 1987; Frith, 1986, Hall, 2008, 2007, 1996), or as the message itself (*McLuhan, 1967)*. Since then, mainly scholars of popular music studies have written analyses on the many aspects around popular music (e.g., *Hamm, 19*95; *Middleton*, *1985, 1990, 199*6; *Shepherd*, *19*91, Chambers, 1995, 1986*)*: the networks of the media- and culture industries (e.g., *Bennett, 1993*; *Frith*, 2007, 2004, 1986; Taylor, 1997*)*, the media (e.g., *Enzensberger, 2002;* Luhmann, 2002), the interactions between musicians and fans (e.g. Bennett, 2000; *Hebdige, 1979)*, sound technology (e.g., *Benjamin*, *1977*; *Porcello*, *1998*), and much more. It might be useful (at least at times) to separate audio-scapes as a subcategory of media-scapes. This is what Grossmann suggests in his article "Audiowissenschaft = Musikwissenschaft + Medienwissenschaft?" (2005). He uses the term audio to reflect on the audio aspects of media; this includes not only music, but all that we can hear, for example, in a movie. The more we listen, the more we see how audio is used to support the meaning of a visual scene; often, when we do not focus on it, we tend to ignore it. Steering happens as well, through values and ideologies promoted by local and global governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations (ideo-scapes), through funding decisions, and sometimes censorship. In the case of music in Lebanon, ethno-scapes have another important impact; we are going to focus on that later. To say it briefly: A musician does not create his ideas independently. The individual and personal is always something societal and

collective, as for example, Emile Durkheim (1987) highlighted. Bourdieu (1996, p. 159) mentions the habitus, and uses the term socialised subjectivity instead of individualism. Appadurai (1998, p. 22) emphasises that life is always a compromise between the things one can imagine and the things a society accepts.

2.2.2   *Superculture, Interculture, Subculture, Sonicculture*

Besides these *scapes*, we should not forget the amount of musical or acoustical elements a musician is surrounded with. These influence him: They either become references in his music, or his music tries to radically oppose to them; to name two extreme reactions only. Marc Slobin's model of - cultures seems helpful to give, to keep an overview. Slobin positions the notions of *superculture, interculture* and *subculture* in music making within power structures. Following his logic, the highly commercialized pan-Arabic pop scene would be categorised as superculture; classical to popular music from the West (Mozart, Madonna, but also indie rock, or rap) would be defined as interculture. The Lebanese music of Fairuz and Marcel Khalife would be a superculture in the Lebanese context and an interculture if we looked at it from the perspective of Europe or the USA. Finally, the music this book mostly deals with can be regarded as subculture - this again, inside the Lebanese context.

We still have to develop this schematic model at least one step further. We have to include all the acoustic phenomena surrounding the musicians: the sounds of Beirut, the noise of war, and of propaganda. To find the right term for these phenomena, an article by Peter Wicke helps us (2008). Wicke differentiates between the German terms *schall* and *klang*. Leo.dict.org translates *schall* as bang, sound, acoustic noise and sonic; and *klang* as rattle, ring, sound and tone - I hereby use *acoustic noise* for schall, and *sound* for klang. To Wicke, schall (acoustic noise) is a physical phenomenon, while klang (sound) is schall (acoustic noise) with a defined structure. Acoustic noise (schall) is thus the physical and acoustic substrate of sound (klang), and sound (klang) is the substantial medium of music. Sound is thus between acoustic noise and music. However, where the phenomenon we call music starts and ends is changing over time, and is defined differently in different contexts - different cultures, different music scenes and circles - this Wicke states clearly. Further, he argues that it is not too often discussed in academia so far, how acoustic noise is transformed into sound and into music, but this is not the important point to make here. Wicke introduces the term *sonic* to describe the layer of the cultural and discursive formed concept of sound that underlies the audio-culture of a society. Sonic is thus the culturalized version of acoustic noise (schall). It differs from the pure phenomenon of acoustic noise mainly because it introduces a listener and implicates listening. This again implies at least two things: First, the listener is a subject of a certain society, so schall becomes culturalized. Second, the sonic becomes significant because it is schall that caught the attention - it became a conscious aspect of our life-world. The sonic thus opens the path towards those phenomena of the soundscape, from natural to technical sounds, that enters, for example, the music of the musicians in Beirut consciously. The sonic is, however, only a little piece of the acoustic and vibrating world - thus how schall comes into our music (or not) is another, very complex issue this book is trying to discuss.

For our model I would suggest to introduce the two terms *sonic-culture* for the sonic, and *acoustic scape* for acoustic noise. Acoustic noise surrounds us in such a complete way that we might even put it around the whole model: This means we have now put the Lebanese musicians inside an acoustic space.

Table 1: Model: Lebanese Musicians, -scapes and –cultures

IDEAL TYPES OF SOCIAL CONDUCT / IDEAL MATERIAL TYPE

ACOUSTIC SCAPE

MEDIA SCAPES — SUB-CULTURE — ETHNO SCAPES

A1

SUPER-CULTURE — A2 — A5 — M1 — M2 — M5 — INTER-CULTURE

A3 — A4 — M3 — M4

IDEO SCAPES — SONIC-CULTURE — TECHNO SCAPES — FINANCE SCAPES
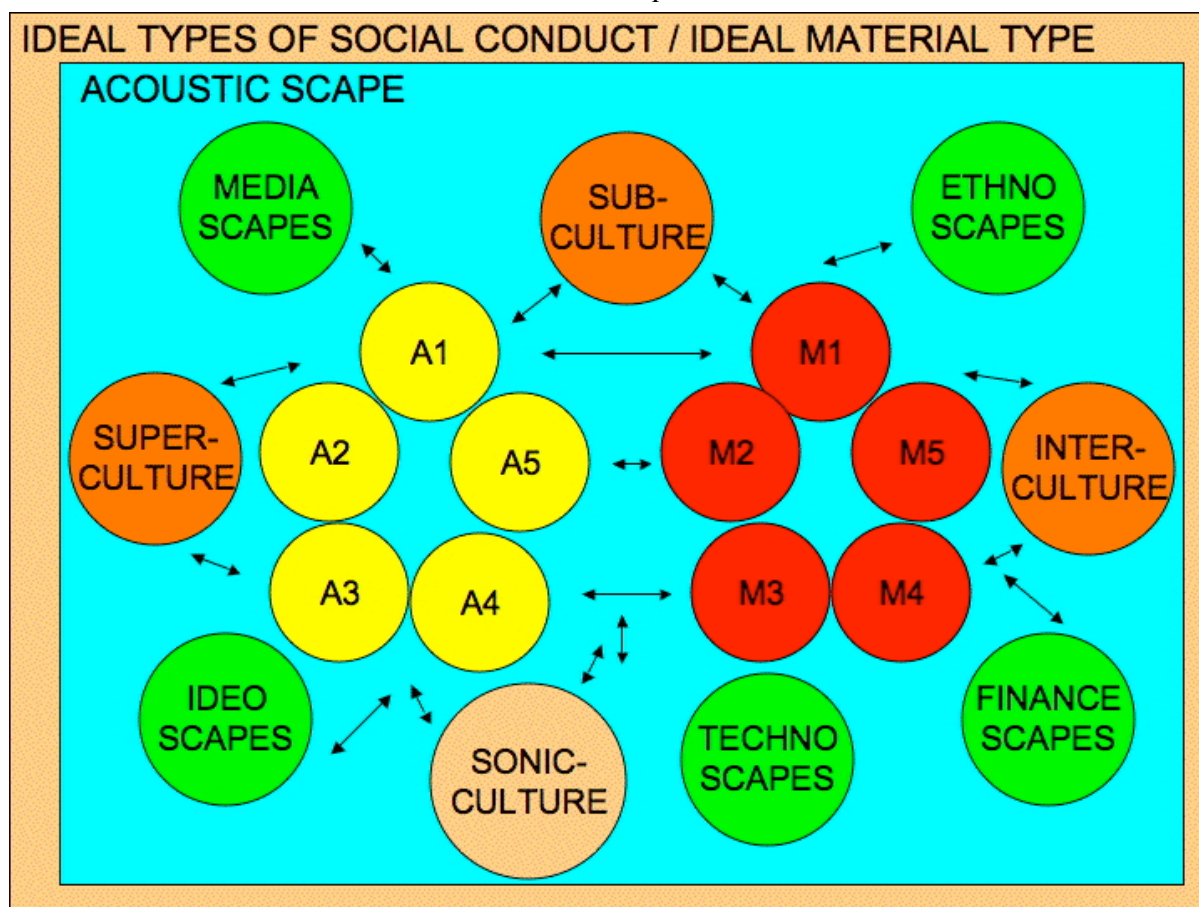
(Index: A: Artists, M: Musicians)

      With this new model we arrive at two interesting crossroads: One observes where the definition of music starts and ends in a specific context. The other looks mainly at acoustic space: Some acoustic noises can only be experienced at a specific place, others cross cultures, contexts, and other barriers. In intercultural (or cross-cultural) research like this, it could be important to analyze what impact this fact actually has. If one argues that the acoustic spaces of cities are similar across continents, can we thus suggest that the music that comes out of these urban spaces becomes similar? And if similar, will musicians living in a desert play different music than musicians on an island? These questions are not at all simple to answer, and we have to be careful: The perception of the acoustic space already might differ from person to person. And how the acoustic space actually enters into music is a highly complex question. Thus, let me for the moment just point the finger at this important aspect. Here, it might be useful to split the sonic elements that derive from the acoustic space of Beirut into more local and more global ones.

      The following chapters initially offer a phenomenological approach into the music scenes of Beirut. Then the book takes the reader on a journey through a history of Lebanon through the ear. It is in this history where we learn more about the acoustic space, the sonic- to subcultural-cultures of this specific place on earth. We learn how sound, music, and acoustics were always connected to phenomena from the various local and global -scapes. This history of Lebanon through the ear is theoretically initiated through Robert Walser (2003). Walser states that it is important to contextualize each piece of music in time and space, and that it is therefore crucial to know all the references and quotations musicians use in their music.

SONIC TRACES FROM THE PAST

3.   The History of Beirut through Music, Sound and Noise

The aim of this chapter is to write a story of Lebanon through music, sound, and noise. This allows us to build a solid basis from which we can later analyze the music of the musicians born during the Lebanese Civil War. This approach is inspired by the musicologist Robert Walser (2003), who encourages us to examine each piece of music in time and space. I intend to bring forward the musicians and composers and their music, that are of a certain importance for today's musicians - today's musicians are either directly influenced by them, or they try to oppose them and create their own musical counter-culture. Further, I will highlight some musicians and musical phenomena from the past that are completely ignored, or even forgotten today. Especially the chapter on the Lebanese Civil War (3.4) will further highlight the sounds of propaganda, and the noises of war: Both are of a certain importance for today's artists.

Many of the musicians from the war generation would probably not agree with my approach. They would call it a waste of time, and they would argue that they are influenced by music from the USA and Europe exclusively. I do not agree with them. First, I will analyze the European and US influences in their music in detail in chapter 6. This chapter will analyze seven key pieces composed, written, and released between 2005 and 2008. Second, I am convinced that the musicians' socialization and biography is crucial to the understanding of their artistic work.

This history of Beirut through the ear became longer than I had expected. In my fieldwork I was able to meet and talk to many time witnesses: Musicians who had played rock music during the Lebanese Civil War; arrangers and composers who earned their money performing in the Casino Du Liban; and composers and writers like Mansour Rahbani, who took the limelight, and are today seen as great innovators and the creators of what is often called *The Lebanese Music*. While researching, I soon found out that almost no academic literature is published on the history of music in Lebanon. We find a lot of literature on Arabic music, maqam and its theory (e.g., Farmer 1997, 1973, 1965; Shiloah 1995, 1993; Racy, 2003, 2001; Touma, 1998, 1968; Lagrange, 2000). Further, a lot of articles and books are written on musicians, singers, music and its practice in twentieth-century Cairo (e.g., Armbrust, 1996, 2000; Danielson, 1997; Gordon, 2003; Gsell, 1999), or on Arabic music in an international context (Stokes, 1992, 2000; Rasmussen, 1992, 1996). Increasingly we find new books on music in Syria and Palestine (Cohen & Katz, 2006; Kaschl, 2003; Shannon, 2006), and Iraq (van der Linden, 2001). There is, however, not too much published on music in Lebanon, with some exceptions: Jihad Racy published some important articles on village music and urban music in Lebanon, and Kathleen Hood published a book on *Druze Music*. Important are the writings of Weinrich (2006), Stone (2007), and Habib on Fairuz, The Rahbani brothers, and Ziyad Rahbani. Beyond that the literature becomes very sparse. There is very little literature on the history of occidental music in Beirut[30], with some works on Palestinian music, often dealing with music and musicians from the Lebanon as well (Boullata, 2003; Massad, 2003; Puig, 2007). Further, we find some articles on Christian Music[32], and articles by the Lebanese scholars Nidaa Abou Mrad on pre-twentieth-century music in Lebanon (see: Revue des Traditions Musicales des Mondes Arabe et

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[30] One of the exceptions is Mainguy (1969)
[32] Published at the University of Kaslik, mainly by Louis Hage

Méditerranéen, 2007). The sociologist Christine Tohme (1998) wrote an important article on the discrepancies between the Festival of Baalbek and the village of Baalbek. Thus, I created this history of Lebanon through music from bits and pieces. It involves a lot of groundwork and brings forward a lot of information that has not yet been published academically. While writing, I decided not to throw everything out: I will highlight the streams that seem important to today's generation of musicians, but I leave in some of the most interesting findings as well.

The chapter starts with a very short introduction into the most important principles of rural music culture in the Levant. Further, it focuses mainly on developments in the city. Because city music was dominated by Cairo for a while, the history of music of Beirut does not always stay in the Lebanese capital. It follows the Beiruti musicians who searched for their luck in the Egyptian capital first. Later, the chapter introduces developments in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is in these years a tradition for subcultural and independent music was created in Beirut. That chapter ends with the Lebanese Civil War that is most influential for today's generation - and this on obvious and hidden levels.

To some readers this historical chapter might look a bit long. Still, I think that it is necessary for the understanding of the music from the musicians of the war generation. This, I hope, we will see in the final chapters 7 and 8. In these chapters, all the different historical to theoretical traces should come together.

3.1   The Continuum: From Bedouin, to Rural, to Urban Music

> Beirut's musical culture features a complex conglomeration of Eastern and Western practices, repertoires and aesthetic outlooks. It presents a panorama of liturgies and styles that belong to various religious sects and ethnic groups. The inhabitants, most of whom came from rural areas after World War II, consist of Sunnis, Shi'ites, Druzes, Maronites, Catholics, Syriacs, and others. There are also Armenians, Palestinians, and before the civil war, citizens of Western countries. Beirut's traditional music also contains elements from Bedouin nomadic culture, and from the Lebanese countryside, for example, zajal, or sung folk-poetry. ... In Lebanon and Syria, itinerant Gypsy musicians have typically used the buzuq, a long-necked, fretted lute similar to the Anatolian saz. In the first half of the twentieth century, many Beiruti musicians also performed on the buzuq. In some cases, the instrument has developed urbanized features, including mechanical pegs and a sound-box made from separate ribs. Today, both professional and amateur musicians perform mainstream Arab genres, such as the improvisatory instrumental taqasim and the precomposed ughniyah, literally 'song.' They also play Near Eastern instruments and include well-established artists such as Sa'id Salam ('ud player); 'Abbud 'Abd al-'Al (violinist); Bashir 'Abd al-'Al (nay player); 'Abd al-Karim Qazmuz (a riqq, or tambourine specialist); and Matar Muhammad (buzuq player). (Racy, 1986, p. 413)

Jihad Racy (1996) examines the music of Lebanon as a continuum from Bedouin music to rural music to urban music. His suggestions are based on his long-term involvement as an academic and as a performer of Arabic music, and on his listening experiences and participant observation of music making in Lebanon. His articles show that traditional Bedouin styles were often transformed into city music. They tell us about the changes in taste, and how music and ideology were, and are, interlinked.

Racy argues that "the historical relationship among the various nomadic, rural, and urban communities is one of social and artistic interaction rather than unidirectional influence" (Racy, 1996, p. 406). Furthermore, he proposes that the various *social-ideological* and *poetic-musical syndromes* are "closely intertwined" with the more "intimate, personal, and sentimental expressions" (Racy, 1996, p. 406).

At first, this seems quite delicate: More than half of today's Beiruti musicians would at least shake their heads when I would tell them that their music is linked to Bedouin music. "We have never seen a camel in our whole life," some would argue - using a sentence that I heard quite often during my field research. "We are not even Arabs," others would state, implying that Lebanon is "open to the world", while an "Arab country" would be inhabited by "conservative," "backward," and "religious crowds."

Under Ottoman occupation, the Bilad Al Sham was one region, including Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and parts of Iraq. The region shares many cultural practices, some of them even with other Mediterranean and Arab communities; similar instruments, rural forms of music, and dance. Often, music is closely linked to daily life, and so culture, music, poetry and dance can often not be analyzed separately from each other.

3.1.1   Shruqi and 'Ataba

First, Racy introduces two major forms of Bedouin singing and poetry: the *shruqi* and the *'ataba* genre, which today both exist in rural and urban culture simultaneously, as we will see. The *shruqi* or *qasid* is a type of sung colloquial poetry[33]. It is performed by the *sha'ir* (poet-singer) who accompanies himself on a single-string fiddle called a rababah. The sha'ir performs folk narratives, and heroic stories, for example, about resistance fighters who fought against outside powers. Most of the texts are excerpts from important, memorable poems, "for example, those by the late-19th-century Druze Shibli Basha al-Atrash, who wrote his heroic poetry when he was exiled to the city of Izmir by the Ottoman Turks. His poetry reached the local community poets, who in turn performed it, thus prompting their listeners to rebel against the Turkish authorities"[34] (Racy, 1996, p. 408). The *shruqi* genre introduces us to a melodic contour "that Levantine Arab folk culture generally associates with heroic songs and the heroic ethos in general," writes Racy. We will hear this mood in various propaganda songs, especially in the Civil War.[35]

The 'ataba genre is based on inner emotions. It presents sentiments as love and longing, and is not based on heroic and historic stories. The 'ataba singer takes the role of a lover and describes himself "as being emotionally vulnerable, lovesick, and tormented by the tribulations of unrequited

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[33] "While the former word pertains to the *sharq* (east), the latter means 'poem' and brings to mind the Arabic classical form known as qasidah" (Racy, 1996, p. 408).

[34] In this genre the historical setting, the background story, is not sung out, but put into words. "What is sung is the poet's words, or the poem uttered by the hero. As such, the narrative becomes a background for the lyrics, a context for the text, which embodies the core of the performance. Thus the entire performance sequence usually proceeds as follows: (a) the historical or contextual background narrated in regular speech; (b) the poetry, or lyrics, rendered in recited rather than sung form; and (c) the same poetry sung" (Racy, 1996, pp. 408-409).

[35] Racy analyses this contour roughly as a "zigzag pattern that moves above and below a tonal center. This tonal center, or tonic note, is prolonged considerably at the end of each verse. In rough intervallic terms, the melody fluctuates around one relative tonic pitch, thus rising up to about a third above or dropping down to about a third below before a cadence ascends stepwise to rest upon the sustained tonic note" (Racy, 1996, p. 412).

love" (Racy, 1996, p. 411). This genre is more *lyrical*; there are no *background plots*, as in *shruqi* singing.

While shruqi texts are sung by men only, 'ataba can be performed by male and female singers. 'Ataba and 'shruqi share a *double-line verse structure* - in the Civil War, Ziyad Rahbani often worked with that structure. 'Ataba texts "use homonyms at three consecutive half-line endings. Thus the same word, but with a different meaning each time, reoccurs at the end of each half line, or hemistich, except for the last half line. The sequence of poetical cadences in the four half lines is AAAB respectively, with B following one of a few standard 'ataba closing syllables" (Racy, 1996, p. 411).

3.1.2   Village Music – First Translation

The interactions between the rural communities of the Levant and the Bedouin culture are complex and somehow ambivalent (Racy, 1996). In Lebanese villages, we can observe various cultural practices that are known in Bedouin culture, on the other hand, the Bedouins (Badawi) and their nomadic way of life are very often topics of jokes. A lot of the time they are portrayed as unsophisticated, and even crude. 'Ataba and shruqi "survived" mainly in specific ritualistic and social contexts, such as weddings and funerals - "or during men's gatherings in which 'araq (anise-flavoured alcoholic beverage) and food may be served. In Christian and Druze villages some shruqi like war chants still exist" (Racy, 1996). Further, village music includes the genre of women's lament songs called *fraqiyyat* (songs of *departure*, or songs of *farewell*). We find elements of this genre in many songs of Fairuz, as we will see. The fraqiyyat are recognized and appreciated for their cathartic value, or their appropriateness for making women cry, thus expressing their grief as they listen to and participate in the song performance[36] (Racy, 1996, p. 414).

Zajal is the main genre of singing associated with Lebanese villages. Zajal singers are often professionals who are invited to sing at weddings and other festivities. They sing in local dialects, and they create their poems spontaneously, on the spot. They praise the couple that is going to be married, and are a respectable guest, and they sing about the beauty of the day. The singers Sabah and Wadi al Safi are well known for singing this genre. Both became very popular, as well in the urbanized music forms, as we will see. Lebanese rural music further incorporates long songs with free metrics, performed by solo singers and choirs. Important instruments are the double clarinet mijwz[37] and the

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[36] Musically, the fraqiyyat genre exhibits many characteristics of the 'ataba proper. "It maintains the flexibly interpreted strophic form and the overall poetical structure, although the homonyms or puns used in the 'ataba are often absent. Also like the 'ataba, the lament displays a distinctly descending contour, as the melody of each phrase, or half line, tends to start on a higher pitch and gradually fall down toward the tonic note about a fourth lower, finally ending on the tonic in the fourth and last phrase. Serving as a cadence, the tonic note usually terminates in a sigh or sobbing-like ornament, one that typifies the fraqiyyat and seems to express a powerful sense of pathos" (Racy, 1996, pp. 414-415).

[37] It is a reed pipe that consists of two similar pipes and can be recognized by its harsh, sharp, and nasal sound. It is associated with rural life, especially with goat herding. The mijwiz is normally played in a fast tempo, with a lot of smaller and bigger changes in tempo (agogic). The playing is *highly motivic*, full of *variations* and *ornamentations* in a relatively narrow melodic range. The instrument is also famous due to his continuous sound that is created through circular breathing (Racy, 1994). "Near Eastern Arabs describe the power of the mijwiz in a variety of ways," describes Racy: "Many state that when they hear it they lose their inhibitions and feel an overwhelming urge to dance. Others describe their vivid reminiscence of rural life, earlier adolescent years, tumultuous village weddings, sensuous love songs, frantic and animated dancing, and passionate indulgence in festivity. To some the mijwiz sound invokes a state of elation and psychological transformation and brings to mind sensations resulting from extensive body movement and intake of 'araq, a distilled alcoholic beverage made from fermented grapes and flavoured with anise" (Racy, 1994, p. 50).

flute sabbaba (or mingayra)[38]. Increasingly, the mijwiz has been replaced by the *sabbaba*, especially in the urbanized forms of rural music. The most possible reason for this is that the flute pleases the ears of a city, or even an international audience more easily than the harsh and sharp sounding mijwiz does. Often the singers, the musicians, and the audiences clap along to the song. Many of the short and fast songs are accompanied by dance. The *dabké* (also transliterated as debke, dabka, and dabkeh) is the most popular of these dances. The meaning of *dabké* in Arabic is *stomping of the feet*, and stomping, as well as jumping and kicking, are moves that characterize the dabké in a unique manner. Dabké is a so-called line-dance that resembles other dance forms in the Eastern Mediterranean. The dance is performed by men, women, or mixed crowds. The dancers hold each other by their shoulders, and move counter-clockwise in a circle to the melody of a single flute and the rhythm of a drum. Dabké is historically danced during various village festivities throughout the Bilad El Sham, and today in clubs, restaurants in and outside the Levant, the Arab World, and also in Israel[39]. The dance "offers possibilities for endless variations at the whim of the dancers," writes Kayat: "In Lebanon the dance varies in different parts of the country. … These local variations are dramatically demonstrated each spring when dancers from all over Lebanon participate in the Folk Dance Festival at Beirut" (Khayat, 1960, p. 154). In the twentieth century, dabké became a dance to celebrate collective and national identity[40]. The war of 1967, in particular, brought dabké into the spotlight, observes Kaschl:

> While earlier sources simply mentioned the dance practice as a ritual part of social festivities in the Eastern Levant, dabkeh in Palestinian writings after 1967 gained attention as an object of study in its own right. […] Dabké was now categorized as Palestinian heritage, even more than before and it became 'part of a discourse of nationalism, which linked the existence of a people to territory and culture.' (Kaschl, 2003)

Today, dabké is often accompanied by loud synthesizer music. Since the early 1980s it has become a very popular, low budget niche culture, situated between formal and informal markets. Often the style is referred to as *new wave dabké* (Silverstein, 2007). The singers of this scene are professionals, who come mainly from the coastal region from Syria, the Bekaa Valley, and from Southern Lebanon. In the best of cases these performers are masters of wordplay and vocal genres like 'ataba. They are capable of singing in various regional dialects for a variety of audiences. One can buy the latest dabké hits on MP3-collections and video-CDs from street sellers throughout the region. In the war between Israel and Hizbullah I bought many of those cheap CDs, MP-collections and video-discs in Damascus. Many of them offered homage to Hassan Nasrallah, and sometimes they even featured the "highlights" of his speeches. This again indicates how rural and urban, local and regional, cultural and political elements intervene.

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[38] The pitch range is most of the times not bigger than a fourth or a fifth. Weinrich says that most of the folk songs in the Syrian, Lebanese region are played in maqam bayyati or huzam, sometimes as well as in sikah. However, the full maqam is seldom fully realized (Weinrich, 2006, p. 170).

[39] More and more international choreographical elements and costumes were introduced to the dance. Specialized ensembles and performers reached huge popularity or even fame: Alain Merheb, Kigham, and Hassan Harfouche, or the Lebanese dabké troupe Firkat el Arz. Groups from Palestine include Ibdaa, Sareyyet Ramallah, and El-Funoun.

[40] Interesting work on dabké and collective or national identity is written by Mauro Van Aken (2006) on dabké in the Jordan valley, and by Elke Kaschl (2002) on dabké in Palestine and Israel.

3.1.3   *Urban Music*

If we focus on urban life in Beirut, we still find many cultural practices that derive from rural life. Shruqi and 'ataba singing "survived" in urbanized forms. They are often categorized as a genre called *baladi* (roughly, local, native, and folk-derived; from *balad*, country or countryside) (Racy, 1996). Baladi songs are performed with such urban instruments as the oud, qanun, and the violin, played in an urbanized, heterophonic style with short instrumental preludes from the musical ensemble. "Instead of the strident, high-pitched singing typical of the Bedouin sha'ir, the baladi singer tends to use a lower vocal tessitura" (Racy, 1996, p. 417). The mastery of the homonyms of the *'ataba* forms seems one criteria for good quality lyrics. Musicians from the civil war generation kept telling me of how good this or that singer or lyricist was in creating 'ataba poems. Still, both shruqi and 'ataba are presented and treated essentially as urban songs. The poetry is sung usually in local Lebanese dialect, rather than the Bedouin colloquial Arabic. Most of the texts are not written by the singers anymore, but by specialized lyricists who earn their living with it.

> Instead of commemorating specific heroes or alluding to memorable tribal contexts, the urban shruqi texts tend to voice generalized sentiments of folk nostalgia and patriotism, for example, praising the valiancy of the country's military forces and at times expressing how as a nation or people 'we' uphold such values as generosity, honor, and chivalry. (Racy, 1996, pp. 416-417)

One genre is known as lawn badawi (lit. Bedouin color). This genre does not include the 'ataba and other actual Bedouin song forms, but alludes to Bedouin forms through the use of melodic and rhythmic references, in addition to lyrics expressing Bedouin themes such as love, chivalry, generosity, and bravery (Asmar and Hood, 2001, p. 318).

Still, it is very important to note that the biggest cultural differences in the Levant do not occur between different villages in different countries, but between cities and villages[41] (Weinrich, 2006; Racy, 1996). "Broadly speaking, the city's Arab musical heritage, which is historically related to Islamic mysticism and to various Ottoman and pan-Islamic traditions and which has been subject to considerable Western influence, seems strikingly non-Bedouin and non-nomadic" (Racy, 1996, p. 420).

3.1.4   *Tarab Music*

The city music of the Arab world is highly influenced by Islamic practices. This occurs to the mundane and the religious repertoire[42]. In most of the genres, the voice is at the centre. The music is thus closely linked to the Arabic language and to poetry. Most of the great singers had training in Quran recitation: for example, the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthoum. Quran recitation is seen as the

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[41] The various writings of the author Emily Nasrallah show the differences between *urban* and *rural* on an emotional level. The villagers she portrays in her novels see the crowded and far away capital Beirut almost as an alien place, or even as a no-go-area. In other tales and books, people in the city are told to be *liars*, they are *corrupt*, *money-driven* and very *selfish*. Their life stands in huge contrast to life in the village community, where conflicts can be regulated through social mechanisms, and problems therefore stay within certain limits.

[42] Touma gives an overview about the different forms of Arabic music (Touma, 1998, pp. 85-148). As the most important forms of art music he mentions the following: Maqam Al Iraqi, Andalusian Nuba, Muwassah. Dor. Qasida, Layali, Mawwal, Taqsim, Basraf and Samaii, Tahmila, Dulab and Saut. The important religious music forms are: The reading of the Quran and the adan, the call for prayer, mauled, madih-an-nabawi, and dikr.

basis of how a singer can learn to pronounce correctly. The main genre of the mundane city music is often called *tarab*. I will mention here only very few of its principles. I further want to draw the reader's attention to Jihad Racy's book *Making Music in the Arab Word – The Culture and Artistry of Tarab*. To the best of my knowledge, this is the most comprehensive book to understand how tarab music is played and performed, and which aesthetical elements it involves.

Tarab is a collective music, played in a small ensemble, called *takht*. The instruments of the takht are all on the same sound level: Oud, violin, qanun, nai and riqq. Traditionally this music is played without huge dynamics: The intention is that one hears the instruments equally, and is therefore able to observe the slightly differing developments of the various melodic lines - heterophony is one of the important characteristics of tarab music. Tarab music is set in a creative framework that is defined by the term *maqam*: Each maqam contains a scale with tonal steps (often including mictrotones), rules for the melodic development, and a rhythmical structure. Each maqam is set in a specific emotional state: Pride, happiness, mourning, et cetera (Touma, 1998, pp. 64-74).

Tarab music is cultivated in a professional environment with singers, musicians, composers, lyricists, and makers of tarab music instruments, and if possible, with an audience of connoisseurs. Racy argues that the deepest tarab experiences are reached in small, often private gatherings[43] (Racy, 2003, p. 51). These small and informal gatherings ideally include "good" listeners (called *sammi'*), who are experts in tarab music. It is through the meaningful interaction between the performers and these listeners that tarab music reaches its final goal of creating ecstasy. According to Racy "jalsah events transform the participants both mentally and emotionally. … Both listeners and musicians need to become part of an organic and a highly dynamic performative process. The transformational qualities of the jalsah also stem from the implicit ordering micro-events, repertoires, and modes of behaviour" (Racy, 2003, p. 56).

One can summarize that tarab music played in the highest quality, offers the musician great possibilities for musical expression and improvisation. It is set in a given framework that, however, becomes increasingly flexible the more the musician knows about it. Racy explains this as follows:

> The interpreter teases out the compositional form without breaking it, tantalizes musical expectations without totally violating them, and presents refreshing departures without obfuscating their essential points of reference. In all, the manipulation of preconceived structures renders the musical message more potent. Ecstatically speaking, it brings out the 'real music.' (Racy, 2003, p. 93)[44]

The goal of the tarab music and performance is to reach *saltanah*, a state of ecstasy. This is the moment where musicians and listeners forget time and what is around them (Racy, 2003, p. 120).

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[43] so called jalsah or qa'dah, both meaning 'a sitting' or 'get together'

[44] Jihad Racy offers a long list of the main agents of tarab. They include "specific timbres; resonant sound effects: suitable tessituras; certain ornaments: soloistic designs: drones: heterophony; appropriate use of melodic intervals, including neutral steps and finer microtonal readjustments; proper progressional flow within modal structures; certain modal consistency; timely and well-executed modulations; effective cadences; stylistic intensification, for example proceeding from soloistic to ensemble genres; cumulative effect, for instance through extended listening; delayed resolutions, including brief digressions just before a final cadence; rhythmic flexibility, especially in improvisatory genres; rhythmic intricacy, particularly in the case of cadences; heterorhythm; metric regularity; phased metric buildup; reiterative elements, such as refrains; proper rendering of melodic fillers, for example by instruments between vocal phrases; verbal economy and the use of vocalizations; proper enunciation; the use of texts that are lyrical and stylized; emphasis on words and expressions that are sonically appealing, as-well as emotionally evocative; the utilization of texts that are transformatively suggestive; and others" (Racy, 2003, p. 219).

Today, most scholars and experts agree that the complex art of tarab music is in a deep crisis. They search for the reasons for this in the education system, the phonographic industry, the commercialisation of our time, et cetera. We will find many of these reasons in our history of Lebanon through music. However, in the final chapter we will see that not everything is lost: Young musicians are still working in the field of tarab music very seriously. Others bring forward new and different aesthetical ideas that we should neither ignore, nor criticise too soon.

3.1.5 Christian Music

Before diving into history, one important aspect should be highlighted. Lebanon is a center for ancient Christian music. The University Saint-Esprit in Kaslik and its founder, father Louis Hage, researched and documented a lot of sacred Christian music from Lebanon, Syria, and other Arab countries. The main interest lies in the liturgy of the Maronite Church, sung in the ancient Syriac language. However, there is additional research on Greek Orthodox Christian, and other ancient Christian liturgy. A younger generation of Lebanese singers and scholars take great interest in that topic[45]. The singer Ghada Shbeir, whom I interviewed twice during my fieldwork, performs this repertory abroad. She even received the BBC World Music award.

Ancient Christian Church music has influenced the Lebanese programs of musical education for many years now. "In the late nineteenth century, Protestant hymnals based on Western tunes were printed and distributed by American missionaries in Beirut. One such hymnal, from 1873, taught Western music theory and notation" (Racy, 1986, p. 415). Further, we will see that many urban expressions in Lebanese music are linked to that ancient repertoire. Further, ancient Christian music serves as tool for a collective Christian identity - sometimes this has a political hue, as the Lebanese musicologist Victor Sahhab told me in an interview:

> Those people who want to separate Lebanon from its Arabic and Islamic environment
> tend to search for very particular cultural forms and products, for example in
> Lebanese villages, in order to show how much they differ from villages in Syria for
> example. Others focused on Christian Syriac music and escaped from the canon of
> the Arabic and Islamic musical environment. (Sahhab, 2006)

In order to elaborate more on how the music of Beirut dealt with the various influences, the next chapter will now offer a closer look into the history of urban music in Beirut since 1918. The aim is to show how, and to what extent the development of institutions like the national conservatory, and international festivals in Baalbek and Beit Eddine, influenced the generation of protest singers during the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990) first, later the rock and death metal scenes, and now the alternative, subcultural, and even avant-garde artists I mainly work with.

3.2 The Construction of an Urbanized "Lebanese" Music (1918 – 1968)

> All of us! For our Country, for our Flag and Glory!
> Our valour and our writings are the envy of the ages.

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[45] Guilnard Jean Moufarrej wrote her dissertation about that topic at the UCLA in Los Angeles: "Music and the Ritual of Death among the Maronite Christians in Lebanon" (2005, Dissertation, University of California, unpublished).

Our mountains and our valleys, they bring forth stalwart men.

And to Perfection all our efforts we devote.

All of us! For our Country, for our Flag and Glory!

Our Elders and our children, they await our Country's call,

And on the Day of Crisis they are as Lions of the Jungle.

The heart of our East is ever Lebanon,

May God preserve her until end of time.

All of us! For our Country, for our Flag and Glory!

The Gems of the East are her land and sea.

Throughout the world her good deeds flow from pole to pole.

And her name is her glory since time began.

Immortality's Symbol--the Cedar--is her Pride.

All of us! For our Country, for our Flag and Glory[46]!

The Lebanese national anthem is usually played by a brass band, with loud cymbals, bass drums, and discreet carillons. Intially the anthem was composed by Wadih Sabra in the Arabic mode of *maqam rast*, however, from the start it was mainly performed in F major (Weinrich, 2006, p. 359). When listening to the national anthem alone, one could argue that Lebanon has taken sides and made choices: European music instead of Arabic *tarab*, an *Occidental* instead of an *Oriental* identity. The national anthem gives us the initial idea of the influence of foreign rulers on the core of Lebanon's existence, on its identiy and music. However, this is not specifically Lebanese, and can be heard in most of the national anthems in the world. European - or Western - musical standards seem to have succeeded globaly. Anthems are played by orchestras or marching bands, and local qualities and principles come in at the most through simplified, or even stereotypical folkloric melodies, for example, in the national anthem of Laos. This might be one of the reasons why many countries of the world have their unofficial national anthem as well. These unofficial anthems also exist in Lebanon and the Arab world, as we will see later.

This chapter explains Lebanese history, its politics and identity debates through music, sound, and noises; through musicians and composers, musical institutions, and the education system. The intention is to introduce the sonic, social, and political phenomena that are influencial to the musicians and sound artists born during the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990). While the chapers 5 and 7 analyse the various and complex interactions between these artists and their habitus in detail, this chapter deals with some major lines. It describes interconnections and interactions between music and society, introduces major debates around taste, authenticity and *Zeitgeist* and offers tools for a better understanding of today's generation of musicians: their artistic strategies, and the way they construct their identities.

For a historian, this *history* of Lebanon might seem unbalanced at times. It is structured along topics rather than compiled in a strict chronological order. It is focussed on major musical developments in Cairo first. The popular music of Egypt attracted many musicians from Lebanon; they moved to Cairo to boost their careers. The chapter then presents the ruling Christian elites who set the agenda for

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[46] Translation by www.lyricsondemand.com

music education in Lebanon. President Camille Shamoun and his followers organised huge cultural festivals like the one in Baalbek, and celebrated a Lebanese identiy that is open towards the West. During the Lebanese Civil War multi-confessional leftist, communist, and panarabist groups in West Beirut appear as the main actors. These groups brought up singers and songwriters that are still influential today. However, a rock music and party scene existed next to these politicized singers and songwriters; these musicians, I believe, created a platform for politically independent and subcultural music in Beirut. However, the first goal of these musicians and partygoers in both West and East Beirut, was to escape from and forget the horrors of war, if often only for a short period of time. The 1990s brought a concentration and commercialization of the media: the focus moves towards Saudi Arabia, and the Arabian Gulf. Censorship becomes an issue: Metal bands were harassed by political and religious institutions, and sometimes even put in jail for "believing in Satan."

Let me stress once again: This is not the hundredth attempt to re-write the history of Lebanon or Beirut, this is research of the sonic memory of today's artists, with the intention of helping to better understand their contemporary work. The chapter will lead us through key discussions on music making in Lebanon. Furthermore, it will uncover the many discussions around music and politics. It is based on research by historians, and includes memories of the musicians and artists that I met during my stays in Beirut. Furthermore, glimpses of the novels and writings of local authors and journalists, and foreign correspondents are introduced, whenever sound or noise are touched upon. Some sounds and noises could be heard over a long period of time, others changed: Due to technological development, changes in the music markets, political and social positionings of the Lebanese people and politicians. One example: The documentary film "Ras Beirut" shows that Beirut used to be a village: One used to hear the many birds that live in the Levant, or migrate through Lebanon in spring and automn; Emilie Nasrallah (2003) offers a beautiful description of this migration in her novel *September-Vögel*. Today, the whistling and chanting of these birds is oversounded by traffic. However, the birds could be heard again between the bombings of the Israeli warplanes and warships in the 2006 war, as Mazen Kerbaj says in one of my interviews: "Suddenly we could hear the birds again." (Kerbaj, 2006) The birds reminded him and his friends of their childhood during the Lebanese Civil War. This is just one of many examples of how sounds and politics interact.

3.2.1   1919 – 1943: The French Mandate – The Dominance of the Music from Cairo

> Beirut's urban secular music was rooted in pre-twentieth-century practices. Beirut and
> neighboring Arab cities were all part of the Ottoman Empire, a sociopolitical entity
> that officially came to an end after World War I. In ottoman-ruled cities, social life
> was typically dominated by a system of professional guilds that incorporated
> members of various crafts, including singers, instrumentalists, dancers, and other
> public entertainers. (Racy, 2001, p. 338)

After the Ottomon Empire lost the supremacy that it had held since the sixteenth century, Great Britain and France became the strongest forces in the Middle East. The treaty of Versailles (1919) that formally ended the First World War, declared that the post-Ottoman territories in the Levant were allowed to become independent if they accepted the backup of European states. Great Britain became responsible for Iraq and Palestine, France got the mandate over Syria and Lebanon. The borders of this State of Greater Lebanon were set around the former Ottoman provinces of Beirut and Damascus,

and the territory of the old Lebanese Mutesarrifate. The French had economical interests in Greater Lebanon, and a certain moral obligation towards the Christians in the area. Furthermore the airports, the airspace, and the harbour of Beirut that grew in size during that time were important strategic bases (Hourani, 1992, p. 392).

Mainstream music in Beirut in the first half of the twentieth century was influenced by the latest musical developments and trends in Cairo, Aleppo, and Baghdad - for example the "mawwal Baghdadi, an improvisatory vocal genre extremely popular in the early twentieth-century Beirut, was particularly prevalent in other cities of the Levant region" (Racy, 2001, p. 338). Soon, however, one can observe that influences from Cairo became most dominant in what could be defined as the popular music in Lebanon. At the same time, the Lebanese and Syrian singers and musicians that continued working in the field of the old tarab culture, influenced, for example, by musicians in Aleppo and Bagdad, performed more and more in informal circles. Whereas singers from Cairo would soon come to Beirut and perform in huge theaters, the local tarab artists performed at private houses. Furthermore, tarab music was increasingly seen as old-fashioned and conservative by many. "Modern" music came from Cairo, "old" music from Aleppo - whether this is true or not will be discussed later. It is one of the main problematics of music making and musical understanding that the musician who fuses local practice with foreign elements is called a modernist, while the musician working within a certain canon or tradition is labeled as conservative. The truth however is, that the media and the public who decide on these categories often do not know the "tradition" well enough to hear the new and innovative approaches a musician might choose. Unfortunately, academic research on these "traditionalist" tarab musicians, and their circles in Beirut, is almost non-existent. Ali Jihad Racy has covered some aspects and mentions some artists' names in his articles. Furthermore, the highly informative online forum "Zaman al-Wasl" offers a great collection of rare mp3 files - some of them are from artists who work in the field of tarab. This gives us the possibility of listening to many Lebanese and Syrian artists whose work is very dificult to find on CD and tape. Furthermore, we can follow or join in the often very qualified online discussions about their work. The Lebanese musicologist and violin player Nidaa Abou Mrad has done important research on music from the *nahda*[47] period. On his CD "Music from Lebanon and the Levant of the Arab Renaissance – The Legacy of Miha il Massaqa," he opens the door to a very important Lebanese musical theoretician during the nahda period (Abou Mrad, 2007). Abou Mrad's work is instructive on at least two levels: First, musical development did not only happen in Cairo, as most academic publications on music in Egypt suggest. Second, the musical developments in Cairo were created by Egyptian and Non-Egyptian artists, music academics, radio journalists, and supporters of music. Cairo was a multicultural, multiconfessional, and transnational place. Artists from all over the Arab world went

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[47] *Nahda*, literally means a rising up, a standing up, or a reawakening. The so-called nahda period witnessed the revival of classical "Arab" music genres in the late nineteenth century. Muhammad 'Uthman, 'Abdu al-Hamuli, and Salama Hijazi (Lagrange, 1996, pp. 69-108) are often referred to as the main artists of the time. They often worked at the Ottoman court in Cairo and created an art music that included the musical forms of nineteenth-century Cairo. Dawr and Muwashahat were two of the main musical forms. Both are still performed today (Danielson, 1997; Lagrange, 1996, 2000, pp. 59-74, 109-11; Shannon, 2006, p. 60; Al-Salihi, 1998, pp. 28-29). From today's perspective, the term *nahda* often "serves as a reminder that the term 'art': as in pre-modern Europe, referred primarily to crafts and techniques not associated with what we today consider to be a medium of personal expression. Therefore, when Arab intellectuals of the nahda and today express a desire to revive or preserve older artistic traditions, they may be imposing a decidedly modern conception of what art entails on an earlier association of art with craft and craft production" (Shannon, 2006, p. 60).

there to find their luck and to help create contemporary music. Nadira, a Syrian singer, went to Cairo before the First World War, and became well established in the 1930s. Through the phonoindustry, radio, film, and TV the work of these artists in Cairo was sent back to their countries of origin and influenced the local scenes.

3.2.2   Sayyid Darwish

At the start of the twentieth century, Sayyid Darwish (1892 – 1923) was probably the most influencial composer and artist all over the Arab world; especially for so-called modernists. Darwish is often seen as the founder of Egyptian music. His style is less influenced by Ottoman court music of the nineteenth century, but more by the singing of the street vendors, workers, farmers, and sailors (Lagrange, 2000, p. 115). His songs, dealing with society and its problems, created the basis for a *democratic art* since it reached all classes of society. Preconditions to do so were a simplification of the musical means of expression and a new orientation on the level of the topics (al-Salihi, 1998, p. 16). In Muhammad Mahmoud's book, *The Story of Sayyed Darwish* (see Mroue, 1999), we learn about the genesis of one of Darwish's compositions. When he had to write a song about a water-seller, he insisted that the song was to be performed by a group of water-sellers complaining about the water company competing with them and ruining their ability to make a living. He

> concluded that he must hear the real water-sellers before he composed the music. The
> next morning, as we sat at a coffee shop in the neighborhood of water sellers, it was
> not long until one of them called the traditional call. Sayyed repeated the call after
> him and then the tune naturally flowed out of that inspired yet realistic situation.
> (Mroue, 1999)

As a solo singer, Darwish influenced, and keeps influencing many musicians in Lebanon. Zyad Sahhab, for example, calls him his main influence:

> Sayyed Darwish created the tradition of the politically engaged song in the Arab
> world. Before him, the only goal of music was to create tarab. Now, music and lyrics
> called for justice on many levels. As Darwish had major problems with the British
> rulers and the Egyptian government he started to use metaphors to make a political
> statement. This is what I and many artists in the Arab world do till this day. (Sahhab,
> 2005)

Many musicians and musicologists argue similarly: Sayyid Darwish created the political song in Egypt and probably in the Arab world as a whole. He "spent his childhood and youth in this inflammatory atmosphere filled with talk of nationalism, revolution, freedom, and fierce opposition to the British" (Mroue, 1999). His songs became very popular; for example, "Biladi" (my country) has been used as the official national anthem of Egypt since 1979. Darwish lived in turbulent times:

> The revolution of 1919 broke out as a result of increased political awareness, the
> development of new ideas, and the availability of cultural activities, mainly by
> collaboration among artists, writers, journalists and the nationalist leaders to foster
> patriotic feeling in the people. Sayyed contributed chants and songs that were used to
> incite enthusiasm in the tumultuous demonstrations; especially effective was his call
> for national unity and for abandoning differences for the sake of fighting the
> colonizer. One of his lyrics which the crowds chanted stressed the unity among

> Muslims, Christians and Jews, claiming that those unified by a nation cannot be
> separated by religions. (Mroue, 1999)

Sayyed Darwish had a broad musical basis: First, he was influenced by the classical music by Hamuli and Uthman from the nahda period; then he composed *muwashshahat* and *adwar*[49] often with European influences; some chords, for example. Secondly, he wrote melodies over satirical and political lyrics: the "song of the waiter", "the song of the worker" that refered to the conflict between the copts and the muslims over fee regulation for Nile water, an idea by the colonial powers, or the "song of the civil servants" that hinted at the Egyptian revolution of 1919 and the civil strikes. Thirdly, he wrote *taqatiq* songs about love and political independence. And fourthly he wrote opera (Lagrange, 2000, pp. 116-117).[50] Sayyed Darwish's songs (Zurouni, Salma Ya Salama, El Helwa Di, Ahu Da Elli Sar, Til'et Ya Mahla Nourhe, and El Bahr Byedhak Leh, among others) can be heard in various versions all over the Arab world today, and also in exile: The Chicago Classical Oriental Ensemble, for example, recorded the CD "The Songs of Sheikh Sayyed Darweesh: 'Soul of the People'" (Xauen Music). For Zyad Sahhab and other contemporaries, he is an idol, because he was "musically well educated," he was "trained as a sheikh singer and therefore pronounced well and knew the essentials of the maqamat," he had "taste," and was "open towards the world." Mroue almost glorifies Darwish's work:

> His music was a revolution against all the uncreative and untruthful art of the time.
> Even his love songs reflected how people truly viewed love, desire and sex. His
> singing was a departure from that presented by singers of the time, who were known
> for their distasteful lyrics and for cheap, open flirtation. (Mroue, 1999)

Mroue either does not mean the tarab artists of the nahda period in his critique and does not think about them, or he criticizes them directly: Both possibilities show that there was already a huge gap between so-called modernists and traditionalists, and also various definitions of what role music should play in a society.

> Following WWI, thousands of Egyptians suffered at the hands of the British
> occupation. Ordinary Egyptians were thrown into labor camps, nationalist activists
> sent to prison, and others into exile. In an atmosphere fraught with resentment against
> the colonizer, Egyptian singers showed little sympathy for the ordeal of their people,
> nor did they appear affected by the war that had set the world ablaze. They continued
> their heedless drinking of alcohol and shameless use of drugs, while singing was only
> an amusement to kill time. Sayyed, however, was not like these other musicians"
> (Mroue, 1999).

In 1923 he wanted to go to Italy to study opera, but then he died. Some, for example, Zyad Sahhab, argue that he was poisoned.

3.2.3   The 1920s: Operetta and Theatre in Cairo

During the years of the French Mandate, Beirut and other cities of the Middle East underwent great changes. The elites spent their summer holidays in Europe, and people at home got used to seeing European and American tourists in their cities. Women dressed in the latest Paris fashion. Leisure activities changed as well: Beirut got its own race-course; football and tennis became

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[49] Both are important and specific musical forms created in 19th Century Cairo.
[50] For more on Sayyid Darwish's work see Al-Salihi (1998, pp. 33-36).

important (Hourani, 1992, pp. 412-413). The number of newspapers in the region increased. New publishers provided the students with new books. Movie theatres were opened. The first radio stations programmed music, interviews, political speeches, and news. All of this led to new tastes, ideas, and aspirations.

Arabic theatrical productions had gained increasing popularity since their beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. The Arabic play was an adaptation of European, usually French, models. The 1920s became the golden age of the operetta. And again, Cairo took the lead. However, there were also Lebanese involved. Marun al-Naqqash (1917 - 1955) became one of the pioneers of Arabic theatre. He enlivened the play by inserting several airs and tunes of Oriental character, often performed by an orchestra and a choir. Most of the time, but not always, the music was related to the topics of the play: This was rather unusual since, for a long time, there had been no connection between music and the plot of the play (Al-Salihi, 1998, p. 30). Ahmad Abu Khalil al-Qabbani was commonly regarded as the founder of musical theatre in Egypt (around 1884), and singer Salama Hijazi its most successful exponent in the first two decades of the twentieth century: "As musical plays increased in popularity, particularly during the 1910s with the rise of Salama Hijazi's theatrical troupe, music designed expressly for theatre affected other musical styles as well. Typically, musical plays included familiar genres such as the qasida and the taqtuqa alongside genres adapted from European models especially for the plays such as the instrumental introduction (muqaddima, or iftitah) and the monologue, dialogue, and trialogue. Accompanying ensembles were relatively large, modelled on their European counterparts and, overall, theatre music was commonly considered to be the most Westernized of repertories" (Danielson, 1997, p. 45).

Popular music from the West became more dominant in that time. *Taqatiq*, operettas, and comedies were compiled to variety programms (Lagrange, 2002, pp. 102-103). The music was now often played by a *firqa* (or band) in an orchestra pit. The orchestra played *muwashshahat*, but also military marches in major and minor scales; one example is the aria "Shahwazad" by Sayyid Darwish in 1921. The more experimental pieces of that time did not belong to the canon of tarab anymore, they were, however, also not entirely part of the opera, since the composer knew this genre only superficially. Many songs were based on simple melodies that everyone could sing along to (Lagrange, 2000, p. 114). The center of commercial music was the theatre district near Azbakiyya Garden with its taverns, restaurants and cafes in European style, and entertainment kiosks, and open-air music halls. The garden was a working space for fortune-tellers, clowns, snake charmers, sorcerers, and other freelance entertainers. The Cairo Opera was situated at Imad al-Din Street (also in the theatre district). It featured European productions, and original Arabic productions, some of which included music. An entertainment district of secondary importance was Rawd al-Faraj. There were music halls and theatres, some outdoors on the bank of the river. Furthermore, there were some small theatres in the working-class districts of Cairo, for instance, in the area near the Husayn mosque. Umm Kulthoum and Mohammed Abd al-Wahab performed there in the early years of their careers (Danielson, 1997, p. 43). The boom of the operetta continued until the rise of the music film in the 1930s.

The old tarab repertoire still existed next to these new styles. The Syrian singer Marie Jubran, for example, was very succesfull in Cairo from the 1920s onwards. She was influenced by the nahda period of the nineteenth century and sang many muwashahat, qasai'd and adwar. Jubran rarely sang in public, and she was therefore known mainly in musicians' and music lovers' circles. The Lebanese singer and songwriter Ahmad Qabour remembers stories from the 1930s to the 1940s his uncle told

him, a blind oud player. He used to go to the houses of the rich ladies in Beirut and play for them. He played the music from Cairo: Sayid Darwish, Mohammed Osman, Saleh Abd al-Hay, but also the folkloric music from the region of Greater Syria called *Bilad ash-Sham*.

> My uncle was not famous, he only played in houses and closed salons. This was in the 1930s to the 1940s. He played and sang mouwashshahat, adwar, tawashih islamiya, mawal baghdadi that came from Bagdad. He married a Jewish woman from Palestine. For a long time there were no problems between Muslims, Christians and Jews in this area. The problems started after the Second World War. (Qabour, 2006)

3.2.4   The Phonographic Industry – and the Lebanese Label „Baidaphon"

Music in Cairo lost its elitarian touch and monopoly. Besides the engaged music of Sayed Darwish, entertainment music became more and more important: *taqtuqa*, a song form consisting of chorus and refrain, played by a takht ensemble, and sometimes sung by a singer with classical education, became very popular. The origins of the taqtuqa are in traditional wedding songs[51] (Lagrange, 2000, p. 102). An important factor for the change of the repertoire, and the transnational outreach of music made in Cairo, were the major developments in sound technology. The phonograph was invented in 1877, and used in Egypt from 1890. It enabled the musicians to record on wax cylinders first, and on flat discs from 1904 onwards. In the first decades of the twentieth century, millions of these 78-rpm discs were produced and advertised. The record companies were mainly foreign: Gramophone (later His Master's Voice) from England, and Odeon from Germany (Racy, 2003, p. 69).

From 1903 to the First World War, a large part of the art music repertoire of the nahda period (i.e., music performed at the Ottoman court in Egypt in the nineteenth century) was recorded. The folkloric and religious repertoire was left out almost completely (Lagrange, 2000, pp. 94-95). After the First World War, Egypt was under a British protectorate. Most of the international labels stayed in Cairo,

> …only the English Gramophone Company and French Pathé relocated and started taking recordings elsewhere in the Middle East. Pathé concentrated on Algiers, Morocco and Tunisia, perhaps largely due to their all being French colonies at the time. Odeon also turned its attention to these areas and both Columbia and Polyphon began building catalogues. The recording of Arab music was about to enter a new era. (Vernon, 1997)

The new technical possibilities led to changes in the repertoire. The complex music of the nahda became less and less important. "Jede Komposition musste in die vom Tonträger vorgeschriebene 6-Minuten-Form gepresst werden. Die Improvisation, die ihrem Begriff nach ausserhalb der Zeit liegt, konnte sich auf Platte nicht behaupten. Die Schallplatten der Vorkriegszeit enthielten stark verkürzte Wiedergaben der Kompositionen, die der Nachkriegszeit abgeschlossene Werke, die mögliche Entwicklungen nur noch andeuteten. Für eine Musik, die an der Schwelle zum 20. Jahrundert grösstenteils nicht aufgezeichnet war, war die Schallplatte paradoxerweise beides zugleich: eine unschätzbare Chance zu ihrer Bewahrung und ein Todesurteil" (Lagrange, 2000, p. 96).

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[51] For a detailed description of taqtuqa, see Lagrange (2000, p. 105-112).

The ownership of music, and also its support, changed completely as well: The record labels now owned the lyrics and the music:

> Middle- and upper middle-class Egyptians patronized entertainment through their purchases of tickets or recordings. Over a dozen magazines appeared that dealt with music and theatre or featured prominent columns for news and criticism of entertainment. Patronage shifted from individuals and families to institutions such as theatres and recording companies. (Danielson, 1997, p. 42)

Racy observed the same issues:

> Especially in the 1920s, the competing record companies made systematic efforts to commission, copyright, and record cast numbers of original musical works. Their efforts contributed to the ascendancy of a type of song that was short (78-rpm-disc length) and fully precomposed, most often in a 'lighter' strophic format. Thus, the record content shifted further away from the live tarab aesthetic, as precomposition had begun to overshadow context-bound flexibility. By the mid-1930s, with the gradual disappearance of recorded exclamations and the elimination of the celebrities' pictures from disc labels, a feature that was originally intended to evoke the live presence of the recording artists, many tarab songs became fixed media 'pieces'. (Racy, 2003, pp. 71-72)

Egyptian music became increasingly not only a domaine of the artists, but also a florishing music market with customers, producers, patrons, and musicians (Lagrange, 2000, p. 12).

The biggest non-European record company at the time was Baidaphon. The company was founded by the Christian family Bayda in Beirut. Mr. Iliyya Bayda, an immediate relative of the company's founders and a Baidaphon recording artist himself, supplied the details on the history of Baidaphon to Jihad Racy:

> According to him, the company owed its origins to five ambitious members of the Christian Bayda (Baida) family from the Musaytibah quarter of Beirut. Two of them were Jibran (Mr. Bayda's father) and Farajallah (a singer who later became a Baidaphon recording artist). These two brothers, who were practically illiterate, earned their living first as construction workers in Beirut. The remaining founders included their two fairly well-educated cousins, also brothers, Butrus and Jibran. Encouraged by the rising popularity of phonograph recording and by the talent of Farajallah, the four cousins decided to form their own recording company. Around 1906, they negotiated a deal with a German record manufacturing company, which agreed to record and manufacture discs for them in Berlin. In their negotiations, Butrus and Jibran Baida were assisted substantially by their brother Michel, a physician living in Berlin and the fifth founder. While still in Berlin the Bayda brothers inaugurated their recording business career by sending for their cousin Farajallah and the Beiruti oud accompanist Qasim al-Durzi to join them and make their first recordings there. (. . .) Back in Beirut, with records ready to sell, the Baydas opened a small record shop on Martyr Square in downtown Beirut. Soon after, the company began to record local talent, aided by the European engineers who made periodic recording missions to the area. It was probably only a matter of

months before the company recorded in Egypt and the rest of the Middle East. (Racy, 1977, pp. 97-98)

Baidaphon produced probably the earliest recordings in Lebanon. Farajallah Baida, a family member, was one of the first stars of the label. He recorded discs in three categories: the syro-lebanese lore of popular *mawwal*-type songs (*ataba*, *mijana*, *mawwal baghdadi*); the Aleppo lore of *qudud*, often egyptianized and turned into *taqatiq*; and *qasa'id*, usually sung in Egyptian dialect. According to members of the Zaman Al Wasl forum, his first recording date was from July 1906.[52] On the forum, one finds some of his recordings as mp3-files. However, not much research has been done on the syro-lebanese 78rpm production, compared to what exists in the Egyptian field.

Baidaphon recorded throughout the Middle East and North Africa, sending their master copies to Germany to be manufactured. Many singers started to record on the label. When the label opened a branch in Cairo in 1914, Muhammad Abd al-Wahab became one of their partners (Gsell, 1999, pp. 28-29). The repertoire seems quite broad: The Baidaphon catalogue features the older genres *mawashasah*, *dor*, *qasida*, and *mawwal*, but also the modern taqtuqa, and also music from Algeria, Marocco, and Tunisia. One of the important singers of the taqtuqa genre was the Egyptian Munira al-Mahdiyya (1884 – 1965), the sultana of tarab (Lagrange, 2000, p. 106). She sang in the cabarets in the Cairo neighbourhood of Azbakiyya, and recorded her first disc "Sett" (Miss) in 1906. She was famous for her "'seductive' husky voice and characteristic bahhah (literally, 'hoarseness')" (Racy, 2003, p. 87). She used to laugh provocatively and in a vulgar manner. Furthermore, she was the first Egyptian Muslim woman who performed as an actress in a theatre play. She sang in operettas by Dawûd Husnî, Kâmil al-Khula'î and Zakariyyâ Ahmad, and was advertised as follows: "Le vent de la liberté souffle sur la salle de Munira al Mahdiyya" (Lagrange, 1994). Criticism by conservative groups made her flee to Lebanon where she stayed until 1920. In 1923 she returned to Cairo where she worked with Muhammad Abd al Wahab, and performed as a singer in the cabarets at the banks of the river Nile - a place where many singers tried to start their career. That same year, she was discovered by Baidophon, and became very popular.

Her main competitors were Fathiyya Ahmad, and the young Umm Kulthoum. The trio had a lot of press coverage, often more was written about their intrigues than about their music. In 1926 Fathiyya Ahmad left Cairo for an extended trip to Greater Syria (Danielson, 1997, p. 63). Umm Kulthoum accepted her first invitation to Syria in 1931 (Danielson, 1997, p. 67). Rumour has it that many Lebanese drove out with their small boats to greet the Egyptian singer who arrived with a huge steamboat. They welcomed her, as if she were an important political leader coming back from exile (Gsell, 1999, p. 31).

Unfortunately, there is not much material that one can find about the early recording days of Baidaphon in Greater Lebanon. A tour through the forum of Zaman Al Wasl, however, shows that there were many musicians who recorded their works. We can hear Ahmad al-Shaykh with his great tarab voice, accompanying himself only with a violin. Similarly, Muhammad al-Ashiq also recorded his music on Baidophon. There are mp3s by Ahmad Effendi al-Mir from Damascus with his light voice, and Muhy al-Din Ba'yun singing a *muwashshah*, accompanied by a qanun. All these artists, and many more, recorded for Baidaphon before the end of the First World War. It seems that their style of singing was more influenced by the Ottoman *ghazal* than is the case with many of the Egyptian singers of the time.

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[52] http://zamanalwasl.net/forums

Especially between 1925 and 1935, the tradition of the nahda school of Hamuli was deemed as old style and lost its importance. However, the links between the contemporary practice and the pre-World War I musical legacy stayed extremely significant, as Racy concludes:

> For modern composers and performers, takht music has served both as a model and a point of departure. .. From takht tradition, which incorporated Sufi vocal elements and various indigenous and Pan-Ottoman secular ingredients, the modern musical ensemble has borrowed its basicArab instruments. Similarly, the modern practice has derived from takht music basis ecstatic techniques, especially those related to mode and modal improvisation. Obviously, modern departures from the older expression have been extensive. Nonetheless, as a musical model, the takht not only represents the musical aesthetic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also informs us about the dynamics of ecstatic evocation in tarab music in general. (Racy, 2003, p. 77)

Racy describes the use of phonographs in cafés, a form of entertainment popular in the Near East during the first few decades of the twentieth century. It "brings to mind the sort of mobile disc jockey who carried a phonograph into various quarters and towns playing the same collection of records for a fee" (Racy, 2001, p. 345). Further, Racy points to some old recordings of shruqi and 'ataba songs by Yusuf Taj and 'Alya al-Atrash, the mother of the well-known singer Farid al-Atrash and Asmahan. These songs were recorded commercially on a 78-rpm disc and were widely heard by 'ataba fans throughout the Arab Near East; this observation shows that, at the time, taqtuqa did not take over completely. However, the 'ataba songs had an urban flavour:

> In this and similar examples, we encounter lavish ornamentation, a highly melismatic treatment of the text, flexible interpretations of an established melodic structure, and basic adherence to the urban intonation. Furthermore, a few urban instruments begin the performance with a short prelude but accompany the singers either by holding a soft drone or roughly by echoing the vocal phrases, thus giving the performance an urbanized musical quality, without departing drastically from the manner in which the rababah accompanies the sha'ir in the Bedouin context. (Racy, 1996, pp. 415-416)

3.2.5   A Closer Look at Developments in the State of Greater Lebanon

In 1920, France proclaimed the creation of the State of Greater Lebanon under the French mandate:

> To the original territory of the Mutasarrifiya were annexed the coastal cities of Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli, and the four ex-Ottoman cazas of Hasbaya, Rashaya, Ba'albak and 'Akkar. Its borders were set at Nahr al-Kabir in the north, Palestine in the south, the Mediterranean in the west and the summits of the anti-Lebanon range in the east. (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 80)

Politically, Beirut was defined as standing between Europe and the Syrian Hinterland (Hourani, 1992, p. 393). The city became dominated by a merchant and financial bourgeoisie, which was embedded in the mandate system. With its financial and commercial power, Beirut became a center of activity. Agriculture lost its importance, the differences between the capital and the country increased. At the same time, the French authorities created a class of intermediaries between the

farmers and themselves whom they would deal with, and who would benefit most from governmental aid (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 88). While the city dominated the economy, the clan leaders in the mountains continued to control Beirut politically. This has never changed, even up to the present day (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 93).

Education was in the hands of Christian schools and missionaries now, led by the Europeans and Americans. The Université St. Joseph in Beirut was subsidised by the French government. A new elite emerged, educated with European teaching methods, often in French. To speak French became increasingly important if a student wanted to find a job in the Lebanese administration or service industry (Hourani, 1992, pp. 399-400).

Wadih Sabra (1976 – 1952) founded the first *Ecole de Musique* (Dar al-Musiqa) in Beirut in 1910. Sabra, of French-Lebanese origin, had worked as an organ player at the protestant church of Saint-Esprit in Paris, and studied at the conservatory in Paris under Albert Lavignac. He came to Beirut with the intention of building bridges between the music of the Orient and the Occident. To him, Arabic music was the basis of occidental music, or, in other words: Occidental music was the developed version of oriental music (Mainguy, 1969, p. 38).

> In 1926, Greater Lebanon became the 'Lebanese republic.' French became an official language next to Arabic, and the leading language for business life, often spoken also on the street and at home. France defined Lebanon as a nation of religious minorities. The political power, however, lay in the hands of the Maronites. Their supremacy was ensured in their capacity as the biggest numerical minority according to the 1932 census, the last to be organised in Lebanon. (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 91)

The constitution mentioned freedom of religious belief. Article 10 summoned the state "to defend private religious education on condition it did not conflict with public education" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 90). Emil Eddé and Bishara al-Khouri were the two main political rivals during these mandate years. Eddé saw Lebanon as a Christian homeland with a Mediterranean identity that was separated from Syria and the rest of the Arab World. He saw the Muslims as a threat, and he therefore supported private and religious Christian education (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 93-94). Khouri, on the other hand, defined Lebanon as an independent country built in cooperation with its Muslim population, and with close ties to Syria and the rest of the Arab World. The conflict of the two was mirrored in the leading intellectual figures at the mandate time: Michel Chiha and Charles Corm (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 95). The idea of Phoenicia as the mother culture of Lebanon became popular:

> According to Corm, Christianity, the historical inheritor of Phoenicia, accomplished the elaboration of a Lebanese cultural identity distinct from that of the rest of the Arab world. Chiha, on his part, was no less a Phoenicianist, but he restricted Phoenicianism to the economic sphere, refusing to consider it the hallmark of Lebanese identity. (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 95)

Two groupings and policies emerged, both were directed by fear: Christian protectionists feared that Lebanon without France might soon be annexed by Syria. And Muslim unionists feared that the country's independence would legitimise the borders of 1920 and destroy their hope of annexation. When, in 1936, France granted independence to Lebanon in its 1920 borders, bloody clashes between the Beiruti neighbourhoods of Gemmayzeh (East - Maronite) and Basta (West - Sunni) erupted (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 102).

The New Phoenicians, a group of mainly Christian Maronite intellectuals of the Francophile Beirut bourgeoisie, foresaw an important role for estivation and tourism in Lebanon. "Their idea was

to revive Phoenicia as a cultural and national identity differentiated from the Arabs and as a model for an outwardlooking service economy." The notion that Lebanon was the Switzerland of the East was heard often. Lebanon had banks, mountains, a federation of sectarian cantons, and it had beautiful nature, and was therefore perfect for tourism (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 92). "The New Phoenicians glorified the peasants' 'dignified misery' in Mount Lebanon, now presented as an abode of the Spirit and of Faith … They hailed migration as an age-old vocation of an entire people, expressing its spirit of freedom and adventure" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 93). One of the Lebanese contradictions of the time was the ambitious plans from the elite on one side, and the economic crisis of the 1930s on the other side. The crisis led to an emigration wave, and increased sectarian and political tensions (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 92).

Wadih Sabra fitted into the world-view of these Maronite intellectuals. In 1925 his Ecole de Musique became the Ecole *Nationale* de Musique, and in 1929, the national conservatory was founded. It was divided into two main departments: One for occidental, and one for oriental music; this divison still exists today. Both departments had their own orchestras. The policies of the conservatory were always influenced by politics. The board hosted twelve members. Under the leadership of the minister of education it consisted of the director of the conservatoire, one minister from the ministry of finance, the president of the organisation "Amis de la Musique au Liban" and the president of the comission of the music festival of Baalbek. Furthermore, there were temporary board members, art lovers elected by the minister of education. It was in these early days that the seeds were planted for the development of the "Lebanese music" of the 1950s, a music that became well known throughout the Arab world, and also in the West. However, these years are also a starting point for many misunderstandings about Arabic music, many crises of contemporary Arabic music, and many other problems to come - with great consequences for the generation of musicians today as we will see in chapter 7.4. Let me just pinpoint some major issues:
The musicologist Victor Sahhab is one among many who have been criticising music education programms in Lebanon for a long time. "Too many professors and teachers at our national conservatory and in our music schools believe European music to be superior to our local music," he told me: "They even call the section for Arabic music at the conservatory the Oriental or the Eastern section. It seems that Arabic music, Japanese music, Indian music, Persian music is all the same to them, just Oriental music." (Sahhab, 2006) An analysis of the music of many of the Lebanese compositions that came out from the national conservatory would suggest that Victor Sahhab is right. Most of the composers seem to be more interested in giving their music an oriental flavour and touch, than really trying to bring out the specialities and qualities of the various Arabic musical forms. Self-exotism becomes increasingly important, as we will see in the section about the Baalbek festival. Another important point that shall be discussed later is the way Arabic music is taught in this Eastern section. The students learn from schoolbooks that teach them Arabic music in a completely wrong way, as many musicians and connoisseurs argue.

Another influential teacher was the French organ player Betrand Robilliard. According to him, experiments between Western and Eastern music should follow the principles of the counterpoint (Mainguy, 1969, p. 34). Later in his career, he developed and wrote various programms for musical education: a course about the counterpoint (1951), and one about the Fugue (1953, 1960). As a composer, he wrote many recitals for the organ that he performed himself, in the chapel of the Sacré-Coeur college in Beirut, for example, or in the Université Saint Joseph. In 1937 he founded the group "Petits Chanteurs de l'U.S.J. " and wrote many pieces of music for them. Furthermore, he helped in

founding the ALBA (Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts) and taught there. Among his students were the brothers Assy and Mansour Rahbani, a composer and a lyricist who later were to become the leading and/or most mediatized actors in the creation of a "Lebanese" music from the 1950s onwards. [53]

3.2.6   Influences from Cairo: Radio and Film

Before the Rahbani brothers and their contemporaries created their "Lebanese" music, Cairo still was some kind of a forerunner concerning urban or popular music. In the 1920s radio replaced the phonograph as the predominant medium of popular culture. Entrepreneurs and other individuals opened several radio stations in Cairo; it is said that they numbered over 100 in the 1920s. Many of the upcoming artists performed over the airwaves (Danielson, 1997, p. 85).

> Beginning in 1934 the government-sponsored National Radio actively promoted traditional music by broadcasting up to eight hours of recordings and live concerts daily. Om Kalsoum (Umm Kulthoum), still the most popular female star, and Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, her male equivalent, made a quick and easy transition to this new medium. In fact it promoted Kalsoum to superstardom. Her monthly radio concerts attracted such huge audiences that virtually all other activity ceased in Cairo for their duration. Om Kalsoum Night became a national habit. (Vernon, 1997)

For almost forty years Umm Kulthoums' monthly Thursday night concerts were broadcast live over the powerful Egyptian radio waves - through the channel of the Egyptian Radio opened in 1934. Many stories circulated about her radio broadcasts: "'Such-and-such a military leader postponed a manoeuvre because Umm Kulthoum was singing.' 'Life in the Arab world came to a stop'" (Danielson, 1997, p. 1).

The early radio stations in Lebanon played mainly Egyptian music. One can observe that the Egyptian superculture was transmitted throughout the Arab world by the radio, and the gramophone. Music by Sayyd Darwish, and upcoming stars like Layla Murad, Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, Umm Kulthoum, and composers such as Zakariya Ahmad, Muhammad al-Qasabgi, and Riyad as-Sunbati were well-known in Damascus, Haifa, Jerusalem and Beirut (Weinrich, 2006 p. 51).

In the mid-1920s, film became very important - real fame and money now came from film (Danielson, 1997, pp. 87-88). The first Egyptian film appeared in 1926. In 1929 there were fifty cinema halls in Cairo and the provincial capitals. Many Egyptian films were also shown in the movie theatres in Beirut. The first Egyptian song film, "Unshudat al-Fu'ad" (Hymn of the Heart) starring the Syrian singer Nadira, was released in 1932. Muhammad Abd al-Wahab's first film, "Al-Ward al-Bayda" (The White Rose), was released in 1933. Umm Kulthoums' first of her six films was "Widad." Layla Murad (1918 – 1995), for example, made her debut in 1927. She was born in Cairo, to a Moroccan Jewish family. In 1946 she converted to Islam. She became a leading film star and very successful during the early 1950s.

Many artists from all over the Arab world came to Cairo and tried their luck. The most succesful ones were probabaly the singer Asmahan and her brother Farid al-Atrash. The two were born into a Druze family in Syria. Asmahan, born in 1924, traveled many times between Cairo and her parents' house in Syria. On the way, she made many stop-overs in Jerusalem and Beirut - at that

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[53] For more on the Rahbani brothers, see Chapter 3.2.15

time, the borders were still open. Through her appearances in films she became one of the biggest competitors of Umm Kulthoum.

> She was a beautiful woman with a well-controlled voice, flexible over a wide range of pitch. Victor Sahhab credits her with creating a vocal style that integrated Arab and European aesthetics in virtuosic performances. However, her talent and capabilities were offset by her determination not to sing in concerts or music halls, nor for money under any circumstances other than filmmaking. (Danielson, 1997, p. 90)

There were rumours about various love affairs. Reading her story reminds one of many gender discussions women singers and artists face in Lebanon today. It was also said that Asmahan was involved in a British intelligence operation in the Jabal Druze in Syria. In 1944 she died in a car accident. It was never clear whether it was an accident, or political murder. Asmahan was the favorite singer of Fayruz, together with Layla Murad. Possibly, Fayruz loved Asmahan because she was one of the first who used a *lawn gharbi* (lit. Western colour) in her singing, she often sang Bel Canto, and used head voice quite frequently (Weinrich, 2006 p. 84).

Asmahan's brother Farid al-Atrash (1915 – 1974) also made his career in film. He wrote at least 111 musical compositions. Most of them became well known through the cinema. The compositions reflect "a blending of the popular and classical traditions of Arabic music, a mixture of lawn tarabi (lit. tarab colour), lawn baladi (lit. local colour), and lawn gharbi, (to use the indigenous system of musical categorization), and also a regional mix of Syro-Levantine and Egyptian components" (Zuhur, 2001, pp. 271-272). What sets him apart from other important composers of the first half of the twentieth century, like Abd al-Wahab, al-Qasabji, and others, is,

> that the melodic line on Farid's songs and dance pieces has a certain magic whether orchestrated for smaller or larger numbers of instruments. This is not true, for example, of the Ottoman-based repertoire written earlier in the century, nor of music of the work of the two composers listed above. However, this particular malleable quality of his work was crucial to its success. It allowed for delightful variations of instrumentation within pieces, and successful renditions of his work by other musicians. (Zuhur, 2001, p. 272)

His work is recorded on Sono Cairo and Cairophone/Graphophone of Greece. Farid al-Atrash's improvisations were renowned, captured on film, and emulated by all solo 'udists to follow him, just as pianists often perform Chopin's Nocturnes or violinists Paganini's work to demonstrate their virtuosity. This is particularly true of a segment that borrows from flamenco, specifically, from a well-known Albeniz' fantasy on Andalucian themes, using the lower string as a rhythmic counterpoint against the melodic movement on the higher strings. (Zuhur, 2001, p. 271)

From Zuhur (2001, p. 282) we learn that Farid al-Atrash and his mother Alia tried to assimilate into the Levantine immigrant community in Egypt. It seems that the Syrian nationality and Druze religion of Farid al-Atrash was not a big issue at first: "In the entertainment world, his nationality was not considered relevant until after the Revolution of 1952, and his religion was seemingly unknown" (Zuhur, 2001, p. 282). A big singer and filmstar was Abd al-Halim Hafiz (1929 – 1978), who is sometimes labelled the "Sinatra of the Arab world." Hafiz seems to have had more possibilities than Farid al-Atrash, thanks to his pure Egyptian background.

> Farid did suffer from certain aspects of the competitive entertainment field. He began
> his life in Egypt in extreme poverty, and as a non-Egyptian, certain difficulties and
> jealousies affected his career, particularly as he exploited the multiple musical
> traditions he had mastered. This seemed apparent toward the end of his career, when
> he had relocated to Beirut as a base, whether to escape inroads of the nationalization
> process in Egypt or to be close to his mother and the nightclub he established. In
> contrast, the rising star, Abd al-Halim al-Hafiz, was acclaimed at the Officer's Club
> presented as a truly Egyptian rags-to-riches story. (Zuhur, 2001, p. 276)

For Lebanese musicians, it became increasingly difficult to gain attention in the Arab world. One has to understand that the Lebanese market was small, so the artists needed to expand. Film stayed important until the end of the 1970s. The stars from Cairo kept travelling to the neighbouring countries and performed in North Africa, Palestine, Syria, Damascus, or Beirut: for example, the great Umm Kulthoum, or Munira al-Mahdiyya.

3.2.7   The Cairo Congress of Music 1932

In the course of the years the "city music" had transformed on many levels: due to technical innovations, but also due to new tastes and ideological standpoints. The Egyptian musicians and composers created a new kind of song that was simply called *song*, or *ughniya* (pl. *aghani*) in Arabic, whose shorter form matched popular formats of mass-media production. *Aghani* were pre-composed, arranged in verses and refrains, and full of pre- and interludes. They differed a lot from the urban tarab music that uses long modal preparation, improvisation, and collective interplay to build up aesthetical pleasure and sensation (Racy, 2003).

The *firqa* ensemble, or orchestra, replaced the small takht ensemble of tarab music. It featured European instruments such as the violin, cello, double bass, accordion and piano along with the Arabic *oud*, *qanun*, *nay*, and percussion instruments. The musicians played from sheets; most of the music was pre-composed. A singer, male or female (*mutrib*, *mutriba*) was at the centre of the music. Most of the aghani started with a short prelude (*muqaddima*). They had several choruses, and often an instrumental part in the middle. The firqa became bigger and bigger. Today, a firqa can consist of more than twenty musicians, with big string sections, Arabic melody instruments, percussion, and sometimes also European melodic instruments. Usually the Arabic instruments are doubled or tripled; especially the oud and the qanun play unisono.

The new aghani were not anymore separated by formal criteria, but by their content: There are different forms of song: *al-ughniya al-wataniya* (patriotic songs) and *al-ughniya al-latifiya* (songs about emotions). The musical form of the aghani was and is, however, very diverse: The term *ughniya* is used for songs of this specific Egyptian school, but also for popsongs. Many Lebanese musicians felt very much inspired by these new musical trends.

While the market took over the economic control of the music, the musicians tried to win back the artistic control. They founded new schools and clubs, and started with new forms of music education. Before the 1920s, the musicians also started to discuss music in music journals and magazines. One could argue that this was the beginning of an Arab musicology (Lagrange, 2000, p. 97). The history of music education in Cairo resembles that of Beirut in many ways: The violinist Sami al-Shawwa and the oud player Mansour Awad founded a first school of Arabic music in 1907.

In 1920, Iskandar Shalfoun founded the music school "Rawad al-balabil" (Garden of Nightingales), and published a specialized journal under the same name. In 1913, noble music lovers founded an Oriental music club that was transformed into the Institut for Oriental Music later, and enjoyed the support of King Fuad. In 1929 it relocated to a huge palace in moorish style that hosted the famous congress in 1932. It was an important year for music in the Arab world - and many academics and writers have written about the famous Cairo Congress.

The term *Egyptian* music always had an ideological note to it. Until the 1930s the music was said to be "Oriental" and therefore coming from Ottoman traditions. Later on, Egyptian music was heavily influenced by European music. In 1932, just before the Cairo congress, Bela Bartok told people about the disastrous effects the European repertoire would have on Egyptian music. The congress itself was an opportunity to compare the musical traditions and styles from the different Arab countries for the first time (Lagrange, 2000, p. 13). It was organised by the Ministry of Culture, under the patronage of King Fuad, and hosted by Mahmoud Ahmad Al-Hifni, the music delegate of the ministy. Leading scholars and musicians from around the world attended the conference. The topics were the Arabic scales, modes and rhythms, but also music education and history of music in the Arab world. According to Lagrange (2000, p. 99) there was one big misunderstanding: The participants from Europe were interested in an Arabic music that was cleansed from European influences. They were convinced that its authenticity was to be found in the folkloric music of the region. The Egyptian musicians, music lovers and press, however, expected that the congress would confirm the leading role of Egypt in the musical production in the Arab world. They thought that the congress would approve the progression of Egyptian music, for example, in the operetta of Sayyid Darwish, who created a national music, and set the ground for the careers of Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab and Umm Kulthoum.

King Fuad's aim was to to establish a basis for an Arab music - an expression of Arab nationalist sentiment. One idea was that the 24-note equal tempered Arabic scale was analogous to the equal-tempered scale used in European (tonal) music:

> Proponents of the equal-tempered Arabic scale, including the conference organizers and their Orientalist supporters, argued that it would help rationalize Arab music and allow for the use of functional harmony in composition, something seen as lacking in 'classical' Arab music, which is largely monophonic (that is, comprising a single melodic line, though heterophony is common in ensemble situations). The adoption of an equal-tempered scale composed of 24 quarter-tones was proposed by the congress organizer, and the equal-tempered scale has been taught as the standard scale in many Arab conservatories ever since. (Shannon, 2006, p. 72)

Some of the Arab participants saw it as backward that the Arabic music was still very much taught orally, and that it was not a written music. In doing so, they used Western musicological standards to analyze their own music. Some even argued that the Arabic or Egyptian music was without theory.

One of the conclusions of the congress was that the music that reached a big audience was no longer constructed in the aesthetics of the nahda period. The music of the nahda was now described as *old* style – as a contrast to the *modern* style that started its triumphant procession by the end of the decade (Lagrange, 2000, p. 99).

Many Lebanese attended the congress as well; one of them was Wadih Sabra with his Oriental Piano: Sabra, who tried to harmonise Arabic music, especially the repertoire of the Bilad al-

Sham, had built a so-called Oriental piano, and was able to play some un-tempered scales and intervals on it. He composed pieces such as "Les Bergers de Canaan" (in the Turkish language), "Les Deux Rois" (in Arabic), "L'émigré" (Franco-Lebanese comedy), pieces for piano (Gavotte, Valse, and Romance), and around thirty transcriptions, including "Harmonisées D'airs Orientaux", and "Cantiques Protestants." "Yes, he invented a piano with quarter tones. However, theoretically speaking one should have a piano with 24 quarter tones because you have 12 half tones between the Do and the Do. Sabra had two quarter tones only. So he was able to play only certain Arab scales. It was a restricted instrument," the Lebanese musicologist Victor Sahhab told me in an interview (Sahhab, 2006). At the congress in Cairo, Sabra's instrument was refused. Sahhab explains:

> One of the problems is that the quarter tones in Arab music are never really fixed.
> They are not tempered, that means they are not calculated as physically equal,
> whereas the tempered scale in the European music on the piano are exactly equal half
> tones. (...) On the oud you can just push your finger a little and the tone changes ok,
> whereas on the piano, if you push your finger a little you jump half a tone, so you
> cannot chose in between the varieties of sound. So this is why this piano of Sabra's
> was refused unanimously, and he was very much upset at the time. (Sahhab, 2006)

The legend goes that it was Umm Kulthoum who actually tested the piano at the conference:

> The director of the academy of music in Egypt who was organizing the congress
> tuned his qanoun like the piano. (...) He played his qanoun and asked Umm Kulthoum
> to sing – she didn't know about the experiment. She said that it was impossible, and
> that the qanoun was not tuned correctly. (Sahhab, 2006)[55]

The quarter tone was always an important point for discussion and debate, as we shall see later on.

3.2.8   The 1930s: New Political Parties - Different Visions for Lebanon

Meanwhile, in Beirut, the frictions grew. New parties and para-military groups were founded: One of them was the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party (SNSP) in 1932 by Antoun Sa'adeh. The vision of the SNSP was an integral Syrian unity including Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan, Palestine, Cyprus and the Northern parts of Iraq. The party was anti-communist, anti-Jewish, corporatist and

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[55] There were others who tried to build an Oriental Piano. Abdallah Chahine constructed his Oriental Piano with the help of the Austrian manufacturer Hoffman. Chahine invented the prototype out of an old straight piano, that had cords and a keyboard of 6 octaves and an ingenios pedal devised to obtain quarter tones. This new piano was first presented in an exhibition in 1954 at the Austrian Pavilion in Damascus. Two years later, while showing the numerous possibilities of his instruments to the members of the UNESCO Congress in Beirut, Chahine declared: "This prototype has been made and transformed by myself, with the rudimentary means that I had at my disposal. What you have here is the result of 40 years of labor. It gives us the basic intervals which enable us to play the main melodies and modulations with their differences, plus the Arabic tones that can be played on the occidental tempered keyboard" (Rita Eid). Later on, in 1962, thanks to a prototype, which he had in his flat in Beirut, he recorded a vinyl record with typical oriental music. I bought the LP for one dollar in one of the stores of Chahine Fils – all the LPs from the Lebanese stars for one dollar each. I was happy, even though I had dusty fingers from going through the big collection. The musicologist Jacques Chailley has talked a lot about Chahine's piano, insisting on ,"its educational interest in abolishing the barrier between the two oriental and occidental musical civilizations" (Chailley). "Aloys Haba, a famous Czech composer (1893-1973) has applauded the simplicity and the perfection of this technical achievement. Left it be noticed that Aloys Haba - who is known for his interest in oriental traditional music and his compositions in intervals of tones smaller than half a tone - and the Russian composer Ivan Vychnégradsky (1893-1979), have made a piano with two keyboards; one of them being toned ¼ tone higher than the other" (Rita Eid).

secularist (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 98). In 1936, the Kata'ib party (Phalange) was founded by Pierre Gemayel, a Maronite pharmacist and football referee who was inspired by the discipline of the German Hitlerjugend (the Nazi youth organization) (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 103). The party wanted a Lebanese state with its 1920s borders. It supported a nationalism distinct from that of the "Arabs," i.e. Muslims. At the same time, Adnan al-Hakim founded the Najjada (Rescuers): They were Muslim independentists who called for integral Arab unity (which was clearly demarcated from Islamic unity), but did not insist on Syrian-Lebanese unity.

In 1937, Rashid Baydoun, a businessman and school owner in Beirut, founded al-Tala'i (The Vanguards), a Shia paramilitary organsation (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 102). From now on, the identity debate became very diverse and more ideological compared to the simple debate between Christian protectionism and Muslim unionism. "Two versions of the country now clashed: Lebanonism versus Arabism. Between the two stood a third variant, the Syrian nationalism of Sa'adeh's SNSP, representing non-Maronite Christians and the Muslims on the peripheries" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 102).

The period saw also the emergence of a third force, which was democatic, reformist and multi-secterian and reflected the social and anti-monopolist struggles of the 1930s. This group crystallised around the National and Democratic Congress (NDC), which convened in Beirut in November 1938 at the initiative of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP).[56] (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 103)

NDC Members were professional, middle-class economists and trade unionists, and merchants and notables who were opposed to the traditional leaders (za'im, pl. zu'ama) (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 103).

These were some of the basic settings at the time. Mainly the discussions circled around questions of national borders and of national identity. Many more discussions and disruptions came from the interior and from the exterior, for example, from the policy changes brought about by the Second World War (1939 - 1945), but also through strikes, turmoil, and fighting.

Support for the musical life in Lebanon came now from international arts councils and missions, from the Casino du Liban and individuals (Manguy, 1969, p. 78). The international institutions invited many Soloists and ensembles to perform in Beirut, especially from Germany, Austria, and France (Manguy, 1969, p. 80). The Institute of Music at the American University of Beirut (AUB), with its concert church West Hall and the Assembly Hall became popular – later, during the Civil War, it would become a venue for rock concerts as well. The AUB had its own music department that, since 1920, offered education in European music. It was closed in 1940, but reopened in the 1960s (Weinrich, 2006 p. 54). Also important was the Beirut College of Women with the Irwin Hall, or the Hotel Al-Bustan where chamber music concerts were held.

In 1937 the Association des Musiciens Amateurs (AMA) was founed. Its task was the support and the development of the classical music in Lebanon. It was under the *haut patronage* of the Minister of the Interior, at the time, Habib Abi-Shahla. The creative leader behind it was Alexis Boutros, an engineer and art lover. AMA organised concerts in the French speaking Université Saint Joseph, and in the American University of Beirut. In 1943 AMA became the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) (al-Akadimiya al-lubnaniya li-l-funun al-djamila), and Alexis Boutros became its first dean - with the authorisation of the president of the republic, Alfred Nakash (Mainguy, 1969, p. 52). ALBA today comprises a School of Architecture, a School of Plastic Arts, a School of Decorative Arts with an Advertising and Interior Design Section, a School of Audio-visual Art and an

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[56] The Lebanese Communist Party was already founded in 1924.

Institute of Urbanism (see: www.alba.edu). An important place was also Sami Salibi's Center of Fine Arts (established in 1954) (Racy, 1986, p. 415).

Before the Second World War, many Lebanese musicians went to Paris, London and Rome to study harmony in order to work with the Lebanese repertoire in a new, and what they perceived as a "modern" way. This idea would, shortly thereafter, gain the interest of international radio stations and Christian politicians.

3.2.9   *Ughniya Mutawwala: The Long Song in Cairo and Beirut*

Meanwile Umm Kulthoum, Muhammad Abd al-Wahab and several other composers and singers had created the *ughniya muttawwala*, the "long song." Elements of the former *wasla* suites (from nineteenth-century Egypt) were back, mingled with the monologues and *taqatiq* from the 1930s (Lagrange, 2000, p. 122). They brought back a counterbalance to the short *aghani*, however, one was still able to sing along to its melodies.[57] "Umm Kulthoum gave life to historically Arabic song in a commercial environment. Her work presented Egyptians with songs they believed proceeded from their own culture and was not copied from another" (Danielson, 1997, p. 198). Umm Kulthoum's voice was the main key for the acceptance of these modern songs as being part of the tradition (*turath*).

> Egyptian discourse about Umm Kulthoum's singing directs our attention to qualities
> of voice, the use of sounds of letters and words, and the rendition of words and
> phrases. Innovations float around these conceptual wires, transforming genres, styles,
> and practices. They become new but retain links to the past. Saxophones, electronic
> keyboards, triadic arpeggios, and tuxedos created a modernity and asserted
> competence coeval with the culture of the hegemonic power. Correct treatment of
> language, use of the structural principals of maqam, performance proceeding from the
> concept of turath represented by the wasla – all these helped constitute asala,
> authenticity. (Danielson, 1997, p. 196)

Muhammad Abd al-Wahab is seen by many Arabs as the greatest musician of the twentieth century. Born in 1902, he started to venture new forms of musical compositions and was one of the first to add Western instruments to the traditional Arabic *takht* ensemble. Sayyid Darwish was his main idol, and it is therefore no surprise that he became the vanguard of modernism and innovation in contemporary Arabic music. His approach was much different from that of Umm Kulthoum. In his compositions he, for example, cited European music (Verdi, Bizet, Beethoven, and Tschaikowski) in order to show the compatibility of Arab and European cultures.

These two artists were leading figures in the development of the genre. They became more and more important. From the 1940s onwards they were both at the top of the musicians' syndicate, and they worked together with President Gamal Abd al-Nasser. They supported his pan-arabist politics, however, they also used him to stay on top (Lagrange, 2000, p. 123). Both influenced generations of musicians and singers in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. Umm Kulthoum created modern, but long songs again (*ughniya mutawwala*). The three composers Muhammad al-Qasabji, Zakariyya Ahmad, and Riad al-Sunbati worked alongside, and often together with Umm Kulthoum and Muhammad Abd al-Wahab. Muhammad al-Qasabji[58]

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[57] For descriptions see Lagrange (2000, pp. 124-131).
[58] For more on Qasabji, see Danielson (1997:, pp. 70 – -78).

> … was and still is regarded as the teacher of a generation of composers and musicians. A number of the musical inventions popularized in the monologues remained as permanent features of Umm Kulthoum's repertory and those of other singers as well. Nor were pieces with these features always viewed as Westernized. They were more commonly charcterized as imaginative, sophisticated, or 'intercultural,' different from both Western and Arab music. (Danielson, 1997, p. 78)

Al-Qasabji's experimental style for Umm Kulthoum culminated in his songs for the film "Nashid a-Amal," many of which included harmonized passages and heavy orchestration. On several occasions, al-Qasabji grounded pieces in the Western modalities of major and minor (Danielson, 1997. p. 75). He wrote some operatic songs for Asmahan.

"Zakariyya Ahmad prided himself on taking musical inspiration from working-class people. He retained his many contacts with the musicians and audiences of the middle- and lower-class quarters of Cairo" (Danielson, 1997, p. 103). His "songs relied upon maqamat," and he "highlighted the singer's leading role". His "rhythmic structures accommodated extra time for clear articulation of a consonant, addition or omission of melodic embellishment, and prolongation of the cadence, all important practices in historically Arabic song." He did "rhythmic innovations" and "new combinations of familiar styles. Almost all of the songs were ughniyat, taking shapes that varied from song to song, but all drawing on well-known Egyptian Arabic practices" (Danielson, 1997, pp. 104-105). Ahmad was also a pioneer in film music. He wrote the melody for the first Egyptian talkie "Unshudat al-Fu'ad" (Hymn of the Heart).

Riad al-Sunbati[60] wrote many songs for Umm Kulthoum and for some of her films. In the 1940s he began to develop what would become his speciality, the *qasida* (Danielson, 1997, p. 109). He "created a musical neoclassicism … Al-Sunbati's success in casting the classical poetic genre in new molds opened avenues for creativity in Umm Kulthoum's repertory. The Sunbati qasida became the mainstay of Umm Kulthoum's repertory for the rest of her life" (Danielson, 1997, p. 115). They first worked together in 1930. He used the "arch-shaped structure characteristic of classical composition. The melody usually began with the lover pitches, and then ascended to higher pitches in the same mode. Modulations into other modes followed, forming the center of the piece. The qasida ended with a descent in the original mode" (Danielson, 1997, p. 115). His innovations were bass lines, occasional suggestions of harmony, and he sometimes used seven or eight violins and worked with a large firqa (Danielson, 1997, p. 115).

"One Arab listener indicated to me that his rich uncle … used to take a plane from Beirut to Cairo to attend Umm Kulthoum's monthly performances live, even though these performances were broadcast across the entire region" (Racy, 2003, p. 74).

This new repertoire of long songs was situated somewhere between art music and entertainment. It had a huge impact on many other artists (Lagrange, 2000, p. 133). Many singers began to sing long songs in the 1940s and 1950s: Abd al-Halim Hafiz, Nagat, Fayza Ahmad, Warda, and many more (Lagrange, 2000, p. 133). Singers and musicians from all over the Arab world were still coming to Cairo trying to show their talent and maybe reach fame. Lebanese, Syrian, Algerian, and Moroccan singers presented songs in Egyptian dialect and copied the performances, the style, the gestures and the facial expressions of Umm Kulthoum. A few were successful: When Umm

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[60] For more on al-Sunbati, see Danielson 1997: 110ff

Kulthoum had health problems, Su'ad Muhammad was said to become one possible successor. This young Lebanese singer "had shown remarkable skill in performing Umm Kulthoum's repertory in Lebanon" (Danielson, 1997, p. 162). Muhammad spent most of her life in Egypt. After Asmahan died in 1944, she sang in many films and became very famous.

Furthermore, there were Lebanese instrumentalists who played the Egyptian repertoire, for example, the oud player, composer and singer Saliba al-Qatrib (1904-1994) from Tripoli. He belonged to Zakaria Ahmad's school of music and became well known in the 1950s. He worked with Muhammad Abd al-Wahab and Farid Al-Atrash and gave concerts in many Arab countries and in Europe.

Another important oud player was Farid Ghosn (1912 – 1985), the teacher of Marcel Khalife. "He composed for Umm Kulthoum, Asmahan and Nour al-Huda, and was ranked with the top Arab musicians of the twentieth century" (Orientaltunes). He experimented on the *oud* with Eastern and Western influences. He started his career in Egypt, where his father had migrated to. In the 1950s he left for Latin America, but came back in the 1960. He taught at the National Conservatory. He was also the teacher of Farid al-Atrash (Zuhur, 2001, p. 283).

