

ARTICLE

Masculinity in Contention: Performance, Language, and Gender in the Lebanese Army during the Civil War

Jonathan Hassine 

Department of History, Sorbonne University, Paris, France / IFPO, Beirut, Lebanon
Email: jonathan.hassine@sorbonne-universite.fr

Abstract

The gender history of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90) has so far focused on the study of female figures. In an attempt to widen the scope of analysis, this article reconsiders the role of the Lebanese army in war-torn Lebanon through the lens of gender. Based on interviews with retired officers and noncommissioned officers, I argue that the military—the combat personnel in particular—never relinquished its claim to an exclusive militarized masculinity, despite the rise of contending actors. By maintaining this claim, these men strove to confront both the new standards of masculinity imposed by the militias and the anxiety caused by the disruption of gender roles throughout the conflict. To make sense of this confrontation, the article investigates how the veterans have engaged in a social performance, during both past and present, to (re)enact their manliness in front of an audience. This diachronic approach allows me to further untangle the combat officers' trajectories during the war, using gender to bring them into conversation with their milieu.

Keywords: army; civil war; gender; Lebanon; masculinity; sectarianism

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count for [sic] you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!¹

“If—,” Rudyard Kipling's memorable poem was recited to me in extenso by a retired Lebanese general, well versed in French and British literature. Toward the end of my interview with him, the officer gave the recitation after relating how, as soon as the Lebanese Civil War ended in 1990, he was put “at the disposal [of the Ministry of National Defense], that is ‘you'll eat shit’ (*bi-l-tašarruf, ya'nī kūl kharā*)” and consecutively stripped of his war medals and his merit promotion. In conclusion to his almost flawless recitation, he swiftly added:

How beautiful, son of a bitch! So, my friend, to hell with the medals! What's a medal? . . .
That one [the one who truly fought] doesn't care about receiving a promotion, a

¹ *Fairies* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1910), 164.

medal. . . . Who does it, who gives me a medal? A bureaucrat sitting on his ass in a leather armchair. . . . These bureaucrats are good but we despise them! [laughs].²

If there were any doubt, his skillful peroration was meant to dispel it by pointing at the one true value that he and his comrades cherished: being a man—a selfless fighter.

When I first started my research on the Lebanese army and the civil war that tore Lebanon apart between 1975 and 1990, I did not intend to focus particularly on gender or masculinity. But the more fieldwork I conducted among retired Lebanese officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who had served during this period, the more familiar I grew with a common lexicon that came to outline their own conception of manhood. To give but a few examples, being a “man” (*rījāl*, sing. in Levantine Arabic), “fearless” (*qabaḏāy*), or a “fighter” (*muqātil*) were all recurrent expressions used by those who fought in the military at the time.³

Such display of militarized masculinity can only be puzzling given the record of the Lebanese army even before the eruption of the civil war. Although the institution used to serve as a symbol of national unity and a model for coexistence, its role became more and more problematic in the face of local and regional tensions.⁴ From the second part of the 1960s, the army had come under harsh criticisms from large segments of the society—Muslims in particular—because of its inaction. Not only had the military not participated in the wars against Israel alongside the neighboring Arab armies, it also proved incapable of defending the country against Israel’s devastating incursions to crush the Palestinian guerrillas (*al-fidāʿiyyīn*) who were turning South Lebanon into a new sanctuary.⁵ During the war period, the army quickly gave way in front of the nascent militias, and despite its two reconstruction attempts, in 1977–79 and 1982–84, it never managed to retrieve its (virtual) monopoly of violence over the other military forces (be they state or nonstate actors).⁶

This failure as a Weberian institution, however, does not mean that the Lebanese army ceased to exist during the war or that its personnel did not take part in the hostilities.⁷ On multiple occasions, the military played a discrete but crucial role, either in the actual fighting or its preparation.⁸ After the army fell apart in March 1976, many of its members

² Interview with General Maroun, Fanar, 5 March 2021. All translations from Arabic to English are my own.

³ Although it now tends to be colloquially used as an adjective, the term *qabaḏāy* (pl. *qabaḏāyāt*) refers foremost to an urban figure that dates back to the Ottoman period; the term itself derives from the Turkish word *kabadayı*. Up until the civil war, the *qabaḏāy* was not only a local strongman who would serve as an intermediary between a political leader (*zaʿīm*) and his constituency in a quarter. He also was informally invested with the regulation of social order: as such, he was a “moral leader” who played a particular role in upholding patriarchal authority—ordinary people would look at him as a symbol of masculine values, both feared and respected. Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 48–52. For more on this figure in 20th-century Lebanon, see also Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840–1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986); and Nabil Beyhum, “Beyrouth, Histoire de deux villes où tuer est une compulsion qui se répète,” in *Guerres civiles. Économies de la violence, dimensions de la civilité*, ed. Jean Hannoyer (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 124–38.

⁴ Oren Barak, *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), chs. 3 and 6 in particular.

⁵ On the Palestinian national movement in Lebanon, see Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (London: Westview Press, 1990); and Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Barak, *Lebanese Army*, ch. 8.

⁷ For a critique of the Weberian approach applied to the Lebanese state, see Jamil Mouawad and Hannes Bauman, “Wayn al-Dawla? Locating the Lebanese State in Social Theory,” *Arab Studies Journal* 25, no. 1 (2017): 66–90. See also Pierre France, who departed from this approach to account for the survival of other state institutions during the war: “Arkan ad dawlé, Directeurs généraux, bureaucratie et survie de l’État pendant la guerre civile,” *Confluences Méditerranée* 112, no. 1 (2020): 51–70.

⁸ Not to mention the main belligerent role that it assumed in the last two years of the war (1989–1990) against the Syrian army and the main Christian militia. See Annie Laurent, “A War between Brothers: The Army-Lebanese

entered the fights, either individually to defend their village or collectively by joining a faction born out of the rubble of the mother institution. The army successfully rebuilt itself in the following years, although it eventually stumbled on the fragmentation of the country. In February 1984, the military institution split into “regional” brigades under the pressure of anti-government forces (mainly the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and the Shi‘i Amal Movement). Yet its units continued to operate in various ways, including those that escaped the high command’s authority.

Despite its institutional endurance over the course of the conflict, the Lebanese army could not avert the emergence of “fragmented military practices” where militiamen came to epitomize the manly warrior at the expense of regular soldiers.⁹ It is no wonder therefore that recent works on militarized masculinities in Lebanon have concentrated on the figure of the militiaman, even though they have mostly done so by examining its representation in postwar cultural production. As Najib Hourani has argued, the militiaman has become an “icon” who serves as an encompassing explanation for the various forms of extreme violence that plagued Lebanon for fifteen years.¹⁰ Sune Haugbolle has revised and completed this analysis by showing that this iconic image could be subverted, through remembrance or artistic performance, to turn it into a “repentant militiaman.”¹¹ All in all, such an approach made the implicit observation that militarized masculinity has been the militiamen’s preserve in the eyes of Lebanese artists, if not the whole society.

This article does not further investigate this manly figure who, at least in the early phase of the war, probably fit for the most part the criteria of hegemonic masculinity.¹² It rather addresses those in the Lebanese military who fought in the war and have continued to present themselves as the true champions of militarized masculinity to this day. As the warrior “still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity,” what happens then when the military’s role becomes disputed by other warmongering actors?¹³ Indeed, these men actually faced the everlasting threat of being deprived of—what they considered to be—their masculine role. To make sense of this experience of self-estrangement, I elaborate on the following argument: the military, both as individuals and a collective institution, never relinquished its claim to an exclusive militarized masculinity, this distinctiveness being its main *raison d’être*. In turn, many choices the military made throughout the conflict were informed by this manly claim.

Here, Judith Butler’s conception of gender proves very useful, albeit in different terms. In her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, the philosopher collapsed the dichotomy of sex and gender by describing the latter as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”¹⁴ According to Judith Butler, gender is a performative construct in a sense that it is “always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed.”¹⁵ Hence the distinction, as Sara Salih further explains, “between *performance* (which presupposes the existence of a subject) and *performativity* (which does

Forces Showdown in East Beirut,” *Beirut Review* 1 (1991): 88–101; and Matthew Preston, *Ending Civil War: Rhodesia and Lebanon in Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 70–95.

⁹ Sune Haugbolle, “The (Little) Militia Man: Memory and Militarized Masculinity in Lebanon,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 8, no. 1 (2012): 120.

¹⁰ Najib Hourani, “The Militiaman Icon: Cinema, Memory, and the Lebanese Civil Wars,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 287–307.

¹¹ Haugbolle, “(Little) Militia Man.”

¹² As R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt explain, hegemonic masculinity can be described as “the currently most honored way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimate[s] the global subordination of women to men.” “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 832.

¹³ David H. J. Morgan, “Theater of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities,” in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (London: Sage, 1994), 165.

