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'Shrinking Worlds': Cronulla, Anti-Lebanese Racism and Return Visits in the Sydney Hadchiti Lebanese Community

Nelia Hyndman-Rizik¹

By drawing on observations gained from ethnographic fieldwork in western Sydney with immigrants who are Maronite Catholics from Hadchit, North Lebanon, I demonstrate the pervasiveness of anti-Lebanese racism in Australia and the way it cuts across class, gender and religion within the Lebanese community. My fieldwork was conducted around the time of two pivotal events: the 2005 Cronulla Riots in Sydney and the July 2006 war in Lebanon. By focusing on the experience of racism within the Hadchiti community, I show that the problems the Lebanese face in Australia cannot be attributed only to their economic disadvantage, low education and religious difference. On the contrary, the Hadchiti experience shows that Australia has a 'glass ceiling' and that there are distinct limits to the ability of successful Lebanese to translate their success into national belonging in Australian society. This has been particularly acute for the second generation of Hadchitis in Australia and has contributed to their search for transnational belonging back in Lebanon. During return visits to Hadchit, members of the second generation strive to find a place in the society their parents left behind, only to discover that they are considered to be 'Australian' rather than 'Lebanese'. Thus, they are trapped in a migration process that renders them out of place in both Australia and Lebanon.

Keywords: Cronulla Riots; Racism; Lebanese; Maronites; Return Visits

Introduction

The satellite TV was on in every house I went to: LBC and Al Jazeera. For most families it is the focus right now, often well into the night; we were up till 2am last

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night because of the time gap. I've been drinking 5–6 cups of Lebanese coffee a day and I'm a bit strung out. Many can't sleep and are distressed by the situation and are crying every night. Every time a town is bombed we look at a map of Lebanon to see where it is located. Everyone seems to feel powerless and dubious of the representation of the conflict by the Australian press and 'sold out' by Howard [then Prime Minister of Australia] in terms of how their interests are being represented at the 'national level'. The scenes of Lebanese in Beirut pleading to be evacuated because 'they were Aussies too' were very telling. There was a perceived link between the Cronulla Riots and the racism against Lebanese Australians and their treatment in Lebanon once the war started. (Fieldnotes 29 July 2006, Sydney)

In this paper, I explore the convergence between anti-Lebanese racism and recent international and local events, such as the Cronulla Riots in Sydney in 2005² and the war in Lebanon in 2006,³ and the impact they have had on Australia's Lebanese community. Specifically, I am interested in how these events have played out within the Hadchiti immigrant community, where I did ethnographic fieldwork throughout 2006. The Hadchitis are Maronite Catholics who live in the Parramatta area of Sydney in about 500 households in four suburbs. My Sydney fieldwork was part of a broader multi-sited research project for my doctoral thesis entitled: 'The Hadchiti diaspora: A multi-sited ethnography set between Sydney, the western United States and Hadchit, N. Lebanon'. There have been three waves of migration from the village of Hadchit over a period of 120 years, the first going mainly to the USA in the 1890s and the second and third arriving in Australia from the 1950s onwards.

I begin the paper with an outline of my fieldwork methods, then situate the project within the broader literature on migration. After covering the history of anti-Lebanese racism in Australia in order to explain the creation of the 'Arab other' in our national discourse, I locate the Maronites within the Lebanese community in Australia. Having set the stage, I then discuss the particularities of the Hadchiti experience of migration to Sydney, and present ethnographic material related to the impact on the Hadchiti community of 'living under siege' in Sydney. Finally, I discuss the way immigrants from Hadchit have been attempting to acquire transnational identity and belonging back in Lebanon, as a reaction to the hostile environment they find themselves encountering in Australian society today.

Methods

My fieldwork in Sydney, 12 months in all, began at the time of the Cronulla Riots in December 2005. I was also in Sydney during the 2006 July war in Lebanon, and gained a feel for the kind of impact the crisis in Lebanon was having within the Hadchiti community. My ethnographic research was framed by my experience as a woman, with a young child, doing fieldwork on my own, and I cannot say that it was easy or that acceptance was automatic. Rather, I found myself moving constantly between my insider/outsider status with every encounter: I am half Lebanese and have a great-grandparent from Hadchit. The outbreak of war in Lebanon led to the turning point of my fieldwork, when people became more open and accepting of my

presence. Because of the war, I brought forward the second phase of my fieldwork, based in the USA, where I spent two months. There, I returned to the community in which my great-grandfather from Hadchit had settled and where my mother had been born: Butte, Montana. I also conducted research in St. Louis, Missouri, and in Portland, Oregon, with descendants of Hadchiti immigrants of the 1890s. In May 2007, I undertook a return trip of two weeks to Hadchit in Lebanon.

My fieldwork methods combined participant observation in three principal field sites—in Australia, the USA and Lebanon—with 50 structured interviews in Sydney and 30 in the USA, during which I took detailed electronic fieldnotes. I also recorded ten oral histories and a discussion with 20 youths from the Hadchiti community in Sydney that I led. With assistance from the St. Raymond's Charities of Hadchit Committee, I conducted a 500-household mail survey of the Sydney Hadchiti community, which achieved a 30 percent response rate. Additionally, I conducted cyber-ethnography—carrying out research on the internet and making contacts via websites—which was particularly useful for building a network of contacts with whom I later conducted fieldwork in the USA. Some of these contacts were made via the Hadchit village website guest book, available online to the global community.⁴ I also made extensive use of text messaging for network building, in both the Hadchiti community in Sydney and in the USA, as a variation on the research method of snowballing, which I found well suited to contemporary urban anthropology. Lastly, I made several detailed migration chain maps for key families within the Hadchiti migration hub in Sydney.