The repertoire of these Lebanese musicians (and also of Umm Kulthoum) was still a repertoire for a certain kind of insider – even though it was very popular. However, it was not easily accessible to Western listeners, and often incompatible with those Western musical styles and practices that gained currency in the twentieth-century Middle East.

The great acclaim directed at such a figure is particularly interesting in the context of Egypt: while it has often been considered the most Westernized of Arab lands, Western scholars, politicians, and other observers have frequently wondered at the reluctance of Egyptians to conform more readily to apparently desirable Western ways. Some have been astounded when Egyptians have aligned themselves with Islamic or Arab causes believed by Westerners to be incompatible with 'progress'. (Danielson, 1997, p. 198)

However, the Second World War had a huge impact on the production of music in the Arab World.

The 1939-45 war severely interrupted the Arab music industry. The three major foreign countries involved in recording all became embroiled in war, and they also brought their conflict to Arab soil. Despite these events, the hardship they brought and the consequent shortage of raw materials, the Baidaphon label kept up a solid output of new material. Pressings were made for them in neutral Switzerland and throughout the war Arab communities continued to enjoy both recorded music and radio broadcasts. (Vernon, 1997)

3.2.10   1943 – 1952: The Independent "Merchant Republic" of Lebanon

In 1943 the Independent Republic of Lebanon was announced. It took off with two *founding documents*: A formal constitution and an informal verbal understanding between President Bishara al-Khouri and Prime minister Riad al-Sulh known as the 'National Pact' (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 109). The national pact corrected many of the essential principles of the constitution. It confirmed the power-sharing formula: a Maronite president, a Shia speaker, a Sunni prime minister. The pact also defined Lebanon's identity:

> Whereas the constitution (article 1) defined Lebanon as an 'independent State
> enjoying indivisible unity and integral sovereignty', the pact defines it as a 'country
> with an Arab profile that assimilates all the beneficial and useful in Western
> civilisation'. Thus Lebanon's 'Arab profile' was supposed to replace the (Muslim)
> demand for unity with Syria, and cultural links with the West replaced the (Christian)
> demand for French military presence or Western protection in general. … The
> negative impacts of a country 'taking off' with two founding texts, instead of one,
> cannot be underestimated. A great part of the later history of Lebanon and of its
> conflicts would be articulated around the way those two texts were read, interpreted
> and assigned priority. (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 110-111)

The president had huge power at first; he named the ministers and was to choose the prime minister. He had the right to dismiss his cabinet, or to veto legislation that passed in the parliament (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 109-110). "The commercial/financial oligarchy that came to power with independence was thought to comprise some thirty families articulated around a hard nucleus composed of 'the consortium': the president's two brothers, his sons, and a dozen related families." (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 115). These families held monopolistic control of the country's economy. They were: 24 Christian families (nine Maronites, seven Greek Catholic, one Latin, one Protestant, four Greek Orthodox and one Armenian) and six Muslim families (four Sunni, one Shiite and one Druze).[61] The president, with his exceptional executive and legislative powers, safeguarded their power (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 115). Their money came from the silk economy and the import trade [62], war profits (between 1940 and 1944, allied troops spent £76 million in Syria and Lebanon), and emigrant money repatriated from Africa, the Americas, and the oil-producing Arab countries (especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia). They also owned dozens of banks. Of the 50 agencies representing US firms, half were in the hand of one family, the Kettaneh, the rest was distributed between the Fattal, Sahnawi and Pharaon families. The families of the consortium were also pioneers in tourism: they owned the biggest and most luxurious hotels (the St. Georges and the Bristol), the summer resorts of Bhamdun and Sawfar, the ski centres of Faraya, and the Cedars. [63] Traboulsi calls Lebanon between 1943 to 1952, the "Merchant Republic." The Lebanese commercial/financial oligarchy established itself as an intermediary between Western markets and the entire Arab hinterland (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 118).

> Michel Chiha had set up an interesting bifurcated model for the relationship between
> economic power and political power. Economic power was to be exercised mainly
> through the executive. The president of the republic, rallying point and business
> partner of the commercial/financial oligarchy, represented, served and defended its
> economic interests. Similarly, the administration's main task was to speed up
> business deals and transactions. …. On the other hand, parliament, defined as an
> 'assembly of notables', was to be the reserve of the landed Za'ims representing the
> country's various sects. Its principal, if not exclusive, role was the establishment of
> 'sectarian peace'. (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 117)

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[61] Important families were: Pharaon, Chiha, Khuri, Haddad, Freige, Kettaneh, 'Arida, Bustrus, 'Asayli, and Doumit.

[62] Western products: food, arms, ammunition, agricultural and industrial equipment, beverages, medical and pharmaceutical products, construction materials, electric equipment, telecommunications, wood, hardware, coffee, cars, spare parts and others.

[63] And more; see Traboulsi (2007, p. 116).

The dream of both Muslim and Christian independentists was a politically independent Lebanon that entertained the best possible economic, social, and cultural relations with Syria (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 121).

In the 1950s this dream was far away. The Maronites feared that economic union would inevitably lead to political unity. Economic prosperity was not equally spread. Dislocations were exacerbated by rapid urbanization, growing disparities in socioeconomic standards, and symptoms of relative deprivation (Khalaf, 2002, p. 107). In 1951, Lebanon counted 57,000 unemployed out of a population of 1,250,000. There were many strikes. The Patriotic Socialist Front (PSF) was formed in early 1950: by Kamal Jumblat, Kamil Sham'un, Raymond and Pierre Eddé, the Phalange, the Syrian Nationalist Social Party (PSNS) and the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 125). In 1952 they adopted a programme of democratic and anti-monopolist policies, mainly inspired by Jumblat's Progressive Socialist Party. Its goals were independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press and of political parties, and the abolition of noble titles, social security, and an unemployment insurance scheme for workers, peasants and intellectuals.

During that time (1949-1950) the Lebanese Maronite Order founded the Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik. It became officially recognized as a university by the Lebanese government in 1961. Important for music education was Father Louis Hage, who is still active today. Hage had studied theology in Rome, and he holds a Doctorate in musicology from the Sorbonne in Paris, France - the connection to the Sorbonne is still important today, as many conferences and publications show. Hage is connected to many European ethnomusicologists. In 2006, he was the leading president of the Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae (CIMS), an organisation that was founded by the Vatican in 1963. It organises symposiums and debates and publishes academic writings about international church music. The main interest of Hage was research and documentation of sacred music (Weinrich, 2006 p. 55).

3.2.11   1948: The Nakba and the Palestinian Influence on the Creation of a "Lebanese Music"

The *nakba* of 1948, the creation of the State of Israel and the loss of Palestine, brought many changes to the region. The consequences for the Lebanese people and for the Lebanese debate on identity, was manyfold. Economically, the Lebanese service industry was the main beneficiary of the Arab economic boycott of Israel. Beirut took over Haifa's role as the main port of the Arab hinterland and as an international communication centre between Europe, Asia, and some parts of Africa. The Palestinian capital, estimated at 150 million Palestinian pounds, flowed massively into Lebanon. Nevertheless, the export industry was dealt a severe blow, as the value of the Lebanese exports to Palestine used to be bigger than its exports to France, Great Britain, and the US combined. The economies of the regions neighbouring Palestine, whose products were destined for the Palestinian market [64] practically collapsed, and constituted a major factor in the migration of many southerners and Biqa'is to Beirut and overseas (especially Africa and the US) (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 113). Tensions in Lebanon grew.

In Egypt, Mohammed Abdel Wahab was one of the first, very influential composers who wrote songs about Palestine. His songs for the liberation of Palestine were performed with big

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[64] Tanneries in Mashghara, a pottery in Rashaya, and shoemaking in Bint Jubayl.

orchestras and sung by many artists. Some of the main sons were "Filastine" (1949), "Watani Habibi" (My Beloved Homeland, 1958), "al-Jil al-Sa'ed" (The Rising Generation, 1961), and "Sawt al-Jamahir" (The Voices of the Masses, 1963).

> While the music of the 1949 song 'Filastin' (also known as 'Akhi jawaza al-zalimun al-mada') used both Arab and Western instruments (oud, nay, qanun, riqq, violins) and featured quarter tones mixed up in segments with Western scales, the music of the grand nationalist songs of the post-1958 period had almost exclusively Western instrumentation, scales, and style and resembled Western martial music (though the syncopation and rhythmic arrangements, as well as parts of the orchestration, bore 'Abd al-Wahhab's modernist Arab stamp). And while 'Filastin' utilized a slow-moving melody to assert that the youth would protect the land of Palestine or die trying, the later 'Watani Habibi' and 'Sam al-Jamahir' roused the masses through Western martial music which 'Abd al-Wahhab punctuated with several bars of emotive melodies in his distinctive style. The lyrics of 'Watani Habibi' address the Arab homeland with the words 'The voice is your voice, Arab and free, and not an echo of West or East,' but the orchestra lacked a single Arab or Eastern instrument. (Massad, 2003, p. 23)

In the song, "Sawt al-Jamahir," the lyrics deal with the Palestinian nakba very explicitly:

> In the name of our union,
> Rise O struggle,
> And tell the aggressor Zionists,
> That the banner of Arabism
> Found its stars
> Ever since the year 1948
> … the masses say that the hour
> Of revolutionary action has struck
> In Palestine, in the name of the masses. (Massad 2003:24)

In the wake of the nakba a large number of rich and middle-class Palestinians moved to Lebanon. Businessmen and intellectuals established themselves in Beirut. At least two of them, Halim al-Rumi and Sabri al-Sharif, would soon help to create and construct a *new* "Lebanese music." Al-Sharif (born in 1922 in Yaffa, who died in 1999) was the director of the music and arts department of the Near East Radio Station, called Al-Sharq al-adna. The British founded the station during the Second World War in Jenin. In 1941 it moved to Jaffa, in 1947 to 1948 to Jerusalem. After 1948 it opened its main office in Cyprus (Weinrich, 2006 p. 80). It is said that Sabri al-Sharif succeeded in moving a good part of the budget from the Cairo branch of the station to Cyprus (Fayrouz.com). Halim al-Rumi, a musician and the father of the well known singer Majida al-Rumi, was told to go to Beirut and to contact the Rahbani brothers, and other musicians and composers who would be interested in creating a music that would deal with the local music from the Bilad as-Sham and European music. However, the sources here are not so clear. Some say that it was, in fact, Sabri al-Sarif who went to Beirut to talk to the artists. It is also unclear whether the idea for the creation of this new kind of Lebanese music came from these Palestinian radio people, or from the Lebanese musicians themselves. Many

interviewees have only scant memories of what really happened, and there is almost no literature about the topic: "Yes, this radio station existed. It was based in Cyprus, but it had some offices in Beirut," says, for example, Romeo Lahoud (Lahoud, 2006). Victor Sahhab recalls the story more easily:

> The idea to take care of the folklore was already born in Jaffa. The idea was to search for brilliant young musicians and guide them in this direction. The first outcomes I remember were short radio sketches about the village. They mixed rural literature with rural music and singing. It was very funny, and often very nicely done. (Sahhab, 2006)

Apart from the radio stations, there were other factors that contributed to the emergence of this new Lebanese style. For one, there was a demographic shift, as Asmar and Hood explain: It was a

> ...demographic trend reflecting a cultural phenomenon of that time and place. After Lebanon's independence, the capital city absorbed scores of villagers seeking better economic opportunities. This segment of population eventually wielded social and political influence that enabled all traditional arts to rise in status. In order to avoid further stereotyping of a 'primitive' society by the prestige-conscience elite, the movement to organize and reformulate the folk arts played perfectly into the hands of the Rahbanis. The government supported these efforts and artistic wealth with the unstated subtext suggesting that the country is independent, peaceful and stable. (Asmar & Hood, 2001, pp. 310-311)

However, "this new style met with criticism at times from snobbish critics, since other singers in Lebanon of that period were not performing the music of the villages" (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 316). "It was not until the first Ba'albak International Festival took place in 1957 that the art community took notice of Lebanese folk music and an effort to preserve it was initiated" (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 316).

> The early radio stations were also recording studios. They invited musicians to the studios and recorded the music. Most of the time the music went out live. The Lebanese Radio station switched to preprogrammed emissions in 1955 (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 68-69). The station took several musicians, composers, and lyricists under contract: Tawfiq al-Basa, Halil Makniya, Abd al-Ganni Sa'ban, Tawfiq Sukkar, Boghos Gelalyan, and others (Weinrich, 2006, p. 109). Together with these musicians, the station built the foundation for a *modern* popular music genre in the region (Asmar, 2004). As our conversation on the Near East Radio Station wore on, Romeo Lahoud seemed to remember more and more:

> Sabri al-Sarif was a great man for the music in Lebanon. He is at the core of a big renaissance. He brought together a very diverse group of artists, musicians and composers and gave them the possibility to discuss and produce their work. It is in his studio in Cyprus where Fayruz and many others were discovered. This radio station was more important than any Lebanese station as it covered almost the whole Middle East. (Lahoud, 2006)

According to Racy, many of these artists were "well off socially and economically" (Racy, 2001, p. 339). This statement seems true when considering the overall picture. It seems that the 1940s brought up the same issues as today: The musicians who create a new type of music are from the higher and upper-middle income classes. They are the ones who have the right networks, know the right people in power, and they are the ones who can afford to take the risk to try to create something new. Next to

these musicians, other scenes existed as well: "A large group of musicians played in nightclubs day and night to earn their living - for example, at the Hotel Normandie," said François Rabah in an interview (2008).

Another important station was Radio Lebanon. It was founded in 1937 or 1938 (the sources differ) by the French mandate force, and taken over by the Lebanese government in 1946 (Racy, 2001, p. 339). The goal was to have a counterweight to the fascistic German radio programmes that also transmitted into the Middle East (Weinrich, 2006 p. 107). The radio had separate programmes and times for France, Great Britain, and later, for the US. In the beginning, the radio was on air for only a few hours per day, and later for more (Weinrich, 2006 p. 80). The head of the *Programme Orientale* was the oud player and composer *Georges Farah* (b. 1913) (Manguy, 1969, pp. 91-92). He also taught also in the *Oriental Section* of the conservatory, and fought for a better budget to buy new instruments for the Oriental ensemble. One of his students was Rabih Abou-Khalil, a well-known musician based in Germany. In 1950, Halim al-Rumi became the director of the music department of the Lebanese Radio. He started with the same ideas and policies as in al-Sharq al-adna radio station, and gave contracts to several musicians and composers. The radio station had its own firqa. It was split into players who read sheets, and others who learned and remembered the pieces by ear.

The idea to focus on the rural music of Lebanon was also based on anti-Egyptian, anti-Arab, or even anti-Islamic feelings. The nakba of 1948 brought up many discussions on the failure of Arab regimes and politicians. To focus on the rural traditions of the Bilad al-Sham region could therefore be seen as a political statement against the hegemonic influence of Egyptian culture (Weinrich, 2006, p. 161). Weinrich names two kinds of anti-Egyptian positioning: The first was a critique of the hegemony of Egyptian culture and music; the second a rejection of the political goals of Nasserism (Weinrich, 2006, p. 351). Whether this was really a political, or more a cultural question, seems difficult to answer. The father of political singer Ahmad Qabour was a first violinist at the National Orchestra, his son recalls. "He was a gigolo who walked around with his tarboush." According to Ahmad Qabour his father played mainly Oriental music and accompanied the great singers of the Arab world: Farid el-Atrash, Abd al-Halim Hafiz, Shadia, and Warda (Qabour, 2006). His father also played the violin at Lebanese Radio, where he worked with Fairuz, Sabah, and other Lebanese singers.

> He did not like to play these songs, because politically he was not in favour of the establishment that supported this music and tried to create a Lebanese Identity. My father was raised with the Egyptian tarab culture, and for him it was difficult to like this (Lebanese) music that was very much influenced by European music. (Qabour, 2006)

Some argue that Radio Lebanon wanted to strip Lebanese music from the Islamic influence. Quranic recitation and the call to prayer (*adhan*) are at the core of Arabic singing and music. Most of the great singers in Arabic art and city music learned their pronouncation from the recitation of the Quran - Umm Kulthoum is the singer most often cited to exemplify this. According to Victor Sahhab, Zaki Nassif, an important musician and singer from the 1950s, counts sheikh singers and Umm Kulthoum as the best singers in the Arab World. There were rumours - and even reports (Weinrich, 2006, p. 351) - that the cultural ministry tried to hire teachers from Iraq for the national conservatory, so that the Egyptian direction did not become too strong. For Victor Sahhab, it seems clear that some of the institutions and their composers wanted to Lebanize Lebanese music: "Some said in public that

Lebanese music should have nothing in common with Arab, or even Muslim culture. Lebanon to them was an island in a desert" (Sahhab 2005).

It is true that many of the singers who reached fame in the urbanized folklore genre were not trained as sheikh singers, and their singing styles differed a lot from Umm Kulthoum and others. Some musicians I spoke to, therefore conclude that this movement towards a new Lebanese music was in its core a Christian thing. I think that this statement does not reflect the complexity of the situation. It is true that many Nationalists, often Christian actors, started to support the new musicial trend. The goal was to create a unique Lebanese national identity, and to celebrate the Lebanese Republic as a special place in the Arab World. On the other hand, the trend of mixing local folklore with art music could also be observed in other countries of the world. Indeed, it was a global trend at the time. We shall see later that some of the singers were trained in sheikh singing and/or Quranic recitation - whether they were Muslim or Christian.

The biggest names of the upcoming artists were the two brothers Mansour and Assy Rahbani, Zaki Nassif, Tawfik al-Basha, and Tawfik Sukkar. They felt inspired by composers such as Bartok, Kodaly, Glinka, Smetana, and Sibelius, who experimented with elements of local folklore, and by the famous "group of five" - Borodin, Cui, Balakirev, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov (Weinrich, 2006, p. 128) - whose aim it was to create contemporary Russian music that was opposed to prevalent European styles. However, there was one big difference between the situation in Russia and Lebanon: While in Russia classical music was well known and developed, Lebanon first had to build a tradition for this kind of music. Furthermore, while the Russian composers tried to repel the most significant European aspects within their music, the Lebanese wanted to "import" it and mingle it with local traditions (Weinrich, 2006, p. 128). The Rahbani brothers, Zaki Nassif, Tawfiq Al-Basha, and Tawfiq Sukkar, created the Lebanese "group of five" (*usbat al-khamsa*) (Asmar 2004; Weinrich, 2006, p. 128). Around them were musicians such as the flautist Joseph Ayoub, and the percussionist Michel Mirhej Baklouk, that should be mentioned (Asmar, 2005).

Most of the artists always stated clearly that they worked with the repertoire of the Bilad al-Sham out of musical, not political reasons. Mansour Rahbani told me the following:

> In Lebanon and throughout the Arab World, the Egyptian style was dominant, in music and in literature. The content (meaning) in Egyptian poems, however, was always very fragile, and smooth like rosewater. … Lebanon is the opposite, full of thorny bushes, wild nature, rocks and mountains. There is a lot of wind and snow, and this is reflected in our music. Nature has an influence on the creating of music, everywhere. The Earth, its vegetation and dust, the mountains, the climate gives your music its spirit. We were always open towards other cultures, because of the sea. So our poems became the opposite of the Egyptian ones: cliffy, dusty, stinging. And, our society was not so conservative. In Lebanon lovers were allowed to go to the movies together. That's why we needed our own poetry and music. (Rahbani, 2001)

Scholars like Victor Sahhab see this classification of the Bilad al-Sham folklore as an important trend in the twentieth century, as Sahhab told me in an interview:

> These composers followed trends in European music in the 1840 to1850 period, with Franz Listz who was Hungarian, Chopin who was from Poland, Glinka from Russia, Grieg from Norway and other musicians who started thinking, 'Why should I do classical music like Germans or like Italians, opera like Italians or symphony music like Germans and Austrians? - I have to make my own classical music. ' So, they

> went back to their people, to their rural heritage, to their religious musical heritage,
> and they started taking and being inspired by this rural national music. They made
> classic music out of it - they classicized it, if you want. They classicized their own
> folklore - this is how I see it, and this has happened in Lebanon. (Sahhab, 2006)

When the Rahbani brothers first approached the Lebanese radio station they were refused. It was Fu'ad Qassim, one of the directors of the Lebanese radio promoting the use of the Lebanese dialect, who later took the Rahbani brothers on board as composer and violin player in the orchestra in the early 1950s. Fu'ad Qassim also created a policy that songs played on the radio should not extend for more than four or five minutes (Weinrich, 2006 p. 361). Similar policies also came about in the Egyptian radio (Weinrich, 2006 p. 361). At the beginning, the Rahbanis wrote up to sixteen pieces a month (Weinrich, 2006, p. 81). Fairuz entered the radio station in the late 1940s. First, the Rahbani brothers recorded radio advertisements. In the early 1950s the sketches that the Rahbani brothers produced for Radio Lebanon and al-Sharq al-adna became very popular. They compiled songs and talks, and portrayed village life in a humorous and satirical way. Weinrich explains that they were very precise in creating characters and topics: "Ihre Treffsicherheit in der Charakterisierung der Figuren und der Themenwahl in den Dorfstücken, bis hin zu einzelnen Formulierungen, die für den Alltag typisch sind, die entweder wörtlich übernommen werden oder als Vorlage zu Wortspielen dienen, all dies ist auf ihre Sozialisation im dörflichen Leben zurückzuführen und ein wichtiger Faktor dafür, weshalb diese Stücke so erfolgreich wurden" (Weinrich, 2006, p. 134). Weinrich concludes that the Rahbanis did not laugh at the village as many others did, but they laughed with the village.

In 1953 Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers also signed a contract with al-Sharq al-Adna. The station held more possibilities for them than the Lebanese radio station. The orchestra was bigger, and it hosted international musicians alongside well-known cabaret musicians from Beirut. The Rahbanis had time to experiment with their music. They had a studio that they could use - and an Orchestra (Weinrich, 2006, p. 119). The Rahbani brothers also worked for Radio Damascus.

However, the Rahbanis and Fairuz were not yet successful at the beginning of the 1950s. The Lebanese audience seems to have preferred Nasri Shams al-Din, Wadi al-Safi, Najah Salam, and Sabah. The success story of the Rahbanis would start in 1957, at the international festival of Baalbek (Weinrich, 2006, p. 118). Let us first have a look at the successful artists of the early 1950s.

Wadi al-Safi was born in 1921 in the Lebanese village of Niha al-Shuf into a musical Maronite family. He was one of the most influential singers of the new folk movement- however, he sang already before, and so his approach to this new music was very natural. His father sang, and his maternal uncle was his first oud teacher. Al-Safi began to study religious chanting at the age of eleven. His first musical instrument was the *rababa*, then the violin, and at the age of 14 he started studying the oud. He, like many others, developed his singing style "by hearing the stars of the Egyptian cinema, and was particularly influenced by Muhammad Abd al-Wahab. The folk art influence came mostly from his grandfather who taught him many poems and tunes from the village tradition, a tradition that later made its way to the capital city of Lebanon" (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 315). During the Second World War, Wadi al-Safi spent a lot of time in Egypt. He had travelled there with the vocalist Nour al-Hoda. The two were, as many before them had been, exposed to a variety of urban genres (Asmar & Hood, 2001). It was, however, Halim al-Rumi who encouraged Wadi al-Safi to stick to Lebanese folk music, arguing that it suited his voice. It seems that the great success of

Wadi al-Safi started from there: He had little success with the Egyptian repertoire in Lebanon, but he became a star when he started singing the rural styles. Following that advice, he participated in a Radio Near East project to preserve folk music. His repertoire comprises 800 songs, covering religious, nationalistic, and romantic genres. He collaborated with a wide variety of lyricists, but composed the vast majority of the melodies himself.[65]

During the 1940s, al-Safi relocated to Latin America. He sang for the Lebanese communities in several countries.

> His experience as a Lebanese expatriate living in Brazil for four years was perhaps a
> further catalyst for making folksongs an integral part of his repertoire. He built a
> network of fans homesick for their native land, for whom the folk song forms … were
> a nostalgic reminder of their homeland. (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 316)

If one listens to Wadi al-Safi, it becomes clear that, among the "Lebanese" musicians of his generation who urbanized folklore, he was the one least influenced by, and dependent on European music. "Al-Safi did not rely on European influences but still managed to turn folk music into 'art'" (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 316). Wadi al-Safi is a reference to the "Syro-Lebanese aesthetics for male voices, which should be simultaneously slightly nasal, flexible, and powerful" (Zuhur, 2001, p. 283).

The singer Sabah was a specialist in singing the different Lebanese folkloric styles, for example 'ataba songs, or *zajal*. She was a virtuoso in these styles, as Weinrich explains: "Sabah ist unübertroffen in ihrer Wiedergabe von zagal-Genres, besonders in ihren Improvisationen, bei denen sie mit Floskeln spielt und so mit ihrem Publikum kommuniziert. Dabei setzt sie überlange Tremoli ein oder hält Töne mit einem übertriebenen Vibrato aus, as fast eine Terz umfasst" (Weinrich, 2006, p. 281). In Cairo she was not able to succeed with her folkloric styles (Weinrich, 2006, p. 51), but in Lebanon she became a star - mainly through her performances at the Baalbek festival.

Nasri Shams al-Din, or with his full name, Nasr al-Din Mustafa Shams al-Din, was born in 1927 in a village called Joune, in the Southern part of the Shouf mountains. He played a lot with the Rahbani brothers and Fairuz. In their plays he often took the role of the *mukhtar*, the leader (mayor) of the village, or of a policeman. He performed in every show with Fairuz: from 1961 to his participation in the piece "Petra" in 1979. He also played in all the Fairuz films and worked for the Near East Radio station, and recorded many albms. He was admired for his interpretation of folkloric music (Weinrich, 2006, p. 133). Nasri Shams al-Din died in 1985.

Zaki Nassif joined the music staff of the al-Sharq al-adna radio station in the early 1950s (Asmar, 2004). Nassif was born in 1916 in the Eastern Beqaa town of Mashghara. He had studied at the American University of Beirut, and with a European professor at Université St. Joseph. In the group of five he wrote many songs and lyrics for Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers, and also for Wadi al-Safi, Sabah, Philemon Wehbe, and Nasri Shams al-Din. Zaki Nassif popularized the *dal'una* genre. He also played Chopin pieces on the piano and was a scholar of ancient Byzantine chants: "He had an encyclopedic knowledge of the Byzantine repertoire and discussed how the chants' Eastern scales, similar to the traditional Arab modes called maqamat, inspired his own compositions" (Asmar, 2004).

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[65] For more, see Asmar and Hood 2001: 317 for a description of the various folk genres he sang.
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Philemon Wehbe was born 1918 in Shwaifat, in the South of Beirut. He had worked at the Near East Radio Station in Yaffa and came to Beirut when it had moved. His first sucesses were his compositions in the 1940s for Hanan and Nagah Salam - later he would compose many of the most popular hits of Fairuz. He was very talented. Romeo Lahoud called him *le fou de la chanson libanaise*, the madman of Lebanese song, in our interview (Lahoud, 2006): "C'est un monsieur qui était doué, Dieu lui a donné ce don extraordinaire, aucune culture musicale à part de gratter un peu le oud à peine sortir l'air, la mélodie."

Another member of the group of five was Tawfiq Sukkar. This composer and violin player used to be a student of Bertrant Robilliard and Wadih Sabra. He was born in Tripoli in 1922. At the age of fourteen he studied violin and piano, and counterpoint. He won some prizes at the conservatory, and was accepted at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, where he studied harmony with Henri Challan, counterpoint and fugue with Noël Gallon, composition and orchestration with Tony Aubin, and aesthetics with Olivier Messiaen. In 1953, after his studies, Sukkar came back to Beirut and started to teach at the conservatory: Solfège, music analysis, harmony, counterpoint, fugue, composition, and orchestration. He also taught oriental music theory to the students of the Occidental department where he taught. Later he became the director of the national conservatory (1964 – 1969) (Manguy, 1969, p. 46; Eid, 2007).

It seemed clear to him that the Oriental music needed harmonization: "Il n'est plus besoin de discuter sure la nécessité d'introduire la polyphonie dans la musique arabe … comme on témoigne le nombre de plus en plus grand de musicians orientaux qui étudient la polyphonie" (Manguy, 1969, p. 29). As he always had an interest in Lebanese music, he mainly composed chamber music with rhythms and melodies from Lebanon. He wrote the "Ballet Libanais" in which he harmonised different Lebanese melodies. Furthermore, he wrote for the Maronite church and the choral section of the cathedrale Saint-Georges in Beirut. He always confronted the rhythms and melodies of Lebanon with contrapoint (Mainguy, 1969, pp. 85-86). He also composed symphonic pieces (Cedar Symphony), chamber music, choir music, film music, piano recitals, and pedagogical pieces (Eid, 2007).

Victor Sahhab's assessment of Sukkar is very complex: "Tawfiq Sukkar knew a lot about music, but he wanted someday to just delete quarter tones from Arab music. That basically means you just finished Arab music - because if you delete one major component of a musical civilization, you are just taking out this music. You are not helping, you're doing the contrary. We had fights about this at that time, but he is not a crook, you know" (Sahhab, 2006). Boghos Gélalian told me about his experiences with Sukkar. Sukkar was, Gélalian told me, one of the few that were real professionals, because he had spent four years in Paris (Gélalian, 2006). Many musicians told me that Sukkar was always in the shadow of other musicians. It was dificult for him as a Lebanese to try to do something new, and to be succesful with it. Zad Moultaka calls his work a mistake, but a mistake that was great during the time, and a mistake that was important for the later generations (Moultaka, 2006).

Boghos Gelalian was another important artist at the time (Mainguy, 1969, p. 86). I met Gelalian in his house near the old green line in Beirut. He lives there alone with his wife, who used to be a pianist and worked with him. Gelalian is a very nice man, and a man who lived a tough life, and sometimes he feels bitter.

Gelalian is of Armenian origin and lived in Alexandretta (Iskenderun) first, under the Ottoman regime. His parents were refugees, after the massacre of the Armenian population in the collapsing Ottoman empire, that would later become Turkey.

> I went to the Christian mission of the Pères Carmes in Alexandrette. There I started playing music at the age of four. My father used to play the flute, and that is also how he survived the war: he was a member of a fanfare in the Ottoman army. In the mission house they had many instruments: pianos, an organ, and much more. I used to sneek into the church and play the organ. One of the fathers heard me playing and asked if I wanted to take lessons. This is how everything started, with the organ, and the piano.

He started playing European classical pieces, but also the local fanfare. For that he also learned the violin, which he played for four years.

In 1939, the Armenians who had escaped the massacre in Turkey had to leave Alexandretta, Gelalian recalls. He moved to Tripoli where he attended another school of the the *Pères Carmes*.[66] This school was closely linked to the Italian ministry of education, and was supported by various Italian societies. Gelalian was thus educated in the Italian system, and he read and spoke Italian. In 1943 Gelalian came to Beirut. "I came to Beirut alone, without my mother. I stayed in the orphanage that my wife's grandmother directed. That's how I got to know my wife. She used to play the violoncello, and later she became a pianist, and she taught at the conservatory." In Beirut he studied at ALBA under Mme. Herchenreder, Bertand Robilliard, and others.

> There were many foreign professors teaching at the time. Many Europeans, many Jews as-well that fled from Germany. Many of them were playing piano or violin, often they were not the best musicians one could imagine, but they were important anyway. We have to thank them; they taught us certain things. (Gelalian, 2006)

Gelalian later worked as a composer and arranger at the Near East Radio Station until 1958. He also worked as a professor for counterpoint and harmony at the national conservatoire. He wrote over 50 pieces of music. Later, Gelalian arranged the songs into dancing rhythms. He was also a very important adviser (for the Rahbani brothers - he was the one who gave them a lot of advice on how to do the arrangements or use the piano) (Weinrich, 2006). Gelalian has fond memories of his collaboration with the Rahbanis:

> It was beautiful to work with them. These were people who loved their job, and they knew about the technical side of music, and they had taste. Mansour was more on the European side, and Assy loved the folklore and made jokes about Occidental music quite often.

They did not need contracts to work together, Gelalian says.

> They did contracts with others, but not with me. We were friends, and they were people with high morals. I arranged some of their songs. Some people say that I have written most of the songs, but this is not true. I was like their adviser; I listened to their music and proposed this or that. Sometimes they listened to me, sometimes not.

He did that for almost fifteen years. When I asked him if this was not a bit frustrating, to always be in the background, he answered: "Listen, in this country you have to be happy if you find some work to earn in your life. I liked working with the Rahbani brothers; they were always very kind to me. We

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[66] See www.amicarmes.com

were like brothers!" He often performed with the Rahbani brothers in Baalbek: "The Baalbek Festival was just amazing. We performed there many times with the Rahbani brothers and Fairuz. My wife and I sang in the choir." Gelalian also used to teach Ziyad Rahbani, Fairuz' and Assy Rahbani's son; and he has remained a student till today.

3.2.12   The Cabaret and Hotel Scene in the 1950s

In the 1950s, people began to travel. It was Spanish music, exported by the Barclay Label that was played at the major travel destinations. Spanish music was capable of evoking holiday feelings. Dalida, born in Egypt, became a star in this genre of Spanish-influenced entertainment music (Weinrich, 2006, p. 178). Her music was played in the many clubs, cabarets, restaurants and other music venues in Beirut. A huge variety of music was performed there: from tarab music, to jazz and latin, to chanson and varieté.

Various examples show that the ties between France, the US, and the Arab World became more and more knitted. Nightclub culture became a transnational phenomenon. Rasmussen explains that the first Arabic Night Club opened in the US in 1952. Belly dancing[67] was the main attraction of these urban nightclubs. It "became the vehicle through which Americans and other ethnic groups came to know about Arab culture, including food, music, and a romanticized version of history" (Ramussen, 1992, pp. 67-68). Musically, these Arabic Nightclubs offered hybrid mixes, with musicians and styles from Turkey, Greece, Armenia, and the Arab World. These styles were combined with harmonic structures, and with Western instruments like the electric guitar, the electric bass, keyboards, and organ. Rasmussen offers a detailed description of the "night club" sound (1992, pp. 70-74) and concludes as follows:

> For the true connoisseurs of Arab music, those who performed and enjoyed music at community haflat, the music of the nightclub violated every boundary of authenticity. The nightclub sound was a musical hybrid generated by the creative invention and innovation of second-generation and post-World War immigrants who were inspired by modernization and Orientalism. Reflecting the influence of American popular music and the modern trends of Cairo, Egypt, musical innovators Muhammad al-Bakkar, Eddie 'the sheik' Kochak, and Freddy Elias incorporated Western instruments and modern emergent styles into their performances during which a kind of musical caricature of the Orient was created. (Rasmussen, 1992, p. 69)

The song "Moustapha" became one of the most covered songs all over the world.[68] The origins of the songs are unclear, but most probably it is a folk song from Egypt. It features in a film with the famous

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[67] "«The misnomer 'belly dancing' is a direct translation of the descriptive French characterization danse du ventre. Referred to more correctly as '"oriental dance'" from the Arabic raks al-sharqi, it is traditionally performed by a woman alone and is characterized by curvaceous movements of the hips, torso, and hands which are held at shoulder level or higher. It is an improvisatory dance which, depending on the dancer, can be delicate and subtle, bouncy and rambunctious, or erotic, voluptuous, and licentious".» (Rasmussen, 1992:, pp. 67/-68).

[68] The song was, for example, covered by Dalida's brother Bruno Gigliotti alias Orlando. "«Moustapha"» was translated into various languages: Dario Moreno had a well- known interperation of it. There are versions in Maltese, Flemish, Hindi, English, German by Los Leandros, and others. In 1967, Clinton Ford recorded the song under the name of ""Ali Ben Dhown".." The French label APC produced a 1994 titled ""Think about Mustapha"" that unites nine versions and interpretations of this song: a jazz version, a 1960ies surf sound, raï,

actor Ismail Yassin. The song came to Europe in a version by the Lebanese singer Bob Azzam, who had been born in Egypt to Jewish parents. In 1960 he recorded the song in three languages. The lyrics went as follows: "Chérie je t'aime, chéri je t'adore - como la salsa de pomodoro" (Darling, I love you, darling, I adore you - like tomato sauce). Bob Azzam opened Maxim's Nightclub in Paris and Geneva. The song became very popular in Europe, sold well everywhere. and also reached the charts in various countries. Later Bob Azzam recorded another song called "Fais-moi du couscous chéri" (Make couscous for me, darling).

> Gélalian gave me a good picture of what it was like in Beirut in the 1950s.[69]
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> I performed in the Cabarets night after night. I even played jazz there, a music that I did not know when I came to Beirut in 1943. I learned it from all these international musicians and ensembles that performed in the small clubs, hotels and cabarets at the time. Among them there were some great musicians - pianists who held international concert diplomas or won international competitions. I sometimes asked them why they came to Beirut and now played in hotels. They told me that they earn more here, than they would earn with great international concerts. So I was able to see great musicians and learn from them - great trumpet players, guitarists, vibraphonists, violinists, double bass players, and many more. It was a great time! (Gélalian, 2006)

There seems to have been quite a lot of competition between the musicians. Some of the pleasant cabarets were situated in Zeytouné, Gelalian recalls: "Some of the most beautiful cabarets were situated right at the sea front in Zeytouné. Today we have the city there, and I can't orient myself anymore when I go there. I do not recognize the roads anymore, it's all past and finished." Gelalian worked in different bars and hotels: "The Hotel Normandie was very important. I often worked there. But also the Hotel St. Georges. I worked there for three or four years with foreign orchestras, for example, from Brazil" (Gelalian, 2006). "The repertoire was quite international. French and English chansons, Brazilian music, bossa nova, samba. And a lot of jazz. We even played pieces from famous opera plays, and the arrangements of great European composers. The hotels, the restaurants, and the cabarets, they often preferred light music, and sometimes we had to play for an important ballet dancer." Many musicians in this scene came from Europe. The good musicians were paid around one Lebanese pound; that was one dollar, Gelalian remembers. The business was tough, because the clubs offered non-stop music from 9pm to 4 am. So the musicians had to share time and the stage. But it was possible to survive as a musician in this cabaret scene - and this with one job only. "It was not possible to work at two places. We had to play for at least six hours every night. If you were lucky you had a contract for a long time at the same place. And sometimes you had to search for better opportunities." Today this live scene doesn't exist anymore, he says. "With the electronic music this all died out. They put their fingers on one knob, and they pretend to play music." He looks back with sorrow and bitterness: "You did not know the true Lebanon. It was paradise. Now, everything is corrupted" (Gelalian, 2006).

> Racy describes the modern Arab nightclub, named the *kabareh* (cabaret) or *malha layli* (a night place-of-entertainment), as follows: "The nightclub repertoire varies considerably and may incorporate a wide array of Western and local popular music and dance genres" (Racy, 2003, p. 66). "The musicians tend to conduct their nightclub performances merely as work, often describing it as

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and even a fusion version featuring an Indian sitar. Important in the belly dance world are the versions of George Abdo, and one arranged and played by John Bilezikjian.
[69] All quotes in this paragraoh are exerpts from the interview I conducted with Boghos Gelalian in 2006.

being tedious if not demeaning and thankless, and similarly some audience members may think of the event as yet another night out" (Racy, 2003, p. 67).

Beirut increasingly became a place where tourists, and the Lebanese high society, could enjoy life. Khayat offers many descriptions of the "elegant summer balls at big hotels" (Kayat, 1960, p. 9), and the dinner parties in "elegant and expensive restaurants serving western meals" (Kayat, 1960, p. 2). She summarises that tourists were treated to all the comforts of home in Beirut's ultra swank hotels, and she links it to the heavy construction works since 1945:

> The rash of building since 1945 has spread through the hotel industry as well as in apartment houses and office buildings. These accommodate a tourist traffic that is fast becoming a mainstay of the Lebanese economy. Many new air-conditioned hotels have been completed and others are under construction along the seAssyde boulevards. These are elegant palaces of chrome, marble and plate glass, lavishly equipped to dispense comfort à la West and at Western price scales. Even bigger than the hotel building boom was the increase of luxury apartments to shelter families of government, agency and commercial staffs from Europe and America. Most of these buildings are packed into the narrow Ras Beirut quarter in the section of the city which has grown up around the American University campus. (Khayat, 1960, p. 2)

3.2.13   1952 – 1958: Towards the first War: The Sham'oun Presidency versus Nasserism

In early 1950, the USA and Britain (in addition to France and Turkey) launched the Pact for the Collective Defense of the Mediterranean against communism. Egypt, invited to join the Western military pact with Syria and Lebanon, rejected the offer, setting as a precondition the closing of British military bases on Egyptian territory (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 126). The rise of Gamal Abd al-Nasser in Egypt increased the US administration's interest in Lebanon. Arab nationalism was seen as the enemy, and its policy on non-alignment as a tactic alliance with the Soviet camp. Lebanon attracted the US for its infrastructure; military bases, ports, communication networks, and other facilities that could serve as a bridgehead on the event of military intervention in the region. In 1953, Lebanon received $6 million in US arms and economic aid. In 1954, President Sham'oun (1952-1958) allowed the US to use Lebanese air space (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 130).

> His foreign policy was suspect because of his
> predisposition to place Lebanon's external sovereignty in the hands of Western and, more particularly, British interests. By the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956[70], the pro-Western policies of the regime were becoming more pronounced. Shamoun refused to sever relations with Britain and France or to condemn the aggression, thereby provoking an outcry among Muslim leaders and the resignation of the Prime Minister, Abdallah Yafi, and Minister of State Saeb Salam. He cultivated closer ties with anti-Nasserist and anti-communist regimes like Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Furthermore Shamoun refused to join the Arab Defence Pact signed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria in March 1955. Shamoun's politics not only alienated Muslim elites and the Muslim 'street', but divided Christian ranks. Shamoun

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[70] Abd al-Nassers Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, whereupon Israel, backed by Great Britain and France, launched an attack against Egypt.

exacerbated sectarian tensions like no other political leader had done before him. With the majority of the Muslim leaders outside parliament, the Muslim 'street' was massively attracted to the Nasserist nationalist and anti-colonialist discourse. (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 130)

So the Pan-Arabic nationalist sentiments became stronger. They were inspired by

…Nasser's charismatic and messianic leadership ... Nasserism, with its anti-imperialist, nationalist fervor, and ideological support for the mobilization of underprivileged masses, awakened muted spirits of rebellion and defiance. It also undermined the authority of traditional Muslim leaders and aroused the anxiety of the Maronite political establishment. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 107)

In May 1957, demonstrations against Shamoun and his backers left 15 people killed. Clan feuds, sabotage, bombing, arms smuggling, and clashes between armed bands and security forces became daily routine. "Slowly, but perceptibly, Lebanon was descending into anarchy and anomy" (Khalaf, 2002, p. 109). There were strike waves, with workers and employees demanding higher wages and better working conditions and anti-Western demonstrations in the wake of the Israeli attack on Egypt, and mounting terrorist activities against British and French targets and interests (Khalaf, 2002, p. 110).

Against the turmoil the Government under president Shamoun issued a military warning to newspapers, with penalties up to five years imprisonment for publishing anything considered as inciting the population or criticizing the army. … Prior censorship concerning the army, the rebels and anything regarded as likely to endanger security, cause sedition, or criticize the government was imposed … on all press reports. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 112)

Despite the tension, Shamoun wanted to renew his mandate. There was, of course, huge opposition that led to two months of fighting between the opposition and the Shamounists. Shamoun's situation got worse - he wanted backing by the army. General Fuad Shihab, however, demurred. So Shamoun had to fall back on the Gendamerie. He also asked the Kata'ib (Phalange) and the Syrian Socialist National Party (PPS) to help him, thereby exacerbating the sectarian character of the conflict. Despite their ideological differences, they showed a common enmity against the onslaught of Pan-Arabism. In the end Shamoun asked for a US military intervention. Consequently, 15,000 American soldiers came, backed by another 40,000 on the 70 warships of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet. The US, however, did not save Shamoun, but helped install a successor: General Fuad Shihab. On 23 September 1958, Shamoun left office. The next day saw a general strike in the Christian areas and the beginning of a three-week counter-rebellion by the Phalange Party. Sectarian clashes, kidnapping, and violence gripped Beirut (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 136-137).

After the attack on the Suez channel in 1956, the Rahbani brothers and other artists decided to stop working for the Near East Radio Station "because of its bias and antiarab propaganda. It also had its name changed to Sout Britania" (Fayrouz.com). There are still discussions concerning the Near East Radio Station and other Arab radio stations being involved in broadcasting in which Arab Leaders had called upon the Palestinians to flee from Israel in the 1948 war. Some say these broadcasts were never made, some say they were fake. The facts are not clear. But, as the Irish journalist Dr. Erskine Childers writes after intensive research, it seems more likely that these calls

were never made (Falah, 1996, pp. 258-259). In 1956 the station ceased to exist.[72] Weinrich offers a slightly different account of the story: Since many musicians were disappointed and outraged about the role the British played in the 1956 Suez War, many musicians left the radio station al-Sharq al-adna in protest: Tawfiq al-Basha, Zaki Nassif, Sabri al-Sarif, Boghos Gelalian, and also the Rahbani brothers (Weinrich, 2006, p. 140).

Nevertheless, it was during the Presidency of Shamoun that the Lebanese music began to flourish. On one side, this was because the composers and musicians that had begun their music education in Lebanon in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were now fully educated professionals. They mixed - as was shown earlier - the influences of rural music in Lebanon with European music. At times their interests switched towards Egyptian music again, or they reached out towards Andalusian music. The switching was often related to current political situations, or global trends and taste in music. On the other hand, the radio stations that had been prevalent in the region for twenty years supported them. But, first and foremost, it was the Baalbek Festival that would start in 1955 that would bring them fame and popularity. As we shall see, the Shamoun Clan supported this festival.

3.2.14 The Baalbek Festival

One of the main factors determining whether a type of music, or a musician would find an audience in Lebanon was the Baalbek Festival. It was this festival that finally boosted the careers of the various musicians and composers, and brought Lebanese music to the foreground; that vision that started with Halim al-Rumi and Sabri al-Sharif from the Near East Radio Station and from Radio Lebanon in the 1940s.

In 1955 Tony Azzi, an event organiser, founded the "Association d'action artistique" together with a commission, from the Lebanse president Camille Shamoun, the commisionary of Tourism, Michael Touma, and various Lebanese and French personalities. A first, the "Festival d'Art Dramatique" was presented that year in the Baalbek Temple of Bacchus. Tony Azzi commented on this as follows: "C'est une grande et lourde ambition, une difficile et dangereuse rencontre; dans l'ombre un peu effrayante peuplée de colonnes, nous attendons ce sphinx à double figure: le public, en face de nous; derrière nous, ces restes grandioses d'une civilsation detruite" (Mainguiy, 1969, p. 62). Jean Marchat, responsible for the programme until his death in 1966, wrote in 1955: "Puissent nos voix retentissant dans la nuit hautaine d'un prodigieux passé, apporter au Liban l'hommage et le salut de la France" (Mainguiy, 1969, p. 63). Mainguy lists many of the concerts, and we can see that many stars of the international music world were there. At the beginning of the Festival, mainly international artists performed in Baalbek, or Lebanese artists who worked in European music. Chamber music, symphonies, and ballet were presented. Theatre plays were held in French, and sometimes in English (Weinrich, 2006, p. 162).

The organisation committee of the festival consisted of the "ladies of society, " basically the wives of high ranking politicians; Zalfa Shamoun, for example, the wife of President Shamoun. Romeo Lahoud describes the President as a great lover and supporter of the arts: "Shamoun était un mélomane, lui et sa femme étaient excessivement cultivés qui aimaient beaucoup la musique, qui aimaient beaucoup le théâtre, la peinture, la sculpture… ce sont eux qui ont instauré et institué le festival de Baalbek avec des gens dont la majorité étaient des dames mais des dames d'un certain

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[72] See also: http://justworldnews.org/archives/001805.html

milieu très riche qui pouvaient elles-mêmes se suffir avec une partielle du gouvernement à l'époque et c'étaient elles qui dépensaient pour faire ce grand festival qui avec le temps est devenu avant la guerre l'un des plus grand festivals du monde" (Lahoud, 2006). Boghos Gelalian agrees: "President Shamoun was a great lover of the arts. Thanks to him the National Conservatory of Music got a huge budget at the time" (Gelalian, 2006).

The priority of the committee was European high culture. However, artists like Tawfiq al-Basha told the ladies that the European visitors would maybe like to see Lebanese music while travelling to Lebanon, and not the same music as was in Europe (Weinrich, 2006, p. 164). Mansour Rahbani remembers how the first Lebanese nights in Baalbek came into being: Before the 1957 festival, they were invited to a meeting of the committee, and they convinced Zalfa Shamoun to organise the first Lebanese Night. The ladies of the committee did not seem to have been enthusiastic about the idea. They thought that it would be the weakest performance in the whole festival. But they followed the plan of the First Lady. However, they asked Mansour Rahbani not to sing long Arabic tarab songs. When they heard that Fairuz would sing, they said no at first - anyone but Fairuz. They thought that she was going to sing, to cry, and to tear her handkerchief apart. Obviously, these ladies from the bourgeoisie did not know the Rahbani brothers and their work. But the Rahbanis still managed to convince them (Weinrich, 2006, p. 164). Before their performance, Camille Shamoun was supposed to say some words that were to become legendary in the memory of the festival: "Tomorrow, after your performance, I will either honor your success in hanging a medal around your neck, or I will hang you on your neck for your failure" (Weinrich, 2006, p. 165). It seems that there was not too much trust in the performance of the Lebanese.[80] Rumour has it that Fairuz and Sabri al-Sharif worked for one Lebanese pound only - the committee said yes to the first Lebanese night, but did not want to take financial risks for an unknown and risky performance (Weinrich, 2006, p. 165). Eventually, the 1957 performance with Rahbani, Fairuz, Tawfiq al-Basha and Zaki Nassif, Sabah and Wadi al-Safi was a huge success. The song "Lubnan ya akhdar hilu" (Oh you beautiful and green Lebanon) became the symbol of the performance (Weinrich, 2006, p. 175).

From that year on, Lebanese folk nights were always an important part of the festival. They became paramount to the the history of music in Lebanon. Many of the performances were recorded by the young label Chahine et Fils.[81] Some of the Lebanese folk nights were also played abroad, for example, at the Gilbekian Festival in Lisbon (Manguy, 1969, p. 73).

The singer Fairuz, became more and more successful. She sang the folklore of the Lebanese mountains in a heart-warming way. The Rahbani plays featured "newly-composed and orchestrated tunes, and newly choreographed line dances" (Racy, 1986, p. 415). What was called folklore - the Festival of music and dance - mostly was a combination of Arab, Russian, Balkan, European, and Lebanese folk elements (Racy, 1986, p. 415). The rural material was presented in modern, formally staged, and well-rehearsed formats adapted to a festival stage and audience, as Victor Sahhab recalls:

> Rural music does not use an orchestra and does not present a big dance troop. In the
> villages, maybe five or six dancers perform. Maybe they have a mijwiz (a kind of
> oboe), just one instrument, and maybe a derbeke (percussion), and that's all. But for

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[80] This is something one can observe until today: At the Festival Liban Jazz, to mention just one example, most of the time the Lebanese musicians are allowed to play along with international stars just for one piece of music.
[81] Chahine et Fils recorded almost every Baalbek performance of the Rahbani brothers, but also of the other Lebanese artists. A while ago they re-released the recordings on LP – I bought them for 1000 Lebanese pounds each, or 1.5 US dollars. In Syria, one finds many pirated copies of Lebanese music. Weinrich found the Fairuz collection: 822 pieces or 55 hours of music.

Baalbek they were asked to present this music in an urban way. They wanted to
perform it on a high level. (Sahhab, 2006)

To this day, the festival is subordinated to the ministry of tourism. There is a great deal of self-exotism in the Lebanese nights, as Weinrich (2006, p. 402) states correctly. Flying into Beirut with the Lebanese Middle Eastern Airlines (MEA), one sees these kinds of films about Beirut and Lebanon: The mountains, the cedars, the wine, the sea, the historic sites, and the Baalbek Festival with its Lebanese Night.

3.2.15   The Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz: The Beginnings

The Rahbani Brothers and Fairuz were arguably the trio that took the lead in the development of Lebanese music. Or, as others say: the trio that knew how to grab the media attention and the spotlight. "Ah, you are writing about Fairuz and the brothers Assy and Mansour Rahbani!" This is what most people say when I tell them about my research in Lebanese music. If I tell them "No, I don't write about Fairuz, no, my interest lies in the generation of musicians who were born during the Lebanese Civil War," most people give me incredulous looks and do not understand: The Rahbanis were quality composers, they say, and today's generation is just Westernized.

Fairuz was born 1935 as Nuhad Haddad, in the neighbourhood of Zuqaq al-Blat in Beirut. Her mother, Liza Al-Bustani, came from the village al-Dibiyi in the Shouf Mountains, South-East of Beirut. Her father was either born at the Turkish Syrian border, or in Palestine - there is no clear data about this. According to some vague rumors he might have been of Palestinian origin (Weinrich, 2006, p. 70). Mansour and Assy Rahbani were born into a Christian-Orthodox family near the village of Rahba in the Akkar region in the Northern part of Lebanon. Their father, Hana Assy Rahbani, was an activist in the *qabadayat*, a political resistance movement that fought against Ottoman occupation. After a hold-up, he had to flee with his family and settled in Antelias, in the Northern suburbs of Beirut. It is where Mansour Rahbani lives until this day. Near Antelias he opened the Café Fawwar Antelias, and later the Café Al-Manibi: Both became meeting points for members of the *qabadayat*. It is from these meetings that the Rahbani brothers got the inspiration for their later work: They listened in on the conversations and stories of the politicized guests, and they heard the Egyptian songs that were constantly played on the café's gramophone. Sometimes their father played the *buzuk*, or their grandmother sang old songs (Weinrich, 2006, p. 86). The mountains became another important inspiration: Assy and Mansour watched the shepherds; they listened to the sounds of the birds and to the sounds of nature (Mansour Rahbani, 2001).

Assy and Mansour were taught mainly in Christian schools. Father Bulus al-Ashqar in Antelias was their first teacher in music. Al-Ashqar (1881 – 1962) conducted a children's choir that sang liturgy chants such as psalms (*mazamir*) and chorals (*taratil*). Furthermore, Al-Ashqar gave the children their first introduction into music theory, piano and organ playing, and also into Arabic music and the *maqam* system (Weinrich, 2006, p. 91). "Al-Ashqar sparked our interest in music. For six years we learned with him," Mansour Rahbani told me in 2001. The next important teacher was the French organ player Bertrand Robilliard, who taught them composition, harmony, and counterpoint at the Academy of Arts. "We studied with him for nine years. Through him we learned a lot about Western and Eastern music."

In 1934 the two founded a sports and culture club. They started to write their first songs, short sketches, and first theatre pieces. They met with their friends in the club, performed, and experimented. By the end of the 1930s the family had financial problems. Assy and Mansour had to help out in the café. Furthermore, Assy and Mansour became policemen in Antelias.

Fairuz as a singer is said to have been "discovered" by Muhamad and Ahmad Fulayfil, two brothers who were known as "The Fulayfil brothers" (*al-Ikhwan Fulayfil*). With their *firqa* "al-Afran al-wataniya" they helped founding a well-known police orchestra in 1942 (Weinrich, 2006, p. 71). The Fulayfi brothers used to scout schools for singers to join in a performance planned to air on the new national radio station - this is how they first met Fairuz. It is said that Muhamad Fulyafil

> was struck by the shy girl's talent and quickly became an agent of sorts, advising her on the smallest of actions, down to how spicy her food could be in order to maintain a good voice, and recruiting her into the National Conservatory, where he worked. ... Fleifel believed in a method of training singers that was prevalent in Egypt —the method credited with making Umm Kulthoum and Muhammad Abdul-Wahab great singers—the chanting of Koranic verses. Nuhad learned the art from him and tremendously strengthened her intonation of the classical language. This skill became clear in her singing of muwashahat, for example. It probably helped her sharpen the Eastern style in her singing in the proper Arabic modes known as maqamat. She distinguished herself from typical Arab singers, however, by not using the common nasal tones in favor of clearer resonances, drawing some comments that she sounded Western. (Asmar, 1999)

Fairuz probably entered the conservatory in the mid- or end of the 1940s - the sources are not clear though (Weinrich, 2006, p. 72). And it seems likely that it was Halim al-Rumi who introduced Fairuz to the Rahbani brothers at the beginning of 1951, although this cannot be confirmed (al-Rumi, 1992, p. 33; Weinrich, 2006, p. 85).

In 1953 Mansour, Assy, and Fairuz worked for three radio stations: they received a regular salary from the Near EastRadio station, and they worked regularly for Radio Lebanon and for Radio Damascus (Weinrich, 2006, p. 118). In 1955 they received an invitation to work for Sawt al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs) in Cairo. They composed and wrote the piece "Raji'un" (We will return) about the nakba, the "Palestinian Catastrophe" of the founding of the state of Israel. Their first piece about the issue of Palestine brought them fame all over the Arab world (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 138-140). That same year, Assy Rahbani and Nuhad Haddad got married in a church in Beirut.

In the 1960s the Rahbani brothers founded a fixed working group of musicians, singers, and dancers called "al-firqa al-lubnaniya as-sa'biya" or "Firqat al-funun as-sa'biya al-lubnaniya" (Lebanese Folklore Group). The group performed abroad: in Brazil, Argentina, and many other places (Weinrich, 2006, p. 184).

Altogether, Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers produced more than one thousand songs, three films, many sketches, and twenty theatre plays; from the 1950s, to Fairuz' separation from her husband Assy Rahbani in 1979, and his death in 1986, to the latest work (mainly composed by Fairuz' son Ziyad Rahbani). Musically, the influences ranged from Lebanese folk, to classical Arabic vocal music genres, from near Eastern church music, tango, Spanish music, European classical music, Eastern European folk music, to jazz and funk. Dabke always played an important role in the musical repertoire of Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers. Then there were some *qasida qasira* (or short qasida),

muwashshah (in the beginning and later in their career), *anasid* (always as mixed forms, also with quiet melodic passages), *dawr* and *qasida* in their long forms, but also forms like *munulug* (monologue) and the *taqtuqa* that were prominent in Egypt. The biggest part of the repertoire of Fairuz can, however, be categorized under *ughniya*. The focus of their work lay on music theater plays with a lot of folk music, situated in a village context, as explained earlier (Weinrich, 2006, p. 345).

In 1953, the Rahbanis and Fairuz released their first commercial vinyl, "Itab" (reprimand), on the label Chahine et Fils. The LP shows that they were heavily influenced by fast dance songs, tango, Spanish and Latin American music. They tried to develop short Arabic dance songs that Weinrich calls *ughniya* ar-*raqsa* (dance songs) (Weinrich, 2006, p. 344). They also took popular songs that they heard on the radio and translated them into Arabic. Sometimes they changed the arrangements or the melody, or they took rhythms of the tango (one example is "Nahna wa-l-qamar jiran", another "Al-bint al-salabiya"), the rumba, samba or bossa nova. Weinrich introduces two terms that characterize these processes: *mutarjam* meaning the translation of the lyrics or the music, and *mu'arrab*, meaning "arabized" (Weinrich, 2006, p. 120). These songs were clearly influenced by the Egyptian musician and composer Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, who experimented with the rhythms of Latin music in the 1930s.

The early recordings of Fairuz were released as 78 vinyls. 78s were very popular in the Arab world until the 1960s. There were almost no 45 vinyls, and LPs had almost no chance in the market (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 30-31). Chahines label became very important for Fairuz.

Initially, the music of the Rahbani brothers was inspired by trends in Cairo, especially by the *aghani* (songs) of musicians, singers, and composers like Muhammad Abd al-Wahab and Umm Kulthoum. However, many Lebanese state that the Rahbani style differed a lot from the Egyptian canon. Many authors call their style *ughniya rahbaniya* (Rahbani song) in order to point out the uniqueness of the Rahbani music (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 345-346). Many even argued that the Rahbanis created a new school (*madrasa*) in Lebanon (Aliksan, 1987, p. 19, p. 73; al-Basha, 1986; Walid Gholmiye, 16.04.1997).

However, Weinrich states that the ughniya rahbaniya was not as new as many thought it to be. The most important innovations were: (1) the use of Lebanese and not Egyptian dialects in their music; (2) the shortness of the songs, and the often fast tempo; and (3) the "Lebanese" or "Rahbani" sound consists of flute, piano, violins, double bass, sometimes the accordion, and the percussion instruments the *riqq* and *darabuka*. The flute used was the *sabbaba* that comes from the folk repertoire, and not the *nay* that stands for Arabic classical music. And there is the *buzuq*, but not the *oud* (Weinrich, 2006, p. 349). There are other elements that are typically Rahbani, as Weinrich states:

> The rhythmic and melodic motives of the piano that is sometimes close to the typical
> diction of folk music melodies and consists of narrow tonal steps, little leaps, and a
> tonal range of about a quint. Some melodies offer small hints to *maqam* scales such
> as *bayyati*, *sikah*, *huzam* or *hijaz*. Some are closely linked to European examples;
> they consist of bigger tonal steps and leaps. (Weinrich, 2006, p. 347)

Some other elements belong to what listeners call the typical "Lebanese" style: the short, improvised passages outside a strict metrical form that resembles, according to some, the 'ataba vocal songs, and old folk tradition in the Bilad al-Sham region - however, Weinrich states that these passages are as

well known in Egyptian music, for example, as *mawwal*. These passages, often performed as preludes, gave the composition an Arabic character (*asil*) and inserted them into the canon of *turath* (heritage) (2006, pp. 347-348). Most of the time the Rahbani brothers did not work with a complete harmonic system. There are often just a few discreet hints of harmonics via the piano, for example. This again accounts for the fact that these songs are not understood as a turning away from the *asil* songs. At the same time, they are modern, new, and developed (Weinrich, 2006, p. 355).

Increasingly, the Rahbanis started to experiment with different musical styles and genres. They were in constant contact with poets, and theatre directors. They managed, as Mainguy writes, "(de) donner au folklore libanais une audience de bon aloi, et très élargie, en lui apportant un soutien polyphonique susceptible de toucher le plus large public. Idée en soi excellente, mais qui posait un certain nombre de problèmes délicats, meme pour des esprits curieux et avertis, dotes au reste d'une belle perseverance." (Mainguy, 1969, p. 93) However, for quite a long time the Rahbanis were criticized harshly for their work - by musicologists, and even politicians. It was said that their work would have a negative influence on Arabic music as a whole, would destroy the traditional tarab and asil culture, and was hostile towards the traditional way of sheikh singing. Others criticized the incorrect use of the Arabic language; it was argued that the musical adaptation of poetry would hurt the basic rules of Arabic metrics (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 144-145). Interestingly enough, these critics did not focus on the Rahbanis' orientation towards European models and forms, nor on the piano that made the use of Arabic quartertones impossible, nor on the belcanto voice of Fairuz that was not compatible with the aesthetical ideals of traditional Arabic singing. What they criticised most was the incorrect pronunciation of the words and the syllables (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 146-147). Weinrich concludes that, for the Rahbanis, the music seems to have a bigger relevance than the correct recitation of the texts. She calls this a new phenomenon in Arabic music (Weinrich, 2006, p. 147).

3.2.16   The 1960s: Arab Nationalism, Patrons and Musicians

> By the 1950s and 1960s Lebanon was being 'denatured' by a new set of threatening incursions and 'borrowed' ideologies: Baathist, Socialist, Arabist, and Islamist. Of course, while such ideologies were not uniformly perceived as threatening or borrowed, they nevertheless altered the nature and character of the discourse. This was also happening at a time when Lebanon, and especially Beirut, was quickly becoming a vibrant cultural and intellectual epicenter, an open publishing house or forum for experimentation, and a permissive haven for political dissidents. The radicalization of Arab politics was bound to reverberate with such a setting. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 206)

On the following pages I shall present two different accounts of Lebanon through music: First, the pan-Arabist movement that influenced many musicians, and later the Occidentalists who invited hundreds of important composers, musicians, and ensembles from Europe, the US, and USSR.

With the rise of Gamal Abd al-Nasser after the 1952 revolution in Egypt, Arab nationalism was born. Under Nasser, the number of radio stations, the power of transmission, and hours of broadcast increased dramatically. Radio retained its popularity until the advent of the cassette tape player (Danielson, 1997, p. 183). Umm Kulthoum befriended the new leader President Nasser. She

sang patriotically, and was a powerful weapon for Nasser; people said: "This use of music was nothing new: during World War II, British, German, and Italian broadcasting stations all tried to get recordings, even endorsements, from popular singers to draw listeners and suggest support for their messages" (Danielson, 1997, p. 166). Kulthoum was invited to sing national songs for other countries: she recorded songs for the Kuwaiti national holiday twice during the 1960s, and also recorded an anthem for Iraq (Danielson, 1997, p. 164).

Umm Kulthoum's close ties to President Nasser were not unique or new. If one takes a closer look at the music and entertainment industry in Lebanon and the region during that time, one observes that there was always a deep and important connection between patrons and musicians. This is still the case today: Arab pop singers sing at private gatherings for kings, sultans or rich people. Already in the nineteenth century, the musicians from the nahda movement in Cairo were able to develop their music at the court of the Ottoman sultans. Umm Kulthoum and other rural singers entered elite circles and, if they were lucky, acquired wealthy and influential patrons (Danielson, 1997, pp. 31-32). There were agreements between patron and performer, sometimes written ones, especially between parties not previously known to each other (Danielson, 1997, p. 33). Most entertainers' careers depended "on less obvious connections with influential Egyptians who supplied prestige of association, entrée into elite circles, and the occasional accommodation for a problem" (Danielson, 1997, p. 83).

As Asmar and Hood demonstrate, Fairuz also had her arrangements with influential leaders:
Throughout her career, leaders of various Arab nations honored her, including the late King Hussein of Jordan, and the late King Hassan II of Morocco. She received a key to the city from the Arab mayor of Jerusalem when, in 1961, she accompanied her father there on a pilgrimage.

Interestingly, Arab intellectuals were apprehensive of these ties - they feared that the Rahbanis would write songs in praise of the powerful elites. Asmar and Hood write:
Instead, Assy and Mansour wrote verses extolling the land rather than its leaders. They composed a series of songs for the major Arab capitals such as 'Amman fi al-qalb' (Amman in the heart), 'Uhibbu Dimashq' (I love Damascus), 'Al-Kuwait' (Kuwait), 'Qasidat al-Imarat' (qasida of the Emirates), 'Ghanaytu Makka' (I sang for Mekka), 'Bahabbak ya Lubnan' (I love you Lebanon), and that became so popular they were frequently played as second national anthems by those nations. (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 308)

In the 1960s many Lebanese musicians started to look toward Cairo again. And they startet to sing for Palestine. Also, the Rahbanis opened up towards Egypt, and they took prominent work from the Canon of Egyptian music: A dawr by Sayyid Darwish, and some *qasa'id* that Muhammad Abd al-Wahab had composed for Fairuz, and two major hits that Abd al-Wahab had sung back in the late 1920s (Weinrich, 2006, p. 345). In 1966 the Rahbani brothers and Fairuz traveled to Egypt with the goal of working for Egyptian radio. They met with Umm Kulthoum and Muhammad Abd al-Wahab and gave a big concert in Cairo in 1967 (Weinrich, 2006, p. 208). Now, they became famous in the whole Arab world. The recognition that they got as artists in Cairo, and their song on Palestine, opened the door for concerts in the Gulf. They started to perform in Egypt and other Arab countries, especially the Gulf, more and more often (Weinrich, 2006, p. 208).

Interestingly enough, Fairuz sang a song about Mecca - "Ghannaytu Makka" (I sang for Mecca) - and thus identified herself with the Islamic world and tried to avoid being seen as a Christian singer only (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 209-210). Her move was, as Weinrich states, in accordance with the

policy of President Shihab, who did not want to be categorized as a spokesman for the Lebanese Christians, but also for the Muslims. In 1966 Fairuz was the first woman to perform on Saudi TV.

During that period, the Rahbani brothers introduced more Egyptian and pan-Arabic genres into their art. Their music was now based increasingly on Arab vocal forms like *muwashahat*, *dawr*, and *qasida*. It is important to mention, however, that music in Cairo had undergone many changes as well. Some ensembles were now sponsored by the government, and they performed traditional Arabic music in a standardised way, often with a big choir with male and female voices, and with many instruments. What used to be solo singing or solo playing, now became choir singing or playing. Improvisation was now very minimal. The music was directed by a conductor, in huge concert halls or opera houses. The audience was not clapping in between the piece for outstanding performances, but at the end of the piece, after the conductor put down his stick (Racy, 2003, p. 222).

3.2.17   *The 1960s: The Decade of Occidental Concerts in Lebanon*

Despite international political tensions and the rise of pan-Arabism, the Occidental music field in Lebanon flourished. In 1956, the Lebanese branch of Les Jeunesses Musicales (JML) had been founded.[84] After some ruptures and even its closing down, it still exists. Its goals were as follows: "servir de lien musical entre l'Orient et l'Occident suivant les traditions du Liban, et cela par une meilleure initiation à la musique occidentale d'une part, et par l'approfondissement, d'autre part, des connaissances de la jeunesse, en matière de musique arabe et plus précisément Libanaise" (Manguy, 1969, p. 55). In the East and in Lebanon in particular, Western music was to be circulated; and vice versa, Oriental music was to be circulated in the West and in Lebanon (Manguy, 1969, p. 55). The JML organised many concerts and started to organise a musical composition competition with an international jury. Jihad Racy recalls what the music circle looked like at the time:

> During the 1960s and 1970s Western notation was already employed by both the Western and Near Eastern divisions of the government conservatory. The city also had dozens of Western-music teachers and composers of Arab, Armenian, and Western backgrounds. There were also local chamber ensembles and keyboard virtuosos, Diana Taqi al-Din, Walid Hurani, Salvador Arnitah, and others. Western music was taught and performed in private institutions such as Sami Salibi's Center of Fine Arts (established in 1954) and the American University of Beirut. (Racy, 2001, p. 340)

Racy notes that interest for Western classical music was very common among the educated middle and upper middle classes.[85]

By the end of the 1960s, the conservatory decided to send its best musicians and ensembles to the provinces of Tripoli, Saida, and Zahlé. The goal was to make the Lebanese youth understand Occidental music (Manguy, 1969, pp. 47-48). At the same time, concerts were organized in cooperation with the tourism industry at historic sites, for example, at Jeita Grotto. The link between music, tourism, and cities became very important. Many concerts were organized in Baalbek, Jbeil (Byblos), Saida, Deir al-Qalaa, Deir al-Qamar and Beit Eddine (Manguy, 1969, p. 51). Manguy

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[84] www.jmliban.org

[85] In the 1960s, a vast number of international and national stars performed in Beirut. See Manguy (1969, pp. 42-44) for an exhaustive list.

proudly notes that "Il est clair que le Liban est devenu ... l'une des escales préférées des personnalités internationales de la musique" (Manguy, 1969, p. 49). Other Arab countries followed suit by organizing similar festivals. Asmar and Hood write:

> A trend followed wherein other Arab countries held arts festivals and concerts specifically at historical sites such as the Syrian city of Bosra, the Jordanian Roman ruins of Jerash and Petra, Babel in Iraq, Luxor and Giza in Egypt, and the Marib dam in Yemen. (Asmar & Hood, 2001, p. 305)

3.2.18   Al-Hazima: The Defeat in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967

The *hazima*, the trauma of defeat of the Arab countries in the Six-Day War of 1967 [86], stimulated the artistic and intellectual production in the whole Arab world. Many songs, political pamphlets and studies, poems, films, novels and paintings dealt with the Palestinian cause and destiny (Weinrich, 2006, p. 265). The functions of these works were very different: Some dealt with personal experiences; some tried to deal with the traumata of displacement, loss and exile; some dealt with identity issues; others documented political agitation and resistance (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 265-266). The reaction to the defeat was stronger still than in 1948. Many authors, intellectuals, and artists felt it like a shock and a wake-up call. 1967 was the starting point for a new view of the world, and for new aestetical forms. Political self-criticism was huge. Any trust in the Arab regimes was lost, and the political system was questioned: "An den Pranger gestellt werden patriarchale Herrschaftsformen, undemokratische Strukturen, das Fehlen politischer Solidarität, die Untätigkeit der Regierenden und sogar Defizite in arabischer Mentalität und arabischem Denken" (Weinrich, 2006, p. 266).

Danielson describes how not only the political system was challenged, but so were the established proponents of culture, namely Umm Kulthoum:

> With the defeat in the 1967 war, every aspect of life was suddenly subject to reevaluation, especially by intellectuals. They decried what they believed had led to the disaster, namely collective delusions of grandeur, pride, lack of concern with the real problems of the Arab world, and lack of critical approaches to their solution. Umm Kulthoum, to many of them, symbolized this corpus of problems with her long performances and pride in local culture that they viewed as avoidance of real economic, social and political distress. They tired of newspaper articles devoted to her wardrobe, wealth, and associations with ruling elites. Her lengthy renditions bored the impatient young and annoyed critical intellectuals who, while willingly acknowledging her musical abilities, objected to the self-satisfaction her performances seemed to induce in listeners, distracting them form active involvement in issues of the day. (Danielson, 1997, p. 185)

And further: "The conflict was not with her music so much as the lack of choice. And it was hard to ignore the interests that intellectuals felt she represented" (Danielson, 1997, p. 185). According to the

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[86] Expecting immediate attack by the surrounding Arab countries, Israel launched a massive preemptive strike, destroying the Egyptian air force and defeating the Arab armies in only six days. Furthermore, Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that had been governed, up until then, by Jordan and Egypt, respectively. Extremely painful for Arab self-esteem was also Israel's occupation (or liberation, from the Israeli point of view) of the holy city of Jerusalem.

Lebanese writer Elias Khoury, the suppression of culture and the arts by despots, monarchs, and the military started after the hazima - he sees this suppression as a long term effect of the 1967 defeat.[87]

Umm Kulthoum remained loyal to Nasser's regime. In the wake of the 1967 War, she did fundraising concerts for Egypt (Danielson, 1997, p. 184) - the revenues of her only performance outside the Arab or Muslim world, the famous concert at the Olympia in Paris in November 1967, and her concerts in Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Sudan, Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Pakistan, raised the sum of 2,530,000 US dollars for Egypt (Danielson, 1997, p. 186). However, it seems fair to say that Umm Kulthoum was patriotic rather than political:

> Umm Kulthoum was not, as an Egyptian political scientist noted, a politicized person, but she functioned in a political environment. To the continued consternation of her critics, she persisted in asserting pride in Arab and Egyptian culture when many thought that past practices could well be submitted to constructive criticism. In the face of such criticism, Umm Kulthoum tacitly retreated to her position as a singer and never became the political voice that critical intellectuals desired. Her repertory, thus, had the effect, felt acutely by intellectuals and leftists, of creating the impression that everything was really all right, that the future could be left to fate, that no action was necessary. Hers was the persistent song of tarab culture and of Arabic poetry. (Danielson, 1997, pp. 197-198)

Umm Kulthoum did sing for Palestine as well. For example, her song "Asbaha al-Ana 'indi Bunduqiyyah" (I have now got me a rifle) from 1969 became popular. It was a poem by the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani, and Mohammed Abdel Wahab had composed the music.

> I have now got me a rifle, to Palestine, take me with you
> To hills that are sad, like the face of the Magdalene
> To the green domes and the prophetic stones . . .
> I am with the revolutionaries,
> I am of the revolutionaries
>
> Ever since the day I carried my rifle,
> Palestine became only meters away
> O revolutionaries, in Jerusalem, in Hebron,
> In Bisan, in the Jordan Valley, in Bethlehem,
> Wherever you may be O free men
> Advance, advance, advance to Palestine,
> For there is only one path to Palestine,
> And it passes through the barrel of a gun. (Massad, 2003, p. 28)

Despite the efforts of Oum Kulthoum and other singers, many cultural forms from the Arab world were criticized heavily after 1967: for example, the tarab repertoire was criticized as not being academic, but too much dependent on "spontaneous inspiration": The endless repetitions, the circling around specific notes, was said to bemuse people and detach them from reality instead of building it

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[87] Elias Khoury made this statement in the documentary film "Voyageur" about the singer Marcel Khalife (Dupouey, 2004).

with full consciousness (Weinrich, 2006, p. 361). Many thought that the Arab world should develop from a world of continous repetition into a world of movement and progress. In their search for modernity, the majority of musicians and musicologists looked at European music - while a minority tried to define and create "alternative modernity" (see Shannon, 2006). It is thus no suprise, that after the 1967 war, Egypt's near monopoly in song production and distribution declined measurably (Massad, 2003, p. 25). Weinrich highlights the changes of tastes in the Arab world. According to her they happened on three levels: 1. The comparison to European musical models and the feeling of a crisis in the Arabic music; 2. Changes in the way music was produced, heard, and appreciated; and 3. The problems on the political levels that led to changes in the art and music world.[88] The songs came now from other countries, and especially The Rahbani brothers and Fairuz took a leading role.

The Rahbanis adapted to the changes of tastes in the Arab world very well. They now produced more and more theatric plays. The early plays (1960 – 1965) were all set in a village. The later plays then turned towards the city. The plays from 1965 onwards deal increasingly with social and political issues [89] - although in a rather superficial way. Weinrich describes some of the plays in detail, and quotes Abu Mrad (1990, p. 10) who categorizes the pieces into *folkloric* ones, and *epic* ones. Furthermore, he categorizes some plays[90] as *realistic* pieces. Weinrich is not totally satisfied with Mrad's categorization as realistic - much like the Lebanese musicians I worked with, who would never call a play by Rahbani and Fairuz "realistic."

In their attempt to capture something of the new spirit of conflict in the Arab world, the later Rahbani musicals often dealt with injustice and state oppression. Yet they remained evasive as to the source of political ills. Though the Rahbani musicals paid lip-service to the somber concerns of this era, they were only marginally interested in serious socio-political reform. The plays always ended happily, usually celebrating a wedding or a happy reunion. Crucial for their success in the Arab world was the trio's work on Palestine: The song "Raji'oun" (We shall return) was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Fairuz also sang patriotic and nostalgic hymns about Jerusalem such as "Zahrat al-mada'in" (Flower of the cities), or the popular LP "Al-Quds fi l-Bal" (Jerusalem in my heart) (Weinrich, 2006, p. 227, p. 270). The song "Zahrat al-mada'in" came out in 1967 - it was an anthem to the city of Jerusalem that had been lost in the war. The music and lyrics were very dramatic and full of pathos, and so was the performance on stage - the performance of the song became an unforgettable event.[91] Other important songs in support of the Palestinian cause were "Baladati jaba jamila" (My country is a beautiful forest), or "Ajras al-awda" (Bells of return) that was based on a poem in classical Arabic by Said Aql. Another important song was "Al-Quds al-atiqa" (Old Jerusalem). The song describes feelings and memories during a tour through the old city of Jerusalem (see Weinrich, 2006, p. 270). Shortly after the 1967 defeat, a piece consisting of several songs called "Jisr al-awda" (Bridge of Return) was produced (Weinrich, 2006, p. 270). One important song was "Sanarji'u Yawwan" (We shall return one day) where people are "terrified of dying before reaching Palestine":

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[88] Paragraph based on Weinrich (2006, p. 257f).

[89] Ayyam Fakhr al-Din (The days of Fakh al-Din, 1966), Jabal as-Shahwan (The Shahwan mountain, 1969) and al-Batra (Petra, 1978).

[90] Hala wa-l-malik (Hala and the king, 1967), al-Shakhs (The person, 1968), Sah al-nawm (Good Morning, 1970), Ya'ish ya'ish (May he live long, 1971), Naturat al-mafatih (The Guardian of the keys) and al-Mahatta (The station).

[91] For a description and the lyrics, see Weinrich (2006, pp. 227-230).

O Heart, slow down,
 Do not throw yourself
In exhaustion on the road of return,
For it pains us to see that tomorrow,
The flocks of birds will return
While we still remain here. (Massad, 2003, p. 27)

Fairuz' Palestine songs deal with the most important topoi and symbols of the Palestine issue: Migration, flight, displacement, alienation, return, and the beauty of the Palestinian countryside. One important topos is the journey - the ever-travelling Palestinian, forced to be constantly on the move. When touring in Arab countries, it was often her songs about Palestine that were celebrated most by the audience (Weinrich, 2006, p. 267).

Their song, "Zahrat al-Mada'in" (The Flowers of cities) became one of the most popular songs of the period. The music mixes Western scales and instruments and melodies with martial music and Byzantine Arab church hymns. "The song opens with a genuflecting gesture: 'It is for you that I pray, O city of prayers, for you I pray, O Jerusalem'" (Massad, 2003, p. 26). The tone is one of resistance:

The gate of our city shall not be locked,
For I shall go to pray.
I shall knock at the gates,
And I shall open up the gates
O River Jordan, you shall wash
My face with your holy water
And you shall erase, O River Jordan,
The remaining footprints of the barbarians
…
For Jerusalem is ours, and the house is ours
With our own hands we shall restore the glory of Jerusalem
With our own hands, we shall bring peace to Jerusalem
Peace shall come to Jerusalem. (Massad, 2003, p. 26)

All in all, Weinrich judges the support of the Rahbani brothers and Fairuz for the Palestinian cause as considerable, but yet within clear limits. In the play "al-Batra" from 1978, the Palestinian struggle was presented as being justified - it deserved to be supported ideologically. However, the Palestinians were to fight on their own, and on Palestinian ground, not in Lebanon - this again was consistent with official government policy (2006, p. 380). The play was written during the Civil War, when fighting in Southern Lebanon was heavy. Weinrich concludes that the antagonism in the way the Rahbanis handled the Palestinian issue was, in fact, not so far away from the political standing of the Lebanese right wing.

The Palestinian question was always a very delicate one in Lebanon. Several musicians told me that Sabri al-Sharif and Halim al-Rumi were never really credited for their role in creating the "Lebanese Music" because they were of Palestinian origin. Sabri al-Sharif worked with many

musicians for many years, but he is not mentioned often, as Romeo Lahoud confirms: "C'est lui qui est à la base de tout. On ne veut pas parler de lui parce qu'il est d'origine palestinienne probablement" (Lahoud, 2006). On Fayrouz.com one can read similar statements. However, Sharif received important awards, as Racy mentions on almashriq.com:

> His contributions to Arab art and culture have not gone unnoticed or unrewarded during the past 40 years. In 1957, President Shamoun of Lebanon and Mrs. Shamoun awarded Sharif the Medal of Honor for his contribution to the arts and particularly for his work as producer and director of the Baalbeck Festivals. For his role in founding the Lebanese Popular Folkloric Troupe in collaboration with the Rahbani brothers, he was honored with the Cedar of Lebanon 'Medal Chevalier.'

Many of these songs about Palestine - from Fairuz and from Oum Kulthoum - were broadcasted over official, often national radio and TV channels. Thus, these songs were held under control by the politicians. Massad argues that these songs were used as a demonstration of a particular regime's commitment to the liberation of Palestine. According to him, Egypt and Lebanon stand out in this regard.

> As a rule, however, only songs found to be nonthreatening were broadcast throughout the Arab world - these included especially the songs of Fayruz and the Rahbanis. Many of 'Abd al-Wahhab's songs, however, were banned because they mixed the socialist goals and rhetoric of the Egyptian Revolution (to which not all Arab regimes subscribed) with the safer messages of Arab nationalism and the liberation of Palestine. (Massad, 2003, pp. 30-31)

From now on the situation would change radically. The emergence of the cassette in the 1970s led to new possibilities for a more independent production of music. Soon, singers would sing about the Palestinian issue in ways that would be dissident to the official approaches of the regimes'. Many of these songs for Palestine were recorded underground and were so able to bypass state-controlled censorship. The songs were popularized "through guerrilla radio transmitters in vans that drove around Amman and other areas of Jordan, broadcasting guerrilla news and nationalist songs" (Massad, 2003, p. 31). In Lebanon, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) established the Radio of the Revolution (Sawt Filastin Sawt al-Thawrah al-Filastiniyyah). "The station, along with others in Iraq and Syria where guerrilla groups were also allowed to broadcast, continued to give prominence to these songs, which became so popular in the region's refugee camps that most people knew them by heart" (Massad, 2003). The late 1960s and early 1970s would be the beginning for dissident culture and subcultural music in the region - and especially in Beirut.

3.3   The Rise of Dissident Culture and Subcultural Music (1968 – 1975)

> Throughout its history, (…) Lebanon served as a refuge and asylum to a wide spectrum of itinerant and dissident groups. Its fairly open liberal democracy, laissez faire economy and uncensored press were both envied and feared by all its neighbouring monolithic regimes. Above all, Lebanon pursued a pacifist national security policy and was clearly the least militarized. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 216)

Lebanon is often called the most liberal country in the Arab world. Today it hosts one of the most thriving and diverse subcultural music scenes in the region. The roots of this scene, I shall argue, go

back to the 1960s. From the 1960s onwards, many political, largely left wing, dissidents fled oppressive regimes in Syria and Iraq.[92] In Lebanon, they hoped to find a safe haven. Lebanon, however, was full of political tension, and not as free as the dissidents would have expected. Newspapers were closed, editors arrested. The newspaper "An-Nahar," for example, was suspended in May 1961 for ten days because it had published a cartoon depicting Lebanon as a Syrian Province. During that time, Kamel Mroueh, editor of "Al-Hayat," was assassinated (Khalaf, 2002, p. 211). Before entering into the cultural (and musical) aspects of that dissident culture, I shall give a short overview over the main political developments that would lead to the Lebanese Civil War.

3.3.1   The Beginnings of the Palestinian Struggle on Lebanese Soil

The main tensions at the time arose between Israel and Lebanon. Palestinian groups launched various attacks on Israeli targets from Lebanon, and Israel hit back. Khalaf (2002) recalls many of these incidents:

> In 1968 Palestinian PLO resistance was mainly situated in southeast Lebanon. There were various guerrilla attacks on Israeli targets, and counter attacks on Lebanon: On December 28 1968, after Palestinian guerrillas had shot rockets at an Israeli plane on a runway in Athens, Israel destroyed virtually the entire fleet of the Middle East Airlines on Beirut International Airport. (Khalaf ,2002, p. 217)

According to Khalaf, Israel's main intention behind attacks like this one was to push the reluctant Lebanese government to clamp down on the growing freedom of Palestinians on Lebanese territory. "The outcome was always the opposite. By their indiscriminate assault on civil targets and innocent villages, Israeli incursions only served to arouse public uproar, stir up waves of solidarity with the Palestinians, and provoke a chain of cabinet crises" (Khalaf, 2002, pp. 217-218). In March 1970, the first serious clashes between Palestinian and Christian militias erupted in a Maronite village. Soon after, heavy fighting broke out between Palestinian and Kataeb commandos in the "Tell al-Zaatar" camp, and the predominantly Maronite suburb of Dekwaneh. Bashir Gemayel, the son of Kataeb founder Pierre Gemayel, was kidnapped, held in Tell al-Zaatar and released after a ten-hour captivity. Many of the Sunni Muslim Leaders, along with the Druze Kamal Jumblat and his left-wing coalition, supported the Palestinians. The Palestinian camps became increasingly militarized, and transformed refugee camps into military bases.

The early 1970s saw labour protests over the increasingly difficult economical situation, and numerous armed confrontations between security forces and Palestinian and Pro-Palestinian Lebanese groups; "bomb explosions, vandalism, robberies, abductions, became almost daily events" (Khalaf, 2002, p. 225). Lebanon was trapped between two contradictory logics: the natural rights of the Palestinian struggle could not be reconciled with the concerns for sovereignty of the Lebanese state.

> Lebanon found itself caught between two treacherous options: Destroy the armed presence of PLO and risk the grim prospects of Christian-Muslim confrontations. Entrust the army with the task of defending the South and suffer the inevitable humiliations of a military showdown with Israel. Typically, Lebanon opted for

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[92] The Arab world witnessed many regime changes through military coups. New leaders and regimes came to power: The Baath Party in Syria (1963); Haouari Boumedienne in Algeria (1965); Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya (1969). (Weinrich 288)

inaction and played for time. Time, however, was hardly a bearer of good tidings. As usual, external events aggravated the magnitude of internal disarray and conflict. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 226)

In 1975, these internal and external tensions would lead to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War.

3.3.2   Student Protests

During all these years Beirut witnessed a lot of student strikes, especially at the American University, AUB, situated in West Beirut. 1968 was not only a dramatic year in Prague, Saigon, Paris and Chicago, but also in the Arab world, and Beirut. It was in 1968 when some relatively new Arab organizations with a revolutionary character came into focus: The underground Arab Nationalist Movement (Harakat al-Qaumiyyin al-Arab) became active as guerrilla groups in South Yemen and Oman, and inside the Palestinian resistance movement. They were inspired by Marxism-Leninism and called for armed struggle and reliance on the popular masses. They criticized the petit bourgeoisie and they harshly criticised imperialism. On the one hand, the movement was very much inspired by the global political Zeitgeist: Guevarism, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and Communism. On the other hand, this was a reaction to major developments in the Arab world: Nasserism, and the Israeli Arab war of 1967. Further, the Soviet Union emerged increasingly as a supporter of the Palestinian struggle, and thus for the upcoming leftist groups as well - however, this support often remained theoretical. Picard recalls the time very well:

> In that city, where the most arrant luxury rubbed shoulders with the suffering Third World, the student revolutions of 1968, the war in Vietnam, the writing of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Régis Debray were enthusiastically discussed. Strikes, solidarity marches, and student sit-ins punctuated the social conflicts and workers' demonstrations, and responded to Israeli attacks and to clashes between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian combatants. (Picard, 1996, p. 96; Weinrich, 2006, p. 304)

Lefitst groups called for support of the Palestinian resistance. They wanted a Lebanese mobilization for defense against Israel, and they wanted Lebanon to invest in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and not only in services and tourism. Furthermore, they wanted an Arabization of the academic programs "so that persons from the working classes will not be at a disadvantage in not knowing French or English" (Farsoun, 1973, p. 3). These demands would bring fundamental changes inside Lebanese society. Farsoun, in his report in 1973, comments very clearly what was at stake - on a national, regional, and international level:

> Arab nationalism, which calls for pan-Arab unity or military-political-economic links to (predominantly Muslim) Arab neighbors, is seen as a threat not only by the domestic dependent bourgeoisie (and its sectarian clerical allies) but also by their foreign 'partners' in the United States and Europe to the extent that such Arab nationalism represents a revolutionary or mass-based movement which may disrupt the present arrangement. It should be noted here that what is at stake for the United States is not Lebanon alone but Lebanon as a key state in the complex structure of political and economic control and of military strategic considerations in the Arab Middle East. The Lebanese regime was the first Arab regime to clash directly and openly with the popular Palestinian guerrilla organizations, in 1969. This attempt to contain and control the guerrillas in Lebanon led to the Cairo Accords, which gave

> the Palestinians a restricted freedom of action. This was made possible for the
> Palestinians primarily because of the popular mass and student support they enjoyed,
> not only among the Lebanese but also among other Arab populations. (Farsoun, 1973,
> p. 11)

The student protests in Lebanon were a direct threat to the Lebanese bourgeoisie with its nationalist and conservative ideology, and to the clan leaders who had monopolized control over the political institutions in the country. Students from the American University of Beirut (AUB) and from the state-funded Lebanese University (LU) went on strike, and clashed with the police and rightwing students. Often, many students were wounded.

> Following the suppression by government security forces using tanks and armoured
> cars, workers and members of leftist, communist and Arab nationalist parties joined
> in a demonstration in April 1972 estimated at 20000 people to protest the
> government's actions. (Farsoun 1973:3)

This protest happened in a time of an economic crisis. In 1966 and 1967 the largest Lebanese bank, Intra, had crashed. The social system was under pressure, as inflation and the unemployment rate were rising, and people from the villages migrated into the city. The government's violent reaction to the protests increased the feelings that it was a partner of the Lebanese Nationalists.

Two musical streams emerged out of these student protest movements: One clearly had a political aim; the other did not. The first involved singers who sang for the Palestinian struggle. The latter was inspired by the movement of psychedelic rock in the USA. A minority of the musicians would work in both "streams", but mostly the circles were separated. Together, the two streams created the foundations for what *we* call "independent" and "subcultural" music today. Observing the active Lebanese scene today, one can argue that these artists from the late 1960s were highly influential.

3.3.3   Musical Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause

With the emergence of different Palestinian guerrilla movements from the 1960s onwards, many singers started to praise the fighters. The rise of the cassette industry in the Arab world enabled a faster, cheaper, and thus more independent production of music. It actually made these new singers heard. The blind Egyptian singer Shaykh Imam (1918 – 1995) became one of the most influential artists of this kind. Imam played music on his oud, and the music was set in different maqam structures. His often ironic and bitter songs about failures of Egyptian and Arab politics became popular in the whole region, even though they were censored by the Egyptian state and radio.

> The songs of Shaykh Imam were banned, and both he and his lyricist, the poet
> (Ahmad Du'ad) Najm, were jailed both by Nasir and Sadat for songs that questioned
> the government's commitment to the Egyptian people's welfare as well as to the
> Palestinian cause. (Massad, 2003, pp. 30-31)

One of his important songs was "Ya Falastiniyyeh" (Oh Palestinians, 1968). This song was very popular among the Palestinian guerrillas, and in dissident circles all over the Arab world.

> O Palestinians, the fusilier has shot you
> With Zionism which kills the doves that live under your protection

> O Palestinians, I want to come and be with you, weapons in hand
>
> And I want my hands to go down with yours to smash the snake's head
>
> And then Hulagu's law will die [93]
>
>
> O Palestinians, exile has lasted so long
>
> That the desert is moaning from the refugees and the victims
>
> And the land remains nostalgic for its peasants who watered it
>
> Revolution is the goal, and victory shall be your first step.

The song became so important that PLO-head Yasser Arafat went to see Shaykh Imam in Egypt in 1968 and asked him to sing it for him (Massad, 2003, p. 30).

The Al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah (The Central Band) produced many revolutionary songs in 1969. The group was associated with Fatah. "These songs made use of Palestinian folk tunes sometimes combined with Western martial rhythms and tempos, but their lyrics were invariably in Palestinian Arabic sung in rural accents" (Massad, 2003, p. 31). The traditional dabkeh dance came into focus again - however, differently than in the sophisticated, upper-class versions of the Rahbani brothers and their contemporaries. Dabkeh now became a symbol of modern "Palestinianness" and was used to celebrate a collective Palestinian identity. After 1967 dabkeh was staged as a "militant men's dance" that reflected the new nationalist discourse of "masculinity, militancy and resistance in its steps and choreographies" (Kaschl, 2003). Dabkeh was now often performed in military clothing. Kaschl argues that a process of canonization set in: "Dabkeh was turned into tradition, a formalized canon of gendered movement patterns whose guidelines and rules were inscribed onto the Palestinian body through the activities of the newly founded performance troupes" (Kaschl, 2003, Chapter 2).[94]

Abu Arab, a Beirut-based Palestinian singer, was a rising underground star in the 1970s. He wrote and sang many songs for the guerrillas and their struggle.

> His music also used folk Palestinian tunes, including popular mawwals and mijana
> sung to revolutionary lyrics accompanied by oud, qanun, violin, and riqq. Abu Arab's
> music, like that of al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah, always had a specifically Palestinian
> flavour. (Massad, 2003, pp. 31-32)

3.3.4   *Psychedelic Rock in the US and in the Arab World: Escapism (1)*

The period from the 1960s to the 1980s witnessed a parallel movement of rock music throughout the Middle East. Beirut became the capital of Arabic rock - for the first time it was not Cairo that would take the lead. Beirut hosted around 200 rock bands in 1973; most of them covered British and American rock music.

The USA and the UK saw a great movement of garage, psychedelic, and freak music. The music was often labeled as *psychedelic rock*, and it evolved in the 60s as an offshoot of the rock and

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[93] Hulagu (or Hülegü) was a Mongol prince and commander; in 1258, he conquered Baghdad, which led to the demise of the Abbasid caliphate that had ruled for 750 years. Hulagu was the famous Djingiz Khan's grandson.
[94] Kaschl shows, in her excellent book, that dabkeh was used in Palestine and Israel similarly. While in Palestine it was used as a marker of difference from Israel, in Israel it was invented as a marker of Israeli national identity. In Hebrew, *dabkeh* is called *debka*.

roll movement. Psychedelic rock music became one of the most defining mediums of the hippie aesthetic. The musicians used extravagant dresses in swirling colours, and hallucinogenic imagery on their covers and in their live sets. The scene opposed the war in Vietnam, but also the race riots inside the USA. Slogans were anti-war, love, drugs, revolution, freedom of expression, freak out, and much more. It became a religion in its own right, as Derogatis explains:

> Psychedelic rock doesn't preach, and its spiritual invocations are left open to interpretation. The references in Brian Wilson's 'God Only Knows' and the Velvet Underground's 'Jesus' are non-specific in that the sentiments could be addressed to any higher force, including one within ourselves. Psychedelic rock is by definition polytheistic. When Lennon said in 1966 that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus, he was stating the obvious. Rock'n'roll is a religion. (Derogatis, 1996, p. 15)

Many of the psychedelic rock bands [95] performed at the biggest festivals of the time: At the Monterrey Pop Festival in 1967, and at the Woodstock Music and Arts Festival, 1969.