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 43–44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

not).¹⁶ By coming back to Erving Goffman's pioneering reflection on the presentation of self, I voluntarily blurred these two categories to comprehend how these combatants performed their masculinity.¹⁷ In other words, I found that, to make their claim successful, these men engaged in a set of repeated acts and discourses that ought to be performative.

Drawing a comparison with the "crisis of paternity" that occurred in Syria and Lebanon in the wake of the First World War, Natalie Khazaal argued that "the Lebanese Civil War was a similarly turbulent period of 'gender anxiety' that could be called a 'crisis of patriarchy' at the levels of nation, community, and household."¹⁸ This crisis has been explored in the works of (mostly women) researchers who turned their attention to Lebanese war fiction and other forms of cultural production (theater, cinema, television). Along with anthropologists who studied family relationships in the aftermath of war, they probed the shattering of social order in war-torn Lebanon and the renegotiation of gender relations that ensued.¹⁹ Despite these promising lines of inquiry, the use of gender—not surprisingly—has remained confined to the study of women, whether civilians or fighters, when dealing with specific actors of the Lebanese Civil War.²⁰ This falls in line with the overall development of gender studies on the Middle East, primarily seen as a means to make up for the absence of women in the historiographical landscape.²¹ As a result, although gendered motivations of female combatants are starting to be documented, men have been mostly left out in this regard—although Michael Gilson's work on Akkar, the northernmost region of Lebanon, offered an important insight into how violence and power relations could be perpetuated and legitimated through performance of manliness in the run-up to war.²² In fact, despite the wave of ethnographic accounts on militarized masculinities in the Middle East, the security sector has remained at the margins of gender studies, not only in Lebanon but also in the rest

¹⁶ Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 45.

¹⁷ Erving Goffman thought of relationships between individuals as a role-playing between a performer and his audience. At the core of his theatrical approach of social interactions lay the concept of performance. For him, the latter can be defined as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 22.

¹⁸ Natalie Khazaal, *Pretty Liar: Television, Language, and Gender in Wartime Lebanon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 209–10. On the "crisis of paternity" and gender anxiety in Syria and Lebanon under the French mandate, see Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ On Lebanese war fiction, see Miriam Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Samira Aghacy, "Domestic Spaces in Lebanese War Fiction: Entrapment or Liberation?" in *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*, ed. Ken Seigneurie (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), 83–113; and Michelle Hartman, *Native Tongue, Stranger Talk: The Arabic and French Literary Landscapes of Lebanon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014). On other forms of cultural production, see Lina Khatib, "Violence and Masculinity in Maroun Baghdadi's Lebanese War Films," *Critical Arts* 21, no. 1 (2007): 68–85; Hourani, "Militiaman Icon"; Haugbolle, "(Little) Militia Man"; and Khazaal, *Pretty Liar*. For an anthropological approach to families in postwar Lebanon, see among others Suad Joseph, "Conceiving Family Relationships in Post-War Lebanon," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35, no. 2 (2004): 271–93.

²⁰ For a global approach to women in the war, see Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, ed., *Women and War in Lebanon* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999); and Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010). On female fighters specifically, see Kari H. Karamé, "Girls' Participation in Combat: A Case Study from Lebanon," in *Children in the Muslim Middle East* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 378–91; Jennifer Philippa Eggert, "Female Fighters and Militants during the Lebanese Civil War: Individual Profiles, Pathways, and Motivations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018), 1–30; and Floriane Soulié-Caraguel, "Quand les miliciennes deviennent femmes: le façonnage des féminités dans les milices chrétiennes pendant la guerre du Liban," *Critique internationale* 93, no. 4 (2021): 9–28.

²¹ Mai Ghossoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb, eds., *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 8–9.

²² Michael Gilson, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).

of the Arab world.²³ Yet, as David Morgan reminds us, “of all the sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced, and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct.”²⁴

This article builds on these observations to suggest a new reading of the Lebanese military’s experience of war through the lens of gender. To do so, I rely on a diachronic approach that consists of studying the words and deeds of these men, both past and present; that is, how they spoke and acted in times of war according to their own idea of manhood, and how they still perform today to sustain a self-image of the manly warrior.

Let us be more precise. The following analysis does not systematically cover the Lebanese army as a whole—although it may hold true for the most part—nor does it rely on a random sample of its personnel. It focuses instead on combat officers, mostly those who entered the Military Academy of Fayadieh during the period encompassing the years prior to the civil war until the midst of it. They were the junior or field-grade officers (ranging from second lieutenants to majors) who commanded infantry or armored units on the battlefronts: a platoon or a company for junior officers, a battalion for a captain or above. At times, a noncommissioned officer makes a foray into this conversation. The subaltern voices of former soldiers will remind us that the patterns under scrutiny are not limited to the primary group of veterans considered here. A preference was given to combat officers for two main reasons. On the one hand, as members of the officer corps, they appeared more preoccupied by their public image than their subordinates. As a retired general told me himself, being an officer in Lebanon is “a big deal (*shughleh kbīreh*). . . . Here, the officer has a project of leadership (*mashrū‘ za‘īm*).”²⁵ These veterans also made up the only segment of the officer corps who had served for lengthy periods on the ground, alongside their soldiers. This compound of self-concern and wartime experience made them particularly responsive to the anxiety caused by the disruption of gender roles throughout the war. They thus offer a sharper lens through which to view the rest of the military.

Most of the material used in what follows is based on an intermittent fieldwork conducted in Lebanon between 2019 and 2021 among officers and NCOs who served during the civil war. It comprised a series of life story interviews with the veterans, some of whom I met with several times.²⁶ This oral survey has been coupled with an extensive corpus of written sources: the Lebanese press; the army’s journals (*al-Jundi al-Lubnani* [The Lebanese Soldier] and, from 1984 onward, *al-Jaysh* [The Army]); and officers’ memoirs, among others. These sources provided a better understanding of the (un)making of a militarized masculinity in Lebanon, both during and after the war.

The army command, as I will first argue, relentlessly attempted throughout the conflict to preserve the masculine honor of its troops, but to little avail. From the outbreak of hostilities, militias rapidly set new standards of militarized masculinity, making them a site of contention with one of its erstwhile upholders.²⁷ Instead of embarking upon a linear journey toward the military’s reaction to this subversion, I will turn to the veterans’ performance of manliness today. This chronological detour shall help unravel the mechanics of gender

²³ Kate Rougvié, “Exploring Gender Norms in the Lebanese Internal Security Forces,” *al-Raida* 42, no. 1 (2018): 6; Konstantina Isidoros and Marcia C. Inhorn, eds., *Arab Masculinities: Anthropological Reconceptions in Precarious Times* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2022), 9–10.

²⁴ Morgan, “Theater of War,” 165.

²⁵ Interview with General Mahmud, Baalbek-Duris, 7 July 2020.

²⁶ Although I received formal authorization to identify every person quoted here in my research, this was not deemed relevant for the purpose of the analysis. I therefore decided to disclose only the interviewees’ first names, capturing a glimpse of their background without identifying them fully.

²⁷ It is worth noting that the military personnel were by no means the prototype of militarized masculinity in the pre-civil war period. There were other male figures, like the *qabaḍāyāt* and their counterparts in rural areas, the *aghawāt*, who were employed by large landholders to control the peasants. Both could wield violence and embodied, in their own environment, the archetype of true manhood. For a detailed analysis of this latter figure, see Gilsean, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*.

anxieties that ensued from the context of war and its shattering effect on the patriarchal system. Only then will it be possible to discern how members of the military, and combat officers in particular, strove to behave according to their own manly ideals during the war.