Situating the Hadchitis within the Literature on Migration

Anthropologists are reconsidering how we approach the study of migration. It is no longer sufficient to discuss migration as a narrative of settlement and assimilation, or migrant groups as merely 'ethnic enclaves'. The challenge is to understand why some migrants continue to maintain links to their homelands and to identify with a 'place of origin', despite the trend towards globalisation. Many observers, including Harvey (1991), have noted the paradox that globalisation pushes us towards unprecedented levels of global interaction while annihilating space through time-collapsing technologies, yet people are not simply becoming ever more homogeneous. Rather, they continue to evince strong interest in issues of 'difference', 'identity' and 'location', which has attracted considerable academic interest. Various scholars have attempted to explore aspects of the global versus the local divide. Researchers such as Ong (1999) and Baldassar (2001) focus on transnationalism as the link between the two processes, whereas Appadurai (1996) and Werbner (1990) show how the flow of transnational people, goods and knowledge produces imagined communities, 'virtual neighbourhoods' and migrant communities inter-generationally. Werbner (1990, 327), in particular, suggests that we should conceptualise migration by successive waves of immigrants as a process of capital accumulation over time. I am particularly interested in the strategies that Hadchiti immigrants employ to connect the global

spaces between Sydney, the USA and their home village, and in the persistence of their connection to a notion of homeland despite mass emigration and settlement in multiple locations.

Diaspora studies attempt to define and understand the phenomenon known as 'diaspora'. This term originally applied to the Jewish, Greek and Armenian experience and has been extended to apply to immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, overseas communities and ethnic communities (Tololyan 1996). However, Tololyan argues that the use of the term has become too ubiquitous, and questions why so many more minority groups are now claiming diaspora status. Clifford (1994, 311) suggests that it is because diaspora discourses break the binary subaltern relationship between the migrant minority and the majority society by linking migrants to a multi-locale community beyond the borders of their host society. This broader 'diaspora community' offers the possibility of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland, not as something simply left behind but as a place of continuing attachment.

According to Saffran (1991, cited in Clifford 1994, 304) there are six basic features of diaspora communities: dispersal from an original location to one or more peripheral locations; memory, vision or myth about the original homeland; belief that migrants cannot be fully accepted in the host society; a discourse of return to the homeland; commitment to the maintenance and restoration of the homeland; and relationship to the homeland in forming the basis of group solidarity. Clifford (1994, 306) argues, however, that some diasporas are more focused on cultural reconstruction in multiple locations than on the doctrine of return, and suggests a definition of diaspora that focuses, instead, on shared history, displacement, suffering and resistance rather than on just a symbolic homeland. According to Cohen (1997, 83–101), the classic definition of diaspora is not an exact fit for the Lebanese; they could more accurately be characterised as a 'trading diaspora', with no single traumatic event acting as the catalyst for dispersion. While the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) certainly did cause emigration, this was a later chapter in the story of Lebanese migration, and many of the Sydney Hadchitis, for instance, pre-date the Civil War migrations. Population pressure and economic opportunity were the main driving forces. Although return migration may have been intended, for most this never came to pass. Nonetheless, the concept of homeland is very central to the Lebanese experience, as Cohen (1997, 99) agrees:

What draws the Lebanese overseas back to the Lebanon from such far flung destinations? One important explanation is, despite frequent memories of bitter ethnic conflict, the extraordinary hold that the imagined homeland has over the Diaspora.

For many diaspora communities, the diaspora itself becomes a home away from home (Clifford 1994, 308). Baldassar (2001, 6–14) argues that many migrants feel home itself has a shifting centre that moves where the migrant moves; thus, finding 'home' becomes an eternal quest. This 'in-between state' that many migrants find defines their existence results in what Baldassar (2001, 9) has described as a 'circular

quest for an increasingly elusive identity', which becomes a central feature of the migration process. (For the 'migration process', see Werbner 1990, 1–4, 327). Nonetheless, the reverential character of the connection to place and homeland is central to Baldassar's (2001, 6) concept that, for San Fiorese migrants, the return visit to their home village is a pilgrimage and right of passage for the second generation.

The counter side to globalisation, therefore, is the persistence of localism, which can be seen in the continuing importance of the notion of 'homeland'. Thus, return visits could be seen as a bridge between the post-modern deterritorialised identities of the present and the enduring conceptions of identity firmly rooted in an ancestral homeland. The Hadchiti immigrant community in Sydney can be seen as an illustration of the 'migration process', as it is both 'de-territorialised' and yet connected to the home village. For example, mass emigration has led to the reconstruction of a social village, set within the suburbs of western Sydney, beyond the geographical boundaries of the home village and yet centred on Hadchit as a place of origin. The discourse of 'return' is also central to the Hadchiti experience, and has become more compelling for Australian Hadchitis in the context of multicultural crisis and the stigmatisation of Lebanese ethnicity in Australia.

Anti-Lebanese Racism and the Construction of the 'Arab Other'

Here I discuss the background to anti-Lebanese racism in Australia. Humphrey (1998, 24–25) describes four main waves of Lebanese emigration to Australia: the first was the pre-1947 phase; the second, 1947–1966; the third, 1967–1975; and the last, the 1975–1990 post-Civil War migration. Until the 1920s, the Lebanese, who were then called Syrians or 'Turks', were classified as 'Asiatic aliens' and denied citizenship under the 'White Australia Policy'. This also meant they were regarded as potential 'enemies within' during World War I (Mansoor 2002, 35). The pressure to assimilate into Australian society in this early period caused many Lebanese to feel compelled to anglicise their names. The lack of access to their own religious institutions also caused many to change their religions and become absorbed into the Australian Catholic and Protestant churches (Batrouney 1985, 1992). While the Cronulla Riots are the most intense outward expression of anti-Lebanese racism this country has seen to date, it has never been easy for the Lebanese to find acceptance in Australian society. Members of the last wave of Lebanese migration to Australia, in particular, have found themselves the most marginalised, economically and socially.

