

# Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora



# Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora

Edited by

Paul Tabar and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**

---

P U B L I S H I N G

Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora,  
Edited by Paul Tabar and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss  
with the assistance of Nathalie Nahas and Melissa Ajamian

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Paul Tabar and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2329-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2329-6

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface .....	ix
Vincent Crapanzano	

Introduction .....	xv
Paul Tabar and Nathalie Nahas	

## **Part I: Identity and Multiculturalism**

On Being Honkey—The Inter-racial and Inter-cultural Experience of 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Generation Lebanese Americans .....	2
Nelia Hyndman-Rizik	

Lebanese Skilled Immigrants in France: Cultural and Social Capital .....	22
Akram Al-Ariss and Mustafa Ozbilgin	

Heritage Projects in the Lebanese Diaspora .....	39
Amy Rowe	

The Fifth Element: ‘Inbetweenness’ and ‘Migrant’ Youth.....	56
Khaled Sabsabi and Tony Mitchell	

Securitizing Dual Citizenship: The Emotional Cartography of Citizenship among Lebanese-Australians and Lebanese-Canadians following the Summer 2006 War .....	69
Daiva Stasiulis and Zainab Amery	

Foreigners Among Citizens .....	104
Grant Farred	

Across Landscapes of Diaspora and Migration .....	121
Jamelie Hassan	

The Myth of Return Reconsidered: Diasporic Representations of Home and Return .....	133
Dalia Abdelhady	

With the Fig, the Olive and the Pomegranate Trees: Thoughts on Australian Belonging .....	151
Ghassan Hage	

## **Part II: Politics and Activism**

On Lebanese Politics and Migration: The 1932 Census and the 1943 Electoral Law.....	162
Thibaut Jaulin	

Contributions of Young Lebanese-Canadians to Peacebuilding in Lebanon.....	176
Pamela Chrabieh Badine	

The Lebanese Community and Political Life in Quebec: Characteristics and Motivations of the Lebanese-Canadian Citizens Behind Chales Ghorayeb's Candidacy at the 2007 Quebec General Elections .....	193
Nada Saghie	

Facing the Mainstream: When the Duty Calls .....	209
Nadine Yehya and Mohan Jyoti Dutta	

The Making of a Lebanese Pan-Arab Nationalist in the Argentine <i>Mahjar</i> .....	228
Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona	

The Transnational Politics of the Lebanese in Ghana, 1948-1963 .....	245
Isaac Xerxes Malki	

The Journey of the “ <i>Turbah Sajdah</i> ” from Mecca to Kerbala to Jerusalem: Transnational, Cultural and Political Identity of Lebanese Shi’is in Michigan .....	263
Hashim Al-Tawil	

The Ties that Bind: The Political Sentiments of Shi’a Migrants in Senegal, 1919-1960 .....	278
Andrew Arsan	

Politics among Arab Migrants in Australia .....	294
Paul Tabar	

**Part III: Literature and Media**

Is Brown the Color of Sexuality? Analyzing Queerness in Joanna Kadi's Autobiographical Texts.....	336
Deema Kaedbey	
Seductive Identifications: Parody and Power in Loubna Haikal's <i>Seducing Mr Maclean</i> .....	348
Saadi Nikro	
The Last Migration: The First Contemporary Example of Lebanese Diasporic Literature.....	362
Syrine Hout	
UnStated: Narrating War in Lebanon .....	377
Salah D. Hassan	
Remembering the Civil War's Destruction in an Age of Reconstruction: West Beirut in Tony Hanania's <i>Unreal City</i> .....	389
Jumana Bayeh	





## PREFACE

VINCENT CRAPANZANO

On May 22, 2007, I was in Paris on my way to Beirut to participate in a conference on the Lebanese diaspora, which was part of the opening ceremonies for the new Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University, when news of the “uprisings” in the Palestinian camps in northern Lebanon were announced. My French friends advised me not to go with an unreflected immediacy that surprised me. After talking to Paul Tabar in Beirut and to a Lebanese friend in Paris who was planning to leave for Lebanon the next day, I decided to go. A commitment was a commitment. When I arrived at the Charles de Gaulle airport, I felt the anxiety of the passengers waiting for the flight. It was as though they were already mourning the fate of their country. It was as though they expected, as did my French friends, a replay of the summer—the war—of 2006. It was simply too much, so at least I thought. As we were waiting, a large Brazilian-Lebanese family arrived, consisting mainly of teenage girls who were dressed as if they were going to a party in Rio de Janeiro and who, apparently uninformed of—or indifferent to—the fighting were laughing, joking, gossiping, and humming pop songs. They were on holiday. Everyone was startled. At first you could see the passengers’ irritation. Their worry had been disturbed but then, as the girls’ excited chatter continued, the waiting passengers seemed relieved by the distraction. That night, I attended a diplomatic party in which several high level government officials introduced themselves to me and thanked me for showing my support for Lebanon by attending the conference in such trying times. They could not rid themselves of the threat of replay.