Masculinity as a Site of Contention

A common motto in the military across the world, at least until it started recruiting women, had pledged to turn “a boy into a man.”²⁸ This was part of the sexual division of labor according to which men were expected to fight, whereas women were barred from this activity.²⁹ The Lebanese army was no exception. Throughout the war, it kept presenting itself to its recruits—the cadets or the enlisted—as the “factory of men” (*maṣnaʿ al-rijāl*), sometimes along with similar labels such as the “school of men” (*madrasat al-rijāl*) or the “creator of men” (*manshāʾ al-rijāl*).³⁰ It also continued to rely on a patriotic manual published in 1963 by the Ministry of National Defense, probably upon the request of then President Fouad Chehab (the first army commander), to whom it was dedicated. Entitled *al-Tanshiʿa al-Wataniyya al-Insaniyya* (Patriotic and Human Education), this handbook had seven sections (soldierly, morality, civics, geography, history, Arabism, and religion), designed to instill patriotic principles into every soldier and promote the army’s paternalistic role in society. In its first section, it characterized the soldiery (*al-jundiyya*) as “serving a doctrine, a school of virility and a message of sacrifice,” before giving more details:

The military is not, as some people think, a means of making a living. It is not a refuge for the lethargic youth whose heart is plagued by laziness. Rather, it is a doctrine, a message and an action. He who embraced it for bread and butter is lost. The military is the solidarity of souls, aspiring to a superior goal, “protecting the homeland,” and a superior idea, “defending the soil irrigated by the blood of the fathers and the ancestors.” These souls are harshly trained and severely dressed in order to turn them into an ideal of virility.³¹

In this order of things, men die fighting for their country and so did their male forebears. Their “docile” bodies are disciplined to fulfill that very purpose.³² As for women, their role was portrayed in the morality section (*al-tanshiʿa al-khalqiyya*). In an attempt to adjust it to the “present era,” they were no longer a “consumer good” (*matāʿ*), but became instead “a pillar of society,” as mothers and educators of the youth who are prepared for a “decent patriotic life,” and as wives who support their husbands in times of disaster.³³

Over the course of the conflict, the military institution desperately tried to remain in line with the fatherly authority it nurtured in its guidelines. Despite the formation of militias and the deployment of the Syrian army in most of Lebanon in 1976, its discourse retained its paternalistic content, only to be augmented with a slight twist in the patriotic plot. Not only did the army deny other local forces the ability to “build men,” it also rightfully claimed to be the sole actor able to build men “from all Lebanon.”³⁴ Compulsory military service, introduced on April 18, 1983, was supposed to be the cornerstone of this strategy of distinction. Some five thousand conscripts presented themselves at the time, and a thousand new recruits arrived each month. With US assistance, the army grew by 5 percent each

²⁸ William Arkin and Lynne R. Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 1 (1978): 155.

²⁹ Morgan, “Theater of War,” 166.

³⁰ For instance, see *al-Jundi al-Lubnani*, August 1982, 12; and *al-Jaysh*, August/September 1988, 62–63. For the other two labels, see *al-Jundi al-Lubnani*, September 1975, 30, and August 1979, 49.

³¹ Ministry of National Defense, Army Command, *al-Tanshiʿa al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya* (Aley: n.p., 1963), 1–2.

³² See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), ch. 5.

³³ Ministry of National Defense, *al-Tanshiʿa*, 77–78.

³⁴ *Al-Jundi al-Lubnani*, December 1982, 6.

month, increasing from 23,000 at the end of 1982 to 40,000 men in mid-1984.³⁵ According to the army's media service, the Directorate of Orientation (Mudriyyat al-Tawjih), "April 18 was Lebanon's appointment with its children." These "little heroes" were about to penetrate into the "society of men."³⁶ Like other armies, the Lebanese military advocated a certain conception of masculinity to encourage male Lebanese to answer the call.³⁷ Meanwhile, the flag service (*khidmat al-'alam*), as it is called in Lebanon, would testify to its monopoly on true patriotism, in the absence of a monopoly on violence. The initiative, nonetheless, was short-lived, as the army split into "regional" brigades in the decisive month of February 1984, along geographical, political, and sectarian lines.³⁸

Despite the continuous efforts of the military institution, its personnel were not spared the painful blow to their self-esteem caused by the civil war. Even before its outburst, many young officers had grown more and more weary of their hierarchy's inaction whenever the Israeli troops made an incursion into South Lebanon.³⁹ Their bitterness was exacerbated when the army had to refrain from intervening during the first year of clashes, because it was accused by some Muslim leaders and the leftist parties of being "aligned" with the Christian camp.⁴⁰ The fact that it was sporadically allowed to serve as a buffer in the volatile regions, often under the guise of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), brought even more dismay among them. On the eve of the army's disintegration, in February 1976, 250 junior officers (ranging from second lieutenants to majors) addressed a "document of honor" (*wathīqat al-sharaf*) to the army commander to vent their frustration and demand energetic measures before it was too late. Toward the end of their statement, they wondered whether those who "turned against the army's rules are the heroes and the patriots while those who complied with [them] . . . are nothing else but traitors and cowards."⁴¹ Faced with the high command's apathy on one side and with deserting comrades on the other, these young officers acutely perceived their inability to act as soldiers, defenders of the nation—regardless of its meaning—which they had sworn to uphold.

Ever since the outset of the war, however, the harshest blow had come from their fellow citizens who, at the same age or even younger, joined the militias. As soon as fighting broke out, venturing out of the barracks in uniform became hazardous, especially in the regions controlled by the leftist parties and the Palestinian guerrilla groups affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This composite coalition, which came to be known as the Joint Forces (al-Quwwat al-Mushtaraka), blamed the Lebanese army for being a "Christian army."⁴² In March 1975, to prevent attacks on its personnel, the army command issued instructions to not be in uniform while commuting between the barracks

³⁵ In fall 1982, the United States had pledged to help the newly elected president, Amine Gemayel, build a strong army that could restore law and order. It established the Lebanese Army Modernization Program (LAMP), a program that was designed to quickly reorganize the Lebanese military and provide it with new equipment and intensive training. Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 115–18.

³⁶ *Al-Jundi al-Lubnani*, May 1983, 43.

³⁷ Although the military service was compulsory, the Lebanese army did not have the capacity to implement it by force since its authority did not extend beyond Beirut and its surroundings at the time. On the use of masculinity by other armies, see Anthony King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63–73.

³⁸ This division was the combined result of Amal's "uprising" (*intifāda*) in the western part of the capital and the offensive launched against the army by the Progressive Socialist Party in the Chehhar region, south of Mount Lebanon. In the wake of these major developments, the different army brigades underwent a profound reorganization. In addition to their relative sectarian homogenization, those stationed in the regions controlled by the opposition forces fell under the influence of militias, whereas the rest continued to obey the orders of the high command.

³⁹ Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, 1835INVA/428, Monthly report of the French military attaché in Beirut, 2 November 1974.

⁴⁰ Barak, *Lebanese Army*, 98–99.

⁴¹ *Al-Nahar*, 11 March 1976.

⁴² Barak, *Lebanese Army*, 99.

and home.⁴³ This memorandum seems to have remained applicable whenever tensions occurred between the army and other military actors. In the early 1980s, General Georges Nader recalled, Fayadieh's cadets were advised to wear civilian dress when not on duty: "What hurt me the most was the instructors' wish that we not wear military uniform on furlough for our safety, as the army had no authority outside its barracks' walls. However, I always rejected this request, wearing my military outfit 'to spite those who'd be displeased' (*nikāyatan biyallī mā byījībū*), because I felt deep down inside me that the uniform I was dreaming of as a child was the garb of honor (*ridā' al-sharaf*) in a country controlled by the occupying armies' uniforms and that of the militias."⁴⁴ Wearing a uniform (*lābis al-badla*) became a way to reclaim his dignity as a soldier, to show his courage, whereas those who went out in civilian clothes (*lābis madanī*) were being mocked.⁴⁵

Not only had the military lost its grip on the country, but its personnel were no longer free to appear publicly in uniform, their primary marker of "generalized and timeless masculinity."⁴⁶ After the army's crumbling in March 1976, some of the soldiers could not even reach their barracks to receive their monthly pay. In the Biqā' valley, many—especially Christians—in the rank-and-file had to stay in their village at home, to evade ongoing pressures to join the Lebanese Arab Army, a splinter faction of the Lebanese army that sided with the PLO, or merely to avoid being killed or abducted on the basis of their sectarian affiliation. For several months, some of them sent female members of the household, armed with their military identification card, so that they could bank their salary.⁴⁷ Among those who had embarked upon a military career, imbued with its paternalistic promise, this subversion of authority and gender roles surely aroused a violent feeling of dispossession—a dispossession in which the militiamen took an active part.

Since the Lebanese army only intervened occasionally throughout the conflict, militiamen assumed, along with foreign troops, the main belligerent role on the battlefield, or at least the most visible one. This iconic figure rapidly set its own norms of militarized masculinity: bearded men with distinctive hairstyles, wearing fashionable (Ray-Ban) sunglasses and a singlet showcasing their tattoo-covered muscles, and, above all, the rifle hanging on one shoulder.⁴⁸ As the poet and journalist Yussef Bazzi (himself a former militiaman) put it in his semi-autobiographical novel, "Thus equipped I finally look[ed] like real fighters, the fierce ones, the killers."⁴⁹ To a bystander, however, the surest way to spot a militiaman was his "badge" (*al-badji*), proudly exhibited on the chest or the shoulder (or both). This manly figure appealed, at first, to youth seeking accomplishments and new role models in a context marked by a general crisis of authority, before being rejected as the war economy developed into a predatory system in the second half of the conflict.⁵⁰ In her autobiographical novel, Dalia Fathallah (under the name of Maya) spoke several times of her admiration for the young men (*shabāb*) of her neighbourhood, dreaming of "being part of their gang or one of the girls invited to their parties." Conversely, she saw her teenage brother's growing

⁴³ Fouad Lahoud, *Ma'sat Jaysh Lubnan* (n.p., 1976), 218; Paul Andari, *Hadhihi Shahadati* (n.p., 1993), 20. The decision was taken after the army was accused of being responsible for the death of the Nasserite deputy Maaruf Saad, when it intervened to suppress a demonstration by fishermen in Sidon on 26 February 1975.

