

# **HIRED TO BE DAUGHTERS**

DOMESTIC SERVICE AMONG ORDINARY MOROCCANS

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis explores why *sha'bi* (roughly, 'ordinary') Moroccans so often talk about their domestic workers as daughters, what this means for workers and employers, and how this is changing as community gives way to market. It brings together ethnographic study of urban *sha'bi* society, of unmarried rural women who work as domestics, and of the communities from which the latter migrate.

Drawing on anthropological discussions of kinship and fosterage, the thesis examines the fading tradition of 'bringing up' in which, according to a moral economy, a 'known' rural girl could properly be placed in the homes of wealthier Moroccans until marriage. This is giving way to new arrangements in which 'unknown' workers are paid a wage and may not stay long, but in which the ethics of charity, religious reward and gratitude still inform expectations from both sides. Geared to play out among neighbours, or at least well-known clients, over a lifetime, these ethics are being disrupted by the easy-come-easy-go of strangers.

The thesis contributes to some fundamental concerns of economic anthropology: the atomisation of market exchange, the growing importance of physical marketplaces, and the meanings encoded in a monetary wage versus payment in kind. By putting together perspectives from domestics' leisure time and life back home, it also questions the relationship between the commodification of labour and individualism. Finally, the thesis discusses a draft law which, if enforced, would mean employing domestics no longer made sense for *sha'bi* Moroccans, state intervention representing a move away from local forms of empowerment and community.

At a broader level, the thesis is concerned with households as internally hierarchical units linked together through exchange to make up society and explores the gendered dimension of household economy in a wider world. This, of course, reaches beyond Morocco, and parallels are suggested with English domestic service.

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M.M.

Domestic work is work. Domestic workers are, like other workers, entitled to decent work.

ILO Convention 189

These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

Matthew 20: 12

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

There is no academic consensus on the way to transliterate Moroccan Arabic, locally termed *dārija*. I therefore follow the system used in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* with some modifications. Consonantal pairs (eg. kh, sh, gh) are underlined to clarify that each represents a single letter in Arabic (خ, ش, غ). Instead of capitalising the emphatic letters ص, ض, ط and the aspirated ح, a subscript dot is used: *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *ḥ*. The letter ع is represented with a superscript ‘c’ (‘) and ء with an apostrophe (’).

It should be noted that Moroccan Arabic confounds some of the consonants of standard Arabic, often using, for example, a hard ‘g’ sound in place of ‘q’ so ‘qāl’ (he said) is pronounced ‘gāl’, and ‘t’ in place of ‘th’ (*tiqa* instead of *thiqa*, trust). Variation exists across regions but transliterations here reflect most common speech patterns in north-west Morocco. The transcription system for consonants can thus be summarised as follows:

ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ	د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص	ض
<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>th/t</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>ḥ</i>	<u><i>kh</i></u>	<i>d</i>	<u><i>dh</i></u>	<i>r</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>s</i>	<u><i>sh</i></u>	<i>ṣ</i>	<i>ḍ</i>
ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق	ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ي	ء
<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ẓ</i>	‘	<u><i>gh</i></u>	<i>f</i>	<i>q/g</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>y</i>	‘

As is conventional for Standard Arabic, short vowels are represented with the letters *a*, *i* and *u*, while long vowels have a macron: *ā*, *ī*, *ū*. A distinctive feature of Moroccan Arabic is, however, the collapse of short vowels and the shortening of long vowels, again with regional variation. These are therefore omitted or shortened in transliteration reflecting speech in the fieldwork setting. When *a* is even shorter than in Standard Arabic it is represented by *e*. The definite article is shortened to *l*, so *al-kitāb* (the book) becomes *l-kitāb*, and, in the case of ‘sun letters’ (which assimilate the *l*), is represented by the repetition of the initial consonant, as in *d-dār* (the house).

Place names, the fictionalised names of people, and Arabic words used frequently in English follow the most common spelling and are capitalised following English conventions. Plurals are only given where relevant. Unless noted otherwise, translations from Arabic and French are mine.

## PREFACE

Contrary to Coser's (1973) prediction that servants would soon be obsolete, it is now commonplace to argue that service does not die, but simply takes another form (*The Economist*, December 17, 2011: 80). The present ethnography captures a moment at which, not for the first time, Moroccan service is changing. Domestic work, once performed by kin or neighbours, or by the daughters of clients brought up charitably as 'daughters of the house' by patron families, is increasingly done by easy-come-easy-go strangers who are paid a wage. Of course, just as there was never a hard dividing line between slavery and free labour,<sup>1</sup> change in domestic work is not wholesale, older forms of service existing alongside emerging forms. Coexisting 'spheres of exchange' (Piot 1991) forge and maintain different kinds of relationships, reflecting, among other things, the varying importance of connectedness and how open people are to strangers. But the issue is more complicated. Traditional ways of *talking* about domestics as 'daughters of the house' are applied to something quite different, like pasting an old label on a jar of newly made jam.

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<sup>1</sup> Slavery can be defined as: 'a combination of elements, which if differently combined—an ingredient added here or subtracted there—might become adoption, marriage, parentage, obligations to kinsmen, clientship, and so forth' (Miers and Kopytoff 1977: 66). Ennaji too, argues that in nineteenth-century Morocco, 'no sharp line divided freedom and slavery. A fine set of gradations marked the continuum running from one to the other' (1999: 89). I leave others to pursue this area of study.

There are plenty of labels for domestic workers. *Kheddāma* is a feminine active participle and simply means ‘worker’, but unqualified always refers to a domestic, (just as *khādīm/a* in standard Arabic means servant). *Sekhkhāra*, from the verb *sekhkher*, to run errands, functions in the same way, but, like the English ‘skivvy’, is more pejorative and conjures up the hurried steps of a child who will be in trouble if she does not do the job quickly. The French term for maid, *bonne* (or *petite bonne* in the case of a minor), is also used, thrown in to otherwise Arabic sentences by women whose ease with the language of the Protectorate reflects a certain level of education. Meanwhile, official discourse has moved from *bonne*, to *domestique*, and now alternates between the more politically correct (for the time being) terms, *employée de maison* and *travailleuse de maison* or, in standard Arabic, *musā‘ida manzilīya*, (lit. house helper). But a rose by other names does not in fact smell as sweet; many *mulān d-diyūr* (household heads) insist that their domestic is not a *kheddāma*, or any of these other things, but their ‘daughter’. Relations of kinship, which imply sharing ‘without reckoning’ (Fortes 1969) over the long term, are used to describe arrangements where a wage is indeed ‘reckoned’, on the basis of work done in a shorter time frame.

I unpack the ‘one of the family’ rhetoric by asking not only why it is so irreplaceable but also what it means to be a daughter in Morocco in the first place. Notions of daughters as recipients of care as well as givers of service play into expectations from both sides and explain an emphasis on payment in kind as a sign of care. ‘Maternalism’ (Katzman 1978) and its attendant ‘gift giving’ are well-documented features of domestic service around the world, but in Morocco this trait owes its particular flavour to Islamic ethics of charity and religious merit as well as the legacy of the colonial ‘*mission civilisatrice*’, through which country girls who ‘don’t know how to brush their hair’ are transformed by the lady of the house (*mulat d-dār*) into ‘human

beings'. Living with a Moroccan family, I too was embedded in a civilising narrative. My host-mother would proudly tell visitors: 'When she came to me, she did not even know how to peel a tomato!' I resisted the temptation to add that I did not know a tomato *needed* to be peeled. In this context, the untimely departures of domestic workers who are accused of 'following the money' are seen as a marks of ingratitude, a poor return for the motherly attention shown them.