I bring up these incidents, not only to situate the proceedings of the conference, now chapters in this book, in their political context but to ask, as I myself did in the airport that morning, what is the source of the Lebanese diaspora? Lebanon is a nation-state, a recent one, that has been so troubled by internal dissonance and external pressures so violent, so pre-possessive, so imperially assumptive that I wonder if it is a nation-state that is deprived of its sovereignty. Is it, as Salah Hassan’ argues, an “unstated state” by which he means both the unutterable and a condition of

the state that is “no longer a state ... that is bereft of the means to uphold or impose the rule of law in its territory or at its borders through mechanisms of force.” What is unstated is less the unutterable than the “muffled,” the unheard, the ignored in the chambers of power politics, he argues, for the grotesque brutalities of war have been documented in over-repetitive detail. But is the unutterable in fact the unstated state of Lebanon? Is it a wound that perpetuates a desire for that which is not and paradoxically holds together that which is not? And this wound, its violent surround, the pain and despair it causes, the hopes it feeds, the identity it gives, resonates diasporically, if you will, through the diaspora, as many of the papers in this collection suggest.

The source of a diaspora is never just a political entity, a territory, *tout simple*. It is deeply symbolic. That is why I speak of source, as in a spring, rather than origin. Its symbolism both enforces its political status and overrides it. It is a homeland, a *pays*, a *watan*. It is far more than a place, a space of origin, a country, a village, a family home, a family, it is also, and perhaps foremost for diasporic Lebanese, but for resident Lebanese as well, a space of memory. In Pierre Nora’s terms, it is a *lieu de mémoire*, albeit one which is tortured by contradiction—a dimension of any *lieu de mémoire* (which Nora ignores)—positive, negative, idealized and de-idealized, romanticized and treated with trenchant realism and inevitable scepticism. It is a place of nostalgia and nostalgia for nostalgia, of mourning, and melancholy: sadness. It is also a place of loss and hope, abandonment and return or dreams of return. It is a place that has been destroyed and rebuilt with exceptional determination. (This was evidenced by the rebuilding I witnessed as I travelled south that May.) It is a palimpsest, an archaeologist’s delight, layers upon layers of history, yes, but more than that, so it seems to me, of Proustian details that inspire memories, recollect forgettings, and promote amnesias. It is a place of knotted, violent resistance, and is, in its many ways, irresistible.

I write this with very considerable hesitation since I am neither Lebanese nor even an expert on Lebanon or its diaspora, indeed of any diaspora. I write out of puzzlement and, inspired by Lebanon, my limited experiences of it, with the conviction that at the core of any national identity, any identity, whether at home or afar, is a paradox, a constellation of paradoxes that can never be resolved. There is no virtue in its resolution. Indeed, it is the space of paradox that charms us, opening us to one creative possibility or another, or at times freezes in our failure to resolve.

For every one of the four million or so Lebanese residents, there are between four and five who are scattered across the globe and seem in

different ways still to be attached to their country. Some are dual citizens (though dual citizenship is not recognized by Lebanon) and participate in its elections. Others have lost or given up their Lebanese citizenship but are no less concerned. Several of the papers refer to the fear that tempered American Lebanese as they sought to bring peace to their “second” country, for the United States was at the time under the yoke of an ignorant, rapacious, fear-inspiring administration. And still others preserve their Lebanese identity in more concrete terms – through food, custom, story, social gatherings (*hafflis*), and genealogical research. And, of course, there are those who deny any identity with Lebanon, as did one of my Brazilian students, who when I discovered that one of her grandparents was Lebanese responded to my interest with a dismissive gesture.

Like all immigrants and exiles the diasporic Lebanese are caught in an in-between. They are at once Lebanese and American, Canadian, French, or Australian, to name a few of the countries in which they have settled. They have continually to bargain their identity -- or better their identities -- as Victoria Aboud observes. Double or multiple identities can be painful, especially in prejudicial situations, as when Maronite Catholics from the village of Hadchit, who immigrated to the western United States more than a century ago, have had to negotiate their racial identity – to whiten themselves. According to Nelia Hyndman-Rizik, herself a Hadchit-American, their assimilation produced fragmented subjects who experienced, as did most Middle Eastern residents in America, “the erosion of their national belonging in the US in the aftermath of September 11th.” Immigrants have always had to situate themselves in terms of not only their country of origin and their host country but also various subgroups (including those who never emigrated) in both countries. They have also to situate themselves, doubtless with some difficulty in the Lebanese community or communities with which they identify. Troubling as multiple identities may be, they do produce multiple perspectives that are the *sine qua non* for true cosmopolitanism, so necessary in today’s world. They open imaginative horizons, spur creativity, and produce inevitably alienation. And, yet I must add, like Lebanese residents their literature tends to focus on Lebanon and their relationship to it. Being Lebanese is their constituted subject.

To speak of the Lebanese diaspora gives, in a certain sense, symbolic cohesion to a country sorely divided not only by political factions but by ethnicity, religion, and class. There are, it should be remembered, 18 separate religious denominations each with its own domestic (family) law and tribunals. Despite these divisions, Lebanese, in my experience, usually refer to the Lebanese diaspora as though it were a unified migration and