Over the last 15 years, anti-Lebanese racism seems to have accelerated. To date, it has been more generally linked to Lebanese 'difference', Islamic disadvantage and the rise of international 'Islamophobia', especially since September 11. Indeed, many authors have traced the cycle of intensification and merging of anti-Muslim, anti-Lebanese and anti-Arab sentiment since the first Gulf War in 1991 (e.g., Hage 2002, 2006; Collins 2000). Poynting *et al.* (2004, 11–51) argue, in *Bin Laden in the suburbs*, that the 'Arab other' has now emerged as the conglomerate of these fears and has become the 'folk devil' of our times as the result of successive waves of 'moral panics' (pp. 12–13),

especially since the late 1990s. The convergence of a series of international and local factors, such as ethnic crime gangs, race rapes, asylum seekers, September 11 and the 2002 bomb blasts in Bali, have been pivotal in creating this dynamic (Poynting *et al.* 2004, 11–51). Politicians and the media have fed the development of this ‘moral panic’, which has come to focus its gaze upon the ‘Arab other’ and, thus, conflate a range of peoples, communities and cultures into a single category.

However, what is more interesting to me is the intersection between the current moral panic against the Arab other and the broader crisis in Australian multiculturalism, which seems to have found its ultimate expression in the Cronulla Riots. Why do the two appear as if they are converging? Or, more specifically, why has the fear of the Arab other come to epitomise the end of Australia’s ‘tolerance’ towards ethnic difference? It appears that Australian society is experiencing a ‘crisis of whiteness’ (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1991, 11), which finds a parallel in the American case (see also Goldstein 2006; Kaufman 2004; Root 1996). The ‘crisis of whiteness’, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1991) argue, is the inevitable outcome of pre–World War II migrants and their descendants accumulating whiteness and, ultimately, challenging the status of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPS) in American society. Moreover, as Ang (2001, 188) argues, the fact that immigrants like the Jews and the Irish were able to accumulate whiteness, over time, revealed that ‘whiteness’ itself is not an innate biological truth, but is a social construction:

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 US.

In the Australian case, Hage (1988) analyses the ‘crisis of whiteness’ (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1991, 11) as a ‘discourse of Anglo-decline’ (Hage 1998, 79) and draws on similar arguments to the American case. However, Hage goes further to suggest that migrants who refuse to integrate present an even greater challenge to ‘whiteness’ than those who attempt to accumulate it through the process of assimilation, because they possess an independent ‘will’, which competes with the national will. Or, worse still, migrants who refuse to integrate challenge the ‘centrality of whiteness’ to the Australian identity (Hage 1988, 22). It would seem, then, that, in the spectrum of Australian ethnic groups, the Arab other has become the ultimate unassimilable other. Where do Maronite Catholic Lebanese find themselves situated, though, in a context in which the Arab other is mostly assumed to be Muslim and predominates as the ‘folk devil’ of our times?

Christianity as Whiteness: The Position of the Lebanese Maronites in Australian Society

Historically, Lebanese Christians have sought to find acceptance in Australian society through their ‘shared Christianity’. In fact, Hage (1998, 60–61) argues that some

Lebanese Christians deploy their Christianity as a means to accumulate 'whiteness' and, hence, greater belonging in Australian society. According to Hage (2004, 118), the Maronites have a long tradition of white self-racialisation, which pre-dates Lebanese emigration to Australia and was associated with the French colonial period and the early engagement of the Lebanese Maronites with the French during the development of capitalism in Lebanon in the nineteenth century: 'Christian Lebanese identity was experienced by those identifying with it as European and white, and as intrinsically endowed with a causal power to generate the very capitalist social practices that produced it'.

No doubt the Maronites brought this pattern of 'colonial whiteness' with them when they came to Australia. Many Lebanese Maronites whom I interviewed have developed a 'discourse of denial' in relation to the state of anti-Lebanese racism in Australia. The Christian Lebanese I interviewed identified Muslims of all backgrounds, not just Lebanese, as 'destroying' the good name of the Lebanese in Australia—a reputation they claim was forged by the early Christian Lebanese immigrants, whose roots in Australia go back to the 1880s. When asked about the Cronulla Riots, many of the Christian Lebanese I interviewed blamed the riots on the bad behaviour of the Muslim Lebanese, and rarely identified anti-Lebanese racism as the source of the difficulties facing the Lebanese community in Australia. Indeed, many claimed to have never experienced racism themselves, saying that the trouble was not 'in their neighbourhood'; there was even sympathy expressed for dominant Anglo-Australian attitudes towards Lebanese Australians as depicted in the media.

The current fashion, amongst Lebanese Christians, of wearing very large and prominent crosses attests to their need to differentiate themselves from Lebanese Muslims. When asked about these crosses, many will say: 'It means I don't have to be asked twice what I am.' Moreover, when asked whether they are effective in diffusing the effects of anti-Lebanese racism, they will generally answer 'yes'. However, when asked about 'personal experiences of racism', an apparent contradiction between their discourse and their experience on the ground emerges. Although they claim that their Christianity diffuses anti-Lebanese racism and that wearing symbols of their Christianity assists in this, many are experiencing racism on a daily basis, as the Hadchiti case will demonstrate. In truth, then, many Christian Lebanese find that there are limits to their ability to convert their Christianity into belonging in Australian society, because ultimately they can only aim to be 'like White Australians', but will always fall short (Hage 1998, 61).