⁴⁴ Georges Nader, *Hadha Ana . . . Jurj Nadir* (Universal, 2016), 56; General Maroun interview, 18 June 2020.

⁴⁵ General Maroun interview, 18 June 2020.

⁴⁶ Morgan, "Theater of War," 166.

⁴⁷ Interview with Chief Adjutant Jirjis, Saarein, 20 October 2020.

⁴⁸ Dima de Clerck and Stéphane Malsagne, *Le Liban en guerre, 1975–1990* (Paris: Belin, 2020), 78. See also Hourani, "Militiaman Icon," 300.

⁴⁹ Yussef Bazzi, *Yasser Arafat m'a regardé et m'a souri. Journal d'un combattant* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 69. For an analysis of Bazzi's novel, see Haugbolle, "(Little) Militia Man."

⁵⁰ Salim Nasr, "Anatomie d'un système de guerre interne: le cas du Liban," *Cultures & Conflits*, no. 1 (1990): 85–99; Georges Corm, "The War System: Militia Hegemony and Reestablishment of the State," in *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction*, by Deirdre Collings (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 215–30; and Elizabeth Picard, "The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon," in *War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 292–322.

frustration, obliged to go down to the shelter with his family, while being taunted by the same *shabāb* who were bragging about their prowess.⁵¹

Such bravado, however, would not have been sufficient to sanction a new militarized masculinity without discrediting its principal opponent. Although every militia resorted to demeaning the military institution, the Lebanese Forces (LF) offer a case in point for which there is no need to go as far as the last part of the war, when the army and the LF were at loggerheads. Originally created in the spring of 1976 to serve as the joint command of the Christian-dominated paramilitaries, the Lebanese Forces progressively became the main stakeholder in the eastern regions.⁵² This expansion was the result of the hegemonic strategy pursued by their budding leader Bashir Gemayel, himself a scion of the founder of the Kataeb Party, the largest Christian-led political group.⁵³ Until his ascent to the presidency in 1982, Bashir Gemayel never hesitated to disparage the Lebanese military, especially when it encroached upon his territory. He regularly depicted it as an “army of decorations and stripes,” deriding its officers “whose sole concern [was] to wear medals and parade.”⁵⁴ A former high-ranking LF member similarly shared a risible memory from the time he was a teenager who took up arms to defend his neighborhood, located in what was being transformed into East Beirut:

When the army split [in 1976] and was no longer operational as an army—no more high command, nothing—everyone was doing his job. You come and find the corporal, let’s say, drafting the daily report: “today, two bullets were shot from there, we sent a patrol. . . .” He signs and hands it over. When we entered some of the army’s barracks and started looking at their documents: we laughed! Imagine, in 1976, the Palestinians were attacking us, the army’s watching and we’re dying, one corporal’s taking notes: “a patrol was sent, a tire went flat for whatever reason, the tire was changed.” Look at the report: he was doing his job! [laughs].⁵⁵

The contrast could not have been starker between an armed force who assumed the function of a petty bureaucrat and a fearless youth sacrificing itself for the sake of its community. Yet behind this laughable image lay that of “schoolboys,” to borrow the LF member’s own term, who felt let down by the authorities.

The year the army broke up, its personnel were being increasingly blamed for their inaction. General Richard, a cadet who was about to graduate at the time, evoked the violent backlash from the Kataeb paramilitaries who would soon constitute the bulk of the Lebanese Forces:

When the army practically disintegrated after the Ahdab coup [General ‘Aziz al-Ahdab’s attempt, on 11 March 1976, to overthrow then President Sleiman Frangieh], they began to arrest officers at the Kataeb’s roadblocks and pull off their stripes. [Researcher: They abducted them as well?] Not abduction [but] insults, abuses, and contempt such as “you, you didn’t do anything,” etc. For instance, a colonel is going to cross the roadblock, they pull off his stripes. . . . and put them on the combatant’s (*muqātil*) uniform.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Dalia Fathallah, *Balcons et abris* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003), 68, 89, 110, 140.

⁵² In addition to the eastern part of Beirut, those regions roughly covered the districts of Baabda (except for its most southern part), Metn, Kisrawan, and Jbeil. They all had a Christian majority population. On the first phase of the Lebanese Forces, see Lewis W. Snider, “The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon’s Politics,” *Middle East Journal* 38, no. 1 (1984): 1–33; and Yara El Khoury, “Le Front libanais face à l’intervention syrienne au Liban: approche historique d’une polémique mémorielle,” *Confluences Méditerranée* 112, no. 1 (2020): 144.

⁵³ Frank Stoakes, “The Supervigilantes: The Lebanese Kataeb Party as a Builder, Surrogate and Defender of the State,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 11, no. 3 (1975): 215.

⁵⁴ *Al-Safir*, 3 September 1979; *al-Nahar*, 19 June 1982.

⁵⁵ Interview with Raymond, Jeita, 12 July 2021.

⁵⁶ Interview with General Richard, Qleyaat (Kisrawan), 26 June 2020.



Figure 1. Badge of Lieutenant Michel's company, Brummana, 15 March 1976. On the badge, one can read: "The Lebanese Army" (top), and "Artillery of the Mountain 155 [millimeters]" (bottom). From the private archives of General Michel.

Although senior officers were the prime target of militiamen's contempt, there is no doubt that every member of the military personnel suffered from this loss of power and the sense of humiliation that went with it. Stripped of their honor as soldiers, some of them started lusting after the type of markings sported by the militias. That same year, Lieutenant Michel was asked by his company's men for permission to wear the Kataeb badge. The young officer eventually chose to design a badge of his own, as a means to preserve their morale without leaning toward a political party (Fig. 1).⁵⁷ Yet the military had sometimes no other choice than to borrow from the militias' own codes to navigate the impediments of the new social order. To travel to Alexandria, a Muslim navy lieutenant, now rear admiral, needed to depart from the port city of Tyre, for Beirut's airport was repeatedly closed because of the 1976 bombings. In his memoirs, he described the way he managed to cross the Joint Forces' roadblocks safely, despite having refused to join the Lebanese Arab Army: "I let my beard and mustache grow for several days, and once my beard got bushy, I put on my uniform without ironing it, wore black sunglasses, and ostentatiously placed my Colt pistol at my waist."⁵⁸ Like that of the badge, the story of this "undercover" officer reveals, not without irony, how members of the military found themselves forced to mimic the militias. But as the sarcastic tone of this anecdote suggests, these trendy symbols of power could also be travestied.

These different accounts, taken among others, may seem trivial at first. Put together, they nonetheless tell us about the rise of a subverted militarized masculinity, while hinting at the army's mechanisms for coping with this subversion. Indeed, far from staying passive, its men resorted to multiple tactics, or "arts of doing" as Michel de Certeau put it, turning daily constraints into opportunities.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly though, this symbolic transfer of military attributes, which were intimately bound to the concept of honor and manhood, took a heavy toll on the military, particularly on the fledgling combat officers who yearned to win their spurs. This tale of anxiety and resistance explains why they engaged in a performance, in both past and present, to (re)enact their manliness in front of society (including the researcher), and more so before their families.

⁵⁷ Interview with General Michel, Kaslik, 19 July 2021.

⁵⁸ Samir al-Khadem, *al-Tariq ila al-Shu'ba al-Thaniyya* (Beirut: al-Dar al-'Arabiyya li-l-'Ulum Nashirun, 2017), 92.

⁵⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

Performing Masculinity

On the “stage” set by the veterans, sounds and gestures, reactions and comments, interactions with other members of the household, or even house arrangements were all pieces of repeated patterns, or “performative acts” to echo Judith Butler’s theory, that sought to reclaim their definition of masculinity and gender roles. One could argue, of course, that the performance was first and foremost influenced by the researcher himself. The questions that I asked, my own reactions to the stories, even my mere presence; all of these aspects undoubtedly made me part of the performance. This caveat, however, does not rule out the empirical value of these accounts and their *mise-en-scène*: although there might be acts that were not performed (or even went unnoticed) during the interviews, what matters here is that the themes mentioned in this section (be they the result of my presence or not) all evoked the same type of responses among veterans who fought during the war.