then go on to talk about the specific history of their family's or their own immigration. Indeed, one of the noteworthy characteristics of Lebanese migration, which is not necessarily shared by other immigrant groups, is the importance given to family history, some of which are told in the contributions to this book. (This was confirmed by the opening of a museum in South Beirut, which had suffered massive destruction during the 2006 war. The exhibition, whose purpose was to renew a sense of community, consisted largely of photographs of present-day and former residents who had died or emigrated. Along side each photograph was a family history.) The stories centre on their natal village, which is symbolically and in fact not just a point of departure but one of return or dreams of return. This is not to say that all Lebanese migrants want to settle back in their village or even in Lebanon. Some do. Others not only plan to return (retire) but build the homes they will live in but never move back. But even when there is no desire to return, the possibility is, I surmise, always there. It would be interesting to see how and when that possibility arises in their everyday lives. I imagine that it reflects ambivalence about their identities and their place in their host society and that it arises especially when their identity or their status in that society is challenged. What surprises me is through how many generations attachment to "the village" persists. Many of the diasporic Lebanese who attended the conference planned to visit or in fact visited their village and returned with what seemed to me to be an invigorated identity that was, however, muted by the impoverished conditions of the village, the war damage, depopulation, and a quasi-admissible sense of saddened boredom. They referred to these conditions in terms of change, as I have heard other Lebanese do, and at the same time they said that nothing ever changes. Change from what? One might ask. Past reality? Memory images? Idealizations? Their parents' and grandparents' descriptions? What excited them was family reunions even when, those of the second and later generations could barely communicate with their relatives. What seemed most important was connection.

There is no ideal-type diaspora. The Lebanese diaspora began in the last decades of the nineteenth century (and perhaps long before then in the Middle East and northern Africa) and has continued with varying intensity till today. Though poverty has been the single most important factor for emigration, other factors have at times been foremost: notably, devastating civil strife, the Israeli occupation, and most recently the 2006 war. We have also to recognize the influence of economic and political changes as well as changes in immigration policies in host countries. Extended networks

among the immigrants are, no doubt, a constant source of information and opportunities.

As many of the papers suggest, characteristics of the diaspora(s) change not only with time but also with the reception and culture of the host countries. Do they isolate immigrant communities? Do they stress the preservation of the immigrants' culture? Do they attempt to assimilate them so totally that they lose their own traditions? Do they accept one group of Lebanese immigrants; say Lebanese Christians and not others, say Muslims or Druzes? Do they categorize people in terms of race? In essentialist terms? Loosely? Indifferently? In whichever case the diasporic Lebanese are forced into continual displacement the disjunctive movement of which they may accept with a disciplined practicality or deny by clinging paralytically to a singular sense of national identity and cultural heritage. Judging from the contributions to this book, it would seem that whatever hardships displacement may bring, it encourages a flexible, pragmatic realism, by no means immune to material interests, which overrides the stasis of discrimination and marginality. It may be too much to say that the Lebanese diaspora is a success story but it would not be wrong to deny that story.

The papers in this collection bare witness to the richness of and variation in Lebanese culture and society: read carefully, they suggest, if not explicitly than implicitly new modes of describing and analyzing a society that has had a long and precarious history of adjusting and adjusting to its diverse populations and to the diasporic desires – the imports – of a people scattered across the world who have managed, often painfully, to preserve over generations an attachment to their home land. They have struggled, in the words of Ghassan Hage, “to preserve their roots as they move.”

—Vincent Crapanzano  
CUNY Graduate Center



# INTRODUCTION

## PAUL TABAR AND NATHALIE NAHAS

In 2007, scholars of Lebanese migration from around the world gathered in Beirut to consider the theme “Politics, Culture and Lebanese Diaspora.” The goal was to examine the politics and culture of Lebanese migrants and their descendants in different parts of the world by looking at the communal, national and transnational elements of their practices, exploring changing characteristics of politics and culture in respect to migration, diaspora and globalization, questioning the interpenetrating relationships between those various aspects, and examining the processes of identity formation as cultural manifestations of migratory politics.

The 24 papers in this volume represent a wide spectrum of perspectives, and are divided into three main thematic sections: Identity and Multiculturalism, Politics and Activism and Literature and Media. Scholars of migration have called into question the notion that the homeland is a fixed, bounded state which is the default container of culture. Rather, they view the homeland as porous, where intercultural processes are able to bleed through the borders and be transported to the country of immigration, in turn influencing the formation of identity of migrants and their politics in the Diaspora.

The interpenetrating issues of the homeland, its complex ways of representation in the Diaspora and its effect on the formation identity are tackled in the first section. The authors bring out how the formation of identity in the Diaspora is a continuous process, one that is constantly negotiated through past and present situations. Through recounting narratives of personal experiences of migration, identity is shown to be continuously shaped and negotiated. Second generation immigrants as well as their children, undergo the same process to determine at what level they will “acknowledge or own their cultural history and their current life’s narrative.” (Aboud) Thus this is a continuous process, one that involves immigrants and their children that are negotiating their identities through their past and present situations. Aboud uses the metaphor of the immigrant as a “plant” where she explains that the “transplantation of one generation becomes the planting of another, all the while enriching the