A growing minority amongst the Maronites I interviewed, however, is starting to see the limitations of their Christianity in protecting them from anti-Lebanese rejection. This is because the Cronulla Riots, for example, targeted Lebanese Australians without differentiating between Lebanese Christians and Muslims. Consequently, it has prompted a growing minority within the Lebanese Christians to see beyond their 'sectarian consciousness' to their shared plight with Lebanese Muslims. The following response to the Cronulla Riots from an 18-year-old Christian teenager illustrates the changing consciousness that is starting to develop amongst the Maronites:

When it was the Cronulla Riots I was crying because I'm Christian and I'm Lebanese, and there was a picture that it was the Lebanese and it was the Muslims, but whether it was the Christians or Muslims it doesn't matter, because it was Lebanese people in general who were being targeted ... and, you know, you wanted to go and fight ... if we're being targeted that much.

Christian Lebanese allegiances with Anglo-Australia can, therefore, be seen as an extension of a long history of white self-identification and self-differentiation from the 'Muslim other', which was an intrinsic part of their identity as a Christian minority in the Middle East, a region dominated by Islam (Hage 1996, 124). No doubt this tendency was exacerbated by 15 years of Muslim-Christian conflict during the Lebanese Civil War of 1975–1990. However, one wonders whether the crisis in Australian multiculturalism and the experience of anti-Lebanese racism have further undermined the development of a more unified Lebanese-Australian identity.

The Limits of Success: The Hadchitis Reach Australia's Glass Ceiling

Here, I discuss the particularities of the Hadchiti experience of migration to Australia over the last 40 years, in order to show the impact of racism on their community. From the information I have gathered through participant observation and interviews in the Hadchiti community, Hadchiti experience demonstrates how pervasive anti-Lebanese racism is in Australia and how it cuts across class and religion within the Lebanese community. For instance, when you speak to members of the older generation of migrants within the Hadchiti community, they will tell you stories of their early experiences of racism in Australia 40 years ago, which usually involved denigration of their 'woginess'. An example of this kind of encounter is encapsulated in the story of a group of Hadchiti men at the local 'club' in Auburn getting into a brawl with a local Anglo-Australian who demanded they 'speak English'. Their response to this was: 'Sure we will speak English, but not in our own families and with our cousins; you cannot deny us the right to speak our own language within our own community.'

When considering these early experiences of racism confronted by Hadchitis in Australian society, it can be deduced that Hadchitis had a lowly social status as newly arrived immigrants of 'non-English-speaking background'; the men worked in factories and the women cleaned hospitals. The Hadchiti experience of racism in those days could be explained by their poor acquisition of the symbols of 'Australian cultural capital'. However, it is ironic that, some forty years later, members of the second generation in the Hadchiti community seem to experience racism even more acutely than their parents did a generation ago. This is despite having been born in Australia and speaking English with an Australian accent; despite most having completed Year 12 and many having tertiary qualifications; despite almost all working and earning good salaries and, most importantly, identifying as being 'Australian'.

Indeed, many members of the Hadchiti community in Australia have attained the symbols associated with success in Australia through working in the building

industry and in business. Still, however, they find themselves 'locked out' of the Australian identity. For example, many Hadchitis, particularly the young men, have told me that they experienced the six weeks following the Cronulla Riots as an intensive period of anti-Lebanese rejection. One young man told me how he was too frightened to eat his lunch outside his workplace in the suburb of Miranda during that time.

The experience of daily racism is also manifested in a more subtle way. For example, I detect amongst some young people from Hadchit a discourse concerned with the 'good ethnic', who works 'overtime' in order to make it in Australian society. This quote from a 21-year-old male who works in retail illustrates the lengths he will go to be seen as a 'good ethnic' and not Lebanese:

I dress to where I'm going to be working; if I am working in the city it is business suits and pinstripes. I use different language if I am working in the city: it is Ma'am and Sir ... [I]n the city they are more corporate ... [p]eople say to me 'are you Italian or Greek', because I present myself well and I have proper English and I am actually respectful and courteous. I uphold myself to a degree to where people respect me, and people who don't see Lebanese people as respectful see a stereotype. I never tell people I'm Lebanese when I'm working; I say my parents were born in Lebanon, I'm born here, I'm Australian.

From this quote, it can be seen how the subject tries to 'pass for white' by being 'courteous and respectful', values not normally attributed to the Lebanese, he says. In fact, 'passing for white', in his case, means aspiring to be mistaken for Italian or Greek, because they are closer to 'whiteness' in the pecking order of 'good and bad ethnics' that makes up Australian society today.

So, what does the Hadchiti experience of racism tell us about the broader experience of racism in Australia's Lebanese community? Anti-Lebanese racism is usually conceptualised as relating to a 'moral panic' surrounding the 'Arab other' (Poynting *et al.* 2004, 12–13), which focuses on Lebanese marginality in Australian society in terms of their high unemployment rate, their poverty and their difference, particularly among Lebanese Muslims (see also Humphrey 1984; Collins 2000). Why, though, is the second-generation group of young, trendy, affluent Hadchiti Lebanese Christians not finding acceptance in Australian society? Although they have now accumulated the 'symbols of success', this is not converting into national belonging; instead, they have hit a glass ceiling, which is blocking their ability to convert their cultural capital into national belonging.