Crossing over the doorstep of the officers’ homes allowed a first glimpse of how they wanted to be perceived, for the intimate sphere is the place where “the self-image and the profound relationship with others [are constructed].”⁶⁰ In the formal salon for visitors—a social marker in itself since only those who can afford it would keep another one for the family—the most common feature would be the classic portrait(s) of the officer dressed in uniform and still in his prime of life.⁶¹ When I was introduced in a more professional setting, in his home office or at his workplace (Lebanese officers tend to have a second professional career after they retire), one possible adornment consisted of a multitude of framed diplomas, hung along a large and spotless wall (Fig. 2). In sum, the initial encounter with an officer’s intimate (but not so private) space fostered an impression of institutionalized prestige, made of power and knowledge. If the officer’s image was indeed of great concern in every interview, how then was it shaped by the physical and discursive performance of those willing to emphasize their virility as combatants?

Officers with a combat record displayed, either in their house arrangements or in front of their guests, physical evidence of their worthy history. The sword handed over by the president of the republic at the military academy’s graduation ceremony might take center stage on the salon’s mantelshelf. But this item would not prove fully satisfactory, since every graduate officer is granted one. Accordingly, these men turned to their own memorabilia: ripped lieutenant stripes, a tired battle dress uniform (i.e., not the parade dress uniform), and above all, their own flesh: the scars left by combat injuries. As Julie Peteet demonstrated in her research on rituals of resistance among Palestinian fighters, the body is not only an inscriptive site for a dominant power, it also can be used to challenge a prevalent order.⁶² For these veterans, showing an old wound, along with the lengthy anecdote about its origin, stood as a proof of their military value, which used to be denied by the militias.⁶³

Nonetheless, the scripting of the performance did not operate in a fixed fashion; it rather varied to reach specific audiences.⁶⁴ The presence of relatives elicited variations in the meta-narration, be it a whole story or a set of remarks, more or less explicitly addressed to the public.⁶⁵ In the middle of an interview, I asked Chief Sergeant Muhammad, at the time a private from the northern region of Akkar, how he was passing the time—and maybe having

⁶⁰ Bruno Cabanes and Guillaume Piketty, eds., *Retour à l'intime au sortir de la guerre* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009), 11.

⁶¹ On the division of the home into distinct spaces, see Andrew Arsan, *Lebanon: A Country in Fragments* (London: Hurst, 2018), 189–90.

⁶² Julie Peteet, “Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian ‘Intifada’: A Cultural Politics of Violence,” *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1 (1994): 32–33.

⁶³ Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization,” 156.

⁶⁴ Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, 49.

⁶⁵ I follow here Barbara Babcock who, rather than “metacommunication,” suggested the use of the term “meta-narration” to refer “specifically to narrative performance and discourse and to those devices which comment upon the narrator, the narrating, and the narrative both as message and as code.” Barbara Babcock, “The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative,” in *Verbal Art as Performance*, by Richard Bauman (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1984), 67.



Figure 2. General 'Abd al-Rahman's office. Photograph by the author.

fun—while serving, in the mid-1980s, in the western part of downtown Beirut, just next to the demarcation line. A little while earlier, his wife had quietly sat with us, before getting on with the preparation of lunch. There was an almost imperceptible hesitation. Then he began to narrate an exemplary event which turned a perhaps too trivial subject to recollect (in front of his wife and a researcher) into a matter of epic resonance:

The [Beirut] souks were . . . an entertainment. An entertainment, all of it! In the evening, I agree with three or four lads: “Guys, let’s do battle today, what do you think?” We were in front of the Quwwāt [Lebanese Forces]. . . What do we do? I told him [his comrade]: “We infiltrate ourselves, we see someone from the Quwwāt, we shoot one of them, one shot, and we retreat. They will retaliate; then we inform the high command that they’re attacking us!” And boom, boom, boom! Here the battle broke out, in the night, we did battle, some five to six thousand bullets were shot, 200 rockets, 500 bombs! Thus was the night spent.⁶⁶

Although the NCO’s narrative was not devoid of historical interest (how the front could be regularly lit up from the dullness of the war), it also was telling of another story: one of a man who was a fierce combatant (the fiercest of all among his comrades), who fought against the militias and, what’s more, had the upper hand with them. The plot even came with an additional twist: the swaggering private who managed to trick the highest echelons of the military hierarchy with his amusement.

To be sure, not all metanarrative devices were embedded so well in the narrated events. This leads to the central question of how the military routinely carved its performance of masculinity within the recollection itself. Based on my fieldwork, I found that these devices mostly took the shape of tropes, wherein combat officers defined what a “real man” (*rijāl*)

⁶⁶ Interview with Chief Sergeant Muhammad, Hrar, 5 July 2020.

was, and what he was not. Over the dozens of conducted interviews, three main tropes emerged: a taxonomy of the officer corps indicating, according to a set of criteria, who is to be considered a man; the officer's value in the eyes of women; and, last but not least, the figure of the *chevalier blanc*, righter of wrongs, in contrast with the mayhem of the militias.

In the course of the interviews, combat officers expressed their esteem for one of their peers by calling him a “real man” (*rījāl*). To be worthy of such label, one needed to be a *muqātil* (fighter), *qabaḏāy* (fearless), and *ādamī* (honorable). Even the widow of an officer spontaneously used one of these words (*qabaḏāy*) to claim that her late husband was not a “standard officer” (*dābiṭ ‘ādī*).⁶⁷ These characteristics—there may be others but these were the most recurrent—epitomized the manly model in the army: a fighter who was “on the ground” (*‘alā al-arḍ*) with his men and proved himself in battle; a man gifted with an extra touch of panache, which could turn him into some kind of swashbuckler; and, last, someone with a strong moral sense, who did not steal or even dabble in politics. It is worth noting that these criteria were never explicitly defined during the interviews. Rather, they arose from the many exempla recounted. One of the interviewees, drawing implicitly upon this ideal type, went as far as suggesting that I rank his peers according to their demeanors throughout the war: “I can tell you . . . you have to start making a list, from 1 to 10! You tell me [what's-his-name], I tell you [his ranking].”⁶⁸

Beyond its taxonomic purpose, this trope encompassed the strong bonds of comradeship that tied the junior officer and his unit together. In his memoirs, General Georges Nader boasted of knowing everything about his soldiers when he was a second lieutenant in the mid-1980s: “I memorized [their] names, blood types, the name of [their] parents, wives, children. I grew to know their problems, their needs. ‘We got to understand each other in an instant’ (*Sirnā nifham ‘a-ba’dnā min taṭlī’a*).”⁶⁹ The author's switch to Lebanese, after the previous sentences in Modern Standard Arabic, aimed to emphasize the special sense of closeness, or even oneness that reigned within the unit. In fact, General Nader made regular use of code-switching in his memoirs, especially as a way to corroborate his portrayal of a brotherhood in arms. In the same vein, General Toufic insisted—although on behalf of the high command—that “the officer should live with his soldiers, stand by their side, listen to them, settle their problems and get along with them.”⁷⁰ As these accounts show, soldiers were enrolled in the narrative performance of their superiors. They served, on the one hand, to cast light on the latter's selfless dedication, as officers risked their lives and shared all aspects of daily routine with their subordinates. On the other, earning soldiers' gratitude implied an outright distinction between them and other officers whose service did not allow for the building of such *esprit de corps*.

To be a worthy man in the officer corps, one also had to prove himself in front of women. Despite the social disruption caused by militiamen, young officers seem to have retained their attractiveness when flirting or in the marriage market. General Richard, then a dashing lieutenant of the class of 1976, merrily evoked his dating experiences while serving at the Ablah barracks in the late 1970s—regardless of the difficulties he encountered in the conservative town of Zahleh. When asked about the role played by the uniform, he was adamant: “Here [in Lebanon], the uniform is the weak point of the society overall, much prestige if you like, and the weak point among girls and women in particular.”⁷¹ Likewise, General ‘Abd al-Rahman, another lieutenant of the same class, pointed out the officer's appeal against the bustling backdrop of (West) Beirut's nightlife during the same period: “Oooh! A girl having a date with an officer? She'd be bragging about going out with him! You know what I

⁶⁷ Interview with Kamal, wife of the late General Ghassan, Beirut, 13 July 2021.

⁶⁸ General Maroun interview, 18 June 2020.

⁶⁹ Nader, *Hadha Ana*, 85.

⁷⁰ Interview with General Toufic, Hazmieh, 2 March 2021.