Drugs, especially mind-altering and hallucinogenic drugs like LSD, influenced the production of psychedelic rock: Often, psychedelic rock bands would record their songs in a conventional way. Then they would edit it in the studio under the influence of LSD, or other drugs, to weird sounding, psychedelic soundtracks. The LSD feeling was evoked or imitated mainly with

> …circular, mandala-like sing structures; sustained or droning melodies; altered and effected instrumental sounds; reverb, echoes, and tape delays that created a sense of space, and layered mixes that rewarded repeated listening by revealing new and mysterious elements. The presence of all or any one of these sounds is enough to earn a piece of music the label 'psychedelic'. (Derogatis: 1996: 10)

Some musicians and groups started to experiment with Oriental sounding melodies and rhythms - according to them, these melodies sounded psychedelic. The Beatles used Indian sitar playing. Others experimented with Arabic music - some also had Arab band members.[96] Some of them worked in the popular Arabic nightclubs (see chapter 3.2.12) to earn their living. The New York based group Devil's Anvil released the album "Hard Rock From the Middle East" in 1967. In this album we hear the bandleader, Felix Pappalardi, and some musicians of the band, The Freak Scene, jamming with Arab musicians from New York.[97]

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[95] Bands like The Grateful Dead, Jefferson's Airplane, and The Doors were among the pioneers of this genre. Other bands like The Fugs, The Velvet Underground, 13th Floor Elevators, Byrds, Beach Boys, Jimmi Hendrix, and others became important as well. The Beatles and The Who were inspired by these trends - The Beatles, for example, with songs like "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" or "Tomorrow never Knows." Pink Floyd and The Cream later became two of the most important psychedelic bands inspiring many musicians around the globe.

[96] An important and influential figure was the Egyptian composer Halim al-Dabh (*1921). He is seen as a pioneer avant-garde composer in the Arab world (see Denise A. Seachist "The Musical World of Halim El-Dabh", 2003). Al-Dabh moved to the USA, in the 1950s he was closely linked to American composers and writers such as Alan Hovhaness, Lou Harrison, Colin McPhee, Paul Bowles, and Peggy Glanville-Hicks. All these contemporary composers wrote music inspired by the music of the East. They were named the *Les Six d'Orient*. Paul Bowles wrote novels like *Shelter in the Sky* in which Americans search for adventure in North African cities first, and in the desert later. Bowles became one of the gurus of the Beat Generation in the 1950s and 1960s. Tanger became *the* Mekka for various writers: Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. And this fascination for North Africa and the Middle East surely also influenced the movement of psychedelic rock.

[97] The members of the band were from the Arab world, from Armenia and from the USA: Felix Pappalardi (Bass, Guitar, Tambourine), Steve Knight (Rhythm Guitar, Bass, Bouzouki) Eliezer Adoram (Accordion), Jerry

A similar band was the Californian band Kaleidoscope around the bandleader David Lindley. They often performed with an Arabic oud, played either by the Armenian John Berberian, or by David Solomon Feldthouse. John Berberian, the son of Armenian immigrants to the USA, released various albums with Middle Eastern and Armenian instruments mixed with jazz, soul and funk. In the mid-1960s he recorded albums that crossed traditional Middle Eastern music, psychedelic rock and jazz: "Expressions East" (1964), "Music of the Middle East" (1966), and "Middle Eastern Rock" (1969). After the Israeli-Arab Six-Day-War of 1967, and after the terrorist attacks at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, many of these projects stopped. In the liner notes of the Devil's Anvil album we read the following: "We look back on that project with fondness and a certain sense of humour. The day of its release as we were taking it around to the New York radio stations, we got word of the onset of the Israeli-Arab War. No one would touch the album!"

We should not forget another interesting aspect: Many of the international rock albums at the time were manufactured in Lebanon by the Societé Libanaise Du Disque: For example, the original 1974 Rolling Stones vinyl LP "It's Only Rock n'Roll", or the 45 rpm Atlantic Records single of Led Zeppelin "Rock n'Roll / Four Sticks" in 1972. Popsike, an online auction platform for rare records writes that

> …for a period of about 8 years in the late 60s and the early 70s, records were being pressed in Lebanon under licence from the parent record companies. This stopped when the local civil war broke out in 1975 and was never resumed. (www.popsike.com)

The band The Sea-ders (later renamed The Ceaders) can probably be called the most successful Lebanese rock group of all time. Their success was, however, short and limited, and it brought the band some serious problems. This band's history shows how cultural streams and networks were transnational at the time, and how politics could destroy them in no time. In 1966, they released a single with the two tracks "Thanks a Lot" and "Undecidedly" on the Decca label in the U.K. Both songs sound Beatles-like: They use the typical rock band instruments (guitar, bass, and drum), they feature a happy sounding ear-worm-refrain, and they switch between a clear sounding solo male voice, and a small male choir. Their guitar playing sometimes resembles The Doors, and in some tracks they even played Oriental-sounding riffs on an electrified *saz*. In 1967, the band released an EP record with the same songs on the PAX label in Israel - just before the outbreak of the Six-Day-War. After the war, someone found out that PAX had released a Lebanese band, and, according to an Israeli record collector, this became the "most funny and tragic error in the history of records in Israel" (www.mistovev.haoneg.com). This record collector interviewed one "Ismaiel" from Jaffa, the responsible person at the PAX label. According to Ismaiel, it was all one big mistake: "I received the package from the UK and thought it contained a record by The Seeds, the well-known Garage and Psychedelic Rock group from Los Angeles." PAX released 100 copies of the EP, and they destroyed 80 copies after they had realised what had happened. Twenty copies were sold, and some collectors chase after them until this day.

Two years later the Cedars single "For Your Information" became a number one hit in Turkey. The song was so popular that the Turkish cult band Mavi Isiklar recorded a Turkish cover

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Satpir (lead vocals, guitar), Kareem Issaq (vocals), Mike Mohel (durbeki), and Bobby Gregg and Herb Lovelle (both drums).

version. The Turkish version again became a huge hit. [101] The Cedars single "Hide If You Want To Hide"[102] became another number one hit in Turkey.

The LP "Waking Up Scheherazade" (Grey Past Records), released in 2007, features other regional bands that played psychedelic rock, garage rock, surf and freak music in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The LP includes the Lebanese bands Simon C. Edwards & His Soul Set, The Kool Kats, Tony Franks & The Hippin' Souls, The News, Ray Psyah, and the Egyptian group Nai Bonnet. The News, an ensemble around Elias Rahbani, are featured with the experimental sounding track "From the Moon." They sing: "We are from the moon, we are looking for peace." Ray Psyah offers a track with fuzzy guitars, an organ and a flute. Simon C. Edwards & His Soul Set recorded their single "I Got You" in Lebanon in the late 1960s. The Kool Kats released their single on an unknown label named Liverpool. Tony Franks & The Hippin' Souls played a "super cool atmospheric garage beat tune with psychedelic touches in the chorus" as the writer in the liner notes of the LP writes.

The Egyptian, Omar Khorshid (1945 – 1981), became one of the most interesting artists of that time. He is often called the "greatest Guitarist of the Arab World," with his surf-style electric guitar playing oud-like melodies over belly dancing grooves. He created a very personal sound, full of staccato played tremolo, *surf* sounds, synthesizer sounds like *moog* sounds, and some reverb. Khorshid released many albums that lovers of psychedelic music all over the world still listen to nowadays. Khorshid further switched between psychedelic rock contexts, and the casino and cabaret scene of high society. The Lebanese composer, guitarist, and oud player Mahmoud Turkmani, who used to perform in the Casino Du Liban in the 1970s, remembers Khorshid well: "He used to play in Beirut very often," Turkmani told me:

> And he was my personal hero. I tried to play the guitar exactly the way he did. Often
> this was a very frustrating experience. The moment I managed to play his style all my
> guitarist friends became very nervous and started to ask me: 'How did you that?', or
> 'Can you teach us?' Omar Khorshid was a big idol at the time.

3.4   Sonic Traces from the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990)

> "Keeping company with death has taught us that death has no sound. If you hear the hiss of
> the rocket, you're alive; the rocket missed you and hit another … The rocket is faster than its
> sound. If you don't hear its hiss, know you're dead" (Darwish, 1995, pp. 131-132).

> Death is important because it has provided a mandate for the living [...] More than
> two years after he was torn apart by a bomb on his helicopter, Rashid Karami still
> speaks to the Sunnis of Lebanon; on the cassettes sold by the street vendors of Hamra
> Street, Karami still lectures his people on Lebanon's Arab identity, the importance of
> national unity and the struggle against Zionism. No matter that his classical Arabic is
> delivered in a preacher's monotone, that the tape costs a dollar, that he was regarded
> by his enemies as a creature of Syria. His words are now wisdom. (Fisk, 2001, p. 93)

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[101] One can find the song on the Mavi Isiklar 'best of' CD "Eski 45'Likler" (Ada Müzik, 2002).
[102] See CD V.A. Pebbles Vol. 12. The World.

"This is not a war, this is a way of living," says a man in the documentary film "Beirut - The Last Home Movie" by Jennifer Fox. His words reflect the insanity of the Lebanese Civil War that lasted from 1975 to 1990, with horrible killings and massacres, with stops and goes. For many people in Lebanon this war has never ended, as the political issues that had made it erupt have not been solved, and as the memories are still very deep and fresh. The man's words show that there was an ordinary life, next to the chaos. The war lasted so long that the Lebanese people started to pretend - or even believe - that they were used to it, or that they even enjoyed it. "Beirut - The Last Home Movie" gives us good first insights into the way a rich Christian family in East Beirut dealt with the everyday struggle of war. We see them and their employees cleaning the house and working in the garden, while we hear shooting and shelling. The family members insist that it is crucial for them to go on with their everyday life, and not to forget to work on details like cleaning the chandelier or cutting the trees. The women continue to depilate their legs and paint their fingernails whether there is shooting outside or not. Even to the loudest explosions, these women do not react. We do not know if Fox manipulated the sounds while editing her film, nevertheless, from the statements I heard from many other Lebanese, these scenarios seem real. "When you hear a shell or a bomb coming, it means that you are not going to be hurt," these people know and say: "It's only when you don't hear it, that it comes directly towards you" - therefore, your ears can relax, and not react to the sounds. But this is just theory: One man of the family portrayed in the documentary film is obsessed with listening to the radio, and constantly analyses the political situation. The others prefer to listen to classical music instead, and do not want to hear anything else. They pretend to live a normal life. Even though they are imprisoned by this war, they try to convince themselves that they are happy. If the bombing becomes really heavy and close, the family hides with some neighbours and friends in the shelter - sometimes for days. They play cards, they dance the dabke, they smoke and drink, and they watch animated cartoons on TV. There is an atmosphere of exerted happiness. This again is what today's musicians remember from their childhood: The nights in the shelter, where everyone tried very hard to give the children a great time and to ignore the noises from outside the house. Many of the musicians state that they liked these nights and days in the shelter a lot: They were close to their loved ones, they could wish for whatever they wanted and they would get it - it seems that their parents spoilt them in the shelter, in the hope that they could forget all the things that they were not able to do as other children could in times of peace. In the film, the men let out their frustration about the insanity of their lives in races with their sports cars. We see them driving through the night, up and down the mountain at great speed.

Just after the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah, some of the musicians who had grown up during the Lebanese Civil War told me about their somewhat perverted feelings concerning these latest bombings. Mazen Kerbaj was thinking of leaving the country, but then he felt that "I can't leave, because I liked it. Somewhere in my brain I felt happiness" (Kerbaj, 2006). He explains:

> I was somehow happy to experiment again, as an adult, with the things that I went
> through as a child. I am an adult now, and I have a kid myself. It sounds terrible: It
> was during these days of war that I loved Beirut the most during the 16 years since
> the end of the Civil War. I remembered the city I grew up in. A lot of people felt the
> same, but it is very difficult for them to admit it. (Kerbaj 2006)

Nostalgia of one's childhood seems not only a normal human behaviour in happy and good times, but in difficult ones as well.

In my work with the musicians and sound artists from the war generation, I found out that the sound memories from the Lebanese Civil War are still very fresh. And they influence their works in various ways, on several levels. To better understand the complex interactions between these memories and their music, the aim of this chapter is to approach the Lebanese Civil War mainly in an acoustic way. It is thought of as a preparation for the music analysis and the conclusions later in the book. We saw that the great majority of the artists this book deals with come from well-off and educated families. This chapter, therefore, also is mainly related to the memories, acoustic impressions, and experiences of these well-off and educated circles. However, all of them sooner or later also witnessed the violence of this war directly, but of course they were not affected like, for example, Palestinian families living in camps such as Tell al-Zaatar, or Sabra and Shatila, that suffered terrible massacres and intense and long direct fighting. But some of these musicians saw with their own eyes how family members or friends got killed.

To develop an overview of the war is very difficult. It was greatly chaotic, with local and foreign armies and warlords, militias, spies, smugglers and businessmen, most of them switching ideologies and loyalties many times, for a great set of possible reasons. This complexity, or this chaos of the war, was what deeply affected the musicians - and we can hear this sometimes in their sound today (see chapter 6). Again, there was the family who tried to translate the chaos into a sort of sense with which they tried to calm down their children. However, when the child grew up to be a teenager, the calming efforts of the parents became relative. We can read in many books, and see in various documentary films, how the youths were influenced by this war: They played war games with each other in the streets; the fighters were their heroes. And many of them became involved in political activities, or even the war itself, at a very young age. Through their parents, school, and university they were influenced politically in this or that way. The sounds that might have been terrifying noises at the beginning of their lives, were now still terrifying, but they also stood for a certain struggle, for an idea, for a vision of Lebanon. So, whenever we analyse their music today, there are various levels to keep in mind: There is the level of the noise as it is, and there are the noises with a clear meaning: The speeches of this and that politician, maybe playing with a certain Lebanese or Israeli dialect.

For this sonic history of the Lebanese Civil War, I focus on the musician's sonic memories, but also on novels and history books, whenever they deal with sound. To focus on the ear seems legitimate, as many narrations show - one example is Jean Said Makdisi:

> The ear, too, is constantly affronted not only with explosions, bullets, screaming jets, and sirens, but also with the sound of glass shattering (or, later, the so-familiar sound of glass being swept up), of the anarchic traffic negotiating ever narrower streets and smaller neighbourhoods. Now, the most recent irritant is the sound of an ever-increasing number of intensely noisy generators lining the street or perched high up on balconies, making a deafening roar. When and if it ever comes, peace will mean to us quiet as much as anything else. (Makdisi, 1990, p. 212)

and further:

> As I write, I can hear Grad missiles being fired a few hundred meters away, and I can see the smoke and dust generated by their takeoff. What a sound they make: first a crash, then a deep, grating sound, a rumble, and then a shrill scream. My windows rattle. In the distance, a few seconds later, I hear the thud of their arrival. (Makdisi, 1990, p. 216)

It seems important to draw some links between the sonic phenomena and the real political and social issues on the ground.

The aim of this chapter is not to provide yet another account of the Civil War, but to give an overview of the most important developments, and to present the basic setting in which we can see the significance of the different sonic phenomena. I draw heavily on the books of Theodor Hanf (1990), Kamal Dib (2004), Albert Hourani (1982), Michael Johnson (2001), Samir Khalaf (2002), Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007), Kamal Salibi (2003), Annika Kropf (2007), Zeina Maasri (2009) and others. Furthermore, I draw on biographical novels and notes by Jean Said Makdisi (1990), Hanan Al-Shaykh (1996), Yussef Bazzi (2005), Robert Fisk (2001), Alexandre Najjar (2006), and films by Mai Masri (1988, 1998, 2006), Jennifer Fox (1988) and others. Basically, the following actors took part in this war: Syria's main interest was that Lebanon was not being split into two states, so it always fought on the side of the momentarily weaker camp. Israel, at first, took revenge for Palestinian attacks conducted from Lebanese territory; at a later stage it came to help the allied Maronites against the PLO and the leftist and communist parties. Libya, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League, the United Nations, the USA and other States were involved in armament supply to the different militias. Palestinian refugees had lived in Lebanon since 1948, their number increased however after 1967, and after the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in 1970. The various groups who sided with the PLO had different sponsors (either Iraq or Syria) and different goals: Some just wanted to create protection for the Palestinians in Lebanon, some wanted to attack Israel, others wanted a revolution in Lebanon. The Palestinians sided with leftist and communist parties who were interested in radical changes of the status quo: There were multiconfessional parties like the SSNP (Syrian Socialist National Party), communist Parties, Ba'thist (pro-Syrian or pro-Iraqi) and some Nasserist groups, for example the *Murabitun* (guards), a militia with a Sunni identity, but with 40% of its members being Shiite. There was alienation between the Sunni political elite and the Sunni population (Kropf, 2007, pp. 75-77).

3.4.1   The Civil War in Four Phases

Theodor Hanf (1990) gives us a very good overview about all the happenings and developments of the Civil War. Kropf (2007) draws on Hanf's writings and splits the civil war into four phases. I shall do the same.

First Phase of the Civil War: 1976 – 1977

Most authors date April 13, 1975 as the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War. On that day, Pierre Gemayel, founder of the Kataeb (Phalange) Party, took part in the opening of a new church in the Maronite neighbourhood of Ain al-Roummane. A car drove by with people from the Democratic Front. They shot at the churchgoers and killed some of them. Only hours later, militias from the Kataeb took revenge. They killed 27 Palestinians who wanted to drive through the area in a bus (Hanf, 1990, p. 264). The conflict had simmered for a long time. Now it exploded. Fighting erupted between some of the Christian suburbs and some Palestinian and Shiite suburbs the same evening: Dekwane fought Tell al-Zaatar, Ain al-Roummane battled against Shiyah, Sinn al-Fil against Nabaa. Palestinian fighters took over the neighourhoods of Shiyah and Haret Hreik that had large Christian populations. They plundered shops and kicked the Christian inhabitants out (Hanf, 1990, p. 265).

Later, the Kataeb almost completely destroyed the old Bazaar in downtown Beirut (Hanf ,1990, p. 269).

Fights and counterfights erupted in villages like Zahlé, and between the Muslims of Tripoli and the Maronites of Zgharta. Syria worried that Christian factions planned to create an independent Christian state. Syria, however, did not want any side to win. For Hafiz al-Assad, the Syrian president, Lebanon was a part of Syria. He knew, however, that it would be a difficult task to reunite the two nations, so he wanted a stable but weakened Lebanon, with a stable regime he could control in order to profit from it economically (Kropf, 2007, p. 77). A division of Lebanon along confessional lines would also be dangerous for Syria for another reason: Syria itself was a nation full of contrasts and tensions, and some groups within Syria might want to copy the Lebanese model (Hanf, 1990, p. 270).

In September 1975, the Syrian foreign minister, Khaddam, travelled to Beirut. He created a National Dialogue Committee with moderate and militant Lebanese leaders from both Muslim and Christian factions. The main points of discussion were - as had been many times before - the Political System and National Identity of Lebanon. While the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Yafi, supported a constitution that defined Lebanon as an independent Arab state, the Kataeb and their allies opposed this idea. They wanted a secular state, and to them Arabism was too much linked to Islam. The Kataeb and the leftist parties were ready to abolish the proportional representation election system of confessional communities if Lebanon would become secular. For the Sunni politicians this was unthinkable, as for them total secularism was against Islam (Hanf ,1990, p. 271). The discussion brought no results, but new fighting. Palestinians attacked the Maronite village of Kahale with heavy artillery fire, and Christian militias murdered, in a counter-attack, two hundred unarmed Muslim civilians and workers in the Beirut harbour. Two days after this Black Saturday, the Murabitun attacked the Kataeb in the city centre. They took over the hotels Phénicia and St. Georges. In East and West Beirut hijackings and murders of civilians became a daily routine.

The Christian militias launched devastating and bloody attacks against the Palestinian camps of Jisr al-Basha, Tell al-Zaatar, and Dbaye in January 1976. On January 19 they attacked the slums of Maslakh and Qarantina, and massacred hundreds of civilians and chased the survivors to West Beirut. Palestinian franc-tireurs tried to launch counter-attacks against the Christian suburb of Hazmié. Since they were much weaker than their Christian opponents, Syria started to support the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA), and the Lebanese National Movement of the Druze leader Kamal Jumblat[103], first with weapons, then with officers and fighters. Jumblat managed to unite the PLO, and the Army of the Arabic Lebanon (ALA). Together, the various militias of the Lebanese National Movement attacked the Lebanese Front.[104] Fierce fighting erupted in Christian villages in the mountains, and the ALA bombarded East Beirut and the presidential palace. The Christians, who had been strong only a short time ago, panicked. In a dramatic radio speech, Gemayel called upon all Christian men and women to fight for their homeland (Hanf, 1990, p. 279).

The Syrian president, Assad, invited Jumblat to a meeting in Damascus - this meeting changed the Lebanese war dramatically. Syria switched sides. On July 20, 1976, Hafiz al-Assad gave

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[103] The Lebanese National Movement was a coalition of left-leaning Lebanese factions and parties, dominated by the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) headed by Kamal Jumblat (and after his death in 1977 by his son Walid).

[104] The Lebanese Front was a coalition of mainly Christian right wing parties that was supposed to act as a counterweight to Kamal Jumblat's Lebanese National Movement.

a long speech. He told people why he had decided to intervene in the Lebanese war. People were listening to the radio:

> One day the front of the parties in Lebanon and the front of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon collapsed. They were unable to stand on their own feet. They sent us cries for help, so we tried and exerted greater efforts. (..) They said then, if you do not make quick contact, the Phalangists will outflank western Beirut. The road is open before them ... At this point I said, 'Poor western sector.' (...) We gave arms and ammunition. ... and yet it was not enough to save the situation. Hence, we had no choice but to intervene directly. ...President Suleiman Faranjiyya contacted me. ... He told me that Syrian forces were entering Lebanon. ... I told him that our stand toward the Palestinians was consistent and that as far as the Palestinians were concerned, there was a red line that we would absolutely not allow anyone to go beyond. (Hanf, 1990, p. 274)

After Assad's speech, Syria and Suleiman Frangiyé tried to create a constitutional document in which they intended to elevate Muslim representation in the political system. For Kamal Jumblat and his Lebanese National Movement the document did not go far enough, so he rejected it. To Syria this was an insult that changed the situation on the ground. Assad, who had helped Jumblat and the Palestinians not to loose the war in January, now did not want them to win the war. Assad saw an opportunity to win over the Maronites for Syria: Between June 1976 and November 1977, Syria intervened in Lebanon on the Christian-Maronite side *against* Jumblat's Lebanese National Movement and the PLO. Syria also wanted to make sure that the Maronites under pressure would not ask Israel or Iraq for help, or move ahead with their idea of separation and the creation of a smaller, purely Christian state (*Petit-Liban*).

Syria's involvement in Lebanon was a big issue: The head of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, asked Libya for help. Egypt put Syria under pressure to stop the intervention. The Soviet prime minister, Kossygin, visited Damascus and tried to prevent confrontation between Syria and the PLO, both allies of the USSR (Hanf, 1990, p. 285). Syrian troops lost a big battle in Saida. They started to heavily bombard Palestinian camps in Saida, Tripoli, and West Beirut. The Arab world was upset: Iraq deployed troops at the Syrian border, the foreign ministers of the Arab League met in Cairo and demanded an immediate ceasefire. An Arab Freedom Troop with 2000 Sudanese, and later Libyan fighters, was sent to Lebanon (Hanf, 1990, p. 287).

The war wore on. The Christian side was celebrating many victories. Syria, however, had to face heavy losses, and decided to retreat slowly. On October 18th 1976, Syria, Egypt, and the PLO agreed on a ceasefire. The Palestinian-Syrian war was over.

The first phase of the Lebanese Civil War had brought huge confrontations between the two big blocks, the Lebanese National Movement and the (Maronite) Lebanese Front. The city centre was almost completely destroyed. The Green Line, separating East from West Beirut, was turning into a confessional border. Khalaf speaks of a "geography of fear" (Khalaf, 1993, p. 102ff). For the civilians, the brutal "passport killings,"[105] the kidnappings, and the sounds of war were still a bit surreal: Next to the war, daily life in the city went on. Al-Shaykh expresses in her novel what many citizens might have thought:

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[105] The term "passport killing" refers to common incidents at checkpoints, where civilians were ID-checked and then killed, depending on their religion or nationality, as stated in their identification documents - for instance, Sunni muslims might get killed at a checkpoint of a christian militia group, and vice versa.

This is something that irritates me about the war: nature fulfilling its function without missing a beat. The waves continued to crash on to the same rocks, the spray boiled up and subsided. Only the sky was not its usual colour because so many bullets had been sown in it and it still bore the acrid traces of the farewell rounds fired on your behalf. (Al-Shaykh, 1996, p. 65)

Second Phase of the Civil War: 1977 – 1985

"The other night in the shelter we listened to Mozart on the radio between news flashes" (Makdisi,1990, p. 219).

The war continued in Southern Lebanon, between Palestinians and some Shiite groups on the one side, and the Lebanese Christians on the other side, lead by the Greek-Catholic major Saad Haddad. Haddad was soon supported by Israel. Palestinians used their attacks on Israeli targets to make themselves heard worldwide (Hanf, 1990, pp. 293-295). The Egyptian president travelled to Israel to start a peace process between Israel and Egypt in November 1977. This had a big impact on developments in the region: Without Egypt, Syria lost the possibility of attacking Israel from all sides, as the two countries had tried in 1973. The PLO was afraid that, through this peace deal, the Palestinian question could be forgotten completely by the world powers. Syria and the PLO approached each other again. Syria wanted the PLO not to be too strong to risk a war between Syria and Israel, and not too weak so that Palestinian interests in Israel could be forgotten (Hanf, 1990, p. 297). After major attacks and counter-attacks between the PLO and Israel, Israel entered South Lebanon and advanced to the Litani river. A quarter of a million Lebanese and Palestinian civilians fled to the north. On March 17, 1977 Kamal Jumblat was killed - after having spoken out against the occupation of Lebanon by Syria many times, in, and outside of Lebanon. For many Lebanese, the assassination of Jumblat held a clear message: Syria wanted to reach its goals in the region, and it did not pay to turn against them (Kropf, 2007, p. 78).

East Beirut was full of pictures of Assad, Syrian flags, and propaganda. Under Syrian pressure, the Lebanese government started to censor some press articles. The Christian groups started to fear for the democratic liberties in Lebanon (Hanf, 1990, p. 300). Bashir Gemayel, Pierre Gemayel's son and commander of the Kataeb militias since the siege of the Palestinian camp Tell al-Zaatar, wanted to get rid of the Syrians. As Syria was now closer to the PLO again, the Lebanese Front needed another partner: Israel came into focus.

By summer 1977, East Beirut saw street battles between Christian militias and Syrian troops - the latter sat in the Rizk tower, a skyscraper in Ashrafiyeh, from where they bombarded the Christian suburbs. Both Syrians and Christian militias suffered heavy losses. The Syrians were no longer a (albeit selfish) peace-keeping force, but a conflict party on their own. They wanted to stay in Beirut and to help the PLO fight Israel. On the other side, the Lebanese Front wanted to throw out the Syrians and the Palestinians - if need be, with the help of Israel (Hanf, 1990, p. 303).

The Christian groups, however, were split about the idea of cooperation with Israel. The former president and head of the *Marada Brigades* militia, Suleiman Frangié, was against such a partnership. The Frangié family had long been friends with the Assad family, and Suleiman Frangié thought the Christian interests were best protected under Syrian leadership. Frangié saw himself as a Maronite, but also as an Arab, and Lebanon, for him, was a part of the Arab world. Pierre Gemayel

thought this would be a pact with the devil. He saw the creation of Israel and the forced emigration of the Palestinians as the main misfortune of Lebanon.

His son Bashir Gemayel, and Camille Shamoun Gemayel felt differently about cooperation with Israel, and so did others (Hanf, 1990, p. 301). The Kataeb commander Bashir Gemayel was very popular and successful in Christian middle and lower classes, and more and more also in the region. In June 1978, Kataeb militias bombed Frangié's house in his home region of Zgharta and killed his eldest son Tony. Frangié declared a vendetta against the Gemayel family (Hanf, 1990, p. 306).

Battles raged in the North and in Beirut: Ain al-Rummane, East Beirut and the eastern suburbs were bombarded by Syrian artillery for one week in July 1978, and for another week in August; 10,000 civilians fled to the mountains. On September 23, 1978 alone, Syria shelled East Beirut with around 2,000 rockets and artillery bombs. Everything was targeted: residential areas, schools, hospitals, and factories. After that, other Christian areas came under Syrian attack: The villages and cities of Bikfaya, Beit Mery, Broumana, and Jounieh (Hanf, 1990, pp. 309-310). There was, however, no way for Syria to win this war and to destroy or to comply with the Christian militias (Hanf, 1990, p. 310). In autumn 1978, a resolution by the UN Security Council ended the fighting for a while (Hanf, 1990, p. 310).

By now, there were no longer two big camps confronting each other - there were many small wars fought all over the country. One was in the centre of Beirut at the Green Line. The PLO, units of the Palestinian Liberation Army, Murabitoun and the PSP were based in West Beirut. Syria took the Murr-Tower in West Beirut; this huge building opposed the Rizk Tower in East Beirut. On the east side of the Green Line were the Christian militias, and from 1979 onward also some units of the regular Lebanese army. Between the two sides were just a few crossing points. Sometimes they were open, sometimes closed. At times it was murderous to try to cross because of the marksmen that controlled the crossings. Downtown was in the hands of the militias: They often shot at each other with machine guns, tanks and artillery - sometimes for the whole night. At times the battle was somehow logical and linked to the political developments. Often, however, it was just chaos and impossible to analyse. Many men had their gangs now, and they also fought each other for prestige.

The situation was now somehow stable, in the sense that no party was near a victory. More and more Syria started to reduce its war budget in Lebanon and left West Beirut in 1980. This led to new rivalries between the groups in the West; they started to fight about the control of certain areas and streets. Some of this fighting was strictly personal, and other fighting was between this and that militia. Only the military police of the PLO sometimes managed to prevent West Beirut from sinking into complete chaos and anarchy. However, new political conflicts erupted amid this chaos; one of them between the Lebanese Shiites and the Palestinians, and the other was a renewed conflict between the Christian Lebanese Front and Syria. The two conflicts were independent from each other, but they emerged at the same time (Hanf, 1990, p. 314).

The Lebanese Shiites had suffered a lot under the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Initially, many Shiites had felt close to the ideas of the left and fought side by side with them against the Christian militias. The Shiite cleric Imam Moussa Sadr and his Amal movement, however, had been reluctant to take sides and stayed more or less neutral. When Syria intervened against the Palestinians, Sadr had sided with Syria, which made him many enemies. The Shiites and the Palestinians lived in the same areas in southern Beirut, and more and more Palestinians fled from East Beirut and South Lebanon to these areas. The Shiites started to see the Palestinians as occupiers. In South Lebanon, the situation was similar (Hanf, 1990, p. 315).

In September 1978, Imam Moussa Sadr went missing in Libya, without leaving any trace behind. The following year, Shiite revolutionaries in Iran overthrew Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime and declared Iran to be an Islamic Republic. With the new Shiite regime in Iran, the Shiites in Lebanon had a foreign protector and ally for the first time in history.

In early 1980, the Amal movement under Nabih Berri started to articulate Shiite interests. They were afraid that the conflict in Southern Lebanon would lead to the dislocation of the Shiites there, and to a Palestinian De-Facto State. They wanted to oust the Palestinian franc-tireurs from all residential areas, and they wanted the Lebanese Army to deploy in West Beirut for protection. But because the army was not allowed into West Beirut - and was eyed with suspicion in East Beirut - they sent weapons to Amal. At the beginning of 1980, a proxy war between Iran and Iraq[106] was fought on the streets of the Beirut suburbs between Amal and the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front. The Palestinian Fatah tried to mediate between the two, but the fighting continued in the South and lasted until mid-1982 (Hanf, 1990, p. 317).

In East Beirut, the situation became increasingly complex as well. Different militias now regulated their income through customs and taxes: the Kataeb, the Tigers of the National Liberal Party, the Guardians of the Cedars, and the Tanzim. Since fighting across the Green Line had fizzled out, the Christian militias within East Beirut started fighting each other. Bashir Gemayel, however, wanted to unite all Christian militias under the umbrella of the Lebanese Forces,[107] if necessary, by force. On 7 July 1980, his men attacked the offices and military barracks of the Tiger Militia and killed around one hundred fighters.

The Lebanese Forces (LF) and Syrian troops fought each other in Zahle in the Beqaa in 1980. Syria wanted to prevent the construction of a new road that could possibly be used by Israel, if the LF chose to cooperate. The Lebanese Forces lost the battle for Zahle. On 28 of April, Israeli Jets shot down two Syrian helicopters. Two days later Syria stationed air-to-ground missiles in the Bekaa - and the conflict between the Lebanese Forces and Syria had an international dimension: the USA and the Soviet Union were involved. The US government sent special envoy Philipp Habib to mediate a peaceful solution in the so called "rocket crisis." An international conference in the village of Beiteddine, attended by the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Kuwait, the General Secretary of the Arab League, and Bashir Gemayel led to a ceasefire in Zahle (Hanf, 1990, pp. 322-324).

In the South, the war wore on. Israel was more and more concerned about the increased and better weapons of the PLO. In April 1981, Israel flew air attacks against Palestinian artillery and rocket bases in Southern Lebanon. The war erupted, and Israeli civilians in Northern Israel had to flee their homes or stay in shelters. In July, Israeli warplanes attacked offices of Palestinian organisations in the densely populated Beirut neighbourhood of Fakhani. The raid lasted only a few minutes, but there were hundreds of dead and over a thousand wounded - most of them civilians. In Southern

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[106] The actual war between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Khomeini's Iran began in September 1980 and ended, without any of the sides emerging as clear winners, in 1988.

[107] Gemayel had founded the Lebanese Forces (LF), the military wing of the Lebanese Front, in 1978 (or 1977?). His Kataeb militia soon became the dominant force within the LF. The *Lebanese Forces* saw Lebanon as a federation of communities with no group having privileges. Freedom, security and the possibility for self-definition should be guaranteed also for the Christian groups. The Palestinians should not be allowed to stay in Lebanon forever and to settle down. Syria should leave the country. These ideas were formulated in a manifesto in December 1980 (Hanf, 1990, p. 321). Together with former President Camille Shamoun, Bashir Gemayel risked calculated provocations against Syria. At the same time, they tried to win over Israel for a stronger engagement in Lebanon (Hanf, 1990, p. 320).

Lebanon, fighting lasted two weeks until a ceasefire between Israel and the PLO was agreed upon. For the PLO, this was a success: they had managed to paralyze life in Northern Israel (Hanf, 1990, p. 326). By the end of 1981, all the different warring factions fought each other in small-scale wars all over the country - they mostly fought over power and for economical reasons. In the first months of the following year, Sunni groups fought Syrian troops in West Beirut; Palestinians fought Syrians, and the Syrians fought back against all of them. More and more fighting broke out between the Lebanese factions, and more and more Lebanese groups started to revolt against Syrian and Palestinian control (Hanf, 1990, p. 330).

In Israel, a feeling of insecurity prevailed. After the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981, Israel felt uncertain about its Peace Treaty with the Egyptians, while the Palestinians in Lebanon grew stronger. The Likud government under Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defence Minister Ariel Sharon debated whether an armed campaign into Lebanon in support of Bashir Gemayel would calm the situation on Israel's Northern border. As Theodor Hanf writes, there were many misunderstandings, and the goals of an Israeli invasion for the various factions were not very clear. This indecision would lead to disaster - for both Israel and Lebanon (see Hanf, 1990, pp. 332-334).

On the 6th of June 1982, the Israeli Army attacked Southern Lebanon. The troops advanced quickly towards Beirut, and on their way up North, they fought Syrian troops and destroyed the rocket-bases in the Bekaa (Hanf, 1990, pp. 334-335). On the 13th of June, they reached the Beirut-Damascus road - West Beirut was now surrounded from all sides by Israel and the Lebanese Forces. After long internal debates and disagreements, Defence Minister Sharon went ahead and started to bomb West Beirut and put it under siege (Hanf, 1990, p. 337). The bombardments were much heavier than the Syrian bombardments against Zahle in 1978 and against East Beirut in 1982. Israel not only used its artillery, but also war ships, and the air force.

The death toll was massive - and the victims, most often, were not Palestinian fighters, but Lebanese and Palestinian civilians living in West Beirut. Robert Fisk recalls:

> The most horrific toll of casualties was in west Beirut. Here, no fewer than 2461 had been killed by Israeli air strikes, by artillery fire from the land and by Israeli naval vessels. Most of them died in Sabra and Chatila – where two of the Palestinian camps were located – the Arab University area around Fakhani, the district near the UNESCO offices, Bir Hassan, Bir al-Abed, Abu Shaker, Basta (the last four districts all containing substantial Shia populations), Tarik Jedeide and Mseitbeh. In these areas, 3574 people were also wounded. (Fisk, 2001, p. 256)

The Palestinian forces in West Beirut were sure that they could hold out under siege for a while. And they knew that if it came to street battles, they would stand their chances. The suffering of the civilians was politically not too bad for the Palestinians, as normally, the attackers are made responsible for the suffering. The Palestinians stated that they would turn West Beirut into a Second Stalingrad (Hanf, 1990, p. 339). But while it is evident that the Israelis used massive force against civilians, the Palestinian side is by no means blameless, and used Beirut residents as human shields:

> Several residents told us that the Palestinians had brought death to both themselves and the civilians around them. We at least found the wife of a Lebanese journalist, a middle-class Sunni woman. 'When the Israelis came,' she told us, 'the Palestinian fighters took their guns and placed them next to our homes, next to apartment blocks

> and hospitals and schools. They thought this would protect them. We pleaded with
> them to take their guns away but they refused - So when they fired at the Israelis, the
> planes came and bombed our homes. (Fisk, 2001, p. 250)

However, Israel increased the pressure on West Beirut: Water supplies and electricity were cut off. At the end of July, the PLO was forced to give up, and agreed to an evacuation from the city - the Palestinians understood that the civilians could not endure the Israeli siege any longer. Also, they were afraid that Sharon would intensify the attack (Hanf, 1990, p. 339).

The United States made sure that the PLO would have a more or less honourable departure from Beirut. They sent a multilateral peace-keeping force with Americans, French and Italians, and Israel promised not to occupy the city. On August 21, 1982, 15,000 PLO fighters and Palestinian civilians left by Sea, and another 6,500 Syrian and PLA (Palestine Liberation Army) soldiers left by land. On September 1st, the last Palestinian guerrilla fighter had left West Beirut (Hanf, 1990, p. 340).

Now that the Palestinian fighters had left, many parties and militias also wanted the other foreign troops - Israeli and Syrian - to leave the country. Bashir Gemayel - national hero to some, extremist and treacherous warlord to others - had been elected President on August 23. The Sunnis declared themselves ready to work together with the new President, as he had stated that he wanted to be a President for all the Lebanese. On September 14th, however, two weeks before Gemayel was to assume office, a bomb exploded in the Kataeb headquarters in Ashrafiyeh. Twenty-six people were killed; one of them was Gemayel himself.

Only days later, on the 17th, and 18th of September, militias of the Lebanese Forces committed the Civil War's most horrifying massacre in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila. They killed hundreds of unarmed men, women, and children; most of them Palestinians and some Lebanese Shiites (Hanf, 1990, p. 345). Israelis stood guard outside the camps; some reports say they watched the slaughter. Robert Fisk describes scenes of horror that he saw shortly afterwards:

> There were women lying in houses with their skirts torn up to their waists and their
> legs wide apart, children with their throats cut, rows of young men shot in the back
> after being lined up at an execution wall. There were babies – blackened babies
> because they had been slaughtered more than 24 hours earlier and their small bodies
> were already in a state of decomposition – tossed into rubbish heaps alongside
> discarded US army ration tins, Israeli army medical equipment and empty bottles of
> whisky. (Fisk, 2001, pp. 360-361)

Two days after the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, Bashir's brother, Amin Gemayel, was elected president in his brother's stead. Later that month, the Israelis left West Beirut and withdrew to areas south of the capital. The new President counted on the American, French and Italian peace-keeping troops that returned to Beirut, and he reopened the Green Line. There was a sense of relief and and athmosphere for reconstruction and departure. The streets were cleared of rubble. On November 22 1982, the Lebanese Army paraded in East and West Beirut (Hanf, 1990, p. 346).

However, the war was far from over. In 1983, fierce fighting broke out between Druze factions and the Lebanese Forces in the Shouf mountains, South and South East of Beirut. In the mountains, both the Druze and the Lebanese forces committed terrible massacres. Sixty villages were destroyed, thousands were murdered, and tens of thousands had to flee (Hanf, 1990, p. 366).

In a peace treaty on May 17th, the Israelis and the Lebanese government agreed on an Israeli withdrawal - under the condition that Syria would retreat from Lebanon as well. Because the Syrians had no intention to do so, the treaty was practically useless (Hanf, 1990, p. 351ff; Fisk, 2001, p. 484).

> When the Lebanese government ratified the treaty on 15 June, Syrian radio
> announced that the parliament members had 'sold their country to the devil,' Robert
> Fisk writes: Druze and Shia militias were urged by Syria to 'turn their guns' not only
> against the Israeli army but against the Lebanese government as well. (Fisk, 2001, p.
> 483)

Amin Gemayel had failed in his efforts to reach a political agreement. Syria, supplied with arms by the Soviet Union, was strengthened; Israel withdrew some of its troops.

In April 1983, a suicide bombing at the US embassy killed 63 people, among them leading Near Eastern specialists of the CIA, and wounded another hundred (Hanf, 1990, p. 353). "The bomb was so powerful," Robert Fisk remembers,

> …that half the Embassy simply collapsed in dust and flames, crushing to death
> everyone inside. A passing Lebanese military vehicle was blasted off the Corniche
> into the sea while the corpses of Embassy staff were tossed 50 feet through the air
> onto a carpet of rubble and glass outside. (Fisk, 2001, p. 479)[109]

A pro-Iranian group calling itself the Islamic Jihad Organisation claimed responsibility for the suicide attack - they professed to align themselves to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and that they had joined in its fight against Western imperialism. A new important protagonist had entered the Lebanese stage: The leader of the Iranian Revolution, Imam Ayatollah Khomeini. A faction split from Nabih Berri's Shiite Amal force, created the Islamic Amal, and cooperated with Iranian fundamentalists. In the Bekaa, an Islamic Republic Baalbek-Hermel was proclaimed, alcohol was forbidden, and women were forced to wear the *chador*, the mostly black coat worn over a head-scarf covering the whole body.[110] On National Day, Lebanese flags were burned and the green flag of the Islamists was hissed. The Islamists were trained in training camps in Northern Bekaa by Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Hanf, 1990, p. 360). In Southern Lebanon, Hizbullah - The Party of God - was founded as a radical counterpart of Amal.

The year 1984 saw an intensification of the fighting, especially in the capital. In February, Amal and Druze militias attacked West Beirut - the 6th Brigade of the Lebanese Army that had Shiite soldiers, deserted and joined Amal forces. Most of the Christian soldiers fled from West to East Beirut. The Lebanese Army had broken apart into rival Christian and Muslim factions, and the city was, yet again, split into two parts, divided again by the Green Line (Hanf, 1990, p. 371). President Amin Gemayel increasingly came under pressure; Fisk writes:

> I saw Lebanese soldiers abandon three tanks and walk into the southern suburbs.
> They were deserting. With half his capital under shellfire, Gemayel now accepted the
> resignation of his cabinet in the hope that a national coalition government could be
> formed to prevent the civil war consuming all Beirut. (Fisk, 2001, p. 532)

In March, the Lebanese government declared the Israeli-Lebanese treaty as void (Hanf, 1990, p. 375). At a National Reconciliation Conference held in Lausanne, Switzerland, Marada leader Suleiman Frangié prevented any changes to the political system of Lebanon. Rashid Karame became Prime

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[109] On 23 October, the US-Marines barracks at Beirut International Airport were hit in a similar suicide mission - 241 US-servicemen were killed, 81 wounded. Only minutes later, a French military base was attacked, 58 persons lost their lives. In spring 1984, the US, British, French and Italians left Lebanon. On 20 September 1984, the US-Embassy that had relocated to East Beirut after the attack the previous year, was targeted again by a suicide bomber; two Americans died.
[110] *Chador* literally means "tent" in Persian.

Minister[111], Camille Shamoun, Amin Gemayel, Walid Jumblat and Nabih Berri became members of the cabinet. Again, a war ended without a winner and a defeated. The dependency towards Syria was bigger than ever before (Hanf, 1990, p. 376).

Third Phase of the Civil War: 1985-1988

After the Lausanne conference, the Lebanese Army tried to gain control, especially in West Beirut; the public endorsed this, because the competing militias made life very difficult for the civilians. Islamists tried to enforce the most unpopular measures such as a ban on alcohol, and wanted women to cover their hair and wear a veil. The shops of Christians living in West Beirut were plundered. General Michel Aoun became commander in chief of the Lebanese Army. There was a security plan for Beirut: The airport was reopened, and so was the Green Line.

However, the militias still existed, and none of them were happy about the status quo. This led to a series of small wars - basically, everyone fought against everyone else. In the Christian camp, there were huge tensions: Amin Gemayel was on Syria's side, while the Lebanese Forces still favoured an Israeli-Lebanese peace deal. Israel withdrew to the Southern parts of Lebanon into a so-called security zone that became the scene of an ongoing small-scale war (Hanf, 1992, pp. 379-382). Islamic fundamentalists in the Southern city of Saida demonstrated for an Islamic Republic of Lebanon. Fundamentalist Muslims kidnapped Christians, and Christians kidnapped Muslims.

Disputes inside the Lebanese Forces led to a split: Samir Geagea founded his own group, Intifada, and took control over some casernes of the Lebanese Forces, and later their headquarters in Ashrafieh. Geagea saw himself as the successor of Bashir Gemayel, who had became a cult figure, his face painted on every wall in Christian areas. Geagea and his troops bombarded Said; many civilians were killed and more than 20,000 Sunnis had to flee the city. They took revenge on numerous Christian villages around Saida, and massacred civilians (Hanf, 1992, pp. 385-387).

Meanwhile, the PLO found its way back to the Palestinian camps in Beirut. Nabih Berri and his Amal movement were afraid that the situation would revert back to what it was like in 1982, when the PLO was a state within the state. In order to prevent this, Amal militias attacked the camps of Sabra, Shatila, and Bourj al-Barajne, helped by the 6th Brigade of the Lebanese Army. Almost unnoticed by the rest of the world, Sabra again saw horrible massacres against civilians. Inside the camps, different Palestinian groups fought each other as well. Amal fighters besieged the camp of Bourj al-Barajne for a long time; in mid-June of 1985, the Arab League demanded an end to the siege. The war in the camps, however, did not end until 1988.

Fierce fights between the Shiite Amal and the Druze-dominated Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) began over the control of West Beirut. Walid Jumblat's PSP was supported by all the forces who were afraid of Shiite dominance; Palestinians and Libyans financially supported all groups that operated against the Shiites (Hanf, 1990, p. 391). Prime Minister Karame asked Syria to mediate between the two camps. Battles raged in Zahle and in Tripoli as well. In Tripoli, Sunni extremists tried to establish an Islamic Republic; many communists and other leftists were killed (Hanf, 1990, pp. 391-392).

It seemed that now, the time had come for Syria to negotiate an agreement around the Lebanese conflict in their favour. Palestinians, Druzes and Shiites had been weakened by the war and

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[111] Karame served as Prime Minister until 1987 when he was succeeded by Salim al-Hoss.

by infighting; the Christian militias had lost the war in the South under Samir Geagea. No party seemed to have any chance of winning the war. The Lebanese government was weak as well: President, government and army had not been able to keep the peace. The prime minister had asked Syria for help more than once. Syria took control over Zahle and Tripoli (Hanf, 1990, pp. 392-393).

In September 1985, talks were held in Syria over a peace deal for Lebanon; the leaders of the main warring factions were present: Walid Jumblat of the PSP, Nabih Berri of Amal, and Elie Hobeika, who had succeeded Samir Geagea as head of the Lebanese Forces. Berri advocated either the abolishment of proportional representation (that discriminated against the Shiites) or the holding of a new national population census. After lengthy discussions, the leaders agreed on a framework for a new constitution that would, after a long transition period, abolish the proportional system (Hanf, 1990, p. 394).

As far as Syria's role in Lebanon was concerned, the agreement envisaged a so-called strategic complementarity between the two countries (Hanf, 1990, p. 396). The future role of Syria, however, was largely disputed, especially among Christian circles that started to fight each other again. Hobeika had to give of leadership of the Lebanese Forces; Samir Geagea took over again. With the power shift in the Lebanese Forces the agreement between Lebanon and Syria had practically collapsed. Amal was the only party that fully supported the agreement with Syria (Hanf, 1990, p. 400).

Amal did not only fight the Palestinians and the coalition surrounding Jumblat's PSP, but also fellow Shiites in the newly emerged Hizbullah. The two Shiite movements had opposite policies towards Israel: Hizbullah wanted to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine and carried out suicide attacks against Israeli targets in South Lebanon; Amal sought a peaceful existence for Shiites in Lebanon. Hizbullah wanted to establish an Iran-style Islamic Republic in Lebanon; Amal opted for a majoritarian democracy where Shiites would take the lead, but opposed an Islamic State (Hanf, 1990, p. 406).

In September 1987, the first fights between Amal and Hizbullah erupted in Southern Lebanon. In April 1988, however, a full-fledged, brutal inner-Shiite civil war broke out. In the southern suburbs of Beirut, the two camps fought over control. Amal sometimes gave up its positions after being paid off by Iran; gradually, Hizbullah gained control over four-fifths of the Shiite suburbs. Syria, Amal's ally, saw only one way out: to take over control in Southern Beirut. The Syrians asked Hizbullah and Amal to withdraw to their caserns and promised not to attack anyone. Without any fighting, Syria took control over the suburbs in May 1988. Amal, however, was not satisfied with its position in South Beirut; and Hizbullah was not happy with its position in the South of the country - fighting resumed in December and continued until spring, when Iran and Syria put both parties under pressure to stop the infighting. Neither side emerged as the winner (Hanf, 1990, p. 408).

Fourth Phase of the Civil War: 1988-1990

When President Amin Gemayel's term ended in 1988, it was impossible to find a successor to the Presidency who was accepted by all Lebanese factions, Syria, and the United States. Gemayel thus decided to appoint the Maronite Army-General Michel Aoun as Prime Minister under a new government - a decision that complicated matters considerably: First of all, there still was an acting Prime Minster: Salim al-Hoss. And secondly, according to the National Pact of 1943, the office of Prime Minister was reserved for a Sunni politician. Needless to say, the new Aoun government and

the old Hoss government competed with each other; both saw themselves as legitimate. With the help of the Army, Aoun tried to disarm the different militias and made many enemies within Muslim armed groups, the Lebanese Forces, and Syria. Iraq, Syria's arch enemy, supplied Aoun with weapons, as did his Christian and Muslim supporters. Aoun had quite a big following since he was against the traditional political class, the militias, and Syrian influence in Lebanon. That is why he was perceived as being dangerous by the other political actors. In what he called the *War of Liberation*, Aoun fought against Syria and the Amal, PSP and Marada militias that were supported by Syria at that time.

In 1989, the Arab League appointed a committee under Kuwaiti chairmanship that started working on a negotiated solution to the conflict in the Saudi Arabian city of Ta'if. In October, surviving members of the Lebanese parliament (elected in 1972, before the Civil War broke out) agreed on a National Reconciliation Accord that was ratified on 4 November 1989. In August 1990, the Lebanese Parliament passed constitutional changes based on stipulations in the Ta'if Accord; the President's [112] signature on the 21st of September put them into effect. The amendments to the constitution did not radically alter the political system in Lebanon, but restructured the National Pact by tilting the power balance slightly away from Christian Maronites and handing a bit more power to the Muslims. For instance, the Sunni Prime Minister had been responsible to the Maronite President before Ta'if; after the accord, he would be responsible to the parliament - thus, the position of the President was slightly weakened in favour of the Prime Minister (Perthes, 1994, p. 19). The preamble of the constitution states, as a long-term national goal, that political confessionalism and proportional representation based on confession should be abolished.

Furthermore, the Ta'if Accord envisaged the disarmament of all militias, Lebanese and others. Since Hizbullah was viewed as leading legitimate resistance against Israel,[113] it was allowed to keep its arms. Syrian armed forces were to assist Lebanese authorities in their attempt to resume control over the country - relations between the two countries were described as being *special* (Perthes, 1994, p. 22). In 1991, the Syrian and Lebanese presidents signed a treaty on *brotherhood, cooperation* and *coordination* that stressed the historical relationship and the common interests between the two countries; close cooperation with regard to security issues, foreign policy, and trade were laid down. Each country promised not to tolerate any activities on its territory that would endanger the security of the other.

The negotiations in Ta'if, and the ensuing political processes lead to the end of the Civil War. However, many Lebanese today say that the War has never really ended. Politics is still very much dominated by confessionalism, and the former warlords and their clans are still the ones dominating the political scene. Samir Khalaf took a rather pessimistic view in his assessment of Ta'if in 2002: "Ta'if's record for nearly a decade now does not provide an encouraging outlook regarding its future prospects as either a peace-making venture or as a covenant for achieving a more balanced and harmonious intercommunal coexistence" (Khalaf, 2002, p. 299).

His pessimism was to prove right: In 2004, the UN Security Council issued resolution 1559, demanding all foreign troops leave Lebanon; Syria, who had kept a strong military presence, dismissed the resolution. On 14 February 2005, former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri - a critic of the

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[112] At that time, Elias Hrawi was President; he followed René Muawad who was killed in November 1989 after only 17 days in office.

[113] Israel retained a strong armed presence in South Lebanon until its withdrawal in the year 2000 - to this day, it still occupies the disputed Shebaa Farms.

Syrians - was killed in a huge bomb blast in Beirut. The country was split into two major camps; people took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands. On March 14, one month after the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, the anti-Syrian camp held a massive rally in downtown Beirut, demanding a total Syrian withdrawal - accordingly, this camp has been called the *14 March Alliance* ever since. It unites most Sunni-Muslim and Christian parties. The popular mass movement was soon called the *Cedar Revolution*, and under the increasing pressure, Syria withdrew its troops in April. On the other hand, pro-Syrian forces also organized mass rallies in support of their neighbour and protector: their first mass demonstration in downtown Beirut took place on 8 March, so the camp comprising Hizbullah, Amal, and some Christian parties is referred to as the *8 March Alliance*.

However, political assassinations continued after the Syrian withdrawal, throughout the year 2005. In 2006, politicians of all factions gathered in the so-called national dialogue to address critical issues such as the investigation on the Hariri assassination and international (as well as national) calls for the disarmament of Hizbullah. The dialogue bore no results.

In July 2006, Hizbullah captured two Israeli soldiers in Southern Lebanon. Israel responded by launching wide-scale air and sea attacks against targets all over the country. In a war that was to last five weeks, great damage was done to civilian infrastructure in Lebanon; more than one thousand Lebanese, most of them civilians, lost their lives. Hizbullah, for its part, launched rocket attacks against Israeli targets. Israel counted 159 dead; most of them soldiers.

Politics in Lebanon remain volatile to this day. In May 2008, Hizbullah fighters clashed with armed pro-government militias, 80 people were killed. News footage conjured images reminiscent of the Civil War. Later that month, parliament elected former army chief Michel Suleiman President, and in July, the formation of a government of national unity ended yet another political deadlock.

3.4.2   *The Noise of War: Rifles, Bombs and War Planes*

"The 24th of June was as bad as we feared it would be," writes the British news correspondent Robert Fisk in 1982: "As we breakfasted, the sound of jets came sweeping down the morning skies towards the Palestinian camps and the window panes shook with the explosions that followed" (Fisk, 2001, p. 261). Robert Fisk is one among many writers in various fields that often refer to noise and sound when trying to describe the horrors of the Civil War. "The planes came back," he writes again and again: "before dawn, they dropped aerial percussion bombs above west Beirut. It sounded as if the whole city was collapsing" (Fisk, 2001). Mahmoud Darwish describes a similar air raid as a nightmare: "A nightmare coming from the sea," he writes,

> …if I only knew how to organize the crush of this death that keeps pouring forth. If
> only I knew how to liberate a scream held back in a body that no longer feels like
> mine from the sheer effort spent to save itself in this uninterrupted chaos of shells.
> 'Enough!' ' Enough!' I whisper, to find out if I can still do anything that will guide
> me to myself and point the abyss opening in six directions. I can't surrender to this
> fate, and I can't resist it. Steel that howls, only to have other steel bark back. The
> fever of metal is the song of this dawn. (Darwish, 1995, p. 4)

While Fisk uses the description of sound to inform his foreign readers about the war, Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet, describes his innermost feelings, his fear of losing his second homeland and burying his visions and dreams. Fisk became increasingly cynical from the overload of warfare: After the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was killed in a huge car bomb in 2004, Fisk described

the huge explosion he heard, then headed to the scene to write about Hariri's socks that were burning. Mahmoud Darwish, on the other hand, became a very welcomed guest on international stages. Becoming cynical and well-known: we are also going to find these two effects in today's generation of artists.

During the 1970s and 80s, Israel tried to destroy, or at least limit the operation basis of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. This explains why Darwish suffers, while Fisk seems to hear the bombs more as a bystander. "Without warning (…) dozens of Israeli fighter-bombers appeared over west Beirut just after dawn and raced at low level over the city," Fisk writes on 12 August 1982:

> One jet turned above the roofs and banked over the office and I saw the pilot's head move in the cockpit as if he was searching for a target. He knew what he was aiming for: the camps. For nine hours, the Israelis bombed them, unloading hundreds of tons of high explosives onto Sabra and Chatila. The bombs fell together, three or four jets dropping them at the same time with a sound like sheets being torn in half. There was no resistance, no anti-aircraft fire, no missiles, which is why the Israelis could fly so low. (Fisk, 2001, p. 322)

Sometimes, Fisk and other writers try to explain battles through hearing only. Whether this is possible or not is a question discussed by some of the Lebanese sound artists of the war generation. I will discuss these arguments later.

At this point, it seems important to highlight the importance of the geographical, ideological, and social position of the listener - and writer. Let me introduce four simplified positions. Position one: The listener is a fighter, he hears and sees his comrades dying, pure fear mixes with adrenaline and hatred, and with the urge to take revenge. Fisk overheard a fighter from the Christian Lebanese Forces screaming out of rage:

> They killed five soldiers here. (…) One had his arm cut off. One had his legs cut off. (…) I found one like this, on one knee, and I wondered what was wrong but his head had come off. The Druze did it. (…) The Druze. The Druze. (…) We are fighting against all the people, against all the world. We are fighting against Khomeini, Sri Lanka, Filipinos, Iran (…) We are not impressed by America. They are strong in their bombs but they need two million years to become like a 15-year-old boy in Lebanon. We are used to this battle and to killing. (Fisk 1990: 531/532)

Position two: The listener is a civilian living, for example, in the Palestinian camp that was bombarded for nine hours. He is thus a direct target. He might not hear anything of the bombings, because he is killed immediately: "Keeping company with death has taught us that death has no sound. If you hear the hiss of the rocket, you're alive; the rocket missed you and hit another (…) The rocket is faster than its sound. If you don't hear its hiss, know you're dead" (Darwish, 1995, pp. 131-132). If the Palestinian in the camp survives, he most probably does not have the means to talk about his experiences to people. So either we will never hear from him, or a writer, filmmaker, or journalist picks up his "story" and translates it for us. Position three: The listener lives outside the targeted area. If the target is not too clear, he might still fear for his life, but can at least hide in a shelter, leave for his second house in the Lebanese mountains, or even emigrate. Position four: He lives outside the targeted area, and the target is clear. He might be afraid or annoyed by the loud noises that he is forced to listen to, but he does not fear for his life. He might listen to the departures and the explosions of the bombs, and he might be extremely worried or jubilant - depending on his human and ideological make up. He might become fascinated by these big sounds that are, for him, out of the

ordinary. But to understand the war through the sounds alone is impossible. "As I write, I can hear Grad missiles being fired a few hundred meters away (…) What a sound they make: first a crash, then a deep, grating sound, a rumble, and then a shrill scream. My windows rattle. In the distance, a few seconds later, I hear the thud of their arrival" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 216). She does not know who was killed while she was writing. In many cases she would also not be sure who would have fired the missile.

Various historians (Hanf, Kamal Dib, Hourani, Johnson, Khalaf, Traboulsi, Salibi, and Kropf, among others) show that many forces were involved in that conflict. Syria, for example, bombarded Lebanon several times, mainly in 1977, 1978 and 1989/1990, with the goal of gaining or keeping its influence on the Lebanese economy and politics. In 1984 no fewer than 186 warring factions with different backgrounds and ideologies, sponsors, grievances, and visions were engaged in the armed struggle. "This bewildering plurality of adversaries and shifting targets of hostility has rendered the Lebanese experience all the more gripping and pathological" (Khalaf, 2002, pp. 240-241). Bombs, rockets, missiles, grenades, gunshots, hand grenades and a "shower of Katyushas" (Fisk, 1990, p. 487) became an ordinary thing. The ear "constantly affronted not only with explosions, bullets, screaming jets, and sirens, but also with the sound of glass shattering (or, later, the so-familiar sound of glass being swept up), of the anarchic traffic negotiating ever narrower streets and smaller neighborhoods" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 212). Two things seemed to have happened simultaneously: First: Horror, for example from the sound of tanks, "a kind of a loud whine" as Hanan Al-Shaykh writes: "Now I understand why it's the tank that is the most important weapon in wartime. The sound it makes is enough to inspire terror wherever it goes, a giant roaring before he picks up the city like a bowl of fruit" (Al-Shaykh, 1996, p. 51). Second: Daily Routine. Even the bombs against the French Embassy and the US marines in Beirut (the latter killed 240 people with one blast) in October 1983 seemed nothing extraordinary to Robert Fisk at first:

> The first distant, soft tremor wakes me up. Bomb explosions, shell-bursts, are heartbeats in Beirut now. I decide to sleep in. It is Sunday morning. A few seconds later, another gentle quake, a very slight, intimate change in the air pressure in the house. A second bomb. I lie in bed for another four minutes. The phone rings. (Fisk, 2001, p. 511)

The more these sounds of the bombs, plus the media, were mixed with sounds from the close environment, the more traumatic they became. The most challenging noises came from dying people - parents tried everything so that their children would not hear them. The different fighters and militiamen shouting around one's house were another sound of fear: "We have come to cleanse your area of terrorists," shouted the Israeli officers on their patrol along Hamra Street in 1982 (Fisk, 2001, p. 384). At crossing points between East and West Beirut a battle of loudspeakers took part: While Israeli loudspeakers urged civilians to leave West Beirut, Palestinian speakers informed them "that their womenfolk would be raped by the Phalange" (Fisk, 2001).

Many express that it was very strange to them, that the everyday sounds would not disappear during a war - Al-Shaykh expresses this in one of her novels:

> This is something that irritates me about the war: nature fulfilling its function without missing a beat. The waves continued to crash on to the same rocks, the spray boiled up and subsided. Only the sky was not its usual colour because so many bullets had been sown in it and it still bore the acrid traces of the farewell rounds fired on your behalf. (Al-Shaykh, 1996, p. 65)

For the Lebanese who experienced it, the war never ended. First, it sticks deep in their memory. And secondly, there was never a true reconciliation between the different parties. The 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah, and the street battles around the elections of President Michel Suleiman in 2008, proves them right: War can restart at any minute in Lebanon.

3.4.3   Listening to the Radio in Times of War

Understanding war just through listening to the weapons is impossible. Other media are needed that confirm or contradict our sonic impressions. During the Civil War, many Lebanese became addicted to radio, to speeches of the favoured clan leaders, and to their propaganda music that aimed to make sense of the chaos.

Robert Fisk's account of the role radio stations played during the Civil War makes for a fascinating and chilling read alike:

> Beirutis had only to twist the medium wave dial on their transistors to hear the brassy Hollywood theme music of Quo Vadis, that creaky religious epic of the 1950s which converted Robert Taylor into a Christian along the Appian Way. The same music which once ushered the heroic Taylor into the forum of ancient Rome had been stolen by the Phalange, whose 'Voice of Lebanon' expounded an exclusively Maronite version of the daily news to its Christian listeners. Across the city in Corniche Mazraa, listeners who tuned to 240 metres medium wave were hourly blasted by the music of 'Allah Akhbar', the old Nasserite marching song of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It was the signal for another anti-isolationist news bulletin from the 'Voice of Arab Lebanon'. (…) On the Phalangist station, disc jockeys played pop records newly imported from Paris, interrupting their programmes for open-line telephone discussions with listeners. There was even a grotesque mutation of the BBC's 'Any Questions' programme in which the inequities of leftists, communists and their fellow travellers were damned in bloodthirsty terms. Every day, 'Gemayel's daily disc' - a ten-minute lecture on the integrity of Lebanon by Sheikh Pierre, the father of the Phalange - would be transmitted. The 'Voice of Arab Lebanon' provided a mixture of pan-Arab sentiment and invective against the 'isolationist-Zionist conspiracy', longhand for the Israeli-Maronite alliance. To commemorate Nasser's revolution - an event which still served, so listeners were informed, to 'bind Lebanon to the Arab nation' - only Arab music was played. (…) The Lebanese government had only itself to blame for these illegal stations. Beirut's official radio was heavily censored; sectarian killings and ceasefire violations went unreported. Demands for the closure of the private transmitters were met by the Phalangists with declarations that they possessed a legal broadcasting licence, issued years before by a leftwing government minister. Ibrahim Koleilat, the Mourabitoun commander, claimed that his station could not be categorised as private since it belonged to the 'masses'. (Fisk, 2001, pp. 145-146)

Radio was the number one information media during the Civil War. "The radio is on constantly, of course, and tuned from station to station, it provides the latest reports. Casualty lists are mounting. The battles have spread. The south is ablaze and so is the north, the mountains and the city" (Makdisi,

1990, p. 44). Alexandre Najjar describes how the radio dictated and structured the civilian's everyday life:

> Pendant la guerre, la radio orchestrait tous nos gestes, nos déplacements, notre vie! ... Les émissions de radio étaient constamment entrecoupées de flashs qui nous invitaient à prendre nos précautions, à descendre aux abris, à ne pas emprunter telle route … Ces messages indiquaient avec précision le lieu où les obus tombaient ; parfois, même, ils devinaient la prochaine cible des canonniers ! (…) Nous étions suspendus aux paroles d'un journaliste sans visage, dépendants de cet oiseau de mauvais augure ! Tick tik tich tik… Le jingle qui annonçait le flash nous terrorisait: Il signifiait qu'un obus était tombé ou allait tomber. C'était le fourrier de la mort!
> (Najjar, 2006, pp. 67-68)

All the main militias and communities had their own radio stations. They were "supported by an extremely well developed and sophisticated media - with their own broadcasting stations, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, slogans, symbols and motifs - competed in gaining access to potential recruits, clients, and converts" (Khalaf, 2003). During the war, the number of stations increased. The main stations during that time were Sawt Lubnan (Voice of Lebanon, representing the Christian-Maronite Phalange), Sawt al-Watan (Voice of the Nation, of the Sunni Maqassed educational foundation), Sawt al-Jabal (Voice of the Mountain, mouthpiece of Kamal Jumblat's Progressive Socialist Party), Sawt al-Sha'b (the Communist Party's Voice of the People), and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation founded by the Christian *Forces Libanaises* (Al-Zubaidi, 2005). But the range of bigger and smaller stations was much wider than that.

Bashir Gemayel often spoke on the *Voice of Free Lebanon*. Fisk recalls how Gemayel promised:

> …to rid Lebanon of 'aliens', an expression which certainly included all Palestinians and possibly all Lebanese leftists as well. The station could appear harmless enough with their popular music and 'doctor's advice' spots, but during street battles - if they were not shelled off the air - they would broadcast vivid descriptions of the 'animal' behaviour of their opponents. During the Christian-Syrian fighting, Bashir Gemayel's broadcast repeatedly spoke of pan-Arab plans for a massacre of Christians. Their casualty claim of 1500 dead Maronites proved to be more than double the true figure.
> (Fisk, 2001, p. 146)

The musicality of the musicians born during the Lebanese war was shaped by the various radio stations that were constantly tuned into - and much like Jean Said Makdisi, they remember those days and nights when they were listening to the radio.

Apart from often vile and violent political propaganda, the radio stations played all kinds of music and loads of jingles and advertisements - most of them composed by Elias Rahbani. A vast range of products was advertised with catchy, kitschy music mixtures between "Lebanese" music in the style of the Rahbanis, and rock'n'roll, rock, funk, big band jazz, reggae, French chanson, country, and other styles of popular music. The sounds, and especially the lyrics of these ads, often stood in absurd contrast to the realities of the Lebanese citizens and fighters. "As you can see, I don't spend much time sitting around," a male American voice told the Lebanese listeners, "So I can't always

have time for a proper meal. That's why I really go for Snickers. (…) Snickers, it's just what I need."[114]

Elias Rahbani was a hard working man at the time. He produced up to three thousand radio commercials and jingles during the Civil War. He also wrote political hymns; Raed Yassin says:

Rahbani also did a lot of anthems for more than one party. Sometimes the parties were really against each other, so he wrote for these and these and these. (…) Maybe 70 percent of all the songs, jingles, and anthems that we remember from the Lebanese Civil War were written by Elias Rahbani. Somehow it was really shocking that he really worked for everyone. On the other hand, he did not stick to one direction and was selling as much as he could. Why not? (Yassin 2006)

3.4.4   Rightwing Propaganda Music: Slogans, Fanfares and Patriotic Songs

Through the radio also came a lot of propaganda music. The Lebanese Forces (LF)[115] had a huge propaganda machine - inspired by Nazi Germany. In 2006, when living in East Beirut during one of my stays, people still played all these Lebanese Forces' anthems loudly on their balconies. These propaganda songs became part of the collective memory of many Lebanese - the ones who were in favor of the LF and the ones who hated them.

One of their most famous songs is called "Achrafieh il-bidayi" (Achrafieh is the Beginning). It is based on the battle between Syria and the LF in July 1978 in the Eastern neighbourhood of Achrafieh. This battle was later called the 100 Days War. Syria wanted to take Achrafyeh, the headquarters of Bashir Gemayel, but did not succeed. On 6 October, 1978 the UN Security Council resealed a resolution against Syria to stop the fighting. Bashir Gemayel saw this retreat of Syria as a great victory. The lyrics of the song tell us how brave the Lebanese Forces were in fighting for these hundred days. Achrafyeh was now seen as a symbol for a departure. "The LF liberated Achrafyeh, soon they will free the whole country" - that was the mood of the song. And its hero was Bashir Gemayel.

Achrafyeh il-bidayi
Refrain
Achrafieh is the beginning, the beginning of Bashir
Achrafieh is history, the history of liberation
After a hundred days of resistance
We can finally sleep quietly
Achrafieh is the beginning, and the beginning of liberation

Chorus1
Justice saw light, and from you sent
The light of fame, Bashir the beloved
He held up the flag

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[114] Ad played on radio *Voix Du Liban* in 1980.
[115] Bashir Gemayel, the commander of the Phalange or Kataeb militia, founded the Lebanese Forces in 1978; it unified various Christian militias, but was clearly dominated by Gemayel's Kataeb. After the Civil War, the Lebanese Forces became a political party.

Your men stood next to,
 They held up the flag with the cross
So that Bashir's dream may come true

Chorus 2
Born as a fortress, you will stay so evermore
Facing your enemy, you grow stronger
And ever more powerful
Your eyes will guard the Cedar
On your soil lies the fame of my country
Drawn with Bashir's blood

Chorus 3
My country's resistance was created through you
When you faced and fought danger
The enemies that attacked you
Were burnt in their own fire
On your soil, your heroes
Have reached freedom with their blood

The song starts with the refrain. A rather fast marching rhythm with a simple melody played by a synthesizer, and a synthetic bass on beat one and three. A male choir sings the message that "Achrafyeh is the beginning of the liberation." The choruses are held in half tempo. Again, the male choir sings. The song switches between refrain, chorus, refrain, and chorus all the time. In between, there are little melodies played by the synthesizer. There is no sensation of something new that will happen in the song. It is just continuous, steady, and fast, moving forward, like the LF in the lyrics.

Most of the songs of the Lebanese Forces are quite similar; a lot of synthesized sounds and male choirs. Sometimes there is a strong, sympathetic male solo singer; a few songs mix male and female choirs. The male voices are resonant, very deep, very brilliant - quite similar to the male singers in the Rahbani plays. The drums are mostly played on drum computers. Sometimes we hear a Rahbani-like oboe, but in a very badly sampled, very synthetic sounding version. The songs are based on simple chord patterns (2-5-1) and on the structures of Western popular music: Chorus, refrain, and chorus. One part of the song is based on a marching rhythm. The other is very much based on kitschy, slow entertainment songs. In one of the later songs, a female singer extols the beauty of Lebanon, and the beauty of Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Forces; in another, a female voice sings in the highest pitch about the greatness of Gemayel. The songs with the marching rhythms sometimes use very badly sampled brass patterns. There is nothing refined about these propaganda songs. They are produced very simply and also very cheaply - maybe the LF wanted to show that they were part of the common people.

The music was broadcast constantly over the Lebanese Forces radio station *Voice of Lebanon* - one song, Robert Fisk remembers, derives originally from the film "Quo Vadis" (Fisk, 2001, p. 145ff). In this film, the Roman Emperor Nero blames the Christians for setting a fire in Rome. But he has started it himself. He arrests the Christians and feeds them to the lions - a great topic to use for the Phalangists, who, as Christians, saw themselves as victims as well. The music was written by the

Hollywood-based Hungarian composer Miklos Rozsa, who wrote film music for many costume and *sword and sandal* films.[116] It seems that the Phalanges took to this kind of music: his fanfares and marches, full of sweeping strings and loud brass. Rozsa's music, of course, was produced with big budgets, played by symphony orchestras. The Phalanges, however, used small budgets.

3.4.5   *Leftwing Propaganda: Leftist Musicians in the Lebanese Civil War*

"We used to drink in this small bar in years past. And during the siege we drank enough barley juice to make even the donkey speak poetry" (Darwish, 1995, p. 142).

The other parties had their propaganda music as well - the leftist parties, however, called them protest songs. Plenty of reason for protest was given after the Tell al-Zaatar massacre. On August 6, 1976, the Palestinian camp of Tell al-Zaatar was the last Palestinian dwelling in East Beirut. The camp had been under almost daily attacks for a long time. Now, the Christian groups completely closed it off from any water or medicinal supplies. Before Tell al-Zaatar fell, it was bombarded heavily for 53 days. The PLO media and press made Tell al-Zaatar *the* symbol for Palestinian resistance. The world watched, and seemed to care, but no-one came to help (Hanf, 1990, p. 289).

The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote the poem "Ahmad al-Zaatar" about the siege of the refugee camp. Marcel Khalife and Khaled al-Habre both wrote songs using Darwish's poem as lyrics. Khaled al-Habre recorded a song called "Ahmad al-Arabi". The composition is twenty minutes long and it is made out of many sections, composed by Ziyad Rahbani and Khaled al-Habre. The mood switches from slow melancholic melodies, played by a big string section, to marching rhythms performed by deep kettledrums, to a wild heterophony of melodic lines played by string instruments and by trumpets, flutes, and oboe. Most of the instruments are synthesized; some are played by live musicians. Interludes introduce flavours of tango through an accordion, or piano jazz from Ziyad Rahbani. Sometimes, Khaled al-Habre plays his acoustic guitar and sings in a singer-songwriter style; another part reminds one of the psychedelic, acoustic guitar-playing by Pink Floyd. The piece is recorded with a lot of reverb. There is a lot of pathos, but also a lot of technical knowledge of various musical styles. The release of "Ahmad al-Arabi" provoked a big debate between Walid Gholmieh, Tawfiq al-Basha and Nizar Mroué, recalls Nizar's nephew, the actor and musician Rabih Mroue. Although he does not know what the controversy was about, he says that Walid Gholmieh seems not to have liked the composition (Mroué 2005).

Marcel Khalife released a whole CD called "Ahmad al-Arabi" on the poem in 1984. However, it is less subtle than the version by Khaled al-Habre, and Ziyad Rahbani (even though their interpretation is far from being a highlight of the musical history of the globe). The music is played by live and synthesized instruments. It is recorded in the By Pass Studios in Beirut, mastered in Sunrise Sound Studios in Houston, and manufactured by Digital Press Hellas in Athens. It is a global product that covers a global music as well. The mainly synthesized orchestra covers the sounds of a huge violin section, many trumpets and trombones, a clarinet, glockenspiel, various drums, and a lot of synthesizer. Marcel Khalife sings and plays the oud. Then, we hear the female and male chorus of the al-Mayadine Ensemble, and solo singer Oumayma al-Khalil. The CD also covers sounds from the

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[116] Quo Vadis (1952), Ben-Hur (1959), King of Kings (1961), and El Cid (1962).

environment, the waves of the sea, the whistle of the wind, shots from machine guns, and explosions. Everything sounds synthesized, though, and thus deriving from the sound studio. One intention of the music seems to be to evoke clear emotions: Marching rhythms from a huge brass and drum section and a male chorus create feelings of patriotism and pride; playful, colourful and light pieces by clarinet, glockenspiel, and pizzicato violins seem to show the beauty of Palestine; and the female chorus and the singing of Oumayma al-Khalil produce the melancholy of a group of people without a homeland. Many pieces are purely instrumental, others cover Darwish's poem "Ahmad al-Zaatar":

> ... I am the Arab Ahmad
> He said
> I am bullets
> and oranges
> and dreams.
> Tel Zaatar is my tent
> And I am the homeland
> The ongoing journey
> To the homeland.
> From the East to the West
> The swords were being sharpened
> As Ahmad came to know his limbs
> Soaring like a star
> Gazing to see Haifa.
> Ahmad was to be the sacrifice
> The Cities left behind their asphalt limbs
> And came after him
> To kill him.
> From the East to the West
> They were arranging the funeral
> They were selecting the guillotine.
> ...

The music around the poem is based mainly on European-American concepts. It is held in tempered major and minor scales, and arranged over chord progressions. The *instrumentation* sometimes resembles the one of the Rahbani brothers, however the instruments are, as was said above, often synthesized, and the melodies are not as refined. On the contrary, there are a lot of melodic clichés of Western classical music, and there are no real musical surprises - this we can observe in other albums of Marcel Khalife as well. Sonneborn criticizes the music of Marcel Khalife's albums "Arabic Coffeepot" and "Dance" in a similar way:

> If a listener were not given the clue of song texts in Arabic, s/he might guess that the
> majority of these works were created for a Hollywood sound stage, or for a film score
> of up to two generations ago. The sweeping sequences played by strings, woodwinds,
> harp and percussion are often tired clichés to a listener raised on the European
> symphonic repertoire, and devoid of the subtleties and virtuosity of the best Near
> Eastern music of this century. One of the key criteria for compositional excellent in

> any music, be it Western or Near Eastern, is the function of surprise to the listener - a
> confounding of expectations as to what is next. There were few surprises here.
> (Sonneborn, 1998, p. 153)

Overall, this studio music seems very far away from the actual horror the people in Tell al-Zaatar must have gone through.

Many of the communist songs were sold on cassettes on the streets of West Beirut, as the actor Rabih Mroué remembers:

> As a young communist, I used to get like 50 cassettes and sell them in West Beirut.
> All the young party members did so, for the sake of the cause. We also sold tickets
> for the concerts of our singers. And we were more or less obliged to go to the concert.
> (Mroué, 2006)

Marcel Khalife, especially, was very popular within the leftist, communist, and Palestinian circles. There was more controversy about Khaled al-Habre, as his music was much more Westernized. The difference is not so great in the pieces on Tell al-Zaatar, where both composers draw heavily on musical traditions from outside the Arab world. A first main point seems that Khalife played the Arabic oud, while Khaled al-Habre's music was more based on either guitar playing and singing, or on piano jazz or jazz funk and jazz rock - often sounding quite like Ziyad Rahbani, but never so elaborated. Habre also worked on Latin American music mixed with jazz, and in some songs, even on Big Band Jazz. Some songs use rock drums next to classical orchestra sounds. Khaled al-Habre often worked with Ziyad Rahbani, as is evidenced in the opulent arrangements in his recordings.

There was a kind of competition between Khalife and al-Habre, as they sung for the same party. For many people, Khaled al-Habre was also not a real singer, they saw him more as a performer - some photographs of the time suggest he sometimes played on a guitar that looked like a machine gun. Why did people prefer Khalife? "Marcel Khalife tried to work on traditional melodies, he was close to Mahmoud Darwish and Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, and this was what people liked about him," Rabih Mroue recalls. Thus, Marcel Khalife became a big star in the Communist party:

> The Communist party arranged a tour for Marcel Khalife in the United States and in
> Europe. Khalife began to earn a lot of money for the Communist party. He also took
> some money for himself, but he also gave money to build a hospital in the South of
> Lebanon. He became increasingly powerful and was now one of the main sources for
> money for the communist party. (Mroué, 2006)

Ahmad Qaboor

Ahmad Qaboor was another important leftist singer. I met him in his office in Future TV to get more first-hand information about protest music in the Civil War. Today, Qaboor is a proud grandfather, and he still plays music. "Today, some people accuse me," he tells me quite early in our interview: "They say, 'ah Mister Qaboor was a communist, and now he is working for a capitalist company.' That's just the typical stupid talk that you hear too often in Lebanon. Normal people have to earn some money too." As a young boy, Qaboor listened and started to sing the songs of Sayyid Darwish, Mohammad Abdel Wahab, but also Jacques Brèl. "Today, my songs are in between: sometimes closer to Darwish, sometimes closer to Brèl," he tells me: "At the same time I try to create my own music." In 1975, when he was 19 years old, he used to work in a civil organisation that supplied people with medical aid. As he was the only musician in that organisation, he started to sing

to cheer up the wounded. "I decided to sing about what was going on around us at the time, and I started to sing in hospitals for the wounded people," he remembers. His first song "Ounadikoum" (I Call Upon You) would soon become very popular in Lebanon, Palestine, and the neighbouring Arab countries. He recorded it in 1975. He sang, and friends of his played guitar and flute. The song later became part of an album that was released in 1982 - recorded in the studio of Ziyad Rahbani. Soon Qaboor wrote new songs and sang them in the hospitals, in universities, colleges, and on the frontline as well:

> I was with Kamal Jumblat at the time, but I was never a big fan of the Soviets. I
> would prefer to have been killed than to be with Stalin. I was 19 years old and very
> militant. I was heavily influenced by Che Guevara, Victor Jara, and by the Egyptian
> singer Sheikh Imam. My friends were all fighters on the frontline. (Qaboor, 2006)

At the front he played during the ceasefires. "The fighting did not go on for 24 hours, sometimes the fighters would relax, and that's when I played. Often we were afraid, we were humans." He played his songs: "Ounadikoum", "Irhal" (Go Away), and "Nabil," a song about "a martyr that I knew." All these songs portrayed the policies of the left: The Palestinian Revolution, the struggle against the Israeli Occupation, the siege of West Beirut in 1982, the call for a more balanced social system in Lebanon. "The songs became well known, like popular folk tunes. Not many people, however, knew that I was the author and the singer of it," Qaboor remembers.

> I distributed my cassettes by myself. I took a box with 50 or 100 cassettes and went to
> the nightclubs to ask people if they wanted to buy some. I did not have a well-known
> father like Ziyad Rahbani had; my father was just an unknown violin player. So, no
> one really helped me. It was a hard time. I wanted that people would listen to my
> songs, so I even went to Tripoli by taxi to sell them. (Qaboor, 2006)

 Next to his singing activities he worked as a professor at school. "Singing was more of idealism," he says, "it was not possible to make a living out of it." According to Ahmad Qaboor there was "no scene for leftist music in West Beirut," but just some individual musicians like Khaled El Habra or Marcel Khalife. "Khalife and El Habra worked with me on my first album. And Ziyad Rahbani sometimes arranged my songs, or he played the bouzouk." For Ahmad Qaboor "everything ended with the murder of Kamal Jumblat. Since then, every musician had his own little Island." Today, Qaboor does not want to be called a protest singer anymore: "It's very simple: I'm a singer, and a musician. I want to make a beautiful, deep and honest music that deals with human sentiments. I'm not interested in promoting ideas and policies from this or that political group" (Qaboor 2006).

3.4.6.   Escapism (2): Rock Music, Party Nights and Drugs in a Divided City

Khaled Fayad, DJ at the Midway Radio Station between 1984 and 1989, tells me about the "good old party days" during the Civil War when he was Dj-ing. "The nightclubs were packed every night, even if there was shooting or shelling outside," he remembers. "People wanted to dance, party and forget. Hashish and cocaine were everywhere." Fayyad used to play his record collection: Supertramp, The Police, Scorpions, Toto, Foreigner, Alan Parsons Project, and others. He recalls some of the clubs' names: The Mécano, The Beach Comber, and others. The rock bands from the 1960s had not disappeared completely - even though many musicians had left the country. The rock scene, though smaller, was still mainly linked to the international universities. This was especially true for West Beirut, where the American University (AUB) and the Lebanese American University

(LAU) are located. Many of the clubs and concert venues were situated around Bliss Street, just next to the AUB: West Hall, Megalith, The Blue Note Café (opened around 1985), and others.

In East Beirut the situation was slightly different - and yet not too different after all. It is often argued that West Beirut was more actively engaged in leftist protest music, while East Beirut was more of a party hub with a lot of nightclubs, and with partygoers who wanted to forget the war. This is true to a certain extent. However, both existed on both sides. Rock and metal bands rehearsed and played some concerts in East Beirut as well.

West Beirut

The Force was probably the most important rock band in West Beirut during the war. Today, some of the band members still work in music: They mainly work as session musicians in the jazz and fusion scene, or they work as session musicians in the pop market: Emile Boustani (drums), Abboud Saadi (bass), Walid Itayim (guitar), Nabil al-Hishi (guitar), and Fouad Afra (drums). I met some of them for interviews.

`   One of the band members was the drummer Emile Boustani. He was born in Lebanon, but had an American passport because of his American mother. Every summer he used to go to the USA for a holiday. "I was born into a westernized family, and I did not listen to Umm Kulthoum. I love bands like Rush, Deep Purple, and others," he tells me (Boustani 2006). His first concerts, he played in the church of the French mission school. "They wanted to attract the youth to the church and thus we accompanied their choirs with drums and keyboard." The Force, however, was his main band. They started to perform in 1979. "First we played cover songs. Then, in 1981, we started composing and became really serious about rehearsing. Our sound became increasingly solid." Contrary to most of the other rock bands at the time, The Force stayed together for many years. "Most of the other rockers saw music as a side thing. They wanted to forget the war, and so they played cover songs from Santana to French chanson," Boustani recalls. "Often the members of the band would leave the country, so the bands stopped playing and performing." For quite a while The Force practised on a daily basis: "Sometimes there were bombardments going on outside, but we did not care too much. We were safe in our rehearsal room two floors down the earth in Ain al-Mraysseh (in West Beirut)." Boustani remembers one concert very well:

> There was heavy shelling going on outside, but still many people turned up to see our
> show. It was so weird, and typical for Beirut. People were so used to this war that
> they decided to try to make their way through the streets to our concert. It was
> extraordinary. (Boustani, 2006)

The band got some attention from the foreign press as well. They were interviewed by various stations like the BBC, Australian TV, and Canadian TV. A report by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) shows them rehearsing in their cellar in 1985.[117] The video shows the musicians rehearsing in jeans, plain shirts, and black shoes - they do not look like a rock band at all. The guitarist explains what their songs are about: "One song is called 'Rise to hell, not to paradise'. How can you rise yourself to paradise with all that killing and death?" He cites some song lyrics: "There is jungle life outside my door, and I'm part of it. That's why I'm living in loneliness for so long. I got to stay away far from this." Another video shows the band performing on a big stage in front of a huge

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[117] The video appeared on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0VRZknaj0k (checked December 2008).

crowd at the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 1984. They use the latest sound equipment, and play very solid mainstream rock. "We earned the reputation of a professional and serious band. And this brought more and more people to our concerts. We were even called by other bands to give our opinion on their music, or to teach them," Boustani says.

The band performed mainly in West Beirut, at the LAU or in the West Hall of the AUB. They did some concerts in different regions in Lebanon, and in 1984 they performed once in Cyprus. Furthermore, they even recorded three albums during the war: "Games," "Forced," and "Reinforced." Unfortunately I was not able to get hold of any of them. The albums were recorded in the studio of Ziyad Rahbani - which shows that links existed between the politicised singers of the left, and the rock bands. On the album "Forced," Ziyad Rahbani even played the keyboards. One member of The Force was a member of the militia of the socialist party, and the others did not belong to any party: "It was just about music!" says Boustani. "We were never labelled under a certain label and attached to a certain political side." The band stayed together until 1988. Boustani got married and left for the United States. He stayed there for ten years, before he returned.

Other members of The Force are still active musicians today. The bass player Abboud Saadi is an important backbone for the jazz and rock music scene in Lebanon. He founded a jazz fusion and Latin music group called Virus; the group released a CD called "Beirut Salsa" in 1998. Walid Itayim, another member, writes on his myspace (www.myspace.com/waliditayim) page that ever since he heard The Beatles at the age of 6, he dreamt of becoming a rock star. He started playing the guitar when he was thirteen years old. Soon he wrote his first songs. On his site, one can download some of the songs of The Force: "Easy" (1981), "Last Night" (1977), and a collection of miscellaneous songs from 1981 to 1990.

Munir Khauli was another rock musician who performed concerts during the Civil War. However, he stayed outside of Lebanon most of the time. His influences were, as he writes on his website, Elmore James, Chuck Berry, Elvis, then Pink Floyd, Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin. He possibly did not know about the experiments of US groups working with Arabic musicians and music.[119] And if he did so, he would not have been much interested in it, as he was interested in Western music only. Khauli studied English Literature at the AUB in West Beirut, and he composed while listening - or not listening - to his professors. "My songs at the time were sung in English and composed in the vein of blues and rock music to which I listened 24/7." In an interview Khauli tells how he was "blocking out the memories of war-torn Beirut through drinking and substance abuse" (Joumana Medlej, Dailystar, December 2003). In 1982 he left Beirut for California: "Everyone possessing the price of an airline ticket was making their way to the exits, as did I." In California he started to listen to Arabic music: to Sayyid Darwish, and to Ziyad Rahbani, and especially to his album "Ana Mush Kafir." This album ignited his anger, he told the Lebanese Gazette in 1997: "I thought, Wow! If Ziyad can explain the trouble with Lebanon so eloquently, so humorously and so blatantly (he said everything like it was) then I can do the same." Stylistically the influence of Ziyad Rahbani was less dominant:

> Ziyad fuses Jazz with Arabic. With the Arabic he's meticulous. He's an artist. The
> Arabic scales that I do know, I know from hearing. I haven't studied them. So my
> music is really based on Blues, Rock, Latin and Reggae with an Oriental touch.

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[119] See Chapter 3.3.4. on Psychedelic Rock.

> Nothing as serious as Ziyad might come up with. It's Western with a tinge of Arabic.
> Just a tint. (Dakhlallah: Lebanese Gazette 18.12.1997)[120]

In 1988 Khauli came back to Beirut and performed a big concert in West Hall. It was entitled "The Art of Arabic Rock" and featured musicians who are still active in Beirut today. A newspaper article covered the show:

> The group, composed of young and talented amateurs, many of them AUB alumni or children of alumni, performed with infectious exuberance, eliciting an enthusiastic response from the audience. Ghazi Issam Abdul Baki was on the drums. Ramzi Sami Abu-Izzedin, Economics Class of '89, played the bass, Ghassan Zein, Architecture Class of '87, the piano and organ, Emile Boustani the 'dirbakkeh', Walid Fuad Itayyim, the guitar. (Al Kulliyah, August 1988)

Another band of the Civil War era was called Exceed. The drummer Fouad Afra, born 1967, was one of its key musicians. He told me that first he had created his own drum set out of pots and pans. He studied Communication Arts at the Beirut University College - later renamed into the LAU. During his years of study he played with Exceed, and with the bands Rude, Virus and The Force. Afra even crossed to East Beirut sometimes. He tells me that he played with the East Beiruti band Generation sometimes. And he used to have a Christian girlfriend from East Beirut. Thus he crossed the Green Line many times - and saw many victims and the tragedies of this war.

East Beirut

East Beirut had a rock scene as well - but many bands played new wave, trash, and punk as well. Some of the main groups included The Gassan Rahbani Group (GRG), Fugitive Entity (with today's owner of Virgin Mega Store Beirut, Jihad Murr), ZED (with today's pop music producer Hady Sharara), Electric Warriors, and Equation with their lead singer Angel, now living in London. The main concert venues were situated in the Christian town of Jounieh, North of Beirut. Disco clubs could be found in Jounieh, in the ski resort of Faraya, in places on Mount Lebanon like Broummana and, very few in the Beirut neighbourhood of Ashrafiyeh.

Cynthia Zaven, in one of our interviews, shows me an old video recording from one of her first concerts with Fugitive Entity. The group plays cover songs from Spandau Ballet and other 1980s bands. On stage we see Zaven standing behind a huge synthesizer. She does not move, and just stares at the note stands to her left. She had written the whole arrangement. Two background singers sing and dance: "These were two girlfriends of the band members," Cynthia remembers (Zaven, 2005).

Cynthia Zaven was born into a musical family of Armenian origin. Her father and grandfather were both violin players. The grandfather also composed and earned his living as a teacher. The grandfather was a poet. "Unfortunately I cannot read his writings, because I don't read Armenian," she says. The Zaven family always had a piano at home, and Cynthia took her first lessons from her father when she was three years old. Later, in school, she started "serious piano lessons," as she says, always of European classical music. Then she went to the conservatory. To her

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[120] His first cassette, "Heik Ha Nishtghil?" (Is that how we're going to work?) was released in 1987 in the USA. "It was entirely self-produced, from the lyrics to the hand-drawn cover. It featured 11 songs with subjects related to the civil war - kidnappings, random shelling, murder based on identity cards. He sold 200 copies to his friends in the United States as part of a humorous leading critic of our nation" (Medlej, 2003).

peers, however, playing classical piano was really not a cool thing to do, Zaven remembers. They were very much influenced by new wave music. "I wanted to play new wave music as well, so I asked my parents to buy me a synthesizer," she explains: "My parents were smart. They bought me two synthesizers, and I started playing all day long - it is probably because of that decision back then, that I still earn my living as a musician." (Zaven, 2005) Cynthia was very proud about her two instruments: "I turned my room into a little studio, full with records, and many, many tapes." She had a lot of freedom at the time: "I was free to do what I wanted - because the situation was bad, the conservatory was closed, and I couldn't get to my teacher. So, I would close the door of my room, put headphones on, listen to music and play the synthesizer." Zaven loved The Cure and all these other bands "where the band members would wear black clothes and would put black make-up on their faces. These musicians looked so rebellious, and they were so far away from the tastes of our mainstream society here." She also liked that these bands used a lot of synthesizers: "These synthesizers in new wave were perfect to rebel against the world of classical piano. These synthesizers offered a wide range of sounds, it was just beautiful."

Zaven remembers that there were a lot of musicians around, and that there were concerts everywhere: "Everyone knew a guitar player, or a keyboarder. Bands were formed very quickly. And often they split after one or two rehearsals. Often the reason was that band members emigrated." Soon, she started to play in the rock band Zed, along with Carole Saqr, Hadi Charrara and Ramzi Khattar, and in Electric Warriors. The latter was founded in 1981 and played for four years. Zaven was only 13 years old at the time - much younger than her band colleagues.

The bands rehearsed in shelters, and sometimes in the bedroom of one of the band members. "I took my sleeping bag to all of these rehearsals, because you never knew if you were able to go home afterwards. Quite often bombings or shooting started while we were playing." They also gave concerts in small shelters: "Ten people would come and we would feel extremely proud. We really had a lot of fun," she remembers:

> We created our own little world. You have to imagine that all this happened during the war: The electricity would often cut out, we had nothing but breaking news on the radio, and our only concern was if we had enough fuel in the car to always be able to flee a bad situation. Playing music in a shelter was a great relief. (Zaven, 2005)

Zaven also played in a band with Jihad Murr, Fugitive Entity. The band was founded in 1986. "It was the only alternative rock band that took itself seriously and performed big concerts. That is where I received my first payment: I think it was 700 US-dollars - not bad at all." However, she did not like that band too much: "Jihad liked to show off a bit. He would buy the most expensive synthesizers without knowing how to play them. On stage he would just stand behind them, without even touching them." Jihad Murr, today the owner of the Virgin Mega Store, remembers the time very well.

> I started working on Radio Mount Lebanon (RML) in 1979. I used to prepare a program with friends where we presented all the new releases from the rock field. We had the Alternative Top Ten and the Gothic and Dark Metal Top Ten. We played bands like The Cure, Cocteau Twins, Sisters of Mercy or Japan, or new wave bands like Depeche Mode. We received hundreds of CDs every week, listened to them, and picked the best ones. (Murr, 2005)

One of the main rock bands of East Beirut was The Gassan Rahbani Group (GRG). Rahbani had an argument with Munir Khauli over who had started Oriental rock in Lebanon, as Rabih Mroué recalls. "Both played rock music in the Eighties – one in East Beirut, the other in West Beirut," he tells me:

> So when the Green Line opened, they started to argue: Gassan Rahbani protested that
> he had been the first one to do Oriental rock and Munir Khauli contested and said 'no
> I am the first one to do Oriental rock, not Gassan Rahbani.' This is just like
> everything else in Lebanon: They always fight about who started it. It is always the
> search for the origin, for the beginning. They like to be the first ones to do anything
> in Lebanon or in the Arab countries, but in truth they are the last ones. (Mroué, 2005)

When I meet Gassan Rahbani, he seems like a very nice person, but slightly over-confident as well. Rahbani, who calls himself Gassan (not the usual Ghassan), started playing rock music "because it fitted the bombardments and the shelling." One influence also comes through his family: "My father and my mother raised me on romantic songs and jazz music and soft music. I tried to find my own style, and I wanted to find a musical expression that fitted to the society: Heavy rock, and heavy metal." (Rahbani, 2006) Gassan Rahbani worked mainly in East Beirut, but sometimes he went over to West Beirut to perform. Rahbani refuses the term Civil War when talking about the Lebanese war. "It was a war from outside powers on Lebanese soil," he argues. He played some concerts as well during the war: for example, in the College of Mont La Salle Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes (www.montlasalle.edu.lb).