culture of the new place, and enriching the culture of the past.” She describes the migrant as an “individual contact zone”, representing two nations, cultures, and homelands. Processes of assimilation and concern with the annihilation of racial and cultural identity are discussed. Migrants are described as feeling “conceptually and spatially in-between black and white in America’s racial pecking order” (Hyndman Rizik), and thus concerned with accumulating whiteness to fit the mainstream. Still, even in the third and fourth generations, Lebanese identity remains resilient. Thus, ethnicity is shown to oscillate between “the search for roots and the move toward ever increasing hybridity.” (Hyndman Rizik) Therefore, among the third and fourth generations it is the inter-racial and inter-cultural character that is important. The term “Honkey-Lebanese” is used to denote people who “look white on the outside and feel Lebanese on the inside.” (Hyndman Rizik) The question of why third and fourth Lebanese-Americans that assert themselves as not being Lebanese invest so much time and effort in order to know and understand Lebanese culture. Practices organizing parties for the Lebanese, putting together heritage albums, and using the internet to inquire about ancestry in Lebanon, go beyond just a pastime hobby. This is a process that these third and fourth generation Lebanese are constantly engaged in because it is one of “being and becoming” (Rowe). That is because their “whiteness is unstable” and at any time there is the “continual possibility of being linked to a broader Arab-American identity which is not arguably mainstream” (Rowe). Therefore the demonstration of heritage is a means of trying to assert “power and authority over their own version of the past—and present.” These heritage projects are more than an assertion of standard American identity because they challenge the second-generation understanding of what it means to be Lebanese. Thus Rowe argues that “looking at heritage brings into view a new iteration of “Lebanese” identity.” Homeland culture then is one that is invented, restored, and revived, through cultural symbols and the meanings attributed to them, and home is “both a concrete reality that is achieved physically or in relations with others and a symbolic reference point that moves beyond territorial boundaries.” (Abdelhady) Our “roots” then are not seen as something firmly entrenched, grounded and unmovable, but that move with you wherever you go: “such a mode of rootedness and belonging is not oppositional in the colonial sense. It is not opposing the belonging of the colonized to the belonging of the colonizer. Nor is it, as already mentioned, post-colonial, in the sense of positing a mode of belonging in which colonialism is superseded. Rather, it is a mode of belonging that recognizes the existence of colonial relations of power and colonial modes of belonging but posits the existence of an-



*other sphere of experiential life* where one can abstract from those relations of power.” (Hage) Yet, there are times when this fluid and hybrid identity is often put to the test, and conflict arises from belonging to more than one world, of being in an “in-between” (Sabsabi) position. The problematic that arises when migrant identities clash is also examined and questioned. (Farred, Zeinab and Amery)

With social identity becoming fluid, nomadic, non-essentialist and mobile, and taking into effect globalization, the intensity for transnational politics becomes quite palpable. Questions are raised and examined through historical and current lenses. Jaulin describes the complex ways in which the political rights of migrants have always been intertwined and tied to local politics in Lebanon. In this way, we are invited to re-consider transnational politics not as a recent phenomenon, but rather as a one that has existed since the first waves of migration. Del-Mar demonstrates with her discussion of the life and work of Jurj Sawaya a Lebanese-Argentinean that “these transnational practices at a very early stage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicate the existence of an emerging transnational sphere which preceded contemporary processes of global political communities.” Yet, as Arsan brings to our attention, it is not only the political elite who participated in transnational politics early on. An examination of the affiliations and aspirations of Shi’a shopkeepers and traders in the early 1930’s in Dakar demonstrates to us their commitment to the reform of their homeland, by the different activities and correspondences they undertook. Currently, the Lebanese abroad are in a continuous process of being involved in homeland politics. We are shown how elections in the Diaspora are influenced by the divisions of the Lebanese back home, how Lebanese Canadians are engaging in various activities to promote peace building and or prevent war back home, how activism is sometimes restrained due to impeding structures in the Diaspora and how it is overcome by creating counter-public spheres to be able to carry their voice and case in the country of destination (Badine, Saghieh, Dutta and Yeyha). We are also shown the political considerations of host governments towards immigrants, the complex ways in which the transfer of homeland politics towards the new domicile occurs, and the influence of international affairs and foreign policies of various governments in shaping the politics and the community of the Lebanese in Ghana (Xerxes).

The last part of the book examines a vast diasporic literature, both novels and film, proposing readings of them to bring out the representations of Lebanese migrants abroad. The authors again raise questions of how identity is shaped, what remains unstated in representations

of homeland states, and trace how representations of migrants themselves, their sentiments towards homelands and Diasporas have changed.

The wide variety of perspectives presented in these papers invite us to challenge the notion of a fixed, bounded, and rigid homeland and identity, and move towards one that is more nomadic and fluid. It invites us to pay attention to the symbols used in the cultural construction of both homelands and identities in the country of immigration. It also pushes us to think of the complex ways in which transnational politics affect the homeland and are in turn affected by it.

## **PART I:**

# **IDENTITY AND MULTICULTURALISM**

# ON BEING HONKEY-LEBANESE: THE INTER-RACIAL AND INTER-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE OF 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION LEBANESE-AMERICANS

NELIA HYNDMAN-RIZIK

## Introduction

Double remoteness never quite Arab enough, and always unconventionally American. (Shryock 2004:302).