Ong's (1999) analysis of the limits of accumulation for wealthy Hong Kong immigrants in San Francisco is relevant to understanding the Hadchiti predicament. Ong argues that, despite their wealth and their acquisition of the symbols of success in American society, such as university degrees, million-dollar homes and Rolex watches, the Hong Kong immigrants are ultimately thwarted from 'belonging' in America. Ong (1999, 108) describes this barrier as the upper echelons of the white business establishment, which upholds the centrality of 'whiteness' to economic power and belonging in American society:

They soon discover that just as there are limits to flexible accumulation in business, so are there limits to cultural accumulation for gaining prestige ... Chinese immigrants ... cannot easily convert such symbolic capital into high social standing in Anglo circles. (Ong 1999, 108)

Hage (1998, 61–62) similarly argues that the limits to accumulation are reached when the immigrant is faced with those who do not have to accumulate symbolic capital or ‘whiteness’, but embody it naturally, being what Bourdieu calls the ‘aristocracy of the field’. In the Australian case this is the Anglo elite, who innately embody Australianness. Thus, for the Hadchitis, there is only so much ‘whiteness’ they can accumulate, and, as long as ‘Anglo-ness’ is considered the core of Australian identity they will always find themselves on the ‘outside looking in’.

To make matters worse, it appears that the current crisis in multiculturalism⁵ and the ‘moral panic’ against the ‘Arab other’ have caused the second generation of Hadchitis to suffer a social devaluation as Lebanese Australians, which has diminished their accumulated cultural capital; they are now going backwards instead of forwards. Tabar (2007, 158) has also observed the symbolic devalorisation of Lebanese ethnic cultural capital in Australia following attacks on Lebanese youth ethnicity under the federal Liberal and National Coalition Government and, at the state level, particularly under the leadership of the former New South Wales Labor Premier, Bob Carr.

Baldassar (2001, 338) suggests that second-generation immigrants possess a migrant habitus that is different from that of their parents, who more readily accepted the status of ‘guest’. Their children, on the other hand, often identify as being Australian and have acquired components of ‘white’ cultural capital, such as language, accent and education, and therefore feel more affronted by the experience of racism in their host society. Hence, the experience of being ‘caught in-between’ is a quintessential experience of second-generation migrants. In the case of the Hadchiti community, the second-generation experience of being liminal is made more acute by the stigmatisation of Lebanese ethnicity in Australia.

The struggle the Hadchitis face to find acceptance in Australian society could be seen as a microcosm of the national struggle over Australian identity and, I would argue, it was the latent tensions from this struggle that erupted during the Cronulla Riots. The riot cannot simply be conceptualised as an issue of Christian versus Muslim or Anglo versus Lebanese; it really went beyond these dichotomies to the issue of who have the rights to ‘call themselves Australian’ and to share in the benefits of the Australian identity. Put bluntly, the riot could be seen as disaffected Anglos asserting and delineating their right to monopolise the category ‘Australian’ and their hegemony over the archetypal symbol of Australian leisure: ‘the beach’. Thus, the struggle on Cronulla Beach that day could be seen as a metonym for the national hegemonic struggle over the Australian identity itself.

Indeed, it could be argued that, for the 5000 rioters on Cronulla Beach that day, the category ‘Lebanese’ simply represented, for that moment, ‘all ethnic Australians’, in that it was an intense moment of Anglo fear and rejection of the ‘ethnic other’.

This collapsing of 'ethnic Australia' into the label, 'Lebanese', was typified by the t-shirts and body painting that read: 'You flew here we grew here'. More telling, however, was the actual 'lynch mobbing' of people for their apparent 'Middle Eastern appearance'. As it turned out, a couple of the individuals were of Greek and Bangladeshi background (Hage 2006). Here, you see the disjuncture between what was said ('No Lebs here') and what was done; that is, any Australian who happened to have an 'ethnic appearance' was victimised. In this way, the category, 'Leb', merged with 'ethnic' and was opened up, in that moment, to include anyone of non-Anglo appearance.

In some ways, then, the Cronulla Riots were more than simply another episode in the unfolding story of anti-Lebanese racism in Australia. In fact, the riots clearly represented a merging of anti-Lebanese racism with a broader 'panic' about 'ethnic Australia' and the fear of 'Anglo-decline'. Thus, the plight of Lebanese Australians and the plight of multiculturalism in Australia have come to be intimately interwoven, with the Lebanese bearing the brunt of Australia's crisis with multiculturalism.

'Under Siege': Being Lebanese in Sydney

I seek to show now how the 'shrinking world' in which the Hadchitis find themselves, the lived reality of being Lebanese in Sydney, is creating a type of 'siege mentality' amongst them. From my research, I discern four main ways in which this phenomenon is played out in their community: a spatialised reaction whereby Hadchitis restrict their movements around the city of Sydney; the development of a 'paranoid patriarchy', which has increased the amount of surveillance and restriction on the movements of women and girls; the intensification of religious practice; and, lastly, the perpetuation of an inward-looking community focus that is somewhat impervious to outsiders despite the Hadchitis having been in Australia for over 40 years.

The spatialised reaction to 'living under siege' forces many members of the Hadchiti community to limit their movements around the city of Sydney and, instead, to retreat into their suburbs and family networks where 'they feel safe'. On the basis of the information I have gained, Sydney is very much turning into a divided city. This quote from a Lebanese real estate agent in the Parramatta area is indicative of this trend:

The North Shore was a bit funny; I worked there for over a year. One time the police pulled me over on the highway and they were looking at my licence and they saw that I was from out west, which is a 45-minute drive away. They said 'what are you doing here', like over the bridge is a different country, and then asked to see my business card. When they saw it they were sort of alright, but it makes us want to stay in this area because we're not wanted. We are stuck in a shoe box ... you know you can go to the South-west but you got to stop at Hurstville, because after that it is Cronulla, and if you go north you got to stop before you cross the Harbour Bridge, because we're not wanted there. So we're sort of stuck between the city and out west.