West versus East

Throughout the Lebanese Civil War there were always rumours about what was going on on the other side. And especially when one side was under heavy attack, the rumours about the abundant party life "over there" turned into frustration, disbelief, and anger. When West Beirut was under siege in 1982, many authors expressed their thoughts about the other side. They had heard that East Beirut was still "sparkling with nightclubs and restaurants" (Al-Shaykh, 1996, p. 214), and that the Casino Du Liban still flourished. Mahmoud Darwish wrote in his diary how the ladies of East Beirut welcomed the Israeli soldiers:

> You can't forget that over there, in Ashrafiya, they're dancing in ecstasy. Yesterday's
> papers showed the carnation ladies throwing themselves at the invaders' tanks, their
> bosoms and thighs bare in summer nakedness and pleasure, ready to receive the
> saviours: Kiss me on the lips, Shlomo! O kiss me on the lips! What's your name, my
> love, so I can call you by your name, my darling? Shlomo, my heart's been
> passionately longing for you. (Darwish, 1995, p. 18)

Overall, one finds similar examples and similar thoughts in West and in East Beirut. Many people just wanted to escape the violence - and many bands wanted this as well. "Sure, overall people in West Beirut felt more concerned with their Arab Identity, while people in East Beirut were concerned about leaving to Europe or saving Christianity in Lebanon," Cynthia Zaven explains:

> However, we should not read things in black and white only. Especially we musicians
> were not concerned about all these topics. We just wanted to forget about the war.
> With music we had our own language to communicate, and to release stress and
> tension. (Zaven, 2005)

Rabih Mroué argues similarly: "Many bands were not involved in politics, however, this does not mean that they were about entertainment only. Some of these bands tried to create music seriously, even though they did not produce musical milestones."

Looking back to these musicians and their activities from today's perspective, one could argue that their work was really important: They kept on going with the Lebanese tradition for independent, subcultural music in Beirut. It was very important that this way of doing things did not stop.

3.4.7   Fairuz and Ziyad Rahbani in The Civil War

During these afternoon hours, the sky lowers, heavy with smoke, steel, and humidity. A sky winding down to the earth. The contexts on the airwaves with the voice of Feiruz, the only trace left of a shared nation, signal nothing, or nothing shared, because the voice is altogether severed from its source. It has left its home for an abstract blue that doesn't speak to one's feelings at a time when war has transformed everything into detail. 'I love you, O Lebanon!' - a declaration not heeded by a Beirut preoccupied with its blasted streets, now compressed into three streets only. Beirut is not creating its song now, for the metal wolves are barking in every direction. And the sung beauty, the object of worship, has moved away to a memory now joining the battle against the fangs of forgetfulness made of steel. Memory doesn't remember but receives history raining down on it. Is it in this way that beauty, past beauty come back to life in a song not suited to the context of the hour, becomes tragic? A homeland, branded and collapsing in the dialogue of human will against steel; a homeland, rising with a voice that looks down on us from the sky - a unique voice that unites what can't be united and brings together what can't be brought together. Speech has run far, far away. It has taken its words and flown. This voice is not the voice of our torture, not the voice of madness. (Darwish 1995:146)

"During the Civil War everything stopped," recalls the pianist and composer Boghos Gelalian. Many of the foreign musicians who had made their living in the Casino Du Liban, the expensive nightclubs and hotels, left the city - most of them deeply shocked by the happenings. Big orchestras, like the one of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers, had difficulties finding enough musicians. Even rehearsing was not easy at all; often the musicians from West Beirut and East Beirut were not able to cross the Green Line and meet.

Fairuz stopped performing in Lebanon almost completely. In 1979 Fairuz and Asy Rahbani divorced. Assy Rahbani died in 1986 in a hospital in West Beirut. His funeral on the 24 of June of 1986 was gigantic. It became very symbolic, as his body had to be taken across the Green Line: from the hospital in West Beirut to the Cemetery in East Beirut (Weinrich, 2006, p. 339).

Fairuz stayed in Beirut during the whole war. This made her a big symbol for Lebanon, a symbol for peace for Lebanese from all the different confessions. She now sang compositions by Philemon Wehbe and Zaki Nassif more often, and some works by the Egyptian Riyad as-Sinbati as well. She mainly performed abroad: In the USA with Toufic El Bacha (1981/82), in Australia with Walid Gholmieh (1984), in London and Paris with her son Ziyad Rahbani (1986/1988), but also in Garas (1983), Bosra (1985), Cairo (1989, 1992, 1993) and Kuwait (1989).

Many of her songs were still listened to across confessional lines. In 1979, she sang "Bhibbak ya Luban" (I Love You, Oh Lebanon), and "Hawa Bayrut" (The Love of Beirut). "Bhibbak ya Luban" was sometimes criticized because of the first line, where Fairuz sings about the South as well, and not

only about Mount Lebanon as usual (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 332-333).

> Bhibbak ya Luban (I Love You, Lebanon)
> I love you Lebanon my country
> I love your north, your south, your plains, I love
> you ask what happened
> what has overcome me
>
> I love you Lebanon my country
> they said what goes on
> in the land of festivals strewn as it is with fire and dynamite
> I said our land is being reborn
> the Lebanon of dignity a people that perseveres
> how could I help loving you
> even in your madness I love you
> because your love gathers us together
> when we are dispersed
> and one grain of your soil equals the treasures of the world

After the Israeli invasion of 1982, the song "Iswarat al-arus" (Bracelet of the Bride) became the unofficial hymn of South Lebanon.[122] It declared love for the South: It basically argued that many people will invade the South, but all will leave again. The South, however, will stay (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 334-335). Another piece, "Gibal as-Sawwan," became very important during the civil war. Each militia took possession of it (Weinrich, 2006, p. 337). Fairuz and her music nourished the dream of a peaceful coexistence of a heterogeneous society; held together through a very typical Lebanese identity that was strong enough to highlight the collective and common over the interests of the individual groups (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 326-440). Her music was a kind of recipe for the Lebanese project. It served for many purposes, and was readable in many ways. Even if some songs contain clear political claims, it is not possible to allocate them with a singular ideology or party. The themes circle around universal values of love for the homeland, charity, freedom, and justice. Some friends of the Rahbanis say that the openness of their work was deliberate. The goal was to reach a broad consensus within their audience (Weinrich, 2006, p. 382). Still, this did not always go without controversy. During their long career, Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers became linked to the Communists, then to the Palestinians, or the Syrian Nationalists, and the Lebanese Nationalists.[123]

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[122] Other milestone songs and compositions of the time include: Toufic El Bacha's "Beirut 82," a composition about the Israeli invasion of Beirut, and his "Peace Symphony" that was performed by a Belgium orchestra and marked the end of the civil war (Asmar, 2005). After the war "Raji' Yit'amar Libnan" (Lebanon Shall be Rebuilt), written by Zaki Nassif, became "an unofficial anthem for all who shared a patriotic feeling of conciliation" (Asmar, 2004).

[123] Many of their friends and collaborators, especially at the radio al-Sharq al-adna were communists. Others were Palestinians who, after the war of 1948/1949, were not able to go back to their homeland. The trio further always held very good relations with Syria, to its audiences, but also to the Syrian officials. This was somehow remarkable, as the Rahbanis had close relations to followers of radical Lebanese Nationalism too, and parts of them were very clearly anti-Islamic and anti-Syria. The poet Sa'id Aql worked with the Rahbanis for many years. His engagement for the Phoenician version of Lebanese Nationalism is well known. He has supported

The last great and important Fairuz song of the war was "Li-Bayrut" (For Beirut), an elegy to the destroyed city, written by Ziyad Rahbani in 1987. The melody is based on the second movement from the concert for guitar and orchestra from Joaquin Rodrigo.

Ziyad Rahbani

Increasingly, Fairuz worked with her son, Ziyad Rahbani. Together they released many CDs. Ziyad Rahbani was the most influential artist of the Lebanese Civil War by far. He worked with both, the leftist artists and the rock bands of West Beirut, and with his mother. Since there is extensive scholarly literature on Ziyad Rahbani - in contrast to the majority of musicians I write about and have spoken with - I will not go into detail here. According to Stone (2008), Ziyad Rahbani started to fill the gap between the "elitist 'Rahbani nation'" and the reality that the majority of Lebanon's population actually lived in. Ziyad Rahbani replaced the Western classical music with "popular" music - mainly jazz and funk - and wrote songs and musical theatre plays that dealt with urban life, rather than the rural traditions and folklore of the Lebanese mountains. Stone (2008) argues that Ziyad Rahbani started an artistic "war" against his family with his work "Hotel of Happiness" one year before the Civil War began. It is not clear "whether or not this musical theatrical project can be implicated as a participant in the heating-up of ethnic identities that might have otherwise remained cool," writes Stone (2005): "It is clear at least that the civil war exposed the sizeable cracks in the idealized Rahbani nation." Ahmad Qaboor agrees with that: "Ziad Rahbani disagreed politically with his family. And he focussed much more on the city, than on the mountains. Musically, however, he used, more or less, the same formula as his parents did." (Qaboor 2006) In addition to his satirical theatre plays, he recorded the albums "Houdou' Nisbi" (Relative Calm, 1984) and "Ana Moush Kafer" (I'm Not an Infidel, 1985). His songs were sung in the Lebanese dialect, and they were recorded by some of the main *underground* musicians at the time, such as Sami Haouat, Toufic Faroukh, Abboud El Saadi, Emile Boustani, Walid Tawil, Bassam Saba, the guitarist Issam Hajj Ali, and others. Further, Ziyad Rahbani wrote some anthems for the communist party, and radio adds for the station Sawt EL Chaeb (Voice of the People).

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and helped in creating the ideology of the guards of the cedar, who became well known in the Lebanese Civil War for their radical position and brutal actions against the Palestinians (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 377-379).

DISCOURSES AROUND MUSIC

4. Subcultural Sounds: Musicians from Beirut Born During the Lebanese Civil War

This chapter describes the life-world of today's sound artists and musicians from Beirut from their personal, subjective views and experiences. It uses the book *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) as a model, and is thus inspired by Alfred Schütz and the scholars working with and around him.[124] The underlying basic intention behind this approach is to treat these Beiruti artists as human beings first. They live on the same planet as we all do, and they are neither *foreign, Non-Western, from another culture, different*, nor *other* from the outset. Ideally, this chapter presents an *emic* view and thus lets the human beings from Beirut decide for themselves how *different, other, Middle Eastern* or *Arabic* they really are. The main body of information comes from the many interviews I conducted with these musicians, and with other members of Lebanese society, musicians and non-musicians, from the same generation and from older ones. Further, I include a variety of other information: from discussions, observations, monographies, novels, feature and documentary films, scientific books on Lebanon, and much more. Each element serves as a piece in this huge and complex puzzle, that as a whole offers a close look into these musicians' life-world - or life-worlds.

This approach is to a certain extent idealistic. How can a Swiss scholar offer an emic view of the life-world of artists from Beirut? The answer, short and clear, is: He cannot. But, let us ask the following: Am I really capable of writing about the life-world of my next-door neighbour, or even my wife, from an emic perspective? No, I cannot do that either, but still I have to try to come so close to his or her life-world to at least try to understand, and even foresee his or her daily actions and reactions. The same is true for Lebanon. I do not have to understand (or try to understand) all the parts of the life-world of my wife. I do need to understand (or try to understand), however, the parts that are important for our living together. The same is true for this research: I try to highlight and to understand those parts of the life-world(s) of the musicians in Beirut that are significant and crucial in order to understand the actions that are of interest in this book - that is, mainly the musical actions.

It is clear that this life-world will always be simplified. Important is that it is detailed enough to be able to explain the logical consistency behind the variety of actions of the artists from Beirut. According to Schütz, the ideal scientific model would be:

> …that a human act performed within the life world by an individual actor in the way
> indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as
> well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life.
> (Schütz, 1975, p. 279)

Thus, the idea of this chapter is to create the model of a life-world in which the musician's actions and re-actions make sense. At the end, this life-world-model is the emic life-world of Beiruti artists as experienced by a Swiss scholar. It is one interpretation that hopefully is as close to what we call "reality" as possible. Others will come up with other interpretations, and this is not bad, but good. It is very well possible that the variety and the large amount of these interpretations brings us, the scholars, one step forward.[125]

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[124] For the methodological approach see Chapter 1.
[125] So far, almost no academic literature exists on the generation of Lebanese musicians born during the Civil War.

Let me describe the life-world of these artists, starting with a short introduction of the scene, including musicians and groups, labels, places, and the media they use. Further, I try to go one step further and see the environment they were born into. Further, I have a look at the surrounding forces again: the pan-Arabic media and pop industry, and the international funding bodies, and major labels like EMI who support the subculture.

4.1   Subcultural Scenes

In order to create a model of the subcultural music scene, I put the different musicians into four categories: "Experimental Music", "Metal and Rock Music", "Urban Music", and "Arabic Music". The categories are not fixed; some musicians and groups work in more than one circle. Rappers and DJs, for example, sometimes play with Arabic oud players, and some of the artists of the experimental scene play in indie rock bands. In this chapter I will focus on the first three categories only. I leave the Arabic singers out, because I see them much more as being part of a continuation of the *leftist* music culture from the 1970s onwards - however, I will give some insights into the Arabic circles in the chapter about Ziyad Sahhab (chapter 6.7). Today's Arabic singers and ensembles perform in similar settings: They either perform in small bars or private gatherings and play songs from Sayyid Darwish to Ziyad Rahbani. Or they play tarab in concerts at universities with specialized departments for Arabic music, or they even perform abroad: in Egypt, Syria, or for interested circles of ethnomusicologists, musicologists, and music lovers in the USA.

4.1.1   Experimental Music

Beirut hosts a very active scene of free improvised music. It was started around 1997 by the Paris-based Lebanese musicians Christine and Sharif Sehnaoui, and Mazen Kerbaj, a cartoonist and trumpet player, living in East Beirut. The three formed a trio, attracted more musicians, and created MILLS (Musique Improvisée Libre au Liban), an organisation for free improvisation in Lebanon. They organize the annual international festival, Irtijal (Improvisation), and invite musicians from Europe and the United States. They further launched their own label Al-Maslakh (The Slaughterhouse), with the goal "to publish the un-publishable in Lebanon." At first hearing, these musicians are mainly influenced by American and European pioneers of free jazz, free improvisation, and new music. Nevertheless, sonic memories of their lives in Lebanon play a crucial role. In the portraits of Mazen Kerbaj and Raed Yassin, two important actors in the circle, we will see this clearly (chapter 6). The sound artist and bassist Raed Yassin, creates challenging audio-visual performances out of radio jingles and advertisements, political speeches, propaganda songs and disco tunes from his childhood and youth. His piece "CW Tapes" features the voice of Philemon Wehbe (*1918), a popular Lebanese singer who, in one of his songs, attacked the Lebanese clan leaders: "they fucked you, oh Lebanon." Mazen Kerbaj recalls the sounds of helicopters and rifles. On his CD "BRT VRT ZRT KRT" he produces blubbering, jarring, and clapping sounds on his trumpet. "My generation knew all the weapons of war just by listening to their sounds. Today, I imitate these sounds of my childhood on my instrument. It was not a conscious process at first," Kerbaj says. (Kerbaj, 2005)

I went to see the musicians of the Free Improvised Music Circle performing many times: at their Irtijal Festivals in 2005 and 2006, in front of big and small crowds; at Zico House where they played just to each other - the audience consisted of the musicians themselves, the mother of Sharif

Sehnaoui, and me, the Swiss ethnomusicologist. One of their performances I attended in my hometown, Bern, in February 2008. It featured the so-called Al Maslakh Ensemble with Mazen Kerbaj, Sharif Sehnaoui, Christine Sehnaoui, Raed Yassin, the Swiss clarinet and electric bass player Paed Conca, and the US-American drummer Michael Zerang in our well-known alternative center called Reitschule. The sextet rendered a very differentiated soundscape that was clearly segmented into different layers: Sharif Sehnaoui created on his guitar very muted in-between sounds: rasping sounds produced by a stick gliding over the guitar strings, or clear flageolets. Yassin used similar techniques, however he sometimes took the lead, starting beating his double bass with his hands or metal sheets, or playing it with a bow, sometimes with heavy force. Christine Sehnaoui on her saxophone played very distinct sounds between very high-pitched notes, low whispering, and aspirated rhythms. Kerbaj used his trumpet to produce a variety of noises, rhythms, and sounds (see chapter 6). Paed Conca showed himself as an excellent team player that either marked the ground with solid grooves on his electric bass, or searched for in-betweens on his clarinet. Zerang finally made his drum squeak in a huge range of frequencies. The result was a rather dense sonic landscape, full of rather small but very distinct sound events. On the larger scale, there was not too much movement: This music stayed mezzo forte for its forty-minute length; no big up and downs and loud peaks could be observed - one could even risk drawing some parallels to the concepts of tarab music: This music lived from the interplay, the heterophony between the different instruments, the sound textures, and not from big crescendos and decrescendos. "We make music where people have to work to listen to it," Sharif Sehnaoui said in an interview with the Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star*: "We create stuff that has not been played or resembles anything that's already been played. We want our audience to be surprised." (Wilson-Goldie, 2008)

Alongside the scene of free improvised music comes a circle of laptop artists who work in the fields of electro-acoustic music, digital music, noise, and Musique concrète - many of them studied art or design in universities in Beirut or Europe. Tarek Atoui is one of the main artists here. I saw him performing live several times as well: in Zico house in Beirut, or at the Festival Transmediale in Berlin. In Zico house in 2005 he performed on two laptops, one for the sound, and one for the visuals. He further used a joystick as the interface between him and the computers. The sound and images moved in great tempo, with loads of clicks and noises in a large range of frequencies. The images showed Beirut, pictures from the Civil War, however, they were often distorted. Atoui channelled all this sonic and visual information into a challenging, very flexible journey: a guerrilla war of sounds and images - refined chaos, I thought. I experienced his performance with Geert-Jan Hobin from the German-based label Staalplaat in Berlin (2007), similarly. The two remixed the music of Muslimgauze, an important artist for the scene (see chapter 8).[126]

Tarek Atoui was born in Lebanon in 1980. In 1998 he moved to Paris and started composing music on his computer and studied at the French National Conservatoire. Today he works with the sound software MAX/MSP on which he creates his own patches to produce his highly complex sonic landscapes, abstract beats, and noises. Since 2005 he has kept going back to Beirut to perform, or to give workshops: He worked with the musicians and sound artists from Beirut and taught them insights

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[126] Muslimgauze is the artistic name of Bryn Jones from Manchester (1961-1999). He collected sounds from radio emissions and old tapes, played some Arabic percussion and created various sonic pieces, often with names with clearly political connotations: "The Rape of Palestine" (1988), "Vote Hezbollah" (1993), "Vampire of Tehran" (1998), "Hamas Cinema Gaza Strip" (2002), "Iranair Infllight Magazine" (2003), and many others. Even though Jones had never visited the Arab world he supported the Arab cause and Palestine.

in MAX/MSP[127]; and he held workshops with children in Palestinian refugee camps where he made them record and film sounds and images from their area, and helped them to edit them into video- and sound-collages. In 2007 he released his first CD on Staalplaat. Other sound artists work with digital and electro-acoustic music as well. In the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, Xardas, aka 20SV, experiments with radical abstract noise and frequencies. He managed to get a record deal first on a Finnish, and later on a US label, and proves that niche cultures in music become an increasingly transnational phenomenon. Police in Lebanon raided Xardas' house after he was accused of being a Satanist.

Jawad Nawfal and Joanna Andraos work with electronic experimentation. Nawfal created a research laboratory called Altered Ear, which serves as a platform for cross-fertilized efforts in cinema, contemporary art, and music. He is inspired by artists from the UK-based Warp label. In his project "Munma" he offers atmospheric sounding electronica with sharp beats and cuts. His interest in sound design is obvious: The music, well produced and with a variety of textures - by trend rather clean-sounding, moves freely between the left and the right of the speaker, between foreground and background. Andraos offers a piano-based electronica that is inspired by music from Aphex Twin to John Cage and Erik Satie. All their albums are released on the Incognito label.

Cynthia Zaven, who used to play in new wave bands in the 1980s (see chapter 3.4.6), works with different media. Besides using her piano in documentary, feature, and experimental films and videos, she uses it as the trigger for software-based digital installations, and performances. She showed her works in festivals and exhibitions in Europe and Asia. Her sound and video installation "The Untuned Piano Concerto" (2006), based on a performance she realized in New Delhi, involves improvisations on a piano while atop a truck driving through the city, interacting with horns and engine sounds in real time. In a report she writes the following:

> I had taken the piano out of its normal 'habitat,' therefore de-contextualizing an ordinary setting, and was using it to interact with a city that was not mine, in a language I knew best (music). We drove around the busy roads of Delhi with me sitting in the back improvising on the piano, challenging the instrument to connect with the urban environment, almost like trying to fit in a place I didn't belong to. Some drivers would beep back, some would just stare in awe thinking it was a movie that was being shot. Feeling the instrument turn into a purely sonic interface to communicate with cars, rickshaws and trucks was both an intense and fun experiment. (Zaven, 2005)

In a second step, Zaven edited the recorded and filmed material and presented it as an installation.

> And there it was, my 'Untuned Piano Concerto with Delhi Traffic Orchestra' screened on a wall with a rickshaw inside the venue. Speakers on each side of the screen would be playing the traffic track. Visitors would sit inside the rickshaw to hear the edited piano track coming out from the small speakers I had installed in the back and the front of the vehicle. It was messier than I thought as I had imagined the whole setting to be indoors, but the rickshaw couldn't fit through the door. Messy,

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[127] Many of the key musicians of my research attended: Zeid Hamdan, Raed Yassin, Joelle Khoury, Cynthia Zaven, and others.

> chaotic and noisy, like the performance itself, and definitely an experience I will not
> forget. (Zaven, 2006)[128]

Some of these artists are linked to sound artists in the region. They, for example, work with the Cairo-based label 100copies that is run by Mahmoud Refat and includes various artists. Refat renders in his electro-acoustic performances, the specific sounds and noises of Cairo and rural Egypt into moving soundscapes. Contacts exist to Palestine, where, for example, Checkpoint 303 works with field recordings and electro-acoustic music, or to leftist sound activists like Eran Sachs in West Jerusalem. Further collaborations exist with electro-acoustic artist Erdem Helvacioglu, and with the Nomad network in Istanbul. The latter works with digital art across disciplines: with sound artists, designers, engineers, architects, curators and writers. Overall, these "experimental" music scenes lead us towards different or alternative definitions of *locality* and *place*, of *authenticity* and *modernity* in music. This we will discuss in the final chapter.

Charbel Haber and his band Scrambled Eggs work between free improvised music and lo-fi experimental rock and punk rock. He brings us into the next "category" of subcultural music in Beirut.

4.1.2   Rock and Metal Music

In August 2005, I break into a completely different world of music in Beirut: The world of metal music and rock. Woody Nawfal, an organiser for various rock events in Beirut, takes me on a "tour" to the "Instruments Garage" of Virgin Mega Store. This headquarters of the Virgin Mega Store is located in East Beirut, just off the Jdeideh highway. It hosts a repair station for instruments. Woody introduces me to the musicians working there: Georges Melhem, a Jazz musician and an ambitious guitar maker. Melhem repairs guitars for Virgin Mega Store, and he builds his own guitars in his free time. Elias Njeim, the fastest guitar player in the Middle East, according to his friends. He plays "progressive rock" with his band ESN project, and he plans to leave for Australia soon. Elias works in several jobs to earn his living. "Normally, I sleep between 5am and 9am" (Elias 2005) - the stories in this repair station do not resemble the ones from the experimental sound artists at all. Ian Chidiac is the bass player of a band called Synapsis. "Rock music is just the only place in our lives where we can be ourselves. The rest is: working, working, and looking after your family, your wife, and your kids." Every Thursday his band performs in Cherries Pub in Antelias, and on Fridays in Nova in Sin Del Fil. "You should go there. Either to see us, or to see The Kordz on Saturdays!" (Chidiac, 2005)

Especially in East Beirut, one finds several places to offer rock concerts from Wednesdays to Saturdays. The Nova Club in Sinn al-Fil is one important spot. It is a pub, with a big bar, many pool tables, and dartboards. The crowd is very mixed: young and old, more men than women. They stare, quiet and somehow concentrated on the stage. Each Saturday the rock band The Kordz performs here. They play well: very powerful and soulful rock music. Moe Hamzeh, the singer, has a strong, colourful voice. He sings with full passion, jumps up and down: he really lives his music. The Kordz is one of the key rock bands in Beirut at the time of writing. I met Moe Hamzeh several times during my field trips, and he told me many things about rock music in Lebanon, and especially about the censorship of Lebanese rock and metal music in the 1990s. Hamzeh was born in 1972, and he lived in Beirut his whole life. He studied geology and hydrology at the American University of Beirut (AUB)

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[128] Written in her report for the KHOJ – International Artists Association.
http://khojworkshop.org/book/cynthia_zavens_report (checked in January 2009)

and joined the university's music club. Between 1990 and 1998 he became the president of the club, and organized a lot of music events in AUB West Hall. In 1992 he founded The Kordz. The band performed all over Lebanon, once even in the occupied territories in the South. With up to five concerts a week, he was able to supplement his income: He got $20 for his first concerts, and later around $100 when performing at weddings. From the start, The Kordz played evergreens out of the pop, rock, soul and reggae world. In 1998 a friend asked Moe if he was interested in working for Musicmaster, the legal distributor for Warner Music in Lebanon. Moe applied for the job and got it. He was responsible for the distribution and promotion of the Warner Music products in Lebanon. Moe liked the job - he was finally able to earn his living with music. At the time of writing he works at the headquarters of the Virgin Mega Store, and he runs his own small label and helps in producing and promoting bands: for example, the rock band Paulak, or Jawad al-Hachem, who by the time of writing, work in Dubai most of the time. Both play straight indie rock music with English lyrics.

Beirut further features a large and diverse metal scene that includes many of its sub-forms such as heavy-, death-, doom-, and black-metal. The scene has a wide following and holds many small concerts and a few big festivals. Members of this community meet with like-minded contemporaries all over the world via transnational websites. Locally, however, its members continue to live under a certain pressure of the Lebanese government, religious representatives, and a rather conservative society.

The music of Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, and other early metal bands reached Lebanon in the 1970s. In the 1990s, metal grew more popular and was celebrated at the "head-bangers balls" in the confessionally-mixed Western parts of the city as well. "The war had just ended, and we wanted to breathe freely and get rid of our aggression," says Cyrille Najjar (Najjar 2006) from the gothic band The Arcane. Many of these *metalheadz*, with their long hair and piercings, were accused of preaching or believing in Satanism - an old stigma throughout the history of the genre. Many insiders oppose this view clearly: " We never had real Satanists here. It was a fashion mainly, it was about being rebellious" (Najjar 2006). After a youngster seemingly copied Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain by committing suicide, things got worse; psychologists and religious leaders debated the matter on major TV shows, and found metal culture guilty. The police started to raid metal gatherings, harassed people, and sometimes even put them in jail - where their heads were often shaved of their long hair. Drugs, mainly hashish, heroin and cocaine, became another issue. Drugs were indeed part of the Lebanese metal culture, as many musicians and fans remember. One recalls an incident: "While our guitarist tried to convince the policemen that rock and metal music was completely drug free, we gained the necessary time to remove the drugs from our bass drum." (Anonymous, 2006) While the country's major political forces had been involved in the drug business during the Civil War, in the 1990s the government (under international pressure) began to crack down on it. The Ghassan Rahbani Group and others started promotion campaigns for a drug-free metal and rock culture. Many metal groups still do so today, trying to polish the negative image metal culture still has in Lebanese society.

In the mid-1990s the government confiscated metal and rock albums and issued a blacklist, banning any music that talked about religion. The list was ridiculous, says Moe Hamzeh:

First the police stopped every kid with black clothes and long hair, confiscated his or

her discs and put them on the black list – for example Bon Jovi, and Pink Floyd.

Later the list became a bit more specific, as the censors at the General Security

became a bit more knowledgeable about metal music. (Hamzeh, 2006)

Certain bands and albums, such as Iron Maiden's 666 album "The Number of the Beast," are still forbidden. The General Security's censorship has neither fixed rules nor fixed criteria. Representatives of the Christian church or Muslim clerics are frequently asked to decide whether a piece of music might go against the morals and principles of their, or any other religion. The main idea behind it seems to be to keep peace between the confessional parties of this fragile nation. Some musicians who enjoy the backing of powerful people have a certain freedom: "Being a member of the Rahbani family and the great singer Fairuz, I can say things in public that others can't" (Ghassan Rahbani 2006). Censorship also created a trade in contraband: "Buying CDs was like buying drugs," a metal musician remembers, "in some stores the CDs were hidden in the basement, or in a fridge full of metal CDs. It was exciting, but expensive." (Anonymous, 2005) Many musicians remember that they got their rock albums through friends who lived abroad but smuggled them in when they came to Beirut. Others argue that the port of Jounieh was the key area: "The CDs used to enter from the port of Kaslik Jounieh. We used to get everything via the sea: The food, the clothes, the CDs, everything… we were having good life" (Rahbani, 2006).

Today, international metal bands might sell up to 4,000 copies in Lebanon legally, says Virgin Mega Store owner Jihad Murr. "However there is a huge amount sold illegally, or downloaded on the net." The local bands sometimes get radio support or find sponsors for their concerts, mainly in the alcohol and tobacco industry. At the local Rock Nation Festival, they perform annually in front of a crowd of up to two thousand people.

Oath to Vanquish is the most successful death metal band from Lebanon at the time of writing. They occasionally perform in Europe, and their debut CD "Applied Schizophrenic Science" (2006) was licensed to Grindethic Records in the UK. Regionally, the band is linked to the promotion agency Jordan River Entertainment, which also represents bands such as Deathless Anguish from Saudi Arabia, and Ajdath from the very active Jordanian metal scene.

Ayat is a strong black metal band with outspoken lyrics. The members of the band live in Lebanon and Abu Dhabi, and have produced several EPs and the CD "Six Years of Dormant Hatred." Their mission is quite radical: "Ayat supports the total annihilation of mankind, mistreatment of women, torture of those who deserve it, and supreme fucking mayhem across all nations, religions and races of the earth. If you are offended by our beliefs you might as well fuck off. Necronarcos is the only law! Your god considers you worthless…" (taken from their website - a wordplay between necrology (death), narcotics, and *Necrons*, a robot-like species in the war game "Warhammer 40,000").

The band Weeping Willow gets some financial support through Jihad Murr, the owner of Virgin Mega Store. The band started in the 1990s as a black metal band, but now plays death metal. I will focus on this band, and mainly on their band leader Garo Gdanian, in chapter 6.4. Other Lebanese bands include the reunited heavy and thrash metal band Blaakyum (which has performed in London), the doom metal group Kimaera, Deveiled (featuring the female guitarist Joy), Cerebral Mutilation with their death metal and grindcore album "Inhuman Gore Holocaust," the black metal bands Kaoteon, Dethroned, Vomit, Damaar, Bloodlink, and Veinen and Kafan from Xardas, and the death metal band Infernal Bedlam, among others. Doshka is an upcoming metal artist. He is trained in Arabic classical singing and is now produced by urban music pioneer Zeid Hamdan on the Lebanese Underground label. All of these bands adhere to most of the distinctive cultural characteristics and codes of globalized metal culture: aggressive singing, distorted guitars, and symbols depicting the

realms of evil. The obligatory tattoos, piercings, and long hair, however, are sometimes missing, as they are taboos in Lebanese society.

Lyrically, most of the bands tackle social and political issues. Oath to Vanquish developed "what they call an 'applied schizophrenic science', exploring and developing political commentary 'through the veil of allegory and unsettling imagery'" (LeVine, 2008). "We went through three wars, I don't know any metal band worldwide who went through that. We spent a lot of time in shelters, we knew how to listen to the bombs, we knew which sounds meant danger, and which not," they say in an interview with VBS TV. In the interview they talk about their video "Executive Onslaught;" a video that has never been aired in Lebanon. The video shows moving pictures of all the Lebanese leaders. "It is a direct accusation against our corrupt clan and war leaders," they say.

The group Ayat explains, "We live in a fucked up society, we spent our younger years hanging out with 40- and 50-year old ex-militias telling us tales about murder, drug dealers, and ex-convicts. Nice people really."[129]

While metal culture involves fans and bands from all of Lebanon's confessional groups, Christian fans and bands still seem to dominate. For the metal community, however, this is not an issue: "Metal and religion do not mix. This is part of the freedom of it," says Najjar. Metalheadz belong to various social groups. Some stem from well-off and educated families, others from the working or middle class. The scene covers the whole country, not only Beirut, unlike most other urban music forms in Lebanon. Some bands and fans even built online communities crossing the divide between the Arab world and Israel. Pierre Hecker mentions the Syrian-Lebanese band The Hourglass meeting and communicating with the Israeli metal band Orphaned Band. "While the national borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours remain all but closed, the virtual space of the Internet stands wide open" (Hecker, 2005, p. 62). One artist of the metal scene tells me very clearly that he would love to see peace with between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. One day he would love to perform in Tel Aviv and meet the Israeli metal groups. (Anonymous, 2006)

4.1.3   Urban Music: Indie Pop and Rap

Zeid Hamdan is the pioneer of urban music in Lebanon. I will focus on him and his various bands, including the Soap Kills and The New Government in chapter 6.6. The New Government (2004) was one of Hamdan's bands: It mixed indie rock, pop and punk with a retro touch of the 1970s and wrote provocative lyrics: "I killed the Prime Minister, I killed the famous journalist … we are the new Government." The band had to stop, officially due to some visa problems of some of their foreign band members. Soap Kills is Zeid Hamdan's duo project with Yasmine Hamdan: The two mix electronic beats with Arabic singing. For many years now, Hamdan has kept creating new labels and platforms for subcultural music groups, mainly working in genres like rap or electro pop. Often he worked together with the Beirut-based record shop La CD-Thèque and its distribution label Incognito. Hamdan's latest promotion platform, Lebanese Underground, hosts various artists: The electro-trash duos Lumi and The Suicides, the video artist Ziad Saad, the rappers Katibe 5, and others. The platform is closely linked to the Basement Club in Beirut that regularly hosts the most ambitious DJs and producers of electronic music from Lebanon and abroad.

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[129] taken from video on the bands website

Lumi is the duo of the singer Mayaline Hage and Marc Codsi, who plays electric guitar with Scrambled Eggs, and electro-acoustics with the free improvised music circles. The duo recently signed a deal with EMI Arabia. They define their music as glam rock and pop; I would define it as electro-rock. Hage sings in English, her mid-range voice balances between eccentric and well-balanced timbres. The songs are either straightforward indie rock songs with some electronic disturbances - or the other way round: Electro track with rock music inserts. The music is always a bit punk, a bit pop, always light-sounding, however with surprising breaks, and introduced noises.

Rap

> The Lebanese Youth has a tremendous energy, but for some bullshit reasons the
> world thinks we are all terrorists. That's complete bullshit. We are the most
> hospitable people! We Lebanese have minds like no-one. We can sell ice-cubes to an
> Eskimo. It's time that this country starts to shine again. We were Phoenicians back in
> the days. So, it's time that the phoenix rises from the ashes" (O-Marz, 2006).

Rap music is big in Beirut. Rappers are just everywhere. They perform at beach parties, at festivals organized by Zeid Hamdan, at the Fête de la Musique, and on many other occasions. It is a scene in the making. Everybody wants to be a rapper - or so it seems. Boys and girls seem to enjoy the lifestyle that they attach to rap: They feel cool, important, and attractive to girls - or boys. They enjoy being creative, and produce personal lyrics. However, this does not mean that all of them are just brilliant, that all those MCs rap with the necessary flow, and that they know how to play with rhythms, or how to use the timbres of their voices. Actually, I suffered a lot while attending those hip hop performances. Why did I choose to come to Beirut, I sometimes asked myself? I remembered all the brilliant rap I had heard all over the globe - mostly on the net: Rap from Dakar, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, and Latin America; Kwaito music in Johannesburg; but also rap in Belgrade. During some of the concerts I started to think in stereotypical metaphors: These Beiruti rappers do not have the "music in their veins," and they "don't feel the beat and the sound." Or: One hears that Beirut has a short and minimal tradition of urban music, subcultural music, and alternative music - as a contrast to Belgrade, for example. Then, I relaxed a bit - I remembered other field trips that I had done, for example, to London to work with Indian and Pakistani musicians. It always takes time to find the really interesting artists, especially if you go to see artists perform live - the discrepancies between live performances and the produced CD can be huge at times. I was again more positive: The larger the number of rappers, the bigger the chance that excellent rappers will come through.

Aks'ser is one of the pioneer rap groups in Lebanon - I will focus on Aks'ser founder Wael Kodeih in chapter 6.5. Another pioneer is MC RGB. This talented beatboxer comes from the Sunni neighbourhood of Basta, from a working-class background. Together with MC Waldo and Banelli from the Christian quarter of Achrafieh, he formed the group Kitaa Beirut in 1999. In 2002 the group disappeared in France after one of their performances. They came back to Beirut in 2005, re-launched the band with MC Stress and MC Joker, and re-named it Kita'youn (Boys of The Sector). Katibet Khamseh (Battalion Five) is a very special group: They are five Palestinian rappers who live in the Palestinian refugee camp of Burj al-Barajneh. They released an album on the Incognito label; Zeid Hamdan was the musical supervisor. A rather young group is the twin duo, Ashekman (Exhaust Pipe).

Political Rap: New World Disorder

Another large group of rappers use the imagery of resistance fighters (or fundamentalists and terrorists, depending on the interpretation) in Palestine, Southern Lebanon, and other parts of the Arab world. These rappers are part of a regional and global network of mostly Muslim rappers. One of them calls himself Beirutus. He awaits the viewer of his myspace site with a gun put to his face, and calls himself the "pan-Arabic, nationalistic, guerrilla warfare adoring MC." Further we find the following sentence on the site: "Keep a lookout for Lebanon's heavyweight emcee coming to your hood sooner than an airliner can strike another skyscraper…Beirutus has risen!" Some of these groups are featured on a 23-track LP compilation with the title "New World Disorder." It features 15 MCs from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Morocco, Egypt and Arabs in Europe and the United States. The LP was compiled by Lethal Skillz, a very active DJ in the Beirut scene. In the following pages I will have a closer look at him, and at one of his key rappers, MC Omarz. Later I will take a brief look at the transnational level.

DJ Lethal Skillz

> DJ Lethal Skillz war mehr HipHop als irgendjemand, den ich je zuvor in meinem Leben getroffen hatte. (…) Seine Platten bestellte er in den USA, sein ganzer HipHop-Habitus war aus den USA. (...) Wir rauchten und daddelten; es war angenehm, bei Lethal abzuhängen, er war ein sehr entspannter Typ. Was jedoch seine persönliche Religion betrug, war er fanatischer Fundamentalist. Er huldigte bedingungslos dem Gott der schwarzen Rille. Hin und wieder ging er zu seinen Turntables, macht ein paar virtuose Scratches und sagte dann, mantraartig, mehr zu sich als zu irgendjemand sonst, Hetzparolen wie: 'Vinyl ist gross! Nieder mit der CD! Nie werde ich die Turntables aufgeben. Unter keinen Umständen, no fucking way. Eher sterbe ich. Ich schwör's zu Gott, ich werde sie niemals verraten.' (Nieswandt, 2006, pp. 159-161)

Hussein Mao Atwi is known as DJ Lethal Skillz or the PhonoSapien Monk of da 3rd World. He is all hip-hop; even his cat is called Scratch. The German DJ legend Hans Nieswandt, who visited Beirut in 2005, shows in his quote above, how deep this involvement goes. At our first meeting, Lethal Skillz collected me in his yellow sports car (16.8.2005). He wears trendy sunglasses, his head is shaved, and he holds the latest and most modern mobile phone in his hand. Lethal Skillz works as a consultant for the American Tobacco Company. Thanks to his job he travels a lot, and he uses these trips to network with the local hip-hop scenes - in 2005 he interacted with rappers from Indonesia: "Music is my life, you know. I just use my job to get enough money to buy equipment and build my music career." (Lethal Skillz, 2005) His company offered him an amazing flat in the heart of Achrafieh. He lives on the 15th floor in an immense apartment of at least 300 to 400 square meters of floor space. The apartment is surrounded by big balconies, from which one has an amazing view over East Beirut, the Green Line, the new city centre, the harbour, and the beginning of West Beirut. The white, slippery floor causes problems to Lethal Skillz black cat Scratch. Situated behind a red and transparent wall of plastic is the "chill out lounge": with a huge black sofa, a huge TV, a big staple of DVDs, a video game console, and a video camera on a tripod. A king-size fridge full of Almaza beer

is the central focus point of the kitchen. The living room hosts a huge desk with turntables, various samplers, and a mixer. "Here I rehearse, sometimes all night through," he explains:

> Often I film myself rehearse and watch it critically the next day. I started to do so
> when I lived in Saudi Arabia and had not one DJ I could compare myself with. You
> have to work on your skills to get somewhere." (Lethal Skillz, 2005)

Lethal Skillz was born in 1976. He grew up in West Beirut, where his family had moved to from South Lebanon. His father played the oud, and listened to a lot of Egyptian music. In 1984 the family moved abroad and lived in a great variety of places: first Cyprus, then again Beirut, then Ghana, Chad, and London. In the mid-1990s the family returned to Beirut. In school, Lethal Skillz started break-dancing, and he recorded his own tapes from the radio and sold it to his friends: mostly music from the US East Coast, Notorious BIG, Gangstarr, A Tribe Called Quest, NAS, Hieroglyphics, 2Pac, and others. "I got the mixtapes from a friend who lived in New York. And my father had a hi-fi store and a machine to dub cassettes. I was rather lucky." (Lethal Skillz, 2005) Soon, Lethal Skillz played music in one of the many pirate radio stations. "I felt like a real DJ now," he remembers. "The pirate radio station played rock music, only my hip-hop show every Friday at 5 pm was the exception." Soon, Lethal Skillz bought more technical equipment: Turntables, a good computer, sound software that "you find everywhere for free in Beirut," and a sampler. He invested a lot, and today he can produce his own beats and record rappers and DJs in his home studio: mainly the rappers and MCs on his labels Phonosapian Produktionz, and 961Underground. One thus finds many videos of his home on the youtube platform.

"Hip-Hop basically started in Beirut in the mid-1990s when many Lebanese moved back to their country," Lethal Skillz tells me. "First, most of us were into American Hip-Hop, into the East Side or the West Side, bitches, cars, and drugs. We thought the Hip-Hop lifestyle was cool, and we loved it because our society did not tolerate it too much." Lethal Skillz went to many parties, and started to meet peers who were into Hip-Hop too. "So many talents were around, so my goal became clear: We have to bring Lebanon onto the map of international Hip-Hop!" To reach his goal, Lethal Skillz started knocking on many doors: "We tried to get a Hip-Hop program on one of the TV or Radio stations, but it was impossible," he explains.

> Today, we mainly use the Internet, and I could not imagine ever again living without
> it. The network of our MCs, DJs, but also fans is spread worldwide. Thanks to the
> Internet, these geographical distances do not matter anymore. I can perform live with
> a Japanese artist while sitting in my bedroom in Beirut. And I don't have to be afraid
> of getting lost in Japan, and of eating Japanese food. (Lethal Skillz, 2005)

Lethal Skillz' circle became increasingly transnational. Today he collaborates with rappers from Ramallah, Arabic rappers in Europe and the US, and with Muslim rappers from Malaysia. "The rappers from Ramallah, for example, sent me a file with their lyrics, and I produced the music for it," Lethal Skillz explains. The support inside the rap circle is huge: "We put each other's links on our websites, we select the other Arab rappers as our top friends on myspace, we play and promote each other's music." Lethal Skillz says: "We are a family, and we hope it leads us somewhere." Recently, Lethal Skillz produced the documentary film "961Underground," in which he interviewed rap musicians from Lebanon, but also from other Arab countries. Further, he created and keeps creating a variety of groups and collectives: Oriental Robotics is a group with the MCs O-Marz and Johnny Damascus that plays samples from Japanese Manga movies; or a project called Fariq al-Attrache that uses samples from the Egyptian singer Farid al-Atrash. "We are like a fucking army! We have MCs

and DJs, many great talents. We represent the Arab world, and we are close to Japan, France and Germany; soon Arabic rap is going to be big - and on the map!"

Lethal Skillz argues that he wants to show another side of the Arab world: not the plastic pop world, and not the world of terrorism. However, he and many of his friends use symbols often associated either with Palestinian resistance, or with Islamic fundamentalism. In one of his videos from the album "New World Disorder," DJ Lethal Skillz scratches on to a tune with an oriental-flavoured melody, produced by synthesized strings. The movie switched between a young woman moving her hips and arms smoothly and like a snake to the melodies, and Lethal Skillz moving rather clumsily, but in the typical hip-hop style to the beat. He stands behind his turntables and produces virtuosic and precise scratches. He is wearing the Keffiyeh, the Arab headscarf that is associated with the late Yassir Arafat. In another video he produces himself as a monk. His turntables are placed in front of a big temple. Again he is wearing the Arafat look. With his beats, the monks outside their temple start to move. They take their traditional swords and start to fight.

MC O-Marz

MC O-Marz is one of the main rappers Lethal Skillz works with. O-Marz calls himself "The One Man Army" whose weapon is the microphone: "It's about changing Arabia! I want this fucked up region to prosper. I want to see us export great music, arts, and cartoons, not only commercialized pop and terrorism," he tells me, and: "I'm heavily into the noble art of sword fights." Lethal Skillz calls O-Marz one of the best battle-rappers in Beirut. He raps with an American slang, in an aggressive, fast, spoken-words style. He uses "fuck" in every third sentence.

I met O-MARZ several times. He lived in a furnished apartment in Hamra - in a room that cost $350 a month. Even though the room is small, he often would hang out with some other MCs playing computer games all day long. When I met him in September (9.9.2005) he was doing exactly that. Next to his bed lies a book about the Druze in Lebanon. "I prefer reading to watching TV," he tells me, "especially history books, and fantasy novels."

O-Marz was born in 1982 to an Egyptian mother and a Lebanese father in Cairo. "It's complicated," O-Marz tells me: "My father is originally from Yemen. My mother's family comes from Turkey." His father was a well-off political journalist. According to O-Marz, he lost money because he did not want to compromise - O-Marz does not go into details here, but he thinks that his father was still too moderate. O-Marz grew up mainly in Greece, but by the end of the 1980s he moved to Beirut.

> I'm not from Beirut; my family comes from a mountain village on the outskirts of
> Saida. That's a difference, I tell you. The village is beautiful, it is green, with simple
> people, farmers, good old women that go out to pick their own vegetables from their
> land. Whenever I go back there, I remember who I am. I'm basically Lebanese, and
> I'm proud of the Lebanese flag and the cedar, but I'm Arab before anything else. The
> only reason why there are borders between me, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan is the
> colonial history. (O-Marz, 2005)

O-Marz complains a lot about the fake Arab politics, about all these Arab leaders who just work against each other, instead of uniting the Arab world, as he says: "They are corrupt, and tyrannical. Every Arab child should dream of a unified Arab World," he continues: "We all speak Arabic, we should all be under one banner and under one flag" (O-Marz, 2005). O-Marz loves Arabic

music, the singer Farid al-Atrash, for example, but also Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, Umm Kulthoum, Asmahan, Abd al-Halim Hafez, Wadih al-Safi, and Fairuz as well. "My parents had this music playing around the clock, so how could I not love it? My father was old-school, and very much into that music. My mother just loved music. She listened to The Beatles as well, and she was in love with Elvis Presley" (O-Marz, 2005). In his music with Lethal Skillz, O-Marz sometimes uses samples from the old Egyptian singers. But there are other influences as well. Public Enemy was a revelation: "Since then I wanted to become a rapper who uses social conscious lyrics" (O-Marz, 2005). The other main influence of O-Marz is the group Wu-Tang Clan. "Many hip-hop guys would tell you that the golden days of hip-hop were in the 1980s, for our generation it's the 1990s, when Wu-Tang Clan came out" *(*O-Marz, 2005). US American rappers like Wu-Tang Clan have sometimes used the word "Beirut" in their lyrics - mainly as a metaphor for war, chaos, and horror.

Another main influence is the Japanese animation movie, mainly the cartoon Grendizer, a robot hero that many Lebanese of that generation watched when they were children. "It was dubbed into Arabic. And we were all just addicted to it. The series was about this guy who looked human but was an alien from another planet. He is a good person, and he comes to earth as a pilot of his huge robot called Grendizer. There he gets into many fights against evil. And the music is just great," O-Marz (2005) says, and starts to sing all these theme songs. He and his friends were all very much into Japanese Manga movies - the rapper Johnny Damascus even learned Japanese in order to be able to understand them, and not to have to watch it in English.

> You should read the book called 'The Book of Five Rings' by Musashi Miyamoto.
> He is the greatest Samurai ever. He follows the principles of Sun Tzus' 'The Art of
> War'. The samurai is the most honourable warrior; he respects his enemies. Even if
> he hates his enemy he owes him respect when he gets up to give a good fight. (O-
> Marz, 2005)

O-Marz says that he finds "honesty" in these ancient stories, and that he loves the Japanese, because they "are noble warriors that never give up. Just look at them: They lost wars, but they came back and they are a leading nation in economics and culture. The music that comes out of Japan is just incredible. And the movies: Look at the animation movie 'Samurai Champloo', it's all mixed with hip-hop" (O-Marz, 2005).[130] O-Marz can talk a whole afternoon about Japanese culture, and he does so in our meeting. However, after a while he concludes: "I wish we Arabs could be half what the Japanese are," he says, and his friend answers: "We were, you know, we were! I wish we could have lived back in those days, and not today!" O-Marz agrees with him: "We don't fit into this age. There is no honour left, it does not matter anymore how people live or die" (O-Marz, 2005). Still O-Marz and his friends have one big vision: They want to change Arabia, they keep saying. This is one the main reason that they sometimes rap in Fusha, in Literary Arabic. They call this style *fus-hop*, and they claim to have invented it in 2002. "It's the language from the holy Qur'an. I want everyone in

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[130] It is interesting to note that other musicians from the war generation talked about Grendizer and other Manga movies as well. For Raed Yassin from the Free Improvised Music Circle, Grendizer was an important influence. In my interview with Raed Yassin, he mentions other Manga series: Shintakarajima (known in English as the New Treasure Island). This anime series was overdubbed into Arabic as well. Plus there were other series: Mazinger, Metal Man (Al-Rajul Al-Hadidy), Sandibell, Sally (The Little Princess), Lady, Captain Majid, Captain Thabit, Ninja, Al-Darba Al-sa Iqa, Al-Ramyatul Multahiba, and more. Superman was another big hero - especially for Raed. He loved the superman magazines that he used to buy in Beirut, translated into Arabic: "The drawings came from outside, but they translated and printed it in Lebanon. In one story a house cleaner is actually singing a song by Fairuz!" (Yassin, 2006).

the Arab world to understand my lyrics. I am from Lebanon, but I'm connected to the whole Arab world. The goal is to empower the Arab world, and to enrich the Arabs in the Diaspora as well" (O-Marz, 2005). O-Marz continues saying that he feels inspired by Che Guevara. He defines himself as a humanist rapping for the poor. One of his tracks is called "I Am a Terrorist," another one "Empty ur 22z," and another track "Jihadhood." The latter uses sharp beats, *Jihad* is scratched so it becomes a rhythmically pronounced "J J J J jihad." In the lyrics he offers his reflections about the stands of the Arab world within the global world, but also about issues inside the Arab world. It is, however, difficult to make sense of the lyrics; especially because they are written in very bad English on his myspace site.

> EMPTY ur 22z
> west leb district/we kill
> shit/east leb side/we get
> high/iraq rocks with
> vigilance/palestine/we kill
> guyz/syria let ur rusiian migz
> flip/while the fish fry/jordanz
> for jaw breakerz/we pushin weight
> like kuwait/qatar barz iz
> major/bahrain rain makes
> dates/saudi be bout bout it
> god/man o man/this is oman/yemenz
> allowed to be lowed

It is difficult to know what he and his friends really think about jihadist groups like al-Qaida. They say that they want to show that the Arab world is not only about terrorists, but they support Hizbullah (at least some of them), and they feel connected to the Palestinian struggle. For O-Marz rapping seems like a mission:

> When I'm rapping I am picturing myself at war, I am picturing myself that I am
> rapping but it's a battlefield, a war. So it is an orgy, a revolution inside when it comes
> to my rhymes. I just use all my thoughts together and it comes off into something that
> is stupid. (O-Marz, 2005)

O-Marz thinks that god blessed him with his rapping skills. "I think it is my duty. God blessed me with this: Not many people can rap as I can. And it's my duty towards hip-hop to rap, and to influence others to rap too. We have to expand the hip-hop culture: This is our duty to Arabia as well" (O-Marz, 2005)

Lebanese rappers are closely connected to rappers in the surrounding Arab countries, but also with diaspora Arabs in Europe and the USA.[131][132] O-Marz is convinced that Beirut is the centre of this

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[131] The transnational scene includes the following artists at the time of writing. All of them have their own Websites or MySpace-Sites: MC Malikah, MC Miskeena, MC Moe, MC La Gale, DAM, Ramallah Underground, Sabrina Da Witch, Black Bannerz Holywar, Arabian Knightz, Eslam Jawaad, Palestine aka Ref-UG, MC Mosiris, The Lost Children of Babylon, and others. Dutch-based rapper Salah Edin is one of the stars in the scene. His 2006 video clip "Het Land Van…" (The country of…) lead to a great controversy in the Netherlands. The video graphic images are of how life in Holland is through the eyes of Salah Edin and other Muslims.

transnational rap universe. He argues that the Lebanese are multi-lingual and speak Arabic, English, and French, often fluently.

> Plus we have genius rappers like Johnny Damascus who learns Japanese, we have Armenian rappers, we have Russian rappers, everything. When these Lebanese rappers grab their mics they are grabbing a sword. You can kill a man with your microphone, with your words only. You can destroy someone's career. That's how powerful hip-hop is. (O-Marz, 2005)

When I meet Lethal Skillz again, we discussed confessionalism. Even though some of the lyrics have an Islamist touch to them, Lethal Skillz assures me that most of the Muslim rappers in Beirut have nothing against other religions. As for himself, religion is an issue, and in his statement he professes tolerance and humour: "I studied all the religious books. I'm interested in Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, everything. But my main religious is the vinyl!" (Lethal Skillz, 2005)

4.2   Technoscapes, Financescapes, Ideoscapes, Mediascapes, Ethnoscapes

4.2.1   Technoscapes – Technical Equipment and Possibilities

> Today, millions of ordinary people have the tools and the role model to become amateur producers. Some of them will also have talent and vision. Because the means of production have spread so widely and to so many people, the talented and visionary ones, even if they're just a small fraction of the total, are becoming a force to be reckoned with. Don't be surprised if some of the most creative and influential work in the next few decades come from this Pro-Am class of inspired hobbyists, not from the traditional sources in the commercial world. (Anderson, 2006, p. 65)

"The ants have megaphones," writes Chris Anderson (Anderson, 2006, p. 99). The universe of content is growing faster than ever. The options to show us and make us heard on the World Wide Web increase with great speed. Additionally, many musicians and sound artists from the Arab World do profit from that trend: In Palestine, Checkpoint 303, the network Ramallah Underground or the rap crew DAM, mix rap, electro-acoustic experiments and field recordings to political messages. Thanks to their websites, they reach niche audiences worldwide. Mika, a Lebanese born in Britain, even reached the top of the British charts, mainly through online promotion.

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[132] The connection between Islam and rap is not new: The Nation of Islam movement and its splinter group Five Percent Nation have both been influencing American hip-hop for a long time. They have now been joined by new organisations such as Remarkable Current, which is managed by Anas Canon aka BeLikeMuhammad. On their website, they ask the following question: "How can you become a vehicle for shaping the future of Muslim American Culture?" The group acts with a missionary statement: "Try to introduce your peers to the synergy of spiritual expression and the pulse of contemporary art. Exhibit the beauty of Islam not simply through your words and actions but through the positive environment and soulful energy that Remarkable Current creates. Join us in shaping the future of Islam's influence on cultural expression in America today." Other platforms go in similar directions: RADIOISLAM.com (Celebrating Life as Muslims), or the platform MuslimHipHop.com, in which the well-known rapper Ali Shaheed Muhammad (A Tribe Called Quest) is involved. Love and tolerance are to the forefront of these new music scenes, which are more spiritual than religious. Some Muslim and non-Muslim musicians also use the symbols of "Islamic" or "Muslim" culture as a provocation, as a style accessory, or to market their music. The US star rapper Lil' Kim, for example, was photographed half-naked in an Afghan burka. Muslim singers that allow themselves a tirade on world politics, on the other hand, are still a rarity.

Anderson lists three main forces that led to this situation: the democratization of the tools of production (digital video cameras, desktop music and software); the democratization of the tools of distribution (Amazon, eBay, iTunes); and new mediators that connect supply and demand (Weblogs, Google, MySpace, etc.) (Anderson, 2006, pp. 53-57). He writes of a confusing mosaic of a million mini-markets and micro-stars: "Increasingly, the mass market is turning into a mass of niches. That mass of niches has always existed, but as the cost of reaching it falls – consumers finding niche products, and niche products finding consumers – it's suddenly becoming a cultural and economic force to be reckoned with" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 5-6). The major changes are ultimately based on a business model: The model of the Long Tail[133]. In Long-Tail businesses, not only a singular star is important:

> Hit-driven economics (…) is a creation of an age in which there just wasn't enough
> room to carry everything for everybody: not enough shelf space for all the CDs,
> DVDs, and video games produced; not enough screens to show all the available
> movies; not enough channels to broadcast all the TV programs; not enough radio
> waves to play all the music created; and nowhere near enough hours on the day to
> squeeze everything through any of these slots. This is the world of scarcity. Now,
> with online distribution and retail, we are entering a world of abundance. The
> differences are profound." (Anderson, 2006, p. 18)

The changes become increasingly fast: for example, with Print-On-Demand solutions[134] soon we will stream everything from around this planet easily into our houses. "The main effect of all this connectivity is unlimited and unfiltered access to culture and content of all sorts, from the mainstream to the farthest fringe of the underground" (Anderson, 2006, p. 3).

Most of the sound artists and musicians in Beirut own their own small laptop. They use various programs to record, edit, manipulate, convert, repair, analyse or mix audio files: for example, Logic Pro, Cubase, MAX/MSP, Ableton Live, and many more. Often, the musicians exchange the programs with each other, or they download them as pirated copies, shareware, or freeware from the World Wide Web. The main winners of *digitalization* are the artists who work with electronic music, and do not need expensive microphones and instruments, or a recording studio and a sound engineer to record their music. My research will show that many of the Lebanese rock and metal bands actually

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[133] As a difference to the normal shops in retail business, online shops have big storage and shelf space. Mostly these storage places are situated outside the expensive urban areas. Thus, these online shops can afford to have 1 Million CDs. At the end, the calculation is the same: if one CD sells 100',000 times or 100',000 CDs sell once each. Anderson shows that Amazon and iTunes work with this concept: indeed more than 90% of the products sold at least once every quarter of a year. "«When we think about traditional retail, we think about what's going to sell a lot. You're not much interested in the occasional sale, because in traditional retail a CD that sales only one unit a quarter consumes exactly the same half-inch of shelf space as a CD that sells 1000 units a quarter. There's a value to that space – rent, overhead, staffing costs, etc.et cetera. – that has to be paid back by a certain number of inventory turns per month. In other words, the onesies and twosies waste space".» (Anderson, 2006:, p. 9). "«In statistics, curves like that are called 'long-tailed distributions,' because the tail of the curve is very long relative to the head".» (Anderson, 2006:, p. 10).

[134] Many books and CDs only exist as data files. They are printed only, if someone ordered them. And data storage places isare the cheapest. "«Amazon's solution was print-on-demand. It its idealized form books stay as digital files until they're purchased, at which time they're printed on laser printers and come out looking just like regular paperbacks. Since bits are turned into atoms only when an order comes in, the costs scale perfectly with the revenues. Or, to put it in the simplest terms, the production and inventory cost of a print-on-demand book that is never bought is zero".» (Anderson, 2006,: p. 95).

have difficulties in recording a high quality album, because Lebanon does not have too many good sound engineers specialized in rock and metal.

Online distribution allows these musicians to sell their albums, DVDs, and T-shirts in small quantities. After finishing my field research, I ordered many of their albums online to stay up-to-date. The mail always reached me within a short time; and my credit card was always debited correctly. Selling in small quantities offers a lot of possibilities for artists in the Arab world: The censorship department is not too much interested in those niche products. "The censorship officers do not take us seriously, because we are so small," (Anonymous, 2005) one musician told me; and many agreed. Many of the small labels of these musicians are not registered officially: "Officially we would not be allowed to sell our records. However, we sell them in small amounts at concerts, or via the Internet internationally. So, no one cares," one of the Beiruti artists told me. Their CDs and DVDs are, however, important promotion tools: Through them the artists gain the interest of international journalists, producers, labels, arts councils, and scholars. Through them they get offers to perform concerts abroad, or to go on a residency in Switzerland, Germany or the USA.

4.2.2   Financescapes – Labels, Distributors

Most of the subcultural musicians produce their music in small studios with the latest sound software and good sound equipment. Some of the artists work for Independent Lebanese feature, short, or documentary films. Others produce music for TV adds. To release their own music they created their own small record and production labels such as Those Kids Must Choke, Al-Maslakh, Lebanese Underground and Chichprod. Some of them work with small independent labels. The main labels in Beirut are Forward productions[135], and Incognito, the new label from CD-Thèque. Tony Sfeir, the director of CD-Thèque has been an important actor in the field of subcultural music for many years: mainly as a record producer, and distributor. It is worth taking a brief look at, and a closer inspection of his company.

La CD-Thèque

I met Sfeir several times on several occasions, at launching parties for new CD releases of local acts, for example. Sfeir was born in 1976 in the region of the mid-Kiserwan. He got into music when he was 16 years old while listening to the music his sister liked: French Chanson, European Art Music, and the leftist singers from Beirut. Soon he bought his first tapes: Bob Marley, Pink Floyd, but no Arabic music. He heard Fairuz, Wadih El Safi, and Sabah on the radio and did like it, but not so much that he wanted to have the tapes. Soon, he spent most of his pocket money for trips to Kaslik, where he would buy CDs in the local record shops. In 1996 he decided to open his own store. His parents did not give him any money, and he was too young to get credit from the bank. His sister helped him out; the bank trusted her. "On 25.8.1996 I opened the CD-Thèque in the garage of our family house in the Kiserwan," he tells me. Business started slowly. "No-one wanted to drive up to the Kiserwan to buy jazz CDs or classical music." (Sfeir, 2006) Tony Sfeir started actively contacting artists, musicians, and music lovers in Beirut. He presented CDs at exhibitions, and soon the first

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[135] Forward Productions is a very professionally run label and a production company. They mainly produce CDs and DVDs with artists working mainly in the field of Arabic taqtuqa songs and Jazz Fusion – or *Oriental Jazz* as some musicians call it.

clients arrived in the village, mainly on weekends. "Mazen Kerbaj was one of my first clients," Sfeir remembers: "Back then he used to listen to French engaged songs, and he was a fan of the ECM label." Soon, 30 to 40 clients would turn up on Saturdays, and the shop became well known in artistic circles. "Friends of friends would come up, more and more people. It became a circle that had not existed before - or I did not know of it." Two years later, Tony Sfeir opened CD-Thèque in Kaslik. In 1998 Kaslik was the place to be. "Whenever people wanted to buy a book, a CD, or to watch a movie they would drive from Beirut to Kaslik," Sfeir remembers. "On Saturday nights you would have traffic jams from Beirut to Kaslik and Jounieh, the other direction, however, would be empty. Today, it is the opposite." Kaslik was further full of CD stores. Sfeir remembers this very well:

> The five or six best record shops of Lebanon were placed in a small circle of 1000m^2: Top 10, Gold Records, Disc Jockey, and Billboard. Gold Records was a great record shop, with great jazz music, and stuff. Top Ten was the best in classical. Disc Jockey was the best in avant-garde music and electronic music, and Billboard was the strongest in the new releases. It had good contacts to the USA. He would have a CD of Phil Collins on his shelf the second day after its international release. Within this circle, I was the outsider. I came from the outside to suck them and kill them. (Sfeir, 2006)

Talking about competition is no problem to Tony Sfeir - similar to most Lebanese businessmen. I felt this in many conversations. "I'm a fighter, I started sucking them. Then I killed them. It was a fair but taught competition, and I won this war. In 2000 I had the best CD shop in Lebanon." Soon, however, another big store would arrive: The Virgin Mega Store. And for Sfeir it is clear: "Whatever I didn't kill, was later killed by the Virgin Mega Store. Today we have 8 Virgin Mega Stores, 2 CD-Thèques, and some other stores. Disc Jockey is still surviving in Kaslik." (Sfeir, 2006)

Since 2000, Tony Sfeir has had a shop in Achrafieh, and one in Hamra. "It's a good balance. And it's the only two places where I can exist. There is no interest for culture outside these two islands!"

The moment he had CD-Thèque in Beirut, Sfeir started to produce or license alternative music from musicians and artists in Beirut: Mazen Kerbaj, Charbel Haber, Soap Kills, Joelle Khoury, et cetera. Most of the artists at the core of this book released their first CD in CD-Thèque - rock bands like The Kordz, or metal bands like Weeping Willow are the exception here. "Important was as well that these artists were able to buy CDs in Beirut. And so their knowledge became bigger, and their music better," Sfeir argues. In 2001 CD-Thèque started to publish a magazine called *Co-musication*. With the magazine, it produced three CD samplers that covered alternative music from Beirut: The first sampler, "Beirut Incognito" covered music from rap to rock, then came a sampler with jazz music, and later one with European art music. Today, CD-Thèque works with artists in other Arab countries. One of the latest CDs was thus called "Oriental Sounds." And CD-Thèque also opened a real recording studio called Tunefork.

Tony Sfeirs' first goal is to widen the society of people who are into alternative music. When he came to Beirut, there was no circle for alternative music. "We were around ten people only, and probably the only circle of that kind in the Arab world overall." (Sfeir, 2006)

Sfeir sees a "small civil society that is at 'war' with the larger society, and if you want with the whole Arab world. It is a war for quality, and thus probably a war without any hope to win it. We just run this war because we want to exist." What was needed, Tony Sfeir argues, was a TV station

that would focus on the subcultural circles, and on the civil society, a TV station that would be politically neutral, and beyond confessionalism. However, he sees the situation as rather hopeless:

> "Who wants to invest in a TV for a society for less than 10,000 to 50,000 people?
> The Lebanese who go to festivals, who eat in restaurants, and have a drink in bars,
> are a big minority. And we are getting less and less, because no one is really
> successful, so sooner or later he or she stops, or leaves the country." (Sfeir, 2006)

The only way he could succeed, he thinks, is to wait till one of the radio stations goes bankrupt and he is able to buy it for a good price.

Overall, Sfeir sees two targets: The pan-Arabic pop world (see 4.4.2), and the Western labels who produce Arabic CDs.

> "I'm in a war with Rotana and these kinds of companies. I want to kill them, but this
> is not that easy. The good thing is that I'm an outsider, they don't take me seriously,
> and so they don't see me coming. On the other side, we want to show that not all
> good oriental music is produced by French, German or Swiss labels - this is why we
> founded the Incognito Label and Distribution platform. Stop taking over our artists!
> You took Dhafer Youssef, Rabih Abou Khalil, Anouar Brahem, Toufic Faroukh, and
> the list will not stop. Give our music back! I'm competing with Europe, because they
> are stealing our music, and I'm competing with the pop market, because it kills our
> audiences. And I'm getting bigger: Today, I'm the main distributor of European
> labels like ECM and ENJA in the Arab world." (Sfeir, 2006)

It is a struggle for more influence - and Sfeir has optimistic moments about it, often, however, he has real doubts about change being possible.

Musicians like Zeid Hamdan and Wael Kodeih want to try to go out of this small circle as well. Hamdan has worked with Tony Sfeir for many years now, but he is not always happy about the collaboration. While Sfeir sees the mainstream pop market mainly as an enemy, he would be ready to work in it: "The moment we get coverage there, our possibilities increase immensely." (Hamdan, 2006) He mentions his band Soap Kills, and the rappers Kitaa Ayoun. "These guys come from different social backgrounds. They rap in Arabic. I see no reason why the youth of the mainstream society would not like them if they were to appear on TV." (Hamdan, 2006)

Rapper Wael Kodeih would love to go in a similar direction: "I'm one of the best selling artists in the alternative circles. Still, I sell only around 1,000 copies in Lebanon" (Kodeih, 2005). A middle ground is needed.

4.2.3 Ideoscapes – Supporters, Places

The musicians give concerts at a great variety of places: art galleries like Espace SD, theatres like the Marignan or Al Madina, cultural centres like Zico House, clubs and bars like Basement, B018, Walima, Bar Louie, or Club Social. Sometimes they perform at venues specially created for a specific event, such as the Luna Park Festival in June 2006. The main areas for this *subcultural* concert life are the mixed commercial centres of Hamra and the trendy bar and club area in Gemmayze. Some concert venues, like the rock club Nova are located in the international hotel area in the Eastern suburbs. Spaces like Forum de Beyrouth and Art-Lounge opened in wasteland areas near the Armenian neighbourhood of Borj Hammoud.

As mentioned above: The *subcultural* music scenes only reach a small audience. Concerts rarely attract more than five hundred people. The exception is the rock, heavy metal and gothic scenes that play at festivals like Rock Nation at the marina in Dbeyeh in front of a crowd which can amount to two thousand people. Garo Gdanian from the death metal group Weeping Willow argues that he was very surprised when he went to see the concert of Apocalyptica in Dbeiyeh: "I was shocked when I saw that so many people turned up. Where are they in daily life! I saw a lot of new faces. People are hungry. They like that shit. I had fun. I drank like a motherfucker" (Gdanian, 2006).

The rock musicians and the rappers perform outside of Beirut as well, however, this is a rather seldom occurrence. Increasingly important became the International Festival of Byblos: Former underground musician Naji Baz is responsible for the program there. He often invites indie rock bands from the UK, and increasingly alternative groups from Beirut.

In 2005, the rappers Kitaa Ayoun performed at a hip-hop party in the expensive beach resort, Laguava Beach in Rmeileh, near Saida. The rappers performed in a bamboo shack that offered a big bar. Teenagers, boys and girls, were dancing on it in their swim wear, while the rappers were rapping freestyle lyrics, and some youngsters went into breakdancing. During the 2006 war, Lethal Skillz and some MCs further performed concerts all over the country to fundraise money for the victims in the Beiruti suburb of Dahje, and South Lebanon. "We did similar fundraising tours in the past: to raise money for cleaning up the mines in South Lebanon, or to help Palestinian children who lost their parents. We do for any poor village, whether it is Muslim, Christian, Druze, or Armenian. It doesn't matter man, we are all people of the same God, the same creator" (Lethal Skillz, 5.9.2005). The rappers argue that they have an increased number of fans in Lebanon. "We do have a lot of support in Lebanon," Lethal Skillz argues. "After ten years of struggle, we can now perform every night if we want" (Lethal Skillz, 2005).

4.2.4 Mediascapes - Blogs, Online Plattforms, and the Foreign Press

The musicians and sound artists often advertise their concerts themselves, through emailing and text messages. Further, they use online platforms such as facebook and myspace to let people know about their activities. Often, the artists design their own posters, which they mainly hang in Hamra and Achrafieh. Mazen Kerbaj designs most of the posters for the free improvised music scene. One recognises that he is a very skilled cartoonist and comic writer immediately: These posters could pass as art-works. Zeid Hamdan produces his own posters as well: mostly self-made photocopies. They appear as very funny, however, they deal with disturbing Lebanese issues. One is based on a photo of one of the dead sons of Saddam Hussein that Zeid saw in a newspaper. The story went that after his death he was so covered with blood that he had to be washed carefully before this picture could be taken. So on the photocopy we see Zeid as if he was dead, covered by huge fonts: "Soap Kills." Another poster shows Zeid standing with his new rock band Government at the Martyr Square in central Beirut. Below them stands the slogan "Government." After the assassination of the Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, they made a new poster: Now it states "The New Government." The posters are done in a nice way: hand-made, fresh, and independent. He started to print his posters in Arabic hoping that it might have a bigger impact. He wants to reach more people, and not only the Westernised elite. "When, for example, The New Government is written in English, no one cares," he says, "but if it is written in Arabic, it becomes a political statement, is linked to the current political

situation, and people go 'wow'" (Hamdan, 2006). Normally Zeid hangs the posters by himself. He rides around with his bike, with the posters on the back.

The media coverage is limited to the English daily *The Daily Star* and the French *Agenda Culturel*. Further, the magazine *Time Out Beirut* often runs articles about the scene. Occasionally, the French newspaper *L'Orient le jour* and the Arabic papers *An Nahar* and *Al Hayat* cover concerts and review CDs. Further, the musicians sometimes get covered by online magazines, dealing mainly with arts and culture in the Arab world, or with Arabic music.[136] TV stations show little interest. Radio Liban runs the show "Ruptured" by Ziad Nawfal. Nawfal works at the CD-Thèque, and many musicians in the alternative scene argue that he gave them many advice on what to listen to. For his radio show, Nawfal runs a small blog in which he reviews concerts and CDs of the alternative music scene.[137] The Internet radio station VibeLebanon covers emissions on electronic music and rap in Lebanon. Breakbeat and Techno DJ Ceasar K, a very active DJ n the club scene, is the main person behind it. VibeLebanon is listened to mainly by Lebanese living abroad. In Beirut, the Internet connections are still rather slow, and only the elite can afford the fastest ones. Still, as one needs money and connections to get a licence for a regular radio station, streaming music via the net is the only option. Lethal Skillz hosts one show on the station.

Overall, media interest is minimal. The minimal support is further overshadowed by a tragic event. In 1990 it was the journalist Sami Kassir who was asked to edit the French-language magazine titled *L'Orient-Express*. The magazine dealt with culture, art, and politics and it was highly stimulating. Tony Sfeir remembers that they were debating music by Frank Zappa and David Bowie. Kassir, a professor of political science at the Université Saint-Joseph and a journalist for the daily *An-Nahar*, was well known for his support of democracy in Lebanon and the Arab world. He was tragically killed by a car bomb on the second of June in 2005.

4.2.5   Ethnoscapes – The Transnational Dimension

It's all there, it's all for free, and it's all ours! I always found it hard to realize that some people still don't know what they can really get from the Internet. Far from advocating that it is a place you should spend your life on, it is undeniable that you can get anything you can imagine that can be digitized in a way or another! From e-books to movies, seminars, tutorials, software, to mood generators and brainwaves frequency emulators...it's all a click away. Information is the new currency, and if you still don't know how to get your hands on it you are way behind! May you be a lawyer or a designer, an architect or simply someone who enjoys movies! It's all out there...it's all free and it's all yours...but if your mind still refuses to change its old habits...well too bad for you...because a lot of people out there are simply born with a mouse in their hands.... We have a massive advantage over you, may it be academically, or technically, and even culturally...taste, fashion, the magazines we have access to, and all the networking facilities available...it is simply insane! (Najjar, 2007)

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[136] For example: http://www.bidoun.com/, http://www.arteeast.org/, http://www.adabmag.com/ http://www.aljadid.com/, http://www.turath.org/, and others.
[137] http://ruptured.wordpress.com/

Today, the musicians in the niches are connected through knowledge and taste. Geography becomes a minor factor – at least at first sight. "We're increasingly forming our own tribes, groups bound together more by affinity and shared interests than by default broadcast schedules" (Anderson, 2006, p. 40). The Israeli musicologist Motti Regev said it very well at the IASPM conference in Mexico City in 2007: "Musicians in the Middle East can today not only read about their favourite musicians, they can actually listen to them on the net – and this most of the time for free." (Regev, 2007) This fact is leading towards a new kind of knowledge, an emotional knowledge. And this emotional knowledge will bring a lot of changes into the music scenes of the alleged "peripheries" of the world. The musicians find even the most avantgardistic music through online archives like www.ubu.com, through guided playlists, on-demand radio (www.imeem.com, www.pandora.com, www.last.fm, www.laut.fm, and www.netflix.com), and *peer-to-peer* file sharing networks like www.kazaa.com. There are additionally a growing number of weblogs and websites that offer information and discussions about new music phenomena in the Arab world and outside the "Western" world[138]. The forum *Zaman Al Wasl* offers a huge collection of archive material from the Arab world. Turath.org offers articles about important artists and topics with Arabic music. The site *The Glided Serpent* finally offers information about rare belly dancing tunes and psychedelic music.

As the niches worldwide become more and more connected, there is more and more competition: It is not enough anymore to be the best jazz player in Beirut, when every jazz fan can compare the local hero with the global heroes with only a few mouse clicks. I therefore argue that digitalization will lead to more quality and more professionalism in the niches. The masters and lovers of the various genres become choosey – I observed this in Beirut. Their aesthetical ideas and visions are rather sharp. Tarek Atoui is very critical about many musicians and artists he works with: To him, many artists in Beirut – and in Europe as well – are slaves of their software: "They use the pre-settings of the soft- and hardware, but they don't know how to manipulate them," he says (Atoui, 2006). Atoui studied music at the National Conservatory in Paris, and he worked at the important *icram* center for research at the Centre Pompidou. His abstract experimental music is mainly made digitally. He works with the software Max/MSP that allows him to design personalized solutions for his laptop music – the software is programmed especially for his music, and not the other way round. In several workshops, Atoui tried to introduce Max/MSP to the Beiruti sound scene. After having held these workshops he was a bit disappointed: "Most of the musicians did not really want to know how MAX/MSP works and how this program can give a lot of freedom to an artist," he says; "Most of them just wanted finished patches that would work for one specific artistic project." Max/MSP is complex, and the "ignorance" of the musicians is understandable: They want to play music, and do not want to go into programming. The dilemma is well known. In the history of music a lot happened by coincidence.

Still, Tarek Atoui leads us to an important point. While he was able to study computer music in France, many of his colleagues in Lebanon might not have had this opportunity. It is the elites, the intellectuals, and the cosmopolites that profit most from digitalization; those who have access to fast

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[138] For example, Ted Swedenburg's blog for Popular Music in the Middle East (http://mepop.blogspot.com/), the blog of the ethnomusicologist Wayne Marshall (http://wayneandwax.com), *Beat Diaspora* (http://beatdiaspora.blogspot.com), *(post) soviet popular music* (http://ps-popular-music.blogspot.com/) or my own network *norient – Independent Network for Local and Global Soundscapes* (www.norient.com)

up- and downloads; those who read and write English. Thus, even if the new possibilities of production and distribution lead to a democratization of the art worldwide, the possibilities of learning to use them are still dependent on geographical context and economical position. Many of the sound artists in Beirut are autodidacts. They often manipulate and edit sound data differently than an artist trained in one the arts schools in Europe would do – an interesting point, I believe. This leads to a specific aesthetic that some see as typically Beiruti. To prove their point is, however, rather difficult. Still, I will try to go into this discussion in the final chapters (see 7.4 and 8).

Outside of Lebanon, the exposure of these musicians is growing steadily. The free improvised music scene, especially Mazen Kerbaj, Raed Yassin, Charbel Haber, and Sharif and Christine Sehnaoui get reviews in internationally recognized music magazines such as *The Wire*. They are able to organise concert tours throughout Europe and the USA. Zeid Hamdan and his Lebanese duo Soap Kills are regularly invited to Australia, North Africa, Paris and elsewhere. The musicians of the Arabic music scene do perform abroad as well. At times, they get invited to Egypt. The singer Rima Khcheich performs in Europe and the USA with the US-based oud player Simon Shaheen.

International Concerts do, however, not always work out: mainly due to the high airfares from Beirut to Europe or the USA, and the difficulties in getting a Visa to work abroad.

4.3   Biographical and Social Position (Ground Settings)

4.3.1   Birth – Times of War, Family Background, Places

The musicians at the centre of this book were all born between 1975 and 1983, during the Lebanese Civil War. Most of them were born in Beirut, in different areas of the city. Many grew up in Beirut as well. They were born into families that brought them a certain reputation - from the beginning. "In Lebanon people tend to judge you through your surname first," many Lebanese kept telling me. "The moment you say your name, people put you into a category, and it is difficult to convince them that you might be different." Some of the musicians told me that overcoming the implications around their family names is one of their greatest challenges inside Lebanon. Attached to most of the families are social and ideological positions. Lebanon is a nation of family clans: From the Jumblats, Gemayels, and Hariris in politics, to the Rahbanis in music. Mazen Kerbaj's father Antoine Kerbaj is a well-known actor: So when Mazen plays his trumpet with strange techniques, the audience sometimes bursts into tears from laughing: "They think I'm doing comedy, like my father. But actually I try to create specific sounds," Mazen Kerbaj tells me (Kerbaj, 2006). Zeid Hamdan, another of the key musicians in this book, has the reputation of coming from a rich Druze family. So, musicians who do either not like him, or are jealous that he is just doing the music he wants to do, would say to me: "You know, Zeid comes from this very rich family. He does not have to care about money issues, so he can work on underground music." Many similar ongoing background stories about family names I was most probably not able to catch.

Most of the family names are further linked to a certain village in Lebanon - and through this, to a political clan. For generations, many families living in the city used to keep going back to "their" villages: some to live there, most to spend the weekends in their second house, or to escape the hot summer (if the village is in the mountains). Kayat describes this "modern" form of nomadism in her book about Lebanon in the 1950s and 60s:

> Summertime the road bears its heaviest load of passenger traffic. Then the mountain resort towns open to receive thousands and thousands of vacationers. It is a rule rather than an exception for a Lebanese to go to the mountains in the summertime. Families move their entire households into the cool altitude of the towns and villages clinging to the rocky sides of the Lebanese mountains. In their escape from the hot humidity in Beirut and the other coastal towns they leave behind empty houses and apartments stripped of furnishings. Tables, beds, cupboards, chairs, lamps, refrigerators, mattresses, pots and pans are piled on to trucks and carted up the mountain roads to furnish a summer home. The coastal exodus begins in mid-June when schools recess for the summer. The trek is reversed in September or early October when the household goods come rolling back down the mountainside.
> (Kayat, 1960, pp. 5-6)

Many musicians I met remember the rush to their villages when there was severe fighting in Beirut during the Civil War. In Beirut, the suitcases were always packed, so the moment the fighters or the bombings came too close, the family could leave at once.

Today, many musicians keep going back to these villages, again for the weekends, or even for the whole summer. I heard many stories about the beauty of villages, and rural landscapes. DJ Ceasar K, for instance, keeps going to his family house in the Southern Beqaa valley. He loves the quiet there, the loud wake-up call of the rooster, the smells of country life. The musicians from the free improvised music scene used to rehearse in a house in the ski resort of Faraya. Since the 1990s, many second homes were built on the hills surrounding Beirut - and not in villages of the family anymore. So, today, many musicians go up to these new places on the weekend - or even for the whole summer. Cyril Najjar used to drive up to the Christian town of Broummana. "Up there, the air is fresh. I can sleep, and I can work," he told me (Najjar, 2005). The piano player Joelle Khoury spends her summer a bit below Broummana, in an apartment house, overlooking Beirut. In the 2006 war, many musicians immediately left for those houses.

During my field research in the summers of 2005 and 2006 I became an expert on going and finding these mountain resorts by minibus, and sometimes taxi. Some of the musicians would stay there for one, two, or even three months. Some of their houses even offered a swimming pool. Many had hired a housemaid, mostly from Eastern Asia, that would work in the house full time. Often, I was served delicious food during the long interviews - and often I thought that it was good to be an ethnomusicologist. One of the musicians took me one weekend to their family house in the mountains. Her parents, her sister with her husband and child, and her boyfriend, had all gathered there. The housemaid served freshly made Lebanese food. Later, the boys watched British soccer on satellite TV, while the women sat in the garden and enjoyed the fresh air.

Migration, however, happens and happened not only inside Lebanon. During the Civil War, some families moved between Beirut and Europe. Some of the musicians lived in Paris for a while, others in Cairo, Cyprus, or in African countries. Quite a few of them told me stories of how they were flying back into Beirut, finding the international airport under attack and taking the same aircraft back to their country of exile. Paris. Overall, being born in Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War meant to live the life of nomads; this is what many musicians told me. They had to adapt to changing situations and constellations all the time: Sometimes the father was missing because he was fighting, one witnessed how her father got killed, some lived with their grandparents, or family friends until the worst situation was over. I shall discuss these and other issues in greater detail in the chapters on the

Lebanese Civil War, and on Trauma. One issue was mentioned very often: As children, the musicians felt very well protected by their parents; some even argue that they were over-protected. A French living in Lebanon for many years conveyed what, according to her, is the biggest problem Lebanon has: "Lebanese kids are treated like kings and queens. They grow up knowing that they can have anything, and that they are so special. As adults many of them have huge egos, and they see themselves as the centre of the world." (Anonymous, 2005) This, I would argue, is probably a reaction to the long and traumatic years many Lebanese parents and their children went through.

4.3.2   Confession

The confessional set-up of the musicians' circles in Beirut is mostly mixed. One finds members of all confessions dominant in Lebanon: Sunni, Shia, Maronites, Druzes, Christian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, and members of other confessional groups. Again, depending on their surname, the musicians become categorized very quickly: first to their confessional background, then to the ideology that the Lebanese would normally attach to it. Christian musicians told me that sometimes they need to make it extra clear that they do not support Christian right-wing politics. Many of the musicians did not like questions about their religious background at all: Rapper Wael Kodeih became very angry when I asked him about it. In other interviews I kept hearing the same answer: "Our religious background is of no importance," the musicians say. Charbel Haber from the post-punk band Scrambled Eggs explained that his girlfriend was Shiite, and he Christian Orthodox. Haber further is one of the artists who love to provoke with this topic as well: For example, when he glued a cross on his electric guitar with tape. The death metal band Weeping Willow has a wooden cross hanging in their rehearsal room. When I asked them about the meaning of it, they stated that it is of non-importance. "Weeping Willow does not talk about religion," Garo Gdanian, the bands leader, told me. "We love this country, but we are surrounded by too much shit: Religion for example. People kill because of Religion, isn't that stupid: Christians killed Muslims, and Muslims killed Christians in the Civil War. Religion is good, but please keep it to yourself" (Gdanian, 2006). In another interview, Gdanian confessed that he never crosses from East to West Beirut, from the predominately Christian to the predominately Muslim side. "This has nothing to do with religion," he continued, saying very quickly: "I just don't like the conservative mentality over there. I don't feel home there. People watch when you walk in the streets with a beer in your hand." Three different people told me independently that the party and live music scene moved from the Bliss area around the American University (AUB) to East Beirut, because West Beirut had become increasingly conservative. In between the lines, one can feel that the interviewed see conservative and radicalizing trends in the Muslim communities as the main reason for this; after the 2006 war, many artists feared that the Shiite Hizbullah could start to pull West Beirut into the direction of Iran. It seems the typical question of distance: Inside their circles the musicians mix across confessional lines. However, towards the other confessional groups of mainstream society, they have their, and stereotypical ideas as well.

Certainly, depending on the religious background of their families, these musicians were socialized differently sometimes. They know different customs, and they might have different positions on how they see and define Lebanon. However, the major differences occur not through confession, but through class, and geography; city and village, and even the different neighbourhoods in Beirut. Many scholars argue that the Civil War was triggered because of "class" related conflicts

within Lebanese society, and not for confessional reasons. It was, however, during the war that the confessional background became an increasingly important identity marker. Still, categorization along confessional lines is dangerous, and in many cases not possible. One finds, for example, many Christians who are (or were) into pan-Arabism, and there are many Muslims as well who prefer Lebanese separatism, and are oriented mainly towards Europe. It is no taboo that many Christian musicians working in the field of tarab, or of Egyptian popular music, learned by reciting the holy Quran - as this is *the* way to learn to pronounce Arabic properly. The musicologist Victor Sahhab told his son Ziyad Sahhab to learn to recite the Quran if he wanted to become a good Arabic singer. The Sahhab family is of a Christian Maronite background.

We will see that the musicians tend to spend their time in places where confession is not an issue: for example, in the bars and clubs in the area of Gemmayze in East Beirut, or in Zico House, a cultural center in West Beirut. These places serve as a refuge in which the ideal of a multi-confessional Lebanon actually lives.

4.3.3   Gender Roles

Inside the alternative or subcultural music circles of Beirut, one finds women and men. Gender is, however, still an issue. Questions of masculinity, and female roles, are of a certain importance - even though the community seems very liberal at first sight. During my research, I even considered focusing on female musicians, sound artists, and composers for a while, before I decided on the generational approach. Joelle Khoury, one of the most active, innovative, and important musicians in the circle of non-commercial and non-programmatic music, triggered this interest. "Sometimes, the Lebanese journalists ask me why I write such complex, 'masculine' music?," Joelle Khoury told me in one of our interviews: "They look at me, a feminine looking woman, thin, and a mother. And they ask, if I want to prove anything." Khoury argues that even in her small musician's circle, being a woman is not at all easy:

> Even my band sometimes has difficulties in accepting me, the woman, as the
> bandleader. Even though we are like a family and we love each other, I feel that the
> musicians sometimes have a problem with the fact that they play the music composed
> by me, a woman – even my husband. They make stupid jokes, and they are nagging
> all the time: Why do your write such complicated music? Do you want to pretend to
> be a great pianist, or a smart woman? Or do you just want to be different? (Khoury,
> 2005)

Khoury, however, found strategies to overcome some of the hurdles. Sometimes she tells her husband to tell this or that musician that he should play differently at this point: "They do listen to my advice coming through my husband, but they do not like my direct advice too much." When Joelle Khoury composed a piece of new music for the Lebanese symphony orchestra, they rehearsed only once, for two hours. In the concert they played many wrong notes, and the conductor even missed the final passage. Raed El Khazen, a jazz guitarist, saw the concert: To him it was a scandal, and he told me that it has something to do with the fact that Joelle Khoury is a woman: "Many musicians here think that she is just a crazy woman," he told me: "If you listen to her music, you know that she is one of the most serious, and most professional musicians working here. But still, I keep hearing jokes that she is a woman in a crisis, in her menopause, or whatever" (Khazen, 2005).

To Joelle Khoury, and to other women musicians, it is clear: These issues have to do with the deep conservatism of the Lebanese society - in the Christian and Muslim communities alike. "As a woman you have to be nice to the men, you have to admire them and make them feel that they are intelligent, important, or even heroes," Khoury explains: "If they feel that a woman thinks differently, and is critical about an issue, they get annoyed. Men have the right to be critical about things, women do not" (Khoury, 2005). Khoury wants to define her life actively: "I don't want to accept the role we women have in this society: Always waiting, for the husband, for the boyfriend, for your child, for better times."

The issue of gender and music has a long history, in Lebanon, and in the Arab world. Jihad Racy observes a strong male orientation in tarab culture; however, there are many female singers too, and some of them became huge stars. Racy writes about the "special appeal" of women as tarab artists:

> Female singing is recognized as an effective conveyor of musical ecstasy. In various historical epochs, male audiences have marvelled at women who sing, partly because the ecstasy conveyed by their voice was supposedly reinforced by their physical appearance. (Racy, 2003, p. 17)

Still, the position of female singers has been challenged by conservative attitudes for many years. It is a widespread belief "that for women, pursuing music professionally is incompatible with private family life" (Racy, 2003, p. 16). Fairuz became a big hero in Lebanon. However, she always had to perform the role of an artist who is a good mother as well. In her plays she played the innocent girl, in her private life she did not go to parties, she did not give interviews, and she built herself a reputation comparable to that of the Virgin Mary. Assy Rahbani, her husband, is said to have been very careful about her image in public (Weinrich, 2006, pp. 142-143, 341, 407). The singer Sabah, on the contrary, was a daily guest at dinner parties, and she created many scandals. That she never reached the stage and fame of Fairuz could be one of the consequences of that lifestyle. The great Egyptian Diva Umm Kulthoum performed as a boy first. Later, when she had become the greatest singer of the Arab world, she was well "protected" by high-ranking politics. Kulthoum:

> …was a model of female decency. As a woman, her conservative religious background, the image of chastity she projected, and the full protection of her own family all accorded her great respect.(…) When she stood up to sing, there was in front of her an invisible sign that read Do Not Touch. She was learned and cultured, refined and faithful to her art. (Racy, 2003, p. 37)

Asmahan, one of Umm Kulthoum's early competitors, was a very independent, self-made and strong woman, as Sherifa Zuhur shows in a remarkable biography (Zuhur, 2001). Asmahan died in a mysterious car crash; many believe she was killed, but there is no proof for this theory. Till today, dancing on stage is an issue for woman performers[139]: Most of the singers working outside the commercial pop market do not move. When the Christian Lebanese singer Julia Boutros performed at the International Festival of Beiteddine, I thought of this issue: She sang her patriotic songs for the South of Lebanon with great passion, and she stood on stage like a rock. She did not smile, but just stood there proud, cool, untouchable; she seemed not to care that the big crowd applauded frenetically after each song.

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[139] Scholars discussed this in the case of belly dancing. See, for example, Karayanni (2004) or Shay and Sellers-Young (2005).

One Lebanese singer told me that female singers are often treated as if they were nobody: "They expect you to sing nicely, be sexy, but shut up the moment you are off the stage." The double moral can be observed in today's pan-Arabic pop industry as well. People admire the female pop stars; but they would not want to be linked to them in private life. The main rumour goes that these singers are in fact prostitutes of rich donors. I do not intend to paint a black and white picture here. Many Lebanese women have gained a lot of status - especially in the city, and higher and upper middle class families. In the field of music women teach at the conservatory, they work as sound engineers, as sound designers in films, they make records, or they DJ in clubs. Still, literature and conversations show that they have to care about their reputation much more than their male colleagues do.

Male roles are lived differently. I was sometimes very irritated by how some males expressed themselves: Some metal bands argued very proudly how they "killed" competitors, meaning how they managed to spread bad rumours about another musician or another band and finally destroyed it. Tony Sfeir from the CD-store CD-Thèque told me proudly how he destroyed other CD stores in Lebanon. Michel Elefteriades, concert organiser in the Music Hall in Beirut, explained how he fought with Michael Aoun in the Lebanese Civil War, and how they were "crazy boys." I was sometimes surprised how openly they would say things like this. If I were them, I often thought, I would stop saying things like this into my microphone. However, these are extremes. Most of the male musicians would just like to talk a lot, which was actually very helpful for my research. Some argued that they very much hated the machismo in the Lebanese society. Inside the circles of subcultural and alternative music and culture in Beirut, it is not an issue, that Zico House hosts the Helem NGO, an organisation for gays and lesbians in Lebanon. Being gay even seemed fashionable, as some artists told me. In June 2004, Cynthia Zaven took me to the Acid, a Disco-Club in East Beirut, on a hill above the city. Every Friday, Acid celebrates a gay night. It was packed. "Smack My Bitch Up" from The Prodigy hammered out of the loudspeakers. White foam fell from the ceiling; it was wet, hot, and the many men and the few females danced and enjoyed themselves. "Beirut had always space for niches," Cynthia Zaven told me then: "This is what makes this place so fascinating, so beautiful, so different from other places in the Arab world." (Zaven, 2005) Again, this is just one side of the coin. Lebanon and Beirut are full of discrepancies. If we were to look closer, speak to gay people, and if we were to look into the mainstream society, we would find many problematic issues to talk about.[140]

4.3.4   Class and Taste

Most of the musicians come from middle, upper middle or upper class backgrounds - with a few exceptions. Charbel Haber: "Most of us come from higher middle class or high class families, but you will find almost no members of lower middle class families." Haber names a few exceptions: "You find lower middle class musicians with an Armenian background who are heavily in the heavy metal music," he says. (Haber, 2005) Some members of the death metal band Weeping Willow come from a middle class background: Garo Gdanian, the bandleader, is of Armenian origin. He works in the instruments' department of the Virgin Mega Store in downtown Beirut. He kept telling me that he just hates these rich kids who drop in to buy the best sound equipment, the best guitars; all the things that he works with everyday, but cannot afford to buy:

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[140] See Brian Whitaker *Unspeakable Love - Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, or Mai Ghoussoub and Emma Sinclair Webb: *Imagined Masculinities - Male Identity and Culture in the Middle East*.

> A rich guy buys a guitar for 3,000 dollars and becomes bored with it after three
> months, and gets involved with drugs. It's easy for him, he has the money from his
> daddy. What about the 'poor' kid? The poor kid saves his money for months to buy
> the guitar. When he finally has it he takes it in his bed over night and sleeps next to it.
> I believe it's this guy that maybe one day will build a proper band that will succeed.
> (Gdanian, 2005)

There is a certain class division between musicians, and what one could define as artists. The latter is what my research is mainly about: artists create their own experimental, subcultural, or alternative music. They do not have to make a living out of it - however, these are again just tendencies. Let us first take an instructive look at the situation in Syria: According to Shannon, most of the professional and full-time musicians in Syria are not members of elite families, and many do not have a university, or even high-school education. He even goes one step further in arguing that most of the musicians he talked to "were not always the most self-reflective artists" and that they had "difficulty talking about their craft" in the same way that poets, writers, and painters would do who "often discourse at length about their work" (Shannon, 2006, p. 11).[141] One can witness similar situations in different music scenes worldwide, and thus non-surprisingly, in Lebanon as well.

Fouad Afra, a drummer in rock bands and in the orchestra of Fairuz, mentioned three "types" of musicians in our meeting: First, the really poor musicians who play on the streets, for example, the Roma musicians in Eastern Europe, but also in Lebanon. Second, the musicians that come from the middle class who have to earn their money, and thus often become session musicians - like Afra himself, as he says. The third class of musicians - according to Afra - are the ones that belong to rich families and call themselves "artists": "They get a good education, they have security, and loads of possibilities," he argues. The session musicians tend to be highly critical about the so-called artists and composers. One argument often heard is that that they do not know their musicians' skills. The session musicians thus complain a lot about the "artists" - even about high-profile art musicians like the Iraqi Omar Bashir: "He gave a terrible concert in Beirut," one of the session musicians told me: "He has no real musical ideas, he missed all the breaks and inputs, and only the background musicians really saved his concert." A lot of these discussions can be narrowed down as follows: The session musicians keep saying that the artists cannot play their instruments. They further argue that the "artists" are arrogant in the things they are saying: Some complained to me about Mazen Kerbaj, who told them that Miles Davis is not too revolutionary, or that the bass player Jaco Pastorious has no taste. Or they joked about Zeid Hamdan, who pretends to be an important producer like Quincy Jones. Charbel Haber knows that many do not like the experimental approaches he and his "artist" friends are taking.