Contemporary trends in the study of migration increasingly focus on transnational ties between 1<sup>st</sup> generation migrants and their homeland in the era of globalization (Kivisto 2003; Harvey 1991; Schiller, Glick, and Bashch 1995; Levitt 2001). However, some researchers (Leichtman 2005; Hyndman-Rizik 2008; Lee 2004) have noticed that, amongst the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of migrants, transnational ties are not ‘seamless’ and can even be characterised by ambivalence and contradiction. Thus, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Lebanese-Americans who are the subject of this study, transnationalism does not accurately reflect their Diasporic experience. Instead, this chapter will examine the inter-racial and inter-cultural experience of the descendants of immigrants from the village of Hadchit, in North Lebanon, who emigrated to the United States of America (USA) in the 1890’s. The chapter begins by situating migration from the village of Hadchit within the context of early Lebanese emigration to the USA and then moves on to analyse their racial positioning within America’s Melting Pot. It will be shown that, like other Lebanese-Americans, the accumulation of whiteness was an integral part of the process of their assimilation into American society (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007). Lastly, this chapter will explore the stigmatization of Lebanese ethnicity in post-September 11<sup>th</sup> America and show how this has caused a disruption to their assimilation trajectory and an erosion of their national belonging, using the Hadchiti experience as a case study. At the same time,

globalization has brought many descendants of Hadchiti immigrants back in virtual contact with the home village online via the Hadchit website.<sup>1</sup> The process of re-integration with homeland, however, is not all-smooth sailing as they find themselves too white to be Lebanese, while not quite white enough to be American.

## Methodology

This chapter draws upon a combination of archival research, previous ethnographies (Kepler-Lewis 1968; Allhoff 1969; Williams 1958), oral accounts, interviews and participant observation field research<sup>2</sup> in the USA in 2006. It is part of a broader research project for my Doctoral dissertation, in the field of Anthropology, entitled: *Home and Place: Migration, Cultural (Re)production and Return Between Sydney and Hadchit, North Lebanon*. The Australian research focused on the Hadchiti immigrant community in Sydney, whose roots in Australia go back to the late 1950's and where close transnational links with the home village have been maintained. The Lebanese field research focused on return visits to the village of Hadchit in June 2007. The American field research focused on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation experience of the descendants of Hadchitis in St. Louis, Missouri; Butte, Montana and Portland, Oregon. This chapter draws upon the American part of this research project.

## Locating the Hadchitis in terms of early Lebanese emigration to North America

Hadchit is a Maronite Catholic village in North Lebanon, located in the high altitude Qadisha Valley. Its population has been emigrating for about 120 years. According to Kepler-Lewis (1968), who wrote an early ethnography on the village of Hadchit, emigrants from Hadchit are to be found in at least 14 countries, with North and South America, Australia and Canada being the principle destinations. The Hadchitis who emigrated

---

<sup>1</sup> See [www.hadchit.8m.com](http://www.hadchit.8m.com)

<sup>2</sup> This research has been funded through a number of grants and scholarships including: The Australian National University (ANU) Re-Entry Scholarship for Women, The ANU Faculty of Arts Fieldwork Grant and the ANU Vice-Chancellor's Peak Conference Grant.

to the USA were part of the first wave of Lebanese/Syrian<sup>3</sup> emigration from the 1890s-1920s, 95 per cent of whom were Middle Eastern Christians from the villages of Mount Lebanon (Naff 1994). It is estimated 100,000 Lebanese emigrated to the USA before WWI (Naff 1994:24).

Why did the Hadchitis immigrate to the USA? Hourani and Shehadi (1992:4) surmised that the first and most basic reason for the first wave of Lebanese emigration was population growth. This was supported by Kepler-Lewis (1968) who observed that the mountain villages of Lebanon experienced considerable population growth and that a land-population balance had already been achieved in Hadchit and the other mountain villages by the latter 1800s. As there were strictly only 3000 parcels of land available in Hadchit, Kepler-Lewis (1968: 77) argued that outward migration was a strategy for those who did not inherit land. Williams (1958), additionally, described the poverty and the harsh living conditions that prevailed in Hadchit even up until the 1950s. However, according to Wigle (1974), it was not always the poorest who were the most likely to emigrate, because often only the landowning families were able to raise the money to sponsor a family member abroad. Migration, therefore, was a broader family investment to access cash earnings from overseas as each migrant sponsored would provide long-term remittances to the home village. Furthermore, it was often viewed as a short-term proposition and there was often the expectation of return migration, which was not always realized by emigrants to the USA at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as Kepler-Lewis (1968:244) observed 40 years ago:

A less obvious, but even more basic factor was the desire for social prestige which wealth could bring. The value of cash was not to live well abroad but to return with it to Hadchite - a desire reinforced by cultural ties of the émigré to the community.

Working and living outside the village in order to gain access to the cash economy was actually a long-term arrangement in the village of Hadchit that pre-dated emigration to the USA. Kepler-Lewis (1968:24) conceptualized the relationship between Hadchit and Kubbe, a suburb in Tripoli, for example, as that of a transhumant village, whereby members of the village spent part of the year away earning money and returned to Hadchit for the summer season. This pattern was then extended internationally with the first wave of migration to the USA and later with

---

<sup>3</sup> In the 1890s the state of Lebanon did not exist so Lebanese were then known as 'Syrians', as they came mostly from Mount Lebanon which was located in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire.

the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> waves of migration to Australia. Consequently, the village of Hadchit experienced a process of deterritorialization, with the boundaries of the village expanding to include all those in the Diaspora, a process Kepler-Lewis (1968:29) already observed in the 1960s:

We were surprised to learn from the villagers that its population was 3,500. There were hardly enough houses to hold one third that number. Then it was explained that there were 1000 villagers in the Kubbe in Tripoli, and another 2000 in "America." Some villagers thought that there were 2000 in St. Louis, Missouri. Others said that those who emigrated were scattered in cities such as St. Paul, Minnesota and Butte, Montana, as well as St. Louis and New York.