The thesis documents the dwindling importance of this moral economy as domestic labour is increasingly commoditised, households looking to the market for what community no longer provides (Gudeman 2001: 1).<sup>2</sup> This reflects shifts in the way rich and poor, city and country are connected to each other. The city thrives on the cheap labour of rural Moroccans whilst migrants' families could not maintain their village lifestyles without remittances from the city. Hafida, a domestic from the Gharb region's countryside, explained:

'We are just working in order to help ourselves and our house. The countryside is hard.'

'I know,' rejoined a potential employer, 'I'm from the countryside too. There's nothing there.'

'No, there's nothing there.' Hafida agreed. 'If you don't bring something into it, you won't have anything.'

Crawford (2008) who deals with the relationship of a Berber village to the global economy, and to whom, it will be seen, this thesis owes a great deal, calls these households 'articulated': they have one foot in the countryside, the other in the city. What is changing is that the hinge points between the two worlds are becoming impersonal and atomised, workers moving from one urban employer to another,

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<sup>2</sup> Gudeman uses community to refer to 'real, on-the-ground associations and to imagined solidarities that people experience. Market designates anonymous short-term exchanges' (2001: 1).

employers clutching at straws to hire someone they can trust. These ruptures go against the grain of a traditional, popular (*sha' bī*) ideal which privileges acquaintance.

Rural women ostensibly migrate to earn cash, often used to pay for a breeze block house to be built in place of their family's adobe dwelling in the village, but the bright lights of the city have their lure here as elsewhere making domestic service an attractive option. There is also the desire to get away from a demanding mother and whining younger siblings. As a general servant in 1930s Britain recalled: 'Before I left home I was at everyone's beck and call; "do this, go there, do that, look after him" – you can imagine. I never had a life of me own ... When I got into service, I know you were restricted then, but you still hadn't got the kids around you and your mother' (Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 4). A life of one's own has been, since Woolf (1929) at least, a major objective of western feminism; however, no-one wants to talk about marriage which is branded a 'pink princess', pre-feminist issue. But marriage is the only obvious way for Moroccan domestic workers to set up their own home. And for this they need to find a husband, something for which many employers fail to allow their workers time.

In early twentieth-century Britain, the lack of free time in service sent domestics in WWI running to work in munitions,<sup>3</sup> which, though insalubrious and poorly paid, offered considerably greater freedom and was preferable to being at the beck and call of the lady of the house, who had a tendency to be morally overbearing. For, as Mrs Beeton advises in her *Book of Household Management*:

A lady should never allow herself to forget the important duty of watching over the moral and physical welfare of those beneath her roof. Without seeming unduly inquisitive she can always learn something of their acquaintances and

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<sup>3</sup> By the middle of the war around 750000 women were employed in British munitions (Storey and Housego 2011: 38).

holiday occupation, and should, when necessary, warn them against the dangers and evils of bad company (Beeton [1861] 1907: 15).

*Cranford's* Miss Matty anticipated such advice by forbidding her maid to have 'followers' (Gaskell 1851), but readers will smile to remember how the tables turned when the maid's eventual marriage provided a home not only for the young couple, but also for the financially ruined Miss Matty. That single women everywhere, particularly poor ones, are to be incorporated into the households of others seems as much a moral as a financial imperative. In the Moroccan *sha'bi* world, these concerns translate into the predominance of live-in arrangements as well as domestics not generally being allowed to spend their leisure time out and about unaccompanied.

Readers will find the intractability of Moroccan domestic service surprisingly familiar, echoing, as it does, the concerns of British maids and mistresses from early modern times until the present day. The themes exposed here have very much been a part of our world and will be again; more and more people in Britain are hiring cleaners and nannies (Churchill Home Insurance 2011). Although this trend is observable in statistics, much of the sector is invisible. Au-pairs, for instance, need not be registered as workers unless they receive above a certain amount of pocket money (UK Government 2014), and in Morocco no statistics whatsoever exist for numbers of domestic workers. But invisibility is also a feature on the ground. Moroccan women would point to the floor or ceiling insisting their neighbours in the apartments above or below either did or did not have a domestic. Sometimes a knock on the door revealed the opposite to be true, but more often the door remained shut and the presence of a domestic behind it could neither be confirmed nor denied. Whilst some people claimed, 'everyone here has a domestic', others would wave a hand over the same part of town saying the habit had long since fallen by the wayside. Denial seems an appropriate

word. A preeminent Moroccan feminist sociologist tried to persuade me to drop my ‘ridiculous’ subject on the premise that, ‘no Moroccan women work as domestics any more’, at which moment, who should walk into the room with the tea, but a plainly Moroccan domestic? The sociologist did not introduce this woman, who, after depositing her tray, disappeared once more into a back region of the apartment.

The elite feel that ‘progress’ has been made, their friends run ‘projects’ for poor women somewhere, so why would anyone have to work as a domestic nowadays? The middle classes, for their part, have, in the face of screaming inequalities, been promoting a popular rhetoric that ‘we are all the same’, but this now meets a new line of thought from international human rights discourse which attempts to equate domestic workers with other kinds of worker. Extending rights such as a minimum wage to domestics threatens to wreak havoc on the flimsy boundaries that distinguish one ordinary Moroccan woman from the next, and those who have for a little while now been enjoying some of these rights, together with increasing access for girls and women to education and employment, start to sound like the workers in the parabolic vineyard.

The position of women became vital in the construction of ‘modern’ identity in post-colonial Morocco, and Newcomb observes that ‘it sometimes seems that those concerned with defining Moroccan identity are obsessed with women: where they are, how they occupy space’ (2009: 9-10).<sup>4</sup> Access to work is often used as a measure in global comparisons of women’s status (Moghadam 1993: 29) and the high demand for domestics among ordinary Moroccans is attributed to the education of housewives who begin to be active outside the home (Kapchan 1996: 220, Ennaji and Sadiqi 2008: 75). But one woman’s liberation from domesticity is facilitated by another woman’s lack of options. Makdisi, a lecturer who employed a ‘housekeeper’ in Lebanon in the 1970s,

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Charrad (2001), Combs-Schilling (1999).

admits that this undermines the idea that women's entry to the labour market is a sign of their liberation from domesticity: 'Having help at home was made possible by the class divisions with which I felt deeply uncomfortable' (Makdisi 1999: 51). In Morocco Nelly Forget listed various professions open to women in urban settings: 'modern' (secretary, teacher, factory worker); 'traditional' (embroideress, *ḥammām*<sup>5</sup> attendant, water carrier); and 'ambivalent' (tradeswoman, entertainer, domestic<sup>6</sup>), and asked both women and men: 'Is it good or bad for a woman to have this occupation?' (Forget 1962: 98-9).<sup>7</sup> Domestic workers fell into the category of 'widely disapproved of' (ibid. 103), the potential for promiscuity being cited as a primary concern (ibid. 105). Those who did this kind of work explained that they were pushed into it by poverty. The status of domestic work is much the same today.

That everywhere domestic service brings together two women of different statuses, is something mainstream feminism, always tunnelling along lines of gender, does not address. Whilst rank among men has been the subject of much ethnography, literature on female hierarchy within the moral unit of the household remains sparse. One exception is Belarbi's (1988) comparative study of Moroccan women which showed that whilst those with high-level jobs were able to relax after work, those with intermediate-level jobs had relatives as household help whom they felt obliged to assist. Similarly, studies of international migrant domestics far outnumber those of national rural-urban migrants. The above-mentioned Moroccan sociologist enthused about the phenomenon of Filipina domestics, employed by relatively few elite Moroccans, as a

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<sup>5</sup> Public bathhouse.

<sup>6</sup> Ambivalent because: 'In European homes, [the domestic] is a salaried maid-of-all-work, but in Moroccan households she is integrated with the family, with all the advantages and restrictions flowing from this state of semi-adoption' (Forget 1962: 99).