⁷¹ General Richard interview, 10 July 2020.

mean. . . [Researcher: What about the parents?] Say, maybe you'll marry her. . . . They're hoping for this, that she goes out with him and that he marries her!"⁷²

Out of this performance nested in the narrated events, one gets acquainted with the idea that the military's prestige somehow remained intact, regardless of the paramilitary's contending image. In rare cases, the performance even reached its climax by combining the first and second tropes altogether:

I'm a poor man (*Anā zalameh faqīr*). I got married in 1983. When [it] came to getting married, . . . I didn't have money. I came and said to my wife, [after] I proposed to her and she said yes, I told her: "I have to tell you, you're taking someone poor. . . ." But what she liked in me was that I was an officer, with a fit body, that I was a man (*rījāl*), *qabaḍāy*, smart, I know how to talk to women, I was telling her sweet things. Anyway, I made it good. That is how I was in her eyes: "This is a man, I want a man like this. I don't care about money." At the time, a doctor from the K. family wanted to get engaged with her, . . . a friend of her brothers, who were also doctors. . . . And when I said to her, "so you left a doctor . . . to come and marry someone poor," she said: "To me, the doctor is delicate (*na'nū*), he is not a man, I don't feel like he is, but you are!"⁷³

Notwithstanding their potential lack of economic capital, combat officers also could claim to stand above the social elites of Lebanon, represented here by a physician from a good family. In fact, many of them had little more than the "stars" (*nujūm*) on their shoulders and what they intended to make out of them, since they mostly came from relatively modest backgrounds. The high command had initiated a reform in the mid-1960s that opened up the officer corps to individuals of lower socioeconomic status, including those from impoverished rural areas.⁷⁴ For these men, manhood was regarded as capital in itself, to be fructified if they were to attain a desirable position in the Lebanese society—that of being a *rījāl*, a noun that goes without an adjective as it has been invested with a social meaning in itself, unlike its alter ego (*zalameh*).

Perhaps even more obsessively, the veterans' accounts hinged upon the role of militias. To enhance their own involvement in the fighting, combat officers used the militiaman's figure as a foil, regardless of the cause they embraced in the course of the conflict. Following the upheaval of February 1984, Captain 'Abd al-Rahman managed to take command of a battalion within the Sixth Brigade, which was stationed in West Beirut, in part thanks to the close ties he had forged with Amal, who had just become the dominant force in this part of the city. His political connections did not dissuade him from describing how local residents felt relieved as soon as they saw an army uniform, before adding right after: "Those are thugs (*zārān*) in the Amal Movement, they strip [you], they steal, they plunder."⁷⁵ Not only did he dismiss the militia foot soldiers as no more than riffraff, but the now general also implied that the army retained a certain efficiency for addressing the current needs of the population. Such discourse has certainly become easier and easier to adopt over the years. The longer the conflict, the more the stature of militiamen faded in the eyes of their "protected" civilians.⁷⁶ This holds even truer in light of their demonization by some artists (directors in particular) and other public debate actors in the postwar period, which provides a ready justification for the protracted spiral of violence.⁷⁷

⁷² Interview with General 'Abd al-Rahman, Jnah, 30 October 2020.

⁷³ General Toufic interview, 5 December 2020.

⁷⁴ On the overall transformation of the Lebanese officer corps, see Oren Barak, "Towards a Representative Military? The Transformation of the Lebanese Officer Corps since 1945," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 1 (2006): 75–93.

⁷⁵ General 'Abd al-Rahman interview, 8 July 2020.

⁷⁶ Samir Kassir, *La guerre du Liban: de la dissension nationale au conflit régional, 1975–1982* (Paris: Karthala, 1994), 493–94; and Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 16–17.

⁷⁷ Hourani, "Militiaman Icon," 296–300. See also Haugbolle, "(Little) Militia Man."

By contrast, it appeared all the easier for the officers to introduce themselves as paragons of virtue—if partially impotent:

And then happened the battles of Chekka.⁷⁸ We penetrated from the Koura region, we prepared a very big force made up of the army [the Lebanese Arab Army] and the parties [the Joint Forces], and penetrated until Deir Nourieh [north of Hamat]. We occupied the whole region. But what happened? . . . In the afternoon, the parties who were with us began to steal the possessions of the other side. The Palestinians started saying that they wanted to massacre the Christians. Thus I stood and told them: “Anyone who hurts a Christian, I am against him and I will fight him.” I gathered all the villagers in the church and I told them: “Don’t be afraid, . . . nobody will touch you. . . .” They returned to their homes, but the houses were not spared from the looting and plundering. Someone grabs a television, someone grabs a car, etc. And nobody stayed: they [the militiamen] steal and they leave!⁷⁹

In addition to drawing from the military’s usual lexicon on militiamen, General Mustafa (1), then a lieutenant fighting in the ranks of the Lebanese Arab Army, set forth another common theme in the trope: the lack of reliability of these unruly mercenaries. One might deduce that behind virtually every critical battle of the civil war lay the national army—whatever its shape. General Abbas, a battalion commander in the Sixth Brigade and a close ally of Amal’s leader Nabih Berri after February 1984, similarly recounted how the militia’s “undisciplined” men were not to be trusted. When asked about the War of the Camps that occurred between Amal and several Palestinian groups in the mid-1980s, he left no doubt about the army’s role: “Without the Sixth Brigade, and Battalion 87 [his battalion] in particular, without us, there would be no Amal Movement. I’m telling you, the Palestinians would have gone out and decimated the Amal Movement. This would have been the end of it!”⁸⁰

As a result, the performative circle of masculinity was complete; a circle that was never to be broken given the overall performance: the military—and above all combat officers—never ceased to be brave and, consequently, to inspire awe among the population—women in particular. In fact, they were the ones who really fought a war, so they were the brave, and so on. This meticulous mise-en-scène would not have been sustainable if the veterans had not tried, at least, to live up to it. In what follows, I argue that this powerful sense of militarized masculinity profoundly influenced the choices these men made throughout the war.

Acting as a Man in Space and Time

During his fieldwork in Kabylia, Pierre Bourdieu noted that the socially constructed dualism between male and female functions was “reproduced in the spatial division between male space, with the place of assembly, the market, or the fields, and female space, the house and its garden, the retreats of *haram*.”⁸¹ Although the gendering of space appeared much more blurred in modern Lebanon, the domestic sphere has remained associated with “feminine” values. The Lebanese Civil War, not unlike World War I and its aftermath, at least temporarily shook the gender boundaries of public and private space.⁸² In many

⁷⁸ On 5 July 1976, the Joint Forces launched an offensive on the Christian town of Chekka. During the fighting, many abuses were perpetrated by the attackers: families were executed, houses were sacked. The day after, the Christian local forces managed to retake the locality with the help of officers from the army. See Kassir, *La guerre du Liban*, 222.

⁷⁹ Interview with General Mustafa (1), Beirut, 8 December 2020.

⁸⁰ Interview with General Abbas, Ayn Bourday, 2 July 2021.

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 89.

⁸² For a reflection on the gradations of public and private spaces in mandatory Syria and Lebanon, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, ch. 10.

households, men struggled to remain the sole breadwinners as work opportunities shrunk in the context of rapid economic deterioration following the Israeli invasion in 1982. As a result, women became increasingly involved in the sustaining or even survival of their families, all the more so as they were less likely to be harmed by the militias outside the home.⁸³ Lebanese war fiction mirrored this reversal in the patriarchal order by insisting on the ambivalent meaning of the house for men. Although it provided them with a sense of safety and relief, it also could be a source of anxiety and alienation. This ambivalence has been well-described in Rashid al-Daif's novel, *Passage to Dusk* (*Fusha Mustahdafa bayn al-Nu'as wa-l-Nawm*, 1986; trans. Nirvana Tanoukhi, 2001). The male narrator, after having sought refuge in his apartment, feels increasingly violated in his own private space, as he loses ground in the face of his illegitimate hosts.⁸⁴

If this unfamiliar seclusion fueled the apprehension of countless Lebanese men during the war period, what of those who had joined the army on the basis of its paternalistic promise? All interviewed members of combat units strove to draw a sharp line between their military career and the domestic sphere, expressing utter contempt for those of their comrades who ventured to cross it. In his lively chronicle of the Akkar region in the 1970s, Michael Gilsenan explained that "sitting at home" (*qā'id bi-l-bayt*)—or "sleeping in the house" as he put it—denoted a "lack of activity, . . . a kind of limbo, without dignity and without any arena in which one might either confront or collaborate with others. [It] confined one to the woman's sphere and as a dormant figure, a doubly anomalous position."⁸⁵ It is no surprise, then, that Lebanese veterans sought to dissociate themselves as much as possible from the emasculating world of their home, and did their best to masculinize it when they ended up having to sit there.

Chief Adjutant Antoine, a sergeant who had just married in 1989, exposed his vision of gender roles when asked about the dire economic situation in his home:

With all due respect to everyone, the house, in my opinion, it is a woman (*al-bayt bi-nisbeh la-eli, huwweh mara*). The woman, if she's capable and knows that her husband is working hard for the sake of his family, there is no shopping, going to the girl[friend]s' every day, or "I must have a car," with all due respect to everyone. Jonathan, *I raised three children, please look where they are now [emphasis added]. . . I'm telling you again, the house is a woman. If the woman is up to her husband's efforts and work, she preserves her family by helping him. As for me, my wife helped me a lot. For a month or two, I was rarely coming back home, this is not easy for a woman.*⁸⁶

Unlike men who ended up "sitting at home," the chief adjutant did not betray a high level of gender anxiety. According to his account, he who defends and provides for his family will not suffer from the social disruption caused by the war. As long as the premises of "classic patriarchy" remained in force, the old gender boundaries of public and private space could be upheld.⁸⁷ Although the noncommissioned officer envisioned the woman as a pillar of the family, in line with the paternalistic stance of the military institution, the idea of a continuum between the "home front" and the "frontline"—an invention of World War I—did not

⁸³ Khazaal, *Pretty Liar*, 209–12. See also Shehadeh, *Women and War in Lebanon*, ch. 4. This trend, however, did not apply to all sectors. Industry, for instance, saw the growing recruitment of foreign male workers, instead of turning to Lebanese women as a way to compensate for the dwindling local male workforce. See Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation*, 121–24.