The imperative to stay in their 'shoe box', as the subject in the quote describes it, disciplines the Lebanese into staying in their designated suburbs and, in practice, it is a strategy of spatial containment often enforced by police harassment. However, the Cronulla Riots are also an example of the punishment meted out to Lebanese who step out of their box and dare to trespass on the recreational zones of the city, such as the beach, which some Australians seem to fantasise as 'white only space'—that is, if it were not for all those migrants who keep showing up.

However, there is a second layer of 'spatial containment' within the Hadchiti community, whereby the movement of women and girls is restricted and subjected to intense surveillance. In practice, the men, who themselves feel restricted, in turn severely restrict the movements of 'their women' in the name of 'protecting' them from racism and moral corruption. In fact, 'living under siege' undermines the evolution of gender relations in Lebanese communities, like the Hadchiti community, and seems to lead, instead, to a type of paranoid patriarchy, which women often experience as a double burden of oppression, or what King (1988, 42) has referred to as 'multiple jeopardy', the layering of multiple forms of oppression.

Contrary to the stereotype, it is not just Lebanese Muslim women who suffer; Lebanese Christian women, in communities like that of the Hadchitis, live in a state of spatial containment that is reinforced by the embattled status of their community. Hussein (2006) argues that some 'disempowered' Muslim men become 'toxic' and often take their frustration out on someone they think they can control, namely 'their' women. A similar pattern can be seen in the Hadchiti community. There is an Arabic saying for young women to keep them mindful of appearances: 'You have two eyes, but there are 1000 eyes watching you'. In the Hadchiti community in western Sydney it is 6000 eyes, because there are around 3000 people living in four suburbs; so surveillance is paramount. Young men have become the 'moral police' for their fathers, and mobile phone surveillance is the method of choice to keep track of their sisters. The 'community of brothers' also extend its surveillance to other female relatives; thus, if they are out and find one of their female cousins, they will ring her brother on the spot and ask: 'where is your sister?' It is a mark of a male's honour to know his sister's location at any given moment. This quote from an 18-year-old Hadchiti teenager describes her reaction to living under this regime:

Me and my cousins, we're not allowed out ... towards the end of my schooling, I didn't do well because I had nothing else to look forward to. I went crappy in my HSC⁶ for the fact that it was all about HSC and I was never allowed out and I was sick of it. If they would have just given me a bit of what I wanted and let me out a bit throughout high school. Now all I want to do is go out, party, spend money, have a phone—kill it—you know, and I can't do it. Because I didn't have it. They tell me I'll get over it. But you're over it, I'm not; I haven't even started to experience it; I'm a very emotional person because I was never allowed to do stuff and I'm resentful for those times I wasn't allowed out and nobody understood it.

Deconstructing gender relations within the Hadchiti community is complicated by recent political debate, in which the treatment of women is seen as illustrating the

lack of Muslim integration into Australian society (see links to some relevant articles⁷). In this context, any attempt to critique gender relations can quickly be construed as justifying the government's campaign against the treatment of women in Australia's Lebanese community and, thus, reinforcing a stereotype. The effect is to silence the debate altogether. Moreover, some Arab feminists critique attempts to apply a Western feminist analysis to gender relations within Arab families as 'Orientalist' (Said 1978; Abood 2002, 168). Where does that leave us? How do we see beyond the stereotypes of 'Arab women' and find a space in which to analyse the sometimes toxic gender relations within a community like that of the Hadchitis?

I argue that the answer is to analyse gender relations in the Hadchiti community as a reaction to the migration experience and the political context in which people find themselves, rather than to see them only as a 'traditional' feature of Arab society. Rather, the Hadchiti community now suffers from a kind of paranoid patriarchy, which is a direct result of living 'under siege' in Sydney. This has been compounded by their 'migration lag', a common feature of migrant communities whereby they attempt to maintain the standards of the country they left some forty years ago. Thus, they have become out of step with both the Australian mainstream and new developments in gender relations in Lebanon.

The pattern I have described in the realm of gender relations is reinforced by the third main reaction to the siege mentality that I observed: the development of a renewed religiosity amongst the Hadchitis, extending to the youth as well. The youth Masses at Our Lady of Lebanon at Harris Park spill over on a Sunday night. Many report that attendance is well up on five years ago. Young people tell me they go to Mass to find a way of understanding their plight as Lebanese in Sydney. This quote from an 18-year-old Hadchiti illustrates the point:

The past eight months now I have been going to church every week. Every Sunday I am there you know. I go to the 7 pm youth mass. It's really good ... I go for praying reasons ... I am really devoted to it and I listen and it touches you because he makes everything make sense How does he know what you're thinking? He makes my life make sense again and how does he do that? You rely on it. During the Cronulla Riots he spoke to us a lot about that and that it was uncalled for and that by retaliating it shows that we're being just as stupid. If we did this to them this is what they will do to us.

The last main impact of the siege mentality, as I see it, is the perpetuation of the Hadchiti community's inward-looking nature in Australia, and the creation of a self-contained social life that is vibrant and somewhat impervious to outsiders and what outsiders think about them. In a way, this is their strength as a community living under difficult circumstances, but it is also a kind of perpetuation of their village-based social relations brought with them from Lebanon. With 3000 people from their own village living around Parramatta, many of them lead full lives embedded within a context of vast numbers of relatives and friends that would be beyond the imagination of many Anglo-Australians. For example, a community event might have 600–800 people attend, a Lebanese Maronite wedding will typically have around

350–500 guests, and a funeral have 1000 mourners. So, while there is a sense in which their world is ‘shrinking’ as a result of the current political crisis that surrounds them, many Hadchitis continue to draw strength from one another.