<sup>7</sup> Davis (1978) similarly analyses women's work in a Moroccan village, assessing women's income-generating options according to the increase or decrease in status they accord. Cf. Nieuwkerk (1995) on attitudes to female entertainers in Egypt who have a similar status to domestic workers.

worthy subject for study, but was uninterested in matters of class among her own compatriots and under her own roof. It is hoped that the thesis demonstrates that what goes on between women locally does matter, as it has done elsewhere.

We have already seen that Mrs Beeton's well-known 'cookbook' was in fact a manual for household management. The role of the middle-class housewife was to manage—it was seen as a noble position. With the 'industrial revolution' in the early twentieth-century Western home, new labour-saving appliances meant fewer servants (or perhaps fewer servants meant appliances), and middle-class housewives were proletarianised to become workers and managers combined (Cowan, R. 1976). Working to keep one's windows spotless and family neatly clothed then became noble too, a matter of personal pride and invested with emotion. Later in the twentieth century, the same women were 'liberated' from the role of housewife, but the idea that being female no longer meant doing domestic work did not apply to all women. The class dimension, largely eluding Cowan, is apparent in Ehrenreich's book which describes a world where one woman cleans the floor as another watches:

So here I am on my knees, working my way around the room like some fanatical penitent crawling through the stations of the cross, when I realize that Mrs. W. is staring at me fixedly—so fixedly that I am gripped for a moment by the wild possibility that I may have once given a lecture at her alma mater ... If I were recognized, would I be fired? Would she at least be inspired to offer me a drink of water? ... Not to worry, though. She's just watching that I don't leave out some stray square inch, and when I rise painfully to my feet again, blinking through the sweat, she says, "Could you just scrub the floor in the entryway while you're at it?" (2010: 84-5).

This kind of detail would not have come across in the statistics or womens' magazine adverts of Cowan's analysis, only in ethnography; Ehrenreich did her research by taking a job as a cleaner.

Moroccan domestic workers are remarkably under-studied by comparison with writing on domestic workers world-wide. This can be divided into three roughly successive bodies of literature. First, researchers studied rural-urban migrants in developing countries, predominantly in Latin America, where peasant women migrate to serve urbanites.<sup>8</sup> Since the 1980s study in other developing countries has continued, focusing on class, and rural-urban differences between employer and domestic.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime, largely feminist researchers turned attention to ‘women of colour’ serving ‘whites’ in South Africa (Whisson and Weil 1971, Cock 1980, Gaitskell et al. 1984) and the USA (Rollins 1985, Colen 1989, Palmer 1989, Romero 1992, Dill 1994), and they emphasised domestics’ subordination on the triple axis of gender, class and race. Most recently, researchers have examined domestics in an international labour market: migrants from the ‘poorer’ global south to the ‘richer’ north. Studies of Filipina and Indonesian migrants dominate (Constable 1997, 2003, Cheng 2003, 2004, Parreñas 2001, 2008, Ueno 2010). Others focus on migrant domestics in countries such as Taiwan (Lan 2003, 2006), Singapore (Huang and Yeoh 1998, 2000), Malaysia (Chin 1998), Britain (Cox 2006), Italy (Andall 2000), Canada (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997) and the USA (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007).<sup>10</sup> Race and gender are foregrounded but the notion of class is problematic since there is often a contradiction for migrants between declining social status and improved economic status.<sup>11</sup> Since most domestics in Morocco, unlike their counterparts in the Levant and the Gulf, do not hail from another country but are themselves Moroccans, the present study revisits earlier research,

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Nett (1966), Smith, M. (1973), Jelin (1977), Rubbo and Taussig (1983).

<sup>9</sup> Including, for example, India (Tellis-Nayak 1983, Ray and Qayum 2009), Zambia (Hansen 1986), Bolivia (Gill 1994), Tanzania (Bujra 2000), Nepal (Shah 2004) and China (Yan 2008).

<sup>10</sup> See also comparative studies such as Anderson (2000) and Chang (2000).

<sup>11</sup> See Parreñas (2001: 150) on the ‘contradictory mobility’ of Filipina domestics.

drawing in particular on the rich historical work that has been done on domestic service in Britain.

A word about methodology in the field: for twelve months from June 2012 I based myself in Rabat, eventually accompanying workers back and forth on visits to their home villages. I chanced initially to rent an apartment from the Sebbari family who drew me into their lives, often joking that I need go no further to study domestic service: 'It's all here!' Their network was a criss-crossing of old and new kinds of domestics, offering a close-up view of changing, overlapping and conflicting practices. I had to work harder to make contacts outside, chatting with people in the street, at our two or three small grocery shops and knocking on doors, which led to a three-month home-stay and a friendship with a network of domestics from two neighbouring villages in the Gharb region. Mornings, when (with the exception of the Sebbaris and later, my host-family) I could not politely visit people at home, I often spent sitting on the pavement with domestics at the day-labour market. Many women here were mature, lending a diachronic perspective that younger workers could less easily offer. Whilst some contacts at the labour market brought me back full circle to the Sebbaris, others flung me further afield, to the apartment for example, of a government employee who moved in quite a different sphere. Hayat wanted me to teach her children English at home, affording the possibility both to see regularly one of my domestic worker friends in her workplace and be a listening ear to Hayat's angst about her relationship with the working class.

As the white protagonist of *The Help* (Stockett 2010) found when collecting the life stories of her friends' black domestics in America's Deep South, loyalties were sometimes conflicting. Because my education and foreign identity meant employers expected me to spend time with them, I had to be tactful gaining access to the

domestic's realm, namely the kitchen, for which my love of washing-up proved a good excuse. Whilst some researchers have avoided contact with both a domestic and her employer, the messiness of human life rarely serves us up people on their own, and employers and workers in particular usually come in pairs. Cold-shouldering one whilst mining the other for material seemed as 'unethical' an approach as any other, not to mention antisocial. Nor could I stop people from telling me what they wanted to tell me. Whilst I did not relay to each what the other had said, I frequently 'off-loaded' to an older domestic worker, Fatima, who became a close friend and kind of agony aunt and gives voice to her feelings about many a situation in the following pages.

Chapter 1 describes l'Océan, the former Spanish quarter, where I based myself, and the popular (*sha 'bī*) ideal which animates it as a neighbourhood and influences the way people think about who they should be employing. The Sebbaris, introduced briefly in the first chapter, become life-size in Chapter 2 where anthropological perspectives on kinship inform an analysis of domestic service as a kind of fosterage. Workers who were 'brought up' by the Sebbaris until they were married contrast with workers of the next generation who do not stay long. Chapter 3 explores the moral economy to explain why it matters to people that domestics are 'daughters', not workers, whilst Chapter 4 discusses the shift from community to market-based exchange by looking at the relational aspect of different modes of recruitment. The question of whether commoditised labour goes hand-in-hand with greater individualisation is addressed in Chapter 5 which deals with the consumer practices and marriage aspirations of domestic workers through the lens of their activities on days off. Chapter 6 takes us out to the countryside, where workers are seen as members not of their employing families but of their birth families, and sheds light on what being a daughter means there as well as on rationales for labour migration and the impact of return. Chapter 7 sets up as

oppositions the popular preference for personalised connectedness, and the modern state's emphasis on regulatory legal codes to enforce the moral equality of individuals. The thesis concludes by revisiting timeworn anthropological themes of household, kinship and gender.

## CHAPTER 1

### A CITY QUARTER AND THE ‘POPULAR’ IDEAL

‘The first thing people ask when you visit them in Rabat is, “When are you leaving?”’ This was said by a Moroccan from Ouarzazate, a town six hours’ drive south of Rabat where the stereotype is that people in the capital are so busy making ends meet that they have little time for hospitality. Rabat’s identity as an administrative city makes for a work-oriented way of life, supposedly different from that of Marrakech or Fès. If cuisine is any indication of the time people have,<sup>1</sup> the processing of cucumbers and tomatoes for the most basic Moroccan salad is illustrative: chopped very finely in Marrakech, they are left chunky in Rabat. A Ribāṭī’s<sup>2</sup> time is dear.