> "You have to accept the fact that not everything is equal in this world. There are
> genres of music that only grow in specific niche circles, mainly higher classes. If you
> have to work hard to make your living, you probably get angry when you go to
> Achrafieh, and you see an intellectual looking guy on stage, sitting behind a laptop
> and creating a hell of a noise for one hour. He will maybe hear the same office or

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[141] This topic would lead us into habits and rules of behaviours that are often attached to the musicians and to the listeners of tarab music. "In the Abbasid era, the court singer was expected to possess qualities that made him a perfect social companion - his role as nadim, or close-companion. He amused the ruler and educated him about various aspects of life. He had to be knowledgeable, sociable, and entertaining" (Racy, 2003, p. 33). Till today the criteria are quite similar, Racy argues: Good manners, high morals, and a good rapport with the audience are important. "A musician must please and provide tarab" (Racy, 2003, p. 35).

construction sounds that he worked in for his whole life. And he will not understand
that we are working on ideas like the purity of the sounds, airwaves, or textures. I
know that many people are super-provoked by our Bourgeoisie music circle." (Haber,
2006)

Other "artists" are not shy to give back. According to them, many of the session musicians have no taste, they are not innovative, et cetera. Overall, it is an old, and to a certain extent, a global dispute. However, outside the Western world the discrepancies between musicians who struggle to earn their money, and artists who enjoyed education in foreign language universities are much broader. One example is: While "artists" take on offers from foreign arts councils for residency programs in Europe, session musicians often cannot leave their jobs. I talked about that with Tarek Yamani, an important percussionist. He was interested in applying for a residency with the Swiss Arts Council, Pro Helvetia, in Switzerland. He soon found out that the risk to really go there would have been too high for him: First, the per diems that Pro Helvetia would pay were not equal to the money that he could earn in his session concerts. And second, he was afraid that other musicians or bands would take his jobs while he was abroad for two or three months.[142]

Being an "artist" or a "session musician" brings with it a certain status in mainstream society, as Racy points out:

Roughly speaking, the highest prestige accrues to performers of Western art music
and the celebrities of Arab music, especially those influenced by the West. Next
come the established working musicians; for example, those employed by the
government radio station and the local conservatory, together with accomplished
amateurs. These are followed by various nightclub and freelance performers. The
least prestigious of all are the city's itinerant entertainers, particularly those who play
outdoors and use percussion instruments. (Racy, 2001, p. 350)

Taste

Often, attached to the question of class is the question of taste. P.A. Russell reflected about socio-economical status and the relation to taste in the USA. He puts forward five "taste-cultures" that he links to class: High culture, upper-middle culture, lower-middle culture, low culture und quasi-folk low culture (Kleinen, 2008, p. 51). The discussion about to which extent this norm has its exceptions is, however, long. There is definitely a tendency that the class, the milieu a musician comes from, will guide him or her in a certain direction. But there are many counter-examples as well, and I would argue that these counter-examples increase in today's digitalized world. Nothing is fixed. And music itself has no real class character; it is, however, used for social distinction (Bourdieu, 1982). In recent years, new wave dabké session musicians who perform with their synthesizers at weddings and restaurants, became *trendy* for some of the "artists." Raed Yassin loves their music for the weird sounds, to low-budget production, and possibly the *exotica* effect.

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[142] Similar issues can be observed with musicians from Egypt. Today, many of them play with a singer for high fees in the Gulf. The Swiss Lebanese composer Mahmoud Turkmani invited a group of musicians to perform with him, when they worked together on a very modern and complex composition of Turkmani's, they would get nervous during rehearsals - they had offers to go to the Gulf, and the need to earn money there seemed more important than doing art music.

Music Hall: World Music for "A-Plus People"

Michel Elefteriades probably comes closest to what the Lebanese Elite would see as a renaissance of tasteful Lebanese nightlife culture. Let me thus go into a short excursus. Elefteriades is of Lebanese and Greek origins, and was born in Beirut in 1970. He is the founder and director of the Music Hall in the Starco Building in Downtown Beirut. Night after night the Music Hall offers very popular music nights "for your sophisticated music taste" - as it is written in the house magazine. The Music Hall is predominantly decorated in red: a red carpet covers the floor, the tables are red, and there are big red curtains in front of the stage. In this old style, Moulin Rouge type of atmosphere, musicians and singers from all over the world perform short sets, mostly one, two, or three songs. Roma musicians from the Balkans, a Cuban group, Flamenco singers, and some Lebanese stars: Nahawand, a star singer of the 1950s, performs with José Galves, a star of the *Cante Jondo*; Wadi al-Safi sings with the Flamenco artist José Fernandez; the Shehade Brothers, and two Palestinians from Jerusalem play a light tarab style with influences from Greece, the Balkans, and Turkey; The group Hanine Y Son Cubano sing Egyptian songs by Asmahan, Abd al-Halim Hafez, and others mixed with son an salsa. Tony Hanna, one of the most poplar singers in Lebanon before the Civil War,[143] performs with a Yugoslavian Gypsy Brass Band. Michael Elefteriades is the "mastermind" behind all these projects. Elefteriades himself imitates the extravagant, crazy director of a glamorous and slightly crazy circus - a circus where everything is possible, and dreams come true. He wears extravagant clothes and a hat, and he walks with a fancy stick. For our interviews he took a whisky at the long bar, and then went backstage, where we sat on a long red sofa. "I take the best of every culture and mix it together," Elefteriades tells me (Elefteriades, 2006). Not everyone likes that: Some musicians stopped or refused to work with him, because they did not want to redesign their image, and their look. "I have been blessed with something very rare," Elefteriades continues:

> One part of my brain is an excellent artist, one part of my brain is an excellent businessman, and one part of my brain is an excellent revolutionary. This combination is rare: I have crazy ideas, I can sell them, and I'm capable to take a gun and lead people. And I know in which moment which part of my brain should take the lead. (Elefteriades, 2006)

Elefteriades is a rather dubious character with strange ideas and questionable business values. However, he shows us one example of how to do business successfully in Lebanon.

Elefteriades: The Artist

Often, Elefteriades travels to Cuba, or to villages in Eastern Europe, to listen to and finally hire musicians.[144] In their contracts they agree to work for him exclusively. If they play a melody, it is his melody. He argues that he learned to be tough. And he learned that it is better to take the second class of musicians, instead of the already famous ones, as the latter would never give him their best

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[143] He used to perform in Elvis Presley style clothes; one of his hit songs was "My village is lost somewhere between Beograd and Baghdad."
[144] He claims that he pays them 2500 dollars per month - session musicians in the scene argue that it is more like 800 dollars.

lines, melodies, and rhythms.[145] The musicians live in Elefteriades' own big hotel; during the day they rehearse and record at The Music Hall, in the evenings they perform short sets. In the CD of Elef Records many musical styles conjoin: Egyptian popular music, Lebanese music, Roma music from the Balkans, flamenco, Cuban music, Greek music, polka, rumba, waltz, and much more. To him it is clear: Musical traditions have to evolve through fusion between the different cultures: "We have to take the best of the best and bring it together." His label has a worldwide distribution deal with Warner Music, and it is a regular guest at the major world music fair, WOMEX, in Europe.

Elefteriades: The Businessman

Soon, Elefteriades explains his marketing concept for the Music Hall: "Our targets are the A-Plus people of Lebanon. A-Plus people are the ones that have studied at a university, who earn more than 1,500 dollars per month, who own a house, a car, and have money to spend. That's my A-Plus." He argues that he can recognize the A-Plus from their behaviour, but not really from their clothes: "A-Plus can be an intellectual who wears shabby jeans, but his intellect compensates for this. Another A-Plus might be a man who did not go to university, but took his life into his own hands and makes 100,000 dollars a month." Just after the 2006 war when we did that interview, many of these A-Plus people had not come back to Beirut yet. "Now we have mainly A people, and some B, but no A-Plus. For a while we did not allow the B people to enter our venue. The benchmark at the door was much higher. Now we had to lower it. We still have the place packed with people, but less quality." I asked him if there were other categories. "Yes, C people, but they would not come to The Music Hall anyway. It's too expensive for them, and it's too sophisticated. They would not enjoy Nahawand; they prefer pop singers with big boobs. It's just a whole different system and mentality."

Elefteriades sees Lebanon as a good place to make business. He further intends to open a Music Hall in Istanbul, and another one in Belgrade. "Doing business in Western Europe is becoming increasingly difficult," he argues. "I prefer to work in the Third World. Here you can work without any limitations. In Europe you have all these norms: They even tell you how much risk an artist in the circus is allowed to take." Elefteriades further argues that it is necessary to have good connections into the world of politics - this is how to get working permits for the musicians, or how to export musicians from Serbia.[146]

> "In Istanbul, Beirut, and Belgrade it all works similarly: You have to stay in the best
> hotel in town, you have to drive around with a driver in an expensive car, otherwise
> no-one takes you seriously. You have to network, to be very nice to the important
> people, buy them gifts, and hand out your business card. You end up getting calls
> from ministers in your hotel. They invite you to talk business. It's all business
> oriented." (Elefteriades, 2006)

It is all about connections, he keeps repeating that sentence: "You would be amazed about the connections I have," he says: "I could give Fidel Castro a phone call right now, or President Sarkozy, or the King of Jordan."

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[145] One Beiruti session musician complained to me about Elefteriades. He wanted to meet those great Cuban musicians to learn from them. However, this was not allowed. "It seems strictly forbidden for these artists to play music outside their contracts," he told me.
[146] He claims to be friends with the wife of the late Serb and Yugoslav Ex-President Slobodan Milosevic.

Elefteriades: The Revolutionary

Michel Elefteriades has been engaged politically since he was 15 years old. As a leftist living in East Beirut, he was in opposition to the Lebanese Forces during the Lebanese Civil War. In 1989 he fought on the side of General Michel Aoun. "For me this was a possibility to take revenge on the Lebanese Forces," he tells me: "I hate the Lebanese Forces, they beat and tortured me when I was a teenager." After General Aoun was defeated by Syria, Elefteriades left for France (as Aoun did) for a few months. In 1991 he came back to Lebanon, and founded the MUR (Unified Movements of the Resistance). He led the MUR until 1994 as a clandestine armed liberation group fighting Lebanon's occupation by foreign armies, and organized general strikes, paralyzing the country's activities. "I was leading fifty of the craziest guys this country has ever seen," he tells me: "We were planting bombs, and doing all kinds of dangerous things to fight against Syrian and Israeli occupation." During this period, Elefteriades was a victim of two unsuccessful assassination attempts. The second attempt convinced him to go into exile in France and Cuba from 1994 until 1997.

In 2005 he was very active in the Cedar Revolution that protested the ongoing Syrian presence in Lebanon. That is when he developed an idea that fitted very well into his old political goals: Rejecting feudalism and political sectarianism in order to establish a secular democracy; struggling to achieve social justice; edifying a modern, independent and sovereign state within Lebanon's internationally recognized boundaries; respecting and implementing the Human Rights Charter. Elefteriades called his own, visionary country *Nowhereistan*. "It's a country without a territory, without borders, without wars, but a country that brings together the best of different cultures. All good people can become citizens," Elefteriades says.

> We want to become the biggest nation on earth. We will ask people to join, and to stop paying taxes in their countries of origin. I even went to the UN in New York to get Nowhereistan registered as an official nation. I was very close to talking to (former secretary general) Kofi Annan. It's going to be a universal revolution.[147] (Elefteriades, 2006)

What we see when we enter The Music Hall is a surface only. "It's just a means to earn the money to later change the world," Elefteriades tells me. Many of the guests, especially the foreigners, are probably not aware of all this. And this, I would argue, is very typical for Lebanon. You see a surface, but it takes a lot of time to see what is actually behind it.

4.3.5   Education and Cosmopolitism

Beirut is often referred to as a cosmopolitan city. Again, we enter the discussion of class, this time through education. What we define as cosmopolitan, are often cultural to ideological exchanges in upper to high-class societies (see chapter 3.2). The "artists" this research is about, can be defined as cosmopolitan: They all went to ordinary schools. Later, most of them studied art or business at the international universities of Beirut: The American universities AUB and LAU and the French Université Saint-Joseph. Others studied at the national conservatory or were educated at the Académie

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[147] For more information, see www.nowhereistan.org.

Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA), Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Antonine University, the local Lebanese University, or other Lebanese institutions of higher education.

Beck, Giddens and Lash (1996) would see these musicians as *taste makers* or *reflexive actors* (1996). According to them these reflexive actors can afford to try to achieve the *possible* instead of only the *probable*. Often, these reflexive actors are situated in an urban, intellectual, economically privileged milieu; and this one can indeed observe in the rich, but also in the poorer countries. It is mainly these reflexive actors that engage themselves in transnational networks, inform themselves about cultural to political developments in far away countries, and are critical against their own society. Hannerz (1996) defines these reflective actors as cosmopolitans, and Vergès (2002, p. 171) speaks of the *educated, revolutionary Universalists* who often live in decolonized countries and identify with European liberalism.

4.3.6   Status

The social status attached to a musician or an artist is low. However, there are differences. In the French speaking community it is considered very good to send your son or daughter to piano lessons: "Every kid has to play the piano, and we teachers suffer," Cynthia Zaven, piano teacher at the conservatory, told me. Becoming a tarab musician is, however, nothing that one could talk of proudly: Tarab music is often linked to alcohol, drugs, and even prostitution, so many parents do not want their children to get into that. Rock music is yet another thing. If a teenager turns into a man, he should stop playing the guitar, because it is considered as being childish. "We have many youngsters and some big dudes. But most of the big dudes, when they are over 20, they lose their sense of humour. They start running after work and they forget about their hobbies," (Gdanian, 2005) Garo Gdanian from the death metal group Weeping Willow told me. There are many who do not say that they play music at family meetings. "Music is my passion, but Lebanon is not a place for musicians," the guitarist Elias Njeim told me: "A musician is considered as not being successful here. My uncle is 46 years old and still plays the guitar: People laugh about him. They think he is a looser. It's too sad."

Musicians who are into art music or experimental music are mostly just not taken seriously. Mahmoud Turkmani, a composer, oud player, and guitarist who grew up in Lebanon and now lives in Switzerland, feels like an alien when he talks to his family or friends in Lebanon. "They just do not understand what I'm doing, and they think it is not really serious," he told me. Mazen Kerbaj, Raed Yassin and other free improvisers told me similar stories. However, it still seems better to be into experimental music, than into tarab:

> A musician gains considerable status if his music speciality falls in the domain of
> 'fine arts' rather than traditional crafts. The importation of Western models and values
> brings with it a categorical distinction, namely that Western art music is 'culture' and
> 'art'. As such, it cannot be subjected to the same criteria and stigmas applicable to
> traditional Arab music. (Racy, 2001, p. 350)

Things become even better when one has a diploma, and, for example, teaches at the conservatory, or in Kaslik or Alba, or in arts departments at one of the universities.

Being a pop singer however seems to be the worst scenario, however, lately this has seemed to change, at least a bit, as some musicians told me: The singers that win TV shows such as "Arab superstar" are well received. It is rather complex:

Musicians tend to become less respected as they become more publicly seen and heard. This brings to mind one possible exception, namely those who attain various degrees of celebrity status through the mass media. Radio and television tend to grant professional musicians economic power, and possibly the type of protection offered earlier by musical guilds and individual patrons. In one sense, media channels make musicians more accessible, but in another, they grant them an auspicious barrier of exclusivity. (Racy, 2001, p. 350)

4.4   Superculture

"People here are not used anymore to listening to music. When I tell them that I sometimes listen to a track that goes on for one hour, and I do nothing but listen, they cannot believe it" (Kerbaj, 2005).

The musicians and sound artists this research is about are surrounded by commercialism. The pan-Arabic pop market has changed a lot within the last years, and mainly since the mid-1990s. The changes are closely linked to developments in the mass media. The pop music industry increasingly turned into a video-clip industry. Today, Arabic pop music is aired via various satellite channels on stations like Rotana.

4.4.1   Mediascapes: The Saudi-Arabian Media Empire

The mediascapes have changed immensely since the 1990s. For a very long time Egypt had been the leader in the Arab media world (see chapter 3.2). In Lebanon, TV culture had gone through a rather special history. As the Lebanese government lacked financial means, the first TV station The Compagnie Libanaise de Télévision (CLT) only started in 1956, formed by Lebanese and foreign investors. It was the first non-state TV station in the Arab world, as the detailed media report by Layla al-Zubaidi and the Boell Foundation in Beirut recalls (Al-Zubaidi, 2005). Another group of investors received a license to create the station Compagnie Libanaise de Télévision du Liban et du Proche-Orient (Télé-Orient). During the Civil War the two stations merged to Télé-Liban. The station received a broadcasting monopoly; however, as the state was collapsing it was not able to enforce this monopoly. By the end of the war around 50 private TV stations existed in Lebanon. In 1994 a new law for the audiovisual media introduced licensing for radio and TV stations in Lebanon. Only six out of fifty TV channels survived: Télé Liban, the state station; LBC, the station of the Christian Lebanese Forces; Future TV, the station of the Sunni premier minister Rafiq al-Hariri; NBN from Nabih Berry's Shiite Amal movement; Al-Manar, the station of Hizbullah and MTV alias Murr-TV from the Greek Orthodox Michael and Gabriel Murr (Al-Zubaidi, 2005). "The licensing process disregarded the professional and financial qualifications of applicants and followed clearly confessional lines in order to respect this confessional balance of power," Dima Dabbous-Sensenig writes. (Dabbous-Sensenig, unpublished). Increasingly, four stations dominated the Lebanese market: LBC (the leader of the market), Télé-Liban, Future TV, and MTV; though the state shut MTV in 2002. LBC (LBCI - The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, International) and Future TV also broadcast via satellite. The competition, however, was fierce.

In 1994, TV culture in the Arab world changed radically: Saudi Arabia took over. According to Hammond (2007) this development was linked to the Gulf War:

> Since the 1990-1 Gulf crisis when the United States used Saudi Arabia as a launchpad for a campaign to evict occupying Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia has used the Arab media as a key area for responding to perceived threats to the leadership's legitimacy and stability such as challenges to its alliance with the United States and criticism of its political system, decision-making processes and image in the Arab world. (Hammond, 2007)

Immediately after the Gulf Crisis, the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) was launched and established as a private television enterprise by a brother-in-law of King Fahd, Walid al-Ibrahim in London. Another Saudi prince opened the Orbit entertainment TV network in 1994 in London, and the well-known businessman Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal and his business partner Saleh Kamel established the Arab Radio and Television entertainment network (ART) in Rome. These three networks, MBC, Orbit and ART, show a Western style entertainment program, led by Hollywood movies, American sitcoms and talk shows (Hammond, 2007). The changes are radical, between the 1950s and 1960s and now: "If Abdel-Nasser wanted you fi-shari' (on the streets), Al Saud wants you fi-sala (in the living room)," writes Hammond (2007). The Lebanese tried to compete in picking up several sexually and politically taboo topics.

The major changes lead to a change in the academic studies about media, popular culture, and politics.[148] Scholars who write about the recent media developments (e.g., Hammond, 2007; Miller, 2007; Sakr, 2007) do so either neutrally, or they profess a certain fascination for the new phenomena.[149] They agree that the media brought a kind of shared Arab Identity into the households from Lebanon to Morocco. Starting with Egyptian soap operas, ending with Arab pop stars, reality shows, and Islamic *televangelists* like Amr Khaled.[150]

Amr Khaled

Amr Khaled lives in the UK, as the Egyptian government banned him from preaching in his own country. He is winning over hitherto rather unreligious young, upper-middle class Arabs by employing many of the same techniques used by Western Christian televangelists.

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[148] For a long time the academic spotlight lay on Egypt almost exclusively: Scholars like Walter Armbrust (1996, 2000) wrote and edited important books on TV, film and music in Egypt. Today, the focus is on the big media networks from Saudi Arabia and Dubai, and on the Satellite news channel Al-Jazeera from Qatar.

[149] Some books (e.g., Miller, 2007; Hirschkind, 2006) deal with the audio aspects of the mediascapes. Miller goes into the sonic media aesthetics, and analyzes the audio-recording industry in Yemen, and looks for new forms of political activism and new definitions of oral performances. Hirschkind takes a similar direction when analyzing popular cassette sermons and Islamic counterpublics. If we look closely we can observe a variety of changes, of new aesthetics in music making in Lebanon and the Arab world: from new wave dabke (Silverstein), to the re-popularization of Sufi Anshad in Egyptian dance music (Peterson, 2008).

[150] The American University of Cairo and its online journal ArabMedia &Society took a leading role in recent media research. These scholars analyze the interrelations between media and politics, and the various phenomena that are attached to it. One finds articles on Arab reality TV with its major music talent competition shows Arab Superstar and Star Academy (Kraidy, 2006). Or we learn about media scandals, for example, around belly-dancing stars like Fifi Abdo, or pop stars like Haifa or Nancy Ajram that are often discussed throughout the region. Some academic articles analyze the interrelations between propaganda, war, and media. Some focus on the Hizbullah media channel Al Manar (Exum, 2008; Ajemian, 2008).

With his stylish business suits, trim moustache, thinning black hair, large, expressive eyes, and magnetic charm, Khaled moves audiences to tears with his retellings of Quranic stories and promises of God's redeeming love. Khaled's fame has grown astronomically, particularly among well-to-do Arab women and youth, many of whom are struggling to reconcile their 'Westernized' lifestyles with the powerful pull of a regional Islamic revival. As a 'born-again' Muslim who rediscovered his own faith as a teenager, Khaled offers himself as living proof that being religious does not have to mean being 'backwards' or fanatical. 'I love people passionately and want what's best for them,' Khaled said in an interview with the English-language Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram Weekly. 'A good preacher should be more compassionate than disciplinary. My main concern is to make young people love religion instead of fearing it.' (Wise, 2004)

Sami Yusuf

The singer Sami Yusuf is a rather similar phenomenon; he is a British Muslim of Azeri origin. He is not a native Arabic speaker, and mostly sings in English. He is a modern pop star who preaches the values of Islam through devotional songs (*nashid*, pl. *anshad*) in which he praises the Prophet Muhammad. Often he uses Pakistani Qawwali rhythms to move his crowds - and he does seem to identify a lot with Sufism, or Islamic mysticism.[151] The focus of this music is on the spiritual side of Islam, and it seeks to disseminate a positive, peaceful image of this religion (Kubala, 2005; Pond, 2006; Starton, 2006). Armbrust offers a good description of one of his songs:

In Al-Mu'allim, Sami Yusuf is shown kissing his mother's hand while she sits on the stairway landing in his 'Beverly Hills' modern mansion reading the Qur'an. He then goes to his Jeep outside in the street. As he loads the Jeep, he spots a blind man crossing the street. The man is about to stumble over an unseen stone in his path, but Yusuf rushes to help him, saving him just before he trips. Another sequence shows him going to a mosque to pray. He goes to an old mosque, but is filmed very tightly against the exterior of the building, and in all-male crowds, so that the urban space around the mosque (probably the Mamluk-era Sultan Hasan mosque is used for the exterior shots) is invisible. At the mosque, he is shown teaching a group of boys how to pray -- an obviously fitting image for a video clip entitled The Teacher. (Armbrust, 2005)

4.4.2   The Pan-Arabic Pop Scene

You find a girl, let her undergo 27 operations, and she becomes beautiful on TV. You tell her to sing, and she sings, you give her Egyptian songs, and she sings them, then songs from Turkey, and she sings them, music from Spain, Greece, all mixed together. It becomes music without an identity, sung by a singer who lost her identity. (Sfeir, 2005)

Arabic pop music and its history is closely linked to these developments in Satellite Media.[152] To a great extent, Lebanese pop music became pan-Arabic. In the 1960s and 1970s, most of the Lebanese pop stars came through the TV show Studio al-Fann; they mainly sang in Lebanese dialect. Now, the singers sing one song in Lebanese, one in Egyptian, and one in a Gulf dialect. The goal is to reach all markets.

> We listened to Egyptian music all our lives, and we understand the Egyptian dialect.
> But when a Lebanese singer like Nancy Ajram sings in Egyptian, it sounds like a
> Japanese person speaking in French or English. This maybe brings an interesting
> touch to the music, but still I think it is strange. (Sfeir, 2005)

He is one among many who see the development in the mainstream culture as very critical.

After investing in TV satellite channels, the Saudi capital was used to invest in recording and producing music videos. Two major companies were established: Rotana, which introduced itself as the biggest producer with offices in Beirut, Dubai, and Cairo; and Alam el-Phan (Alam Al-Fann) that had 25 major Arabic artists under its umbrella: from Amr Diab, Hani Shaker to Mohamed Mounir. Alam Al-Fann was linked to the first specialized MTV-like music video channel Mazzika. Soon, it was bought by the Founoon holding company, who own most of the intellectual property rights in Egyptian cinema. Then it was bought by Rotana, which today almost controls the entire Arab music market.[153] So basically, the main shares of music and Egyptian film are in the hands of the billionaire Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal by the time of writing. Rotana runs several TV channels, and its record companies have a roster of more than a hundred Arab top stars. A hidden goal of Rotana, some argue, is to make singers from the Gulf as famous as the ones from Egypt and Lebanon (Ismail, 2005).

The Pop Business

Next to the Rotana Empire, many pop music labels struggle to survive.[154] Record labels, like High Quality, for example, changed their product line and produce mainly religious tapes (Said, 2004). Thus, the increased number of religious singers on the scene could probably be seen as a counter-strategy to confront Rotana - or at least to survive next to it.

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[152] The Arab world has around 40 Arab music video channels, some of them broadcast around the clock. Melody channel (owned by Gamal Marawan, the son of Ashraf Marawan, the Egyptian billionaire and global businessman), ART and Mazzika (today Rotana), Dream channel, (an Egyptian private satellite channel owned by Egyptian billionaire Ahmad Bahgat), AL-Mehwar (an Egyptian private satellite channel owned by Hasan Rateb and a group of other Egyptian businessmen), Zien, a Lebanese private channel, showing music videos for at least 12 hours a day, Nojoom, and some other channels (Ismail, 2005). There is a mutually beneficial relationship between specialized MTV-like channels and recording companies. "A channel needs the companies for the free songs that need to be aired instead of producing their own programs that are not affordable. The companies need the channels to make this kind of free advertisement of their new albums and singers" (Ismail, 2005).

[153] Rotana further owns a major share of Egyptian films, dating back to 1935. It shows coloured versions of black and white films - a strategy introduced by Founoon some years ago. I met Frederic Giaccardo, the French CEO of Founoon, during a research trip in Cairo. He told me that colouring these 'old' films was the main strategy to try again to make them popular for the masses (Burkhalter, 2003). In Egypt a lot of criticism could be heard: Many were lamenting that the Egyptian film rights moved into the hands of the Arabs - these statements show how the definition of "Arabs" switches depending on context, and content.

[154] Among them are (or were) High Quality, Free Music, Ok, and Music now in Egypt, Mega Star and Rozana in Lebanon, and Al-Kheul (the horses) and Fenoun AL-Jezzira (The arts of the Arab peninsula) in Saudi Arabia.

In this Saudi business world, Beirut plays mainly a role on two levels: It hosts some of the star singers, composers, arrangers, and studio musicians, and it hosts record studios where the music is produced. The formula is clear: Money comes from Saudi Arabia, Dubai serves as the business hub, and Beirut and Cairo offers the content. Many composers, arrangers, and musicians who now work in the pop scene, used to play subcultural music in the 1980s or 1990s: The pop composer Jean Marie Riachi, for example, used to play disco music as a DJ in the 1990s. Today he has his own studio, and produces pop songs for pop stars like Nawal al-Zoughbi. Former rock drummer Fouad Afra makes it very clear: Sooner or later every musician starts working towards an audience, either in the pop market, or as a session musician. He thus relativizes his argument about "artists" and "session musicians." Or he enhances it to an *age* and *generation* question: Many "artists" become "session musicians" when getting older and having more responsibilities - for their families, for example. The guitarist Raed al-Khazen is one of the studio musicians in the pop scene. During the year he studies jazz guitar at Berkley College in the USA, and during the summer he comes back to Beirut to earn money. To work in the pop markets is rather lucrative. Al-Khazen can get up to 2,000 US dollars per session. "This is much more than I get in New York," al-Khazen explains: "The average salary of people in Beirut is around $200 to $400, so as a musician you earn not bad." (al-Khazen, 2005) He plays many club concerts as well. There he earns between 50 and 100 dollars. The financial highlight is to perform in Dubai, or in the Gulf - this I heard from many musicians: "After one concert a sheikh gave me an envelope with 3,000 dollars inside," al-Khazen remembers. (al-Khazen, 2005)

Al-Khazen does hate the pop business. However, he likes to work with some of the composers, arrangers and musicians involved. "You have some high class musicians and composers working in this genre," he tells me, and names Hadi Sharara, Bilan al-Zein, and Michel Fadl. The latter gave me more insights into the business of the pop arrangers. Michel Fadl was born in 1976 as a Latin Catholic - a very small minority in Lebanon. His father was an opera singer who used to teach at the National Conservatory. Michel started to play the piano when he was four years old. Later he studied classical piano, and did his master's degree at the National Conservatory in Lebanon, and he received diplomas in composition and orchestration at the Conservatoire de Boulogne in Paris. He performed with star singers like Fairuz, Julia Boutros and Majida al-Roumi, and he became the musical director and jury member of the TV program Star Academy. Further, he earned his money arranging songs for stars like Nancy Ajram, Elissa, Carole Samaha and Nawal al-Zoughbi, and he performs his own music, for example, in a duo with the Lebanese percussionist Rony Barrak. Like many of the Lebanese males I met, he is very open in telling me how much he earns. The evening before our meeting he recorded and arranged three songs with a twelve-year-old girl. Her father had given her this recording as a gift - it cost him 9,000 dollars. Further, Fadl explains to me how the pop business works: "Normally you have the singer and his or her manager. They go to a lyricist, then to a composer, and then to an arranger. At each person they pay a certain amount of money." He names the figures as follows: The melody, mostly written by an Egyptian, costs between $3,000 and $3,500; the lyrics cost $1,000 to $2,000; the arrangements $3,000 to $8,000. Fadl normally charges $5,000 per arrangement.

There is a lot of cheating and copying involved as well in the pop business. A successful song in Turkey often appears in the Arab world some time later - and often the composers mentioned in the CD booklets are not identical. This copying and stealing mainly happens between the Arab world, Turkey, Greece, Israel and the Balkans, but it includes countries like Pakistan and Brazil as well. We

find various examples in the World Wide Web - mainly on YouTube. The Lebanese female singer Nelly Makdisi sung in 2005, a 2004 song by the Turkish female singer Gülşen.[155]

While the songs travel, the singers are often bound to their label or to a TV station through strict contracts. Rotana has a strict monopoly policy. It owns the exclusive rights to its artists, their performances in concerts, and their video clips.[156] Controlling artists seems common practice.[157] One musician became very angry when we talked about this topic:

> Music in Lebanon was always controlled and manipulated by certain people: First by
> the Rahbani clan, today by Rotana, or World Music producers like Michel
> Elefteriades. The Rahbanis signed contracts with every talented singer in the country
> and let them sing background vocals – or let them just disappear. And they keep
> saying that they created Lebanese music, or they brought rock to Lebanon (Ghassan
> Rahbani), or created Lebanese Bossa Nova (Ziyad Rahbani). I just hate them for that,
> and I would never work with them again. (Anonymous, 2005)

Many of the subcultural musicians believe in the rumours (and/or transport them) that most of the female pop stars make fame and money in sleeping with kings and sheikhs. Some argue that this is true even for the biggest stars in the scene. One Lebanese female singer tells me that the pop market is indeed a "very dirty business". "The managers talk very badly and nastily about their stars, and they treat the women singers like prostitutes, or like animals." (Anonymous, 2005) A Lebanese ethnomusicologist argues similarly: "Many of the main men in this business make stars out of their girlfriends. Normally they give them contracts for fifteen years, so when love is over, the career is over as well." (Anonymous, 2005) These accusations became tragically true in July 2008 when the Lebanese pop singer Suzanne Tamim was murdered in her apartment in Dubai. Her former lover, an Egyptian businessman and lawmaker from the ruling party of President Hosni Mubarak, was accused of paying a hitman to have Tamim killed. A CNN online report announced the following: "Rumors abound of businessmen and politicians peddling out actresses and singers in prostitution rings. The frequent marriages and divorces of celebrities and businessmen make big news." The CNN article stated further:

> People in the Arab world have long followed with fascination and moral clucking the
> tales of businessmen and politicians cavorting with actresses, belly-dancers and

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[155] The Egyptian pop star Amr Diab even includes a whole subpage of "Stolen Songs" into his website. He traces thirty examples of songs that were copied without his knowledge in countries as diverse as Israel, Lithuania, Russia, Argentina, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Japan, Turkey and Greece. Many other songs can be traced that are in fact the same - often performed in the same tempo, with the same orchestration, but just with another singer: Ibrahim Tatlises "Usta" - Fadel Shaker "Allah A'lam"; Ibrahim Tatlises "Aramam" - Wael Kfoury "Bel Gharam"; Alisan "Yalan Oldu" - Rayan "Haram Aleik"; Ibrahim Tatlises "Selam Olsun" - Wael Kfoury "Tabky el Touyour"; Ibrahim Tatlises "Leylim Ley" - Saber el Roubai "Ya Lila"; Serdar Ortac - Wael Kfoury "Keral ayounak."

[156] This policy led and leads to a number of law cases - for example, with the Lebanese singer Nelli Maqdisi, who cancelled her contract with Rotana. She argued that "despite the fact that the contract says that I have the right to show my video clip on any of the satellite channels a week after its first broadcast on the Rotana channel, the company asked me not to broadcast my clips on the other channels" (Said, 2004).

[157] Controlling artists seems a common practise: And an insider argues the following: "Rotana does not even have well-planned projects for its singers. The late [tunisian singer] Zikra, for instance, spent two years with Rotana without releasing a single song," adding that "Bin Talal wants to see rival companies fail by hoarding every singer, even those who are not very talented" (Said, 2004).

singers -- a sort of Hollywood Babylon in the conservative Muslim Middle East.
(CNN 6.9.2008)

The fact is, the biggest pop stars earn a lot - at least when they have made it to the top at Rotana. Amr Diab, the big Egyptian star, is said to have earned around $1.8 M per album, before moving to Rotana to get $5 M for each album. Nawal al-Zoghby, the Lebanese star singer for a while, takes $900,000 (Ismail, 2005). In 2001, I visited Nawal al-Zoughbi in her villa - together with the composer and musician Mahmoud Turkmani, and Ahmad, his brother-in-law, a taxi driver, and a huge fan of hers. We were sent by a music festival in Basel with the idea of inviting at least one pop star of the Arab world. After having visited Rotana's studio in Beirut, Najwa Karam in a bar, and Nawal al-Zoughbi at home, we gave up this idea. First, we did not like any of the music, and second $40,000 for one concert was just too high for our budget. We felt, that for the managers of these artists, Europe is not at all a primary market. They earn much more with concerts in the Gulf, or in private parties all over the Arab world. "Sometimes these pop singers sing in five or six places a night: in private parties, hotels, TV shows. In each they perform for twenty minutes, and they can earn more than $100,000 per night," the Lebanese jazz singer Randa Ghossoub (2005) told me. Hubert Ghorayeb from EMI-Lebanon confirms this: Women have bigger changes to make careers in this business, he says.

Video-Clips and Songs

The stars of the pop world change quickly: George Wassouf, Najwa Karam and Nawal al-Zoughbi are replaced by Haifa Wehbe and Nancy Ajram, and new faces pop up almost on a daily basis. Ninety percent of the songs deal with love, romance, and longing, and the rest talk about celebrations like weddings, home life, motherhood, and children. "Min Safer" from Issa Ghandour is one of the rare pop videos that deals with the Lebanese past. In the video we see him returning from exile, probably his first time back since the Civil War. He enters a beautiful, old Beiruti house, sees his parents, and remembers how they fled during the war: We see him as a boy running down the stairs, leaving the country for good.[158] A very small minority of the videos deal with social or political issues. The Egyptian Shaaban Abd al-Raheem produced videos with titles such as "I Hate Israel" and "Hitting Iraq."[159]

The aesthetics of the videos have changed a lot within the last years. Some years ago the production was rather cheap, now it is done very professionally. In the old videos the singers walked around, in a cheap set of palm trees and kitschy fountains. Now the settings have become more diverse: between modern and urban places, and idealized village life: People drink in Italian style cafés in an urban square, or they stand out as the beauty in a rural setting full with farmers and goats. Today's videos are often done with directors, film crews, and actors from all over the Arab world, from Turkey and Armenia. A considerable number of the Arab music videos are shot outside the Arab

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[158] (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQRKD-7mAbw) (last checked December 2008)
[159] Shaaban Abd al-Rahim, further, released very political albums: Amrika Ya Amrika (America O America), al-Kurah Shai' Qalil Ya Isra'il (Hate is a Trivial Thing O Israel), and al-Darab X al-'Iraq (Bombing X Iraq). Even though his songs were rather anti-American it did not stop him from appearing in an advertisement for the McFalafel. Abd al-Rahim's excuse was that he had no idea that McDonalds was a US company (Gordon, 2003). For most of the albums, one finds a variety of video clips on youtube. The majority of the videos of these songs were released on satellite channels (Melody and Mazzika mainly) within weeks of the events that inspired them (Grippo, 2006).

world, especially in Turkey and eastern European countries where directors can find cheaper models, clothes, and materials for decoration.[160] (Ismail, 2005). The most expensive productions can cost up to $300,000, smaller productions $20,000 to $25,000, and low budget videos $3,000 to $5,000 (Ismail, 2005).

The videos are full of beautiful women and men in expensive designer clothes. The men often are David Beckham or Latin Lover types. Sometimes the women singers are depicted as Oriental beauties. Men and women drive around in expensive cars, dance on the beach, or lie in bed in an expensive, modern furnished villa waiting and longing for their beloved. Women often wear sexy lingerie, and males show their naked chests. Many of the videos keep provoking religious circles and conservative viewers[161] all over the Arab world.[162] Haifa Wehbe and Nancy Ajram are the two Lebanese singers in the pop business people probably talk about most.[163] Haifa Wehbe[164] is famous for her sexual suggestiveness. In her video-clip "Mosh Adra Astana" she dives out of a swimming pool. Her body passes the camera in one shot: from her head, to her lips, to her bikini, to her hips, to her legs. We hear a repeating guitar riff, a hard beaten darrabukah rhythm, and intense electronic sounds. The rather chaotic sounds and rhythms suggest that Haifa is in turmoil, and according to her lyrics, this is true:

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[160] "Turkey is more successful in attracting crews of directing music videos than Egypt or Lebanon. Ashraf Mahmoud had Miss Kazakhstan did one of his music videos for $100. Having foreign models in Egyptian music videos takes place because directors cannot find that many beautiful fair-skinned girls in Egypt, yet they can find them easily in Turkey, the Czech Republic, and Romania, thus directors move to these countries to get a global image, especially with new singers. This fact has made the future predictable as Wageh Ahmad put it by saying that the market is expanding with small companies and individual production. People want to see new singers instead of old ones; the time span of stardom is very short." (Ismail, 2005).

[161] The media giants however mostly own these record companies anyway - see the case of Rotana. The satellite channels are not always free of censorship. In 2004 Nogoom TV, owned by Suhail Abdoul, husband of the Lebanese singer Diana Haddad, decided to ban the airing of songs that are classified as "inappropriate for the average viewers" and which contain seductive scenes and females wearing revealing outfits. The censorship committee officials at the network revealed that "broadcasting such demeaning songs goes against Arab social and traditional values and should not be allowed to be aired" (Freemuse.org, 7.10.2004). Banned were songs by Ruby, and by the Tunisian singer Najila, who in her video clips presents herself in sexy lingerie, dances on the laps of men, shakes her breasts, and loves to take foam baths.

[162] The debates around these 'scandalous' video-clips often help to shoot the singers to more superstardom. Some videos provoke Muslim traditions in a rather direct way. Darrah (2008) mentions the song "Ama Ach-kta" by Samar, in which she performs in a wedding dress and the typical henna paintings from the Maghreb. Her song is about her pleasant and erotic anticipation of her wedding night (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZEu4RyTN0U). Ruby, born Rania Hussein from Egypt, is the queen of belly-dancing in the commercial pop industry: Her music varies from techno dance pop to Chaabi styles, however she keeps belly dancing - in different surroundings and in different clothes: In a girlish cheerleader look, in a gym outfit with a dumbbell in her hands, in an elegant red dress, in a Cleopatra look with a snake around her neck, in a beach bikini look, in a striptease dancer look in a striptease bar (see Comer, 2005).

[163] They are a common topic in the discussions of the musicians from the rather subcultural scenes as well. One musician of the experimental music circle kept repeating his fun idea to "kidnap the beautiful Nancy Ajram and force her produce a piece of music with him." The idea is not meant seriously, but it could be the ideal strategy to bring the Lebanese to listen to his experimental sounds at least for once.

[164] Haifa Wehbe is a Shi'a woman, born in South Lebanon. One of the stories around her goes that she lived with her husband in Africa. When he started to hit her, the two divorced, and Haifa came back to Lebanon, and she has, since then, not been allowed to see her daughter Zeinab. Some subcultural artists see Haifa Wehbe as a strong character - mainly because of her history and her courage to be open about it. "Haifa became a phenomenon," Rana Eid, a sound designer for alternative films, argues: "Some scholars and journalists started to reflect on the sociological meaning of her, others even compared her to Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Monroe. The latter is just bullshit."

I can't wait another day.

Come back to me I'm yearning for you.

My darling the dream of my life is to meet you for a moment

Oh you, who is depriving me, I still have time

My darling this is the last moan of moans

We will stay here together

You've been away from me long enough

Look how many years I've not seen comfort and security

Cultural Decline

Across generations, most Lebanese call today's pan-Arabic pop culture "decadent," "tasteless," and "cheap." Shannon found the same critique in Aleppo, Syria: According to a woman journalist, most pop singers "lack sincerity (*sidq*)," and they are thus not true artists (*mutrib*). Another music lover told Shannon that "modern singers may sing of love, but they don't know real love - they are mimicking true love, and at worst fabricating the experience; theirs is false love." Others said: *"They sing of love but are really only interested in sex"* (Shannon, 2006, p. 155). A lot of critique comes from the conservative and religious circles. For Armbrust, their arguments go too far. He shows that sex was important not only in today's videos, but throughout the media history of Egypt in the twentieth century:

> Video clips are far more interesting in historical context than they are as putatively
> unprecedented 'new media.' Even the rhetoric of dismissing them as vulgar and
> cheap resonates with the past one hundred years of Egyptian history. (…) It is,
> however, crucial to recognize that some of these ideas have historical roots. One must
> be on guard against overstating the novelty of new media. (Armbrust, 2005)

The poet Mahmoud Darwish defines what the satellite networks are offering as *petro-culture*: "'Petro-culture' (…) invaded all platforms and institutions devoted to culture and communication," he writes and argues that petro-culture leads to a further decline of culture in the Arab world: "In the final analysis the destruction of culture and the cultured is the only clear outcome of the phenomenon of the petrol 'patronage' of culture" (Darwish, 1995, p. 140). Most composers and musicians of the generation of Mahmoud Darwish I talked to agree with him. Some Christians would actually not use "Saudi" but "Arab." According to them, the decline of Beirut as a cultural capital in the Arab world started with the influences of the "Arabs" - a highly racist, and much too simple argument. Elias Rahbani said in an interview with the culture magazine *Al-Majalla* that everyone that listens to Arabic pop music becomes a part in a race towards bad taste (Darrah, 2008). It is interesting to hear this quote by Elias Rahbani, who made his money through so many, very commercial radio adds and pop songs. Other arguments come from a culture conference of the Arab League in 2004. There, all participants agreed that the old music was authentic and better than everything that is produced today. To underline their argument, they said that the old music was listened to by aristocrats, and the new music by everyone (Darrah, 2008); class thinking is back!

The sound artists and musicians born during the Civil War, complain about the pop business as well: some with passionate anger, others in a very playful way. Rapper MC O-Marz belongs to the first category: "These Arab channels poison the Arab youth," he screamed into my ears: "The music

they play makes our people dumber and dumber the more they listen to it. 'I love you, you love me, and the wind whispers your name': this is all this music is about." When I tried to ask him a question about Haifa Wehbe, MC O-Marz became even louder:

> Haifa Wehbe, George Wassouf, what the fuck is that! I don't care how much he loves his girls and how much she longs for her beloved! If we had Umm Kulthoum back, I would be the happiest man on earth! It's a fucking conspiracy! The political leaders and the big businessmen are happy when the crowd consumes this bullshit and stays stupid. (O-Marz, 2005)

The rap group Aks'ser decided to use the aesthetics and the contents of pop videos and pop songs and to produce a kind of a parody.[165] Gassan Rahbani makes fun of the pop singers as well. In his song "Everybody's sick but me" he offers his reflections and feelings towards the pan-Arabic pop world:

> Pathetic thoughts; disgusting plans, frantic lives; dark nights; ruling egos, ignorance is knowledge; killing is needed; praying is a shame, worship cruelty; stealing respected; sacred greed; minds rotted; education raped; rights violated; love smashed; principles polluted; respect destroyed; ethics corrupted; purity affected; power is weakness; nastiness welcomed; malice is adored; betray is a goal; innocence is annoying; sense is frustrating; honesty is revolting; praying is shame … Believe me, my friend, they think like this! (Gassan Rahbani, 2006)

The Missing Link

One of the main arguments I kept hearing from the musicians was the following: There is no middle ground between the highly commercial pop music and the underground scenes. While we Westerners maybe can enjoy and maybe even laugh at TV preachers, Sami Yusuf and Shaaban Abd-al Rahim, the underground musicians in Beirut, wished to have alternatives. The interest of the big companies in producing alternatives, seems, however, minimal. I got to know this in a meeting with Frederic Giaccardo, the director of the Founoon Company in Cairo. His answer to my question as to why no-one seems to promote alternative styles in the pan-Arabic pop market was short and clear:

> Piracy is the main reason why we can't promote alternative artists. Because of piracy, we can only work with artists that sell a huge amount of copies on the day of the release, because from the second day onwards we don't earn anymore, because all the CDs are getting sold on the black market already. (Giaccardo, 2003)

I was not too convinced about his answer: First, the record companies live from the video channels and these earn their money through advertisements. So the CD sales are probably not too important. And secondly, the underground bands would not become copied as fast as he said when compared to the commercial pop. His answer was again, clear: "We are fighting piracy, and we are going succeed within five years. Then you will see alternative music in our catalogue," he told me. The interview was held in 2003. Since then, Founoon was bought by Rotana, and the commercial pop market did not change. The major problem, so most argue, is that the satellite stations do not care about the quality of the pop music. Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal has enough money to spend and not to worry about financial profit too much - this many argue. Closer to the truth might be the fact that the music is just there to fill the music channels. The money comes in through the advertisements that are constantly

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[165] See chapter 6.5.

mixed into the video clip pictures. Further young viewers from the Arab world and the Arab communities abroad can send mobile phone text messages to each other through the TV - their messages appear at the bottom of the screen. Davies argues that it is too easy to blame the TV stations or the artists only:

> Egyptians (and Lebanese and Moroccans and Jordanians, etc.) actively participate in their fate by making song requests, sending SMS messages, purchasing mobile phone ring tones and video images, and contacting the channels and demanding to hear and see them. Clearly the public is complicit in this plan for its own destruction. (Davies, 2005)

Satellite TV: A Revolution?

A major debate revolves around the question as to whether these transnational satellite channels bring more freedom of speech, more public debates and critical reflection, and thus a democratization of Arab societies. There are indeed programs on these channels that are seen as controversial:

> Interviewers putting tough questions to heads of state; live phone-ins and studio audience participation; programmes dealing with subjects like divorce and homosexuality; adversarial talk shows featuring Islamist guests who would be jailed if they set foot in their own countries; these examples of gritty current affairs programming marked a major advance on what passed for current affairs on Arab television stations ten years earlier. (Sakr, 2001, p. 3)

Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, a Lebanese scholar and close observer of the media, sees the changes, however, as minimal: "The reality on the ground remained relatively unchanged," she writes, and argues that, for example, the various national media laws have not changed till this day, and that the pressure from Arab countries often remains on these TV stations even if they program from outside the Arab world. Concluding, Dabbous-Sensenig summarized the changes as follows.

> A mapping of the changes in the Arab media landscape showed that, as important as these changes are in breaking previous taboos and widening the scope of what can be offered on television, limits on free expression remain significant, perpetuated by a combination of direct and indirect controls exercised over terrestrial and satellite broadcasting by authoritarian Arab regimes. In other words, the new media, as agents of pluralization, have not 'guaranteed a transition to civic pluralism or democracy.' (Dabbous-Sensenig, unpublished)

4.5   Interculture

If we finally look at the musical phenomena that cross and travel between the Arab and the Western world (what Slobin would define as *interculture*) we find a lot of Western-based institutions and firms involved: from international major record labels like EMI and its sub-firm EMI Arabia, to MTV Arabia, International Arts Councils and NGOs, and state-founded exchange programs. The latter often work under the umbrella of Cultural Diplomacy. This means that one of the main goals of these institutions is to help to promote the ideas, values, and policies of their home countries: The American and French Universities are, as we saw, one important backbone of many cultural activities

in Beirut: They educate arts students, and they all have their own concert spaces. Cultural institutions like the Goethe Institute, and the British Council offer language courses, but they support cultural projects as well. The Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia mainly finances exchange programs between Swiss artists and artists from the Arab world. These institutions' efforts mainly reach elites; small but important target groups. The Heinrich Böll Foundation in Beirut supports people and projects who - according to the Böll website - "are working for meaningful participation, solidarity, sustainable development and peaceful change towards equality and justice in social and international relations."

4.5.1   International Arts Councils

In 2005 I held a long conversation about the international funding bodies in Beirut with the arts curator Christine Tohme. Tohme founded Ashkal Alwan, the Lebanese Association for the Plastic Arts. It is a non-profit organisation that initiates and supports the production of contemporary artistic practice, and provides grounding for critical reflection and theory. The aim is to promote free thought and critical discourse in Lebanon. Ashkal Alwan organises lectures, workshops and the important biannual forum, Home Works. Home Works focuses on arts and culture in the Arab world, and it includes performances by sound artists as well. For her work, Tohme received an award by the Dutch Prince Claus Fund in 2006: "For her struggle to stimulate local contemporary art production in difficult circumstances, for creating links with the rest of the world, for her research and for creating possibilities for the next generations," as we can read on the Dutch website of the organisation. Today Ashkal Alwan is supported by various funders and partners - mainly from Europe and the USA: DigiArts UNESCO, The Ford Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Open Society Institute (Soros), the British Council, European Cultural Foundation, and others. Local funders and partners include the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and Middle East Airlines.

Some of these funders chose Ashkal Alwan as a mediator. This means Ashkal Alwan became a funding body as well. They support the production of specific arts projects with smaller sums of $1,000 to $5,000 - Raed Yassin was supported to produce his video and audio piece "CW Tapes" (see chapter 6.1). Around this money and the influence of Ashkal Alwan in the scene, a lot of struggles came to life. Tohme knows her critics: "They say that we always support the same artists." This is a criticism that every arts organisation keeps hearing - all around the world.

The main supporters of the alternative music circles in Beirut at the time of writing are the Centre Culturel Français, Goethe Institute, the American Embassy, and occasionally the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia. In most of the cases the support seems closely linked to the person in charge.

The Centre Culturel Français (CCF) supports projects in the field of urban music. The main part of the cultural budget (in this case for music) goes into a concert series in the Music Hall that showcases French artists in Beirut. At the time of writing, Frederic Pinard was in charge of that cultural budget. I thus met him in June 2006, just one day before the war between Hizbullah and Israel broke out. At the time, Pinard was 33 years old. He had worked in Beirut for three years, and he liked the place a lot. Overall, Pinard has a budget of $160,000 which he can use for local artistic productions. With one part of that budget he supports the urban music scene. He mainly works with Zeid Hamdan and the rapper Wael Kodeih. He had told them to create their own labels through which they should support upcoming talent. For that they receive $3,000 and $5,000 annually - "It's carte blanche," Pinard tells me: "I don't tell them what albums they should produce or not." (Pinard, 2006)

Pinard further funds special events: for example the Luna Park Festival, organised by Zeid Hamdan, or DJ nights under the title "Paris mix Beirut" in the Basement Club.

The Goethe Institute supports projects that involve mainly German musicians. The pianist Joelle Khoury was able to invite several jazz musicians from Germany for a project. DJ Hans Nieswandt visited Beirut to perform at some clubnights and festivals - and to relax in the apartment of Lethal Skillz. Irtijal, the Festival for Free Improvised Music, received some support, when the German pioneer Peter Brötzmann performed in Beirut. Again, the support was closely linked to the person in charge: to director Rolf Stehle.

The US Embassy support cultural projects as well: for example, they pay flight tickets for American artists performing in Beirut. Further, the musicians from the free improvised music scene in Beirut were sent to the USA through a cultural exchange project funded by the US State Department. Marina Peterson discusses this project in her unpublished paper "Sonic Cosmopolitanisms: Cultural Diplomacy and Experimental Improvised Music" (2007). The so-called Tabadol Project featured five musicians from Lebanon who toured with musicians and dancers in Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Washington in 2007. In the project, experimental improvised music was used for cultural diplomacy between the USA and the Arab world.

> Differently from cultural diplomacy projects that send American artists abroad, by
> bringing the Lebanese musicians to the United States the Americans they meet –
> musicians and others – become the cultural diplomats. Granting visas to males from
> predominately Muslim countries is intended to convey an image of the United States
> as generous and open. As 'outreach,' part of the project was also to create new
> opportunities and connections for the Lebanese. (Peterson, 2007)

To include mainly elite artists (who also could be called cosmopolitans) in the project, made the project, however, a bit strange: Basically, the ones that the USA wanted to show openness to, were not the ones who the US thinks endangers them. Interesting also, was that while the project was based on the idea of cultural exchange of the USA and the Muslim world, many of the Lebanese musicians involved were of Christian origin. Peterson concludes as follows:

> The cosmopolitan attitudes and aspirations of experimental improvised music
> provided the primary means by which this music could be used for cultural
> diplomacy. However, the cosmopolitanisms of experimental improvised music and of
> cultural diplomacy are at opposite ends of the spectrum of the universal–particular
> that marks the tension at the core of the cosmopolitan. While for experimental
> improvised music the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism transcends (or occludes) local
> practices in the service of the universal, cultural diplomacy deploys the rhetoric of
> cosmopolitanism in the service of a nation-state making agenda that is very much
> apparent. These two poles mark at once the convergence and divergence of the logics
> of experimental improvised music and the State Department. Within their span,
> various content emerges – cosmopolitanism, the nation, and the popular – to
> constitute what was ultimately an uneasy fit between musical genre and
> governmentality in the Tabadol Project. (Peterson, 2007)

Decision-taking processes in these international founding bodies are often complicated and intransparent. The Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, who has a regional office in Cairo, ran a special program in Beirut in 2007, as a reaction to the 2006 war. Being a board member of that organisation, I know about the decision-taking processes that led to this program. Francois Barras, the Swiss

ambassador in Beirut, was the initiator. He tried to collect money for this cultural program from a variety of Swiss founders. These funders all agreed on the task, however, for a variety of reasons they did not agree to work together. As a result, Pro Helvetia only reserved 200000 Swiss Francs to this program.

International funding is often project based. These projects often have to include collaboration with German, French, or Swiss artists. Or, in the case of films, they need to work with topics that are of interest for the Europeans: war, gender, Palestine - this is what many artists and observers keep criticising. "Why are there so few Lebanese movies that want to entertain?" Wael Kodeih asked me in one interview:

> Why do all Lebanese films deal with the Lebanese Civil War? Because Lebanon does
> not invest in culture. We all have to get our money from foreign funders. And we all
> know what triggers their interest: War, Gender, and Palestine. (Kodeih, 2005)

A further, however most of the time minor issue, is that these international arts founders are never completely independent. Most of the time they cannot afford to risk diplomatic relations with these host states because of arts activities. The British Council was kicked out of Russia for reasons like that in 2008.

Local funding is almost completely absent - similar to many other countries outside of Europe. For the arts and for subcultural music circles in Beirut, this creates a difficult situation. Christine Tohme argued, in our discussion in the Linah Café, that the situation was better between 1995 and 2000: "Then a lot of local funding went into the arts. The efforts somehow correlated with the efforts to re-construct Beirut. One year Ashkal Alwan received $35,000 from the Ministry of Culture. Today, we get sometimes $1,000, sometimes $5000, and if we are lucky, $10,000." (Tohme, 2006) The main strategy for local artists is to find sponsorship in the private market. This works for the big festivals that get their money through banks, for example. "To get there, you need a lot of contacts and connections: someone high up in a bank, or someone in a ministry. Often it is still the 'tribal connection' that counts" (Tohme, 2006). Rock, rap and electronic music events find sponsors mainly in the alcohol and tobacco industry. Virgin Mega Store supports the local death metal and gothic bands Weeping Willow and Arcane thanks to Virgin manager Jihad Murr, a former gothic and rock musician.

4.5.2   International Major Record Labels

EMI Arabia, the local branch of the major international record label EMI, tried for a while to become something like a mediator between the commercial pop world and the underground music scene. Again, one person was responsible for that policy to a high degree: The Frenchman Pascal Gaillot, managing director of EMI Arabia in Beirut first, then in Dubai. EMI Arabia is the most active "Western" actor in the field of Arab music. Its headquarters is based in Dubai and its main role is to import Western pop music to the Arab world, and to export star singers from the Arab world to the West. In doing so, the company works with the big Arabic labels, and it licences tracks to produce compilation CDs: Best of Arab Pop 2007, Best of Fairuz, Best of Star Academy. I met Gaillot several times; he loves to talk about the "crazy Arabic pop world," as he defines it. One of his personal main interests, however, is to produce CDs from alternative bands in Beirut, and to create something like a middle ground between the highly commercialized pop market and the subcultural music scenes. He signed the Beiruti rock band Blend to EMI, and they produced a good rock album. Many people loved

it, but the sales were low. "Lebanon is just too small," Gaillot told me "Further, there is no market for those alternative bands, so Blend only sold 10,000 copies ." (Gaillot, 2006) Gaillot further tried to convince EMI France to release the album in France, but he did not succeed. "This is the main problem for bands on major labels, but in small countries," Gaillot explained: "They do not sell a lot of CDs, and so the headquarters of the major label considers the bands as not important." After their first CD, Blend disappeared from the scene.[166] Gaillot continued working with other bands: the rappers Aks'ser, the techno group R.E.G., and in 2008, he signed the minimal electro and *glamour pop* Duo Lumi - a rather interesting step.

4.5.3 International Media – MTV Arabia

International media bodies are the third players who sometimes support *interculture*. Here, again "cultural diplomacy" is important. The idea of diplomacy through media is not new in the region.

> Subsequently, many Western states founded specific channels to attract foreign publics. France started Radio France International in 1931 and the British launched the BBC World Service in the following year. The U.S. followed with Voice of America in 1942, later adding special regional stations like Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia or Radio Martí targeting Cuba. The German Deutsche Welle was established in 1953. In addition to Western channels, socialist countries or regional powers also started to broadcast internationally, such as Egypt with Nasser's Voice of the Arabs. In the 1980s, international broadcasting entered the television sector, including, for example, French TV5 or the British BBC World. (Richter, 2008)[167]

One of the main questions is whether these government-sponsored international broadcasting bodies find viewers next to the big Saudi Arabian cannels. In her analysis of Deutsche Welle, Richter argues that the most successes could be achieved in the fields of arts and culture. "Themes like arts and culture, society or science and technology offer opportunities for mutual learning and may serve to reinforce intercultural dialogue in contrast to the highly political al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya" (Richter, 2008). Richter, however, shows that especially the culture and arts programs often lack relevance to the Arab region because they often do not include artists and cultural happenings within the Arab world. She concludes as follows:

> Deutsche Welle's programming has potential to foster intercultural dialogue, for example, by focusing on non-political news and feature magazines in the fields of arts and culture, society or economics. Topics within these fields might better generate dialogue between cultures than controversial political issues. Nonetheless, this potential needs to be supported by an adequate financial budget and institutional backing from the German government. (Richter, 2008)

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[166] Their singer, Jad is however still active: As the artistic director of the Basement Club, and as a DJ.
[167] Richter summarized the different approaches by France, Germany, Britain and the US as follows: "France and Germany particularly focus on the function of representing a certain culture and language as well as on offering a connection to the home country for fellow countrymen abroad." The US approaches she characterizes as being "missionary" in that it has 'the goal of disseminating certain social and political convictions, concepts and ideologies.' The British BBC, however, is seen as a "global player that tries to encompass all but the missionary function in addition to being a global news channel" (Richter, 2008).

In culture, other foreign media bodies are active in the region: For example, Radio Sawa, launched by the US Government with the idea of reaching the youth in the Arab world. The station plays 80 percent music, mainly Arabic and US pop music, and sometimes Spanish music - when I was listening they played one piece of Reggaeton. The success of Radio Sawa is minor - pop music is just not enough, Hilmy argues:

> Pop is a major successful commercial enterprise that targets a wide youthful common denominator, but it alone cannot present the picture of America which American public diplomacy is intended to present—that of a country with rich, multifaceted culture, revolutionary ideals, commercial vitality, history-making values of human rights and social justice, and standards of transparent government. Nor is pop music what young Arab needs today to form a more enlightened view of their societies and the world, or to build a more participatory society firmly rooted in human values. Pop does not attract potential future leaders or opinion makers. It does not build credibility. (Hilmy, 2007)

There are both, doubts and hopes, that these Western public broadcast radio and TV stations could bring some alternatives to the Arab world.

> Perhaps more important that an appraisal of what Western PSB has been able to achieve by the end of the 1990s, is the importance of the ideal itself, which continues to inform national and international public debate over media, participation and inclusion in Western democracies in the 21st century. Unfortunately, it is those terms of the debate that are wanting when it comes to regulating the new media environment in the Arab world. A tradition of PSB that various policy entrepreneurs and political activists could evoke during policy debates (when these debates are allowed to exist in the first place) in order to correct market failures in an increasingly liberalised broadcast environment, never existed in the Arab world. Indeed, when seen comparatively with Western PSB, there seems to exist a gap, a missing link if you will, in the history of the evolution of broadcasting in the Arab world: in less than a decade, the region witnessed an abrupt shift from a situation of tight state control over terrestrial broadcast media (with the exception of war torn Lebanon), to a situation where new private satellite channels were a dozen a dime. (Dabbous-Sensening, unpublished)

According to Dabbous-Sensenig, the PSB as a concept could be interesting for civil society groups in the region. She dismisses the argument that PSB is a purely Western construct and is thus non-transferable to the Arab world.

> Though in practice there is no equivalent for Western style PSB in the Arab world, the ideal itself could be transferable, especially that there is a historical foundation for rational thinking, the merits of debate, and pluralism in the early history of the Arab empire, and that a strong case for inclusion and diversity can be made based on Islamic Scriptures. Moreover, considering the general, current dissatisfaction of Arab populations with their corrupt and oppressive leadership, calls for democratic reforms from below have never been higher on the agenda. (Dabbous Senenig, unpublished)

MTV Arabia: Arab Rap

MTV Arabia (www.mtva.com) is another intercultural link: Since the end of 2007 MTV has tried to compete with the Saudi Arabian music channels. One of the most interesting shows is named "Hip HopNa" (my hip-hop). It is co-hosted by Saudi rapper Qusai Khidr, and Palestinian-American producer Farid Nassar, aka Fredwreck, who has worked with Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent, and other marquee names. In their show, the two hosts visit different cities across the Middle East in search of talented rappers. For example, they visited Beirut, and talked to Lethal Skillz, a very active DJ in the Beirut hip-hop scene. By the end of the year, Hip HopNa announced the best rapper of the Arab world. In May 2008, the first winners were the Egyptian rapper Omar Boflot, and the Lebanese MC Zoog, who I met in my research in Beirut as well. Both rappers commented on the victory as follows. Boflot said:

> I have been passionate about Hip Hop all my life and never thought that I would get
> the chance to showcase my talent on MTV! The fact that MTV Arabia understood
> that the youth of our region not only had talent but professional aspirations as well, is
> a true testament to the fact that they understand our needs. The Dodge Charger of
> course was a great cherry on top.

And People's choice winner, MC Zoog said:

> I am living my dream through MTV Arabia and Hip HopNa. Hip HopNa has not only
> given me the opportunity to pursue my passion, but has also given me great hope by
> opening the vote to people. I still cannot believe that I have a fan base that decided to
> vote for me. I never thought that I would showcase what I love doing on public
> television through MTV Arabia, and today this is happening for me.

On youtube and myspace one finds many clips on Hip HopNa.

Closure Note

Before I look more closely at some of the key artists of the subcultural scene, it seems important to stress that all these artists stand at a delicate crossroads. Most of them do support any political group, as they say. However, as most of the support they get comes directly or indirectly from Europe and the USA, they are seen as closer to these countries, than to the Iran and Syria-like Hizbullah, or Saudi Arabians, like the Hariri family, as most of the artists are part of, and sometimes active in the Civil Society, and support policies for democracy, free speech, environmentalism, and much more. This again puts them into the category "Westernized" - if they want it or not. The fact that their music sounds Western at first hearing, does not help to overcome that point of view. In the next chapter, I will try to observe these musicians and their music in detail, to see whether we can overcome these rather clichéd views.

DISCOURSES IN MUSIC

5. Theory and Methodology (2)

5.1   Analysing Music as Sonic Narratives

The core idea of this book is to approach music closely. The book thus deals not with discourses about and around music and music making only, but it analyzes the music itself. It tries to find specific musical aesthetics; and it tries to read "music as a social text" (Shepherd, Wicke, 1991) through which we learn about the musicians, about Beirut, and about the World. It was at the IASPM conference of 2008 in Glasgow, after a paper by Keith Negus (2008), when I started thinking of defining and reading the main music pieces of this book as *sonic narratives*. The term fits to my approach due to two main reasons: First it opens up the term music to the sonic (see Chapter 1.0), and secondly, it introduces the term narrative - and *narrative* fits my approach better than *text*. According to Negus the term narrative, used in songs, implies three main points: 1) A narrative arises from the combination of lyric, voice, instrumentation, melody, rhythm, timbre and other musical characteristics, in a specific performance; 2) Songs are constantly in dialogue and continually enter narrative dialogues with other songs (whether or not it is intentional on the part of the songwriter); and 3) Songs become part of broader social stories, of cultural narratives; their meaning is shaped by political events and processes, along with audience appropriations, and critical interpretations. While Negus works with pop songs, I work with pieces of music as well. More important, however, is the following: In defining each piece of music as a sonic narrative (instead of text) I open it up to non-musical phenomena. The term *text* becomes increasingly criticized in music theory - especially in popular music studies and ethnomusicology. One argument is that to reduce music to a text, and to analyze in detail how certain music structures relate to other musical structures, reduces the phenomenon of music (or organized sound) to a webbing of meaning. However, Hawkins argues that "we need to continually remind ourselves that pop music is also about entertainment; it is about fun, fantasy, play and self-irony. Any musical interpretation cannot avoid the consideration of these politics of jouissance that shape the text" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 28). Reading music as a sonic narrative, I believe, includes reading music as a text; but it goes one step further. It defines music as a crosspoint where (or in which) many musical and non-musical forces play and meet. Music is interacting with extramusical components from a great variety of -scapes; and it is interacting with intramusical components from a great variety of -cultures (see chapter 1). The term *sonic narrative* includes that we do not read the music only, but that we include the musician as well - the construction of music, and his or her interaction with the environment. Thus to analyze music as sonic narratives brings together music analysis and cultural analysis - and this is, as many authors argue today, needed. According to Walser, analyzing music as explained "can help us make sense of the seemingly fragmented modern world; it can help us understand the thoughts and desires of many whose only politics are cultural politics" (Walser, 1993, p. 34). Through these sonic narratives we cannot only hear how the Lebanese musicians are situated in local and global contexts, but also how they actively situate themselves. These sonic narratives might thus tell us inside stories of the working and living conditions of these artists and human beings from Lebanon in the twenty-first century. The sonic

narratives are thus significant from different academic perspectives. They let us analyse music and music making in today's world, and read today's world through music and music making.

How should we then analyze the music? There are many discussions on that question in the different sciences that deal with music. My focus mainly lays in methods from ethnomusicology and popular music studies. Very inspiring are the articles of Philipp Tagg, especially his book written with Clarida titled *Ten Little Tunes* (2003). I found that book late in my research, and I found it rather interesting that I had decided on the same amount of tunes: "Ten Little Tunes from Beirut." However, here I work cross-culturally. Further, I do not intend the approach of Tagg and Clarida to the fullest extent - mainly because this is not a theoretical book about music analysis, but about contemporary aesthetics and the definition of *locality* and *place* in a digitalized and transnational world.

5.1.1   Types of Musical Knowledge

Taggs' table "Types of musical knowledge" offers a very helpful framework in introducing four main levels of music making.

Table 2

Types of musical knowledge (Tagg, 2003, p. 9)

Type	Explanation	Seats of learning
1. Music as knowledge (knowledge in music)		
1a. Constructional competence	Creating, originating, producing, composing, arranging, performing, et cetera.	Conservatories, colleges of music
1b. Receptional competence	Recalling, recognising, distinguishing between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions	?
2. Metamusical knowledge (knowledge about music)		
2a. Metatextual discourse	'music theory', music analysis, identification and naming elements and patterns of musical structure	Departments of music(ology), academies of music
2b. Metacontextual discourse	Explaining how musical practices relate to culture and society, including approaches from semiotics, acoustics, business studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies.	Social science departments, literature and media studies, 'popular music studies'

My intention is to include all these four levels into my analysis: Constructional Competence (1a), Receptional Competence (1b), Metatextual Discourse (2a), and Metacontextual Discourse (2b). According to these four levels, I am going now to design a *roadmap* of how I am going to proceed in the analysis of the key pieces.

Metacontextual Discourse

To analyze the *metacontextual discourse* (2b) is not only the key interest of this book, it is also what this book has done so far. The aim of the chapters "History of Lebanon through the Ear" and "Sample: Musicians from Beirut Born During the Lebanese Civil War" was mainly to relate musical practice to culture, society, and politics. Till this point the book is based mainly on discourses around music - from here the focus lies on discourses in music. The goal is to see how these discourses around music differ from these discourses in music. The metacontextual discourses stand at the beginning, and at the end of the analysis of the ten pieces of music - and thus in this chapter as well.

First, it seems necessary to briefly explain the methods I worked with to analyse this metacontextual discourse so far. The main results derive from several pieces of field research in Beirut - the main ones were conducted in 2005 (four months) and 2006 (six months), and smaller ones between 2001 and 2009 (between one and two weeks). I used some of the methodological approaches of the *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). Basically, this grounded theory enables us to put forward far-ranging theses without ignoring the complexity, inconsistency, and the process-oriented nature of human (and artists) behaviour and strategies. To approach the musicians in Beirut as closely as possible, I used a set of qualitative research methods: different forms of interviews (structured, semi-structured, informal /theme based, biographical /with single informants or groups), participant observation, and systematic observation[168] of the musicians in their daily life and during concerts. I focused on many actors of different age groups, working in or around the field of music in Beirut. All in all, I met and interviewed around one hundred musicians, composers, scholars (musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and social anthropologists), music producers (record producers, festival and concert organisers), media people (journalists, and editors), arts councils (from different international institutions), and music lovers. Further, I observed their activities in numerous settings: from international music festivals in Baalbek, Beiteddine and Byblos, to club concerts in the trendy Beirut areas of Gemmayze and Hamra, to rehearsal sessions in small cellars or in big villas. The decision to work on a "generation" of musicians was taken after long consideration - for a while I considered focusing on women artists. Further, the decision of who to select as one of the ten key musicians (key informants) was taken late, at the end of my field research of 2005.

My aim in meeting that many actors was to become as well informed about the Lebanese context as possible. This became increasingly important the more I met the key informants. Most of them I met several times in different constellations. The intention was to slowly bring the discussion to the deeper levels of music making, and to sensitive issues like childhood and trauma. To do so I needed a lot of knowledge on the local context, to ask and re-ask the right questions. Often the interviews and discussions went on for many hours. Charbel Haber after one meeting told me that he

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[168] Beer (2003, p. 119), Hauser-Schäublin (2003, p. 33).

had never talked so much and never given an interview that was that long - we had discussed music for nearly five hours. To go through his piece "CW Tapes" for the first time took Raed Yassin five hours as well.

Worth mentioning is how my role changed over time. I approached the musicians in different functions, and I thus saw them acting towards different constellations: In 2001 I visited Beirut for the Festival Musik der Welt in Basel, thus the musicians I approached were basically interested in getting into business - and I got to know how making business works in Lebanon. In 2004 I came back working on a journalistic reportage. I saw how easy it is to meet them (being a journalist), and how incredibly quickly these artists managed to portray Beirut as a fascinating place. Getting to know and/or seeing them again as a scholar in 2005 and 2006 showed them again in another light. In 2009 I approached some of them again: first to invite one or two of them to a small Festival that I was organising in Switzerland, and secondly for a documentary film project I was working on with my German colleague Jay Rutledge. Possibly this changing of roles might have created some tensions. However, I think it brought more opportunities than disadvantages. The more I know, the more I am involved with the musicians, the more I could start to ask the critical questions, or I could start to express my doubt on certain answers and bring the discussion forward. The most important goal, however, was to try to create an atmosphere of trust between the musicians and me. This issue of "trust" went so far that I let the musicians re-read what I had finally written about them. This again led to another set of important discussions that brought this book to a great step forward.

The main section of the questions answered through these qualitative research methods is situation, on the level of metacontextual discourse. They include:

- How do the various -scapes and -cultures interact with musical phenomena?

Receptional Competence

The first phase of my work dealt with the level of *receptional competence* as well. From the beginning I followed Robert Walser (2003), who states that it is important to contextualize each piece of music in time and space, and that it is therefore crucial to know all the references and quotations musicians use in their music. In a first interview round I asked all the musicians about their musical influences. I conducted them through their biographies, and asked them what music they used to listen to, and to which music they listen to now. In doing so, I intended to map the major musical traditions and trends the musicians feel related to. However, these data arrive (again) form discourses around music. To dive into music and to actually hear the musical influences created another challenge. *The History of Lebanon Through the Ear* for example, helped me to prepare the ground. Further, I collected and keep collecting as many audio sources from Lebanon and the Arab world as possible. With the help of musicians, musicologists, radio journalists, music lovers and organisations, I collected music that was produced in Lebanon since the early twentieth century, plus sound and sonic material from Beirut from the last thirty years (radio- and TV-jingles and adds, melodies from soap operas, political songs and speeches by the different Lebanese militias, parties and their leaders, and sounds from the Lebanese war). I collected all these sounds with the intention of knowing, and later possibly hearing as many of the close musical references these musicians use. In order to *hear* the musical references deriving from different musical styles and traditions from Europe, the USA, and many other parts of the world, I had to rely on my own musical knowledge. And I decided to conduct

a listening test. The main idea was to send a piece of Lebanese rock music to scholars who deal with rock music in the West, and a jazz piece to a connoisseur of jazz. I am going to explain this approach in detail at the end of this chapter.

Some of the main questions to answer here would include:

- Is this music inspired by certain musical traditions, styles, and forms?
- Is this music inspired by specific bands, musicians, composers, and songs?

These questions bring answers as to the materials of music. Overall these are that these can be defined as the sedimented artistic practices of human kind: the forms of music, the styles, the techniques of composing, et cetera. It is interesting that this process of "referencing" is hardly part of music education and musicology. We learn how to play an instrument, or we learn how to analyze music, but we do not practise listening to a great variety of music and to find references in between. The latter is a knowledge that can be found by fans, and often by music journalists as well - but not always by music scholars who are busy producing and theorizing about music. Tagg seems to agree on this thought when he writes that the "ability to distinguish, without recourse to words, between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions (…) is, with the exception of isolated occurrences in aural training and in some forms of 'musical appreciation', generally absent from institutions of learning" (Tagg, 2001, p. 5).

The referencing, however, includes non-musical phenomena as well. We are going to see how, for example, the Lebanese Civil War has an important impact on the sound levels: Some musicians use sound samples from political leaders, or the noise of bombs and gunfire. So another main question would be:

- Does this music refer to non-musical phenomena - historical, geographical, political, socio-cultural, et cetera?

Metatextual Discourse

The *metatextual discourse* is of great importance in this chapter. To analyze this discourse seems easiest, at first glance. To identify and name elements and patterns of musical elements in the different pieces (2.a) can be done through listening - and again through questioning the musician, whenever an instrument or a sound is unclear. The different musical pieces can be written down by different methods: Depending on the piece of music I use the *classical* form of notation, or I create tables with timelines of specific musical events, or I just describe: which chords are played, what is the scale used, et cetera. The problem with all the notation methods remains: They can only show a glimpse of the actual musical phenomena. First, they can not show us all the musical movements in great detail, and second, they ignore important musical factors like, for example, the textures of sound or the timbre of voices - and these are quite often more relevant to the musicians than the notes that are played. Many musicians further stated that they cannot read notes, so they do not write notes in order to create their music. Susanne Binas describes the situation very well:

> Der Transfer des Klanggeschehens in ein syntaktisch strukturiertes Sprach-
> beziehungsweise Schriftsystem ist dabei weder intendiert noch wird er von Musikern,
> Tontechnikern, Betreibern von Soundsystemen, Produzenten, Veranstaltern,

Journalisten, Labelbetreibern, für Artist & Repertoire Manager, Marketingspezialisten in nennenswertem Maß betrieben. Ein auf Notenpapier gekritzeltes Riff bildet die Ausnahme, und das Songbook eines Rockstars dient eher der Verwertung von Verlagsrechten denn als Ausgangsmaterial für Coverbands. Ohne ihren spezifischen Sound – das Klanggeschehen – bleiben Songs oder Tracks letztlich bedeutungslos. Die Reproduktion des Klanggeschehens ist ohne Umweg über symbolische oder ikonische Kodes (wie z.B. Notation) möglich. Weder für den Produktionsvorgang im Studio, die Wiedergabe via CD oder Festplatte, für eine Sendung im Rundfunk oder das Live-Konzert bedarf es eines abstrakten schriftlichen Außenspeichers. Die akustischen Informationen werden mechanisch oder elektronisch übertragen oder aber digital kodiert und auf Ton- und Bildträgern gespeichert. Das Medium der Memorierung beziehungsweise Fixierung ist ein mechanischer, elektronischer oder digitaler Speicher, dessen eigentliche Funktion – und das ist sehr wichtig für den Gesamtzusammenhang – die Vergegenständlichung des Tauschwertes ist. Technische Mediamorphosen beinhalteten immer auch kulturelle und ökonomische Wandlungsprozesse im Gebrauch von Musik. (Binas, 2008, pp. 9-10)

There is another problem with traditional notation: The moment a musicologist puts a traditional notation, the social scientist is excluded from the discussion - in probably at least 90% of the cases. The problem with notation is that it looks more difficult than it is - non-musos even see it as a miracle, not as a language only, that one can learn. Nevertheless, the approach of Philip Tagg, in his paper "Music analysis for 'non-musos'" (Tagg, 2001, pp. 9-14) is very interesting for my work: First because it tries to open up discussions between musicology and cultural and social sciences; and secondly, because the variety of works in this book is so big, that the approach of Tagg is one of the rare approaches through which I can analyze all of them. Tagg writes down *observations* in a graphic score. This score consists of a *time grid*, a horizontal line that marks the timing (0:44 means 44 seconds into the piece). Further, it needs a *formal grid* that shows us the various sections of the piece (intro, verse 1, chorus 2, etc.). The *paramusical grid* shows events as lyrics, and description (or drawings) of visuals. Last, the grid of *musematic occurrence* highlights meaningful strands of sound in a piece of music (Tagg, 2001, p. 11). The idea of these grids is "to focus attention on the constituent meaningful elements of the music under discussion" (Tagg, 2001, p. 11).

The main questions to answer on this metatextual level are:

- What instruments, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, scales, ornaments, and other musical elements do the musicians use in their music?
- How is their music structured and arranged?

Tagg (2003) offers a typology of signs which we can highlight with in the music of Beirut, if they appear. Schafer (1994) brings up the term *schizophonia*. Especially some of the typologies are important in my analysis.

- Musical Structure:
    Although a musical structure may have objective characteristics
    quantifiable in terms of acoustic physics, our understanding of musical

structure here is cultural, i.e. as an identifiable part of a musical continuum that may be referred to or designated in either constructional or receptional terms. Although a musical structure may or may not have a ready name, we posit that it must be not only audible but also identifiable and (at least approximately) repeatable by members of the same music-making community, and that it must be recognisable as having the same or similar function when it is heard by members of the same community of listeners, even though many members of that community may be not be conscious of either the structure or its effect (if any). (Tagg, 2003, p. 94)

- Genre Synedone: a different/foreign/alien set of musical structures inside a given musical style that refer to another (different, foreign, alien) musical style by citing one or two elements typifying that *other* style (Tagg, 2003, p. 100).

- Anaphones: An *anaphone* means the use of existing models in the formation of (musical) *sounds* (Tagg, 2003, p. 99). Tagg defines three different kinds of anaphones: Sonic Anaphones: a quasi-programmatic stylisation of non-musical sounds (bells, birds); Kinetic Anaphones: stylisation of human behaviours (riding, walking, strolling, marching); Tactile Anaphones: stylisation of moods, for example, with romantic string underscores (string wallpaper). Some anaphones are at the same time sonic, kinetic, and tactile.

- Schizophonia: packaging and storing sound and splitting sounds from their original contexts (Schafer, 1994, p. 88).

Constructional Competence

To a great extent this book tries to find difference in similarities. It tries to see whether a rock musician from Beirut performs rock differently than a rock musician from the UK. To answer this question, the level of *constructional competence* is crucial. My thesis is that it is exactly through the way these musicians create, produce, compose, arrange, and perform their music that we can see what is specific about being a musician in Lebanon. We can see if these musicians find independent expressions and aesthetics - even if they work in the globalized field of rock music. In electro-acoustic works the questions will go into how certain sounds are produced, constructed and manipulated, and through which software. This again offers us insights into the knowledge, or the education of a musician. Possibly we hear in the Lebanese National Orchestra whether Lebanon has a good National Conservatory of Music, or not.

Questions to answer on this level would be:

- How exactly do these musicians arrange, interconnect and play their sonic material?
- How do they treat sound? (Reverb, delay, phrasing, distortion, etc.)
- How do they describe the timbres, textures, sounds, volumes of their music?
- To which extent do the musicians create their own aesthetics?

Wicke (2008), among others, argues that we need to analyze music on the sound levels. According to him this includes:

- Technical aspects (types of instruments, guitar strings, types of microphones, amplifiers, effect devises, mixing and mastering)
- Interpretation (playing techniques, way of playing, phrasing, agogic, timbre, volume)
- Structural aspects of composing (harmony, voice leading, characteristic phrases)

Other scholars go further, or they highlight specific definitions of the term *sound*. For example, sound is often used to describe style - for example, the individual or recognizable style of a musician, a group, a composer, a producer, a studio, or an arranger (Binas, 2008, p. 6).

Altogether, this level leads us to the core of music and music making, as the musicologist Leonard B. Meyer argued long ago. He stated that "while cultural contexts are of relevance to the forms and styles of different musical genres, they do not affect the central aesthetic core of music itself" (Meyer, 1956, p. 65). Meyer is half right, but half wrong as well: Music is in its aesthetic core, very personal. This *personality* is, however, shaped by a musician's life experiences. And these are closely linked to certain places, and to a lesser extent to the more virtual, transnational spaces - musicians choose musical styles and forms inside these transnational spaces, however they hear, translate, and perform them always out of their own and special position.

However, if we look closely, we find still the biggest obstacles ahead: The process of composing music is rather difficult to catch. A musician does not always know how he (together with his instrument, or the machine) created a specific sound. And most of the composers do not know their composition till they started working on it and re-working it. Some scholars wrote about the process of composing (Dobberstein, for example), however, mainly in the field of written music; European classical music. It is in the process of composing the music, where a lot of extramusical forces come in: Our tastes, our way of doing things, conscious and unconscious emotions, and much more. It is basically on this level, where our analysis goes back into *metacontextual discourse*.

Metacontextual Discourse

The metacontextual discourse now brings us to the complex relations between music and the most personal, the biological to psychological, parts of ourselves as human beings. Questions at this point include:

- How does the biography of a musician interact with his music and music making?
- Which external forces do intervene, how and where: social forces, biological forces, psychological forces, et cetera?

In chapter 1.3 we already discussed that the body could be seen as the mediator between these interacting forces. Through the body, music again becomes a part of our life. This is where this book is heading too, in the last chapter, when it, for example, tries to shed some light into the complex, interactive fields like childhood and music, or trauma and music. I believe that it is if we can at least answer some of these questions that we will arrive at the core of music: It is at this core where we can learn most about localisation and globalisation in music and music making today. It is at the core

where I want to try to answer my main questions: How do these Lebanese artists define *locality* and *place* within their music? And it is at this core where we can decide, or struggle to decide whether a musician came forward with a unique musical aesthetic, or not.

- What are the musical aesthetics these musicians come up with? To what extent are they specific and personal?

Music: A Multi-dimensional Phenomenon

To analyze music properly we need to include all four levels: 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b. In doing so we soon find out that the four levels constantly interlink. We have to contextualize sound, and textualize human behaviour. We have to see music as a multi-dimensional phenomenon in which many musical and non-musical dimensions are interwoven (Middleton, 1990, p. 17). The bundle of influences and forces that lead the artist to compose his piece of music is almost impossible to unwire - for the scholar, but also for the musician as well. Our independent artists from Beirut are constantly influenced by a huge number of musical and non-musical forces: from psychological traumata to impacts from the surrounding ideoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes, technoscapes and other - scapes, as Appadurai would name them. At the same time, these artists are actively trying to create their own and special music - by pushing a variety of limits, and by using the possibilities our digitalized and transnational world offers. It is through their sonic narratives that we learn how these musicians create *locality* and *place*, and notions of *modernity* and *alternative modernity*.

5.1.2 The Listening Test

Two of the main decisions this book is based upon call for a rather special methodological approach: The first decision was to work cross-culturally and to use emic and ethic criteria to analyze and describe the music (see chapter 1). The second decision was to focus on a generation of musicians (born during the Lebanese Civil War) instead of a specific musical style: tarab, rap, rock, metal, or electronic music, for example. One minor problem is that we cannot transcribe the variety of musical styles similarly. I therefore decided not to work with classical notation, and to use the rather open approach from Tagg (see above). The major difficulty however was (and is) that I am not an expert in all the musical styles I work with in this book. Having played clarinet in a music school, and saxophone at the Swiss Jazz School of Bern (and in some local bands) for quite a while, makes me today understand more about jazz and free improvised music than about metal music. Today, I further perform in smaller electro-acoustic projects (norient.com), and sometimes DJs give me some knowledge of electronic and electro-acoustic music. Arabic music I experience as a passionate listener only and I would never consider myself as an expert.

Early in my research I thought of working with two groups of listeners: First I wanted to play the music from Beirut to people working in the field of music in Switzerland: Rock music to rock musicians, electro-acoustic music to artists of electro-acoustic music, et cetera. The idea was to involve Swiss musicians, DJs, rappers, but also sound engineers, music journalists, musicologists, art founders, and others. Second, I wanted to conduct similar listening sessions in Beirut. However, I soon found out that this would not work: The Beirut scene is rather small, and the moment I play the music from Zeid Hamdan, Mazen Kerbaj or Ziyad Sahhab to a listener, this listener would know that

musician. His or her listening experiences would become "overshadowed" by rather personal and possibly ideological elements.

Finally it was the book *Rock in the Reservation – Songs from the Leningrad Rock Club 1981– 86* by Yngvar Bordewich Steinholt that convinced me to still go through with this idea of the listening test. I soon found out that other scholars had used the method of the listening, or reception test, as well: Francès (1958), and again Philip Tagg in his article "Music analysis for 'non-musos'" (Tagg, 2001, pp. 9-14). Steinholt asks in his book for amateur musicians to listen to four pieces of music, and he edits and adds their comments in his analysis chapter. With his listening test, Steinholt further aims to achieve the same goals as I do: He states that the feedback of the listeners would cover a "sufficient basis" on how the bands from Leningrad "use and combine western musical styles," and to "which extent their recontextualisation of rock styles creates particular local styles" (Steinholt, 2005, p. 12). Further, Steinholt argues that the focus of the analysis is to investigate how the selected songs "relate stylistically to the western rock tradition, how they combine stylistic influences and whether notable influences from Russian or Soviet culture can be identified" (Steinholt, 2005, p. 113). My own listening test was conducted as follows: I uploaded the ten main pieces of music onto my account on archive.org. I named the files 001, 002, 003, and so on, and neither mentioned the name of the artist or the title of the piece. I further grouped them into four categories: Metal/Rock/Gothic, Arabic/Syriac, FreeImprovisation/ElectroAcoustic, and Urban. I then approached people from my network worldwide: mainly consisting of musicians, ethnomusicologists, musicologists, and music journalists. I asked for listeners who I know, and on whose musical judgements I have a lot of trust in. I hoped that thanks to their own journeys in music they would be able to bring forward crucial observations that would lead to further discussion that I would have ignored otherwise.

I asked experts of metal and rock music to comment on the songs in the Metal/Rock/Gothic categories. Similarly, I did this with the other categories. I further approached some listeners with the task of just listening to one specific piece of music: 002 in the Urban section, for example. The majority of the listeners did not know the pieces of music, nor their artists. That they are listening to music from Beirut was the only information they received from me - this was inevitable, because most of them knew that I was working on my PhD about music in Beirut anyway. Some of the listeners had heard one or two of the music pieces at an academic conference, when they had listened to my paper. The listeners of the category Arabic/Syriac were probably informed the most. These listeners had worked in the Arab world (some for many years), and they thus knew singers like Ghada Shbeir and Ziyad Sahhab, who are well known in music circles.

I decided to give the listeners no information about the piece: not when it was produced, not how it was produced, not which instruments are involved, et cetera. I further asked them to focus on the music itself, and on the sound - and not on the lyrics too much. I was thus more interested in hearing from them how they hear a rap MC like Rayess Bek: How do they comment on his MC skills, on his flow, for example? However, I was not so much interested in receiving an analysis of Rayess Bek's lyrics. Similarly, to the listeners of the Raed Yassine piece "CW Tapes" I did not tell them where the different sample sounds had come from: I did not tell them that at this point, Bachir Gemayel was saying to get rid of the Palestinians - just to use one example. I was thus mainly interested in how the listeners would hear "CW Tapes" as a sound piece.

Along with the sound files, the listeners received a short questionnaire. It served as a loose guideline, and told the listeners which kinds of answers I was seeking from them. In Taggs' table

"Types of musical knowledge" the questions mainly dealt with: Receptional Competence, Metatextual Discourse, and Constructional Competence.

Table 3
Questionnaire Listening Test

First Impressions
-   What are your first impressions/associations when you hear this music?

References
-   Is this music inspired by certain musical traditions, styles, and forms?
-   Is this music inspired by specific bands, musicians, composers, and songs?
-   Are there non-musical references?

Melodies, Rhythms, Forms
-   How is the music structured and arranged?
-   Do you hear specific Tonal structures, (harmonies, chord progressions, chords, keys, modalities, scales, quartertones, ornamentations…) (please indicate with time codes)
-   Do you hear specific time structures (rhythms, time patterns, …)
-   Do you hear something rather specific, unique, surprising?

Instruments, Samples, Sounds
-   Do you recognize specific sounds: instruments, samples, electronic sounds, etc?
    Do you hear specific technical aspects (types of instruments, guitar strings, types of microphones, amplifiers, effect devises, mix and mastering)
-   How are these sounds produced: Live Instruments, different sound software, from sample databases (in specific sound software, synthesizers, etc.)
-   How would you describe the production itself?
-   How do you hear timbres, textures, sounds, volumes of this music?

Musical Performance / Interpretation
-   How would you describe the way the different players use their "Instruments"? How exactly do these musicians arrange, interconnect and play their sonic material?
-   Do you hear a specific/typical or unusual treatment of the instruments/sounds?
    How do they treat sound? (Reverb, delay, phrasing, distortion, etc.)
-   Do you hear references to other musicians in the way the musicians/artists treat sound(s), their voice, or their instruments?

Musical Qualities
-   Do you like the music? Why? Or Why Not?
-   Do you think it is original, innovative, special, just an imitation, … ?
-   To which extent does the musician create his own aesthetic?
-   Do you think there is something Lebanese/Beiruti to it? Why? Or why not?
-   Would you buy it? Why? Or Why not?

I told the listeners that they could reply freely - and that this questionnaire could lead them in a possible direction, but no more. However, I asked them to put time codes to the musical elements they described - Between 0.45' and 1'20 the musician uses a pattern that I know from this or that band, for example. I further told the listeners that in this book I am going to keep them anonymous, but I might

mention their age, their gender, their profession, or their place of residence, whenever it would be useful.

The main reason why this listening test was important for me was the following: I felt that through this listening test I could gain a wider perception of the ten pieces of music. This was important as I wanted to analyze whether the musicians from Beirut came up with a specific musical aesthetic or not. In the interviews, I asked critical questions about their music as well. And I could not always avoid showing that I actually liked some of the music a lot, and I thought it was of a high quality, and that I was not too fond about other pieces. Nevertheless, in my research I favoured an approach that also risks judging musical qualities, or at least discussing them in detail. I widen the perception of their music, through the informed listeners, and this helps me also to reflect about my own perception of these pieces. I believe it is going to give the discussions with the musicians a greater diversity - and maybe at least a greater objectivity (if objectivity is achievable is another discussion). Plus, it takes some of the responsibility from me taking the entire risk of judging these musicians alone. I owe these musicians a lot. They took their time, and they taught me a lot of things. Personally, I started to like them a lot, and I do not want to end up creating enemies.

6. Analysis: Seven Pieces of Music between Text and Context

6.1   Raed Yassin – CW Tapes

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

Raed Yassin I met the first time in the bar De Prague in Hamra, on the 2nd of August 2005. It was difficult to start the conversation. Raed is not a big talker - at least when he does not know people. It was Mazen Kerbaj who had told me to contact him: "Raed Yassin lived in west Beirut during the civil war, in the other part of the city. And still he was listening to exactly the same music as I did. When we met in 2001 the two of us were really amazed about that." For some years now Raed Yassin and Mazen Kerbaj have worked together closely. However, Raed is more interested in Arabic music than his friend. He tried to involve the oud player Fahed Riachi into the circle of free improvised music in Beirut for a while, because "the oud is part of my culture," he says: "It would be great if we could have Arabic instruments in our free improvised music as well."

Raed Yassin was born in Beirut in 1979, as the son of a Shiite family living in Tayouneh, close to the suburbs of Southern Beirut. Yassin graduated from the Theatre Department of the Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut in 2003. He works in the fields of music and audio, video, performance, and visual arts - he is thus one among many Lebanese artists who work in several artistic fields simultaneously. Our first discussion is not too long: I did not know what to ask, and he probably did not know what this Swiss ethnomusicologist was searching for.

It was April 2006 when Yassin and I met again. Yassin performs at the Irtijal Festival for Free Improvised Music in Beirut. I met him at the sound check for his concert with the Lebanese clarinet player Béchir Saadé, and the Swedish guitarist David Tackenäs. Raed works on his double bass using a lot of unusual material: a small plastic propeller that he uses to hit the strings at a fast pace; and

plastic plates or a metal stick that he puts in between the strings of his instruments and then hammers on them to produce a variety of sounds. My interest this time was more focused. I had heard from Nadim Mishlawi that he had produced an audio piece about the Lebanese Civil War with Raed Yassin. I wanted to hear this piece. After the sound check I asked Raed if we could meet and listen to it together.

We did so on a Wednesday in May 2006 (17.5.2006). I met him at eleven in the morning at his home in Tayouneh. It is an apartment building, with a small fruit shop on the ground floor, and an old elevator inside. Raed lives there with his mother. Raed and I talked for six hours that time. And their nanny from South East Asia brought us tea, and cooked lunch.

First, Raed told me about his piece "CW Tapes". The piece is built on material from the Lebanese Civil War. "All the material is related to my memory and to the collective memory of the Lebanese," Yassin explained. Yassin collected as much material from the time as possible - this was not at all easy. Anything like a national archive is non-existent in Lebanon. So, he went to the headquarters of different Lebanese militias and political parties, to the archives of radio stations, he visited records shops, and talked to streets sellers, and individuals. "Basically I went to many places and talked to many people. I asked them who composed this or that, what was this commercial for, and other questions," Raed explained. "One of the main problems was that the moment people found out that I was really interested in these things they started to charge for the audio material." A lot of material he could not get, he said: "You needed either money or 'wasta' (English: connections) to get access to this material." He soon found out that collecting the sonic material from the war period was a very sensitive issue. Often he was forbidden to listen to audio files at all, and "each and everyone asked me about my political background," Raed remembers. All in all he collected around three hundred hours of material from the war period: "Constantly hearing this, made me almost crazy. But I also started to love the material: the propaganda music, for example, or the Lebanese pop songs from the Civil War period."

First, Raed released "CW Tapes" as a video. This was the only possibility to get at least parts of it financed. Ashkal Alwan, The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, annually supports emerging video artists with production funds. Raed used this opportunity and received $2,500. His video was called "Featuring Hind Rostom" - referring to Hind Rostom, an Egyptian actor, born in Alexandria 1931, and often called the "Marilyn Monroe of the East", or "the Queen of seduction of Egyptian cinema." The video "Feat. Hind Rostom" is very minimalistic: We just see someone sitting in front of the TV. The TV, however, does not show anything; the picture is flickering.