Shifting Identities

It is not surprising, considering the lack of acceptance and belonging that many Lebanese people now confront in Australia, that some, especially members of the second generation, are attempting to strengthen their links back to Lebanon and have developed a more diasporic Lebanese identity. A number of factors have contributed to this. About five years ago, satellite television, such as the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), Al Jazeera and other Lebanese and Arabic language programming, became available in Australia. It appears in real time, and a very high percentage of Lebanese households watch it,⁸ sometimes all day and well into the night. Before the advent of satellite television, only Arabic language newspapers and radio provided news about the ‘old country’. However, accessing the newspapers was dependent on literacy in the Arabic language. With satellite television, all speakers of Arabic, regardless of their level of literacy, can now engage with news and other programs straight from Lebanon.

Being enabled by satellite television to watch events in Lebanon as they unfold transforms the way these events are perceived, and collapses distance so that many now feel closer to Lebanon than they did before (Aksoy 2006). The July 2006 war in Lebanon also highlighted the ability of satellite television to transform opinion in the Lebanese community and to pull many members of the diaspora, especially the Maronites, out of their attitudinal ‘migration lag’ towards a set of viewpoints that is closer to the prevailing opinion in Lebanon concerning recent events. Satellite television also allowed Lebanese immigrants to receive news about the war in Lebanon through Arab media sources rather than mainstream Australian news, which demonstrates the contested nature of news and its representation. For many Lebanese families, it is liberating not to be constrained by the version of reality officially sanctioned by the Australian media establishment.

‘Return visits’ to Lebanon have also had a transformative effect in the development of Lebanese diasporic identity. Over the last decade or so, between the end of the Civil War and the outbreak of the most recent war, many Lebanese have been returning to Lebanon on a regular basis. In the case of the Hadchiti community in Sydney,⁹ members of the migrating generation mostly return to their village of origin. However, there has been a renewed engagement with broader Lebanese culture amongst the second generation, and many of these have also been returning to Lebanon on a regular basis. They have been looking for a way to feel proud of their Lebanese background, which is so maligned in Australia. It is more than that, however; many Lebanese I interviewed see their lives in Australia as only work; they say, ‘Australia is work and Lebanon is life’. They all comment on the unique ability of the Lebanese in Lebanon to live life to the full despite war and uncertainty, and it is

this quality that draws them back. This excerpt from a poem about Beirut illustrates what the diaspora loves about it: 'I love Beirut because Beirutis live as if they are going to die tomorrow and party as if they will live forever' (source: 'I Love Beirut', on www.daleelaustralia.com) .

Many Hadchiti immigrants strategically time their return visits for the St. Raymond's Day Festival, which is held in Hadchit every September for its Patron Saint.¹⁰ When asked why they go then, they tell me they go there to dance *dabki* (Lebanese circle dancing) in the village square of their forefathers. Many tell me of having an intensely emotional experience of belonging whilst they danced, but no sooner did the dancing finish than they once again felt like an 'outsider' in their parents' village. In fact, for the second generation, finding identity and belonging in the home village of their parents has turned out to be fraught with contradictions. Return migrants to Hadchit often find themselves positioned as 'Australians', or at best *moghtarebee* (return immigrant), but certainly not 'locals'. To make matters worse, they discover that their Arabic is indelibly tainted with the regional accent of their parents, which contemporary Hadchitis now associate with the backward and unsophisticated 'village identity' they strive to lose. Many returnees thus find themselves caught between the competing versions of modernity in Lebanon and Australia and on the outside of both.

Baldassar (2001, 338–39) describes a similar 'disorientation' amongst the second generation of San Fiorese in Perth during their 'return visits' to Italy; they feel 'out of place in both their old and new home'. Baldassar argues that the feeling of 'homelessness' is a quintessential feature of the diasporic condition and an inherent feature of the 'migration process'. She argues that the movement back and forth of the return visit itself becomes 'home' for the deterritorialised migrant (Baldassar 2001, 338). I argue, however, that the return visit for the Hadchitis allows them to unify the two competing conceptions of home, one that moves with the migrant and the other that is tied to the primordialism of place and ancestry. Dancing *dabki* in the village square of their forefathers achieves just this through an intense moment of 'communitas' (Tabar 2005, 143; Turner 1974, 238), wherein all obstacles are overcome, if only for that moment.

However, because of their 'imperfect fit' in the ancestral village, members of the second generation found that it could not hold them for long, and the young men, in particular, tell me that they were irresistibly attracted to the night life of Beirut. Here they strove to do what their parents or grandparents could never do as 'illiterate mountain peasants' or *jabaliye* (mountain people): join the fashionable, cosmopolitan expatriates and the educated elite of Lebanon on the dance floors and in the cafes of Rue Monot. Thus, they participated in a new Lebanese diasporic identity, which incorporated those who had left with those who had stayed, and gave the Lebanese returning migrants a way to engage with a new post-Civil War Lebanese 'modernity'. Hence, the inability of the second generation of Hadchitis in Sydney to translate their acquisition of Australian cultural capital into national belonging in Australia has given some the impetus to switch strategies and attempt to acquire

transnational cultural capital and national belonging back in Lebanon, in a way their forefathers never could as rural peasants or *fellahin*.

Conclusion

I have used observations gained from ethnographic fieldwork with Sydney immigrants from Hadchit in relation to two pivotal events—the 2005 Cronulla Riots in Sydney and the July 2006 war in Lebanon—to demonstrate how pervasive anti-Lebanese racism is and how it cuts across class, gender and religion within the Lebanese community. By focusing on the experience of racism within the Hadchiti community, I have shown that the problems the Lebanese face in Australia cannot be attributed only to their economic disadvantage, low education and difference in terms of religion. On the contrary, the Hadchiti experience shows that there are distinct limits on the ability of Lebanese to translate their success into national belonging in Australian society. This has led many members of the Hadchiti community to renew their ties with Lebanon through return visits. For the second generation, however, these return visits are fraught with contradictions, and acceptance is not always guaranteed.