This suggests one would find a demand for cheap labour to help maintain standards of domesticity in the homes of busy, double-income families. But space also is dear in Rabat. High real estate prices mean homes are smaller than those of people with a similar income elsewhere in Morocco—a limiting factor in the employment of

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<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that Moroccan domestic techniques are labour intensive to combat boredom: ‘townswomen especially, are often more concerned about how to spend time and effort than how to save them’ (Maher 1974: 104). There is also an argument that time-consuming housework serves to keep women out of ‘mischief’. Cf. Hirschon (1978) on ‘prostitute’s food’ among Greeks in Asia Minor. Also Rivière (1984: 11, 89) on Amazonian women pounding manioc.

<sup>2</sup> A person from Rabat.

live-in domestic workers if not of casual help, and a mother of two who had grown up with a live-in domestic in a large house in Casablanca thus swept her hand around her Rabat apartment: ‘I’m sorry, but if I want to employ (*jīb*, lit. bring) a worker, where is she going to sleep? There’s my room, there’s the children’s room, there’s the salon. I’m not the kind who makes them sleep in the kitchen.’<sup>3</sup> Less labour is needed to keep a small house clean than a large one. Indeed, some women affirmed that their homes were so small there was little to do. Yet, other families employed a live-in domestic worker despite lack of room, indicating that to have a *kheddāma* (worker or servant) outweighed for them the inconvenience of an extra body in a small house. My fieldwork took me to this kind of employer: hardworking lower-middle class families living in small apartments where they top and tail with a domestic whom they called their ‘daughter’. Whilst government statistics are unavailable and numbers are difficult to establish without access to every home, in my street about 1 in 10 households had a live-in worker; many more had casual help.

In this chapter I describe the neighbourhood of l’Océan where I based myself for fieldwork, outlining the historical background and examining the implications of l’Océan’s demography. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the Océani branch of the Sebbari<sup>4</sup> family who constitute a case study, to be developed more fully in later chapters, of fairly ordinary Moroccans learning on the job what it means to employ paid workers.

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<sup>3</sup> Accommodating a domestic worker in the kitchen was not uncommon in less wealthy families in the past (Khelladi 1938: 266) and some workers I met spoke of struggling to sleep with the noise of the refrigerator. Even today, proximity to the kitchen is deemed appropriate. Modern apartments in Hay Riad have a ‘*chambre de bonne*’ (maid’s room) off the kitchen. In one apartment I saw, the light switch for the kitchen was on the side nearest the maid’s room, which the residents, who had a live-out cleaner, used as a store room. Clearly the *bonne* imagined by the architect was to be first awake and last asleep. Cf. Royaume du Maroc (2011: 32).

<sup>4</sup> Sebbari is a fictionalised patronym. Other branches of the family remained in the old city of Rabat, whilst yet others are in Tangier, Casablanca and some of the younger generation have moved to Europe.

## LE QUARTIER DE L'OcéAN

Rabat's *quartier de l'Océan* (Ar. *ḥay l-muḥīṭ*)<sup>5</sup> lies, as its name suggests, next to the Atlantic. At its north-eastern end the quarter's spread is curbed by a cemetery and the *medīna* (the old, walled city) from Bab l-'Alu to Bab l-Hed. To the south east the main road from Bab l-Hed, along which the brand-new tram runs, marks l'Océan's boundary with the neighbouring quarter of Diour Jamaa, whilst the *cité universitaire* and the disused military hospital separate it from the Akkari quarter to the south west (Figure1).

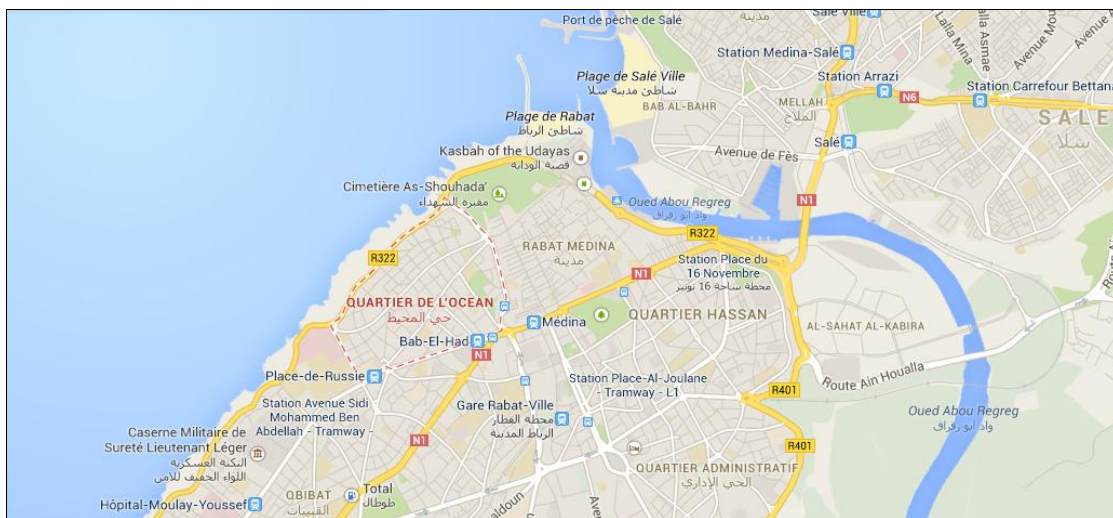


Figure 1: Map of Rabat showing the Quartier de l'Océan. Map data © 2014 Google.

L'Océan's grid-iron streets are named after cities and countries around the world: rue Tokyo, rue Canada etc. At some point after Independence in 1956 street names like rue Emile Zola and rue Lamartine were replaced along these lines, as if to rid the quarter of the memory of a bookish French presence. But l'Océan had never been particularly French. At its heart the white building of the Spanish San José church, now the 'Complexe Culturel Mehdi Ben Barka' but still colloquially known as *l-kanīsa* ('the

<sup>5</sup> It is rare to hear the quarter referred to by its Arabic name (the French is the original name, the Arabic a translation) although it does appear on the front of buses to that quarter.

church'), serves as a reminder of l'Océan's original inhabitants, who were largely manual workers (electricians, mechanics, artisans), many of whom came from Cadiz and Malaga during the Protectorate period (1912-56).<sup>6</sup> As well as the church and a Catholic mission, there was a Spanish school near rue Leningrad, a basketball team at the Joso stadium and Saturday evening entertainment at the Casa de España on rue Dakar. One resident recalls a certain Señora Escobar's ice-cream shop which 'brought the whole of Rabat together ..., her *horchata* was unequalled.'<sup>7</sup>

This ghettoisation of l'Océan was not unique in Protectorate Rabat. The city was, and still is, characterised by sharp demographic contrasts between different quarters—a text-book example of colonial town planning.<sup>8</sup> Rabat was recommended as the administrative centre of the French Protectorate in Morocco by Maréchal Lyautey, who governed Morocco from the Protectorate's establishment in 1912 until 1925. He argued that to remain in Fès, where the Moroccan government (the *makhzen*) was, would 'slow and impede any administrative action' (Lyautey 1953: 147-8, cited Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 139), due to Fès's marginal location and the difficulty, at the time, of safe and rapid communication between there and Marrakech. Rabat, by contrast, was located 'at the intersection of the three major axes of Morocco, one toward the Taza, one toward Marrakech and the third one along the coast,' and most importantly close to Casablanca which Lyautey correctly predicted would become 'the commercial metropolis and the largest European center in Morocco' (ibid.). Also, Lyautey believed that 'life is much more healthy in Rabat than in Fez where the summer is exceptionally

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Findlay et al. (1984: 42). Smaller numbers came from Italy and Gibraltar (Abu Lughod, J. 1980: 172). One Moroccan resident in l'Océan during my fieldwork maintained that the Spanish came to Rabat to escape Franco's regime. Whether for economic or political reasons, the Spanish community became well established.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous blogger: <http://www.vip-blog.com/vip/articles/5116620.html>. *Horchata* is a traditional Spanish drink, originally made from tigernuts.