Receptional Competence

Raed has a very diverse collection of music on his CD-shelf. On his laptop he has many of the main files he used in "CW Tapes." We decided to connect our computers via firewire cable and exchange sound files: First, I got the piece that Nadim Mishlawi had talked about: "CW Tapes." Then I imported works of composers who Raed felt influenced by: the composers Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis (for example, his composition "Orient – Occident 1960"), and the pioneers of Musique concrète, Luc Ferrari, and Pierre Schaefer. Further, Raed offered me the main data files that he had used in "CW Tapes."
Here is a brief overview:

Radio Ads

Various radio advertisement spots from the Lebanese Civil War, many written by Elias Rahbani. "Rahbani composed around three thousand radio commercials and jingles during the war," Raed told me while the files were copying from his laptop to mine. "Many of these radio ads are part of our collective memory."

Political Speeches

Political speeches from the different Lebanese leaders. Many speeches from Béchir Gemayel, Sammyr Geagea, and others.

Propaganda Music

Propaganda music by the various Lebanese militias: mainly from the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, and Amal.

Protest Songs

Leftist songs by Ziyad Rahbani, Khaled El Habr, and Marcel Khalife (see chapter 3.4.5).

Manga Anime

The music of the Japanese Manga movie Grendizer. This movie was overdubbed into Arabic in the 1980s. It was very popular with many Lebanese kids. It seems that this Manga hero has a certain influence in the subcultural music scenes. The rappers talk about Grendizer (see page X), and Raed Yassin now does as well.

Old Recordings from Egypt and Lebanon

Some mp3 files from Egypt and Lebanon: Asmahan, Layla Murad, Nour El Hoda, Philemon Wehbe, Zaki Nassif, Wadi el Safi, and the comedian Chouchou.

New Wave Dabké from Lebanon and Syria

Mp3 files by Naim el Sheikh, Mohammad al Ali, and Ali Al Deek.
After copying these files, we went through Raed's LP collection. Here we found other artists that are included in the piece "CW Tapes."

Franco-Arab Pop Music

Singers like Sammy Clark, Azar Habib, and Al Amir Al Saghir who created a heavily synthesized pop sound in the 1980s.

Metatextual Discourse

In the following Raed and I went through the whole piece. We will see how Raed had arranged the musical ingredients: the synthesized Franco-Arab pop music from the 1980s, radio ads, radio jingles, political speeches, and propaganda music. Added is the singing and whistling of Raed Yassin, plus various noises from radio transmitters and from sound effects. To discuss the whole 23 minutes of the piece took us about three hours. We did not catch every detail in the piece, but

discussed the bits that, to Raed, are crucial. Further it is necessary to note that I can not separate content and technical aspects clearly.

"CW Tapes" opens with the sounds of tuning through a radio receiver. Then bombs explode (0:46): not bombs of warfare, but bombs of joy. "We hear detonations that exploded to celebrate the election of the Christian leader Amin Gemayel in 1982," Raed explained. At 0:58 Gemayel praises the Lebanese resistance in a long speech. He argues that the Palestinians will never be able to throw the Lebanese into the sea - highlighting his people's worries that the PLO could become too strong in Lebanon. At the same time we hear Camille Chamoun far in the background: The former president (and important Christian leader in the Civil War) tells people how to get rid of the Palestinians. "Chamoun in the background is saying openly, what Gemayel in the foreground is actually saying, but does not do so too clearly," Yassin explained. At this point Raed introduces a sound effect that seems to transmit these two speeches into space (1:18) – or "to the moon" as Yassin explained. "The idea was to relate these speeches to the Cold War." There is more manipulation: The speech of Gemayel becomes increasingly meaningless, as Raed cuts out words and turns sentences around (2:08). "These speeches become increasingly nonsense," he explained. At 3:00, the speeches and the exploding bombs are contrasted with a kitsch song by the synthesizer hero and pop star Sammy Clark (3:00). "While collecting material from the Civil War, I started to love Sammy Clark and other artists from the so-called Franco-Arab pop scene," Raed explained:

> These songs sound different than the mainstream Arabic pop music that used a lot of string instruments at the time. Sammy Clark and others used these extreme synthesizer sounds, and sometimes even synthesized voices. It's extremely kitschy, and extremely funny. They played a lot of cover songs from the West as well. Their repertoire and sounds show how much the Lebanese were connected to 1980s pop globally - despite of the war.

To Raed these songs are fascinating, because in their "kitschyness" they seem so much detached from the "realities" of war. The lyrics of the song in the background say "Baby let's go dancing." "These years of war changed the sound identity of Lebanon completely. And artists like Sammy Clark are key figures in this change," Raed explained: "Being a musician I'm fascinated what these musicians are doing with their synthesizer. They use converters that allow them to play oriental scales." Behind the song of Sammy Clark we keep hearing bombs, speeches, applause, and voices over radio transmitters (3:00 – 3:36). "All this is plugged together, and it is meant as very sarcastic, for sure," Raed said, and laughed:

> Amin Gemayel behaved like a pop star, while everybody just hated him. He played a celebrity, while people were dying in the war. I thought a song by Sammy Clark would fit: the two belong together. And Sammy Clark is an artistic name, and I could imagine Amin Gemayel choosing an artistic name for himself as well. Clark played kitsch music, while Gemayel was a kitsch president.

The composition continues with the "news section" (3:36 –9:08), as Raed called it. The radio station Voix Du Liban reports about Michael Aoun condemning the Taef Agreement. "Most of the parties were against the agreement at the time. But today they keep repeating that Lebanon should restart from Taef," Raed argued. In the background we hear another news reader from the same radio station. At 4:30, radio jingles from Voice of the people, composed mainly by Ziyad Rahbani, come in. "Many radio jingles came from Europe, for example the synthesizer music from Jean Michel Jarre was used a lot," Raed explained: "The jazzy jingles of Ziyad Rahbani were one of the rare exceptions." A variety

of radio jingles are introduced. At 5:27 a news report about Soha Bechara is introduced. Bechara is a communist fighter who tried to kill Antoine Lahad from the South Lebanese army. The news report is again manipulated, and mixed with stories about Michel Aoun. We hear a short glimpse from an American broadcast, plus feedback and noises. The section closes (7:13) with just the breaths of the news presenters. "I cut out all the breaths, normally it is different in radio: They don't like these breaths, and sometimes cut them out. But I wanted to work on these breaths artistically. Plus, after two minutes of news I wanted to give some space - the listener should find some time to take some breaths too," Raed explained. Again a mix follows: with a news jingle from Sawt Al-Shab, the radio of the communist party; a news ad for pizza and macaroni; and the news jingle from the Christian right wing station Voice of Lebanon (8:22 – 8:35). This jingle was aired when very bad things had happened. "For many Lebanese it is still very traumatic to hear it," Yassin explained. The melody of the jingle is well known: It is taken from the soundtrack "Shaft", written by Isaac Hayes in 1971. Alexandre Najjar called this jingle a sign of death: "Tick tik tich tik" (Najjar, 2006, pp. 67-68).

At 9:08 we hear a door closing, and we seem to sit in a small room. We hear nothing but silence for seven seconds. At 9:15 Raed Yassin whistles a melody from a radio ad: we hear him whistle, and we hear the melody in the background on the radio. Finally Yassin sings the final chord of a jazzy piece (9:44). Again, the "sign of death," the news jingle from Voice of Lebanon is introduced. At 9:55 a very short glimpse from a very important song follows: Philemon Wehbe with his song "Naku immak ya Loubnan" (Lebanon, they fucked your mother). I will write more about this song when it re-appears at 18:25. At 10:05 we hear glimpses from a Rahbani theatre play. The Manga movie hero Grendizer is introduced at 10:20. The main theme was sung by Sammy Clark - in "CW Tapes" it is manipulated heavily. "We kids couldn't wait for the Grendizer program to start," he remembered.

> Grendizer is really part of the collective memory of my generation. Even during the
> war period the dubbing into Lebanese was done in Lebanon. However, by the mid-
> 1980s the dubbing was done elsewhere, and so Grendizer suddenly spoke with an
> Iraqi accent. This was really strange for us.

From 10:56 "CW Tapes" recreates the atmosphere of radio programs played during the day: "During the day there was often no hot news. So the radio stations used to fill their programs with someone talking about fashion design, listeners calling and asking questions about problems with their kids." A talk about fashion (11:04) is mixed with a song by Azar Habib, and a comedy program by Sammy Khayat (11:40/12.00). Azar Habib is a singer from the Franco-Arab pop scene. Sammy Khayat is a comedian: "Sammy Khayat used to live in east Beirut. He produced many, very funny comedy plays, and we used to listen to his programs on the radio in West Beirut," Raed remembered.

The next section (from 12:12) introduces political speeches again. "It's a fight between the different radio stations," Raed argued. First, we hear Bashir Gemayel - far in the background. "Often, one of the leaders suddenly appeared in these radio programs, as if to say 'Hi listen, big brother is watching you,'" remembered Raed. Gemayel is cut back by a rhythmical, heavily synthesized Sammy Clark song: Clark sings that he cannot sleep - not because of the war, but because of a woman. Glimpses from different media are introduced. At 14:14 Bashir Gemayel is re-introduced. His speech is manipulated, and distorted on various layers. "I want him to suffocate while having one of his fascist and nationalist speeches. These right wing politicians consider us a big nation, but we are only three million people, and really not that important," Raed explained: "I love Lebanon, you know, but I'm really not a nationalist." Another song by Azar Habib is introduced at 14:36 and manipulated with

various techniques: scratching, changing of sound qualities, moving the sound between speakers and between fore- and background. At 15:30 a huge bundle of material finds itself together: Sammyr Geagea in a radio interview, again Bashir Gemayel, and Elie Hobeika who accuses Leftist Parties, Palestinians and Syria for having committed assassinations. Further, we hear a propaganda song by the Lebanese Forces at 15:45: "These propaganda songs are often produced with a very low quality, using a lot of Casio synthesizers. The male choir sing that 'our guns will be with us,'" Raed explained. Further, we hear glimpses of a song by the Shiite Amal party. Within all this sonic chaos, a radio presenter reads the exchange rate of the US-dollar (16:00). From 16:20 onwards Raed Yassin works with a sound effect that makes one sound file delete the other: When a new politician enters this chaos, someone else stops talking. At 16:40 all ends in silence for twenty long seconds. "I use silence quite often. Especially after these tense sounds, silence was needed," Raed explained and continued saying that silence was something very crucial in war: "Silence was the most terrible thing. In silence we were always waiting for what was going to happen" (Yassin, 2006).

The silence ends with Raed Yassin singing along to a commercial for carpets (17:00 – 17:30). Again, we hear him in a three-dimensional space. From 17:30 various radio ads are mixed in, and manipulated with different techniques. Many of these radio ads were composed by Elias Rahbani. During the war he was involved in the production of music on many levels: for example, as an artist or a producer of most of the pop LPs that were released during wartime. "Many of the Elias Rahbani songs and his melodies for the radio ads are part of our collective memory," Raed remembered. Elias Rahbani further wrote many anthems and nationalist songs for various political parties. "This is quite shocking somehow,", thought Raed: "On the other hand he at least did not stick to one side. He just sold his music to everyone, even to his worst enemies." To Raed, those radio ads are fascinating and disturbing: "How could Rahbani produce these songs while being surrounded by chaos and war?" he keeps asking himself. At 18:07 Yassin uses DJ scratching techniques, playing parts of the theatre play "A Long American Movie" by Ziyad Rahbani: "The theatre plays of Ziyad Rahbani are very important: Many of my peers memorized these plays by heart. And we keep imitating the ways the Ziyad Rahbani characters used to speak." Philemon Wehbe re-enters with his piece "Naku immak ya Loubnan" (Lebanon, they fucked your mother) at 18:25.

> This song was so great. Wehbe was just fed up with all these Lebanese leaders. One
> could buy his tape in street shops in East and in West Beirut. The street merchants put
> the song on their speakers and we could hear it loud. He named all the leaders that
> according to him fucked up Lebanon. Thus, his piece was crucial for my piece.

Raed and his friends consider Philemon Wehbe as the only true protest singer of Lebanon: "He is really smart, and he composed like Mozart. He had worked for Fairuz in the 1950s, he was a great comedian, and now he spoke plaintext." The song of Philemon Wehbe becomes mixed with glimpses from different propaganda songs, for example, with one song about the murder of Bashir Gemayel at 19:10: A singer makes clear that "we will always follow your steps," meaning the politics of Bashir Gemayel. Further, we hear more radio ads, and propaganda music. The section fades out. In the background we keep hearing Philemon Wehbe: "Lebanon they fucked your mother."

The section starting at 20:08 is "out of control and a bit vulnerable," Raed explained. We hear a cover version of "Ma Vie en Rose" (20:15), sung by the Lebanese singer Ronza. Ronza used to work with the Rahbani brothers, and she was a specialist at singing English and French pop songs in Lebanese. "These sentimental cover songs were played on the radio, when outside the bombs were falling," Raed remembered. At 20:20 Raed uses an effect on the voice of a news presenter to imitate

bombs and Kalashnikovs: "As children we would perform these fake guns and bombs with our mouth. The 'Bah' would be the bomb in our children's language."

The last section of the piece opens up with a cross-fade at 21:30. The last section is very quiet. "Towards the end of the piece I tried to create a quiet tension," Raed explained. We hear noises and clicks that are produced by layering a great number of sound effects on top of each other. Far in the background we hear a song by a singer called Le Petit Prince. He sings about his neighbour. How much he likes her, and how beautiful she is. It is with this song that "CW Tapes" ends with a sudden stop: no fade out.

Constructional Competence

Technical Aspects: Editing, Mixing, Scratching

The piece is held together through different techniques of editing and sound manipulation - most of the work is done on the Pro Tools software. Yassin worked together with Nadim Mishlawi, who is responsible for a great part of the sound design of the piece. Further, Yassin sent some of the sound material to Lebanese musicians to remix them. Charbel Haber and Tarek Yamani were two of the artists involved: "I gave both of them one pop song and one propaganda song, and they produced remixes. The results were great, however not everything fitted to my piece." The editing and mastering of the piece took a lot of time - around four months, as Raed remembered. "The piece is created out of so many layers, it was a huge effort to arrange and mix it. Every time we listened to the piece we wanted to change things. It was like a never-ending process."

The final result switches between two- and three-dimensional spaces, plays with the balance between the left and right channel of the speakers, between background and foreground. The editing appears very rough: We hear no slow fade-in or fade-out, but a lot of cuts and immediate changes. "We thought that rough editing would fit in this piece very well," Raed explained. Yassin argues that he borrowed aesthetics used by radio stations and popular music in the 1980s: very rough mixing, and many abrupt changes. "I mixed this exactly in the way the radio programs did during the time. They used to play songs, then put another on, stop it, and talk nonsense. It's like a 'war' between songs, a real mess." Raed remembers listening to the radio very well: "People were not at all able to enjoy listening to these radio broadcasts at the time. There were loads of cuts between the songs. Sometimes the radio was manipulated and you suddenly heard the enemy speaking through your radio. They tried to manipulate the memories of the people."

A lot of work is done on the sound qualities and textures. Here again, the sound design resembles the aesthetics of the time to a great extent: we hear a lot of kitschy sounds and timbres. Quite often we hear the archive material in its original quality. Sometimes, however, it is sent through samplers and filters: "We found out that we could change meanings, when we would change the sound," Raed explained: "However, overall, we did not manipulate too much. The piece is thus not at all abstract. You can still hear a lot of the information clearly."

Sound qualities and textures were a more important criterion for the arrangement of the sound material than the actual content of the speeches or songs. Yassin does not care about chronology - meaning the chronology of events in history. He hears the piece aesthetically, and he argued: "It was nice to put those heavily synthesized sounds of Sammy Clark next to radio ads, for example." Some choices, however, were meant to create interesting contrasts on the content level: to put speeches of

Amin Gemayel next to bombs of joy, or to let different clan leaders comment on each other. "I try to manipulate the memory of the people. I put things together in a certain way, through sound design I put it into a kind of a virtual space - it sounds like sounds deriving from another planet. It becomes very abstract."

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

The reaction to this piece is very different inside and outside of Lebanon. In Lebanon, listeners focus mainly on the content. "They react physically. Sometimes they are shocked to hear these sounds again. After listening they start to discuss which ads, songs and speeches they remembered, and which they did not." Even though Raed Yassin created "CW Tapes" for a Lebanese and Arabic speaking audience, he would love to hear reactions from non-Arabic speakers. "I'd like to hear the opinion from listeners in Europe or the USA. These listeners might focus on the aesthetics of the piece and give a completely different feedback." The listening test shows that this is wishful thinking: Most of the listeners state that they would love to understand all those speeches. They agree that the content would be the most important aspect of it. One defines it as an "abstract radio play," another as "an acoustic reportage." One is reminded of the great time of radio plays and radio collages. He is reminded of his youth, where he used to listen to short wave radio stations, and the Arabic ones were always his favourite ones. Another listener tried to listen to the piece aesthetically. However, he argues that the bombs, and the speeches, are so heavy that one automatically is drawn to it and thinks that the main message lies there. Still he argues aesthetically, saying, for example, that the mixture between these very happy synthesizer sounds and the heavy background noises is very disturbing. He further likes the sound of the Arabic language. He observes that the piece becomes increasingly experimental with time, and he would love to know if the content becomes more abstract as well.

Raed Yassin did not give back the piece to the different political parties, from where he got the original material. "I'm really shy to go back now to these people and show them the final piece," he told me. "They will immediately hear that 'CW Tapes' is very critical about their political positions, and I don't know how they will react." It is no surprise that Raed Yassin did not release "CW Tapes" officially till this day. The main problem is that he does not own the rights to do so. "I'm afraid to release it in Lebanon, because some parties or musicians might ask for a lot of money," he said. However, he is thinking of releasing it on a foreign label, for example on the US label Sublime Frequencies, as a limited edition. "No one cares about these small foreign labels anyway," Raed explained, "and many of the companies who owned this music closed down anyway. Plus, I did not use music by superstars like Fairuz."

Raed Yassin's work shows how fragmented Lebanon is till this day. According to a discussion I had with Victor Sahhab, there are ideas about building a National Sound Archive of Lebanon. When I told Yassin about this idea, he stayed sceptical: "They will delete all the political speeches, and only include what they consider as 'high art'" he explained.

> They will not include what I'm interested in: this I can guarantee you. I'm interested in popular culture, in trash: weird radio ads, low quality pop. These sounds can really reflect what that period was about. These sounds tell us a lot about the Lebanese society. But no-one wants to hear sound files from Bashir Gemayel stating that he wants to kill all the Palestinians.

6.2   Mazen Kerbaj - "Blblb Flblb," "ZRRRT," "PIIIIIIIIIIII"

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

Mazen Kerbaj is kind of a focus point for complaints and gossip. Musicians told me: "He can't play the trumpet!"; "He shows off!"; "He said that his music is based on the planetary system. What a bullshiter!"; "He criticized Miles Davis as being a bad musician, and that in the twenty-first century, we should forget about John Coltrane!"; "He plays his trumpet with his ass!"; and much more. Other musicians argue that he is a serious artist, and a good friend. I saw him perform at the Irtijal (improvisation) Festival of 2005 in Beirut for the first time. On stage he played solo on his trumpet and produced a wide range of sounds: blubbering, jarring, clapping, et cetera. The range of sounds is wide and rich, I thought, and his playing is distinct, and very precise. Furthermore, he does not show off on stage: He plays with great concentration, when he moves from one sound technique to the next - using different mouthpieces, and different equipment like plates, balloons, and long tubes. I liked his concert a lot, and thus I was not at all convinced by the negative critics that I had heard about him before I met him.

At the end of July 2005, I met Mazen in person: At the popular bar Torino Express. Outside, supporters of Samir Geagea celebrated the release of this Christian Maronite politician from prison.[169] Mazen complained about everything: these fanatics out there, the noise, the flags of Samir Geagea, the traffic jam - and with a big smile he apologized for being a Christian Maronite himself. Mazen Kerbaj was born in 1975, in East Beirut, close to the green line - "I had the shooting and bombs in my ears during my whole life," he stated. The family lived near the Rezk tower, one of the highest buildings in Beirut, close to the CD-Thèque in Achrafieh. In their own house, 18 bombs exploded, Mazen recalls. "But the Rezk tower was much worse," he remembers:

> It would receive bombs day and night. We saw many bombs exploding, and then two
> seconds later we would hear them. I learned a lot about sound at that time. And I
> learned that in war one is not so much afraid of what one sees, but what one hears.

Soon he stopped talking, as he wanted to know who I was and what I was doing there. Carefully he listened to my little speech, before he continued talking about his childhood - even though I did not ask him to go back that far. He grew up in war, and living it was quite normal for him. It was at the age of eleven that he started to feel fear, and sometimes anger: "On one side it is not good for a kid to walk around and always fear that you or your parents could die within the next second," he remembers: "On the other side, I was always more than happy when school was closed (because of the fighting, T.B.)." Then he said, "Sometimes, I have to admit it, I almost feel nostalgic about this childhood in war, and especially about these sounds of war. I know that to many people this sounds shocking, but it is the truth, unfortunately." I was a bit sceptical about his words - uttered while drinking Almaza beer. Why did he start into this conversation so rapidly? Was he trying to catch my interest, the foreign researcher, quickly? I decided to approach these questions of war, sound and

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[169] Samir Geagea was a commander of the Lebanese Forces during the Civil War; he is the only Lebanese condemned of crimes comitted during the war. He was given a life sentence in 1994, but was released in 2005 after Lebanese parliament passed an amnesty law.

childhood very carefully in the future to see what actually lay behind them. We both agreed to discuss those issues in detail at our next meeting. Just before we left, Charbel Haber entered - as he does every day. He brought the latest issue of the UK magazine *The Wire,* and the two musicians discussed to which of the writers they should send a packet with their promo CDs. "One day we want to get covered in 'The Wire,'" they said and they decided to put many Lebanese stamps on the packet. "Maybe the journalist will find it exotic to receive a package from Beirut. He will think of war, and he will thus want to hear the CDs inside it."

In August Mazen and I met again. We had a quick drink at Torino Express before we drove in his old army car to his house in Sinn al-Fil – an area on the outskirts of East Beirut. His flat offers a great view over to the hills of Achrafieh. Mazen's living room is packed with comic books, and CDs. There is a big, cosy space with cushions on the ground. It is where he keeps his trumpet, a tenor saxophone, and all the equipment he uses to play his instrument with: pits, plates, cans, feathers, gums, et cetera. Our discussion circled around his biography, and about his musical influences. He was born into an artistic family: His father, Antoine Kerbaj, is a well-known Lebanese actor who performed with the Rahbani brothers, but also with many others. His mother is a painter. The family comes from Zabougha, in the Metn Mountains. On one of the homepages of the village his father is mentioned under "some of the famous Lebanese from Zabougha": "Antoine Kerbage, famous and well-known Comedian in TV and Theatre since 1965." His parents taught him individualism, Mazen said.

> I'm very grateful for that, because there is no individualism in Lebanon. In one way or the other, people are always controlled by their families. A lot of musicians and artists have one foot in the music, and the other in the family. They visit their village very often, and they often live in their parents' house until they get married.

When Mazen told his parents that he wanted to draw and paint they encouraged him. They told him to make a profession out of what he liked - this again is quite unusual for a Lebanese family, as Kerbaj says. "All the parents of all of my friends would have said that I have to go to university to learn financing or law, but I was lucky with my parents." Mazen loved to paint; his mother was his idol. So in 1994, he started to study fine arts and illustration at ALBA. He finished his education in 1999 and had until then already established a reputation as a well-known cartoonist and comic writer. He sold his illustrations to different, mainly French speaking magazines in Lebanon (*L'Orient-Express, La revue du Liban, Le commerce du Levant*, and others), but also started to work on more personal projects: for example, a "journal in time" of the year 1999, which became his work for the diploma. Supported by the CD-Thèque, he published several, often very personal cartoon albums that became popular in the Lebanese artists' community. He also exhibited some of his work in Beirut and Paris. Today he teaches illustration at the American University (AUB) and at ALBA. It was in his years of education where he read the many writers and intellectuals who keep having a great influence on his way of thinking, he says: French writers like Henry Michaud, but also Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Fernando Pessoa, and Nietzsche. Further, Mazen likes Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese Palestinian who was exiled and lived in Boston. "He is somehow like an optimistic Nietzsche." - Nietzsche is mentioned by many musicians I meet in Beirut. And I wonder if they have really read it. Mazen laughs when I ask him this question: "You know, I really read some of his stuff. But Nietzsche is a good name to mention anyway. You have to be careful with these Lebanese. They talk a lot."

Becoming a Musician

It was in 1997 when Mazen started playing the saxophone, together with the Paris-based Lebanese musicians Christine and Sharif Sehnaoui.

> We were a bunch of ten friends who started to play very bad free jazz. I played the saxophone, because Sharif had one. We rehearsed every day. Most of us came from Bourgeoisie families, we were mostly French speaking, and four or five people lived between Paris and Beirut, so they were able to see live concerts. I saw my first free jazz concert many years later than them.

Often the group of musicians rehearsed in one of their families' houses in the ski resort of Faraya. Soon however, only Sharif, Christine and Mazen seriously continued working on this music: "The others were coming for fun. They wanted to release pressure or had fun kicking the drums. We, however, wanted to play music," Mazen Kerbaj remembers.

After a while, Kerbaj switched from playing the saxophone to playing the trumpet, and took trumpet lessons. The same teacher taught Walid Sadeq as well - Sadeq later played with Soap Kills. "This teacher was a jazzman, and I had to play scales the whole day, and to read notes. But I was not interested in that," Mazen said. "So after the first lessons, after the trumpet teacher had given me good exercises to rehearse blowing techniques, and after I was able to read notes, I started to argue a lot and involve him in discussions about free jazz." Mazen did not want to go in the direction of a jazz player, he wanted to play free jazz, and he brought the teacher tapes with music of his heroes: Don Cherry, for example, "a very smooth version". "We listened to Don Cherry, and my teacher just hated it." Mazen remembers well that first, playing free jazz was also kind of a rebellion against all these Lebanese jazz musicians that were around: "I just hated these guys who would listen to old jazz, or to modern jazz, and would take themselves so seriously."

"In the beginning, our music was really weak, in form and content," Mazen remembers. "We were not able to control the sounds that we were producing." Some days before our interview, Mazen had seen an old video from his first performance in Beirut. His comment was clear: "We really had balls to go on stage with this very narrow musical vocabulary." Kerbaj and the Sehnaouis formed a trio. They started to attract new musicians, and they created MILLS, an organisation for free improvisation in Lebanon. "In the first concerts we were so afraid of the reactions of the Lebanese audiences. I knew the reactions from my brother: Whenever I played a Free Jazz CD at home, he would come into my room with his friends, and they would laugh tears! This is music?!" In one of the first concerts they played in front of 30 people, 20 left immediately, the rest stayed. "We were afraid at first that people might storm the stage when we performed," he recalls: "But this did not happen." According to him, free jazz and free improvised music were blank categories in Lebanon: "We started into the nothing," Mazen remembers, and he states clearly that he did not know too much about alternative music in Beirut within and before the Civil War. Still, he argues that "music as art has absolutely no history in Lebanon. Music was for entertainment only."

In 2001 Mazen met Raed Yassin. "He approached me and said that he loved what I was doing," Mazen remembers. "It was crazy. This was a guy from West Beirut who seemed to have the same musical influences as I did." The two recorded one track on a jazz compilation released by the CD-Thèque. "We dared to say that our music was jazz. And since then the whole jazz community in Beirut hates us," Mazen says. Musically, Mazen soon changed from free jazz, to noise, to silence. "I started with free jazz, and I really felt that I'm not black. The field of free improvisation felt much

more open. I was attracted by pure sound. By the idea that someone who grew up in Sweden could do the same: Trying to create sonic sensations." He, Sharif, Christine, and Raed rehearsed a lot. They became better at mastering their sounds, and they started to create their own sonic repertoires.

After a while they started to organize Irtijal, the International Festival for Free Improvised Music. Further, they launched their own label Al Maslakh (The Slaughterhouse), with the idea "of publishing the un-publishable in Lebanon." They wanted to start a tradition for free music in Lebanon, Kerbaj remembers. "Someone has to start it. And once someone started it, there is always a chance that the music continues." Kerbaj made the conscious decision to work out of Beirut. First, he did not want to be one of 1,400 free experimental music players in the West. And second, he would love to help build a history for alternative music in his home country. After a while, the three musicians started to use not only French and English, but the Arabic language as well to promote their concerts and their website. "We stopped using French too much, because we became aware that in using French we would talk to the Christian high-class only."

What makes Mazen confident is that the Lebanese are really curious, as he says: "The Lebanese are a great audience, they are hungry to discover new music, and often, they stay and listen to it". Sometimes the listeners start laughing when they see Mazen playing. "They see me as a comedian that is using strange techniques to play the trumpet" Mazen says, and I think that they maybe compare Mazen to his father, who is a well-known comedian. After the concerts some of them often go on stage and ask Mazen this and that. "Wow, you invented this music," they sometimes say to me. "And it would be easy for me to pretend that yes, I did. But I don't do that."

Receptional Competence

Musically, at first, French singers such as Serge Gainsbourg and Nino Ferrer influenced Kerbaj. "I was mainly interested in French chansons, and especially in the lyrics." It was with Frank Zappa, Jimmy Hendrix, and Pink Floyd that Mazen found out that he should also care more about the music itself - and not only about the lyrics. With the album "Olé" by John Coltrane he fell in love with instrumental music. "I loved this specific track, Olé. It is 20 minutes long, and I heard this oriental mood inside it," he explained. "My favourite moments in that piece was the flute solo played by Eric Dolphy (at 8:12), It had this oriental sounding melody, and it was like psychedelic rock, but much better!" Mazen bought different albums by Coltrane, and by Eric Dolphy - but never felt the same sensation again. "I also like the last period of Coltrane a lot. This guy was never stopping his revolution. Like Picasso! This is what I love and search for in an artist," Mazen said, as he rolled his grass into a joint, and smoked it. After a while Mazen started to hear artists like Ornette Coleman ("I loved the freedom in his music, but became bored by it after a while"), Albert Ayler ("This guy was pure emotion!") and others. "I don't know a lot about be bop, or artists like Charlie Parker or Dizzie Gillespie, but I started to search for more and more free jazz." After a while Mazen's interests switched to the European free scene: to Evan Parker and his circular breathing, Michel Doneda, Peter Kowald, Han Benning, and others. "I discovered all of them through my friend Sharif Sehnaoui who used to live in Paris," Mazen remembers. The album "Machine Gun" by the German free improviser Peter Brötzmann became one of his favourites. He saw the LP lying on a record shelf in Amsterdam - he had gone there on his honeymoon. First, he was attracted by the cover that features a machine gun. Then he listened to the music, and just loved it. "For me this was the answer to American free jazz. It

was a collective music that was heavily structured," he argued: "I just love this solo by Evan Parker. He plays alone, firing with his saxophone on the band, and then they counter-attack as a huge and loud collective. It's so incredible, so powerful." After the album "Machine Gun" he started to discover more albums from the improvised music circles in Europe. "I became interested in musicians like Evan Parker who are very much into the research of sound. I went for this music now, not for the high energetic music anymore." He discovered some contemporary music: Stockhausen, Xenakis, John Cage. Today Kerbaj listens mainly to trumpet players Vinko Globokar, Axel Dörner, Franz Hautzinger, Greg Kelley, and Rajesh Mehta. "It's actually because of Rajesh Mehta that I stopped playing the saxophone and concentrated on the trumpet only," Mazen said. One finds most of these CDs on a shelf in Kerbaj's apartment in Sin el-Fil. It was thus no showing off – like with Nietzsche. However, we do not find any traces of Arabic music.

Hearing all these great musicians inspired Mazen to rehearse more and more. He recounts many incidents: "I was so amazed when I heard Evan Parker playing his famous overtones," Mazen remembers:

> I went crazy. It seemed as if three saxophones very playing, but I saw one only. And
> then the three saxophones never stopped, because Parker uses circular breathing, a
> technique that I wanted to learn as quickly as possible. So I became a really bad
> imitator of Evan Parker first.

Further, he remembers seeing a concert by the French saxophone player Michael Doneda: "He was so different to my other idol Evan. Doneda played very small sounds that were full of textures. In the nights I started to practise those small sounds for hours - with my former wife asleep. I had to play very quietly, and I trained by breathing a lot during those nights."

Within music, Mazen took another path to painting: There he had learned all the techniques from the beginning, "and it took me too much time to get rid of the techniques." In music he just wanted to search for the sounds that he liked, and not spend too much time on music theory, and on rehearsing scales. "Technical skills are important as a tool, but not for more," he says - and he knows that one could debate on his words endlessly:

> Some people say it's better not to learn in order to play more with reflexes and
> emotions, some say you have to learn as much as possible so you can choose from a
> rich repertoire. To really play with reflexes. Some people say to learn so you can
> choose.

Soon Mazen would start to work a lot on his techniques in order to build a sonic vocabulary. The music started to influence his drawings:

> I rebelled against all my own drawings. I accepted that soon people would start
> saying that I'm a bad drawer, but I did not care. I started to use improvisation in
> drawing. People ask me today why I stopped drawing those social comics with people
> with big noses. I don't know. I just don't relate to these things anymore. I'm into
> improvised comics these days.

Metatextual Discourse

Mazen Kerbaj latest solo album "brt vrt zrt krt t" shows that Kerbaj is heavily into experimenting with distinct trumpet techniques and sounds. His trumpet is *blubbering, jarring,* and *clapping* from the deepest to the highest frequencies. Basically, the CD offers a collection of sounds that Mazen Kerbaj produces on his trumpet. It is like a sound library. Within the different tracks not

much changes, but we hear that Kerbaj controls those sounds, and we hear the rhythmical precision he is working with. In another interview, on the 31st of May 2006, Mazen and I went through the different tracks, and we chose four key pieces that we discussed in detail.

Constructional Competence

"Blblb Flblb"

We started talking about the track "Blblb Flblb": Here, the trumpet is filled with water, and Mazen is using different techniques to create a *bubbling* first. Then he turns the trumpet to one side, blows like an Arabic nay flutist and gets this "windy, high pitched sound. To really to control this sound you really need the right amount of water in the trumpet. It's only like that that you get this nay sounds," he told me. Mazen is also capable of producing both of these two sounds together, and he demonstrates this in the track: "It's the only double sound I can produce on the regular, the non-prepared trumpet." Basically, this sound is influenced by Evan Parker: "With his famous circular breathing Evan Parker was able to play and control two or even three sounds at the same time," Mazen explained: "His multiphonics are just incredible: With one sound he produces a steady rhythm, with the other sounds he is improvising above it. It's like people talking to each other." Mazen tried to produce multiphonics on the saxophone first, and then on the trumpet: "The problem was, that on the trumpet you can't really play them," he explained. "So I had to find ways to be able to produce them. One solution is this playing with water inside the trumpet." Mazen found this technique by coincidence - like he did with many other techniques as well. After having discovered it, he started working on it till he was able to fully control it. This is important to him: "I'm always interested in finding new sounds. But the most important thing is to create a clear, distinct vocabulary out of it, one that I can control in every situation."

The listeners of the listening test are impressed by this way of trumpet playing. I had told some of them that they hear a trumpet, and to some I did not say anything. One listener tried to classify the music. He hears that it derives from an improvised process. According to him this sound "positions itself between music and music concrète, sound installation and performance." He further tries to define it as a sort of "contemporary ethnomusic that tries to find its own aesthetic" - it is a rather interesting approach. However, he argues that he is not capable of tracing this *contemporary ethnomusic* to a specific region. The listener who knows that he hears a trumpet only, is very much impressed by this music. One listener hears some non-regular cyclic structures based on sounds played.

"Zrrrt"

"ZRRRT" is a classical tube track. Here Mazen uses his second technique to produce two sounds at once. He plays the trumpet through a long tube, with his instrument between his legs. He puts a plate on the opening of his trumpet and can put other things on it, for example little stones, that start to dance when he blows through the tube and thus produce a rhythmical sound. In this track we hear typical bass sounds that he produces thanks to the long tube - he is playing it with circular breathing. "I'm very interested in those deep sounds. I always wanted to buy a bass clarinet, but never did. This is probably my version of it." To explain this track musically he uses metaphors: "It's like a

never stopping train. You hear people boarding and leaving. The track ends up with three layers that I can control individually.” Attached to the tube is a saxophone mouthpiece: This is how he gets this bass clarinet sound. “I’m happy that I kept my saxophone mouthpiece. At the beginning it was strange to change from saxophone to trumpet, and I was not 100% convinced at first, so I kept the saxophone and the mouth piece.”

The listeners like the track “ZRRRT” a lot. They argue that in this track the sound itself keeps changing, while it stays fixed in the others. “Here, the musician tries to find many aspects of a specific sound and thus starts to change it, or turn it around. I really love this aesthetical concept.”

“PIIIIIIIIIIII”

“PIIIIIIIIIIII” offers a high pitched, long sound. It changes between clear and distinct timbres, and very windy sequences. “Here I work on highlighting the variety of layers inside a sound,” Mazen explained. “The sounds are produced through turning around the valves of the trumpet. Depending on the position of the valve, only a very small amount of air can pass, or a lot.” Sometimes the sound cuts, sometimes it gets very windy. Mazen found this technique by coincidence when he had put the valve into his trumpet incorrectly. “These sounds I can’t perform with a group. They are so small.” Mazen explained that these sounds were mainly inspired by Axel Dörner: “He is a hero on working on such small sounds! But other trumpet players use this technique as well: But with every player, it sounds different.” Another influence here is the French soprano saxophone player Stephen Reeves. “He produces sounds that sound like they are made by electronics. I like that idea a lot, to imitate those sounds with the trumpet.” According to him, this is his acoustic answer to electronic music. “I like the idea that theoretically, trumpet players were able to produce those sounds, long before we started to hear them in electronic music. And: These high frequency sounds can be really annoying - this I like as well.”

The listeners from the listening test hear “digital processed sounds,” or a “noisy explosion with electronic sound qualities.” One argues that the sound does not really appeal to his ear: it is “too noisy, too harsh, too edged.” Another listener mentions references that he hears: “Voice Crack, AACM, and younger artists from the increasingly global scene of free improvised music.” One listener went into the melodies, rhythms and forms of the track. He hears no melodies, no rhythms, but a repeating, non-regular formal structure based on a hollow and a whistle sound.

“Taga Of Daga”

The way of playing in “Taga Of Daga” is, according to Mazen Kerbaj, directly linked to rifles and helicopters. Mazen plays the trumpet through a tube that is five meters long; the air travels a long way till it reaches the trumpet. This sound we will discuss in more detail now. For one of the listeners, it is their favourite track!

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

It was the Austrian trumpet player Franz Hautzinger who told Kerbaj one day that his sounds (for example in “Taga Of Daga”) sounded very much like helicopters and rifles. This made Kerbaj think about the relationship between the sounds of his childhood and youth, and the sounds that he

likes and creates today. "There was no intention at all to play the sounds of rifles and helicopters," Mazen recalls and says, "actually, Hautzinger has great helicopter sounds as well. And Axel Dörner plays similar sounds, but just ten times better than me." Still, Hautzinger's comments made Mazen think of the relationship between the sounds of his childhood and youth, and the sounds that he likes and creates today. Mazen told me the following:

> I went back and asked myself why I liked the CD 'Machine Gun' by Peter
> Brötzmann. I'm sure there is a relation between this album, my music today and my
> sound memories of my childhood. But I don't really know how these things are
> connected to each other. Maybe I just liked free jazz because its tension and its noises
> resembled my youth.

The first time Mazen spoke about these ideas in public was during an interview in Berlin: "Maybe one hears the Lebanese Civil War in our playing," Kerbaj told the journalist. "After the interview we laughed about my statement a lot, Sherif, Christine and me. However, the more I thought about it, the more it became clear, that this might be more than a joke."

It is a difficult, but important question: How are sounds that one heard during one's childhood and youth translated into one's later artistic expression? To what extent does this translation happen consciously or unconsciously? Is it an essentially musical and psychological process? Or is it part of an artist's performance, and a representational strategy? Kerbaj believes that the sonic memories determined, to a certain extent, which sounds he likes or dislikes. "I have, for example, a very special relationship to silence," he says: "I was always afraid of silence. In silent moments we were always afraid of something worse to come." On the other hand, Kerbaj states clearly that musical taste and perception keeps changing - through listening, musical education, and practise.

We discussed if other influences might come from his closer environment and from his sonic memory as well. "One thing might be the way of thinking: our frankness and directness," Mazen explained, and I wondered if this was really typical for Lebanon: to be franc, and direct. However, it seems that with directness he means something else: "I don't remember playing with a free improviser from the Arab world who is shy." More interesting was his answer on how the Arabic language might have influenced his music making.

> Lately I talked to a linguist about the Arabic language. Through my Lebanese dialect
> I'm able to produce vocals that a non-Arab could not do. So, on the trumpet I can use
> these vocals to produce sounds that a Japanese player could not do. One could say:
> This is an Arabic influence. I even know a Japanese improviser in Amsterdam who
> tries to learn as many languages as possible to be able to produce as many new
> sounds as possible.

Another influence might come from Beirut itself:

> I'm a city person. Beirut is a very noisy city, so there could be a connection between
> the sounds of the city and my music. When we play as a collective we have the
> sounds that resemble the noises of Beirut. On stage, playing the ensemble, we hear
> these sounds from different directions - like in the city.

His music, however, is not only made of the sounds that he is able to control.

> In a concert I play many sounds that I did not intend to produce. Sometimes it's just
> the humidity in the place, that changes everything. Once I had to cough, and I used it
> to do a sound. Sometimes it's just mistakes. The challenge is to be able to control
> these unexpected sounds on the spot and try to make something out of them.

I asked him to what extent he was critical about these "mistake" sounds: Did he think of his sounds as "good sounds" and "bad sounds" for example? "No there are not good and bad sounds. The crucial question is how you place a specific sound inside music."

I tried to take this discussion one step further, by asking Mazen much more about how he actually gets to the sounds that he uses in his sound library. He argued that many sounds appeared by mistake. Important however, is which sounds he keeps on board, and which not. This decision-taking works on two main levels: First, he selects the sounds that he likes. And second, he keeps those sounds that he is actually capable of producing and re-producing.

> I dismiss a lot of sounds, for a variety of reasons: Often I think that this or that sound is not useable in a performance, and that there is no need to integrate it into my self-built sonic vocabulary. I have priorities, and I can't develop all sonic material around distinct sounds.

 Sometimes Mazen hears a sound, and he is sure that he is going to work on this sound in two or three years, but not now. "It's also a question of time: You can't take all sounds on board! You have to work and re-work them to get maximum control." Another fact is crucial. One of the challenges Mazen has with his various ways to prepare the trumpet is that he is not always able to react and adapt to sonic happenings in group playing - because changing from one technique to the other means taking off the balloon and putting on the tube, for example. "One goal is to be able to produce a great variety of sounds out of each situation. I have to be able to react to everything when I'm playing the tube, for example. This is my biggest challenge, and it took me a long time to get to where I stand now: The goal is to have a big variety to use everything in the group playing." So, more and more, Mazen tries to play concerts with less changes of his prepared trumpet.

> Because my playing has kind of a circus effect. And the problem is that I can't play in darkness, because I have to see to be able to play my prepared trumpet. The only thing that I can do is to work on my sounds so that if someone closes his or her eyes or listens to my music on a CD it sounds good.

 We further discussed his criteria for "good" sounds, or sounds that he would introduce into his sonic vocabulary. "This happens mainly through emotional criteria, not through rational ones. It is like I feel connected to a sound. It is instinctive, why exactly I feel connected to it is very difficult to know."

This complex question I will try to discuss in chapter 7 in more detail. Some of the sounds of Mazen Kerbaj are influenced by other free improvisers, by the *reductionist* school of the free impro circle, by Mazen's love for *small* sounds. Others are influenced by his sonic memories, by his Lebanese mother tongue, and others by technical aspects, and by questions of trial and error. "It's not that I hear a sound and I just play it on the trumpet. The sounds that finally come out of my instrument are like a miracle. They are a complex mixture of rational and emotional aspects, they stand at the end of a long process of coincidences."

6.3   Charbel Haber - "Track 5"

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

The first time I saw Charbel Haber was in the Torino Express Bar in 2003. Cynthia Zaven introduced me to him: "Let's meet up soon," we said. Two years later I watched him performing – at Irtijal 2005, the annual festival for free improvised music. The evening was held in the Goethe Institute in Manara. The German legend Peter Brötzmann was to perform that night, so quite a lot of people had gathered. The evening started with a Trio: Charbel Haber and Discipline on two laptops, accompanied by the singer Mayaline Hage (who now works in the duo Lumi). While Discipline produces deep atmospheric drones, Haber is responsible for the higher pitches: we hear sounds resembling fax machines, modems to log in into the Internet, and other cracking and rustling noises. Mayaline Hage talks or flusters into her microphone, quite often she just sits in silence. All this does not sound too refined for my ears. The drones stay in the foreground; I cannot hear any build-ups or atmospheric changes. Later, during Peter Brötzmann's energetic concert, I observe Haber and Discipline talking and making jokes at the door of the institute. They are the only two people who do not listen to the concert. Is it more important to *network* at the door, whenever a late guest arrives? Is an old German saxophone player, a pioneer in the genre of free jazz, not a must to see?

Two weeks later, on the 25th of July, 2008, I met Charbel Haber again. At Torino Express, his favourite hang out - his living room, as some say. Charbel Haber entered on time. He knew all the guests, and the staff working behind the bar. He wore a three-day beard, intellectual-looking glasses, and a T-Shirt with Japanese Manga on it. He seemed shy at first, and did not look me in the eye while talking. However, he loves to talk, and he tells me so. We ordered two beers, and he told me more about himself. Charbel was born in Beirut on June the 1st, 1978. He spent a great part of his youth in Paris. He was educated in French schools, first in Paris, later in Beirut. "I was raised in a community that was very much against Arab nationalism. And as Arab nationalism did not succeed to prove itself it was rather easy to take and defend this position." Today Charbel is still against Arab Nationalism. However, "I don't have any problem with my Arab Identity. I'm an Arab like all the Arabs in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. At the same time I feel different than the Arabs from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Maghreb, or Africa." Charbel is from a Christian Orthodox family. He has a Shiite girlfriend.

> Whenever you take a critical position towards Arab Nationalism and you are
> Christian, everyone here puts you into a prefixed category. But I'm even more against
> Christian rightwing extremism, than about Arab Nationalism. I'm just an Arab from
> Lebanon who does not believe in any big or extreme ideas.

His list of issues that he is critical about in Lebanon is long: too much racism, fascism and machismo. "We need to build an open-minded society, that is not influenced by religious beliefs and radical ideological ideas anymore. We need a better education system, and we need a more equal economical system. The Lebanese reality however is, that every crisis can immediately lead to war." Like his peers, Charbel is very frustrated when it comes to Lebanese politics. "Many of our presidents and clan leaders have blood on their hands. They murder each other in the vendetta style of Sicilia. It's disgusting."

Charbel studied banking and finance at the Lebanese American University, and he took some courses in media studies and political science. He studied, because this was what he was expected to do. "I was a fan of punk music back then," he says, "I considered myself a punk". At 19, Charbel went clubbing a lot. He went to punk parties. "There were a lot of drugs involved at the time," he remembers: "Drugs helped us to forget the horrors of war." Basically the scene opposed to the superficial lifestyle that was celebrated in the Arabic pop scene. "We just wanted to be the opposite of glamorous. We listened and played rock and punk, we wore fucked-up jeans, a t-shirt, and tennis shoes." One could argue that Charbel Haber and his friends are rebels. Charbel, however, disagrees with that: "Sure, we try to break out of certain rules of our conservative society, but we never do so completely," he says with a big smile on his face. "Whatever we did, our parents accepted us home, they gave us money and they took care of us. We are not real rebels." Haber and his friends did not consume drugs somewhere hidden in a dark corner of a street. "All the drugs we've done, we did it in our parents' house and not in a subway station. We smoked, and our parents watched TV next door."

Haber was a Punk, but he never had red hair. "I never went to the extreme; I only had an eyebrow piercing and a tattoo at 18." Social control seems to work in Lebanon: "You do not want to push yourself out until a point where everyone notices you and then you have a problem. You don't want everyone noticing you." Within these limitations, Charbel still tried to find his own way. "Punk was a lifestyle," Charbel tells me: "It was a reaction to the idealism and optimism of the hippie movement. Punk loved to shock society, but it was without too many illusions of being able to change the world." The often heard "No Future" slogan of the punk movement, fitted to the Lebanese context as well:

Me and my friends were at war with everyone, our parents and the whole community.
Plus, in the 1990s the Civil War had ended, and so life was not only a matter of
surviving anymore. We started to have new needs, ideas and dreams, but we were
still not too positive about the future.

Charbel became friends with people from all religious backgrounds, "People who were into arts and culture, and a bit Bourgeois," he says. He was into Western culture only, and he says that this is one of the problems of his generation: that all role models came and keep coming from abroad, mainly from the West. Kurt Cobain, the singer of Nirvana, was one of his main role models; to him Cobain was an anti-macho. Charbel was never interested in Arabic culture - "But I'm discovering some Arab intellectuals now, for example, the poet Nizar Qabbani," he argues.

After the death of Kurt Cobain, Charbel Haber started to play music. "Punk made it easy, as you only needed to know three chords." Haber chose the guitar. He took three lessons only. He did not like his teacher who was too much into metal guitar playing and used to criticize the alternative rock scene for not playing the electric guitars properly. He hated metal, a music that was loved by a lot of people of his generation in the 1990s. Today, his main musical knowledge comes from the British music magazine, *The Wire*.

It was in 1998, when Charbel Haber co-founded the post-punk group Scrambled Eggs. They first performed improvised concerts in a pub called Quadrangle in Beirut. In 2002 they recorded their first album "Human Friendly Noises." It is characterized by a spacious, ambient rock mood, somewhere between British alternative and progressive American rock and pop. The second album was called "No Special Date, Nor A Deity To Venerate." The band declares it as follows: "A fine mesh of guitars and noises, pushing to the extreme the search for harmony in chaos" (www.lebaneseunderground.com). The influence of free improvisation kept on growing steadily, and

parallel to their work with Scrambled Eggs, group members Charbel Haber and Marc Codsi started playing and recording with artists from the circle of free improvised music.

The third album by Scrambled Eggs was called "Nevermind Where, Just Drive." It was the most experimental approach so far, situated somewhere between noise and free improvisation - I will focus on one key piece of that album shortly. After that, they produced a few songs for the soundtrack of Joana Hajdithomas and Khalil Joreige's recent film "A Perfect Day." The latest album by the time of writing is called "Happy Together Filthy Forever." The CD includes the song "Johnny Anti-Christ." I included it into the listening test - even though Charbel and I did not choose it as our key piece. To me it was interesting to know what specialists of rock music would think about the punk-rock side of Scrambled Eggs. I thus sent the track to rock music journalists and rock musicians in Switzerland. I wanted to hear what they thought of it - without them knowing that it came from Lebanon. The journalists liked the song, the musician did not: "Excellent mood," "great voice," "good song," the journalists wrote. Another listener put forward a great range of reference styles: "new wave," gothic rock," "progressive rock," "noise rock," "dark electro-rock," "post-punk." Further, he mentions bands that could have been influential for this kind of music: "Bauhaus," "Joy Division," "New Order," "Young Gods," "Nine Inch Nails," and the "Constellation" label from Canada. He mentions further that Johnny Rotten used the term "I'm the Antichrist," referring to the refrain of the song. The voice of the singer reminded one listener of Joy Division's Ian Curtis, while the guitar riff reminded him of the Strokes, especially their first album. One of the journalists heard it as a good, "authentic," "credible" rock'n'roll track with a punk approach and interesting psychedelic inserts. To him it is more linked to sixties garage punk than to mid- and late-seventies punk. "The most interesting bit is that psychedelic moment that disrupts the classic structure." A rock guitarist from Bern hears "The Cure" as a main influence. The bass plays some melodies that resemble The Cure, and the guitars play mainly main note and fifth (1,5) - "this is typically The Cure." However, they play with more of a rock approach than The Cure. The guitar player from Bern is critical about the guitar player from Beirut. He argues that he does not really know how to work with the plectrum: He attacks the strings from one side only, and is not capable of playing it from both sides. However, he argues that this is, as well, a typical punk approach. Another listener likes the distorted electric guitars a lot and writes that they "play very convincingly." The listeners argue further that the production is very solid, and that the guitars sounded really sharp. One writes that "experience shows that it's not that easy to produce this kind of sound in a studio which isn't equipped and operated by technicians used to creating these kinds of textures. I wouldn't be surprised if that song had been recorded outside Lebanon." Finally, the listeners argue that this song could have been recorded anywhere in the world. One argues as follows: "It's very generic, and it's not original. In this sense it's an imitation. But this is not necessarily a criticism. Every country needs these kinds of bands."

Receptional Competence

On my second meeting with Charbel Haber on the 4th of August, 2005, we mainly talked about his musical influences. It became my longest interview ever held. We again met at Torino Express, before we went to Charbel's apartment in Gemmayze. The apartment was messy - but not too much. The wall offers interesting flyers of the various concerts of Scrambled Eggs. On the ground there are CDs with punk, post-punk and Brit pop bands from Europe and the USA, and some albums by Pink Floyd. In one corner stands an old guitar, with a small amp. Again, Charbel tells me that the

first and main band he listened to was Nirvana. "I started with Nirvana, basically the first record I bought, I guess, was 'Never Mind.' In 1991, I was 13, and I read their interviews in magazines, and picked all the influential bands they mentioned." Haber went back to bands like the US hardcore punk band Fugazi that was founded 1987 in Washington DC, and took their name from a term often used by American soldiers in Vietnam meaning "Fucked up, got ambushed, zipped in." Other bands were the early Californian hardcore punk band Black Flag, founded around 1978, and the punk and noise band Flipper, formed in 1979. Flipper became famous for their slow, noisy, sometimes even atonal sounds. Important was the US band Bad Religion with its socio-critical lyrics inspired by writers like Noam Chomsky, Edward O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins. Later came punk rock groups like the Pennywise, a Californian group named after a monster from a Stephen King novel.

During the 1990s Haber started to listen to Pink Floyd - similar to most of the musicians that I met. "Pink Floyd came with the joints, as simple as that. We all discovered drugs and Pink Floyd at the same time." Besides Pink Floyd, Smashing Pumpkins, the American alternative rock band around the vocalist and guitarist Billy Corgan, became an important influence:

> This band showed me how far one can go in experimenting with sound. How this
> band approached sound was so completely different than all the alternative rockbands
> that I had heard before. The band went beyond all the teenage anxious thing into
> sound-making itself. I consider the albums 'Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness'
> as the album that pushed me into experimenting more on my guitar.

Later Charbel Haber listened to post punk, wave, dark wave and Indie-rock bands as well – for example The Stone Roses from Manchester, Soundgarden, Mudhoney and The Melvins. "Mudhoney had these fuzzy sounds and fuzzy guitars. It was just beautiful." One finds a huge collection of all this music on his floor. Charbel mentions only one reference coming from the Arab world: The Egyptian guitar player Omar Khorshid (see chapter 3.3.4). "Khorshid manages this great surf guitar playing of the 1960s, and I just love his clear sound, and his tremolo. I would love to be able to play like him."

Metatextual Discourse

The key piece I analyze with Charbel Haber comes from the album "Nevermind where, just drive". It is simply named "Track 5." "It's the most experimental album by Scrambled Eggs so far. I see it as an essay, made in September 2004. At the time, we did not have a lot to say, we did not know where to head to. That's why we put the empty dialog boxes on the front cover." The CD cover offers an illustration by Yasmina Baz: We see four young people driving in a car. The expressions on their four faces range from anger, to relaxedness, to satisfaction. "Track 5" is Charbel's favourite track on the CD. "It offers a great variety of sounds, and it sounds very organic." The band itself explains this music on their website as follows:

> The foursome combines trash noise guitars, electronics and tape machines, backed by
> bass and drums, and engulfed by a thick sheath of maximalist distortion. The result
> can be steadily hypnotic at times, and volatile, mirage-like, at others. Including
> guitar-generated pulses and drones and sudden jumps in volume and intensity, the
> album represents an uncompromising sound, the latter shifting restlessly between
> moods and arrangements, never settling into anything resembling a comfortable
> groove, but opting for an episodic series of compressed but intense tableaux.

The track starts with a reel-to-reel tape machine[170]: It is switched on and off, we hear sounds, and silences: "We were starting and stopping the reel-to-reel tape, so you get these silences, and then these walls of sounds and textures." The noisy bits feature a deep drone, very noisy middle frequencies, whistling sounds in the high frequencies. At 1:00 we can imagine that some of the sounds might come from prepared guitars - at 1:40 it becomes evident, when heavily distorted guitar sounds enter. At 1:45 a drum is playing on hi-hats, at 2:10 the drummer uses the bass drums. It is clearly a band now: we hear a drum, an electric bass, and guitars - however, still sounding in the background, behind a wall of noise. "Track 5" continues switching between waves of high frequencies (full of guitar feedback) and waves of deep noises. We hear clear guitar sounds at 5:30, before the track fades out.

The listeners I invited to listen to this track all work in the field of electro-acoustic music, and free improvised music. They define this music as "industrial," "noise," "industrial ambient," "atonal," "dark," et cetera. They hear it as a sound piece that could work as an installation, or as a live performance. They think that some of the sounds derive from field recordings, however, most of them mention also the guitar sounds, and the drums. All of them argue that it is produced with specific sound software, no-one thinks of the reel-to-reel machine. One listener however comes very close: "the interruptions are created in a way which reminds me of a tape or record player being stopped manually." He describes the pieces as "heavily amplified" with a "lot of feedback." He further argues that "sometimes tonalities occur for short moments, but the primary and dominant aesthetics here is the noise." He further describes it as a "noisy, abstract drone piece with few timbre changes, concrete and instrumental sounds played over it, and heavily amplified." He hears "three different intensities of noise and density are played after another, interrupted with short breaks. The third one is the longest part, fading out slowly." From their comments it becomes not too clear if they liked the track, or not. One argues that this switching between low and high waves of sound and noise seems a bit kitschy and clichéd to him. "The track could be more radical," he argues. One argues that it is not important if one likes this track or not: "The interest lies in the transformation process of various sources of sound into one piece of music. This by itself is fascinating, however, it can become a bit extraneous as well." Another listener argues that too many elements in this piece sound a bit accidental. He mainly refers to the breaks between noise and silence at the beginning of the track. He wonders why this aesthetical element just disappears, and does not have any impact anymore in the continuation of the track. Most of the listeners finally argue that this sound could come from everywhere on this planet: The UK, Japan, China, Switzerland, or Lebanon.

Constructional Competence

Scrambled Eggs recorded and produced the album in different locations, in various steps. First: The band improvised in a studio and recorded the session. Cedrelle Farhat was the sound engineer. The musicians that participated were Marc Codsi (guitar), Charbel Haber (guitar), Tony Elieh (electric bass), Saïd Elieh (drums), and The Kitano Home Ensemble. The latter is an ensemble by Charbel Haber and Marc Codsi that works with electronic and electro-acoustic manipulation. "In

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[170] Using the reel-to-reel tape machine is a clear reference of the band's interests in pioneers of sound production and editing in avant-garde and popular music. The machine was used by Delia Derbyshire, The Beatles (on Revolution 9), Jimmi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Musique Concrète pioneers, Pink Floyd, and many others. It is clearly a reference to psychedelic rock bands as well (see chapter 3.3.4): The studio itself becomes an instrument.

the studio, we were just improvising, and we recorded everything," Charbel recalls. As a second step, Charbel Haber and Marc Codsi separately recorded guitar drones, feedback, and other sound effects onto a reel-to-reel machine. Mainly, they played prepared guitars - they put sticks in between the strings, or they hit the guitar with different objects. As a third step they linked the reel-to-reel tape to the computer, and re-recorded the guitar sounds - from reel-to-reel to the computer. "While recording we played with the reel-to-reel tape. For example, we slowed it down to the minimum, and through that we got really dirty sound textures," Charbel explains. In step four they manipulated the guitar textures and the bands' recording in the computer. They used the sound software reaktor that offered them another million options for sound manipulation. From the computer all was played back on the reel-to-reel tape again. Now they had over two hours of sound textures on the reel-to-reel. They played with that material on the machine again, and recorded it back to the computer. Finally, it was edited and mastered with the Pro Tools software, and exported as the finished sound file that we hear on the CD.

Accidents played a huge role. Charbel agrees with that, and he tells me that they actually had worked like one of those psychedelic bands in the 1960s and 1970s. "You know, we had a huge box with stuff to smoke in the studio," Charbel recalls:

> We were so stoned, that I really do not remember the details of how this music was put together. I just remember that at one time we had a total mess in Pro Tools. We did not know anymore which track came from where. But we put everything together somehow, and suddenly it all sounded great.

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

> Charbel argues that this music is musique concrète in a rock outfit.
> In this track I enjoy the little, but special moments. I love the textures, the spaces, I love that there is not virtuosity, no grandiosity. There is nothing that is too interesting, however all the sounds come from far away. The guitar sounds come from a long way off. Many accidents are involved. The guitar sound becomes a human being. It lived and travelled a lot before we actually get to hear it.

In a long speech Charbel explained his vision about this kind of sound. To Charbel the question of accidents and failures is at the core of this piece. "I just love to observe what my guitar does," he started explaining. "I prepare my guitar with a lot of different materials, and I do not often know what kind of sounds I will get while playing. While playing I have a certain sound in mind that I try to approach. It's this process of trying, searching, and finding that interests me." This approach is completely opposite to the way Mazen Kerbaj works (see chapter 6.2). Charbel agrees: "Mazen Kerbaj keeps making fun of me. According to him, I would just release anything on a record. Actually, he is quite right. However, Mazen often argues that we have to sound more refined, and more finished; I don't agree with him here." According to Charbel, imperfection is important. "I play music with full emotion; I do not want to build a sound library that I can recall at every concert. I decide on the spot where I want or try to go sonically." Charbel says that as an artist he is about anti-virtuosity, and anti-work: "I'm lazy. I'm super Lebanese, you cannot get more Lebanese than this," he says.

From here, he jumps into another topic. The accidental, the imperfection, all this is linked to Beirut, he argues. "This track sounds how I see and hear Beirut. I was really stoned while recording

and editing this track. And when I heard it the first time, I realised I heard Beirut." He goes into a long description*:*

> The track sounds like Beirut in May and June. You wake up at 5.36 in the morning, just when the sun comes up. Everything is quiet, but you hear the most beautiful drone you can imagine. Soon you hear a great variety of noises and textures: the traffic, the people talking, but also small sonic events. You have a lot of changes in the mood, often unexpected, often not prepared. You drive up the mountains for thirty minutes, and everything is super calm. At the same time, everything is unfinished here, not at all perfect. We keep asking ourselves what tomorrow will bring. However, we kill this fear for our future, and we go for a drink, or two or three. The next morning, it all starts again. It's a repeating story. And we are not in control as human beings, and I'm not in control as a musician when I put my guitar sounds through the reel-to-reel machine and the sound software.

Charbel argues that this track is very nostalgic. "This again is something super Arab. We are super nostalgic about everything. We are nostalgic that we used to be Bedouin, and lived in the countryside; a simple but perfect life."

Do these theories make sense? Within Scrambled Eggs, there was a lot of dissent about this track and this album. "No one wanted to record that album. I was the one that pushed it," Charbel remembers. For Charbel Haber music is a very emotional thing on one side, and a life-style on the other. In his rock performances Charbel goes crazy on stage - a reporter of the Lebanese newspaper the *Daily Star* described it very well:

> When Charbel Haber, lead singer of Beirut alternative rock band Scrambled Eggs, sings and plays guitar they would probably cry witchcraft and try to hang him. For when Haber is at the microphone, his skinny torso jumping up and down like a man on fire, he seems as if possessed. But for the 300-strong audience, sweating and squashed together in the oblong venue Sunday night, Haber's 'possession' was par for the course. Alongside his band made up of bass, guitars and drums, Haber demonstrated what possession by music can do to a man - and that is give you freedom and passion few attain. (Short, 2006)

Music seems an escape from the conservative and narrow-minded realities he sees in Beirut everyday. "Life is so fucking boring. You have to fill your time and do something. Basically the only thing that makes living better next to drugs and the alcohol and everything is music. It's just nice. It's a good way to pass time. And we take it deeper and say it's a form of rebellion." Charbel escapes into his own music, and possibility of creating his own stories around it. Maybe one of his many sentences says everything: "What you hear on the CD is just one part of the track, but it's not 'the' track."

6.4 Garo Gdanian - "Remains of a Bloodbath"

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

Garo Gdanian is the founder and guitarist of Weeping Willow: One of the various death metal bands in Beirut. We met a week ago in the instrument department of the Virgin Mega Store. Now we sit in Garo's small car. We are heading to Adma, a village a bit North of Beirut. I am invited to attend a rehearsal by Weeping Willow. Marco, the bass player of the band joined us in the car. We stop at one of the supermarkets on the highway to get beer: "We play music, we drink beer, we enjoy," Garo tells me. Back on the road we pass the Christian dominated town of Jounieh with all its super-nightclubs. Soon we drive up the hill to Adma and approach an amazing villa. The rehearsal place is not at all an underground cave, or a sticky rehearsal room: It is a villa with a great view towards the sea, and the Casino du Liban. The lights of Beirut shimmer on the horizon. The house belongs to the family of Junior, the drummer. His brother plays in another band: The Arcane. They practice here as well, as Garo tells me. The two rehearsal spaces are located on the ground floor of the villa. The walls are plastered with pictures of Weeping Willow, and with big posters: Iron Maiden, Nirvana, and other groups. Each member of the Weeping Willow band wears the shirt of one of his favourite groups: Pantera, Black Sabbath, Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden. The rehearsal starts, without long discussions. Probably the band decided to perform a set for me, I think. All the musicians start head-banging immediately. It is very loud: the fast double drums, the guitar riffs, the unisono played bridges. The singer is groaning into his microphone. It is English, I realize after ten minutes. I do not understand anything. However: A good band. It is loud, but precise, and virtuosic. Behind the second guitarist hangs a big wooden cross: What is this all about, I ask myself. I will ask soon.   George Bassil drops by after the rehearsal. Weeping Willow's manager. He further organises rock concerts in Lebanon. Did he turn up for me? He just came back from a metal festival in Istanbul and shows us the latest pictures. "The Turkish Metal scene really keeps it real," Bassil says, and the Weeping Willow boys start dreaming of going there. "Shit, if we go to Turkey, we have to drive through Syria," one band member says suddenly. "We just put black blankets on the window, and watch a horror movie," another member says. Now they all laugh loudly: "But if we drink beer as usual we will have to go for a piss. So we would actually need to stand on Syrian soil!" one says: "We need a modern bus, with a toilet inside," comes the answer, and again everyone laughs loudly. Is this the typical Christian right wing band, I ask myself? Again: I will ask soon.

Driving back, Garo tells me how important this band is for him. He founded it in the early 1990s, with his best friend Clemens. The two tattooed the Weeping Willow logo on their backs. "The band is my identity," Garo says: "It's a big part of my life. It's much more than a lifestyle. Our group writes music together, we want to reach somewhere in this fucking life. We members compose the music together, we have a target; we want to reach somewhere." A few months ago Clemens left to work in Dubai. He left the band. Garo was very disappointed: "This is how it works here," he says: "At least he has to walk around with our logo on his back for the rest of his life!"

Our next meeting happens in September 2005. We meet inside the Virgin Mega Store, go to a quiet corner, and talk. Garo was born in 1981, "just before Israel invaded Beirut," he points out. The family lived in East Beirut, in the Armenian quarter. His uncle used to listen to metal music. He

borrowed Garo albums from Ozzy Osbourne and other big groups. Garo was eleven years old, and he went for metal. He started to play the guitar, and soon started Weeping Willow: "First, it was a hobby only," Garo remembers: "We started to play music in a small place, in Clemens' house." The band played black metal, and soon played many local gigs: "The metal scene was huge in the 1990s. When it became censored, a lot fell apart"[171] One member of Weeping Willow was put into prison for three days - "He sat next to a murderer!" Garo remembers. In the following years, some band members had to leave, mainly because they were heavily addicted to drugs. "Drugs were everywhere in the 1990s. It was as easy to buy it as to buy a Pepsi. A lot of my old friends became junkies," he recalls: "You can't stay friends with someone who is addicted to hard drugs, even if you try. They start to lie to you, try to steal, it's really bad." Today, Garo sees himself as the bandleader: "I created the concept of this band, and I'm probably most involved. A leader is necessary to push things forward."

Today, the members of Weeping Willow look like the "stereotypical" metal musicians. Three of them have long hair. During the day, however, they all walk around with normal clothes. Wearing piercings, tattoos, and long hair are three not to does in Lebanon. Garo wears a small piercing in his eyelid. "People watch when I enter a shop," he says, "So, I decided to compromise on the haircut. People don't respect you when you wear long hair." However, tattoos and piercings are hidden trends, as Garo observed: "I see Saudi men and women in that piercing shop everyday," he says, and points over at the piercing shop on the same floor. "The men put piercings in their huge bellies, and the women paint tattoos on their body. These Saudis do everything, just hidden: They drink, they fuck, they smoke, they sniff, everything. I hate seeing them!"

The band recorded three albums: "Garden of Misery," "Mentally Decayed," and "The 3rd Portal." "Marco, our bassist, drew the cover of our 'Garden of Misery' album. You see a green tree surrounded by a desert. The tree is us man, Weeping Willow, and around us everything is deserted." "Garden of Misery" was recorded in a studio. "We paid two or three thousand dollars to a guy called Joe Barojan. He owns a small studio, but he normally records Arabic pop singers," Garo remembers and becomes rather angry: "He did a lousy job, because he was not involved. We paid him and he did what he had to do, not more, and with no enthusiasm. We were not able to really work on the recording, because time was up too soon." The band released the 500 copies of the album and got criticised a lot for the bad quality of the production. "We were furious," Garo remembers, "We don't have big and rich daddies who can get us into the best recording studio. We are working class dudes. At least we try to make the best out of it! We do not just sit around and complain about others!" I tell him that I had a different impression last week, when they were rehearsing in the villa. Garo answers that the drummer, Junior, comes from a "classy" family, but that he is different: "I think they lost a lot of their money during the Civil War," he says, and: "Junior is a good mate. He does not behave like a rich guy. He is a soul mate."

The second album, "Mentally Decayed," was a step forward. "We let our emotions out. We just wanted to be really aggressive and go fucking crazy!" Again they went to a studio: "It was fucking terrible," Garo remembers: "We did not have much studio time. We were stressed, and then the fucking electricity goes on and off. That's Beirut! It's not that easy, I tell you." The owner of the studio paid them money to produce the CD in advance. Soon after the release he wanted his money back, and this led to trouble: "I don't know what he had thought. We are a metal band, we are going to sell 500 copies maximum, so we can't give him his money back within the first year already."

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[171] See chapter on Metal and Rock (4.1.2)

Finally, the members paid a part of the money from their own pocket. George Bassil paid the rest. He became their manager, and since then they have been paying him back after each concert. Further, Jihad Murr, the owner of Virgin Mega Store and thus the boss of Garo and Marco, started to promote the band. He played them on his radio show, and he sells their CD in his shop.

Garo sees "Mentally Decayed" as a concept album. First he refers to the picture on the cover: "You see a guy in a street that is separated into two sides: It's about the good and the fucked-up side of society," he explains. The topics in the lyrics are very radical, dark, and negative. The songs talk about the "backside stories of Lebanese society," Garo says. The song "Flower" is about a dad who is raping his daughter. When the daughter later in her life realises what the father has done to her she goes back to his house and kills him. One song is called "Perversion." "It's about all the perverts in the high society of Lebanon. We see them every day", Garo explains: "Everybody is fucking each other's wife, and everyone takes cocaine. But during the day we see them, all managers, all dressed up, all fucking important." Another song is about a girl that locks herself into her bathroom and wants to commit suicide with a razor blade. The song "Victims Behind" talks about the many Lebanese who leave their kids with their housemaid from Sri Lanka or Africa. "The song is about a maid from Sri Lanka who does not give a fuck about these small Lebanese kids," Garo explains. "She probably watched TV the whole day, and maybe smokes a joint or something. This is what they do the moment the parents of the kids leave." In the song, a serial killer enters the house and slaughters the kids, and the housemaid. This actually sounds quite racist, I tell Garo. He does not agree, and gives an answer that is not really convincing: "We just observe and build our stories. Most of the maids are black in this country. It's as easy as that," he says. "Maybe it would be good to take an old Lebanese lady as a housemaid, and not someone from Africa or Asia. Maybe she would need the money, and maybe she could educate our children better, I don't know." So, it is actually quite racist? "You know, many Lebanese are racists. They hired black persons for cleaning, and if they see an educated black person they behave strange to him or her. But Weeping Willow is different: We just observe, and we provoke with our songs."

I now ask him about the cross on the wall in their rehearsal room. "All the members of the group are Christians; me and the singer are Armenian Christians," Garo says, "But we usually don't talk about religion. Religion is not really an issue. There is too much religion in this country anyway!" I continue the discussion and ask him how important his Armenian background is to him. He says it is important, but he is quite flexible. "The Armenians used to teach you discipline. They were real Christians," he says: "Today however, everything has changed. My sister married a local guy, not an Armenian. But it's all right, we don't care, as long as she is happy. Twenty years ago, however, this would have been a big issue." Garo says that he prays sometimes, but only for himself - "when I need something," he says, and laughs. "I know that I'm a Christian, and I believe in Jesus", he continues. "I think it is important that you can believe in something; this can make you a happy person. If you don't believe in anything you are probably a bit fucked up." He continues saying that "if a Muslim boy or a Muslim girl is good, we have nothing against him or her. We are open to everyone." Still there seem to be limits to that openness: "You know, we stick to our side, to Jounieh. Here people are open, and you can drink a beer on the street without being disturbed. Why should I go to Hamra?" Garo goes to Hamra, or to West Beirut, only when he has to go there for work. Otherwise, downtown, the Virgin Mega Store, is a border that he does not cross. "Hamra is also too much loaded with bad memories," Garo explains: "On this corner I think, this is where a friend of my family was killed, or I ask myself, what was this guy in that shop doing during the Civil War, things like this. I'm mentally fucked up

man, we all are." But again, he says, it is really mainly a question of where you feel home, and where not. "I'm not a racist," he says: "I just think it's all too conservative on the other side." "Or," he puts it another way: "Deep down, maybe everyone is a bit of a racist, and this counts definitely for Lebanon: I hang out with my own community, where I feel free, and they hang out with their own group. It's as simple as that."

Back to the music. I ask him how all these quite radical ideas came into their minds? "We are all fucked up mentally. Lebanon is a fucked-up place with too much religion and too many clan leaders everywhere." he says. "I still have nightmares from the war. My father used to fight - a lot of shit happened. It was not a normal childhood," he tells me. "At the same time we watch Horror movies all the time. So our music is somehow reality, somehow fiction. We believe that one has to look at the darker sides of life too." I try to discuss with Garo how many of the lyrics are inspired by his own experiences, and how many are actually just inspired by Metal music: "Sure, there are influences mainly from black metal and doom metal, and from some more progressive stuff. The important thing is, however, that we tasted this stuff, we know what we are talking about." For him, Weeping Willow is very authentic, very honest. "Our music is like a horror movie. This does not mean that we like the things that we sing about." And one thing is important to know, he argues. "When I sing that I'm going to kill someone, this does not say that I intend to do so." To Garo there is a clear cut between the "fiction" in a song, and real life.

Receptional Competence

Garo says that "Remains of a Bloodbath" is his most important song. And it is this song that Garo and I decide to work on. First, I asked Garo how the song was composed: He wrote the lyrics during his work. Now and then he would sit down and write a line. Sometimes he watched a horror movie, and took some more inspiration from there. Then he collected "a bunch of riffs" on his guitar. All this he brought to one of the band rehearsals and there they built the song as a collective. The song is clearly inspired by death metal. This genre developed in the mid-1980s from trash metal. It mainly started from the USA, first in Tampa near Florida (with bands like Death, Morbid Angel, Obituary, Deicide), then in New York (Suffocatin, Cannibal Corpse, Immolation, Malevolent). Often Charles "Chuck" Schuldiner from the group Death is called the godfather of death metal. Later, scenes appeared in Stockholm, and then in Goteborg as well. One listener and heavy metal scholar from the UK writes a very clear comment on the track:

> From the very start, this track feels very familiar to me. That is not because I have heard it before (although I cannot absolutely rule out that possibility) but because I have heard so many tracks of this kind. Put simply, this is proficiently played, well produced, stylistically orthodox death metal. The track could have been produced at any time since the early 1990s and could come from any part of the world where metal is performed. In short this is a good example of generic death metal. That is not to dismiss this track as unworthy of attention. Rather, it is a mark of how many bands from across the world play this style.

The lyrics

The lyrics of the song are held in English. They are basically a collage of phrases and words such as "Men at war," "dead in a bloodbath," "emptying your firing kit," "brainwashed minds," "hallucinations and crimes," "killing," "active graveyards," and many more. According to Garo it is "a war song, about a soldier going to a battle, and returning home afterwards. At home the soldier is having flashbacks from the war, just as we do."

> Marching worried one by one the men are off to war a once stuffed zone now blank
> and dead a bloodbath coast in store aim the unknown squad fire the ruthless kid drop
> your witless brain empty your firing kit left their friends behind triggered their
> brainwashed minds slayed whatever moved dropped like fallen cattle those left where
> sent home like missing parts and reborn skulls hallucinations and crime addiction
> elusive behavior now craving crime one by one no way for any outlet walls are close
> they're off to complete their crimes no man's land flooding marching and killing their
> way foes mutilated hand in hand and evident decadence shattered through nothingless
> dismembered neighborhood an active graveyard aim fire drop empty left triggered
> slayed dropped.

The lyrics are basically one long sentence. The content of it is not unusual in the international death metal scene. In death metal war is a big issue: War, murder, rape, torture, death, brutality, et cetera. It is further well known that many death metal groups take their inspiration from horror movies. A difference is in the case of Weeping Willow that the members of the group experienced war: this is an issue I will discuss shortly. Does this bring a difference into their music?

The Music

Garo likes this track, because he thinks it is quite original. "Maybe some riffs are similar to riffs from Pantera, and maybe one hears some elements from 'the classical dudes', for example Morbid Angel," he argues: "Still, I think our mix is special. We can't pretend to be a band from Florida, we are from fucking Beirut, man." The listeners from the listening test come to the following conclusions. One hears the influence of the US band Morbid Angel very clearly, and she names other bands from the USA: Angel, Death, Suffocation. Accordingly, this track is clearly inspired by US American death metal, and not by death metal from Sweden. She calls it "Typical US Death Metal." Another listener puts the track in a slightly different context:

> I am content to place the track within the mainstream of death metal, noting that it
> does not come within some of the more high-profile sub-genres such as melodic
> (gothenberg-style) death metal, stockholm-style death metal, tampa-style death metal,
> gore metal or black/death metal. Possibly the closest point of comparison is New
> York death metal bands such as Incantation or Immolation.

Metatextual Discourse

All the listeners agree, "Remains of a Bloodbath" is full of typical characteristics of death metal. It is performed with the usual straightforward metal instruments: Two guitars, one bass guitar, drums, and vocals. We hear the typical *growling* or "low-pitched guttural vocal delivery" of the singer

(sometimes known as *cookie monster* vocals), and we do not really understand the lyrics - this is quite usual as well. Further, the abrupt changes for contrasting sections, and the fast playing double bass drums are typical for death metal. We hear little of the typical *blastbeats* (1:32) from the drums - it is a way of playing mainly 1/16 notes in fast tempo (between 180 and 330 bpm), alternating every beat between bass drum, snare, hi-hat (or ride). Often the effect is increased because the drummer uses the double bass drum as well. Some listeners think that part of the drumming is triggered - however, they are not sure. One listener writes that "it is definitely not the most aggressive piece of death metal I've heard." Further, we hear the typically often abrupt changes from one part to another, with minimal changes in tempo. Sometimes the change comes abruptly, sometimes the changes are introduced by a short bridge - where the drummer is offering a break over two bars. It is a song with a lot of different parts. For Garo, it is the ensemble of these characteristics that makes him love the track: "The riffs fit very well to the mood of the song. The songs stops, and goes, it becomes slow, and fast again." Then he explains the song in more detail: "cool vocals," "really fast," "a clean guitar in the middle section," "and then the rhythm comes back in a great way," "it's quite catchy," and "its fucking orgasmic." Melodically, the guitar plays a lot of chromatic and pentatonic scales, and scales in Locrian and Lydian mood (see graphic).

Rather interesting are the parts D (1:01 – 1:40) and E (1:40 -2:05). In both sections one can hear an Oriental mood. In part D the guitar plays B flat in a Locrian mode. Part E is played in G harmonic minor – it is, again, an Oriental sounding scale. The basis is on D, so one can not go deeper on the guitar. This part is thus probably the dramatic highpoint (or deep-point) of the song. Many of the listeners of the listening test hear in these two parts Oriental melodies and Oriental scales. One guitar player calls part D an Iron Maiden cliché, and in part E he is reminded of Black Sabbath. To the insiders of death metal culture, this Oriental sounding melody is nothing new: "Bands like Morbid Angel had used these Oriental sounding melodies for example on their album 'Domination,'" one listener writes. Another listener agrees with her:

> There were two points in the track where I did hear something that could be interpreted as sounding vaguely and non-specifically 'oriental': the riffs in the slow drum-less section starting 1:01 and the slow section starting 1:41. However, I doubt this is a conscious move towards local syncretism. Rather, some metal riffs can sound vaguely non-specifically Oriental due to the frequent use of the Locrian and Phrygian modes.

Another listener offers a long list of bands who do use modal riffs and minor harmonies, or do deliberately play with exoticism: She names the US band Nile, who only deals with Egyptian themes and employs similar melodic structures. Other bands mentioned are Melechesh, and Orphaned Land from Israel. Further, Iron Maiden with "Powerslave," Led Zeppelin with "Kashmir," and Metallica with "Wherever I may roam." She concludes: "The modal riffing (especially with a minor second and a minor seventh) is very usual, producing a Phrygian atmosphere." To Garo this is a clear melody that derives from Armenian, Turkish, or Arabic influences. "We have this small Oriental part," he explains: "It reminds me of Beirut. We have these scales and ornaments in our veins; we grew up surrounded by Arabic songs. Actually, we did not listen to them ourselves, but we heard them everywhere." And back in school Garo was taught some hours of Armenian music, traditional music, with "weird instruments," he says. "I liked it, but I don't listen to that stuff."

Constructional Competence

On the sound level the music is again typically death metal. The guitars and the bass are played in D tuning. This means they lowered the deepest chord. This is a very common thing to do for metal, and sometimes rock guitarists. According to one guitar player I talked to, this D tuning can lead to a fungous and not to precise sound, especially on the low pitch. This is exactly what is happening in part F, for example, where it is difficult to know if bass and guitar play E or E flat. The guitars further use a typical death metal compressed and heavy *distortion*. Often, the guitars are playing typical "power chords" with the ground tone, the fifth and the octave. Further, the guitar uses single-notes, for example, the high notes in part B. One listener of the listening test goes as far as to guess the model of the guitars: "Jackson, Ibanez, B.C Rich, or Marathon. Thickness of the strings probably between 11 and 52." One listener argues that the guitar parts have a very percussive quality:

> I thought of Sepultura and Pantera, as well, even though they are usually labeled as thrash. There is some sort of mechanical/industrial repeating guitar, which is very common in Sepultura's textures. I also thought of Deicide.

The drums play live, using a double bass drum, a snare, tom-toms, ride, and hi-hat. "It's all performed live, however the bass drum could be triggered," one listener from the listening test argues. One listener argues that the drummer is sometimes not very precise, and that he could be faster. The bass is virtually inaudible. It is hidden somewhere behind the guitars.

The quality of the production is medium. Garo is not too happy about it - especially about how his guitar sounds: "My live guitar sound is quite ok," he says: "It's just my guitar and my amp, but I worked on the combination of the two for quite a while till I got the sound that I love: It's very heavy, and it has a lot of power." The guitar on the CD sounds different, Garo thinks. "It is not the right combination. But anyway, the guy who recorded the album just went to Germany to take courses after he had recorded us. I'm confident that we are going to sound much better in the future." The listeners of the listening test, all experts in metal music, hear the production in a very similar way: not too many mid, but a lot of high and low frequencies. The mixing is, as well, not perfect: Garo argues that the drums are too low. One listener of the test thinks that the singer is too loud, and the guitar too low. Furthermore, she argues that the production should "push" more. Another listener argues: It sounds "thin" and "not fat." For Garo it is clear:

> The next album will be better. We learn from our mistakes, the sound engineers learn from their mistakes. The problem is that we had to work with a sound engineer who normally produces Arabic pop music. You can't compare the quality of the recording to that of the American bands with their great studios and brilliant sound engineers.

The end result speaks a rather clear language: Overall, the ensemble playing is ok - however, it is not at all perfect. If one listens to the death metal bands from the USA, all the sounds are much more precise - however a great part of it has to do with the studio production as well. With the band Suffocation, one can often even understand the lyrics. The drums and the whole band play very precisely, the changes in tempo between the different parts are often big, but always very clear. From one moment to the other, Suffocation plays at 30bpm higher. Listening to the US band Morbid Angel offers a similar listening experience. The band sounds very close together under all circumstances: for example, when they introduce small accelerations or slow-downs in tempo. Everything sounds distinct: one hears the different guitars even in the heaviest distortion. With Weeping Willow, all this is not the case. The tempo is not always solid. The drummer is sometimes a bit behind, or the singer starts too early, so that the band becomes confused - see examples in the graphic (Part B, C, D).

Still, when I heard the band rehearsing, the ensemble playing seemed reasonable. And the listeners from the listening test argue that the technical precision is also reasonable to them. One listener writes that

…death metal is no longer at the forefront of innovation in metal and most of its proponents concentrate on replicating existing stylistic blueprints. Given the technical difficulty of playing and recording this kind of music, any kind of death metal track represents an achievement of some sort.

One of the listeners likes the music a lot. The other argues that it is nothing special and not to original. Overall, one could conclude the following: Weeping Willow is a band inspired by international death metal. The quality of their playing and their recording are not 100%. Thus, the band sounds not too precise at times, and it might be difficult for the band to reach an international stage. Additionally, the latter is the case because the band is not using clearly recognisable Middle Eastern sounding musical elements, like, for example, some death metal bands in Egypt do.

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

One of the most interesting aspects of the song is that it is produced by musicians who lived during the war. This is different to the bands from the USA and from Sweden who sing about war, but did not experience it. However, do we hear this in Weeping Willow's music? Is there a difference to US metal, for example? None of the listeners of the listening test heard anything of this kind. I would argue that probably we do not hear these war experiences because of the semi-professional status of the band. We actually hear out of their production and playing that they live in a country with not too many possibilities. We hear a band that tries to reach the international standards of their idols in death metal, and that has not yet found its own and personal voice completely. Till now the band members use death metal as a kind of self-therapy to release stress and to forget traumatic experiences, but they have not yet found a way to really make these experiences be heard clearly. Garo is not to sure if he agrees or not with these conclusions: To him "Remains of a Bloodbath" is about his and his friends' memories of war. "We are all born during the war. We heard many ugly stories from our parents, we knew that there was an East side and a West side," he says. Garo remembers many things from the war, for example, when school was closed, and they had to rush home. Or when they were playing in a playground and suddenly were surrounded by shooting and had to flee home as well. "We were just kids, man! And these experiences were really not nice." Sometimes Garo still has nightmares from all these early experiences, especially when he is tired, or stressed out from work. "Sometimes I see war; a couple of scenes that I saw will never fade away," he says: "Other people in 'normal' countries have other nightmares: They see themselves falling from a building or drowning, but I see war. Everything from our environment influences us," Garo explains:

Your life in Switzerland is so different: you wake up, go to a park, work, and have a drink in the evening. You don't have to worry that a fucking terrorist blows up the pub. You don't have parents who are worried about everything 24 hours a day. My mom is always tense. She lived a life of horror. When my talking becomes too aggressive she goes crazy all the time. It's not her fault, we are just living in a very stressful country. A bomb can jump up every second everywhere. This influences us. We have to worry about everything. When we go home there is no fucking electricity, or you don't have hot water. On the road you have car drivers who just bought their

licences. We are fucking stressed. I drive like a crazy fool, I drink like crazy. Everything around us is fucked up: There is no peace, no security, and an unclear future. This is what our music is about: We want to express our nightmares and dreams through our music, and thus we never thought of playing cover songs, like most of the other metal bands in Lebanon.

 For Garo, music seems the most important element in his life: "I play music, I listen to music at home, with friends and in my car, and I work in a music shop. My life is 100% music," he explains. To people he does not say that he is a musician: "I'm a guitar player," I tell them: "If I say I'm a musician they think I play fucking Arabic pop music." Most of the time, however, he does not tell people that he is into music. Sometimes he says that he plays guitar a bit, as a hobby. "I'm proud about my music, but I don't like to talk about it to other people. They would not understand that in our band we go fucking crazy. For them, a guy who is into rock music is a looser."

6.5   Rayess Bek - "Schizophrenia"

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

"Where were you? We arranged a meeting for one o'clock! And now it's fifteen minutes past!" Rapper Wael Kodeih from the duo Aks'ser, known as Rayess Bek, is in a bad mood. My mood is not too good either. It is our third meeting, but this time we organised our first proper interview. The date was set up at least ten times, but Wael kept postponing it. He had no time - he at least said so. To be fifteen minutes late in Beirut, normally means perfect timing. Not for Wael. "We arranged the meeting at one," he repeats. "I train my friends and colleagues to be on time. Now they know that I hate them for being late, thus they come on time." What a good start, I think – and: what a nerd! I knew him differently. We met in 2001 when I was in Beirut to find artists for the festival Musik der Welt in Basel. And we met in 2003 when Wael performed in Switzerland, invited by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia. All my Swiss colleagues from the arts field just loved this smart, intellectual, and cultivated rapper. The same seems true for Lebanon. When we now enter the big apartment in which he has his small studio he helps an old lady carry her bags - a true gentleman. They speak in French for a while. Wael is the nice guy that just everybody likes: Even the musicians and artists do not complain about him. They just find good words: He is serious, he knows his stuff, he helps some of the younger rappers, et cetera. Normally, everybody complains about everybody, here, but with Wael, it is different.

We start our interview on a small terrace outside his studio. A young cat and a dog jump around while we talk. I have to ask a lot of questions, as Wael's answers are very short. His mood is still bad. Wael Kodeih was born in 1979. He lived the first four years of his life in South Lebanon, before his family moved to Paris. He came back in 1993, when the family lived in Dahiye. When I ask him about his confessional background, he explodes: He is from a Shiite family. But he just hates the question, says that he is a total atheist.

> I hate it that people here tend to ask you about your background. They even don't ask
> if you are Maronite, Shiite or Sunni, they just ask your name and the village you
> come from, and from there they put you in a certain category. They judge you before
> they know you.

I tell him that I have no intention of putting him into a pre-fixed category, but that I just need to know those things for my research. "Almost none of the artists here care about their religious background," he says, and again starts to complain about my question: "It's like asking about sex. I don't ask you what you are doing in bed with your woman, and you should not ask what I do with God. It's too private." A strange comparison, I think. Wael is fed up with all these ignorant people he is surrounded by in Lebanon: "I don't have a lot of friends here, people who I can really count on. And I'm not always very social." Some weeks later I will meet Wael at a private party. He will tell me that he is thinking of leaving Lebanon. "This country is once again on its way down and down and down," he says, again on the terrace: "You can't trust the politicians, you don't know where terrorism will lead us. My strategy to cope with all of this was becoming a workaholic. Still: You can't start a business here." According to him, the best thing to do is to stay away from politics. "Just stay in your room and work and work. If you care about politics, it means you do nothing but wait for solutions.

And in the Middle East, these solutions never come." Wael has a French passport, he knows Paris well, and he has a good network there. Shall he move? He worries about his career: "Rap fans in Paris are not really waiting for a Lebanese rapper," he concludes.

Wael has a deep love and hate relationship towards Lebanon - and towards the Lebanese. He is full of inner conflicts, and what he says is often contradictory. "Arabic is not my first language. I don't read Arabic and I don't write Arabic. When I came here I did not even speak Arabic," he explains, and I wonder: Why is he rapping in Arabic, and not in French? - On his website we read that Rayess Bek was the first MC ever to rap in Arabic. Wael mentions two reasons: It is an identity thing first. Secondly, he is aware that rapping in Arabic creates more possibilities in the market. "In English you compete with all these American rappers, in French rap there is huge competition as well, but in Arabic you are special somehow," he explains. His targeted market is the Arab world. However, he plays many concerts in festivals in Europe and Canada. "It's true," Wael says: "We played some concerts in Europe, and people really liked us. It seems they are ready to hear something different. Europe is good for playing concerts, but not too good for selling records." However, he wants to reach the masses of the Arab world.

> Fuck underground music. Underground music does not exist in the Middle East. In
> Europe I would probably make underground music and be happy about it. Here
> however, I try to create an intelligent 'upper ground' music and to compete with
> those pop stars: Nancy Ajram, Haifa Wehbe and all the others.

His main goal is to try to perform in the Arab world as much as possible. He wants to get the masses interested in Arabic rap: He wants to perform from Dubai to Casablanca - and he sometimes does so. A video on you tube shows him performing in Casablanca on the 20th of July, 2008, in front of 50,000 people (www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qW_ze3Rp6s). The video shows that Wael knows the business of entertaining very well.

> "Are we terrorists?" he shouts.
> "Noooooooo!!!!!" the crowd shouts back.
> "But Bush wants to drop bombs on us. Is this democracy??"
> "Nooooo!!!!"
> "Are we terrorists?"
> "Nooooooooo!"
> "Are we terrorists?"
> "Nooooooooo!"
> "Do we want peace?"
> "Yeeeeeeeees!!!!"
> "Do we want human rights?"
> "Yeeeeeeeees!!!!"
> "I'm going to send this video to CNN, BBC, Euronews to show them: Arabs want
> PEACE!!"

His Career

Wael Kodeih started rapping in 1993, first in French, then in Arabic. He created the group Aks'ser, meaning one-way-street, in 1996. Houssam Fathallah, aka Eben Foulen, was his main

partner, later Tarek Yamani joined them. The first song was called "safet bi 'aks elser." It was about the crazy ways the Lebanese drive. And it was about the different classes in Lebanon, and their attitudes: about the people in their huge and expensive cars, and the ones in the very small and very fucked-up cars. While the ones in the small cars keep getting fined by the police for nothing, the ones in the big cars got away with everything. Aks'ser gave their first concert at the Fete de la Musique in Beirut in 1997. Since then, the group released two albums "Ahla Bi-chabeb" in 2000 and "Khartouch" in 2002 on the independent label ChichProd. In 2003, Wael released his first solo album under the name Rayess Bek. It was called "3am behkeh bil sokout." Wael further created his own label. He uses his sound studio to work with young talent. He helps them in recording, or he does a remix for them. For his label he gets a bit of support from the French Cultural Center (see 4.5.1). In 2004, Aks'ser got signed to EMI Arabia and released their third album "Aks'ser" in 2005. "We really tried to make this CD for the Arab market," Wael explains: "We put a lot of Arabic violins and percussion in. The topics were Middle East oriented, talking about the dreams and problems of the Arab youth." Their song "Ana Mich Illik" features musical elements from pop songs: The Moroccan star singer Hasna is singing an Oriental sounding chorus; synthesized strings play around her; funky keyboard riffs, and clear and crispy rhythms set the beat. The video-clip shows a cartoon-like Beirut: We see the Corniche, the typical mixture of houses in Beirut, and the special colours of their walls. The two rappers chill out at the Corniche, and they whistle after girls. The video starts with a UFO flying towards the two, and it offers them a can of "Star Cola" - a parody for the usual product placement in pop clips. Later we see Wael Kodeih, one of the rappers, lying on a bed under a bride that tries to caress him while he tries to flee. Other scenes show him driving in a big sports car, a woman ironing, and a very small woman dancing on the noses of our two rappers. They flee from a big group of women and are finally caught by Hasna with two fingers. She takes the two up and lets them fall into her décolleté. One interesting thing to mention is that the pianist Joelle Khoury is a member of the cast crew.

Commercially, the CD failed. For Wael it is clear why. "The Youth in the Arab world is very Americanized. They prefer US rap to rap in Arabic. They dream the American dream, even though they are told to be terrorists by the USA on a daily basis. This does not fit somehow." Wael was a jury member at a rap contest in Dubai. Rappers mainly from Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia performed: "Not one was rapping in Arabic. All of them copied US rappers. Not one used an instrument from the Arab world." He does not want to change people, he argues, but at least to wake them up, and to show them alternative paths. The only way to do so, if only a little, is through TV. "TV is the god of our century. Without a video clip you change nothing." Wael's mood had not become much better. When I mentioned the rapper O-Marz who raps in Fusha, in literary Arabic, he again freaked out:

> Why should I use Fusha!? Even my grandfather did not use fusha. I can't use a language that I'm not able to write! I'm Lebanese first. And I don't say I'm a Phoenician. I'm Lebanese first, then I'm an Arab. You are Swiss before being a European – or not?

This was not what I wanted to ask, and I try to tell him. He interrupts:

> You Europeans put us all in the same category. 'You are an Arab,' they say - or at least think. But I'm Lebanese. Plus: Not every Arab is a Muslim, as you guys think. We have Christians, and Jews and other confessional groups. It's all so fucked up!
> See, the markets in the Arab world. How diverse they are. The Emirates, Saudi

> Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, North Africa, all need different advertisements. Then you
> have to target the Arabs living in Diaspora. So it's difficult to sell your album: I don't
> know where in the Arab world people will like my dialect, and where not.