The Cronulla Riots and another war back in Lebanon have combined to place many Lebanese Australians between a rock and a hard place. Now they find themselves ‘under siege everywhere’, in a world of shrinking options. Perhaps they may now feel compelled to accept the status of the grateful second-class citizen? This would probably suit government in Australia, which is increasingly preoccupied, on both sides of politics, with border protection and national allegiance. That is, while government wants the absolute allegiance of its immigrants, in return it offers to some only marginal membership. This creates a potential conundrum for government, as the marginalised immigrant may well respond: ‘If you will offer only marginal membership, then I will offer only marginal loyalty.’

Notes

- [1] *Acknowledgments*: I thank all the kind people in the Hadchiti community in Sydney who supported my research, especially the Loulach and Rizk families. I also thank my academic support from The Australian National University, The University of Western Sydney and the University of Sydney, in particular my supervisor, Dr Ashley Carruthers, for all his guidance, and my advisors, Professor Ghassan Hage and Dr Greg Noble, for the roles they played in supporting my research. I also thank my father, Dr David Hyndman, for reading many drafts of this paper, and my mother, Mary Rizik Hyndman, for raising me with an appreciation of our Lebanese roots. Last, but not least, I thank my husband, Kai Wallenius, who was the supporting spouse during my field research and looked after our three children, which was not always easy. A version of this paper was presented to the Everyday Multiculturalism Conference at Macquarie University, 28–29 September, 2006. While it has had suggestions and input from many people, in the end its faults and limitations are my own.
- [2] ‘The 2005 Cronulla riots were a series of ethnically motivated mob confrontations which originated in and around Cronulla, a beachfront suburb of Sydney ... Soon after ... violent incidents occurred in several other Sydney suburbs. On Sunday, 11 December 2005,

approximately 5000 people had gathered to protest in response to some recently reported incidents of assaults and intimidatory behaviour by groups of non-locals, some of whom were identified in earlier media reports as Middle Eastern youths from the suburbs of Western Sydney. The crowd had assembled following a series of earlier confrontations, and an assault on three off-duty lifesavers which had taken place the previous weekend ... violence broke out after a large segment of the mostly white crowd chased a man of Middle Eastern appearance into a hotel and other youths of Middle Eastern appearance were assaulted on a train. The following nights saw several retaliatory violent assaults in the communities near Cronulla and Maroubra, large gatherings of protesters around western Sydney, and an unprecedented police lock-down of Sydney beaches and surrounding areas, between Wollongong and Newcastle.' (Wikipedia. Accessed 14 November 2007)

- [3] The 2006 Lebanon War, known in Lebanon as the July War ... was a 34-day military conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel. The principal parties were Hezbollah paramilitary forces and the Israeli military. The conflict started on 12 July 2006, and continued until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire went into effect on 14 August 2006, though it formally ended on 8 September 2006 when Israel lifted its naval blockade of Lebanon.' (Wikipedia. Accessed 14 November 2007)
- [4] <http://www.lebweb.com/site/lebanon-hadchit-8m-22318>
- [5] Australia has seen a revision in its attitudes and policies in relation to multiculturalism over the last decade, owing to a resurgence in anti-immigrant sentiment, which Hage (1998) first detailed in *White nation*. This trend started with the emergence of Pauline Hanson as a Member of Parliament in the late 1990s, and became entrenched over the last decade under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard and his conservative Coalition Government. The Cronulla Riots might be seen as a peak phase in Australia's multicultural crisis. Recently, we have seen the government shift its policies in relationship to migrants back towards assimilation and integration, with the symbolic gesture of changing the name of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to The Department of Immigration and Citizenship. For a full account of Australia's crisis in multiculturalism, see Hage (1998, 2003); Poynting *et al.* (2004).
- [6] HSC refers to the end-of-year exams sat by Year 12 students in New South Wales in order to gain their Senior High School Certificate and university entrance score.
- [7] 1. Cook, Terry. 6 March 2006. 'Australian Treasurer Peter Costello joins anti-Muslim bandwagon'. In *World Socialist Web Site*, pp.1-4. <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2006/mar2006/cost-m06.shtml>
2. This link quotes an Opinion piece by the Prime Minister, John Howard, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, 2 September 2006, with reference to immigrants and women's equality. <http://catchthefire.com.au/blog/2006/09/05/pm-john-howard-and-peter-costello-speak-out-on-muslim-integration/>
3. Steketee, Mike. 20 September 2007. 'Muslim integration still a simmering discontent'. *The Australian*. Following the Cronulla riots in Sydney in 2005, John Howard rejected the idea that there was underlying racism in Australia. <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22447255-25072,00.html> | similar pages
4. Franklin, Mathew. 1 January 2007. 'Fraser warned on Lebanese migrants'. *The Australian*. ... warned the Fraser government in 1976 it was accepting too many Lebanese Muslim refugees without 'the required qualities' for successful integration. <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20996448-601,00.html>
- [8] A 500-household survey of the Sydney Hadchit community shows 80 percent of Hadchit immigrant households in Sydney receive LBC Satellite TV transmitted from Lebanon.
- [9] The household survey of the Hadchit community also found that one or more members of 61 percent of households have returned to Hadchit in the last five years and, of those, 30 percent report they have returned frequently.

- [10] 28 percent of returnees specifically state that they return for the St. Raymond's Day Festival in Hadchit.

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