<sup>8</sup> French North Africa is widely used as an example of colonial town planning (Eickelman 1981, Findlay et al. 1984, Studer 2014).

difficult; all these conditions will weigh heavily upon the recruitment of civil servants and the installation of their families ...'(ibid.)

Throughout the country Lyautey was keen, in the fashion of a museum curator, to 'conserve' existing Moroccan architecture and ways of life, whilst planning European cities to accommodate the colonial enterprise. These *villes nouvelles*, he argued, should be outside the 'Moroccan' cities because, drawing on what he saw as the failure of town planning in Algeria, the styles of European and 'native' homes and ways of life were incompatible:

You know how jealous the Muslim is of the integrity of his private life; you are familiar with the narrow streets, the facades without opening behind which hides the whole of life, the terraces upon which the life of the family spreads out and which must therefore remain sheltered from indiscreet looks. But the European house, with its superimposed stories, the modern skyscraper which reaches ever higher, is the death of the terrace ... Little by little, the European city chases the native out; but without thereby achieving the conditions indispensable to our modern life ... In the end it is always necessary [for the European] *to leave the indigenous town* and, in haste, create new quarters (Lyautey 1927: 452 emphasis his, translated Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 143).

Besides aesthetic and cultural considerations, separation of the two communities (European and Moroccan) was intended to prevent conflict and to make control of the Moroccan community more straightforward. Lyautey's chief of municipalities, de la Casinière, argued that this scheme 'avoided direct contact of the European population with the indigenous elements of the lower class, whose physiological misery and filthiness would be important factors in the spread of epidemics' (Casinière 1924: 88, cited Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 144).

Pre-protectorate Rabat consisted of the *medīna* and the Oudaya, a *qaşba* (kasbah, fortified citadel) originally built by the Almohads in the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>9</sup> Rabat came into prominence under the Almohads as a fortress for launching attacks on Iberia. The name of the Oudaya dates from a later arrangement between the Alouite Sultan Yacoub al-Mansour and the

European *ville nouvelle* appended to the existing city was designed by Henri Prost, who allocated all the land surrounding Rabat's *medīna*, an area ten times larger than the *medīna* itself, to accommodate a European population which would never account for more than a third of Rabat's inhabitants (Abu-Lughod 1980: 160). The European quarters thus effectively barricaded the Moroccan city, leaving nowhere official for the expansion of its population. In the early 1920s large numbers of labourers were required on the construction sites building European-style boulevards and homes for French administrators. There was also a steady recruitment of Moroccan *petits fonctionnaires* (low-ranking civil servants) and domestics (Montagne 1952: 132). Urban demands for labour coincided with famines striking rural areas in 1913, 1921, 1928, and 1937 (ibid. 13) and with French expropriation of the best farming land so that many subsistence farmers and transhumants, no longer able to live off agriculture, migrated to the coastal cities 'for bread alone' (*al-khubz al-ḥāfī*).<sup>10</sup> Existing space in the *medīna* soon reached capacity and poorer Moroccans constructed *barārik* (*bidonvilles*, shanty towns)<sup>11</sup> at the periphery or on areas that were thought unsuitable for European construction (Montagne 1952: 138, Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 161-2).

The topography of Rabat served to reinforce socio-economic and ethnic distinctions. The land rises steeply from the *medīna*, the coast and the Bou Regreg river valley, providing an area of high ground which enjoys a cooling breeze in summer and

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Arab Oudaya tribe whom he hired to defend the city, which he refortified with further ramparts to the west (Terrasse 1952).

<sup>10</sup> This is the title of vol.1 of Choukri's (1993) autobiography which recounts his family's migration during a famine in the 1930s from their village in the Rif mountains.

<sup>11</sup> Initially the most prevalent form of rural-urban movement was 'temporary masculine emigration'—a man would leave his family to work in the city for a period and on his return to the village would be replaced in his city occupation by a kinsman (Adam 1973: 327). These lone migrants lived as bachelors, called *ruwwāsa* (Montagne 1952: 234, Adam 1973: 334). Workers with meagre resources created 'an original institution', the *garsūna* (from the French *garçon*): 'This woman, usually widowed or divorced, kept house for several *ruwwasa*, and satisfied their other needs' (ibid. 334-5). Cf. Rivet (1999: 319) on *garsūnāt*. Later whole families migrated, see, J. Etienne's (1951) account of a rural family who moved to Casablanca during the 1920s and Nouvel (1938) on paid jobs for children in the shanty towns.

is removed from the humidity which plagues the seaward areas. The high ground was chosen for the 'central sector' allotted to administration, commerce and housing for Europeans, and is to this day the preserve of the wealthiest inhabitants. L'Océan's less desirable climate, with sea mist making it cold and damp in winter, as well as uncomfortable in summer, explains why it was inhabited not by French administrators or businessmen, but by working-class Southern Europeans whose status, though above that of most Moroccans, was moderate (Findlay et al. 1984, Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 309). Although it was not illegal for Moroccans who could afford it (which construction and domestic workers could not) to settle in European quarters, laws and regulations governing property ownership and registration of land titles made it difficult, thus creating an 'urban apartheid' (Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 147).

In the 1920s domestic servants who were accommodated with employers in European quarters and a small number of 'assimilated' Moroccan aristocrats were the only exceptions to the rule of separate residence. By the late 1940s, however, l'Océan had witnessed an 'infiltration' by better-off Moroccans.<sup>12</sup> Villème observed that in l'Océan, in contrast to other areas,

the intermixture of the two societies is an accomplished fact. There, from repurchase of land and houses, and above all from construction in the open spaces, are houses and shops for the Moroccans ... The infiltration has followed the major streets: the avenue of Temara has been transformed into a Moroccan street by extremely recent constructions (Villème 1952: 89).

Villème noted the different architecture of these new Moroccan houses in l'Océan: 'villas with elevated walls and windows protected from sight' (ibid.). My host-family's

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<sup>12</sup> In wealthier quarters Moroccan aristocrats who were integrated in the French-run economy had also moved into villas originally built for Europeans (Villème 1952: 89, cited Abu-Lughod, J. 1980: 212).

house<sup>13</sup> was surrounded by one such wall, although two floors had been added to the original single-storey building which meant people across the street could see into the upper windows. Whilst some Moroccan houses were extended, many of the Spanish houses were split up.

After Independence in 1956 the French and Spanish left Morocco slowly—unlike the precipitate departure of *colons* from Algeria. The church of San José was given to the governor of Rabat and Salé in 1972, an indication that most of its congregation had left by that date, and residents who reminisce about flamenco dancing in the streets recalled that some Spanish families remained until Spain joined the European Community in 1986. Older Moroccans who had grown up in l'Océan spoke proudly of the history of their quarter and their intermingling with Spaniards:

There was space between the houses. The Spanish people would sit out in cafés in the evening. It was very nice and clean and people lived in harmony. We all lived together, Jews, Spanish, French, Moroccans.

The variation in type and quality of the housing constructed in l'Océan during the Protectorate meant that as the Spanish left, a void opened up in the quarter's housing market. In l'Océan, argue Findlay et al., 'the deteriorating housing stock has been occupied by a population from a wider variety of socio-economic groups than would be true of practically any other district of Rabat' (1984: 49).