For a rapper it is thus difficult to target these different audiences. "Making networks with Palestine is very complicated," Wael says: "The North African countries have their own rap scenes, and they don't need us." Then Wael says that he might stop with rap very soon. "I don't think that I'm going to spend much more time on this," he says: "I'm not interested in performing in front of the same crowd all the time." He thinks a little about his answer and continues: "I will not stop. But maybe I will just produce things for myself, or I will go really underground." One minute later Wael argues that he grew out of the age where he wanted to make a revolution:

> History repeats itself. When we get rid of our leaders, the next stupid leaders will
> come up. We had one and a half million people demonstrating in 2005. And what
> were the results? Nothing: Still we have to deal with Jumblatt, Hizbullah, Geagea,
> Aoun, and all of them. The right wing takes over all around the globe, communism
> never worked, and the media take over. So where should we go?

Recently, Rayess Bek was featured in a PBS documentary "Dissonance and Harmony" produced by Miles Copeland for the series "America at a Crossroad." The film captures the process of Wael's collaboration with Nile Rogers, Rza from the Wu-Tang Clan and Shavo from System of the Down, as well as Rayess' live performance at the Roxy. In 2007, Rayess Bek was commissioned by the UN to compose and produce a song for the special program on disability. The song and video, "Ekhtilef Tabi'eh" (Difference is Normal) was the first media campaign promoting acceptance of handicapped people in the Middle East. It has been broadcast in over 20 countries in North Africa and the Middle East. In June 2007, Wael completed his Doctorate in Fine Arts in Paris (France), and began work on another campaign for the UN, this time for a an anti-war campaign, along with American co-writer and producer Frank Fitzpatrick. The song/video is titled "Just Like You" and is scheduled to debut throughout the Middle East and North of Africa in August 2007.

By the time of writing, Wael Kodeih is living back in France.

About the Song: Schizophrenia

Our next meeting - just after the 2006 war - was much better than the last one. Wael was in a good mood. We talk about "Schizophrenia," the track he chose as a key piece for my research. "The track Schizophrenia is really about me, about my conflicted identity," Wael says, and cites one phrase: "I'm not really from here, but I'm also not really from there."

Receptional Competence

Wael and I did not talk about his musical influences and references too much. Listening to "Schizophrenia," however, shows that he is mainly influenced by French hip-hop. The listeners of the listening test all agreed on this. Three mention French rap, two of them, MC Solar. One is reminded of IAM, a group who works as well with Arabic lyrics.

Metatextual Discourse

The Lyrics

Garo remembers writing the lyrics very fast, "within two hours," he says. "The topic was so close to me, so it was easy to write it down. However, I do not have the answers to all these questions that I have and ask in that track." The track was written in October 2005, "a time in which I was completely depressed", he remembers: "They had murdered journalists like Samir Kassir at the time, and this is really the worst!" Wael did not leave the house for one month, he says. He stayed in his studio and wrote the tracks "Lubnan Helim," and "Schizophrenia."

> The song is basically about two things: My life in France, and my life here in Lebanon. In Lebanon my life was really confusing: I used to live in the Shia neighbourhood of Dahiye, but I was studying in the Christian neighbourhood of Achrafieh. In one context I would talk Lebanese, in the other French. Half of my time I would spend with lower class Shiites, the other half with the Christian bourgeoisie. In both societies I would not feel home: I'm a Shia who doesn't speak Arabic well. I speak French like the Christians do.

The lyrics of "Schizophrenia" speak of all this:

> Ils disent qu'au Liban les religions se marient, j'ai pas dû être invité au mariage, je les ai toujours vu se battre et ça depuis l'âge de 15 ans, pourtant on est tous nés innocents demande à ma mère je ne suis pas né avec un couteau entre les dents.
> Je débarque dans ce pays sourire aux lèvres et les yeux tristes, les voir s'entre-tuer me rappelle que nous sommes tiers-mondistes, j'ai pas réussi à m'intégrer dans cette société complexe et complexée toujours annexé l'excès d'être en marge est vexant. Les yeux remplis de vide de vivre cette vie plastique noyé au Pepsi regard placide, je ne suis pas vraiment d'ici et pas vraiment d'ailleurs, l'inconscience m'aide à m'éloigner de leur politique le plus que possible. Jamais les pieds sur terre en tous cas pas sur la leur ! Leur terre de merde leur pierre de marbre et leurs martyrs chaque jour me navrent et les larmes de ma mère pour un Paris –Beyrouth sans retour, elle savait ce qui nous attendait, moi j'étais heureux je ratais les cours ! C'était les vacances pour moi le soleil et la mer, je pensais pas que j'allais vivre le manque d'oseille et l'amer et plongé dans la merde jusqu'au cou le clash des cultures fut brutal et je cite : "interdiction formel d'être laïc".
> Classé comme un dossier par ordre alphabétique, on te demande pas ton avis surtout si t'es chiite au milieu de la bourgeoisie, si au moins j'avais choisi je crois que je serais resté à Clichy, y aurais passé ma vie y aurais moisi, ça valait mieux que supporter leur manque de respect et les communautés illimitées se limitaient à qui " tu_er " ?
> Ma vie coupée en deux. Mentalité moyenâgeuse on s'adapte aux deux langages on s'adapte au double jeu. A l'Est jouer l'européen au français impeccable, à l'Ouest fils du bled et fier d'être un arabe, à force de faire le caméléon entre les deux extrêmes, je crois que j'en suis devenu schizophrène.

> [Schizophrénia le Liban vit un dédoublement de personnalité *en arabe]

Je perd mes repères par milliers je les retrouve dans le son je change de caractère et d'attitude selon.

[Schizophrénia le Liban vit un dédoublement de personnalité *en arabe]

Déchiré en mille morceaux rien n'est plus comme avant prépare toi à changer de gueule au prochain tournant.

[En 94, je retourne au pays du bakchich, les routes étaient détruites, les gens avaient du mal à vivre.

C'était l'époque des règlements de compte, tous étaient armés de flingues et moi d'un bouquin .De retour de Paris, j'étais un gosse innocent, tout a changé j'ai laissé mon enfance sur le pavé.

Je vivais à l'Ouest et étudiais à l'Est, le confessionnalisme, je ne savais même pas ce que c'était.

Je me suis adapté autant que possible, j'ai vécu le manque de thunes.

Ma vie au Liban est une ligne de démarcation.

Perdu dans cette mentalité et ce comportement agressif,

quand tu vois ton père bosser jour et nuit tu fermes ta gueule et tu râles pas

tu bosses, tu te prives, tu économise chaque sou.

Les courants politiques avaient beau parler, ils ne m'ont jamais convaincu je ne me suis jamais pris au jeu, je suis resté libre comme l'air.

Dans cette mélasse je ne savais pas ce qu'était le Liban, ne comprenais pas le manque de respect entre les religions, même en classe y avait des milices.

Quand tu t'en prends plein la gueule tu reconnais bien le goût de la souffrance.

Comment passer outre ? Comment faire abstraction?

Vouloir vivre avec tous signifie vivre seul.

J'ai maintenant 26 ans, je discerne mal le vrai du faux

Je ne sais pas si j'ai compris quelque chose à ce pays. *en arabe]

The lyrics are clearly split into two parts: Part one is in French, part two in Lebanese. Rayess Bek argues that he was never able to fully integrate into this complex Lebanese society. In his childhood, Lebanon was both: A place of war on the TV, and a place of the sea and the sun in the summer holidays. He raps about his double identity: In France playing the European, in Beirut pretending to be the proud Arab. He argues that he was never convinced by the politicians of Lebanon, so he stayed independent till this day. Coming to live in Lebanon in 1994 was a huge shock: He lost his naïve youth on the sidewalk. In Lebanon he found out about confessionalism, about the hatred between the different clans and militias, the huge differences between the different classes. In Lebanon, staying away from all these struggles, or being against it, means living alone. At the end he raps that he is now 26 years old, and he is not sure if he has understood anything in this country.

In our interview, Wael argues several times that it is very difficult to translate his lyrics into another language - especially the Lebanese parts. The lyrics are full of double meanings. "I tried to translate one song for a concert in Switzerland, but it did not work out. I just hated the translation. It was not my song anymore."

The Music

After having written the lyrics Wael tried to find the right music. He wanted a very slow tempo, between 85 and 100 bpm, and a straight forward, simple arrangement. "I wanted this song to be very mellow, not aggressive, and not too powerful." He changed the bass several times: "I wanted the bass very calm, and not too pushy. People should listen, and not dance to Schizophrenia," he explains. The track has a rather simple structure. It starts with an intro, then has an A part and a refrain. The first A part is held in French, the second in Arabic. The refrain is sung - and one might hear something "Oriental" in the melody. However, it is just a pentatonic melody sung on B flat, C sharp and G sharp. The electronic piano in the background plays a pentatonic scale mainly - one can accompany the song on the black keys of the keyboard. The only exception is the note F that appears in one of the several melodies - the song is thus held in a C flat major scale. The keyboards Wael played himself. He decided to put a very "New York style" old school beat, and contrasted it with an Oriental flute. This contrast between Orient and Occident is further highlighted in the chorus, where he raps in French first, and then in Arabic. Musically, there are not too many surprises. An interesting aspect is that the melodies of the electronic piano do repeat, however, not in detail. They are absent in certain phases of the A part, and sometimes they even change position within the cycle structure. It is thus not a copy pasted background, but played by a musicians - here by Wael Kodeih himself. At 3:14 a two second long silence is introduced - it resembles approximately half a cycle that underlies the musical sample. Further, one could mention that the second version of A - the one in Arabic (2:04 – 3:14) - is two cycles shorter, than the first one (0:11 – 1:41); 6 instead of 8 cycles. This shows, like in other tracks, that none of the Lebanese artists analyzed are really interested in creating forms or arrangements that are very strict or fixed (Mazen Kerbaj is maybe the only exception). However, this again is not unusual in popular music - and is thus not a special and maybe local characteristic.

One of the listeners of the listening test calls this a "somewhat 'sophisticated' arrangement." To him it sounds "like hip-hop produced by savvy musicians/instrumentalists, influenced by sample-based production techniques but seemingly playing instruments that behave like looping samples rather than employing actual samples from old records."
Another listener argues that he hears nothing surprising except for the change of languages. "The track is set in a usual modal structure for this genre," he writes, and recognized a "simple driving bassline, regular dropouts at the end of 4-bar sections to highlight the lyrics."

Constructional Competence

The Voice

To Wael it was very important, that the listeners can understand his lyrics very well: "I wanted to talk to people. And not to show off with my MC skills." This, he argues, was not too easy. "I recorded my voice like a hundred times. I should sound convincing, but it never did. Sometimes I went too much into rapping, and sometimes it sounded so boring." It was at four in the morning, after a long night, when he got it as he wanted:

> I was almost asleep when I took the mic, put it very close to my mouth, talked very
> slowly and heard the texture that I wanted for this piece. It finally sounded like a guy,
> very tired of the situation, very tired of himself not finding a solution.

Two listeners mention two aspects related to the voice: One listener argues that it is typical for French hip-hop that the rappers go into a kind of chanting - like here in the refrain. Another listener argues, that "this rapper tries to fit the lyrics into the rhythmical structure, but does not follow the rhythm of the language at all."

The Mix

To record and mix the song Wael used a variety of software, "all that you can imagine," he says and does not go into details. The song was mixed twice: "The first mix I made myself. It was very bad, but I needed to hear how Schizophrenia would sound," Wael says. There is another mix, produced by a Lebanese sound engineer. It is the mix one hears on the CD now. Wael was, and is, however, very unhappy about it: "After hearing the CD I found out that I actually hate this mix. It was too aggressive, too sharp, and I was screaming into my ear." Six months later Wael called Philippe Tohmé, one of the most important and influential sound engineers in Beirut to re-mix the track. "And now the mix was much more round, and soft. You can hear me breathing. All these things you don't hear in the first mix - and unfortunately not on the CD." The listeners of the listening test hear a "proper and clean production," a "proper and sweet hip-hop production," or "very slick, high production qualities." They hear the usual preset instruments and effects. They mention "pingpong delays," "quite a lot of reverb," "electronic triangle pings," and "dubby electronic drum/effect," et cetera. One listener thinks that at 3:17 he hears a mistake in the production: The rhythmic form starts wrong. I can, however, not hear that.

Some of the listeners do not like the track too much. One thinks that it is "too long" and it "makes him a bit sleepy." Another listener writes that he finds the track "rather boring as it is rather imitating something than trying its own." These reactions seem to show that the listeners actually do listen much more on the beat and the music, than on the content - even though some of the listeners understood French.

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

Overall, Wael argues that he is very egoistic and very egocentric when working with music. "I make music for myself. I don't have the intention to change anything." This again seems not very much related to his ideas about reaching different markets. "Music is a way of analyzing myself. It's psychoanalysis. In my lyrics and my music I try to find out who I am, basically." Lebanese people are complicated, he continues:

> We are complicated in our heads. Our origins come from different places, and many
> of us used to live in different places. All these differences are deep inside our bodies,
> and thus we are schizophrenic. I am schizophrenic and I am serious when I say that.
> Actually it's MPD, multiple personality disorder, that is the right term. A lot of
> Lebanese suffer from this syndrome. We have been squeezed in a country by world
> politicians, and we did not manage to live together.

To explain what he means by MPD he brings up a point that somehow warns me: "If we hold the same interview tomorrow, I might say something completely different. It's hard to work, when you have two personalities."

Today, he says, he wants not to think to much who will like this song, and who the other. "An artist should just work and work. The rest might come by itself, by luck, or I don't know by what." The most important thing in his view was to try to get better and produce more quality music: "It's a good sign when an artist starts to throw ten of his twenty tracks into the garbage. I used to try to save songs. Now I know, it's not worth it. Good songs come easily, and suddenly. And you know immediately that this is a good song."

6.6   Zeid Hamdan - "Aranis" (Remix)

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

If one talks about urban music in Lebanon, one talks about Zeid Hamdan. His duo Soap Kills, with Yasmine Hamdan, is a pioneer group in the region for mixing Arabic lyrics with electronic beats. His post rock group "The New Government" performs in Beirut and Europe on an increased frequency. Further, Hamdan produces many hip-hop groups, post-rock bands, and electronic artists in Beirut. I knew Zeid for quite a while, before I met him again in his studio in Achrafieh in 2005. In 2001, I had worked for a Festival in Switzerland, and I was considering inviting Soap Kills. I liked their CD "Bater" that I had bought in Beirut. This was something different to the omnipresent Arabic pop in the region. Soap Kills sang in Lebanese, and not in English or French like the other "alternative" bands. Plus they mixed the Lebanese voice with minimalist electronics. So I took the train to see Soap Kills performing live in Paris. Their concert, however, did not convince me. Soap Kills lacked precision. The sounds and beats that I had liked on the CD for their simplicity and lightness, felt not too refined in the live context. And the colourful and warm timbres of Yasmine Hamdan's voice became disturbed by her unstable intonation of pitch. I did not invite Soap Kills to the festival. Still, in June 2005, I was looking forward to meeting Zeid Hamdan again.

Zeid Hamdan shares a studio with the owner Khaled Mouzannar.[173] It lies like an island in a courtyard in one of the most beautiful streets in Achrafieh. Entering it is like entering another world. Outside is a small and green garden, with many trees and plants, a hammock, a round table with comfortable chairs, and a house cat. Inside, the studio is well equipped with an up-to-date mixing desk, samplers, and studio loudspeakers. The room looks very tidy; it seems Khaled and Zeid love to have things in place. A huge poster of the Beatles St. Peppers Lonely Hard Club covers the wall.

Zeid welcomes me with a big smile. He looks like a fashion designer with his big sunglasses. First I have to wait a while. A London-based Lebanese brought in a CD on which we hear her daughter singing songs. Zeid's job is to produce the background music, to include guitar chords, and a rhythmic beat. Zeid flips through a library of sound effects on his computer, and stops when "Swiss Yodel Sounds" appear. He smiles at me - the Swiss ethnomusicologist.

Sitting outside in the small green garden in front of the studio, one thing becomes clear very soon: Zeid is a busy man: often our discussion is interrupted by calls on his mobile. Zeid is involved in many projects. His main goal is to build a stronger community for alternative music. He shows me the concert schedule of Soap Kills for the near future: concerts in Australia, Algeria, Kinshasa, and other places. "I need an assistant soon," he says, "I have too many things to do at the same time."

Receptional Competence

Zeid was born in Beirut in 1976. As a ten-year-old he moved to France with his family and stayed till 1992/93. "In Lebanon I listened to the commercial pop music on the radio, in France I discovered hip-hop, and a bit of rock and punk," he says, still relaxed, like a hip-hop producer. "One of my early musical memories is that I heard my brother listening to Depeche Mode, but also to The Doors. My sister listened to Aha at the same time. And to be honest, I loved all of it." Soon, he went

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[173] Khaled is a singer and pianist whose first album of Chanson, "Les champs arides" is released internationally. Further, he composed the music for international feature films like the Lebanese production "Caramel."

for Pink Floyd, for their powerful melodies that would stick in his head all the time. "While listening, my mind used to float like on a big and beautiful trip." Then came Rap. "These rappers were young, honest, very powerful and fresh," he says, using exactly the words in which he describes his own music. With MTV he discovered acid music and other styles of electronic music. And he started to listen to The Cure. And he liked Ska music. "I know it's a wild mix of styles," he explains as if he would like to apologise, "but I was always touched by people who were able to make great songs or tunes but did not use too many instruments, or musical layers."

Back in Lebanon the choices were again limited. "I started to work at the pirate radio station called UFO. They used to play hard rock and heavy metal. Soon I was into trash- and speed-metal bands like Pantera and Testament, the Celtique Metal band Manau, or Merciful Fate from Denmark." Zeid started to play the guitar. He was attracted by very lyrical approaches: "I listened to Classical Rock, Wishborne Ash, King Crimson, Hegemon, Vanilla Fudge, and others." He became interested in songs "that told stories - either just musically, or in the lyrics." He always kept a close ear on the developments in black music in Europe and the USA. And he moved back and forth, between Beirut and Paris.

> I could not really adapt in Beirut. I longed for my friends from France to fly into
> Beirut and to bring me new music and news from the world. Every time I got to know
> a foreigner I used to grab him and try to absorb as much as I could from outside. In
> Lebanon you get claustrophobic sometimes, so from a foreigner you try to get the
> maximum of fresh air you can get.

In Beirut, in 1995, he founded his first "real" band, as he says. "I convinced my uncle, who is younger than me, to learn the guitar and to start a band with me. After I had taught him some guitar playing he had to change to the bass - because I was playing the guitar." His uncle, Sherif Saad, plays with Zeid till this day. The band used to play covers from The Pixies, Guns N' Roses, Jimi Hendrix and others. "Soon we started to play trip hop. We played the famous song 'Glory Box' from Portishead, and we played it well. All the other bands in Beirut were playing heavy metal and we did something new. This attracted interest," Zeid remembers: "And then I met Yasmine!" With her he plays till today. "She introduced me to Arabic music," Zeid confirms. Yasmine was born in Beirut into a Shiite family who used to listen to the big singers from Egypt. She spent most of her childhood in the Gulf and in Greece, because the family escaped The Lebanese Civil War. Yasmine learned singing mainly by herself, but she took two or three lessons at the Lebanese conservatory in Beirut, as her teacher Rima Khcheich remembers. Since the end of the Civil War, Yasmine has lived between Beirut and Paris, however, increasingly in the French capital. The Lombricks recorded a first 4-track CD, "a mix of Oriental melodies with rock, sung mainly in English." He tries to find the CD in the studio. But why Oriental melodies, I ask him, as he did not tell me about any interest in the music from the region so far.

> You know, I mean we were mainly imitating some clichés that felt Oriental to us. I
> mean we were still surrounded by these melodies all the time and everywhere. And I
> wanted to do something that also resembles our environment. I wanted to give to our
> listeners something familiar, but also very new.

Today, Zeid feels ashamed of this first CD - maybe this is why he cannot find it anymore, I think and smile.

> I really sounded very clichéd and arabesque. You could easily hear it: I was a
> foreigner in this country, but still it was my country as well. I felt Arab even though I

> did not speak Arabic well. So I wanted to play a new kind of Arabic music, but I did
> know nothing about Arabic music. It became something fake, but people seemed to
> have loved it - maybe because of that, because it was weird and not Arabic at all.

The Lebanese Press covered the new CD. Zeid searches through a staple of newspaper clippings and finds the article. The journalist writes very positively:

> If we give time to Zeid Hamdan, time and money to write and compose and rehearse
> with his group and arrange titles, he would give in one year the album of the decade,
> because the Lombricks have everything you need, a group spirit of creativity where
> you need it and in the right time…

Zeid laughs: "The truth is, this album was really empty. I'm actually ashamed of it. But we came out of a very dark period in Lebanon, and at least we brought some fresh air and made some people happy."

For a while, The Lombricks were financed first by the producer and sound engineer Philippe Tohmé, a Lebanese who lived in the USA at the time. Today he lives in Beirut and produced, for example, the album of his wife Tanja Saleh, but also the rock group Blend. They worked in the studio of Ziyad Rahbani, but Zeid found out soon that not everyone in the band was so seriously involved in it as him. So the band stopped. Zeid continued with Yasmine Hamdan and founded Soap Kills. "I bought a groove box at the shop of Abdallah Chahine and started to re-invent the rock music of The Lombricks," he says and shows me the machine proudly.

> First I used all the pre-sets of this small, beautiful and nice looking machine. Then,
> more and more I explored every single part of it. I used very simple bass and drum
> sounds, and Yasmine sang along. So somehow we became the first Arabic electro
> band. At our concerts I just improvised and used the machine, often by chance. And
> people were enjoying what we did. It was just beautiful.

Naji Baz, a Lebanese producer, and today the director of the International Festival of Byblos, liked the band. He invited them to their house and let them listen to his up-to-date collection of electronic music. "It was from there that Soap Kills took off," Zeid remembers: "I bought an Atari ST, started to discover the MIDI language, and started to work with Cubase and other audio software."

Over the years, Soap Kills evolved a lot: This becomes clear when one hears their early and their late work. The lyrics became increasingly written and sung in Arabic. The Arabic side comes in through Yasmine Hamdan. The well-known actor and hobby flutist Rabih Mroué wrote some of the lyrics and composed some of the pieces. And also his friend Walid Sadiq, a trumpet player and professor at the AUB, wrote some.

Soap Kills use word play - sometimes close to 'ataba. For example, they play with the word "shiftak" that means "I saw you" or "your lips," depending how you pronounce it. "When you sing 'shiftak ala shifta' it means 'I saw you on her lips.' You find word plays like this not too easily in other languages, I think," explains Zeid. Zeid says that thanks to Yasmine he started to appreciate Arabic music, the quartertones that can give music another emotional level, as he says:

> To explore this huge body of Arabic songs, to harmonize it and to play with
> electronic beats, is just beautiful. I believe that you start to like all the music that you
> get used to listening to. I loved metal music and did not like Arabic music. Now I
> listen to the songs Yasmine gives to me over and over, start to like them, and
> compose to them.

"Yasmine jumped into the world of Arabic music and took me with her on that trip. We abandoned English speaking music completely, and Soap Kills became entirely Arabic." Mainly the two started to listen to Egyptian and Lebanese artists from the twentieth century - mainly from the 1930s to the 1960s. "We listened to Fairuz, Asmahan, and other big singers in the Arab world. Plus we listened to Nour el Houda, Zaki Hamdan, and others," Zeid explains. "We were proud to let people hear these old songs in a fresh way." According to Hamdan, no-one in the youth communities he knows listens to Arabic music, not to Arabic pop, and not to Arabic classical music. "Except when you have dinner at a very intellectual guy's and he will put records with classical Arabic music on, and you will say how beautiful the music is," says Zeid and laughs loud: "But most people do not enjoy Arabic music. They would never put it into their walkmans." Why is that so, I ask him. "It's very simple: The recordings are either bad, or they use cheap sounds. So it does not sound good when you put it up very loud." The Lebanese, as are many people around the globe, are used to pumping music with big and loud bass kicks and bass lines. "It's like a black and white movie. No-one enjoys seeing it," Zeid says - and gives me the feeling that culture and the arts do not have an easy stand here.

"Yasmine showed me how to love the Arabic music. Even though my Arabic is not strong, I started to translate some of the songs for myself, and I found beautiful and deep lyrics there." Since then, Zeid has tried to express his emotions and feelings into Arabic, and he feels increasingly confident about it. "It felt increasingly awkward to sing in English. I can enjoy Yasmine's singing only when it is in Arabic. It sounds so natural, while in English it sounds funny. At the end of the day were are Arabs," Zeid says, and also brings in a marketing strategy too: "There is French and English blues, rap, rock, electro, hip-hop, and funk, but there is almost nothing of this in Arabic. It's virgin territory, an open place to experiment."

Soap Kills remixed some old songs by Lebanese or Egyptian singers. For example, one song by Nour El Hoda. The version by Nour El Hoda is played by a string quartet, and a classical piano. A guitar plays a solo, interpreting the main melodic line. Nour El Hoda sings the melody with a lot of pathos. Her timbre is between opera and Arabic singing. In the version of Soap Kills, electronic beats are introduced.

The Song: Aranis (Remixed)

"Aranis" is another remake from an old song. It is this song Zeid and I chose to work out in more detail. Part A is composed and written by Soap Kills. Part B of "Aranis" was composed by the Lebanese singer and songwriter Omar Z'éné (O'mar al Ze'inni) in the 1940s.[174] Z'éné was one of the first and important protest singers in Lebanon. Yasmine Hamdan found the song on an old cassette, but lost it. Neither her, nor Zeid Hamdan, nor me were able to find a recording of the song - unfortunately! "Aranis" appeared in two different versions on the two Soap Kills albums "Cheftak" (2002) and "Enta Fen" (2005). The 2002 version is longer than the one of 2005. The mix is rougher. It features a small backing choir, and a part (part b in this analysis) that introduces noisy textures. Zeid Hamdan plays guitar, the rest is programmed on the sound software Reason. The song, however,

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[174] Umar az-Za'ni is one of the founders of the socio-political song (al-ugniya al-intiqadiya) in Lebanon. He is often associated with other politicized singers like Niqula al-Mani, Halid Adu an-Nasr, Yahya al-Lababidi, Sami as-Saydawi and Mitri al-Murr. (Weinrich 106-107)

features a drum sample form on old recording by Umm Kulthoum. The 2005 version, to which I refer here, is entitled "Aranis (remix)."

Metatextual Discourse

On first hearing "Aranis," it is not the typical Soap Kills song: The song features no electronic beats. Instead, the song is played by an acoustic guitar, electric bass, and drums. The lyrics are clearly split into two parts - similar to the music, as we are going to see. Part A is written by Zeid Hamdan, it talks about the noises of Beirut. Part B is written in the 1940s: It talks about how Beirut changed at the time, it reflects about what Beirut lost. It is a criticism of reconstructed post-war Beirut and the Lebanese consumer culture.

> Part A
> Aranis Aranis Boya tirilou x2
> Corn corn , shoeshine
> ta ' nerkab autobus, dora mathaf cornich
> come and ride the bus from dora to museum to corniche
> boya tirilou boya tirilou
> shoeshine , shoeshine
> arreb al tayeb arreb lamset chfafi jarreb
> come to the tasty come , a taste of my lips , try
> boya tirilou
> shoe shine shoeshine
> al sekkin ya battikh termos termos aranis
> Watermelon on the knife (meaning you can try the watermelon before you buy it)
> termos !(it's a seed u eat) , corn !
> boya tirilou
> shoeshine shoeshine
>
> Part B
> kullu ndeef , kullu naheef , kullu muhafhaf kullu latif
> all clean, all skinny, all smelling good, all nice(kind)
> ah ya lateef titlattaf bissabaya ya latif ya latif
> oh you kind(god) be kind with girls, oh you kind, oh you kind
> harj ou marj (...........) taksiyyaat tukruj karj
> noisy or busy (.........) taxis running and rolling
> kullu ndeef kullu khlanj wilaswaa' zay eshatranj ndeefe zareefe mitl ettalj
> all clean all bright new and markets like chess clean nice like snow
> (.................) welbanaat tughnuj ghanj
> (........) and girls flirting around
> lukandaat wetyatraat a'ssafain khammaraat
> hotels, theatres, bars on both sides
> allah ybaarek belbaraat, law bitshouf mhammaraat, mbaudaraat, mkhadwaraat
> bless the bars, if you see them lipsticked, powedered, greened

> kull enhaar awadem kul elleil nattaataat
>
> during the day wise, during the night hopping around

In Part A, the lyrics take the Lebanese listener on a trip back into the sonic memory of Beirut. The lyrics offer a collection of familiar expressions one can still hear in Beirut today: "Aranis" is what the sellers of corn scream in the streets - these corn sellers work at the Corniche, the long seafront of Beirut, mainly. "Boya Tirilou" is what the shoe shine boys scream to offer their services. Again, these shoe shine boys we mainly find at the Corniche, and in Rue Hamra, but in other places of the city as well. "arreb al tayeb arreb lamset chfafi jarreb": This, the sellers of vegetables call out so that customers approach and taste the nice things. With "al sekkin ya battikh termos termos aranis" they praise their watermelons, their termos (a seed), and their corn. "ta ' nerkab autobus, dora mathaf cornich" (come and ride the bus from dora to museum to corniche) is what the assistant of the bus driver in those small Beiruti busses used to scream to find customers. These busses circle Beirut on several bus lines. As their route is fixed, they do not change route (as the private cars and taxies do) whenever they approach one of the many Beiruti traffic jams. This makes travelling on them very time consuming.

From the perspective of Zeid Hamdan, a Lebanese artist living in Beirut today, the lyrics of "Aranis" evoke nostalgic memories on many levels. Even though one can still hear those calls and screams today, they do not only risk disappearing, but most of them are also far away from the circles and milieus Zeid is interacting with. In the re-constructed downtown of Beirut, those screams are absent almost completely: the stands and shops of these sellers are replaced by expensive restaurants and boutiques. Thus, if one lives in East Beirut one has indeed to travel all the way from Dora or Mathaf to West Beirut, to Hamra or to the Corniche to hear those screams. Today, almost no-one of the middle and upper classes would, however, take these busses and profit from the very low bus fees. In the second half of my field research I started to use them whenever I had enough time between two interviews or meetings. This bus ride offered me the possibility of seeing new corners of Beirut, and to talk to Lebanese people outside the music and arts circles. However, I met not one musician who would actually make this trip by those small buses. Most of the musicians would drive there by their own cars, and a minority would use a taxi or a service.[175]

This is what part B is mainly about. "All clean, all skinny, all smelling good, all nice." Yasmine Hamdan sings at the beginning referring to the "bright" and "new" supermarkets, to the reconstructed downtown Beirut, to the skinny, and operated on female popstars, and to much more. It is rather interesting that this part was already written by Omar Ze'ne in the 1940s. The sentence "hotels, theatres, bars on both sides" tells us that Beirut has become a city with big hotels for a rich clientele already. Today, these hotels and apartments stand at the Corniche ,for example - mainly for rich customers from Saudi Arbaia. "All noisy and busy" refers to the hell of traffic cruising in Beirut day and night - this, as well, in the 1940s. The sentence "bless the bars, if you see them lipsticked, powdered, greened" criticises high society. The sentences "ah ya lateef titlattaf bissabaya ya latif ya latif" and "welbanaat tughnuj ghanj" seem to hint at the many discrepancies between a rather

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[175] Lebanese taxi drivers work with two possible offers. If you tell them "taxi," they drive you straight to the place you want to go for about 5,000 Lebanese pounds; when you tell them "service" you pay 1,500 or 3,000 Lebanese pounds, but the driver will take on board other passengers and decide on the route on the spot. On these "service" rides one often gets into similar discussions as in the small buses - but often with people who earn a little bit more.

conservative society, and the thriving night life, the flirty girls, the pop divas and possibly the high profile, escort service styled prostitution between Lebanese girls and rich visitors from the Gulf States: "kull enhaar awadem kul elleil nattaataat," and "during the day wise, during the night hopping around."

One could argue that these lyrics talk about some of the lost real and true beauties of Beirut - however, they were already lost in the 1940s. One aspect of these beauties is today far away from the elite classes: the bus drives, the corn seller, for example. This is why there is a sense of nostalgia that is also attached to nostalgic memories of pre-war Beirut. Other aspects of these beauties even the artists experience at times: The ones that do not shop in the big supermarkets with the large car park underneath it; they would still go and shop for vegetables next door at the small fruit shop. Here again it depends if they go shopping themselves, or if their parents or their nannies from Sri Lanka would do so. In my case, the local fruit shop was fifty meters from my apartment. Everyday I would say hello to the shop keeper, and when I did not pass the shop for three or four days he would ask if I was ill or had travelled abroad. Whenever I would by a melon, he would ask the next day if it was juicy and tasteful. In my memories about Beirut today, this was one of the beautiful things about this city.

Overall, the lyrics of part A speak of a working class Beirut, part B however, speaks about the influence of the elite. It is no surprise that part B is written by Omar Ze'ne who is known as one of the first Lebanese singers who was aware about social differences in Lebanon. In the case of Soap Kills, it is the higher class looking at the working class. It is the higher class defining their *place* and *home* through the working class - this again is a well-known topic in Lebanese arts and culture, at least since the creation of a "New Lebanese Music" around the Rahbani brothers in the 1950s. However, in this case there is a big difference: In part B, Soap Kills is criticizing the contemporary status quo heavily. The song can thus be put into the category of socio-politically engaged music. This is again in the line of Ziyad Rahbani. Like Ziyad Rahbani, Zeid Hamdan focuses on every language: "I don't want poetry, I want everyday language, sincere, direct, and sometimes funny," he says.

The Music

Musically, "Aranis" is split into two clearly different sections as well: A and B. At first, the song appears very catchy, and simple. The closer one listens to it, the more complex it becomes: Part A goes through some interesting chord changes, and part B interchanges between two different rhythms while occasionally introducing two separate beats that disturb the ongoing rhythmic structure and make the cycle shift.

Section A starts with an acoustic guitar. The style of playing resembles Brazilian bossa nova on first hearing. This is what some of the listeners of the listening test agreed upon as well: One listener was reminded of Astrud Gilberto, and he heard similarities with Claus Ogerman, who used to arrange bossa nova with guitar and strings, and was influential for a genre one could define as *easy listening bossa nova*. Another listener was reminded of Bebel Gilberto - and this on various levels: the timbre of the singer Yasmine Hamdan, the overall mood of the song, the qualities of the production. A jazz player on the other hand, argued that this is definitely not bossa nova. He defined it simply as a pop ballad. Another listener agrees to that. He hears "Aranis" as being influenced by international pop and kitsch - the latter as far as the strings are concerned. If one compares "Aranis" with bossa nova tracks from Brazil, a variety of differences occur: First, the guitar rhythm of "Aranis" differs clearly from bossa nova rhythms. Further, the chord changes do not reach the harmonic complexities of

certain bossa nova compositions - for example, by Carlos Antonio Jobim. What probably gives that feeling of bossa nova are three main elements that join in this song: The major and minor chord changes of the guitar, the timbre of Yasmine Hamdan's voice, and the synthesized string sections.

One could characterise part A as a pop ballad with a sense of bossa nova. The guitar offers some rather interesting chord changes, and it introduces a very smart bridge in A5 (1:29-1:42 - see transcription). The melody sung by Yasmine Hamdan appears catchy and simple on first hearing. However, one might argue that it develops very smoothly from A1 to A3, A4 and A5. It reaches the highest pitch in A4 and A5 – it reaches the note *A flat*. Here (1:36), Yasmine seems a bit insecure, and she does actually not intonate the As very clearly and sings a note between A flat and A. Part A further offers synthesized string instruments, first playing long, high-pitched bordun like tones on Gis and A, and later short melodies.

Section B is very different. The melody resembles the melody that Omar Ze'ne used in the 1940s, Zeid tells me. Part B switches between two different grooves of different length (see graphic). The listeners of the listening tests all defined this part as reggae-like. "We are suddenly in 'reggae-ish' land" one listener replied. Some listeners agree that the song here changes between a rhythm similar to rocksteady (B1) and a rhythm similar to ragga and dancehall (B2). One listener defines rocksteady as "a straight, one-droppy/roots rhythm that was used by reggae bands in the 1980s, and is still used today in Live concerts." Interesting in the section is that Soap Kills introduces or looses two beats at three positions (2:05, 2:15, 2:35). This gives the effect that half a bar is missing or introduced, and that the song continues on the one when it should be three. This "technique" is used by other singers as well: One listener of the listening test mentions songs by Burt Bacharach. Basically, the song here seems to follow the singer. Whenever Yasmine Hamdan finishes her lyrics, the song moves to the next section.

After the B section that song "jumps" back to part A. The guitar is again playing the chord progression of part A.

Constructional Competence

Yasmine Hamdan's voice is a crucial factor in this song. Her voice is rather warm sounding, and at times breathy - especially in part A. At the same time it has a certain hoarseness to it as well. This occurs mainly in part B, however in part A as well. Her style of singing is rather flat, with not too many ornaments, but with sometimes very small vibrato at the endings of long tones. Sometimes Hamdan adjusts to the correct pitch with small microtonal movements. Overall, it is a pretty voice, that is able to produce a certain variety of emotions. It is rather soft sounding in part A, and cheeky and girlish in part B. Her style of singing in part B inspired one of the listeners to make an interesting remark: It reminded him of new trends in British music: the music of Lily Allen for example, who sings R&B with girlish cheekiness and merriness. He further indicates the Irish singer Kate Nash and the US American A Fine Frenzy. This observation is rather interesting, as Zeid Hamdan is very open to new trends in British music - we hear this in a variety of his projects. Plus, the girlish and cheeky singer seems something like a bigger trend. It, for example, reached Turkey, where the singer Nil Karaimibrahimgil is singing in exactly this kind of way. The listeners of the listening test seem to like the voice of Yasmine Hamdan. One describes it as a "breathy crooning voice," another argues that this must be a lullaby because of the sweetness of the voice and the instrumentation in part A.

The guitar is described as "mellow, close-miked, singer-songwriter guitar" in part A, and as a "very dry, no reverb guitar" in part B. One of the listeners argues that part B imitates reggae music. However, it is not at all sounding Jamaican to him - the sound is "too clean and too choppy, if also crisp and crunchy." To this listener this sounds more like an American or European version of reggae - he mentions the group No Doubt. If we listen closely we know that the drums are sample-based: one hears that the drum sample has some vinyl dust on it. If we link this to the lyrics, it is very interesting: While Yasmine is singing about the new and clean Beirut, we keep hearing the crispy and crunchy sounds of old vinyl.   The production itself is fine. One listener describes the production as proper, and quite dry.

All seems edited together in the studio. In the break between part B and part A, at the end of the song, the guitar comes out of nowhere. The string section comes from a string-plugin. One listener, an expert in studio production, writes the following: "I hear a very precise phrasing/voice, drums are over-quantized, there are two surprising drum breaks in part 3, guitar/bass is very precise if not plugged in and quantized as well." Here we enter a field for which Soap Kills gets criticized from one side mainly - from some of the live musicians in Lebanon. The Lebanese drummer Emile Boustany, who worked with Zeid Hamdan frequently, is not too happy that Zeid started to perform "sequenced music," music that is played almost "too perfectly." According to Boustany, this "sequenced music can never reach the variety of music played by normal musicians." Zeid Hamdan, in one of our interviews, agrees with that critique - working as a duo only and thus using the voice and the computer, is a budget question:

> I know that the music would gain so much with musicians, and especially when we
> could work with a drummer. The problem is that concert organizers abroad most of
> the time can't afford to invite a group of musicians from Beirut, because the plane
> tickets are just too high. This is one of the reasons why we work as a duo.

For the listener of the listening test, it is impossible to hear something Lebanese in that production. The only exception is the language Yasmine Hamdan sings in. One listener writes: "The voice/language and the phrasing that arises from it is the aspect of this track I like most and it is what I would identify as Lebanese."

The listeners of the listening test have different opinions about the song. Some like the song, some not. To most of the listeners, the arrangement is not too convincing. One just thinks that is not a wholly coherent arrangement. Another listener says that this kind of crossing between two completely different moods or different styles of music is very rare in the production of pop music. He argues that in Western pop music each album (or even each song) is very clearly defined and produced for a certain audience or function: Either it is produced to dance to, or to dream to, to cry to, et cetera. This is an interesting point. Possibly one could argue from the way this track is arranged that this music is produced rather independently. Or - one step further - one could hear from the arrangement that subcultural pop music in Lebanon is still subcultural, and that thus no major firms are interested in it. In the case of Lebanon this is true, as we saw on various occasions. The musicians produce completely independently.

Metacontextual Discourse (2)

If one listened to part A only, one would define some of the characteristics as being typical for music in Lebanon. The lyrics of part A give a sense of a world to which neither the singer nor the

producer of "Aranis" belong. And the music gives a sense of bossa nova, but a flavour only. Yasmine Hamdan and Zeid Hamdan are cosmopolitans. Zeid lives in Beirut, Yasmine in Paris. Their lives are completely different than the lives of the shoeshine boys, the corn sellers, the bus drivers, and the merchants in the vegetable stores. At the same time, the two live in completely different contexts than musicians and producers of bossa nova. And probably their biographies are completely different too.

On both levels, the lyrics and the music, one could speak of a certain kind of schizophonia, a term that describes the phenomena of splitting sounds from their original contexts. What Yasmine Hamdan is doing with those working class screams, is not so different from what Fairuz used to do with the screams from the villagers in the Lebanese mountains - from the 1950s till this day. Neither the shoeshine boys, nor the corn sellers, nor the bus drivers' assistants would shout in the way Yasmine does: with her whispery and soft voice. Yasmine and Zeid are rendering these screams into their well-designed and produced music in a tasteful way. The screams that often would sound harsh in reality, now sound appealing - and this for an international audience, as the listening test showed. Overall, this creates a feeling for Beirut that is, to a certain extent, "fake." The lyrics speak of a Beirut with a nostalgic feeling that neglects the existence of class divisions in Beirut.

The "fake" bossa nova feeling is also not at all new for the Lebanese. Again, Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers, and later Ziyad Rahbani mainly, enjoyed producing bossa nova-like tunes. The inspiration for these songs probably goes back to the Egyptian singer Mohammed Abdel Wahab, who experimented with foreign music dance styles from Spain and Latin America very early. The easy listening approach with the synthesized string sections that we hear in "Aranis" has a long history in the music of Lebanon as well: Again it was used by Ziyad Rahbani in many songs, and during the Lebanese Civil War in the French pop culture, for example. Rabih Mroué and Walid Sadeq are the two musicians and artists who introduced Zeid Hamdan to this kind of music - he tells me so in one of our interviews. This is not so surprising, I think. Both Mroué and Sadeq are one generation older than Zeid Hamdan. And it is this generation who is probably influenced most by Ziyad Rahbani. Overall, one can say the following: Like the Portuguese have their Fado, and the Cape Verde have the Morn, the Lebanese use Latin and Spanish styles to express their longing for far way, beautiful, exotic, conflict-free and peaceful places. For many, the Corniche at the sea front is a place where they can dream about these far away places. And it is at this seafront where we see Zeid Hamdan cycling with his bike in many of his low budget video clips. However, everyone knows that the Corniche is not the Copacabana. Instead of a nice beach, the Corniche offers rocks and some private sports clubs only, the water is dirty, so that the rich used to leave the city on Sundays to swim and relax in one of the expensive beach clubs in the South or the North of the city.

Part B, however, makes the song rather special. Here, Yasmine Hamdan is not at all singing sweet and soft anymore. Part B criticises the polished version of Beirut, and Soap Kills shows here that it is open to the trends of urban music globally: It has a flavour for the crushing of the vinyl, it plays with well-defined styles like reggae, rocksteady, and dub in a rather personal way. Through this, and through the girlish singing style of Yasmine Hamdan, it can be linked to recent styles in urban music.

To Zeid Hamdan, "Aranis" seems much more than a song only. In his artistic life he searches for the beauty of the old and nostalgic Beirut, and he tries to use it in his lyrics, music, performances, et cetera. In 2006 he organised a festival in the Luna Park near the Corniche. And in 2005 he invited his friends to a concert with The New Government in the Baw Baw Supernight-Club in Hamra. It is one of the several very cheap and small bars where prostitutes hang out. Zeid was very enthusiastic

about the idea: "It's a place were all my friends always wanted to go to but did not dare." The happening took place at the end of June. The club is one floor below the ground. During the concert it all felt very sleazy, the air smelled bad, it was hot, and everything was wet.

In one of our interviews, Zeid tells me, that for him it is all about trying to find his own and independent way of living in Lebanon. Zeid is an idealist, he says so himself:

> I'm one of a few idealists in this country. Most of the Lebanese treat us like hippies. Even Yasmine. We separated some years ago because she thinks that I'm crazy and that I should grow up and become an adult.

From here Zeid becomes very clear concerning his goals of being an artist in Lebanon. He does not want to play by the rules that he does not accept. And he wants to prove that an alternative way could lead to a step forward. "I try to realize my dreams. And even if my success might not be a social success in Lebanon, I want to be able to look back on my work, be happy, and see that I had a good impact on my surroundings."

> People - even Yasmine Hamdan - say that he is a tramp. Some consider him as a looser. I don't have a real job, I don't have a running business, I don't have social security. I am a nobody, and I'm considered immature by many people. Still I'm quite happy about that: I try not to play by the rules too much, but I produce music to be able to travel the world.

One day, Zeid says, he would like to have a family. However:

> I can't tolerate having a wife in a country where I'm not allowed to marry from another confession. If I accept that, I say everything is ok in Lebanon. I can't tolerate putting my child in a school where they teach you the national history in such a biased way. But these are two of the core problems of our country.

> With his art, he loves to play with jokes, with little things, that are incomplete, funny and /or weird. He wants to show that the world is just a bizarre place, and that the logic of the advanced societies is wrong. "I'm trying to make fun of this and other societies. Playing being rich or poor, acting like a mafia boss, being very clean, or very dirty. I make fun of people who are very fond of themselves, I like to play roles." This we feel in "Aranis" as well, but even more in his band The New Government. The New Government mixes indie rock, pop and punk with a retro touch of the 1970s, and they write provocative lyrics:

> I killed the prime minister; I killed the famous journalist and the next one on my list was a nature communist, I blew his car in the date, I blew his car in the crowd; I am so powerful and proud, I am not scared to shout it loud; I am the new Government.

Zeid argues that he can write such lyrics in English only - because the censorship department does not take English language music too seriously. With Soap Kills he has to be more careful and pay much more attention to the lyrics. However, the New Government started to print posters in Arabic:

> We put in Arabic: 'Soap Kills killed the new Government,' 'al-saboun qatala al-houkouma al-jadida'. It is nice. You jump from a language to another and you jump from a world to another; that's what is amazing here. In English, even though everyone understands the term *New Government* no one would actually link it to the Lebanese context. Everybody is very much asleep here.

From here we start discussing more deeply about the motivations Zeid has while doing music. His main goal is to deliver "powerful and clever music," he says: "I want to entertain people through concerts and albums. And deliver something Arabic to the world that goes against many stereotypes

the world has about the Arab world. You can be Arab and be completely multicultural and open to the world!" While working towards success in the Arab world, Zeid does not forget the West. And how could he. It is still in the Western countries that he is most successful - for example, he tours a lot. Most of the support for his work comes from the West as well. And in 2005, the producer and musician Miles Copeland toured the Arab world and met many musicians. They were full of hopes after that - "Miles Copeland is going to sign us on his label," many told me, as did Zeid. The result is not too convincing: Copeland signed some tracks for his belly-dance compilations: The Soap Kills song "Cheftak" appears on the sampler "Belly Bar," and "Le Zaalen" on "Desert Roses 4" (www.milescopeland.net). I don't think it was the intention of these artists to become belly dance musicians...

6.7   Ziyad Sahhab - "Rawak"

Metacontextual Discourse (1)

The Author: Biography

Ziyad Sahhab is a singer and oud player. I met him many times, mainly in 2005 and 2006. For our first meeting he picks me up at Zico House, a place where he likes to hang out in the evenings, and the place I used to live in during my first month of field research. Zico House, named after its owner Moustapha "Zico" Yamout, was, and is an important place for "alternative," "leftist" culture in Beirut. It is a location for concerts, film screenings, discussion, and a festival called Anti Crise, and it hosts NGOs like Helem, an organisation for Gays and Lesbians in Lebanon. Ziyad Sahhab is accompanied by his girlfriend Marie - the CD "Keep on Singing" on which we find the song "Rawak" is dedicated to her. The three of us drive down to the Corniche in Ziyad's small car. We pass the Luna Park with its Ferris wheel, and head down to the Rawda Café at the seafront. The Rawda Café is, again, an important place for the artistic circles here. On a normal weekday afternoon one would find one theatre director sitting at this table, a novelist twenty meters away at another table, a filmmaker over there, and some musicians here. All would sit under the shadows of the many trees, or under the ugly, old concrete construction at the sea front. Sometimes the artists would get up, walk around, go for a chat or a serious discussion with their colleagues, and then go back to work. After a while I started to know many people here as well, and I would fall into the same routine. Ziyad orders the obligatory water pipe, and the three of us smoke. Ziyad asks me a lot about my research project and says that he is very happy that someone from Switzerland came here to research his and his peers' music. Soon, we talk about him.

Ziyad was born in Beirut in 1982 - the year Israel invaded the city. Victor Sahhab is his father, a well known musicologist who published books on the Egyptian musicians and composers Sayyid Darwish, Muhammad al-Qasabgi, Zakaryya Ahmad, Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, Umm Kulthoum, Riyad al-Sunbati, and Asmahan. Victor Sahhab considers them to be the main agents for innovation in Arabic music - not everybody agrees with that, but his son Ziyad definitely does. Victor Sahhab further works as the program director of Radio Liban, and he is the acting director of the Conseil International de la Musique du Liban. Salim Sahhab, Ziyad's uncle, was the director and conductor of the Beirut Orchestra for Arabic Music, a very important orchestra for Arabic music in Beirut. Like Rima Khcheich and other singers in Beirut, Ziyad Sahhab learned Arabic music in this orchestra, and he performed on stage with it when he was very young. Today, Salim Sahhab works as a composer and conductor at the Opera house in Cairo.

Thus Ziyad was surrounded by music, mainly Egyptian music, for as long as he can remember. "So, when I was seven years old I asked my father, if one can actually learn to play the oud, or if one has to be born with it," Ziyad remembers. His father had tears in his eyes when he heard that question, and he was even happier when Ziyad soon started to practise and play the instrument. "He had never pushed me into music. But it was clear that for him, a dream came true," Ziyad explains. Surrounded by musicians, Ziyad learned music through listening, and with private lessons. He likes the atmosphere of the *jalsah* or *ca'dah* (Racy, 2003, p. 51) where musicians gather, sit together, play and discuss music for hours and hours. Today, Ziyad performs in pubs and bars to earn

some money, and to enjoy the atmosphere, as he says: "I love this atmosphere. We play, we drink, we smoke, we react to the audience."

The same night I go to see Ziyad Sahhab performing live at the Bar Louie, one of the many bars in Rue Gourraud in the neighbourhood of Gemmayze. Sahhab played in this bar weekly for nearly a year, before he changed location and moved to the Walimat Wardeh bar in Hamra. Changes like this seem to be quite frequent: Mostly the musicians told me stories about impolite and dishonest club-owners, while the club-owners simply argued that "there was some friction between us and the musicians." Ziyad Sahhab performs with old friends: Yasmina Fayed (vocals), Ahmed al-Khateeb (percussion), Ghassan Sahhab (qanun), and a guitar player, whose name I do not know. They play the "worker songs" by Sayyid Darwish, some compositions from Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, Ziyad Rahbani and Philemon Wehbe, an old Fairuz songs (composed by the Rahbani Brothers), a piece by the Egyptian Muhammad Munir, and the Algerian song "Ya Rayah" that became world-known through a version by the French-based singer Rachid Taha. Thus, the repertoire is mixed: some leftist music from Lebanon and Egypt, and the popular repertoire of twentieth-century Egypt. Ziyad is a great singer and oud player. Music seems to float out of him very naturally, both when he is singing with his deep voice, and when he is playing the oud. Ghassan Sahhab, the son of Salim Sahhab, also plays very smoothly and lightly; he follows Ziyad Sahhab with virtuosic lines on the qanun, always ready to change directions, never feeling strained. Ahmad al-Khateeb beats the riqq with a cigarette in his mouth - he also plays rather precisely. He is always ready to use short breaks to enjoy a sip out of his bottle of Almaza beer. Yasmina Fayed offers a warm and sonorous timbre in the mid-range, and good intonation. At times she sounds like Fairuz. And when she and Ziyad sing together, one cannot avoid thinking of Leonard Cohen and his female singers. The five musicians are dressed very casually: jeans, football shirts (Brazil), and sneakers. The listeners and viewers sit around black tables. They eat tapas, drink Almaza, wine, or cocktails. They clap, sing along, and some love to dance to every song they know - and there are many. The crowd is mixed: young and old. Some are wearing fancy artistic clothes with big and colourful sunglasses and sport shoes, some sport elegant dresses and expensive shoes.

A week later I meet Ziyad Sahhab again, in his house in the predominantly Sunni neighbourhood of Mossaitbe. Ziyad lives with his parents in a big apartment building. The walls are full of pictures: One shows Ziyad, still very young, performing with the Salim Sahhab orchestra - it is the typical picture that one finds in photo books of many Arab singers and musicians: A young singer standing behind a microphone or sitting behind a big oud, in front of a big orchestra or a small ensemble, singing or playing for a large crowd. The living room is packed: with hundreds of cassettes, mainly with the big Egyptian singers, some CDs, and many books. An *Encyclopaedia of Islam* can be found on the bookshelf, and the holy Qur'an. Some cassettes that feature the recitation of the Qur'an lie next to the hi-fi system. "From the moment I began playing the oud, my father made me listen to all those tapes," Ziyad explains: "and he kept telling me that to listen to Qur'anic recitation as the key to learning and understanding Arabic music." The Sahhab family are Christian Maronites. Thus this interest in the holy Qur'an might look strange to an outsider - and some Lebanese actually think it is strange. However, the connoisseurs of Arabic music know that most of the great Arabic singers were trained in Qur'anic recitation (see chapter 3.1.4). Some weeks after this meeting, Victor Sahhab would explain this to me in detail. He would also reflect about what he would call an ideal musical socialisation: "Ziyad was raised in a home where musicians kept coming and going. He was surrounded by music all the time," he recalled in his office at Radio Liban: "I believe that it is

important that children rise into a purely musical environment, which in our case was Arabic music, mainly from Egypt." Immediately he relativized his use of the term "pure," but came forward with a conviction:

> It's in the first years of life that a child acquires its musicality, and this 'ground setting' stays influential in his or her later development. To me, a child born in Lebanon should be an Arab child first, and thus listen to Arabic music. Later, as a teenager he or she can or maybe even should start to rebel against the surrounding basic pattern and to open new doors, listen for example, to the music of other cultures, and enrich himself by it. A musician should have those two components in his consciousness, in his interior guidance: He or she should be genuine in his culture, and very open to other civilizations. And I believe Ziyad has somehow followed that path. The only thing he lacks, I believe, is that he is not trained in Qur'anic recitation. (Sahhab, 2006)

In the living room, Ziyad tells me about his first steps in music making. He was eleven when he gave his first concert - with the orchestra of Salim Sahhab in the Assembly Hall of the AUB. Two years later he performed in the opera house in Cairo, again with Salim Sahhab: "I stood on the stage on which Umm Kulthoum and Muhammad Abd al-Wahab used to perform. It felt like a dream," Ziyad recalls. However, Egyptian music was not his only interest. He used to love the Lebanese music from the 1950s: Zaki Nassif, Philemon Wehbe, Wadih al-Safi, and the early works of Fairuz and the Rahbani Brothers. Other non-Arab singers were even more important: Leonard Cohen, Jacques Brèl, and later Roger Waters, Eric Clapton, and Jimmy Hendrix. "I started to become fascinated by rock music," he explains: "It was so fresh, so rebellious, and it seemed such an interesting way of life!" His peers listened to the same music. And so did the leaders of the leftist parties in Beirut: "Soon, I was really attracted by them," Ziyad says, and laughs: "I probably was a bit naïve sometimes." His interests changed: from tarab music with romantic lyrics, to songwriter songs with a socio-political relevance; from concerts in formal dress on big stages, to gigs in bars, with jeans, and the earring that he still wears today.

Still, Ziyad agrees with his father about the importance of musical socialisation: "A musician should have a solid base in the music of his home culture. He should not start to fuse music with foreign styles too early," he argues, and starts criticizing some other local musicians who begin with *fusion music* too early. "These musicians search for modernity in the West only, and they are ashamed of Arabic music. However, they often do not know the Arabic music."

In the mid-1990s Ziyad Sahhab founded the band Chahadine Ya Baladna (Beggar, Oh My Country). The band was named after a theatre piece of Chouchou (Hassan Alaa Eddin), a very popular Lebanese comedian. "It's a comedy about beggars who have a committee and everyone that is not in this committee is not allowed to beg on the streets. This leads to various problems," Ziyad explains. Again, the band members (Ziyad Sahhab, Ahmad al-Khateeb, Ghassan Sahhab, Bashar Farran, Yasmina Fayed, Ahmad Chebbo, Salmen Baalbaki, and Rayan Haber) played the songs of mainly leftist singers from Egypt and Iraq, and from Lebanon: Ziyad Rahbani and Ahmad Kabbour. The band performed all over Lebanon, often at Universities, and they performed abroad: in Egypt, Tunis, and in a big festival in Istanbul.

Later, Ziyad Sahhab released two CDs on the Label "Forward Music": "Oyoun El Ba'ar" (2004), and "Keep on Singing" (2007). "Oyoun El Ba'ar" is a beautiful, very minimalistically orchestrated album. Many songs feature Ziyad's' low pitched voice, accompanied by his oud, and

very cautious riqq rhythms. Some songs offer catchy melodies sung by Ziyad Sahhab and Yasmina Fayed. "Keep on Singing" is performed with a bigger ensemble (see below). Some of the lyrics were written by Ziyad Sahhab, others by the Egyptian poets Salah Jahine, Ahmad Fouad Najem, and Muhammad Kheir. "Sometimes Lebanese peers ask me why I keep singing in an Egyptian dialect," Ziyad tells me in the living room: "The answer is easy: These Egyptian poets just wrote beautiful lyrics."

Today, Ziyad earns his living as an oud teacher in a private school. He is studying musicology at the Antonine University - Nidaa Abou Mrad is one of his teachers. "Maybe in the future I want to go to Paris and write a PhD in ethnomusicology," he says. "I performed in France twice, and I would love to see more of Europe - maybe perform in London one day, or even in the United States." To realize his dream means to change some of his habits, Ziyad is convinced. "I don't network, I don't sit on the internet much, I don't check my email, it's very bad for a musician," he tells me. Unfortunately he seems to be right: Especially in today's digitalized world it seems necessary for an artist to spend time on networking, to be able to read and write in English - otherwise, things can be difficult. Ziyad Sahhab is the "stereotypical" musician: He plays late in the night, he sleeps late in the morning. His website is up on the net, but it does not work. Often, he does not log in to his myspace site for many months. He does not reply to emails; the only way to get hold of him is through his mobile number.

Receptional Competence

The Lyrics

When analysing the lyrics of "Rawak" we find a lot of non-musical references. These references are closely linked to experiences Ziyad Sahhab made during his life as a musician in Lebanon.

Years ago, Ziyad Sahhab was a member of the communist party: for six months only. By then he realised that he did not fit: He did not know enough about communism and was thus not ready to fight for it, or defend it - at the time the Lebanese communists took part in the resistance against Israel. It was before Hizbullah claimed the monopoly over that struggle. Today, Ziyad feels connected to the idea of pan-Arabism, however mainly on an economical level. Politically, he does not want to become linked to the many dictators of the Arab world. He is basically disappointed by politics, and by the politicians in Lebanon. While many of his musician friends are members of leftist parties, mainly the Democratic Left Movement (DLM), Ziyad is not. The DLM was founded in September 2004 by leftist activists and intellectuals who had previously been members the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP). The goal of the DLM is to create a new and strong left. Sahhab's main disappointment with the new left comes from his observation that some of the politicians "introduced confessional, religious thinking." To him leftists should be one hundred percent against any forms of confessionalism. "I was on the streets on the 14 of March (demonstrating against the Syrian presence in Lebanon). I was full of hope," he explains to me, "But today, I'm again so disappointed with Lebanese politics: Our leaders have no ideas and plans, but to steal money from our pockets. We should separate from them and find alternatives, I just don't know how."

What Ziyad dislikes a lot are the strong connections between music and politics. "During the Lebanese war many singers became singers by decision of a political party," he explains. "It was a political, not an artistic decision. Everyone in the party had to like 'their' singers and dislike the

others. It's awful. That's why I don't want to stick to any of the political parties." According to Ziyad, many of these protest singers were rather weak musicians, but they were invited to work with the lyrics from great writers and philosophers. And everyone loved them anyway: "The communists heard and loved communist singers, whether they were good or bad did not matter," Ziyad argues. "For example, many communists completely ignored Muhammad Abd al-Wahab. Or they did not like him, because he came from high society. The art should count, nothing else!"

Basically, the lyrics of the song "Rawak" deal with these issues, Ziyad says: "I am a musician, that's what I know to do. I want to be independent, even though I know that this is impossible in Lebanon. I am not a politician and I don't want to be a politician." At the same time Ziyad agrees that he is a highly politicized person. However, to him this is not the point: Consequently, Ziyad Sahhab feels he is in a difficult position: He would love to escape from politics; at the same time he is very interested in politics. And he got into trouble several times: In his career many political groups asked him to join their party and to spread their ideology; most of the time he said no. He received death threats from one political party for having written in a newspaper that not every Jew is necessarily a Zionist. Members of another political party put a gun to his head after he had criticised Syria. The party forbade their members to attend Ziyad Sahhab's concerts. In another incident, militiamen from yet another party, stormed his concert stage and stopped his performance. And in 2003 he lost a lot of leftist supporters: "Chahadine Ya Baladna" had performed a series of concerts in Lebanese universities, sponsored by Nestlé. Afterwards, various leftist groups from Lebanon, Turkey, and other countries attacked the group heavily. One can find the hot debates and tirades on Indymedia Beirut. [176] According to these leftists, Nestlé supports Israel and should therefore be boycotted.

Metatextual Discourse

If we turn to the lyrics of "Rawak" we see very clearly that Ziyad Sahhab refers to the complex relationship between personal freedom and pressure from his surroundings. The lyrics speak of his experiences as a musician in Lebanon. Ziyad helped me translate the lyrics into English. This is what we came up with.

I Want to Live Calmly

By the way, I'm getting married, in order to get divorced.
In order not to repeat this mistake,
Let me learn from my mistakes early enough
So I'll have my time to recover calmly,
I Like to Live Calmly

By the way, I'm making a revolution that will surely not succeed.
In order not to repeat this mistake,

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[176] http://beirut.indymedia.org/en/2003/10/571.shtml

Let me learn from my mistakes early enough
So I'll have my time to recover calmly,
I like to live calmly

It's good to make a mistake, when we know it's a mistake
It's good to convince ourselves that leftists aren't a joke,
That there's no racism, everyone's democratic.

Let me dream calmly, that I'll learn calmly.
I like to live calmly

Ziyad and I are again sitting in his living room when we try to discuss these lyrics. Ziyad argues that the main issue underlying these lyrics is the following: As a leftist singer in Lebanon he feels under immense pressure. He repeats what he had said some weeks before: "Listeners want to hear answers for the current political situation. But I don't have answers; I only have questions myself." In the song, he basically asks for time, and for tolerance: He wants to be able to commit mistakes, and not to get condemned for committing these mistakes immediately. The lyrics seem to suggest that in Lebanese society one is not allowed to learn from mistakes: "Give me some time to find out my own positions. Allow me to make some mistakes, allow me to learn," he says. Depending on his family background, confessional background, his education, and his daily actions, one is judged very quickly, and put into a category. However, to leave this category is very difficult. "I'm fed up with all the politics and therefore I'm basically fed up with who and what I am without being asked even," he tells me. This statement alludes to his familiar background as a member of a well-known family of musicians and leftists.

Overall, it is difficult to translate the ideas behind the lyrics line by line. The line "I'm making a revolution that will surely not succeed" seems to allude to ideas many peers of Ziyad Sahhab's generation seem to share: They do not believe in the old political clan system, and they seek alternatives. To some, the demonstrations on the 14th of March seem to have held a feeling of this kind of revolution. After that demonstration many young activists from different confessions camped in downtown Beirut - until Syria had to leave the country, mainly out of pressure from the USA. If one watched the various documentary films shot inside the downtown camp, one gets the impression that these youngsters were actually discussing a new, an ideal, a really tolerant multi-confessional Lebanon. At the same time one sees the revolution dying already, when these activists start to debate on this or that ideological issue, eventually get into a fight and urge the filmmakers to stop their cameras. Today, many Lebanese laugh when you ask them about these activists living in the camps. Most of them argue that the activists were just naïve. If we read these events from the point of view of Ziyad Sahhab's lyrics, we would argue that probably these activists indeed committed mistakes, and probably they were naïve. However, they tried to make a revolution, they learned early, and they might not commit the same mistakes again. Positively, they might grow from the experience, and this camp might have been a step towards a change that needs more time than two or three weeks. Maybe we will witness the fruits of this change in the years to come.

Ziyad did not write these lyrics after March 14, 2005, but before it, in 2003. It might have been in reaction to the debates on his performance at a concert, sponsored by Nestlé. However, the

problems and the issues stay the same: Ziyad wants time to reflect, he asks for an openness towards him, he wants to learn from his mistakes.

Overall, Ziyad wants to sing songs that deal with important issues. He says that his main role models are French singers here:

> Arabic songs do normally not speak about everyday life and social issues. Listen to Charles Aznavour - he is able to express so many important and beautiful things! I myself want to develop my music in this direction, without losing my Arabic and Egyptian musical roots.

Usually Ziyad starts with the lyrics when writing a song. "I learn them by heart by reading them every day for a week. After a while the melodies of the piece come out by themselves. I start somehow composing unconsciously. I start to play the melodies with the oud, and this is it. It does not always work, but quite often it does."

In the living room, Ziyad tells me that some of his songs deal directly with politics, but often more in a funny and ironic way. He often uses the 'ataba form - as it was used by Ziyad Rahbani in perfection: "I love to work with these sentences that have three different meanings depending on how you pronounce them. This is very Lebanese, very Levantine" (see also chapter 3.2). One listener of the listening test argues that the lyrics of "Rawak" take her directly to the music of Ziyad Rahbani: "However, the lyrics are less refined, less poignant, and not clear in the message: Ziyad Sahhab just sings that he has doubts about everything. It is like a soft version of Ziyad Rahbani."

The Music

The instrumentation of the song is partly traditional takht - violin (Ahmad Shebbo), oud (Ziyad Sahhab), qanun (Ghassan Sahhab) and riqq (Ahmad al-Khateeb) - but the guitar (Ghazi Abdel Baki) and the electric bass (Abboud Saadi) play along and bring in a new element, however, one that is not completely foreign to Arabic music, as it was used in the popularized forms of Arab music as well. The melodic lines, the technical approaches, the arrangement are, however, outside the maqam tradition. The melody is not really an Arabic melody. It neither develops in the ways of classical Arabic music, nor renders the maqam truly (see chapter 3.1.4: Tarab Music). Ziyad Sahhab agrees to that:

> Usually when you compose with Egyptian lyrics it takes you more deeply to the classical way of composing. When I compose with Lebanese lyrics it takes me to a different place, because mainly the classical Arabic music was written and composed by Egyptians. My own lyrics somehow force me to write a different kind of music. This you see very well, when you compare my first and my second album.

The ground setting of the piece is in *maqam ajam*, but there are elements of *maqam nahawand* as well, and some pentatonic turnarounds. Both ajam and nahawand are based on scales that do not use quartertones. Ajam is basically C flat, starting from B. Nahawand is basically a C flat scale, starting from G - it thus becomes a minor mode. Both scales are thus close to tempered major and minor scales. Ajam is further described as the "foreign" (*ajami*), but also the happy maqam. Nahawand is a maqam scale that is known in Persia, Turkey, and Northern Africa.

> Usually it is a sad mode. The mode of the end major is a happy mode. But here I think the two modes have the same effect, you don't really know the lyrics exactly in

> Arabic, so I don't know what effect it has on you, but it is a strange feeling, a strange
> melody; it is like music that says what happens.

The arrangement is 16 times four beats. It is played with 130 bpm. The structure of the song is not too strict. If we count in four-four-time we get the following schemata:

> A Instrumental = 10 x 4/4
> A Verse 1 = 10 x 4/4
> A Ending = 4 x 4/4
>
> A Instrumental = 10 x 4/4
> A Verse 2 = 10 x 4/4
> A Ending = 4 x 4/4
>
> B Verse 3 = 12 x 4/4
> B Ending = 4 x 4/4
> Ending (no rhythmic beat)

One listener of the piece argues that this is a typical *taqtuqa* song (see chapters 3.2.3 and 3.2.4) "Rawak," according to him, is closer to blues and to European music than to Arabic music. However, the instrumentation brings in an Arabic flavour.

Constructional Competence

The style of playing and singing brings significant differences to Arabic music traditions as well. Ghassan Sahhab, for example, plays the qanun in an untypical way. Ziyad Sahhab explains the differences:

> Technically Ghassan is not perfect yet in doing other things than classical, but the
> good thing is that he's practicing a lot to try to have all the ways to express himself as
> a player. In this song he plays a little bit differently because he's playing chords.
> Usually, the qanun plays mainly vibrato. He is playing each note with a hand. It is
> like codes; it is not anymore classical melody that is played with two hands playing
> the same note in a different octave. So it is not a classical way.

Participants of the listening test agree to this statement: One argues that an Egyptian would never play like this: it is all too clean, too much straight forward, and there are almost no ornaments. The same criteria appear in Ziyad Sahhab's oud playing. However, one of the listeners, an oud player himself, argues that Ziyad is a very good player on his instrument.

For the listeners of the listening test - musicians and singers from the Arab world - the way Ziyad Sahhab is singing is "typically Lebanese." Two listeners argue that his voice takes them immediately to Ziyad Rahbani: The typical Lebanese accent, the way of singing, the deep pitch of the voice. The *sheikh* singing is absent. If we look towards Arabic protest singers, Ziyad Sahhab in his way of singing, does not relate the Egyptian Sheikh Imam, for example. Imam uses many more small ornaments and slight pitch changes in his voice to produce what connoisseurs call *tarab*. Further, the timbre of Imam's voice is different: It is much more mid-range, and more nasal sounding. Sayyid

Darwish sounds very different as well: his voice is higher pitched, again with a different timbre. Further, he tends to sing longer passages in unison with small choirs - this again is absent in Ziyad Sahhab's music. Thus, the style of singing, and the timbre of Ziyad Sahhab's voice, seems to lead directly to the Lebanese leftist musicians: Ziyad Sahhab's voice indeed resembles that of Ziyad Rahbani, for example in the famous song "Ana Moush Kafer." Again, the voice of Ziyad Rahbani sounds more flexible and uses more sonic timbres - it is, however, a flexibility that Ziyad Sahhab shows much more in other songs, especially on his first CD. In certain moments, Ziyad Sahhab's voice sounds similar to that of Khaled El Habre - however, more precise, more natural and at ease. The low pitch of Ziyad Sahhab's voice reminds me of a great number of singers in the field of "Lebanese Music," written by the Rahbani Brothers, Zaki Nassif and others. The low-pitched voice is a cornerstone in this music, and it appears very often, for example, in musical dialogues with Fairuz. In comparison, a voice like, for example, Wadih al-Safi's, creates again more timbral variety, and covers a much broader tonal range that the voice of Ziyad Sahhab. One can thus indeed see the voice of Ziyad Sahhab more closely linked to the voices of Leonard Cohen - however, again, the comparison becomes delicate, the closer we listen to these voices.

The listeners of the listening test found another similarity in the music of "Rawak" by Ziyad Sahhab and "Ana mush Kafer" by Ziyad Rahbani: Both musicians are playing outside the conventions of Arabic music. However, while Ziyad Rahbani uses *maqam rast*, a heavy Arabic scale, the scales used in "Rawak" are not necessarily Arabic. The two scales *ajam* and *nahawand* are actually used by many Arabic musicians today - especially when they work with chord structures, mostly thirds. With both scales, *nahwand* and *ajam,* one can play third structures on the oud very well - for example, Nassir Shamma uses that.

The song is recorded in a studio session - not like an Arabic takht ensemble: It is recorded in the studio of Forward Music:

> This time I chose the metronome, I recorded oud then percussion, then bass and everyone came then; qanun, violin and guitar. Next time we are going to play together without a metronome. I tried the two things and I preferred to play at the same time. I will sing after, but at least you can play together.

Conclusion

"Rawak" is inspired by singer-songwriter traditions: by "French Chanson", as Ziyad claims, and by "text singers" from the Arab world as well. Overall, I would claim that the mixture is rather unique. Musically, Ziyad Sahhab seems closer to Cohen than to Lebanese leftist singers. Overall, the songs of Marcel Khalife, Khaled al-Habre and Ahmad Qabbour are constructed differently: They are not based on a clear musical structure like A-A-B-A. Often these songs start with a musical idea, this idea develops into another idea, and so on. The music travels from A to Z, it does not have to repeat itself. "Rawak" is arranged differently. Only at the end of the song, when Ziyad Sahhab sings accompanied by his oud only, does this lead in this direction. Things become rather interesting here: As far as the instrumentation is concerned, the music is closer to Egyptian takht music than, for example, the music of Ahmad Qabbour and other leftist singers. These singers often use musical elements that are rather foreign to tarab music: marching rhythms, harmonic structures, Western style flute melodies that introduce a sense of longing, et cetera. In the instrumentation, again I would argue, from all the leftist singers, Ziyad Sahhab is closest to Ziyad Rahbani. But, here as well: "Rawak" is

much more strictly structured, while "Ana Moush Kafer" seems to develop from one idea into the next, and takes the listener on a journey.

Is "Rawak" structured like the music of Leonard Cohen, for example? In the tendency it is probably closer to it: It is based on a rather small amount of key ideas, and key elements that makes it poetic, "magic," or at least nice to hear: Ziyad Sahhab's strong, low-pitched voice, the catchy melody and the way it is played with a slight heterophony between violin, qanun, and the oud. It further pleases the ear trough these in between melodic lines of the acoustic guitar. Compared to Cohen, the absent chord changes are, however, a missing element. One might argue that similar to Cohen, Ziyad Sahhab manages to create a certain atmosphere through a minimal amount of key elements. However, Cohen again makes his music travel through chord changes. Ziyad Sahhab's music moves, after two choruses only, slightly to another level.

Overall, we see that comparing becomes difficult. On the sound level, I would see this music closer to Arab music: the instrumentation is close to Egyptian tarab music, the style of singing to Lebanese music. The structure of the music is probably most closely linked to singer-songwriter styles from the West - even though the chord changes are missing. If I was to argue critically, however, I would say that on both levels - sound and structure - it does not go really far. Sonically it does not challenge the listener in introducing even more heterophony, or quartertones. And structurally it does not really offer surprises. I would see and define its quality as follows: It is catchy, and it brings along a certain *authenticity*. It is not, however, an authenticity in a traditional sense, meaning linked to a certain tradition. It is an authenticity of emotion, an authenticity that is often used by popular music scholars or music journalists to define a certain musical quality: honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness of a musical expression. A thesis could be that this music is actually typically Lebanese: It is a song played from a singer and musician who is surrounded and inspired by a great variety of musical elements. He is capable of making sense of it by mixing it together without going to the limits in either of them. In contrast to a great number of fusion artists that work in the field of world music, he manages to create a good sound that one would see as authentic.

When listening to the song, it becomes evident that Ziyad Sahhab is knowledgeable about twentieth-century Arabic-Egyptian music, but tries to develop it into something personal. Or, in Ziyad Sahhab's own words:

> I want to try to change the way of singing. I want to try to say there are other ways of singing in Arabic or Lebanese dialect. You can be deeply rooted in classical music and at the same time open towards other styles of music. It doesn't make sense to make mixtures just for the mixture's sake. I try to go deeper than that. You have to have a good foundation in your tradition first. Only then you can go anywhere. [177]

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[177] Sahhab, interview by the author, Beirut, 2006.

OUTPUT: MUSIC BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY, POSITIONING, AND PERFORMANCE

7.   Reading Music as Sonic Narratives

Music produces meanings: emotions, feelings, associations, but also social roles and functions. Scholars have discussed for many years now, whether these meanings can be found in the musical material itself, or if they become attached from the outside: from the listener, the society, the nation, et cetera. I am convinced it works both ways. And I agree with many scholars that music produces multiple meanings. A piece of music is heard and understood differently, depending on a listener's background, position and personality. The idea of this chapter is thus to highlight a variety of meanings (readings, and interpretations) of the music of musicians of the war generation in Beirut. Some meanings derive from the music itself, others were brought up by discourses about and around it. Some by emic discourses inside the musicians' circles, some by interviews and discussions conducted by me, and some by etic readings from the outside: from different local, transnational and global contexts and viewpoints.

I decided to highlight meanings from four main perspectives: 1) from a historical perspective 2) from a socio-political perspective, 3) from a psychological perspective, and 4) from an aesthetical perspective. Perspectives 1 and 2 will draw heavily on observations made in earlier chapters. Perspective 1 highlights links between the past and the present, between the "History of Beirut through Music, Sound and Noise" (chapter 3) and the music of today's generation of musicians. Perspective 2 shows how their music can be viewed from local and global contexts. The perspectives 3 and 4 intend to move this analysis to a deeper level. Theories on memory, trauma and music, and aesthetical discussions, will help me to finally bring forward suggestions on how we could, or should deal with issues of *locality* and *place* in music in today's digitalised and transnational world (chapter 8). Perspective 4 reads the key pieces (chapter 6) from Beirut (and others) as *sonic narratives*. These sonic narratives tell us about the musical and non-musical preferences of the musicians. They speak of these musicians' knowledge in working inside a specific musical language or sound software. They thus say something about these musicians' living and working conditions, and about their position and positioning inside Lebanon and the world. In conclusion: These sonic narratives tell us something about Lebanon.

The meanings I put forward are only a small collection out of a vast number of possible meanings. However, to me they seem the most important ones that I came across in my field research in Beirut, and in my daily work with music and musicians during the last few years. At times, it is difficult to split these meanings from each other, and sometimes they even seem contradictory to each other. This is a non-surprising consequence of the complexity of realities we all live in today.

7.1   Historical Perspective

From the historical perspective we can see clearly that the musicians and sound artists from Beirut's war generation follow a variety of trends set in Beirut and Lebanon in the past. Lebanese modernists and intellectuals probably set the greatest and most influential of those trends. On one

hand, they helped to create Beirut as an *international*, cosmopolitan place with important academic institutions, book publishers, a rather liberal printing press, and a lively cultural scene. On the other hand, these Lebanese modernists and intellectuals - along with their contemporaries in Egypt and other countries of the Arab world - seem jointly responsible for steering away today's generation of musicians from the heritage of Arabic music, for example, from tarab music. Chapter 3.2 shows that these so-called modernists have kept criticizing the main cultural forms of the Arab world for many years now. Some of them argue that Arabic music is based on emotions only. They compare its endless repetitions, the circling around specific notes, to the lousy Arab politics. Many of the main actors in the music field do indeed talk rather arrogantly about Arabic music - till this day. Walid Gholmieh, the director of the National Lebanese Conservatory, told me in an interview that so-called modern music needs to be played by an orchestra. He further assumed (between the lines) that some of the Arabic musicians are just lazy:

> The most vital factor to bring music to move and to get an evolution is an orchestra. If you don't have an orchestra, you are out, totally out. In our orchestra we have four qanun players, six oud players, and four nay players. It's the first time that an Arabic orchestra has worked with that many Arabic instruments. Why? Because normally Arabic musicians argue that two oud, or two qanun players do not fit together. But this is not true! The truth is that the musicians have to practice more to be able to play like this. And after that you judge. (Gholmieh, 2005)

I attended one of the rehearsals of Gholmieh's Lebanese National Arabic Oriental Orchestra. Gholmieh made the oud, nay and qanun players rehearse by repeating composed melodies in unison. To me, these melodies neither sounded too refined, nor too specific. I was not surprised to observe the musicians of the orchestra making jokes about these rehearsal methods behind the backs of their director and conductor - while others seemed to almost fall asleep. These musicians earn their money in this orchestra, but to me it did not look as if they believed that they actually were creating great music - or high art[178]. In chapter 3.2 I showed that in the history of Lebanese music many musicians and composers started to turn exclusively towards the West. Others introduced European standards to the Arabic music. Arabic music became performed by big orchestras instead of small Arabic takht ensembles, with simple, well-tempered harmonies instead of wild heterophony. The consequences of this approach by the elites seem clear: Today, there is both a lack of musicians who want to learn Arabic music, and a lack of musicians who learn it with its entire aesthetical dimensions (see 3.1.4). I was often surprised how little the Lebanese musicians of the war generation knew about Arabic music. To some, Arabic music is just an equivalent to commercial pan-Arabic pop music. The most ignorant answer I received was from a DJ and sound producer who told me that "all Arabic music is shit" (Anonymous, 2005). When I told him that I did not agree with him at all, he wanted to hear some examples that would contradict his assumption. When I finally mentioned the Egyptian composer, musician and singer Mohammad Abdel Wahab, he cut me short. "Mohammad Abdel Wahab is bullshit. I saw him performing live a year ago, and it was bullshit." Mohammad Abdel

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[178] In my research, the conservatory, it's orchestra, and it's director were often criticised –- sometimes heavily. The rumours went that Walid Gholmieh had never finished his degree in musicology, and that he was just put into the position by a political decision –- the latter is not unusual as it happens with many other positions in Lebanon as well. Weinrich writes (2007, p. 351) that in the 1960s the Lebanese Ministry of Culture had hired Iraqi teachers so that the National Conservatory would draw away from the Egyptian influence. Gholmieh worked for many years in Lybia and Iraq, and he composed the Iraqi national anthem, ""Ardulfurataini Watan"" (Land of Two Rivers), that was in use from 1981 until 2003.

Wahab died in 1991; he could not have seen him perform the year before. After I had told the DJ so, he continued saying, "Never mind, all Lebanese composers of Arabic Music are bullshit anyway." Mohammed Abdel Wahab was from Egypt... Many other musicians and sound artists of the war generation told me frankly that they did not listen to Arabic Music, and that they did not know anything about it. Even Zeid Hamdan, who mixes electronic music with Arabic songs, argues that he only knows the flavours of Arabic music - see chapter 6.6. Overall, the tendency is clear: A great part of today's generation is not interested in Arabic music: To them Arabic music is either the music of some "music lovers who want to show off" (Anonymous, 2005), or commercial pan-Arabic pop, or ideologically flavoured program music. When mentioning the latter, they mainly refer to the leftist music of the Lebanese Civil War (3.4.5), but sometimes they refer to the propaganda music of Amal, Hizbullah, and other parties as well. Not one of the musicians that I met argued that he likes Marcel Khalife, Ahmad Qaboor, or Khaled el Habre (chapter 3.4.5). To them, these musicians and singers wrote kitschy music for a cause - a cause that many artists of today's generation have given up believing in for a long time now (at least it would seem so - see 7.2). Ziyad Sahhab told me that he is not interested in direct political songs. "People here lost a lot in their lives already, so I should not 'kill' them with political songs a second time. I think it's enough to make good music, music to enjoy and to listen to." Today's musicians define the leftists' music of the Civil War as propaganda music as well - even though it deals with rather humanistic ideas[179]. The propaganda music of the other parties is not well received either. However, some of the artists from the experimental music field - for example, Raed Yassin - like this kind of music, "because it is so wonderfully 'tasteless'" (Yassin, 2006). This is actually a rather interesting point: One could hastily argue that today's artists steer away from the elitist way of creating and hearing music - for example, from the "Lebanese Music" created by Fairuz and The Rahbani brothers, a music that never sounds harsh to the ear, and can thus be enjoyed by an elite audience in Lebanon and abroad. Today, some of the musicians do enjoy the tastes (sometimes referred to as "bad taste" by the elites of the older generations) of the non-elites: the sounds of the harsh-sounding double clarinet mijwiz, or its adaptation by the synthesizer in so-called new wave dabké. However, we should evaluate these new tastes carefully. Most of the sound artists analyzed in this book still come from elite families. And it is not the case that they do actually oppose the idea of being from the elite. I would thus argue that their fascination for the "tasteless" sounds of the non-elite has not too much to do with the Lebanese context: It is much more a global Zeitgeist: Globally the interest for *harsh* and *un-clean* sounds, *trash culture*, et cetera, is growing. The Lebanese artists thus follow this overall and global trend - a trend that has its strange sides too. Basically, it is a search for the *unusual*, the *exotic*, the *crazy-sounding*. So, when these Beiruti artists go to buy *new wave dabké* CDs on cheap markets in the suburbs of Beirut, they leave their social context: They are like foreigners shopping in their own country. The same happens when they go to Baalbek, often referred to as the capital of dabké[180]. One could write a whole book about

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[179] There are some exceptions. Some musicians and sound artists do actually look back. Ziyad Rahbani still holds a great status. Ziyad Sahhab and other singers and musicians still sing and play his songs in cafés and restaurants, and at concerts. Sahhab plays songs by Fairuz as well –- but mainly the older repertoire. Otherwise, he often sings songs by Egyptian singers like Sayyed Darwish. Zeid Hamdan and Yasmine Hamdan love to look back as well, mainly to the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s: They recorded remixes of songs by Omar Z'éné, Nour El Hoda, or Zaki Nassif) (see chapter 6.6).

[180] One can get a glimpse of that in the feature film "«Bosta"» by Philippe Aractingi (2007). The plot deals with a contemporary Ddabké dance crew from Beirut that travels to different places in Lebanon where the Ddabké tradition is still strong.

the issue of the elite working on non-elite issues - I will highlight some of the issues in the final chapter, chapter 8.

Overall, going through the history of music in Lebanon, the set up of today's music scene is no big surprise. The largest part of the musicians' and sound artists' work, as mentioned before, is outside the field of Arabic music. Looking back from today, it seems that the psychedelic rock bands of the 1970s, and the rock and jazz bands of the Lebanese Civil War created the groundwork for alternative music in Beirut. Interesting is that none of today's musicians I talked to ever heard of bands like The Seaders (3.3.4), who released their first psychedelic rock single in 1967 in Israel. This fact could actually bring us to the conclusion that a large amount of backing for alternative and sub-cultural culture comes through institutions: for example, through the American University, who hosted many alternative concerts for many years. These institutions seem important carriers for alternative music. However, the knowledge is transmitted via musicians as well - mainly from one generation to the next. Some of the rock musicians who performed during the Lebanese Civil War know about the former psychedelic rock bands. And some of the musicians today have heard of the bands of the early 1970s - The Force, for example. Some of these musicians are key transmitters. Often the musicians would tell me that this or that musician from the older generation had told them to listen to this and that. Still, to a great extent, I observed a gap between the different generations. Tony Sfeir from CD-Thèque became very angry when we talked about this issue: "The older generation lives in a divorce with us. This is one of our biggest problems," he told me:

> There is not one musician, musicologist or composer who was active before the
> Lebanese Civil War, who is interested in what our generation is doing today. I did not
> see Ziyad Rahbani in my shop once, even though I produced six compilations with
> his music officially. These CDs reached him, but he never called, never wrote a letter,
> never told me if he liked these CDs or not. To me this is an official divorce. I have
> the same issue with musicians like Marcel Khalife: In our shop we have a huge
> collection of jazz and classical music, of alternative music from the Arab world, and
> we sell the music of Marcel Khalife, Ahmad Qaboor, and others at the official price.
> Still, they never come to our shop. The older generations of musicians show no
> interest in what is happening in today's circle. They are arrogant, and they have a
> preconceived opinion. Sometimes I hear from other people that they criticise us for
> this and that. (Sfeir, 2006)

As exceptions, Sfeir names some of the musicians who performed during the Civil War, and still live in Beirut today: Aboud Saadi, Emile Boustani, Fouad Afra, or Nasi Baz, who organises the Byblos Festivals.

So, from the historical perspective, we can see today's musicians in a certain light: They are influenced by many trends of music in Lebanon and Beirut, however, they still created them mainly autonomously. The historical approach shows that a major influence lies in some of the main universities (the AUB, LAU, and Université Saint-Joseph) and arts institutions (ALBA) in Lebanon. It seems that the "traditional" openness of Beirut towards the world, the academic traditions of the place, the variety of audiences, makes Beirut an open place to create alternative musical visions. However, it might be a place that lacks continuity, and knowledge of, for example, the tradition of Arab music.

7.2   Socio-Political Perspectives

From a local, socio-political perspective, one can argue that these musicians work for change in Lebanon: They do so in creating non-commercial and non-programmatic music in this highly commercialized and politicized society. In working on the Lebanese Civil War they further approach a big taboo. Ideologically, many of the sound artists and musicians are linked to the local civil society that opposes mainstream values of politics, culture and society in Lebanon - with the support of many locally active NGOs that are financed from Europe. Overall, these musicians are part of what Hanf calls the "sceptical nation": They believe in a multicultural and multi-confessional Lebanon that is open to the world, but still they are sceptical about it (Hanf, 2003).

The music of these musicians and sound artists is thus an attempt to create an alternative identity: It is rooted in their close environment, but open towards the world. It is influenced by foreign and local forces, but it aims to sound personal, and beyond self-exotism and propaganda - if it succeeds to do so or not, is part of a debate inside and outside of Lebanon. I intend to make a clear statement relating to this point in chapter 7.4.

When I asked the musicians and sound artists about how they see their roles as artists in Lebanon, many answered similarly. They want to create platforms for quality music, and they hope that the upcoming generations would profit from them. Joelle Khoury quoted Wassily Kandinsky, who, according to her, argued that the artist's responsibility is to push society forward. Khoury aims to do this too, however she is quite reasonable: "Our generation of artists in Lebanon might perhaps change some things in the long term," she argues:

> We can try to be role models, we can try to live alternative biographies and show
> alternative ideas and career options to the upcoming generations. However, we have
> to be humble, passionate, and keep trying not to accept the limits this society tends to
> give us. In doing so we might be able to change something in the long run - maybe
> you see the fruits in one, two or three generations. (Khoury, 2006)

Many artists argue that they want to help to create a counter-culture to the dominant mainstream culture. "We try to show an Arab identity that is truthful, open to the world, educated, and modern. We try to wake people up and show them alternative ways to live," rapper Wael Kodeih told me (Kodeih, 2005). Zeid Hamdan said the following:

> Our message is clear: To live in Lebanon and in the Arab world does not mean that
> we should not produce quality, and work seriously. You can be an Arab artist and
> deliver powerful art. Maybe we can be even more powerful than others: We
> experienced a lot, we talk three languages, we can adapt to many
> situations. (Hamdan, 2006)

Charbel Haber wants to spread some ideas too. "We are trying to set up a scene. And we hope that this sets a basis for amazing things to come. In the future, we might not get credited for our music, but for setting up our labels and fighting for an audience" (Haber, 2006). Tarek Atoui defines the efforts of his generation of musicians and sound artists as long-term resistance: "You can see our music as kind of a long-term resistance. Our ideas have to infiltrate the Lebanese society slowly. Our music is not so easy to listen to. It takes time, and might succeed in the long term" (Atoui, 2006). When I asked Tarek Atoui whether he really thinks that his abstract, electro-acoustic music could actually "infiltrate" society, he starts laughing. "You never know: Maybe in ten years all Lebanese will listen to experimental music about the bombing. This would be nice! However, it will not happen." Charbel

Haber names a major obstacle: the big gap between the artists' scenes in Achrafieh and Hamra and the suburbs of Beirut - and the country as a whole. So overall, Haber is very sceptical - and very honest:

> I'm cultivating my own garden, and I hope that I can help to spread some ideas. But it all runs very slowly. I'm too lazy, and to be honest: I don't overdo myself. If you overdo yourself you start to neglect your own individual and personal life, you become stressed out and miserable. You invest too much into a cause that you might never reach. Don't forget yourself in your search for a better society. Maybe, the better society is never going to come. So don't fuck your life for it. (Haber, 2006)

Joelle Khoury defines the local context as very difficult, and not at all as a place for culture: "Under normal circumstances we would all focus to make good music only. However, in a place like Lebanon, my friends and me will probably never produce our music in the artistic quality that we dream off. We did not get the chance" (Khoury, 2006).

Most of the musicians told me that their aim is to stay in Lebanon and to try to create platforms for "quality" music. However, during my field research and the writing process, some of the musicians and sound artists changed their opinion. Especially after 2006, some left the country. They now work in Dubai or in the Gulf. Wael Kodeih lives in Paris, and Raed Yassin left for Amsterdam. Others came back: Sherif Sehnaoui, one of the founders of the Free Impro scene, decided to migrate back to Beirut. And rapper MC Malikah now lives back in Lebanon, after she spent some years in Canada.

7.2.1 The Local

> - And when will you go back to writing poetry?
> - When the guns quiet down a little. When I explode my silence, which is
> full of all these voices. When I find the appropriate language.
> - Is there no role for you then?
> - No, No role for me in poetry now. My role is outside the poem. My role is
> to be here, with citizens and fighters. (….) I say the wounded, the thirsty,
> and those in search of water, bread, or shelter are not asking for poetry. And
> the fighters pay no heed to your lyrics. Sing if you wish, or hold your
> tongue if you want: we're marginal in war. But it is within our power to
> offer the people other services: a twenty-litre can of water is worth the
> Valley of Genius itself. What is needed now is human commitment, not
> beauty in creative expression. (Mahmoud Darwish, 1995)

The poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote within the Lebanese Civil War, what in Lebanon is true till this day: It is not easy to make art for art's sake. Further, it is not easy to stay ideologically neutral to all the conflicts happening within Lebanon and the Middle East. Lebanon is a place with a lot of pressure(s). The 2006 war showed this to the extreme - on musical and non-musical levels. The musicians and sound artists are "endangered" all the time of falling into one or the other of the old ideological directions, and to believe in this or that conspiracy theory or rumour. In my interviews held just after the war, I was often surprised at how much some of the musicians seem to have changed their opinions. Some of the artists became very fascinated by Hassan Nasrallah and his Hizbullah movement. They argued that they were proud of Hizbullah confronting Israel, and they

agreed with the claim of Hizbullah to have won the war - even though the Southern suburbs of Beirut were flattened, and many people had died. One of the artists told me that normally he and his friends were against all the politicians in Lebanon, but during the war they felt deeply connected to the state, and to them, the state was Hizbullah.

> We were all supporting Hizbullah. They fought well, and we were proud. We all watched those very smart speeches of Nasrallah, and we thought that he was a great leader. He is the only politician in this country who cares for the people in Southern Lebanon. (Anonymous, 2006)

Another artist told me that even if he does not agree with Hizbullah ideologically, it was not the time to criticize them. "People were dying, and we felt so alone. The USA just kept silent, and we just wanted this Israeli killing machine to stop. We actually did not care who would win or not. We just wanted this war to stop" (Anonymous, 2006). Even the artists who had always looked towards Europe and the USA suddenly argued that they would prefer Hizbullah ruling this country, and not what they called the legitimate but corrupt government. "People should stop fearing the influence of Iran in this country," one of the musicians told me. "I fear our government that supports the USA and Israel much more than I fear Hizbullah and its backers Iran and Syria" (Anonymous, 2006). Another artist argued similarly. He used to have problems with Hizbullah because they stopped some of his concerts. Still, within and after 2006 he supported them.

> Our government is corrupt and lying all the time. And our prime minister, Fouad Siniora, was crying on TV almost every day. He pleaded for Israel and Hizbullah to stop. We need a strong leader, not someone who cries all the time. I'm not afraid of Hizbullah. They care about Lebanon, and they will never turn it into a second Iran, as many fear. They know that Lebanon is multi-confessional, and they will not try to change this. With Hizbullah in power we might even get back some of the Lebanese prisoners in Israel. We might get back the Sheeba Farms[181], and maybe even Samir Kantar[182] might return. I never expected that I might see him one day. (Anonymous, 2006)

Not everyone agreed on these issues, however. Relationships and friendships broke up on the question of whether to support Hizbullah or not. Many celebrated Hizbullah as the new left, while some saw them as a group of liars who would neither care about the Lebanese, nor about Lebanon.

During the war, some artists gave up their ideal to make art for art's sake as well - this led to big discussions within the scene. Many of the artists became activists. Mazen Kerbaj, for example, started a Weblog in which he wrote and drew pictures about his daily life inside the 2006 war (see Kerbaj, 2007). Kerbaj tried hard to keep the blog on a personal level, and not to take sides within the Lebanese political fields.

> I criticized Israel heavily, but I did not criticise Hizbullah openly. Being of Christian background I did not want to give the impression that I was the typical Christian

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[181] Shebaa Farms is a small area of land with disputed ownership located on the border between Lebanon and the Israeli controlled part of the Golan Heights. Hizbullah sees the continued Israeli occupation of the disputed area as partial justification for attacks upon Israeli concerns.

[182] Samir Kantar is a Lebanese Druze militant and a former member of the Palestine Liberation Front. On April 22, 1979, at the age of 16, he participated in the attempted kidnapping of an Israeli family in Nahariya that resulted in the deaths of four Israelis and two of his fellow kidnappers. He was held in an Israeli prison for many years. In July 2008 he was released as part of an Israel-Hizbullah prisoner swap. In Israel he is seen as the perpetrator of one of the most brutal terrorist attacks in the country's history,; in Lebanon he is celebrated as a hero by many.

> supporter of Christian right wing politics. I tried to maintain a very humanist point of view of the war, and not to answer all these heavily political comments from readers from Israel, the USA, Iran, Syria and Lebanon. I thought it was a stupid war. Too many people died for nothing. (Kerbaj, 2006)

The Blog got attention from big media companies like CNN and Al-Jazeera, and by many individuals all around the world[183]. "Suddenly, we all became famous. I would have been happy to become famous 400 years after my death, but it all happened now," Mazen Kerbaj told me. "It felt rather strange. Suddenly many people around the globe thought that they knew me. To them I was the passionate guy, who sits under the bombs in Beirut and who had decided to stay in his country whatever would happen" (Kerbaj, 2006).