The early Hadchiti immigrants arrived in the USA mostly through Boston and later through Ellis Island, many with the assistance of a migration agent who organized their passage and initial contacts. Some immigrants stopped in Boston, however, for many it was just an entry point along the way to other locations within the network of Hadchit immigrant communities across the USA. Sometimes Hadchitis arrived in family groups, such as in groups of siblings; husbands and wives together or sometimes on their own. Men often migrated first and then sent for a wife who then migrated with the assistance of relatives or a migration agent to meet their spouse or sometimes men returned to Hadchit in person to 'select a wife'. Some Hadchit women migrated without husbands or even left husbands and sometimes children behind in the home village. These women migrated to the USA, hawked for a living and sent money back to the village. Thus, the migration process was an opportunity to change their lives, fate, and husbands too if they could manage it. This was a common feature of the first wave of Lebanese migration (Boosahda 2003:22)

From Boston there were several main centres to where the Hadchitis moved: St. Paul, Minnesota; St. Louis, Missouri; New Brunswick, Canada; Butte, Montana and later onto Portland, Oregon. The Hadchitis were commonly hawkers who supplied goods to the miners, pioneers and settlers of the American West. St. Louis formed the main migration hub for the Hadchitis in North America. It was the Gateway to the West, the point where train and river travel stopped and the wagon trails started. St. Louis was a supply centre to where many Lebanese, including the Hadchitis, made return trips to obtain the essential dry goods they sold in the frontier hawking trade. The Hadchitis were a considerable contingent within the Lebanese quarter in St. Louis, where they clustered on Hickory Street. It was speculated by Kepler-Lewis (1968) that their descendants numbered some 2000 by the 1950s, although this may be an exaggeration

given the records show that only 258 individuals emigrated from the village before 1950 (Kepler-Lewis 1968: 29).

The Hadchitis were the main force behind the establishment of the St. Raymond's Maronite Church, in the Syrian/Lebanese quarter on Le Salle Street, that was opened on 15 July 1913 (Allhoff 1969:45). It is named after the patron saint of Hadchit, St. Raymond. Although there was no Maronite-rite priest for 45 years, in January 1967 Father Robert Shaheen was appointed the parish priest (Allhoff 1969: 46). Today St. Raymond's Church is a cathedral and is the centre of St. Louis's Lebanese community. Father Shaheen is now the Maronite Bishop for the Western USA.

St. Raymond's Maronite Church in St. Louis was a hub for all the Hadchitis in North America. Many marriages took place at St. Raymond's before the couples moved to other sub-hubs within the network of Hadchit immigrant communities across the western USA. St. Raymond's Maronite Church was also an essential node in the collection and repatriation of remittances from the first wave of Hadchit migration back to the home village. Up until the 1950s remittances still flowed back to Hadchit from the US. Kepler-Lewis (1968:246) noted that in 1950 the village priest from Hadchit visited St. Louis, Missouri and returned with US\$3,000 dollars to refurbish the village churches. However, contact was starting to be sporadic by the 1950s, as the migrating generation was starting to dwindle. Letters from the American Hadchitis were anxiously awaited in the home village for the possibility that they might contain some remittances. The essential problem for the village of Hadchit then, and as presently observed in Sydney, is that remittance flows end or significantly reduce with the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, a similar pattern was also noted by Kepler-Lewis:

As older emigrants die abroad and are succeeded by a younger generation which has no first-hand knowledge of the village, all contact tends to disappear. However, whether American cousins, nephews and grandchildren have any real feeling of close kin ties or not, the people of Hadchite still consider them so and count them as part of the population of the village (Kepler-Lewis 1968:34).

It appears, therefore, that diminishing remittance flows inevitably led to the migration of a new generation from the village. Hence, another wave of migrants left Hadchit at the end of the 1950s for Australia, about the time the remittance flows from North America dried up and Australia became the post WWII migration pathway.



## **The accumulation of whiteness: the racial positioning of the Hadchitis in Americas Melting Pot**

The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colour-line (Sollors 2006:155).

How did Lebanese immigrants like the Hadchitis fit into the matrix of ethnic groups that made up American society from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till now? In the era of unfettered assimilation they were expected to give up their Hadchiti identity and leave behind their traditions, language and culture and instead to absorb American values and culture, which mostly meant 'Anglo-Saxon conformity' (Huseby-Darvas 1994:15). This process came to be known as the 'Melting Pot':

The demand for assimilation, the end of hyphenated Americans, 100 per cent Americanization, all summed up in the image of the melting pot. This image took on graphic form...[during] a festival sponsored by Henry Ford during the early 1920s a giant pot was built outside the gates of his factory. Into the pot danced groups of gaily dressed immigrants dancing and singing their native songs. From the other side of the pot emerged a single stream of Americans dressed alike in the contemporary standard dress and singing the national anthem...The enormous pressures which created this vast transformation amounted almost to a forced conversion (Bellah 1971).