A significant number of households in l'Océan, 12.5 per cent of Findlay's sample, had moved from the *medīna* to l'Océan, which was relatively cheap compared with the other areas adjacent to the *medīna*, vacated by Europeans of a higher status. I came across several such households in l'Océan—branches of expanding 'original

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<sup>13</sup> A lower middle-class family. The father, Hassan, like so many others in l'Océan 'bought and sold'; the mother, Touria was a teacher but had taken early retirement. They owned their home which they inherited from Hassan's father and were university educated, as were their children.

Ribāṭī' families who had outgrown their *riyāḍ*<sup>14</sup> in the *medīna*. Other branches of these families still occupied the *riyāḍs* so a link with the *medīna* was maintained. They were people of a certain standing—the fact that they were urbanised before 1912 set them apart from peasants who migrated to the city during the Protectorate—but had comparatively modest incomes (wealthier Ribāṭīs moved into zones previously inhabited by the French). One such family who moved to l'Océan from the *medīna* is Dār Sebbari (the house of Sebbari)<sup>15</sup> whom I shall introduce shortly. Although the Spanish have all but disappeared from l'Océan, the heterogeneity which characterised the quarter from the later years of the Protectorate onwards still distinguishes it from other quarters of Rabat.<sup>16</sup> Visitors to l'Océan are struck by the mixture of styles of housing, where the former homes of the Spanish and Moroccans (extended or divided for different household demands) are packed between newer apartment buildings.

## SPACE, CLASS AND COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS

The sea, associated by Moroccans in Rabat with damp and cold rather than picture-postcard views, remains a negative factor in the housing market. A sliding scale of status can thus be identified across l'Océan: from the highest and most central point along the tramway where new apartment buildings are in the majority, down the

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<sup>14</sup> A traditional house, which, technically speaking, contains an inner garden.

<sup>15</sup> The convention is to name houses after the male household head. See Munson's (1984) *House of Si Abd Allah*. The word *dār* denotes both the physical building and the members of the household. If a man asks his friend 'how is the house?' he is politely enquiring after the friend's wife and children. Cf. Bourqia (1996: 23).

<sup>16</sup> Most other areas of Rabat are more clearly inhabited either by the employing classes or by the working classes. Although wealthy and poor neighbourhoods are sometimes juxtaposed, a stark contrast will exist between the housing on one side of a main road and on the other, the two neighbourhoods will each have their market or commercial centre, and will bear distinct names, separating the two groups of residents from each other both physically and symbolically.

gradient, which becomes increasingly steep, to the sea front, '*l-taht*' (lit. the bottom, lowest point – physically and symbolically), where many older, smaller houses remain (see Figure 2 below). This gradient coincides with notions of safety and danger, and Moroccans were often concerned when I mentioned that I lived by the sea ('Not at the very bottom?!'), then relieved to learn I was not too close, ('...just half way down').<sup>17</sup> In practice the pattern on the ground is jumbled, not a straightforward gradation from high to low, but imagined differences smooth this over. Because the main roads run parallel to the tramway, and the smaller roads at right angles to it down the gradient, many residential streets in l'Océan contain a cross-section of society, from middle class to working class<sup>18</sup> (with locals attentive to subdivisions along this continuum), making it possible for both employers of domestic workers and workers themselves to have almost the same address.

Whilst 'working-' and 'middle-class' as customary or Marxist-derived terms do not align well with local conceptions of status which go beyond education, income and property (cf. Cohen, S. 2004, McMurray 2013), these terms are freely used in Rabat to differentiate people living in l'Océan. Factors such as having the power to employ others, maintaining an extensive kin or fictive kin network, or doing things the traditional way, also stand as determinants of status which Moroccans can fall back on when 'money in the bank' is lacking. But 'middle-' and 'working-class' people rub shoulders buying vegetables in l'Océan's daily market, at the bakery, and waiting for their children outside school. My host-mother, Touria, first met her former domestic

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<sup>17</sup> In the past decade or so l'Océan has also received migrants from sub-saharan Africa, further adding to its diversity so that the street names 'rue Bamako' or 'rue Dakar' no longer seem such a stretch. Many of these migrants have settled in the cheaper housing closer to the sea which, due to racist attitudes, makes the seaward side seem still more undesirable and 'dangerous'.

<sup>18</sup> Teachers, doctors and low-ranking government office workers are typical Océanis, as are members of lower-income groups: car mechanics, bakers, butchers, electricians, decorators, tailors, shopkeepers, waiters and domestics.

worker because their sons were classmates, and her neighbour was put in touch with a worker through another neighbour whose son went to school with that worker's son. When I moved out of my host-family to a shared apartment, the woman who cleaned the stairs of the apartment building lived directly opposite.<sup>19</sup> This is quite unlike other quarters of Rabat such as Hassan or Agdal where house prices exclude people with low incomes, with the exception of door-keeper families whose accommodation comes with the job<sup>20</sup> so that live-out domestics who work there must commute from elsewhere in the city.<sup>21</sup>

It was this socio-economic variation across a small space and the lively movement of people through the market, together with a tip-off from a Moroccan student that l'Océan was where the '*classe-moyenne-moyenne* (middle-middle-class)' could be found, that led me to select it as a primary field site. It seemed the kind of place one could easily meet new people. Indeed, many people in l'Océan hailed from elsewhere, mostly from rural Morocco, and the difference between country and city ways was often pointed out to me. L'Océan, in these many respects, was a *ḥay sha bī*, a '*quartier populaire*'.

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<sup>19</sup> In buildings without *concierges* (caretakers) each household pays a small monthly sum (30dh - 40dh was the going rate in l'Océan during my fieldwork) for someone to clean the communal staircase. Many women who clean the stairs of apartment buildings are middle aged or older and some have been in l'Océan a good deal longer than most of the residents of the apartment buildings. One woman who lived in a long-established squatter settlement near the sea could point to many buildings and tell me when they were built, how long the new apartments had stayed empty, how large they were, who had cleaned the apartments, who the stairs and so on.

<sup>20</sup> Ozyegin (2001: 5-12, 55-8) writes about the families of *concierges* or 'doorkeepers'. As people of working-class and often rural origins who live in middle-class residential areas they suffer social exclusion. The wife of a *concierge* in an apartment building near my host-family's house was not invited to the wedding of the daughter of one of the residents whilst all the other residents were. It was to take place in a 5-star hotel and my host-mother commented: 'Well, you don't invite the *concierge* to the hotel. That's just how it is. Moroccans confuse the *khedma* (job) with the *shakhsīya* (person). [To them,] the *concierge* is only a *concierge*.' When the *concierge*'s own daughter got married, his wife invited everyone in the building, except this family who then complained that they had been excluded.

<sup>21</sup> See Saaf (1999) on communities of regulars on buses from the poorer quarters of Rabat.