⁸⁴ For a thorough analysis on the ambivalence of the home in al-Daif's novel and, more broadly, the disruption of the domestic sphere in Lebanese war fiction, see Aghacy, "Domestic Spaces in Lebanese War Fiction: Entrapment or Liberation?"

⁸⁵ Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*, 282.

⁸⁶ Interview with Chief Adjutant Antoine, Hadath, 12 June 2020.

⁸⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): 274–90.

fully materialize, for the all-embracing front—where men stood—was still the battleground.⁸⁸ The hearth, in return, would be relegated to the realm of pleasures and vanities, if it were not for the male authority to rule the entire household.

Fighting therefore counted among the surest means to evade the emasculating effect of the house, perpetuating a male-dominated order in a state of crisis at the time. This no doubt accounted in various degrees for the paths the military (and arguably every combatant) chose to follow in the course of the war. General Amine, a Druze second lieutenant who had just graduated from Fayadieh in 1983 (and who would thereafter embark upon a career in the commandos), dwelled on his own reaction when most of his coreligionists deserted in September 1983, under the pressure of their *za'im* (leader) Walid Jumblatt, who vehemently opposed the pro-Kataeb policy of the government:

As for me, no, I stayed perhaps until November [1983], then I left. But I didn't go to the Mountain [the south of Mount Lebanon, where the majority of the Lebanese Druze community resides]. I went to Beirut and [in February 1984] I was appointed to Battalion 97 [in West Beirut], . . . which was made up of those who broke away from the Eighth Brigade [the main unit that fought against the Druze militia in September 1983]. . . . When the Druze [military] left and sat in their homes (*qa'adū bi-buyūtan*), I thought no, my duty is on the ground (*'alā al-arḍ*). If I don't like something, I do something else, but I stay on the ground. . . . Of course I faced pressure, from the political sides, from the officers who left, saying: "why are you still there?". . . But what, you [the Druze officer who went home] followed your conscience, but your conscience is nonsense: you registered your name and you ended up sitting at home the whole day. . . . These officers, they sat at home, next to their women, drinking maté the whole day. I did not join for this: I register my name and I receive my salary at the end of every month while sitting at home, next to my wife. No, this is not the army.⁸⁹

General Amine's recollection hints at a different story from that usually told about the army during the war: on many occasions, men chose to stay in a position or to join another not only as a result of geographical, sectarian, and political affiliations, but also because they intended to live up to their conception of ideal manhood. More than the institutional appeal to their masculine sense of honor, the intense pressure coming from their peers was a key motivating factor for this.

In his magisterial thesis on French veterans of the Great War, Antoine Prost delineated the "fraternity of the trenches" by stressing how "they [lived] under each other's eye and [knew] exactly what they were worth."⁹⁰ To prove his value, the Lebanese soldier also had to withstand, first and foremost, the gaze of his comrades. This social pressure, General Mustafa (2) recalled, was part of the reason several Sunni officers from the Sixth Brigade (a predominantly Shi'i unit) eventually entered the fray at the height of the War of the Camps in September 1986, after being reluctant to clash with the Palestinians:

When the decision was taken [to renew the fight against the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut], . . . Battalion 87 was deployed because it was mostly composed of Shi'a and headed by officers with the Amal Movement. . . . At the time, it was decided that the Sunni officers would sit at their desks, playing cards. . . . The offensive began. Lieutenant Salih got surrounded at the heart of the [Shatila] camp, in front of

⁸⁸ On the invention of the home front and its continuum with the frontline, see Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁸⁹ Interview with General Amine, Bchamoun, 14 July 2020.

⁹⁰ Antoine Prost, *Les anciens combattants et la société française*, vol. 3, *Mentalités et idéologies* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977), 27.

Jericho School, . . . while we [the sitting officers] were hearing all the details through the [military] radio. I called the [brigade commander] and told him: I'm going down [with my company]. . . . At that point, many Sunni officers also went down. . . . We went down because we didn't want the Sixth Brigade to split, . . . in the sense that as the [Sunni] officers didn't go down, muttering began to spread: "You saw the Sunnis, they're not fighting." So, what do we do? We sit in our homes, playing cards? They started talking about us! The whole atmosphere was wrong: these are our soldiers who're fighting! And officers fell as well. . . . In the end, you are in a very sensitive position: either you preserve your strong presence in the brigade, or you sit at home, and you end up marginalized. We used the Salih incident to intervene.⁹¹

This vivid account given by General Mustafa (2), then a lieutenant in charge of a tank company in the Sixth Brigade, was twofold. On the one hand, it featured the strong esprit de corps that had developed inside the brigade after the turning point in February 1984. When tested to their limits, as in the War of the Camps, the bonds of comradeship would prove steady enough to overcome sectarian and political affiliations. Many Sunni officers, including Lieutenant Mustafa (2) himself, were indeed ardent proponents of the Palestinian cause. Still they eventually resolved to "shoot at [themselves]."⁹² These officers, on the other hand, felt somewhat compelled to intervene, lest they lose face in front of their (Shi'i) comrades and their place in the brigade altogether. In this particular space and time, "sitting at home" took on an additional meaning: besides conveying the idea of inactivity or frivolous distraction, the expression also entailed the shameful position of the "shirker," which referred, in the context of World War I, to a man working safely in the rear, despite being meant to fight on the frontline.

Nonetheless, brothers in arms were not the only actors who contributed to both construction and enforcement of social and gender norms. As Anthony King put it, "the wider society also utilized a similar concept of manhood to enjoin appropriate behavior from these male groups."⁹³ In addition to this brotherhood, army personnel invested with a particular authority, such as the medical staff, also could exert moral pressure on these men to perform well in a combat situation. When asked about the possible trauma left by the intense shelling on the army's positions on the mountain in September 1983, the medical officer in charge of triage responded: "That is only among the Americans. There is no such thing around here. There was stress on the front, but in general our soldiers are not the type to collapse. No such thing here."⁹⁴ This type of medical discourse echoed that of the First World War. "Shell-shock," as it used to be labeled, was categorized at the time among the "illnesses with 'feminine' symptoms"—the term itself was actually coined to avoid speaking of "hysteria" for a man's diagnosis.⁹⁵ Broadly speaking, the response outlined the military's reluctance to admit to the existence of stress-related conditions, as they seriously challenge its (?) reliance on the traditionally masculine values of courage and endurance.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Interview with General Mustafa (2), Jnah, 3 June 2020.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ King, *Combat Soldier*, 69.

⁹⁴ Interview with Dr. Amir, Beirut, 17 June 2020. In September 1983, following the redeployment of the Israeli troops to South Lebanon, the Lebanese army had taken position at Souk al-Gharb, a village located a few kilometers away from Aley, to prevent the Progressive Socialist Party and its Syrian and Palestinian allies from hurtling down toward the presidential palace in Baabda. For more than three weeks, the assailant's artillery pounded the army's positions, causing hundreds of casualties.

⁹⁵ Françoise Thébaud, "Penser les guerres du XXe siècle à partir des femmes et du genre. Quarante ans d'historiographie," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, no. 39 (2014): 167. See also Tracey Loughran, "A Crisis of Masculinity? Re-Writing the History of Shell-Shock and Gender in First World War Britain," *History Compass* 11, no. 9 (2013): 727–38; and Allan V. Horwitz, *PTSD: A Short History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 54.

⁹⁶ Horwitz, *PTSD*, 150.