Kerbaj further recorded the piece "Starry Night" on the balcony of his apartment (hear track 14 on Companion CD). We hear his trumpet, and the bombs dropped by Israeli warplanes. In between we hear car alarms that go off due to the pressure of the bombs and the sonic booms produced by the Israeli planes. In between those sounds we hear the silence of the city. Kerbaj uploaded the MP3 file on his blog. It was downloaded by many of his readers - the website of the British Music Magazine *The Wire* had uploaded the file as well, and so it became very well known.

Mazen Kerbaj further set up a blog for his mother as well: "She told me that I saved her life by showing her how to blog. She had drawn pictures during the Lebanese Civil War, and now she drew again, and published her drawings in real time" (Kerbaj, 2006)[184]. Other musicians reacted similarly to the war. Many wrote blogs as well, and some created music pieces of the war. Raed Yassin created the piece "Day 13." He recorded glimpses from radio and TV and created a sound collage - similar to his piece "CW Tapes". Charbel Haber created the piece "Summerdrone," an abstract drone made out of sounds of his guitars, planes and the bombs from the 2006 war. Some musicians further organised fundraising concerts: They performed in Beirut, or in the cities of the Arab world they had fled to - Zeid Hamdan, for example, performed in Amman, after he had organized a fundraising concert in the Club Social: with Scrambled Eggs, RGB, and The New Government. The label Forward Production produced the compilation CD "We Live …," to earn money for the refugees of the South. "The first role of an artist in times like this is to try to reactivate the musical life in the city and to collect money for the victims. This is why I contributed one song on this CD," Ziyad Sahhab told me (Sahhab, 2006). Other musicians were involved in charity work with local NGOs: "For a week I was packing food. This was positive, and this kept my mind busy," Zeid Hamdan told me (Hamdan, 2006). Tarek Atoui produced a web jam, between Holland and Beirut. He, the Dutch curator Nat Muller, and some friends invited musicians, scientists, and political activists to present their work, to talk about the current situation and to give insight impressions on what was going on. Just after the war, Tarek thought that this was a good project, however, a very unusual one for him: "I think it is really difficult to bring artistic and social issues together," he told me: "Normally, I either do art for art's sake, or I do social projects, for example, in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon." Still, Atoui was annoyed by some Lebanese artists who did not stop complaining about technical problems during the web jam: "We were in a war, what did they want!? It was not an exhibition in the Tate Modern in London!" (Atoui, 2006).

Other musicians and sound artists reacted completely differently to the pressure of war. The

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[183] At the time of writing he still continues writing this blog. See http://mazenkerblog.blogspot.com (January 2009).
[184] At the time of writing this blog is still online: http://www.laureghorayeb.blogspot.com/ (January 2009).

singer Ghada Shbeir worked in her family house in the mountains. "From where we lived, we did not hear the bombs," she explained:

> All was so calm and quiet. So I finished some research about the Rahbani brothers
> and their Muwashahat pieces. I transcribed music, and in between I watched TV. It
> was so tough to see all those dead children's bodies, and I felt very bad about me
> working in my quiet house. But I could not do anything else. I would never perform
> as a patriotic singer, as many of the commercial pop singers did on TV. They
> produced video clips where they met the refugees of the South. They used the
> situation to put themselves on TV. I preferred to stay quiet. (Shbeir, 2006)

Joelle Khoury moved to her house in the mountains. She stopped working completely, she told me. "You can't create art when you are constantly crying. You can't compose when you would like to commit suicide. You have to be above your emotions when you compose" (Khoury, 2006). Cynthia Zaven reacted similarly: "I could not produce anything. Conflict does not inspire me. I have to feel relaxed to be able to work" (Zaven, 2006). Tarek Atoui - besides his webjam project - was mainly worried about his grandmother who lived in Dahye, and his family in South Lebanon. All of them could flee, before bombs destroyed their houses. Mainly, Tarek Atoui was watching TV with his flat mates: Al Jazeera, the BBC, and CNN. "We programmed all the news stations next to each other, and watched news day and night. It became like a movie, or a soap opera, a quite disturbing effect" (Atoui, 2006). Atoui avoided talking about politics with too many friends, "because it was a great source of conflict," he explained to me: "Everybody had his own ideas about the conflict, and supported this or that political opinion." Overall, he did not do much: "I slept a lot, and ate a lot of candies. I was not too proud of myself," he told me. He could not work either:

> I was too impulsive, changed from this to that idea, and all the work I tried to do
> became very fragmented. I could not concentrate at all. I hope that now, when I go to
> Europe, I will begin to put things into perspective. Then I will see if this war changed
> anything about how I hear and produce things. But I can't change my music and my
> way of performing from one day to the other. First I have to have the idea, then I have
> to build the MAX/MSP patches to be able to find the right interactivity between me
> and the machine. This takes at least a few months. (Atoui, 2006)

The different ways the Lebanese artists dealt with the issue of war, led to many discussions. Some argued that it is the duty of an artist to create good art, and to be quiet when he or she is in turmoil emotionally. The artist should absorb as much as possible, then get an emotional distance from the happenings, and then make his artistic statement. Others argued that an artist has to make himself heard; he has to stay active to help his people. If necessary he should even stop working as an artist and help people on the street. After the war, the "activists" in the scene had to defend themselves. Especially Mazen Kerbaj was accused of making a profit from the situation: "I was attacked a lot," Kerbaj recalls: "Lebanese and non-Lebanese argued that I used the situation to become famous. Well, my answer to this would be: Please come and live in Beirut, and try it yourself" (Kerbaj, 2006). Raed Yassin "defends" himself in a different way: "We all worked so much during the war, we did not have time to think," he told me:

> We became activists by outside forces. Normally, we are all not activists, we are not
> even into politics. Or let's put it like this: We are mostly against everything that
> surrounds us. In normal days only the quality of the music counts. But within the war,
> we had to do something. We could not just stay quiet. (Yassin, 2006)

The examples show it very clearly: The local context is highly influential. And as simple as it sounds: Artists are human beings. They react differently to pressures from the outside. War, political crises, and an uncertain future thus makes it difficult for an artist to concentrate on his art, and to produce art for art's sake - even if he or she intends to do so. "You can't do art for art's sake in a place like this," Cynthia Zaven summarized the circumstances: "Everything is political here. Maybe music might look independent, because it has no words, but it is not" (Zaven, 2005).

7.2.2   The Global/The Transnational

On an international level we find similar topics and discussions. Many of these musicians are well connected within transnational *knowledge* or *taste* communities worldwide. Some of them perform abroad quite often - Mazen Kerbaj, Raed Yassin, Charbel Haber, Zeid Hamdan, Ghada Shbeir, and Rayess Bek mainly. One of their aims is to compete with their niche communities worldwide. But they want recognition because of the quality of their work, and not because they are Lebanese, or exotic. The Free Improvisers and artists of electro-acoustic music try to avoid essentialistic *localities*, meaning "stereotypical" Arabic forms and styles. They say that they do so in order not to please us ethnomusicologists, or the producers of so-called world music too easily.

However, the fact of them being from Lebanon, makes these artists interesting, and even exotic for Europeans and US-Americans. They all know that. Tarek Atoui knows that being Lebanese is a good selling argument. He used to worry about that issue a lot: He was not sure whether foreign organisers liked his music, or just wanted to invite a Lebanese artist. Today he does not bother too much anymore. "I am who I am, I might have advantages, but also many disadvantages by being Lebanese," he told me: "and I do not take profit in an easy way: I don't mix beats with Oriental flavours, and I don't put bombs directly in my music. I try to make good music; this is the most important thing" (Atoui, 2006). Mazen Kerbaj is also very much aware that it is a plus to be a musician from Beirut. He even told me that this is one of the reasons why he does not want to play with an Arabic oud player necessarily. Further, this is one of the reasons why he sometimes tries to avoid telling journalists that his music is influenced by the sounds of war. He wants to be a free artist. For him, his art has a lot to do with Lebanon, but its value should be global.

The international platform is important for a variety of reasons. Tarek Atoui refers to an international level when he reflects about his role of being an artist in Lebanon.

> I think that it is important that people in Europe hear and see that Lebanon offers a great variety of music. In producing experimental music I might help to open up minds in Europe and the US and go against stereotypical views: Lebanon, the Middle East and Islam have much more to offer than fundamentalism, terrorism, and conservative crowds. (Atoui, 2006)

Atoui feels responsible for the image he gives abroad of Lebanon - especially since the 2006 war.

> War is not an argument to produce shit. We should not only moan or shout, we should try to do something different, and to create our own language out of our knowledge and our experiences. The best I can do is to produce music that is built in a serious way, and that can stand on an international level. Somehow, I feel the responsibility to work twice as hard, and to become better. This is my - or our - way of being patriotic. We want to use the name of Lebanon, and show a good and different image of our country. Let the people abroad see another version of this

country; let them see what Lebanon could be as well. (Atoui, 2006)

Mazen Kerbaj argues similarly. Good feedback from abroad is very important for him. He aspires to gain international recognition - to be the best free trumpet player in Beirut is not enough. "Musically, it is, for me, more important to play abroad," he told me: "Not because it's better outside, but because abroad I can play in front of an audience that has experienced free improvised music for many years. To play abroad is the real test!" (Kerbaj, 2005). Kerbaj needs critical feedback. He knows that he is not a revolutionary musician yet, but he tries to become better and better. "To be able to compete internationally is what is most important to me. I hate it when the Lebanese are so over-confident. Often they are very happy and proud too early," he argued, and recalled an incident:

> Once, a Lebanese friend and me went to see the concert of a Lebanese saxophone
> player. After the concert I was very angry and I said that this was the worst
> saxophone player that I had ever heard in a concert. My friend answered, 'yes, but for
> a Lebanese he was good.' This is what I hate; this makes me almost vomit. It's like
> admitting that we Lebanese are just a bunch of shits. I really hope this will change.
> And this is one of the reasons we want to compete internationally and prove
> ourselves. (Kerbaj, 2006)

To perform internationally is important for another reason as well. It is an indirect way of gaining a good reputation within Lebanon. According to Mazen Kerbaj, the Lebanese mainly look at the West, and a Lebanese musician becomes recognized when he has made himself a name abroad. "Look at Rabih Abou Khalil or Toufic Faroukh," he told me: "People here see them as great musicians, just because they released CDs in Europe. I don't want to say that these musicians are bad - but their good reputation in Lebanon shows that you have to make it abroad first, and then you become known here" (Kerbaj, 2006).

> One goal of Mazen Kerbaj is to work towards a solid career.
>
> People here are very proud. They think that the Lebanese are very smart - the chosen
> race almost. A saying goes that you can throw a Lebanese anywhere, and he will
> always fall on his feet. He will earn his living - but there the problem starts: He often
> earns his living by cheating, by being clever, and not by being honest, or by
> producing quality. We are all good talkers and sellers, like the Phoenicians. We
> would sell our father for one dollar, if it was needed. Me, and other artists, want to
> change this: We want to create quality; we do not want to cheat. (Kerbaj, 2005)

7.3   *Psychological Perspective*

The psychological perspective leads to deeper levels of music making. This chapter thus intends to bring forward alternative suggestions of what *locality* and *place* could mean in music. The overall questions asked are the following: Which affects and effects does the audible space that surrounds us have in, and during our lives to our manner of listening to music (or sound) and of producing music (or organising sound)? Is there an interaction at all? And if yes, how can we measure it? And: What does this mean for music theory, and the study of music? In the specific Lebanese case, one of the questions would be: How do the sonic memories of these musicians' childhoods in war influence their music making?

In working with *sonic memories* and *audible spaces* we clearly introduce the musician and sound artist as a human being who is part of an environment that seems to have a certain impact. We

focus on both: The human being, and his or her music.

The memories of the Lebanese Civil War are a crucial issue in the music and music making of the musicians and sound artists in Beirut - this became increasingly clear during my research. However, in my interviews I did not ask questions about childhood memories, and about traumatic experiences in the Civil War from the beginning. I decided to hold back these questions, and to focus on musical references and biographical notes first, and later on, musical aesthetics. I did so due to different reasons. One of them was that I did want to approach these musicians and sound artists as neutrally as possible. Having conducted many interviews as a music journalist, I further knew that it is risky to ask the most complex and delicate questions too early, as one might get superficial, often stereotypical answers. I thus speculated that these hidden, often traumatic memories might eventually come out by themselves, after the musician and I had built a certain trust between us. I decided to wait, to learn as much as possible about the musician and his or her music first, and just see from there where it would lead us to.

As expected, many musicians brought up the issue of the Lebanese Civil War by themselves. Mazen Kerbaj was the first to talk about his relationship with the sounds of war. He did so in our first meeting - and that actually made me a bit suspicious as to whether this was just an interesting story for a foreign ethnomusicologist (see chapter 6.2). Garo Gdanian from the death metal band Weeping Willow talked about his nightmares of the war in our second meeting (6.4). Others did not mention the war at all, or very late on. What was interesting was that many of the musicians talked about their childhood memories in war in similar ways. For example, many recalled similar listening experiences. They told me that they knew all the weapons of war just by listening to their sounds - and they claimed that they still do so today. They hear from where to where a rocket flies and if it is of direct danger to them or not. It seems that many of these Lebanese musicians and sound artists know about the first and main biological function of hearing by experience: It is to orient us and to locate acoustic sources. Sound is linked to movement; in hitting each other, the molecules in the air create acoustic waves. Depending on our position, we hear these waves in different frequencies and intensities. And the ear registers the waves and categorizes them as dangerous and threatening, or as comforting (Hellbrück, 2008, p. 17). In my interviews, some musicians went very far and started to ask cynical questions full of black humour: "Is war good ear training?" Or: "Can listening to the weapons of war replace musical Solfège?"

Let me, in the following, highlight some of these sonic memories - first from the Lebanese Civil War, then from the 2006 war. After that, I will try to see how these memories interact with today's music and music making.

7.3.1 Sonic Memories of War

"I remember the departures and arrivals of the rockets and bombs," explained the metal and gothic musician Cyril Najjar (Najjar, 2006).

> I used to hear the departures, stopped breathing, and breathed again after the bomb
> had not fallen on me: When you hear a bomb it is a good sign, it means, it did not hit
> you. If you don't hear anything it means it is so close, you just feel the blast, and you
> are dead. This is something remarkable about the war. (Najjar, 2006)

Rana Eid, a sound designer for many Lebanese films, told me in 2005 how, to her, war was closely related to music.

> As a child, I used to listen to Egyptian music and to the Lebanese singer Fairuz on my Walkman, just not to listen to the bombs anymore. This is what my mother told me. I also used to play on a piano, while there were bombings outside. Till today, I can't even think of touching a piano again. And with music, as such, I still have a lot of problems. For a long time I refused to listen to it at all, because it was too much related to war. (Eid, 2005)

At the University, Rana Eid started to record the sounds of the city, and the voices of people. "I was interested in people talking about their war experiences. It fascinated me how the frequencies changed in their voices when they recalled their tragic memories" (Eid, 2005). Today Eid works as a sound designer for many independent Lebanese films. She is not ready yet to make music for music's sake. "I hope that one day my deep emotional involvement with music will fade away and I can compose my own music. I'm not ready yet. Sound design, however, feels safe for me" (Eid, 2005). But she also says:

> Maybe I could do a composition, but it would be only half-hearted. If I were to compose, I would want to be sure that I could be very passionate and mature. I don't want to be afraid of the sounds; I want to work with them at a very close distance. I fear I would be very melodramatic in my music. (Eid, 2005)

The 2006 war brought back many of these memories. "Again the Israelis attacked, again I felt the same horror, but this time it sounded different," explained Rana Eid, just after the end of the 2006 war (Eid, 2006). For her, and for most of her contemporaries, the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah came as a big shock. Many said exactly the same thing: The war sounded different than they had expected. Rana Eid experienced these new sounds as very scary: "The scariest thing of all was that I did not hear the sounds from the first war. The airplanes sounded so different, more mid-range, and less high frequencies. This freaked me out completely," she explained (Eid, 2006). Eid felt lost and disoriented. She was not capable of locating the airplanes through the ear anymore - she had expected that she could do so. "My father told me that it is impossible: The planes that drop bombs fly high up and very slowly. You don't hear them," she explains: "The ones that race over the city and fly through the sound barrier don't bomb anything. They are just here to scare people" (Eid, 2006). The apartment of Eid and her husband Nadim Mishlawi - who worked with Raed Yassin on "CW Tapes" - is located between the sea and Southern Beirut, the main target in the 2006 war. "We heard the departure of the missiles from the boat. The missile flew over the house, and then we heard the arrival in Southern Beirut," explains Mishlawi. "The departure sounds are louder than the arrivals" (Mishlawi, 2006).

Eid and Mishlawi talked a lot about sounds that were new and unexpected to them: For example, the leaflets that the Israelis threw down over Beirut: "You hear a very small boom when the package explodes in the air and then releases all those leaflets. And then you hear the fluttering. You are happy first, because it's only leaflets, but then you read them," Eid explained (Eid, 2006). Traumatizing were the observation drones used by the Israeli army: "This thing made 'zzzzzzz' sound, and it was observing and filming us from above. It was as if a bad God was watching us" (Eid, 2006). The Israeli phone calls to Lebanese houses were experienced as a big shock: "It was a recorded message that told us not to link up with Hizbullah," Eid remembered:

> The record was high quality, the male that spoke had a deep and dramatic voice, but he spoke incorrect Arabic; this freaked me out. It was very traumatic: The bombs come for everyone; the phone call comes for me personally. The voice intruded into

> my home, into the most personal part of my life. I felt that they would rape my
> territory. (Eid, 2006)

The sound of the city changes completely during war and this is what many musicians recalled: "You can't hear the sound of life anymore, the sound of the cars are different, they're passing so quickly to get home. You don't hear people in the streets anymore. There is no pop music coming from the windows - I even started to miss the pop singer Haifa Wehbe" (Eid, 2006). Further, the electricity cuts changed the sonic environment. And when Hassan Nasrallah was talking, the whole city fell quiet - his voice shouted from all directions, often with small delays. Many musicians further talked about the issue of *silence*.

> It was the silence that was the most difficult thing to tolerate. Normally Beirut is very
> noisy - and it has a special noise, different from London or Paris. Now, again, we
> went from noise to silence, at 6 o'clock in the morning, between the bombardments,
> you heard nothing, nothing; this was very unsettling, extremely unsettling, you felt
> very out of place, very unstable, insecure, because sound really orientates you, it
> gives a sense of belonging, a sense of structure. Once that sound changes or goes
> away you really feel you have been displaced to somewhere else. (Mishlawi, 2006)

The singing birds were another topic that came up very often: "It was so bizarre. When the Israelis started bombing in the early morning, the birds started singing. And even when the bombing started at two in the morning, the birds woke up and sang in the dark" (Eid, 2006). The most terrible moment for Rana Eid was when she finally heard one of the sounds that was stored in her sonic memory. "The last morning of the war, I suddenly heard this airplane sound that I used to hear as a child. It was the most terrible moment for me personally in the whole war. There was this whistle sound that was so traumatising for me" (Eid, 2006).

Mazen Kerbaj reacted completely differently to Rana Eid. When I met Kerbaj several times just after the war, our discussions became quite interesting, but also difficult. "First, I just wanted to leave. I was very angry, and I was afraid for my son Ewan," he explained to me, "But then I felt that I liked this new war. Somewhere in my brain I found something like happiness" (Kerbaj, 2006). After saying this, Kerbaj kept apologizing. "It sounds terrible, but I was somehow happy to experiment again as an adult, what I had experienced as a child. It was like going back to childhood, to a time and place where we felt secure" (Kerbaj, 2006). Nostalgia of one's childhood seems not only a normal human behaviour in a "happy" and "good" life, but also in a difficult one. "It seems that I'm nostalgic about this time," Kerbaj continued: "Till the age of sixteen I spent my whole life in war. To me, war was normal and peace was an abstract concept - as absurd and terrible as this might sound. It was during these days of war that I loved Beirut most during the 16 years since the end of the Civil War" (Kerbaj, 2006). This nostalgia for the sounds of childhood seems to come from the fact that the sonic atmosphere of Beirut changed completely - as explained before. "Beirut is a very noisy city. It's only during a war, in between two bombs, where it falls silent" (Kerbaj, 2006). Kerbaj even went one step further when saying that actually he wanted to be even closer to the bombs. Did he say so just to be provocative?

> I didn't get injured, and I was almost angry that I was not tested more. We were war
> tourists in Beirut. It took us time to realize that we were safe. We were watching TV.
> It was like having the war without the suffering. On the other hand this was the
> difficult thing: It was really tough to see that you couldn't do anything. (Kerbaj,
> 25.9.2006)

7.3.2 The Translation from Sonic Memories into Music

From here we head back to the main questions. How are sounds that one heard during one's childhood and youth translated into one's later artistic expression? To what extent does this translation happen consciously or unconsciously? To what extent is it an essentially musical and psychological process? To what extent is it part of an artist's performance, and a representational strategy?

One thing seems clear to me: The translation of the sounds from one's childhood into one's music happens on conscious and unconscious levels. For the unconscious parts we might have to look into literature on *sound psychology* and *socialisation of music* first. Here we learn that the first years of our lives are crucial for our capabilities of hearing, enjoying and later working with sound. Kleinen (2008) suggests four phases of musical socialisation. According to him and many other scholars, the first stage, from birth to adolescence, is characterized through a basic openness. The child is oriented towards the parents and the wider family, and it takes over their musical behaviour, preferences, and repugnances. This leads to a repertoire of songs that the child loves to listen to and sing (Kleinen, 2008, p. 56). Inspiration comes also through the surroundings: Through the noises of the city, the birds one hears sing - and thus also from the sounds of war and the noise of propaganda; in the case of the musicians of Lebanon. In short, the child first takes over the cultural model of its environment (Dobberstein, 1994). *Depth psychology* argues that these founding elements of our childhood affect our whole life. There is however, the question of how. And we have to be careful - especially in the case of war. Not each traumatised child becomes neurotic, or psychologically ill as an adult; this is shown by various examples in psychology. There are many factors that can give a life of a traumatised child a positive turn - and this in every situation and every age of their life (Nuber, 2000, pp. 75-78). This point seems important: Many of the musicians from Beirut experienced traumatic incidents, however, it is not at all clear how these influence, or even determine their music today.

The conscious levels force us to turn our attention to non-musical factors as well. The Lebanese artists position themselves in various, rather difficult contexts - see the socio-political perspective (7.2). It seems significant that Mazen Kerbaj talked about the interrelations between the sounds of war and his music to a foreign journalist first (see chapter 6.2). Was his answer thus just a smart strategic move to answer all these questions about "authenticity" that foreign journalists, international funders, or we - scholars - keep asking? At the same time, it seems clear that his answer was probably more than a joke - Kerbaj himself says so too (see 6.2).

Raed Yassin took the rational decision to collect the sonic material of his childhood and to create his piece "CW Tapes" with it (see 6.1). However, to analyze precisely how he finally built the piece, how and why he took this or that musical decision while working on it, is difficult to reconstruct.[185] A lot happens by coincidence, and the criteria for this or that decision can be musical

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[185] Some scholars tried to do so: They analysed the processes of composing from important composers. Some actually sat next to the composer, interviewing him while he was working. Or they analyzed the letters these composers wrote while working on a composition. Some of their reflections are useful – however, the major problem is that these scholars worked with music that is written. The music of Raed Yassin is created in a studio and not written down. Still, Marcel Dobbersteins (1994) comment seems important. He argues that it is important to analyse not only the material of the composition itself, but also the composer, meaning the psychology of the person who is composing and who positions himself as a composer. Both, the question of the composer and of the musical material are interrelating in great complexity. (Dobberstein 1994:13/14) After having put forward several poles that interact

and non-musical. "The artist, like the rest of us, is torn by various desires competing within himself," Anthony Storr writes, and continues praising the artist: "But, unlike the rest of us, he makes each of those desires into an element for use in his art. Then he seeks to synthesize his elements all together to form a style. …. The process by which a man has forged such a unity is the most profound and most exalted of human stories"[186] (Storr, 1992, p. 114).

7.3.3 Intentionality

Phenomenology helps us to understand more about the conscious and the unconscious - as already mentioned in the theory chapter (see chapter 2.1). The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy describes this academic field as the "study of consciousness (…) as experienced from the first-person point of view." Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, highlighted *intentionality* as one of its key terms (Husserl, 1984, 1986). According to him, every form of action is made intentionally, it is directed towards someone or something, and is thus conscious of its receiver. This is highly important when we are dealing with musicians - in Beirut, and elsewhere: These musicians create music for listeners. Even though many musicians would state that they do not leer towards a certain audience, they still have non-musical issues and strategies in mind whilst creating their music. They create music with an intention. And they talk about their music in certain ways that, to them, makes sense - and maybe makes them interesting, for example for me, the interviewer. For phenomenologists the actor acts intentionally, even if he might not always be aware (or conscious) of that fact. Un-conscious actions are thus often described as deeply rooted in cultural and social behaviours, instead of deriving from biology or neuroscience. Here, phenomenology offers a very helpful, specific set of *modes of awareness* and thus the possibility to find better-balanced argumentations on a continuum between the conscious and the un-conscious. This fact alone makes phenomenology very helpful here.

7.3.4 Body, Mind, and Memory

The human body is often brought forward as a link between the human mind and the surrounding world. There are many works written on the relationship that exists between the mind and the body. Disciplines like philosophy of the mind, socio-biology, evolutionary psychology, and neuroscience tried and keep trying to analyze the nature of the mind, and how, or even if it is affected by the body, and vice versa. Important are also studies in phenomenology[187], cultural theory, and ontology[188]. Overall we could argue to a certain extent, that our unconsciousness is in fact *embodied*

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during composting (composer – material, inspiration – craft, idea – work, phase of inspiration and phase of work, illumination – verification) he focuses on the continuum between unconscious and conscious elements of composing.

[186] (Storr cited Jacques Barzun, Critical Questions, edited by Bea Friendland, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 87).

[187] Since the mid-1990s a variety of writers working in philosophy of mind have focused on the fundamental character of consciousness, ultimately a phenomenological issue. Meanwhile, from an epistemological standpoint, all these ranges of theory about mind begin with how we observe and reason about, and seek to explain phenomena we encounter in the world. And that is where phenomenology begins. Moreover, how we understand each piece of theory, including theory about mind, is central to the theory of intentionality; as it were, the semantics of thought and experience in general. And that is the heart of phenomenology.

[188] Phenomenology offers descriptive analyses of mental phenomena, while neuroscience (and wider biology and ultimately physics) offers models of explanation of what causes or gives rise to mental phenomena. Cultural

knowledge.[189] This means that the bodies of the Beiruti artists have been infused with a specific knowledge of the acoustic environment of war. This might be, in fact, an interesting path to follow - however, a slippery one too, a path that lies far beyond the scope of this research, and far beyond my own knowledge as an ethnomusicologist. Still, one could risk saying: These artists have a certain knowledge of qualities of sound and noise. They are trained to listen to nuances in sonic textures and sonic intensities.

It might be fruitful to reflect on *memory* more. Anthony Storr argues that "music originates from the human brain rather than from the natural world. (..) What we need to consider is not nature, but human nature" (Storr, 1992, pp. 51-64). I understand Storrs' observation as a warning: To analyze to what extent the trumpet sounds of Mazen Kerbaj do indeed resemble the sounds of machine guns and helicopters might lead us nowhere. More important might be to see how Kerbaj actually memorizes these sounds, and how he reconstructs and re-creates them. Thus, it is Mazen Kerbaj that should be at the centre of our interest, and not the machine gun or the helicopter. Many of the reflections on memory made by Aleida Assmann (2007) are important here. She argues that even though each human being has his own, and personal memories and his own and special view of the memories of the different groups he belongs to (family, ethnic, social to political group, nation, etc.), this individual memory cannot stand alone. The individual human being does not memorise and remember things individually. Memories are not isolated, but connected to memories of other people, and created, affirmed and fixed through social conversation. According to Assmann, our individual memory is undependable and cursory. She cites Maurice Halbwachs, who argued in the 1920s that a lonely human being would not be capable of creating memories at all - because memories become created and fixed through interaction and communication with other people. Assmann thus defines the memory of the individual as a *communicative memory*. When I asked Raed Yassin whether he actually remembered all those sounds that he put together in his piece "CW Tape," his answer was significant: "Some adds, songs and speeches I did actually remember. Others I discovered while doing my research. And some tracks I got from friends" (Yassin, 2006).

Assmann further explores how this communicative memory is communicated between different communities and groups. Each group to which an individual belongs to during his life creates its own memory: Assmann recalls the memory of a family, a neighbourhood, a generation, a society, a nation, and a culture (Assmann, 2007, p. 23). According to her, the memory of the generation is most important. She cites Halbwachs and Karl Mannheim, who argued that each individual is very responsive to experiences that would coin his or her whole life when he is between 12 and 25. This leads to the phenomena that each generation shares certain values of seeing the world, and takes possession of the world. Each generation creates its own access to the past, and it does not

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theory offers analyses of social activities and their impact on experience, including ways language shapes our thought, emotion, and motivation. And ontology frames all these results within a basic scheme of the structure of the world, including our own minds." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008)

[189] In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty emphasized the role of the body in human experience. «When I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity (= consciousness) is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 408).

allow the generation before them to tell them what perspective they should take on it[190]. This is exactly what we see within the music circles in Beirut: Raed Yassin, for example, took a completely different approach to discuss war sonically than the Beiruti artists one generation before him (see chapters 7.1 and 7.4). This means the following: First, one could argue that this generation of musicians do communicate their memories similarly. They remember the war and its sounds in a similar way - because they discussed, and thus fixed their memories while communicating with each other. Musically, we thus get a somehow typified version of the war. I will show this very clearly in the chapter on the musical aesthetics of this generation (see 7.4).

7.3.5   Children in War

Second, the approach to focus on a generation was probably not wrong - even when you look at the war experiences of these musicians themselves. Children experience war differently than adults. Cyrille Najjar remembers the Civil War very differently than the war of 2006: "When you're very young you don't perceive the war the same way. In 2006 I felt responsible for my friends, for my brothers, for my family. Within the Civil War we felt that we lived a normal life. Probably we experienced it at the right age," he told me (Najjar, 2006). Joelle Khoury argued similarly.

> In 2006 I was a grown up. I feared for my child, my future, all that I had built up so far. But during the Civil War, I was a teenager, and to tell you the truth, we had a lot of fun. Everything was possible: No-one cared about my sexy clothes; no-one cared if I smoked, or flirted with the boys. It was a sexy period. I felt great running under the bombs to see my boyfriend. I was fifteen then, and I had nothing to loose. (Khoury, 2006)

Many musicians told me similar stories, and the commentators and documentary films of the Civil War period mention similar issues. "This is not a war, this is a way of living," explains a man in the documentary film "Beirut – The Last Home Movie" by Jennifer Fox (1988). The film offers insights into the daily life of a rich Christian family living in East Beirut. We see them working in the garden and cleaning the house, while we hear shooting and shelling close by. To forget the harsh realities of war the women epilate their legs, and the men compete with each other in car races through the narrow streets of the Lebanese mountains. During heavy bombardments the family sits together in the shelter, often with friends from the neighbourhood. They play cards, smoke, drink arak and dance the rural Levantine dabké. The children seem to enjoy the situation: They have the attention of the whole family upon them. They play games, watch animated cartoons, and are allowed to stay up late. Even the loudest explosions everyone ignores: Imprisoned by the war, the family creates their own private world in which they pretend to live an ordinary everyday life. They are constantly trying to convince themselves and their children to be happy. Jean Said Makdisi seems to agree with these observations: "It occurs to me that the children rather enjoy these crises, that is, until true terror strikes," she writes: "Everyone is at home; having become thoroughly irrelevant, discipline collapses. No-one is told to be quiet and do his homework. Bedtime is any time and no time. Daddy, one ear on the radio, the other

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[190] This memory formation of the generation is constantly interacting (and challenged) by different types of individual, social, cultural and political memories. An important memory here is the so- called «collective memory». However, Assmann argues that the term *«collective memory»* is not precise. She thus defines it as *«ideology»*, meaning the ideology of a state, of a confessional group, etc.

on the noise outside, will indulgently if absentmindedly agree to play a game in an inside room to try to fight off their fear" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 37). It seems a very common strategy by many parents to not to let their children feel the war too much. Still, on the long term – and the Lebanese Civil War was long term – this did probably not work. According to Khalaf the children's daily routines and conventional modes of behaviour were inexorably wrapped up in the omnipresence of death, terror, and trauma:

> Their schooling, eating and sleeping habits, playgrounds, encounters with others, perceptions, daydreams and nightmares, their heroes and role models (…). Even their games, their language became all warlike in tone and substance. Their makeshift toys, much like their fairly tales and legends, mimicked the cruelties of war. They collected cartridges, empty shells, and bullets. They played war by simulating their own gang fights. They acquired sophisticated knowledge of the artefacts of destruction just as earlier generations took delight in identifying wild flowers, birds, and butterflies. There is hardly an aspect of Lebanese children's lives, and this is certainly more so for adolescents who were involuntarily drawn into the fray of battle, that is exempt from such harrowing encounters. They have all been homogenized by the menacing cruelties of indiscriminate killing and perpetual anxieties over the loss of parents and family members. These and other such threats, deprivations, and indignities continue to consume their psychic energies and traumatize their daily life. Successive generations of adolescents have, in fact, known little else. (Khalaf, 2002, p. 238)

7.3.6 Between Self-therapy and Anger

Overall, the psychological perspective is very complex. The musicians and sound artists react very differently to their childhood in war - and to the 2006 war. Some of them seem to have a great fascination for these sounds of war, others react with aggression and anger, while others seem to take flight into imaginary worlds. "War is horrible, people die in this shit," Garo Gdanian told me, and he channels his anger and his aggression into death metal music (see chapter 6.4). "With the first bomb I got back my anger. I remembered everything. I tried to forget many things, but now all those memories are again hunting me. War sucks! It's not cool! The next album will definitely be about war" (Gdanian, 2006). Some of the rappers became fascinated by noble warriors like the Samurai, or by the Japanese Manga animation movie Grendizer (see chapter 4.1.3.). Cyrille Najjar from the gothic band The Arcane started to read books and write lyrics about death, cannibalism, occultism, and much more. Again, we have to be careful in drawing simple conclusions. The reactions to traumata of war inside these music circles would be another book again. Still, from a psychological perspective it seems clear: Many of these musicians of the war generation do actively remember and reconstruct their past - openly and in a more hidden manner. Some of the artists would probably not like to hear this psychological conclusion. According to the Lebanese anthropologist Samir Khalaf, Lebanese society is generally not too open about "psychoanalytic counselling and therapy." However, he writes that the "scars and scares" of war have left a "heavy psychic toll," and he sees it as highly problematic that "they are bound to remain masked and unrecognized and, hence, unattended to" (Khalaf, 2002, pp. 232-233). According to him, the trauma displays itself in "pervasive post-stress symptoms," "nagging feelings of despair and hopelessness," "vulgarization and impoverishment of public life," "erosion of civility," the "routinization of violence, chaos, and fear," and much more (Khalaf, 2002,

pp. 232-233). The generation of musicians I worked with tries to deal with the psychological burden and to at least un-mask some of the crucial issues.

One could, for example, argue that these musicians and sound artists use music as a self-therapy (a well-known method in trauma therapy). Music therapists worldwide use music to treat victims of trauma (see Maus, 2007; Sutton, 2002). Especially free improvisation is used very often. Music can function as a bridge to travel from the present back to the past. Maus further argues that trauma can be worked out with creativity: "Music helps return the listener to the pleasures of sensory involvement that trauma destroys" (Maus, 2007). Many musicians seem to agree with this. Wael Kodeih told me that music to him is a kind of psychoanalysis (see 6.5). Mazen Kerbaj seems to agree too:

> I think in playing music I go again through my experiences of war. For me, this is
> very important - or let's say: it seems important, as I like it a lot. Most people here
> live in denial of what has happened. They all say that they love each other, but the
> war is still in their body and mind. I think we have to keep it in the open so that this
> ugly history does not repeat again. Whenever I say this to Lebanese people, they do
> not want to listen. So music is my way of communicating these issues - unfortunately
> for a small audience. (Kerbaj, 2006)

About his recording "Starry Night" Kerbaj argues similarly: "To be honest, I preferred to stand on the balcony, to play trumpet and to record those bombs, than to stay in the living room and go crazy. When you play you shift your brain, and you hear those bombs as sounds, and not as killing machines. Just to continue working helped many of us to stay sane" (Kerbaj, 2006). Raed Yassin talked similarly: "During a war your life changes, and your way of work changes. You have to take decisions quickly. We decided to work, and to document in real time. Work saved us from going nuts" (Yassin, 2006).

Before we close this chapter, two main other points in Assmanns' article (Asmann, 2007) adapt very well to the Lebanese context: First, she observes that the memorizing of traumatic events (she mentions the Holocaust) usually starts to happen after fifteen to thirty years. In Lebanon we are exactly in this timeframe as well: The Civil War ended in 1990, and it is mainly now that a generation of musicians (and artists from other disciplines as well) heavily work on that topic. Before, the war was mainly a taboo topic, now this generation does what Assmann calls "memory talk" or "conversational remembering" (Assmann, 2007, p. 28). Secondly, Assmann argues the most our memories "doze" in us and wait to get wakened up by an external incident. For the Lebanese artists, this incident can be, for example: questions about the war from foreign journalists, or the 2006 war.

I am sure that the war put a big psychological burden upon these musicians. This burden, however, creates creativity as well. MC O-Marz told me the following:

> We Lebanese are all fucked in our head. But you always have to find the positive in
> the negative as well. If there had not been a war, I would not have become a rapper,
> and Lethal Skillz would not be a DJ now. The war gave us issues to rap about, it
> made us awake. But the war made us different people as well. We all know that we
> can die in the next second through a bomb or something else. But we live with it. (O-
> Marz, 2005)

7.4   Aesthetical Perspective

"Yes, I have a trained ear. I know if someone is lying from the tone of his voice. I learned this from listening to our politicians" (Khoury, 2006). This chapter deals with the music itself. It tries to answer the following main questions: What kind of musical aesthetics do we hear from these sound artists and musicians from Beirut? Can we hear overall aesthetical elements that are specific for this generation of artists? Can we identify something like a typical "Beirut sound"? Do these artists and musicians actually create something new? And: Do they perhaps create an aesthetic that we could define as the specific sound of the 21st Century, or the contemporary sound of an increasingly digitalized and globalized world?

The main references are clear: One group of musicians is highly influenced by popular and subcultural music and sounds from Europe and the USA; the other group mainly by either Egyptian singers of the early to mid-20th Century, by leftist singers from Egypt and Lebanon, or by Popular Lebanese music from the 1970s. Almost none of the musicians work with the principles of Arabic tarab music, with the "Lebanese music" from Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers, and with the pan-Arabic pop music of today.

However – as this research showed – deeper levels of music making are more important than these stylistic references: How do these musicians and sound artists work within these styles, genres and canons of music? How do they organize sound, how do they play their sonic material? To answer these questions I follow the Questionnaire of the listening test (see chapter 5). I do focus on some of the main points only, as a lot is discussed in the key pieces already (see chapter 6). I further want to make one thing clear: In this chapter I put forward my own and personal opinion. I do take the risk of judging musical qualities – and I thus follow the advice of Nercessian (chapter 1) who argues that we should not reduce all phenomena to sociology (Nercessian, 2002, p. 107). It is important to discuss the aesthetics and the qualities of music in Cross-Cultural Studies as well. These musicians from Beirut aim to compete worldwide. Thus, we would not take them seriously if we were to argue that all is relative. This is thus my critical view towards their music – other listeners would probably judge differently.

7.4.1 Forms and Melodies

On the level of the forms and melodies, I observed the following: Most of the songs (for example, from Ziyad Sahhab, Zeid Hamdan and Wael Kodeih aka Rayess Bek) are structured similarly to the average song in Europe and the USA. The arrangements neither refer to Arabic tarab music, nor to some of the leftist songs of the Lebanese Civil War period. All is set in clear arrangements: with verses and choruses that repeat themselves. Tarab music is arranged and played differently: It is structured in clear melodic sequences called Nafaz[191] (see chapter 3.1.4). Basically, the singer and his takht ensemble move from deeper to higher pitches, and then back. Within this process, the singer tries to find a large variety of melodic paths, and the musicians play around him (or her). Some of the leftist singers of the 1970s render their music differently as well – for example, Ahmad Qaboor. "The Arab identity of my songs lies in the musical structure," he told me:

The Arabic song develops like a cactus: One melody leads to the next melody. This

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[191] Touma (1968:, p. 33).

> melody again leads to the next melody, and so on. It is furthermore not necessary to repeat one of these melodies. You can continue your musical journey, and the listener does not know in advance where it will lead. It is this structure that counts and gives your song an Arabic identity. The instruments played are not too important. This kind of structure is deeply rooted in Islamic culture: you find it in music, calligraphy, and architecture. (Qaboor, 2006)

Interestingly, one can hear this kind of structure in many of the pieces of the free improvised and electro-acoustic music scenes as well. "CW Tapes" from Raed Yassin moves from one idea to next, and it never repeats itself. Similarly, Mazen Kerbaj, in some of his trumpet tracks, starts with a basic sonic idea that he smoothly develops into the next one. Charbel Haber often works similarly. One could thus argue that, as far as the structure is concerned, these artists are closer to the "Arabic" or "Islamic" identity than Ziyad Sahab – even though the latter sings in Arabic. This even holds true for the death metal group Weeping Willow to a certain extent: "Remains of a Bloodbath" moves from one melodic section to the next, and the repetitions are rather minimal. One might argue that adapting these criteria of structure across different genres might go too far. Still, I think it is a valuable thought – a thought that some artists and musicians could use or even exploit to create what some call *alternative modernity*, a musical modernity that is based upon principles of ones non-Western home culture (see below).

Another interesting fact is worth mentioning. Some of the Beiruti artists seem not to care whether a structure is "complete," or not. Soap Kills introduce in their song "Aranis" two beats in a rather surprising way. As an effect, the whole 4/4 beat structure of the song seems to shift. Other popular music artists worldwide work with this stylistic effect as well – however it is not that common. I would therefore say that for Soap Kills – and several other Beiruti bands – it is not too important to fulfil repeating structures strictly and rigidly. Consistency of form is not one of their main criteria. We hear this on many levels. The piece "CW Tapes" by Raed Yassin is one example. It is held together through various techniques of editing and manipulation; however, there is no overall aesthetical thread.

7.4.2 Consistency and Eclecticism

Consistency in style also seems rather unimportant. On the contrary, the music often sounds very eclectic. The indie rock band The New Government often rushes from one core idea to the next, with numerous breaks and direction changes. Often, even the genre changes; one minute it is reggae, the next rock. At times, it sounds like a medley of well-known stylistic ideas, a cocktail without any strong identity or personality – which sometimes, however, works very well. Soap Kills works similarly – we see this in "Aranis" (see 6.6) and in many other pieces. I asked Zeid Hamdan once: Why is this so? Why do so many bands in Beirut work with so many breaks, turnarounds, and sudden stops? "I don't know," he answered at first. "It's just that I don't want people to get bored. They feel uncomfortable when they have to listen to the same musical décor for too long. People here want movement, and change" (Hamdan, 2005). After having reflected somewhat, he offered another explanation – a psychological reading:

> In Beirut you never know what tomorrow will bring. A bomb might explode and your future is shattered. You walk in the street thinking of your beloved one, then 'boooooooom.' Your life can change radically every minute. So it's somehow nice to

> have this in the music as well: changes between silences and grooves to dance to,
> everything within a small amount of time. (Hamdan, 2005)

One could read it differently, as a certain weakness to create a consistent song – or even a lack of musical knowledge? To develop one musical core idea into the next one is probably one of the most basic, but most difficult tasks for a composer, songwriter or musician. Many music pieces from Beirut offer catchy core melodies, however, these melodies do not deform themselves and develop into new ones – we see this in "Aranis," for example. This however, is nothing new: It seems to be typically Lebanese. The songs of Fairuz were eclectic too. Mansour Rahbani, one of her composers who died in January 2009, told me the following:

> Our influences were always the Lebanese Folklore, Islamic music, and Arabic music.
> Important were also Syriac, Byzantine and Armenian music. A big influence was the
> classical European music. We always had an open ear for the opera. It was our goal to
> create our own handwriting out of all these influences. (Rahbani, 2001)

This is where the real discussion starts: Do these musicians create their own handwriting and identity? Or is their music just a cocktail of ideas? I think that Soap Kills actually has handwriting, and an identity. However, the potential is not fully utilized.

Today's musicians and sound artists do also switch between popular music and avantgarde approaches. Raed Yassin switches freely between *high culture* and *low culture*: He introduces an "elite" audience to new wave dabké.

7.4.3 Time Structures and Rhythms

Zeid Hamdan, Wael Kodeih, Scrambled Eggs, and other bands and DJs mainly work with rhythms, grooves and beats from the canon of popular music from the West: dub, reggae, dancehall, bossa nova, drum'n'bass, et cetera. Again, they use them in a rather eclectic way. Soap Kills, for example, have been playing a number of their songs for many years now – often in changing versions. However, instead of working on their musical formula and challenging it, they add new flavours to their old pieces: a bit of rock, post-rock, rap, and reggae. These styles are used as important points of reference – I experienced this in some of the rehearsals that I attended. In one of them, Ziyad Sahhab told his riqq player to play "a bit bolero" here, and "a bit chachacha" there. The final result was a song with different rhythmical and melodic parts, put together through breaks, accelerations and slowdowns. The rock band The New Government worked similarly when they rehearsed their song "Fat Horse" in a basement in Achrafieh. Singer Jeremie Regnier had brought the lyrics, the melodies and the chord changes. He introduced the song chord by chord on the piano, and the band searched for ideas of what and how to play along. They used fixed stylistic reference in their discussions: "Can you play this a bit punk, or rock, or trash." With copying however, many of the bands and musicians are not too strict: They play reggae, bossa nova, and punk just how they remember and memorize it. One might say that they play it in a personalized way. Or: They use these styles as flavours. These flavours make their music sound international, global, and open to the world.

Concerning the time structures used by the musicians, I did not find anything unusual. Most of the bands work with a steady pulse (beat), often 4/4, at times 6/4 – for example, the gothic group The Arcane. Apart from the sound artists working with free improvisation and electro-acoustic music, no-one works with free rhythmical structures – as, for example, used in the *taqsim* improvisations in

tarab music[192]. The musicians, further, do not use the huge repertoire of fixed rhythms (*wazn*) in Arab music. This repertoire consists of approximately 100 different cycles, with a length up to 176 beats (Touma, 1998, pp. 75-83).

7.4.4 Tonal Structures

We do not find many surprises on the level of the tonalities. Almost no-one uses Arabic quartertones. The musicians either work with tempered scales, major and minor chords, or with un-tempered noises and drones. Wael Kodeih, Weeping Willow and other groups sometimes work with scales that resemble Arabic scales: Harmonic minor scales, pentatonic scales, and Locrian and Lydian modes. Some of the singers do sing Arabic songs, but they do not master the techniques of Arabic singing properly. Others, Ghada Shbeir and Rima Khcheich for example, do so. They master the difficult, un-tempered Arabic maqam scales. They learned singing through many years of practise. One problem, however, occurs even on that high level: When, for example, Rima Khcheich tries to sing un-tempered scales over tempered jazz harmonies – she often works with a Dutch jazz ensemble. Khcheich seems not to feel at ease, and she often does not find the right pitch[193]. In contrast, whenever she sings the Egyptian repertoire, she has no problem singing perfectly. And she does have a gifted voice. The problem occurs on some of the tracks on her CDs, and at live concerts. In one of our interviews I asked her about that topic. Her answer was very honest, and convincing:

> I love to try new things, for example to sing Muwashahat over jazz chords.
> Sometimes it is however difficult to sing in this setting. In Arabic music the takht
> ensemble follows my voice and supports me. In jazz, the instruments do not follow
> my voice. I sing alone, and I do not always feel at ease. It's a great challenge. Still, it
> is important to try something new. (Khcheich, 2005)

7.4.5 Instrumentation

A great variety of instruments are used. I saw and heard most of the instruments of the Arabic takht: the oud, the qanun, the riqq, and the violin. Further, the typical jazz and rock instruments are in use: piano, double bass, drums, guitar, trumpet, saxophone, flute, et cetera. The electro-acoustic artists work with the latest Mac and PC laptops, and with the latest audio software – from Ableton Live to MAX/MSP. One aspect I found interesting was that musicians from different genres like to prepare their instruments: Mazen Kerbaj, Raed Yassin, and Sharif Sehnaoui use different techniques and materials to work on the trumpet, the double bass and the acoustic guitar. Cynthia Zaven played her piano on a truck while driving through the Indian city of Mumbai. Others use unusual instruments: Hayaf Yassine, a young player of tarab music, performs on a self-constructed santur, instead of the qanun. Zeid Hamdan works on an old groovebox, Charbel Haber loves his old reel-to-reel tape machine. Raed Yassin, in one of his projects, played old Arabic music from his cassette player via a microphone into the sound system – or via a cable into the computer. He further manipulated these cassettes by hand, moving the tape forward and backward with his fingers. "It sounded really weird," Yassin explained to me (Yassin, 2005). Yassin goes deep into the popular music of the region, but he

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[192] See Lagrange (2000, p. 82), or Touma)(1968:, p. 26).
[193] One can hear this problematic issue in many different projects that fuse Arabic singing with *jazz*, electronic beats, or rock music. Often, the singers fall out of tune.

does so with an avantgarde approach.

The question whether they play and master their instruments well, unusually, or even differently is delicate to answer. For my part I heard some brilliant players: Ziyad Sahhab and his fellow musicians play very well. Often they play very precisely, and they do care about how they sound – even if they perform their weekly set in the Walimah bar, while people are eating, drinking, and talking. Mazen Kerbaj, Sherif and Christine Sehnaoui are capable of producing very distinct sounds on their instruments as well. Tarek Atoui is very knowledgeable in the field of electro-acoustic music: He knows how to use the MAX/MSP software, and how to create his own and personal sound - again a sound full of ruptures, unexpected changes, all in a great variety of frequencies. Other musicians I would not see as brilliant instrumentalists, but as artists with a certain sense of taste. Zeid Hamdan is capable of creating catchy songs. However, he uses a lot of pre-sets. As mentioned above: He probably could develop his songs further. Charbel Haber seems not to care too much about instrumental skills. He relies on the principle of trial and error. For my ear, his sound experiments are not refined enough to really stand the test of time. However, with his band Scrambled Eggs, Haber is capable of creating very tense and emotional moments: He has a good voice, and in his performances he acts very fresh, energetic, intense, and somehow "authentic."

Some of the musicians and singers did not study music for a long time – they started late. I discussed this with the pianist Joelle Khoury, whom I consider to be one of the most important actors in, and for the alternative music scene in Beirut. I like her musical approaches, her ideas, her small jazz compositions, and her musical taste. However, she is limited in her playing on the piano. In her jazz compositions one can hear the influences of Thelonious Monk, and sometimes Johann Sebastian Bach – her two main references. Her compositions bring together different patterns and counter-patterns that interact in different ways. Her playing on the piano, however, is not convincing all the time: In the faster improvisations she is not always 100% precise; she sometimes loses the plot, and she could play more laid back and a bit more relaxed. Overall, I think that she is a better songwriter than a pianist. We discussed this issue openly in one of our interviews: "I started late with the piano," Khoury told me.

> You can't become a classical piano player in seven years. So, for a long time, my
> mind was full of complicated musical concepts and compositions, but I rarely
> managed to play them on the piano. So I spent a lot of time in our house in the
> Lebanese mountains, playing Bach and Chopin, jazz standards, and exercises in all
> keys. Today, I feel that I'm catching up technically, but it is still frustrating
> sometimes, to not to be able to translate certain ideas to the piano. (Khoury, 2005)

Khoury told me this in 2005. Since then one can hear in her many concerts that she is catching up step by step.

Other circles would need more skills as well – I kept thinking this during various concerts I attended. Compared to rappers in Belgrade, Dakar, Johannesburg, or London, I found not too many MCs in Beirut to be really convincing: They are often not much aware of *rhythmical flow*, and of the timbres of their voice. MC Malikah, who won the MTV Arabia rap contest, and Wael Kodeih, among others, are exceptions here.

7.4.6 Production

The production itself is another important issue. Listening to the different genres within the

alternative circles shows clearly that the advantage lies with artists who work digitally, or at least with not too many acoustic instruments. The rapper Wael Kodeih was able to produce his track "Schizophrenia" in high quality. However, some of the rock and metal bands find it difficult to produce their music that well. The death metal band Weeping Willow, but other bands as well, told me many times that they would need more studio time, better sound engineers, or sound engineers that know about rock music and not only about commercial Arabic pop music. "We did not have much studio time. We were stressed, and then the fucking electricity went on and off. That's Beirut! It's not that easy," Garo Gdanian from Weeping Willow told me (Gdanian, 2005). To a certain extent it is a money issue. Beirut hosts some good sound engineers, and if a band is capable of paying enough (or knows a specific sound engineer well) it can produce a high quality rock and metal album. Still, some bands go to the USA and to Europe to record their music with a specialized sound engineer. Others just send the recording for mastering. This is common practise with bands in Europe too: They often leave the country to produce in the studio of their dreams, or with the sound engineer of their choice.

7.4.7 Sound and Sonic Textures

Interesting and a bit surprising to me was that so many musicians and sound artists focus on sound a lot. And many of them do so in very convincing ways. The rapper Wael Kodeih searched for a while to find the right timbre to rap "Schizophrenia." Raed Yassin plays a lot on the level of sound design. "CW Tapes" switches between two- and three-dimensional spaces, plays with the balance between the left and right channel of the speakers, between background and foreground. According to him, sound qualities and textures are a more important criterion for the arrangement of the sound material than the actual content of the sampled speeches and propaganda songs. Charbel Haber focuses on sound textures as well – however he creates them by coincidence. For him a piece of music becomes mainly a sonic texture. Many of these artists do not shy away from very harsh, noisy, trashy, distorted and edged sounds and noises. They perform them with the highest intensity on maximal volume, or on low volumes, almost not noticeable. Some of the sounds of Mazen Kerbaj's trumpet are so silent, that one can hear them through a microphone and an amplifier only. Sound quality, for many of these artists, is the main musical criteria: "Really good artists are able to produce sounds and timbres that one has not heard before," Jawad Nawfal explained to me:

> Today, where you can create all kinds of timbres with a variety of sound programs,
> this criterion becomes even more important. This is why I am so impressed by bands
> like Radiohead: They create unique sounds. It's all about research! It's about
> searching and constructing sounds, hour by hour. (Nawfal, 2005)

Most of the artists do further work with a broad definition of music and sound – as Mazen Kerbaj explained: "Once a journalist told me that war sounds are not music. I do not agree with him. For me everything can be music" (Kerbaj, 2005). However, some of the bands and artists are not very sophisticated in that respect: They use a lot of pre-set sounds from sound software, and from sampler CDs. Very critical ears do thus not approve of their music too much. However, it could be an aesthetical choice and decision as well: Zeid Hamdan, for example, likes to work with these simple and catchy melodies and sounds, and with minimalist beats.

7.5   A First Conclusion

What does this mean? We hear in the music of these musicians the knowledge assembled in Beirut, we hear the possibilities artists have in the Lebanese capital. We find artists who have great ideas, but do not always manage to render them into great music. We hear that they are experienced on the level of sound and noise – maybe the war had an impact here, as a psychological reading would suggest. One thing is clear: There are more than a few artists and musicians who have reached a very high level. They do convince me, and the specialist listeners of the listening test, on various levels.

There is a downside as well – especially when we leave the best of these artists aside for a while. We sometimes hear that Beirut is a rather small place, and to a certain extent closed off from artistic competition. Many artists and musicians go on stage rather early, and are often celebrated by their small in-community who do not have the opportunity to compare "their heroes" with other rock bands, rappers and jazz players. Overall, one can thus definitely say that the average level of alternative bands performing in London, Paris, Berlin, New York or even Bern is higher than in Beirut. The lack of competition inside the circles is probably one reason. During my research I heard many other reasons as well: Charbel Haber told me, again, that the Lebanese are just lazy: He blamed it on the heat, and the sun –a rather questionable explanation that evokes racist stereotypes. Another reason often mentioned is the uncertain future: How can one invest in a long-lasting career and into long-term projects, when one does not know what tomorrow brings? Some of the Lebanese artists seem to have the tendency to try to succeed quickly in playing a certain style or mixture. If it does not work, they do not work to refine it, but they start with the next project – hoping the crowd might like it.

One big problem is the education system: While in the West musicians can learn their instruments at high profile jazz schools, conservatories, or in private lessons with well-known musicians, this is not the case in Beirut. Many of the musicians are thus autodidacts. They are not always on the highest level musically, and they might create more surprising mixtures if they would have more knowledge of, for example, the structures of tarab music. One example is the key piece by Ziyad Sahhab: It creates a great emotional atmosphere. However, it could go much further: introducing more heterophony, quartertones, and a more interesting structure.

7.5.1   Rationalizing Arabic Music – The Education System

My research showed that the knowledge and non-knowledge of these artists is closely interlinked with the local context. The musicians do not know too much about Arabic music – see chapter 7.1. Responsible for this non-knowledge is, to a great extent, the education system of Arabic music in Lebanon and in the Arab world.[194] A short excursus is thus needed. For the Lebanese musicologist Victor Sahhab it seems clear: "The education for Arabic music starts too late, and in the wrong way," he told me:

> It should start in the mother's womb. The embryo, the baby and the child have to swim in Arabic music from the early days. However, many parents do not listen to Arabic music anymore. They consume commercial pop music, gossip, and entertainment shows through the media. And when a child wants to learn Arabic

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[194] The education system in Lebanon is an issue many musicians and scholars comment on and write about (see Touma (, 1998:, p. 187),; Racy, (2003),; Weinrich, (2006:, p. 53)).

>   music in our schools, conservatories, and music schools, he or she learns it in the
>   wrong way. (Sahhab, 2005)

The chapter on the musical history of Lebanon (3.2) showed that the conservatory has taught Arabic music through European methods of music education for many years now. The conservatory is split into the *Western* section and the *Oriental* section. "They do not even call it the Arabic music section! The Oriental section could be anything: Hindu music, Vietnamese music, Gamelan," Victor Sahhab argued (Sahhab, 2005). The major problem at the conservatory, according to many musicians, is that the students start with Oriental music too late. First, they are obliged to go through the theory of European music, before they can start with the theory of Oriental music – according to Ghada Shbeir, after the fourth year only (Shbeir, 2006). Further, Arabic music is taught with Western-based pedagogy. European notation serves as the basis of the instruction. The students learn to play pre-fixed compositions, and sometimes they are taught on how to harmonize Arabic maqam forms (Racy, 2003, p. 92). Further, European methods of learning, and finally playing an instrument, are adapted to Arabic instruments (Touma, 1998, p. 187). According to Ghada Shbeir, it was one of the main efforts of Walid Gholmieh, the current director of the Lebanese national conservatory, to publish new books with teaching methods for the different instruments: oud, nay, qanun, et cetera (Shbeir, 2006). For example for the oud, the stylistic ideas of Charbel Rouhana and Marcel Khalife are very influential – I heard this from many musicians[195]. Oud players learn to play fixed melodies and songs, and a major focus lies on technical skills – thus a lot of finger exercises are introduced. This leads to a specific aesthetic: Many of these players are highly skilled, and they show this in their music. They play fixed compositions, and they do play their oud over chord structures – minor and major chords. We hear this in the duo project "Jadal" by Charbel Rouhana and Marcel Khalife. To my Swiss ear, these and other musicians often create agreeable melodies, harmonious euphony, pleasant to the ear, sometimes kitsch – however, played with great virtuosity[196]. In an interview, Marcel Khalife told the newspaper *An-Nahar* that he and Charbel Rouhana in their "Jadal" oud duo (with ensemble or orchestra) are "rationalizing" musical traditions. "What distinguishes 'Jadal' is that both the solos and the rhythms of the riqq are in a written form in their entirety as well as the solos performed by the ouds of Khalife and Rouhana" (Chalala, 1995). Victor Sahhab refers to many of these musicians as "Orientalists":

>   The ones that studied in the Western section feel superior to the Arabic music. They
>   often create Western music with an Oriental flavour. The musicians of the Oriental

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[195] "«Khalife, who long studied the oud in the Lebanese Conservatory, Lebanon's prestigious school of music, discovered certain shortcomings in mastering this instrument. This "'led me to compose "Oud Marcel Khalife" [the Lute of Marcel Khalife]," which "'is an academic method developed through 500 pages."' The book itself has a chapter entitled "Oud Quartet," in which Khalife inquires as to why the Arabs lack a "family of the oud" in the same way we have "one for the kaman [Violin]; why not have oud-bass, oud-soprano, and oud aktovat." Writing the oud quartet, Khalife adds, helped him complete the "Oud Concerto," which was performed with the Philharmonic Orchestra in Kieve, Ukraine".» (Chalala, 1995). These issues are mentioned further in a documentary film about Marcel Khalife. (Dupouey, 2004).

[196] I saw Marcel Khalife performing at the Beiteddine Festival in 2005. The old leftist songs of Marcel Khalife were kept at the centre. Sometimes they were re-written and re-arranged for an instrumental ensemble and an orchestra: for oud, a string section, three percussionists, a clarinet and a trumpet, and an accordion. Around the well-known melodies those instruments sometimes played sometimes a waltz, then tango, flamenco, a balkanesque fanfare, and jazz solo. The musicians played very well, very dynamically and precisely. Still, to my ears this music became a cocktail of styles – often played with a lot of pathos and sweetness. The experimentation never went too far - last but not least because of the fact that the audience wanted to hear the old patriotic songs. As a conclusion: I' am not convinced that this art music approach over popular song structures is the right path forward. However, this is – again – a personal opinion.

> section do not learn Arabic music properly, and they do not even learn European music to a high standard. So, they are lost: They can't really play Arabic music, and they can't create great fusions, because they know too little about European music. (Sahhab, 2005)

On the level of singing, changes appear to be coming. According to Ghada Shbeir, Walid Gholmieh opened the conservatory to religious songs: Quran recitation, and Christian liturgies. This might be a step in a different direction. The violinist and musicologist Nidaa Abou Mrad might be important as well: He has started to teach Arabic music at the Antonine University in Beirut differently, and he works with highly talented young musicians.

The main reason behind these discussions about the education system is a deep and ongoing controversy about *authenticity* and *modernity* in Arabic music (and culture) today. Tarab musicians "did not learn from books and manuals but rather through extended processes of socialization" (Racy, 2003, p. 34)[197]. Shannon discusses the situation of musical education in the Syrian city of Aleppo, and states very clearly that many of the great musicians of tarab music do not have knowledge of musical notation and orchestration:

> In fact, many well-known twentieth-century Aleppine composers have had little or no training in music theory and notation. The oral transmission of melodies and their memorization by choruses and instrumentalists was the primary mode of composition and study and remains practiced today among older and even some younger singers and composers; in fact, some musicians expressed a distrust of notation, preferring what they perceived to be the 'certainty' of learning via listening (*sama*) and dictation (*talqin*) from a master teacher. (Shannon, 2006, p. 148)

In Syria, many musicians and music lovers understand tarab music as cultural *authenticity*. Often the term "Oriental spirit" (*ruh sharqiyya*) is used to name what is *authentic* about this kind of music. Musicians, art lovers and critics in Aleppo "describe the person endowed with Oriental spirit as emotional and sensitive, someone who uses intuition and understands instinctively the nuance of the melodic modes" (Shannon, 2006, p. 156). This sensibility to instinctively understand tarab music is something mainly "people from here" inherent. Westerners, on the contrary, are said not to possess these possibilities. According to Shannon they are often described as "rational, direct, and logical, someone barely capable of understanding the modes, if at all" (Shannon, 2006, p. 156). Many Arab modernists do not agree with this position. For them "Oriental spirit" is an attribute for being backward. For them, tarab is no longer a positive aesthetic term; they prefer a more intellectual music that caters to the thinking of the listener and not to the old-fashioned emotional listening of tarab listeners whose shouting and sighing to them seems *vulgar*. In their view, tarab is non-modern, non-reflective, hopelessly repetitive and emotional (Shannon, 2006, p. 181). In his research Shannon concludes clearly that "Techno-rationality is identified strongly with the West, and is understood somehow as the opposite of Arab emotionality and sentiment. Emotion and sentiment is understood

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[197] Traditionally, the learning process is linked either directly or indirectly to religious contexts. "«Before wWorld wWar 1, a larger number of Egyptian singers developed their vocal artistry through performance of Sufi liturgies. Their Sufi training was usually reflected by the religious title *«Shaykh»,* which is preceded their names. (…) A further traditional path toward vocal proficiency has been Qur'anic chanting. The art of *tajwid*, or the melodically elaborate recitation of the Qur'an, entails mastering certain rules for proper enunciation and textual delivery, developing knowledge of the maqamat (or melodic modes), and cultivating effective improvisatory skills. Similarly, in some communities, learning has been acquired through the mastering of other religious repertoires, for example certain church liturgies".» (Racy, 2003, pp. 25/-26).

by many Arabs as defining elements of their authentic self" (Shannon, 2006, p. 66).

7.5.2   *Alternative Modernity*

Tarab music was the victim of this debate. While the "rationalized" version of Arabic music is dominant in education and media, the "emotional" tarab is known mainly to insider circles. Musically however, this completely different approach of tarab music (see chapter 3.1.4) would offer a huge amount of possibilities. Musicians could try to create innovation from within tarab music. They would not attach Arabic flavors to a Western-style song structure anymore, but they would work on musical principles that are deeply rooted in the history of the Arabic world and of Islamic culture. Some musicians try to do so: The Lebanese Swiss composer, oud player and guitarist Mahmoud Turkmani, works with an Egyptian takht ensemble. He performs Arabic takht music that follows surprising paths – and not contemporary Western art music with Eastern colours, as one can hear in many other examples (hear track 13 on Companion CD). Unfortunately, his music provoked very negative reactions. After one of his concerts at a conference of Arab music in Cairo, some musicologists from the Arab world called him a traitor to Arab music. I assume that changes from within a "tradition" seem more "threatening" to conservative insiders. Other critics argue that Turkmani does not know tarab music well enough. He is considered an outsider who tries to change tarab music from within.

Some scholars define approaches like the one of Mahmoud Turkmani as *alternative modernity*. In ethnomusicology, the term is used to describe a modernity that comes out of its own, specific, mostly non-Western culture or context. It is about finding *modernity* inside the structures and principles of one's home country. Theoretically, it is a delicate concept. First, alternative modernity seems to suggest that modernity derives from Europe and the USA only, and so artists from the Middle East (for example) are condemned to create an "alternative" modernity. Numerous scholars would not agree with that setting - for example Shannon: "We have to understand that what we call 'modernity' was co-produced by Europe and its colonies" (Shannon, 2006, p. 63). Second, we should not divide cultures and cultural forms into fixed and closed entities. We should not define locality in an essentialist way. And still: Musically speaking the approach of alternative modernity offers a huge amount of possibilities. We can find examples for this all over the world: The Paris-based Lebanese composer Zad Moultaka is currently working on a composition with Lebanese Zajal poetry. The Indian composer Sandeep Bhagwati works with the arrangements and frequencies of Indian raga and tala music, but using non-Indian instruments. The music is deeply rooted in Indian art, but does not sound Indian at first hearing.

If we read alternative modernity not too strictly and rigidly, it can be used to challenge the power structures inside cross-cultural projects. The duo of the Palestinian singer Kamilya Jubran and the Swiss jazz player and electronic artist Werner Hasler is a good example here (hear track 12 on Companion CD). The two bring together Arabic singing and minimal electronics. But unusually the well-trained Arabic singer takes the lead, and the electronics follow her voice – similar to a takht ensemble. This marks a difference: Normally in crossover projects the electronics set the theme, and the Arabic singer just brings in some Oriental flavours. We can find this formula in many projects throughout the history of music: Often Europe and the USA set the theme, and other nations provide colourful local variations. Even many Arabic musicians inside the Arab world repeat that formula – mainly because they do not know the principles of tarab music, and are not well-trained in Arabic

singing. They, too, offer Arabic flavours over song or beat structures. A concert by Soap Kills in Deir el-Qamar (20.8.2005) is a typical example. Yasmine Hamdan sung over the beat structures produced by Zeid Hamdan. She often struggled to find the right moment to start singing, and while singing she seemed to sing along. On Zeid Hamdan's side a similar problem occurred: Even though he varied his minimalist beats in an interesting way now and then, he was not capable of supporting Yasmine's voice, to follow her, or to start interacting with her. To me it seemed as if Zeid Hamdan and Yasmine Hamdan were not too knowledgeable of the musical sides of the other: If Zeid Hamdan knew more about Arabic music, he could try to build longer melodic paths – as used in tarab music. And if Yasmine Hamdan could feel the electronics better, she would feel more at ease.

7.5.3   The Sound of a Generation

        This excursus was not meant to suggest that musicians from Beirut should make Arabic music. However, it showed some possible paths that – I believe – would clearly lead to new aesthetical forms. It further highlighted one problematic key issue from the local context. The problematic state of Arabic music leads to the situation that the musicians from Beirut can only look at music that flourishes abroad: in Europe and in the USA. They can try to work within these foreign musical genres, and they do so with remarkable talent. However, they do not find strong examples – musicians and musical styles – in their local environment. And this, I believe, has a negative impact in some cases – for example, on the level of the musicality itself.

        As a conclusion, I would argue that the strengths of these musicians and sound artists from Beirut are the following: They have a specific knowledge and taste for sounds and textures, and a very fresh, playful and direct approach to music and music making. They organise sound and noise with a certain independency, they mix genres and styles freely. They further do not shy away from imperfection, accidents, chaos and failure. Many believe in the strength of collective music – this is interesting, as it is in its essence close to Arabic tarab music. Improvisation is important to many of them – as the clarinet player Béchir Saade argued:

> When we're playing improvised music (…) what's peculiar is the instant you're living
> at the moment. You're not in the past. You're not in the future. You're in the moment
> itself and you're trying to open your ears as much as possible, to get whatever you can
> get and to react to whatever's going on. It's a continuous process. There's practically
> no thought process on an intellectual level. It's just pure emotion, an explosion of
> whatever you want to express at that moment. (Wilson-Goldie, 2006)

        One of their strengths is to create an authenticity of emotion - an authenticity that is often used by popular music scholars or music journalists to define a certain musical quality: honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness of a musical expression. At the same time they show certain limitations: Many of these musicians learned music late, and they do not live in surroundings where they hear great music all the time. To a certain extent, musicality has suffered. They do create new aesthetics. However, they could go even further.

        Overall, one could define their music as the aesthetical approach of a generation – comparable to the Zeitgeist elsewhere. One example: These musicians and sound artists are not afraid of using the original sounds of war – or are at least trying to imitate them. The generation before worked differently. The bombs Marcel Khalife and Khaled el-Habre put into their tracks were easily recognizable as being synthesized, and not coming from the original source. They further used a lot of

pathos: marching rhythms, fanfares to deal with turmoil. War experiences were thus rendered into clear, often stereotypical emotional sounds of patriotism, pride, suffering and longing. It was a programmatic music. "Music is of two kinds: absolute and programmatic. In absolute music, composers fashion ideal soundscapes of the mind. Programmatic music is imitative of the environment and, as its name indicates, it can be paraphrased verbally in the concert program" (Schafer, 1994, p. 103). Today's generation is into absolute music. However, it tends to fall back into programmatic approaches at times – the music of Mazen Kerbaj, for example, can be seen as programmatic as well. This is one among many typical aspects of the music of this generation from Beirut: One can not put it into pre-fixed categories anymore.

OPERATIONALIZATION: CHALLENGING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

8.   Locality and Place in the Music of a Digitalized and Transnational World

> The most vital contemporary music searches for ways to articulate new responses to the dramas of social change, technological shifts and upheavals in how to make, how to show, how to hear with clarity, how to remember, how to move around, how to maintain poise in a world gone crazy with commercial and informational delirium. (Toop, p. 3)

This research offered a detailed case study about music and music making in Beirut. The aim was to contribute to the study of localization and globalization processes in music in an increasingly digitalized and transnational world. This last chapter now operationalizes different key concepts that can be discussed, compared and used in other contexts: *locality* and *place*, and *cultural diversity* and *cultural difference*. To do so, two of the main questions of this research shall be answered:

1)   How do musicians in Beirut create and define *locality* and *place* in today's digitalized and transnational world?
2)   Do we head towards musical homogenization, or do today's musicians and sound artists create new artistic forms and aesthetics?

8.1   *Reading the World through Music*

We found out that the musicians and sound artists from Beirut are well informed about what is happening in their specific niche cultures worldwide. An overall Zeitgeist influences their music, their music making, and their discourses around it. Similar to their contemporaries in different places around the globe, these sound artists are fascinated by sound, and by sonic textures. Their definition of music is broad: It includes the noises and sounds of their closer environment. This indicates that the approaches of pioneer avantgarde musicians in Europe and the USA are today not only influencing popular music in the West, but popular music in Beirut, and probably other places as well. These non-Western artists rework, re-arrange and/or imitate the sounds and noises of their city with the latest sound software. They do not even miss out the global retro-trend, and work with reel-to-reel tape machines, cassette players, and other old school sound equipment. They move rather freely between experimental and popular projects, and between what is often referred to as high-culture and low-culture. They ignore the old hierarchies of E and U music - of rational *serious* music and emotional, body-driven *entertainment* music.

One could argue that these musicians and sound artists create the soundtrack of the 21st Century. Their music is an attempt to "create sense out of chaos" as Anthony Storr argues. He states that music is not an escape from "real" life, but a way of ordering human experience and of creating sense out of chaos (Storr, 1992, pp. 182-183). According to him, "languages are ways of ordering words; political systems are ways of ordering society; musical systems are ways of ordering sounds. What is universal is the human propensity to create order out of chaos" (Storr, 1992, p. 64). This is

exactly what I heard in a performance by Tarek Atoui and the Staalplaat Sound System in the Club Transmediale in Berlin in 2007 – and on Tarek Atoui's latest CD, released on the "Most Aux Vaches" series of the well-known Staalplaat Label (hear track 11 on Companion CD) On his laptop, Atoui creates soundscapes full of ruptures, cuts and contrasts. A mash-up of intense noises, digital frequencies, and samples from different sources: field recordings, voices (Arabic, English, Chinese, etc.) media files (from radio and TV), popular music (Arabic strings, Chinese Opera, etc.), war sounds, and much more. These sounds reach us in different qualities (lo-fi to hi-fi) and compression (MP3 to Wave). Atoui adds reverb, distortion and other effects. He sends the resulting sounds to the left and to the right channel, and to the foreground and the background of the speakers. On stage, Atoui used a joystick to steer his sound program MAX/MSP. He stood still when his music dived through chaos: with rhythmic structures deriving from all possible directions. Then his body would start to move when the introduced breakbeats, and hardcore drum'n'bass began structuring the soundscape – beats from the well-known canon of popular music and club culture. "I want my music to be a violent message of hope, of denying all forms of repression and of believing in people's wills and right to freedom," Atoui said in an interview (Atoui, 2006). In Berlin, Atoui controlled his laptop sometimes, and sometimes his laptop seemed to control him. "We fucked up, we lost control," he told me after the performance very unhappily. This is what today's world is about, I thought: We are surrounded by information, by war, by terror, by a huge amount of media sources. It seems like we have lost control: And still we have more options and possibilities than ever before. Simon Marshall Jones, in a CD review on brainwashed.com, wrote:

> My reading of Atoui's music is that it is a narrative of, and a commentary on, the way things break down and the ongoing processes of disintegration. (…) For me, it locks on to the end-of-times angst that seems to grip modern society, portraying with alarming clarity the not-so-gentle collapse of global civilization with its attendant anarchic aftermath. (Simon Marshall-Jones, 27 July 2008, brainwashed.com)

This is exactly what this research was about as well: Reading about the world through music, sound and noise. Or at least, reading about Beirut and its position in today's world. In doing so, we open up music studies to social anthropology – and we follow Veit Erlmann, who calls for a new ethnography of the ear. In his edited book "Hearing Cultures – Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity" (2005) he suggests that it is possible to conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a deepened understanding of a society:

> It is not only by accumulating a body of interrelated texts, signifiers, and symbols that we get a sense of the relationships and tensions making up a society. The ways in which people relate through the sense of hearing also provide important insights into a wide range of issues confronting societies around the world as they grapple with the massive changes wrought by modernization, technologization, and globalization. (Erlmann, 2005, p. 3)

I hope this research presented a variety of insights, challenges and enabling and disabling conditions from Lebanon, and from the Lebanese people. Through the music and the strategies of the musicians, I learned how deeply conflicted and traumatized this country still is, how much of its strengths (and its knowledge) it has already lost, and how many energetic and creative people it still hosts. I learned so from: the band leader Garo Gdanian from Weeping Willow who channels his traumata, nightmares and frustrations into aggressive death metal; the rapper Rayess Bek, who by the time of writing has migrated to France; the Duo Soap Kills that remixes Lebanese pre-war songs with nostalgia; the

singer and oud player Ziyad Sahhab who tries to find his independent political voice; or from the sound designer Rana Eid for whom listening to music still is painful, as it reminds her of her childhood in the Lebanese Civil War.

On a higher level – in the sphere of the senses – Tarek Atoui and many of these musicians and sound artists might even confirm some reflections made in music studies in recent years. Werner Jauk (Jauk, 2008), Rolf Grossmann (Grossmann, 2005), and other scholars argue that we are heading from the dominance of the *visual space* to the dominance of the *auditory space*. Jauk argued at the conference in Oldenburg (Jauk, 2008) that information today reaches us from all possible, official and unofficial sides and channels. We do not have to look for it anymore; it reaches us. This setting, according to Jauk, resembles the way we hear things, and not anymore the way we see things. This greater awareness of the *auditory space* again inspires today's musicians and sound artists: They hear the world around them with "new" ears, and they will come up with even newer, more surprising and challenging aesthetics and forms in the future.

8.2   Attacking the concept of "Cultural Diversity" and "Cultural Difference"

These contemporary aesthetics do challenge the perceptions of many of the main actors in the field of music – especially in cross-cultural settings: the producers of world music, the international arts councils, the NGOs who use music projects to support peace, the concert organisers, and the ethnomusicologists. Many of them still see cultural globalization as one-way streets – from the West to the East and the South, but never back. They fear that music will increasingly become homogenized all over the globe. This led to an urgent debate on cultural diversity – held, for example, through the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. This declaration is important. However, it is necessary to not close our ears to contemporary sounds and music, and to search for the great variety of music that is in fact out there. If we find it, we should not judge too early. Too often, the artists in Beirut are confronted with the accusation of being "Westernized", and/or not "Arabic enough." This "Orientalist approach" – as the musicians call it – drives them mad. When Raed Yassin hears these remarks, he becomes furious:

> How do they dare to say so? It's so arrogant, and ignorant. My work derives directly from my environment. I saw how close relatives got killed; I lived in Beirut when it was destroyed, and when it was reconstructed. I lived like a nomad, and had to move between many homes, between Beirut and the Lebanese mountains. In my artistic work I love to deconstruct and reconstruct sound and media files. I feel at home when I work with the sonic material that surrounded me during my life. However, I organize this material in the way I want. (Yassin, 2006)

Joelle Khoury can recall many stories of similar misunderstandings as well.

> Once I met a German banker who wanted to sponsor a jazz concert. I told him that I'm into Rilke and that I intend to do a project with music and his poems. The German guy got angry. He asked why I didn't work with my own culture. I answered because I prefer Rilke to Khalil Gibran. There was no funding, after all. (Khoury, 2005)

She had similar experiences in France. There she constantly felt that people were annoyed by the fact that she was not presenting Arabic music. "I got to feel from them that I should better stay in my

fucking country, or play dabké folklore for them. I was really annoyed and angry. I think the French are afraid that we will start competing with them in their 'own' genres" (Khoury, 2005).

My research in Beirut showed that, in general, notions of *cultural diversity* and the concept of *cultural difference* are too limited. We should focus on the concepts of *biography* and *generation*, and not on simplified, essentialist notions of cultures – or the *cultural*. It is patronizing to tell these musicians and sound artists from Beirut what they should sound like, and what kind of music they should play: Arabic music, if possible. It is a lack of trust in the creativity and the potential of these artists. Some of them might not have reached the highest possible level yet, as I explained (and judged) in the chapter on the aesthetical perspective (7.4). But still: Wouldn't it be better to wait and see with what kind of musical aesthetics they will come up with in the near future? Their arguments put forward in chapter 7.1 (historical perspective) are important and right: These artists form ideas and create platforms for upcoming generations too. They create a lively music scene in Beirut. And this is the basis for any artistic development. We should thus support them, and not make them responsible for saving the musical diversity of the world alone.

8.3   At the Core of Music

These musicians and sound artists suggest looking at different levels of music making when we want to see what *locality* and *place* could mean in the sound of the 21st Century. We should not judge from the musical genres and styles only, whether a musician plays *local* music or not. We should focus on the sonic material these artists are using as well: the samples, the sounds, and the noises. And we should not ignore how exactly they arrange, interconnect and play this sonic material. We do hear *locality* on these deeper levels of music making as well: We hear from the intonation and the timbres of the Arabic singers that Lebanon has neglected Arabic music out of a variety of reasons; we understand from the patchwork aesthetics that many Lebanese lived in many places around the world and/or that Lebanon is a place with many cultural influences; we hear in the treatment of sound and noise that these musicians are up-to-date and part of a global Zeitgeist; we maybe hear in the non-importance of consistency of form and structure and in the many breaks, and turnarounds in their music, that Beiruti artists live in an inconsistent, troubled or at least chaotic place; and we hear many things more. In short, many musical capacities are deeply hidden in a musician's personality - in the "core" of his music, as the musicologist Leonard B. Meyer argued long ago (Meyer, 1956). Music is, in its aesthetic core, very personal, shaped by a musician's biography – and thus also through his or her acoustic surroundings. I myself learned a lesson that might be important – especially when researching music that crosses boundaries and cultures, and sells in foreign markets. Today, where all kinds of music are accessible with one mouse click, these musicians suggest that we have to look at the core of music to find the deepest notions of *locality* and *place*. Musicians choose musical styles inside the more virtual, transnational spaces, however they hear, translate and perform it out of their personal and special position. A musician might choose a certain style just in order to reach a certain market or to get international funding. His strategy might be short term. Changes in the core of his music making are, however, far more long term. Or, is an African percussion player more "African" than an African heavy metal drummer? – It is by finding and supporting great musicians that we save the musical diversity of this globe: Whether this musician's music sounds *local* at first hearing, is not any longer a valuable criteria.

To summarize: The bundle of influences and forces that lead the artist to compose his piece of

music is almost impossible to unwire – for the scholar, but for the musician as well. The musicians and sound artists from Beirut are constantly influenced by a huge amount of musical and non-musical forces: from psychological forces, to impacts from the surrounding ideoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes, technoscapes and other -scapes. At the same time, these musicians are actively trying to create their own and special music – by pushing a variety of limits, and by using the possibilities our digitalized and transnational world offers. To reduce this complexity is difficult. One thing is clear, however: The musicians from Beirut this research focused on are not westernized, as many critics state: They deal with their difficult memory – in more or less conscious ways. To them *locality* and *place* are no longer linked to "Arabic" music, but very much to the sounds and noises of their environment, and to their *sonic memory*. Their works lead us towards alternative definitions of *locality*, *place*, and even *authenticity* in music. At the time of writing Mazen Kerbaj is not too happy about his piece "Starry Night" anymore. He recorded it on his balcony during the war of 2006. We hear his trumpet, and the bombs dropped by Israeli warplanes. "Locality should be situated on deeper levels of music making," he told me in a conversation: "To play the local out loud makes a music exotic, maybe superficial, and often short-lived" (Kerbaj, 2009).

I see these musicians and sound artists from Beirut as a part of a very loose, but important post-colonial movement that mainly originates from outside the "Western" world. It shows that the specific contemporary sound of our digitalized and globalized world is not anymore created, merchandized and exploited in Europe and the USA exclusively. Modernity is produced across the globe – in cities like Beirut, Beijing, Mumbai, Lagos, Johannesburg, or Mexico City. Artists from these urban spaces offer new representations beyond exotic East-West-Formulas. Their music, noises and soundscapes reflect the effects of localisation and globalisation on various levels. We hear the noise of world politics, propaganda and war, and digitalization in challenging settings. Even though wars like those in Lebanon, the war on terror, or strict visa policies forces these artists to take two steps forward and at least one step back, they started, and will continue to challenge the perception of *localities* and *place* in music in today's world.

OUTRO

I experienced and learned a lot through this work. I am very thankful to all the musicians who took their time and shared all those ideas. It was a huge effort to bring all the information together. I do still agree with Robert Walser's theoretical approach. According to him, it is important to contextualize each piece of music in context and time. However, after having written this research, I must say: It is an approach that is almost impossible to fullfil and complete – especially when one works outside his or her context. Looking back, the main obstacles were the following: There was almost no research done on the history of popular music in Lebanon up to that point. Not many scholars actually looked into the forming of the different musicial institutions in Lebanon. Not many wrote about the many composers and musicians that work with, and next to Fairuz and The Rahbani Brothers. I did not find any academic articles that dealt with the psychedelic rock music scene in Beirut in the 1970s. And I found nothing on rock music during the Civil War. With Robert Walser's approach in mind, I tried to discover this history. Additionally, I searched for as much audio material as I could. Overall, I spent months and months in researching the past: I met many muscians and composers from the older generations, and sometimes interviewed them – a lot of that material is still not transcribed. Finally, I came forward with the chapter "A History of Beirut through Music, Sound and Noise." For the reader, this chapter might be too long at times. I decided to leave it at that lengh. First, because almost nothing is published on that matter yet. And second, because I think that all of the information is very useful for the reader. To me it seems clear that many of the clues about understanding today's generation of musicians and sound artists lie in this past.

Being the first writer to publish a book on this generation of musicians in Beirut, I feel a huge responsibility. The musicians told me a lot of important information, and sometimes we touched on delicate issues. For the planned publication I will thus go into collective editing. This means that I will send them all that I have written about them to crosscheck. The idea is that they can comment on it. Then they can argue that this or that passage has to be deleted – because it is delicate politically, for example.

For the publication I intend to adapt some areas. I will increase the number of key pieces. Further, I want to introduce key pieces for the history of music in Beirut as well. In doing so, I intend to place these pieces in the forefront, and to build the story around them. The chapter on the history of music in Lebanon, I intend to shorten. I have the idea of maybe publishing an extensive separate version of it (with other interviews). Most probably I would invite a Lebanese musicologist to be a co-editor. He will bring his views and knowledge into this history as well. And we will re-write it together.

I learned a lot about localization, authenticity, and place in music. I learned a lot about music making. I think that I am on the right path to better understand how music is made, how it is related to the human being living in a certain context. I think I learned a lot about Lebanon. And I showed that social studies and music studies could actually work hand in hand. The difficulty is, as mentioned, the sheer amount of data. And the fact that the scholar is actually dealing with two sets of languages that sometimes speak a completely different language: the human language itself, and music.

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Short, Ramsy	Beirut	11.8.2005
Tawil, Frederic	Beirut	26.7.2005
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Weeping Willow, The. *The 3rd Portal*. Self Published. *2007:* Lebanon

Yassin, Raed; Coleman, Gene. *The Adventures of Nabil Fawzi*. Al Maslakh Recordings 04. *2006:* Lebanon

WEBLINKS (selected)

Labels:

Lebanese Underground: http://www.lebaneseunderground.com
Incognito: www.incognito.com.lb
Forward Music: www.forwardmusic.net
Al Maslakh: www.almaslakh.org
Those Kids Must Choke: www.thosekidsmustchoke.com
100copies: http://www.100copies.com/

Musicians and Sound Artists:

Experimental Music:
Mazen Kerbaj: http://www.myspace.com/mazenkerbaj
Charbel Haber: http://www.myspace.com/charbelhaber
Raed Yassin: http://www.myspace.com/raedyassin
Sharif Sehnaoui: http://irtijal.blogspot.com/
Xardas: http://www.myspace.com/invocationofthesleeper
20sv: www.myspace.com/20sv

Rock and Metal Music:
Weeping Willow: http://www.myspace.com/wwillow
Oath To Vanquish:http://www.oath-to-vanquish.com
The Kordz: www.myspace.com/kordz
Arcane: www.myspace.com/arcanelebanon
Gassan Rahbani: www.gassanrahbani.com/
Munir Khauli: http://www.munirkhauli.com/
Blaakyum: http://blaakyum.blogspot.com/
Kaoteon: www.myspace.com/kaoteon
Orphaned Band: http://www.myspace.com/orphanedmyspace
Ayat: http://www.geocities.com/swineayat/
Vomit: www.myspace.com/vomitleb
Bloodlink: http://www.myspace.com/bloodink
Nightchains: www.myspace.com/nightchains
Dethroned: http://www.myspace.com/dethronedband
Cerebral Mutilation: http://www.myspace.com/cerebralmutilation
Metal Archives: www.metal-archives.com (offers up to date information on
Metal bands worldwide, including Lebanon)

Urban Music: Indie Pop and Rap
Soap Kills: http://www.myspace.com/soapkills0
Scrambled Eggs: http://www.myspace.com/scrambledeggslebanon
The New Government: http://www.myspace.com/thenewgovernment
Lumi: http://www.myspace.com/lumisounds
Aks'ser: www.myspace.com/aksser2
Rayess Bek: http://www.rayessbek.com/
961 Underground: http://www.961underground.com/
Lethal Skillz: www.myspace.com/lethalskillz
Shiftz: www.myspace.com/shiftz
The Suicides: http://www.myspace.com/suicidesthe
Ziad Saad: http://www.popwillsaveus.com/
Jawad Nawfal: http://www.myspace.com/munma
Paulak: http://www.myspace.com/paulakmusic

Shiftz: www.myspace.com/shiftz
The Kordz: www.myspace.com/thekordz
Ceasar K: http://www.myspace.com/ceasark
Nadine Khoury: http://www.nadinekhouri.net
Shadia Mansour: www.myspace.com/shadiamusic
Salah Edin: http://www.salahedin.com/
Hanoueh: http://www.myspace.com/hanouneh
Katibe 5: http://www.myspace.com/katibe5palestine
DAM: http://www.myspace.com/damrap , http://www.dampalestine.com/main.html
Ramallah Underground: http://www.myspace.com/rucollective , http://www.ramallahunderground.com/
Aswatt: http://www.myspace.com/aswatt
Ramez: http://www.myspace.com/ramezlebanon
RGB961: www.myspace.com/rgb961
Clotaire K: www.myspace.com/clotairek
Ashekman: www.myspace.com/ashekman
MC Zoog: http://www.myspace.com/mczoog

APPENDIX

Selection of Key Pieces: Graphics and Transcriptions

TABLE 4:

Weeping Willow: Remains of a Bloodbath

Time	Parts	Length	Bar	Descriptions	Tempo
0:00 – 0:13	A	8 x 4/4	4/4	Guitar plays 1/16 note riffs around the notes B flat –D - D sharp - A-Flat. It's based on E flat Major scale. Mood is in A flat Lydian mode	150
0:13 – 0:32	B	12 (3x4)		Guitar riffs on E – F - F sharp - C. Chromatic scale. The singer starts after 4 bar, however on the second beat. Drums starts turning around the rhythm. It's not too clear anymore where to find the 1.	150
0:32 – 0:36	Bridge	2		Bridge	
0:36 – 1:01	C	16 (4x4)		Guitar plays 1/16 note riffs around F (voicing 1+5) - C (1,5,8 "Power-Chord") - C (1,4,7) - C (1, sharp5) - F (1+4) - G (1+4). Mood is in G Locrian mode. It's a typical metal riff, played in low pitch. Drums, Guitars and Bass are not always precise.	160
1:01 – 1:40	D	24 (6x4)		Guitars play in A Minor and B6 (sometimes B5Moll and B6 (sometimes B5). Mood is in B Flat Locrian mode. The singer and drummer join the band after 8 bars.	150
1:40 – 2:05	E	16 (4x4)		This part is played in G Harmonic Minor – it sounds Oriental to many listeners. The guitars play on D – the deepest possible notes. The pitch is not too precise. The drummer starts to turn the rhythm around in the third round.	140
2:05 – 2:24	B	12 (3x4)		Part B repeated.	150
2:24 – 2:27	Bridge	2 (8)			
2:27 – 2:47	F	12		The guitar and bass change between E (1+5) and Es (1+5). It is not too clear if they play E or Es. This is because they play on the lowered and loose string, and the intonation becomes rather unclear.	150
2:47 – 2:50	End	2		Ending on C – and deep D.	

TABLE 5

Rayess Bek: Schizophrenia

Time	*Parts*	*Bar*	*Length*	*Descriptions*	*Tempo*
0:00 – 0:11	Intro		1	Background Melody (A) on F sharp - F – B flat. Then: D sharp – C sharp – A sharp – G sharp – F – F sharp	168 bpm (feeling 84 bpm - half note counted)
0:11 – 1:41	A	4/4	8 (8x4/4)	Rapping starts. Same Background Melody (A) repeated 0'17 new melody (B) introduced: B flat – C sharp –B flat – C – sharp – D sharp – C – sharp (this melody is played in 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th turn of the cycle) The melodies shift inside the cycles – one time they start early, another time later.	
1:41 – 2:04	Refrain		2 (8x4/4)	Background melody (A) stays. Melody (B) is played in both cycles. New melody sung by rapper Rayess Bek: B flat, B flat, C sharp, B flat, B flat, G sharp, B flat, B flat, G sharp, B flat. It's a pentatonic scale – "Oriental" flavour.	
2:04 – 3:14	A		6 (8x4/4)	A part return. But now rapping in Arabic. Melody B in cycles 2, 3 and 6.	
3:14 – 3:16	Silence		½ (8x4/4)	Silence introduced: It resembles approximately 4 times 4/4 – it's half a cycle.	
3:16 – 4:02	Refrain	4/4	4 (8x4/4)	Refrain: Now twice as long as the first refrain. Melody B played in every cycle	

TABLE 6

Soap Kills: Aranis

Time	*Parts*	*Length*	*Bar*	*Descriptions*	*Tempo*
0:00 – 0:13	A1	4 x 4/4	4/4	Guitar Solo: D MAJOR 9 – D MAJOR – D MAJOR 7 – A MINOR 7 – A MINOR 7	80 bpm
0:13 – 0:38	A1 + A2	8 (2x4)		Guitar repeated, Strings on G sharp and A. Singing Starts	
0:38 – 1:04	A1 + A2	8 (2x4)		Guitar repeated	
1:04 – 1:16	A3	4		Guitar repeated, Strings new	
1:16 – 1:29	A4	4		Guitar repeated, Strings new	
1:29 – 1:42	A5	4		Guitar: G – B Minor/Des – F Major – G Minor At 1:36 the voice sings a not between A and A flat.	
1:42 – 1:45	Bridge	1		Finish from A, and pickup to B. In-Between a short Silence	
1:45 – 1:54	B1	7 x 4/4		Rocksteady Rhythm D-MAJOR – F SHARP MINOR – B MINOR (H) – F SHARP MINOR – And then in doubled Tempo: D MAJOR – A MAJOR – B MINOR – E7 – A MAJOR	80 bpm (*Alla breve* – two Beat feeling)
1:54 – 2:05	B2	6 x 4/4		Ragga, Dancehall Rhythm F sharp MINOR – F sharp MINOR – B MINOR – F sharp MINOR – F sharp MINOR – F sharp MINOR	
2:05				Two quarter notes are introduced – H Minor	
2:06 – 2:15	B1	6 x 4/4		B1 repeated	
2:15 -				Two quarter notes are introduced – B Minor	
2:15 - 2:25	B2	7 x 4/4		B2 repeated	
2:25 – 2:35	B1	6x 4/4		B1 repeated	
2:35				Two quarter notes are introduced – B Minor	
2:36 –	B1	4x 4/4		Ragga, Dancehall Rhythm	

2:45			F SHARP MINOR – F SHARP MINOR – B MINOR – F SHARP MINOR –	
2:45 – 2:49	B1 Ending	3x 4/4	Turnaround: I D A I B Minor E7 I A	
2:49 -	A1		A1 repeated. Guitar only	

FIGURE 7: Sheet Music „Aranis", by Soap Kills

Aranis

Soap Kills

Part A

FIGURE 8: Sheet Music „Rawak" by Ziyad Sahhab

CONTENT OF COMPACT DISC

1	Raed Yassin	CW Tapes*	23:49
2	Mazen Kerbaj	Blblb Flblb	3:23
3	Mazen Kerbaj	Zrrrt	5:26
4	Mazen Kerbaj	Piiiiiiii	2:18
5	Mazen Kerbaj	Taga Of Daga	2:20
6	Scrambled Eggs	Track 5	6:12
7	The Weeping Willow	Remains of a Bloodbath	2:51
8	Rayess Bek	Schizophrenia	4:10
9	Soap Kills	Aranis	3:20
10	Ziyad Sahhab	Rawak	2:21
11	Tarek Atoui	Track 02	3:20
12	Kamilya Jubran	Al-Hubb Assa'b	5:42
13	Mahmoud Turkmani	Mouwashah Zananil Mahboub	3:40
14	Mazen Kerbaj & The Israeli Air Force	Starry Night*	6:32

* Track unpublished

Tracks taken from the following albums:

Atoui, Tarek. *Mort aux Vaches*. Staalplaat. *2008:* Netherlands

Jubran, Kamilya; Hasler, Werner. *Wameedd*. Unit Records W&K 001. *2005:* Switzerland

Kerbaj, Mazen. *BRT VRT ZRT KRT*. Al Maslakh MSLKH 01. *2005:* Lebanon

Rayess Bek. *Nuit Gravement à la Santé*. Chich Productions. *2005:* Lebanon

Sahhab, Ziyad. *Keep on Singing*. Forward Music. *2007:* Lebanon

Scrambled Eggs. *Nevermind Where, Just Drive*. Those Kids Must Choke. *2005:* Lebanon

Soap Kills, *Enta Fen*. Mooz Records. *2005:* Lebanon

Turkmani, Mahmoud. *Zakira*. Enja 9475. *2004:* Germany

Weeping Willow, The. *Mentally Decayed*. Self Published. *2004:* Lebanon