The cohabitation of socio-economic classes in l'Océan did not go unremarked. The woman who spoke about the harmony that reigned while Moroccans and Spaniards were neighbours complained that the houses the Spanish left were now rented room by room to migrants from the countryside, who, in her opinion, for lack of education and a surplus of freedom, 'don't clean the streets in front of their houses as we do.' In a similar spirit someone had spray-painted on the wall of an old house at the ocean-end of one street: '*ICI, C'EST PARIS (THIS IS PARIS)*'. Against the backdrop of run-down buildings and the stench of refuse overflowing the municipal bins on the coastal road just below, it can only have been intended ironically, and a few days later an addition was made next to it: '*Les aigles ne volent pas avec les pigeons (eagles don't fly with pigeons)*'. Differences between people in l'Océan often came down, in local discourse, to a distinction between country and city folk. Domestic workers on return visits to the countryside make a point of saying, 'in the capital...', when referring to their life in Rabat, aligning themselves with the 'original' inhabitants of Rabat, who, along with those of Salé, Meknes and Marrakech but particularly Fès, lay claim to a particular urban way of living originating in the pre-colonial past (Ossman 1994: 23). But Paris, more than Rabat, is the symbolic opposite of the Moroccan countryside. One often hears the phrase, '*arūbīya*<sup>22</sup> *f Bārīs*, 'a country bumpkin in Paris', to index rural women with their coloured bags of oranges or onions on the train, or those afraid to ride on the escalator leading out of the Rabat-Ville train station. The message of the graffiti was clear—this might not be Paris, but country people do not belong here either. Whilst people from the countryside were the scapegoats on which blame could be laid for the rubbish in l'Océan's streets and for making the bottom-end of the quarter 'dangerous',

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<sup>22</sup> The masculine form is '*arūbī*'. It is often used as an insult for someone who is 'uncivilised' (Newcomb 2009: 41). Ossman (1994: 24) explains, 'Originally '*rubi* referred to people from a region just east and south of Casablanca, but it has come to include unworldly or uncultured behavior or persons in general'.

they could also conveniently be employed, because close at hand, as domestic workers or to clean the staircases of apartment buildings. Elsewhere in the city these socio-economic divisions are more clearly spatialised.



**Figure 2: ‘Ici, c’est Paris.’ The graffiti is sprayed on the high wall around a traditional house whilst newer apartment buildings tower behind. The Atlantic Ocean lies to the left.**

‘Classes (*ṭabaqāt*), that’s what makes Rabat what it is,’ said Fatima, a domestic worker in her forties who lived in l’Océan and worked in Agdal, a more prosperous quarter half an hour’s walk away. She continued:

‘There’s *ṭ-ṭabaqa l-kādiḥa* (the toiling class)...’

‘Who is that?’ I asked.

‘Us’

‘What does it mean? *Nās ‘ādīyīn* (ordinary people)?’

‘No, less than ordinary. Ordinary people have money in the bank, they have their own house. *Ṭ-ṭabaqa l-kādiḥa*, we don’t have money in the bank. If we haven’t worked we won’t eat that day. We don’t have a house, and the rent is

more expensive than the money we bring from work. It isn't enough. What do you do? You borrow from people and you tell them you will give it back. But when you have to give it back, you don't have it, you don't have it!<sup>23</sup>

In the city Moroccans from the countryside experience explicit class divisions for the first time. Living in l'Océan possibly made the sense of difference more acute for Fatima than if she had lived in a quarter like Takkadoum, where the residents are more uniformly working-class, for in l'Océan people of other classes were her neighbours but did not function as neighbours in the way country people do, or are supposed to do. In Fatima's words:

There are no classes in the countryside. Someone could have a bigger house or more animals ... but people help each other. If there is a party or some occasion, the girls from one house will help another. This doesn't happen in the city except in *aḥīyā' sha' bīya* (*quartiers populaires*).<sup>24</sup>

Such exchange among rural households serves to swell temporarily the domestic labour available to the household either regularly or at peak times and its significance will be explored in later chapters.

Fatima's vision of the city involved not groups with which she could exchange but groups from which she was excluded: 'ordinary people' made up the *ṭabaqa mutawassiṭa* (middle class), above them were the people of the *ṭabaqa rāqīya* (the 'elegant', 'sophisticated', upper-class), and finally there was the King—'he's in a class on his own'.<sup>25</sup> The separation of rich and poor is seen by Moroccans as a relatively new trait of urban life, changing the way people recruit labour. In the clan-based society of

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<sup>23</sup> This last statement was almost hysterical. This was too close to home for Fatima. She had borrowed 400dh from me and was not going to return it. Cf. Ehrenreich (2010) on low-wage workers in America and the difficulty of escaping the poverty trap. What for middle-class people is economically common sense is impossible if one can never scrape together savings.

<sup>24</sup> Fatima does not consider l'Océan a *sha' bī* quarter whilst most people who have lived all their lives in the city do. Rural households are not equal but the point is that their exchanges are reciprocal.

<sup>25</sup> On the power of the Moroccan monarchy, see Combs-Schilling (1989), Hammoudi (1997), Bourqia and Miller (1999).

nineteenth-century Morocco, networks of patrons and clients, that is asymmetric dependency relations, linking countryside and city were important channels of supply and demand for domestic workers. Particularly in times of mass rural exodus ‘elites had their choice in providing themselves with dependents of all sorts’ (Ennaji 1999: 88).<sup>26</sup> Maher argues for the historical importance in southern Morocco of patron-client relationships contracted within ‘a hierarchy of social categories, differentiated by ritual status’ (Maher 1974: 24-5).<sup>27</sup> At the top are *shurfa*, held to be descendants of Muhammad, followed by Arabs, Berbers,<sup>28</sup> and finally *ḥarātīn*.<sup>29</sup> Membership of these groups is inherited patrilineally as are patron-client relations between them. The long-term placement of children, particularly *ḥarātīn*, in wealthy homes also forged patron-client relations (ibid. 141). Maher observes that ‘poorer women wash the floors, run messages and help at the feasts of richer women, who call them “sister”, lend them money, invite their families to meals and make them gifts’ (ibid. 43).<sup>30</sup> Patron-client relations are also often contracted between rich and poor kin (Maher 1976: 59). The cluster of households studied by Hildred Geertz in Sefrou contained a group of poverty-stricken, unemployed kin, who, whilst sleeping elsewhere, ate their meals at their wealthy cousin’s house and performed domestic chores for him and his wives (1979: 337). More recently, Newcomb observed ‘mini patron-client relationships’ between the members of an extended Fassi family: ‘those who received the generosity of other family members went out of their way to help with domestic tasks and other

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<sup>26</sup> A number of studies underline the importance of male patron-client relationships in the Maghreb more recently (Cherifi 1983, Geertz et al. 1979, Rosen 1984, Smith, Andrew 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ensel (1999) on estates of ‘saints’ and ‘servants’ in Southern Morocco.

<sup>28</sup> The Arab-Berber distinction is more imagined than real; Moroccans often say ‘every Arab has a Berber grandfather’ (Maher 1974: 25). On Berber identity see Crawford and Hoffman (2000), Hoffman and Miller (2010).

<sup>29</sup> Descendants of West-African slaves who were expected to serve the other estates (Maher 1974: 25).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Tellis-Nayak (1983) on clientage and domestic service.

nonmonetary exchanges' (2009: 114). One woman gave small amounts of money to a poor relative who repaid her with housework or sent her daughters to do the same (ibid. 116).

This literature is echoed by oral accounts from residents of l'Océan who tell of a bygone era (bygone, but much more recent than the nineteenth century) where rich and poor were 'neighbourly' and cooperated in relationships like those Fatima describes from her rural up-bringing. A set of linked vignettes may bring the idea to life.

One telling conversation was between my host-mother, Touria, and other guests at a *sbū* (seventh day after the birth) party for her grandchild. My host-mother had already thrown a party at our house in l'Océan. We had worked hard: Touria had cooked with the assistance of an old neighbour, Mbarka, the mother-in-law of her former domestic worker, Salma, whose own son had been at school with my host-brother. Salma herself had come to help with preparations, clean the blood which spilled across the roof terrace from the customary sacrificial sheep, and do the washing up. These neighbours were given a small sum of money but for the most part were rewarded with leftover chicken, meat and fruit, and the satisfaction that they had helped a neighbour. They remained behind the scenes throughout the party while my host-sister, her two cousins and I served, running up and down stairs from a kitchen on the second floor to the two salons on the first and ground floor where men and women were catered for separately.