Perhaps more crucial to the social imperative of being a man was the role that society as a whole, and families in particular, ascribed to members of the officer corps.⁹⁷ We have seen how the performance could be altered in the presence of relatives. It is now possible to appreciate the full scope of these alterations, which are to be reinscribed in the moral economy of the patriarchal family.⁹⁸ For combat officers, this calculated self-presentation came at a cost, for it raised greater expectations from their milieu. Lest they squander their social capital, these officers were pushed to stay in their positions in the army, while striking deals with the dominant forces on the ground, even though it sometimes meant compromising their own convictions. When recounting his experience as a Shi'i commanding officer in West Beirut in the mid-1980s, General 'Abd al-Rahman made sense of his links to Amal and the insubordination of certain soldiers:

There were always people out of control, a few who would be double agents, that is a soldier in the army working with the Amal Movement or the Socialist [the Progressive Socialist Party]. There were a few of them. Them, nobody would say . . . basically, they were protected politically. . . . You know, it was the Amal Movement that was the political force of the Sixth Brigade. . . . By virtue of your geographical presence in this region and your sectarian affiliation, you have to walk the line, whether you're convinced or not. Otherwise, what do you do? You leave and sit at home? If you sit at home, you will be ashamed. That is, you can't provide bread, you can't provide gas, nor do you have your troops; while your position in the army provides you with power and many great services. There were officers sitting at home: he comes, he receives his salary at the end of the month, he drinks a cup of coffee with you and goes back home. He has to manage things by himself, just like anyone, whereas when you are in power, the people come and ask you.⁹⁹

Home, therefore, was not only the place where a man renounces his fighter status and fails in the eyes of his comrades. It also was a space of social death from a combat officer's standpoint. General Mustafa (2) alluded to this risk of marginalization when he and his peers were faced with the alternative to engaging in the hostilities with the Palestinians alongside their Shi'a comrades. In the 1980s, the social strain put on these men's shoulders grew even heavier, as most of the young officers, ranging from second lieutenants to majors, were about to marry and start a family. As General 'Abd al-Rahman himself recognized, "things got completely different" after his marriage in May 1983.¹⁰⁰ Combat officers, then, probably felt the toll more and more of the "patriarchal bargain," whereby women tend not to challenge the male-dominated order as long as heads of households effectively ensure the protection and the economic security of all their members.¹⁰¹ Yet being in charge of a household in the second part of the Lebanese Civil War was no sinecure: from the mid-1980s onward, the economic situation kept on crumbling, as the Lebanese currency depreciated from 3.5 lira to one dollar in the middle of 1980 to 16.5 lira five years later, only to plunge dramatically toward the end of the war, when a dollar was worth more

⁹⁷ See the pioneering works of Suad Joseph who posited that individuals in Lebanon, although retaining their agentive potential, are embedded in a complex network of interpersonal relations, in which kinship plays a decisive role and contributes to the reproduction of patriarchy: "Connectivity and Patriarchy among Urban Working-Class Arab Families in Lebanon," *Ethos* 21, no. 4 (1993): 452–84; and "Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1 (1994): 50–73.

⁹⁸ I draw here upon the ecumenical definition given by Didier Fassin who considers "moral economy to be the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space." See Didier Fassin, "Moral Economies Revisited," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 6 (2009): 1237–66.

⁹⁹ General 'Abd al-Rahman interview, 30 October 2020.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 281–84.

than 500 lira in June 1989, and almost 700 lira one year later.¹⁰² As threatening for the perpetuation of gender roles was the routinization of violence in Beirut, especially its western part. Disorder was rampant in the streets of the capital, due to the myriad internecine strife between neighborhood gangs—loosely affiliated to larger militias—all eager to defend and extend their turfs and profits.¹⁰³

In the event of a patriarchy crisis, Deniz Kandiyoti has argued, “women often resist the process of transition because they see the old normative order slipping away from them without any empowering alternatives.”¹⁰⁴ To be sure, gender anxiety—albeit of different kind—did not only affect the men. Their wives, too, must have been anxious, about the safety of the family, of course, but also about its welfare, for the marginalization of the husband could lead to downgrading of the entire household. These women, who certainly contemplated marriage with an officer as a springboard to a safe and stable situation, had a vested interest in emboldening their husbands to behave like they should. The military, in turn, tried to address this dual anxiety by its own means, despite the necessity of sometimes bowing to sectarian pressure. In sum, it was unthinkable for these men to “go home and sit there,” just as it may have been for their wives.

Conclusion

Despite the crumbling of the Lebanese army over the first year of the war, military personnel rapidly found ways to reassert their agency. Faced with the shift ignited by the militias, these men resorted to various strategies to turn things to their own advantage. Social conventions, issued by either their peers or their families, further pushed them to disrupt the new order in the making. The army command played its part by remaining faithful to its longtime pledge “to turn them into an ideal of virility.” In addition to its rebuilding efforts, it maintained a fictional discourse of hegemonic masculinity, regardless of the military’s restricted ability to influence the course of the conflict. Yet many officers eventually failed to reconcile their honor as soldiers and the moral obligations that derived from their social relations, as they could not keep up with the numerous setbacks that unfolded in the fifteen years of protracted violence. The destructive fighting between the army and the Lebanese Forces, for instance, was deemed far too costly by certain Christian officers who chose to step aside from the bloodshed. On the other side, in the late 1980s, the War of Brothers between Amal and Hezbollah (originally a splinter group of the Amal Movement that operated under the banner of the Islamic Resistance against the Israeli occupant) led to the marginalization of Shi’a officers who refused to lay hands on their own community. In this way a dramatic turn of events could ruin the officer’s endeavor and send him back at once to the “feminine” space—a home or an office—he used to eschew.

As soon as the veterans felt the cracking of the supposedly hermetic frontier between active service and the domestic sphere, their overall performance dried out, exhausted by the “sitting status” of the performer. The narrative became elliptical at best. In fact, most of the interviewees had already interrupted themselves, ready to wrap up the setting before reaching this watershed in their lives. It was only when asked about “what happened next” that they reluctantly admitted to their change of status. Still, the officers’ recollections and their *mise-en-scènes* emerged as an instrumental vehicle in challenging the hegemonic narratives that made the militiamen, along with foreign forces, the only male combatant of the Lebanese Civil War. Counterhegemonic narratives do not necessarily come from “memory makers,” the artist and intellectuals who engage in the production of a memory culture,

¹⁰² Samir Makdisi, *Lessons of Lebanon: The Economics of War and Development* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 87.

¹⁰³ Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 328–30.

¹⁰⁴ Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” 282.

as opposed to the culture promoted by dominant political groups.¹⁰⁵ They also are the doing of individuals (or groups of individuals) who provide us with alternative and contradictory stories, thereby offering a better comprehension of the conflict.¹⁰⁶ All in all, the veterans, albeit for different reasons, have taken an active part, along with artists and the militiamen themselves, in reversing the dominant form of militarized masculinity that was once embodied by the militias.

Without slipping into an all too eager celebration of the military's agency, this study has proposed a different view of the Lebanese army during the war, which is often discarded in the prevailing historiography as an impotent force due to sectarianism. The use of gender gives us instead insight into its persistent military activity, unraveling the importance of honor and manhood for the cohesion of combat units, all the more so when they escaped the army command's authority. It also has proven critical to make better sense of the trajectories of combat officers throughout the conflict. This is not to say that other affiliations (geographical, sectarian, political) should not be accounted for in the choices they have made. In fact, the relationship between Amal and the Sixth Brigade showed that patriarchy can lend a hand to sectarianism by enjoining combat officers not to leave their positions. It would be mistaken to hierarchize these analytical categories by solely considering the gender factor at the infrapolitical and infrasectarian levels. As demonstrated in the case of the War of the Camps, male anxieties were more important than the political and sectarian mobilizations among Sunni officers. A focus on gender allows for reassessment of the sectarian factor, which all too often continues to serve as an encompassing explanation for the civil war dynamics.

The generous accounts of Lebanese veterans suggest, at last, new avenues of inquiry for war studies in the Arab world. It is symptomatic that the most complete book on militarized masculinities in the Middle East did not comprise any piece on an Arab army.¹⁰⁷ The modern history of the region is filled with pivotal situations where the military must have been overwhelmed by gender anxieties. As for the Lebanese army itself, the tale of anxiety and resistance has not ended. While it has yet to recover its monopoly on violence, the military institution, as every public institution in Lebanon today, has been dealt a severe blow by the multifaceted crisis the country has faced since late 2019. Now working only three days a week, the new generation of soldiers, like that of their predecessors, has to achieve small victories in the daily struggle to somehow uphold the dignity of military men.

Acknowledgments. This article owes a great deal to the perceptive comments of *IJMES* editor Joel Gordon and the three anonymous reviewers. I also am very grateful to Elspeth Black and Brent Eng for their helpful remarks on the manuscript. Finally, this article could not have been written without the generosity of the Lebanese veterans who agreed to share their stories with me.

¹⁰⁵ Haugbolle, *War and Memory*, 8–9.

¹⁰⁶ Carmen Hassoun Abou Jaoude and Daniele Rugo, "Marginal Memories of Lebanon's Civil War: Challenging Hegemonic Narratives in a Small Town in North Metn," *Journal of the British Academy* 9 (2021): 20.

¹⁰⁷ Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb, *Imagined Masculinities*.

Cite this article: Jonathan Hassine (2022). "Masculinity in Contention: Performance, Language, and Gender in the Lebanese Army during the Civil War." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 54, 647–667. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743822000824>