The Melting Pot positioned in front of the Henry Ford factory producing a neat stream of proletarians devoid of ethnicity provides an evocative image of the assimilationist project on the part of America's national planners. The aim was to convert immigrants into a benign stream of settlers and proletarians that would feed the great American expansion. In fact, American planners expected that the forces of assimilation would cause the diverse ethnic groups that came to settle the USA from the end of the nineteenth century to disappear without a trace, as Lloyd Warner noted:

There are too many factors ... to predict accurately whether all these groups will continue to exist or will surrender to the forces of assimilation and acculturation, but it seems likely that most, if not all of them, will ultimately disappear from American life (Lloyd Warner 1961:144)

If immigrants, like the Hadchitis, were to be absorbed into American society through enforced assimilation, how would they be positioned within America's black/white system of racial classification? At the turn of the twentieth century America was dominated by a discourse of race,

which created a dichotomy between black and white and enforced the categorization and placement of each arriving ethnic group into a racialized framework, regardless of whether they defied categorization within this prevailing system of binary oppositions (Goldstein 2006).

African-Americans were the unequivocal other of America's racial pecking order; while White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPS) were the norm of whiteness against which all other Americans would model themselves (Kaufman 2004). The immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Ottoman empire were regarded as culturally, racially and intellectually inferior (Huseby-Darvas 1994:17). Thus, America was, and still is, an acutely colour conscious society and the lines of segregation were being sharply drawn at the turn of the twentieth century.

A number of historical factors contributed to the formation of the racial colour line in American society at that time. Firstly, America was in a period of mass immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe and the Hadchitis were part of this wave of international migration. The America into which the Hadchitis arrived was rapidly industrializing and expanding into the American West. Secondly, the end of the Civil War in the 1860s led to the emancipation of the slaves in the American South. This led to several large waves of African-American internal migration, known as the Great Migration, into the northern cities of St. Louis, New York and Chicago during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century (Sollors 2006:158). Lastly, the convergence between mass international and internal migration along with industrialization unsettled WASP America's sense of order and security in their position of unrivalled economic and social privilege (Goldstein 2006:38). The reaction to this unease was the formation of a clear language of black and white, which aimed to assert and maintain the racial pecking order, or status quo, and in practice led to a rapidly advancing system of racial segregation (Sollors 2006:154).

The ideology of assimilation, however, would only offer immigrants, like the Hadchitis, the promise of inclusion if they were able to pass as whites. The alternative was 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizenship and segregation, which by contrast, was the only social universe offered to African-Americans (Sollors 2006). For this reason, the Hadchitis, like other Lebanese and Arab Americans, strived to be seen as white and to accumulate whiteness in order to climb the American racial and economic ladder (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007). Assimilation and the ideology of accumulating whiteness were, therefore, parallel processes that worked hand in hand:

Immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe in the new American industrial workplaces of the mid-nineteenth century aspired to

and eventually procured whiteness; they viewed it as payment for the exploitation of their labour (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1991:9).

The accumulation of whiteness by immigrant groups, such as the Lebanese, demonstrated, however, that the category white was not fixed or immutable, but instead was porous and was actually more of an ideology or a social construction than a fixed biological truth (Ang 2001:188; Kincheloe J 1991:5; Novak 1996:406; Goldstein 2006):

Whiteness is not a biological category but a political one: to be white signifies a position of power and respectability, of belonging and entitlement, but who is admitted to this position of global privilege is historically variable. Some people have become white over time as their status and power have risen such as the Irish and Jews in the USA (Ang 2001:188).

The accumulation of whiteness by America's immigrant groups, in the course of the twentieth century, has challenged the absolute dominance of WASPS in the American racial pecking order and resulted in what has been termed a 'crisis of whiteness' (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1991:11; Kaufman 2004). A parallel can be found in the Australian case, where a 'crisis of whiteness' has manifested in what Hage (1998:179) has termed the 'discourse of Anglo-Decline'. However, I would argue that the process of accumulating whiteness produced a subaltern inversion of the 'crisis of whiteness' for the Hadchitis, which could be described as a 'crisis of ethnic demise', which was particularly acute for the migrating generation. Indeed, it has been argued that exile communities are caught between two seminal fears: absorption into the host-nation and the loss of the homeland (Naficy 1993). The Hadchitis worried that enforced assimilation and out-marriage would lead to the inevitable dilution or even the annihilation of their racial and cultural identity in the USA, an observation also supported by Naff (1994: 31). It was thought that by limiting out-marriage and asserting the importance of in-group endogamy, they could ensure their ethnic and cultural survival, as this interview reflects:

**George:** Our grandparents would never have considered letting us marry *Ameriken* (Americans) – it would have been the kiss of death. They would rather have seen us die than let us marry an *Ameriken* (American).

**Nelia:** What did they think would happen?

**George:** You would lose who you were. It would be horrible for you and for the family. But the children didn't buy into it as you know.

The counter-side to the fear of ethnic demise, however, was the reality of America's system of racial classification, which limited the capacity of the Lebanese to become white. Rather, Lebanese typically found themselves spatially and conceptually in between black and white, as was the case in St. Louis, as is described in the following interview:

St. Louis is a very racially divided city, with the blacks in the North and the whites in the South. The Lebanese, because we were not ever really fully accepted by the whites, we were not white enough, always found ourselves in the middle – we were the middlemen.

Thus, the Hadchitis, like other Lebanese Americans, experienced complex and contradictory identity pressures. On the one hand, the first generation attempted to maintain their distinctiveness as Lebanese from Hadchit, while the second and subsequent generations attempted to accumulate whiteness, in order not to be seen as black. However, as the above quote reflects, in reality they found themselves conceptually and often spatially in-between black and white in America's racial pecking order. The next section will discuss how September 11<sup>th</sup> has undermined the assimilated status of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Lebanese-Americans.

### **Being Lebanese after September 11<sup>th</sup>**

Lebanese and Arab Americans, in general, have experienced the erosion of their national belonging in the USA since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Now the certainty of the integrated status of Lebanese, like the Hadchitis, has been undermined and some have experienced their re-designation as 'non-white' (Elaasar 2004: 16). Consequently, my research shows that having a Lebanese background has become increasingly stigmatized, as is reflected in this quote from a fourth generation Hadchit descendant:

...people don't think that Lebanese people had anything to do with September 11<sup>th</sup>, but my dad has always warned me not to tell people I am Lebanese at certain points in our lives. Like when I was a teenager was a middle point it didn't seem to matter. But when we were having trouble [in] Beirut...[he would say] "When you're going on a plane never tell anyone you're Lebanese"...there must have been some turmoil in Lebanon. He didn't want me to tell anybody I was Lebanese; he was scared that people hated the Lebanese. It was always up and down, up and down, of course now he says it again, don't tell anyone you're Lebanese.

It is apparent that Lebanese-Americans sometimes feel compelled to go underground with their ethnicity. This interview also highlights that the

stigmatization of Lebanese and Arab American identity actually started well before September 11th. Abraham (1994) argues it began during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and continued during the Lebanese Civil War and throughout Reagan's 'War on Terrorism' in the 1980s. It has been exacerbated by each phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the first Gulf War and now it has hit rock bottom after September 11<sup>th</sup> (Abraham 1994:161). However, my research has found that the 2006 July Israeli War in Lebanon was perceived to have an even worse impact than September 11th, as this interview with a 3rd generation Hadchit-American lawyer explains:

Since September 11<sup>th</sup> they're equating Arab with Muslim now, even though there are Arab Catholics. I really think that 9/11 focused the world's attention on the Arab world. However, to tell you the truth, I got more shit during the Israeli war on Lebanon in July 2006. They said: "Oh you Arabs and Jews can never get along...which side are you going to fight on?"

It is clear that Lebanese-Americans, some now in their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation in the USA, find their position to be increasingly tenuous. However, my research with the descendants of Hadchitis shows they overwhelmingly consider themselves to be fully American. That is, they have multiple identifications that they inhabit simultaneously (Farry 2005:267). For some of my interviewees their "Lebaneseness" is only a form of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1994) that they strategically deploy, while for others they feel compelled to strategically hide their Lebaneseness. My research also shows that being Lebanese is often an unavoidable ascriptive identity that they cannot escape and it is imposed upon them based upon their physical appearance, as the following interview with a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Hadchit American shows:

**Paul:** I identify as being Lebanese-American. But, once a week I get asked – what are you Mexican, Indian – that's how they usually ask. Not many people ask if I am Lebanese. It used to kind of bother me if they asked if I was Mexican. I just tell them I'm Lebanese.

**Nelia:** You're family has lived here for 110 years – when will you stop getting asked where you're from?

**Paul:** Yeh and now when I tell them Lebanon they always have to say something about the Middle East and terrorism

This interview shows how difficult it actually is to overcome the colour barrier in the USA, even after five generations. What is more, Shryock (2004) suggests that the excessive scrutiny of America's Arab

communities since September 11th has exacerbated the internal cleavages between the assimilated and non-assimilated, or 'boatie Arabs.' That is, a kind of 'cultural promotion' has emerged within the Arab American leadership, which aims to project a domesticated, glossy, benign Arab ethnicity to the American mainstream. However, in so doing they project a seamless Arab American identity which glosses over the internal class, ethnic and religious differences within the category 'Arab American' (Shryock 2004). These tensions have resulted in what I term 'culture wars' between the new and old Lebanese-American communities over how to be authentically Lebanese in America.

### **Culture wars: The experience of hybridization**

The ethnic enclaves in St. Louis, Missouri and Butte, Montana scattered some 40 -50 years ago and most descendants of the Hadchitis have married out and live embedded in multi-racial settings across the USA. Complete assimilation, however, has turned out to be a resounding nation building myth (Daniels 2006:74). After more than a century in the USA, most descendants of the Hadchitis I interviewed, know their history and are aware of where their grandparents or great-grandparents came from and still consider themselves to be Lebanese from Hadchit as well as American. For example, the descendants of Hadchitis in St. Louis have an annual Hadchit Hoedown and run a Hadchit Open Golf-Tournament. Their Lebanese identity has proven to be resilient across the generations and even sometimes felt to be stronger than other aspects of their cultural and racial makeup. A 4<sup>th</sup> generation Hadchit American explains:

I want my children to be proud of it, even though they are like [a] quarter Lebanese, I think it is really a special thing in our lives, we are unique.

Ethnicity, therefore, oscillates between the search for roots and the move toward ever increasing hybridity (Farry 2005:266; Kivisto 2003:17). Abdelhady (2008) has argued that Lebanese Diasporic identity has become increasingly transient and less focused on the myth of return, but rather on building homeliness in Diaspora. My research with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Lebanese-American families has found that their inter-racial and inter-cultural character is now their defining characteristic. It is also what sets them apart from new arriving immigrants from Lebanon, who have been migrating to the USA in increasing numbers since the 1990's. Indeed, Humphrey (Humphrey 2005:50) argues the chasm between the new and old Lebanese communities is one of the primary schisms across the Lebanese Diaspora.