But the family of the newborn's father also wanted to throw a party, which took place the following day, at their home in Hay al-Fatih, a newer and less *sha'bi* (fr. 'populaire') part of town than l'Océan. The work we had been performing the previous day was here done by paid staff. A team of cooks three-strong was employed and Karima, a *kheddāma* (servant, worker) who had been with the family for twenty years,

supervised and served, which allowed the hostess to circulate. Whilst the men were being entertained with music in the larger front-salon, we women sat rather bored in the smaller back-salon. The mother of our hardworking cousins had excused the girls from this second party, telling us that they were exhausted from the day before: ‘They are not used to serving like that, up and down the stairs’. The conversation turned to how visiting and hosting used to be done differently. My host-mother began by saying,

Nowadays you have to phone your own sister before going round, and she’ll tell you to come between 4 and 6 o’clock. And the reason? Because people feel they have to put on a whole spread. They tell you the time so they can be ready with all the food on the table for you. Previously, you could knock at anytime on anyone’s door—neighbours, not just family—and they would welcome you with whatever they had. They’d give you just a piece of bread and you’d be laughing and having fun and dancing.

Other women chipped in:

And if you were ill your neighbours would come and wash up and cook for you. When someone had a baby the neighbours would come, four, six, ten of them, and each one or two would cook something different.

And if someone didn’t have the strength to knead the dough, the women would take it in turns and that’s how the bread would come out!

The second speaker opened and closed her fists several times to signify risen bread.<sup>31</sup> My host-mother then told about an old lady, a neighbour of her mother in Fès, who used to call her from her first-floor window and say, ‘Come and help me lift a mattress.’ She would go and find a whole table laid out and the neighbour would say, ‘Sit down, drink your tea and eat your breakfast so that you have the strength to look after your children.’ My host-mother concluded: ‘There was *insijām* (harmony).’

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<sup>31</sup> The same gesture praises a bride’s beauty at weddings.

Although it was not made explicit, the conversation served as a comment on two sorts of hospitality, the first of which followed the old pattern of family members working for free and needy neighbours who will work for little, the second involving labour that was contracted in and supervised by a paid worker. In the countryside also, Crawford identifies a shift from long-term reciprocity to short-term gain: ‘The decision by ever more local patriarchs to send their children to the cities for wage labor rather than loan them to relatives who need help, signals a newly significant articulation between the rural and urban sectors of Morocco’ (Crawford 2008: 6). My host-father Hassan (now in his late 50s), whose family came from the Sous valley to l’Océan after Independence, often told me about this old way of working, which supposedly had been common in the city’s past as well as in the countryside:

At weddings we never used to have servers. The people you knew, *awlād l-ḥūma* (children of the neighbourhood), would come and serve. Or your own people: cousins, aunts. And you’d talk together and mix and have fun. Now people have to get a company in and they wear a uniform and we don’t even look at them and we don’t know who they are. And they don’t talk to us. They wear those plastic gloves, you know ... so the food is not contaminated ... [he waved his hand next to his ear to mean ‘it’s crazy!’]

My host-father related this change to what he saw as the dwindling importance of *jīrān* (neighbours). The conversation was initiated, in fact, by the story of a man who had thousands of ‘friends’ on Facebook, none of whom played the role of neighbour. My host-father told how, planning to move house, the man had messaged all his online friends asking for help, but on the day no-one turned up. A neighbour saw the man struggling with his furniture and offered to lend a hand: ‘This neighbour wasn’t friends with him on Facebook so the man hadn’t told him he was moving that day, but he was happy to help. The Facebook friends weren’t friends at all!’

The ideal of neighbourliness was encoded for my host-father in the architecture of the *medīna*. His view of the matter was quite the opposite of Lyautey's assumption that a 'Muslim' quarter refuses sociality.

It was built for people to meet up with each other. The streets are narrow with one door right in front of another so people meet when they come in and out. And the roofs were all on one level so people could talk. One roof is next to another, to another, to another. We have a proverb: to have a neighbour is to have 70 neighbours. Because it just goes on and on.<sup>32</sup>

Although l'Océan's architecture differed from that of Rabat's old city, in my host-father's memories of growing up the street in l'Océan was also a space for interaction<sup>33</sup> and neighbours as much as family made up community:

We used to play outside and then when it was time for *casse-croûte*<sup>34</sup> we would just pick any house in the block and have our food there. We weren't obliged to go to our own house. Everyone in the block was your family. Whoever you found was your mother. We had eight families in the block. Eight mothers, eight fathers. You went in, they gave you food and you sat and ate with your brothers and sisters. We respected everyone who was older than us like our own fathers. Someone in the street would say to you, "Go inside!" You'd go inside. Nowadays if someone said that to a boy, he'd laugh at them, or spit. There's no

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<sup>32</sup> What outsiders perceive as antisocial architecture is for insiders, who have access to the roof terraces, decidedly social. The roof-top is predominantly women's space. The distinction between inside and outside the house is an organising feature of writing on Morocco. Self-conscious about their natural position on the outsides of houses, writers prized and wrote about access to insides. Celarié's *Behind Moroccan Walls* (1931) is a classic example; Peets' *Women of Marrakech* (1983) and Hart's memoir, *Behind the Courtyard Door* (1994), follow suit. Fernea did not enjoy intimacy with her Moroccan neighbours although she met them on the roof terrace; her account of *A Street in Marrakech* (1988) contains the recurrent motif of closed houses, echoing Boughali's words that: 'the traditional Moroccan house hardly ever has openings that are visible to a visitor' (Boughali 1974: 45). Kenneth Brown similarly described the house in Salé as a 'closed off, private universe unto itself' (1976: 39).

<sup>33</sup> The street in the *ville-nouvelle* (new city), argue Chekroun and Boudoudou (1986: 105), is a common space not for sociability but for transit, for the movement of traffic (pedestrian or otherwise). This has the effect of making Moroccan families turn in on themselves, having to fulfil alone the functions that previously were shared by others on the street. Cf. Eickelman (1974) on the *darb* (small street or alleyway in the *medīna*): 'Component households in a *darb* should be able to assume a certain moral unity so that in some respects social space in their *darb* can be regarded as an extension of their own household ... Because of the multiple ties of its residents, respectable women who never venture to the main market can circulate discreetly within their *darb*, where the households are "known" (*ma'ruf*) to each other' (Eickelman 1974: 283, 6).

<sup>34</sup> A light meal between lunch and supper, usually consisting of bread, pancakes or pastries with tea or coffee.

respect. No-one knows who is who. Now everyone just goes into their apartment and shuts the door and the windows.<sup>35</sup>

During my fieldwork I often heard people say: ‘*mā ‘andnāsh jīrān* (we don’t have any neighbours),’ as when Hinde came to borrow an electric whisk from her former employers, the Sebbaris. Knowing that Hinde lived in another part of town, I wondered why she had come so far to borrow such a simple thing:

‘Don’t you have neighbours?’

‘No, we don’t have neighbours. If I had neighbours I would be alright.’

Hinde did not mean that no-one lived in the apartments next to her but that she did not know them well enough to ask a favour. This conception of neighbours as existing only in so far as they behaved liked neighbours recalls statements about ‘real *komšilik*’ (real neighbourhood) in the Muslim Bosnian village of Henig’s (2012) study in which neighbourliness is characterised by open doors. The *komšilik*, Henig argues, is a moral rather than physical way of living in proximity: ‘the space where people live *with* one another, rather than *next to* each other’ (2012: 14-5 emphasis mine). His informants emphasised the image of the ‘opened doors’ of their neighbours. Moroccans talk about this kind of interaction as *sha ‘bī*.

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<sup>35</sup> Such evocations of a past community where one knew and interacted with all one’s neighbours are not unique to Morocco. See Dresch (2006: 206) for examples from the Gulf where ‘almost everywhere ... an image recurs of an older world where everyone knew everyone else.’ Nostalgia is problematic. As far as reciprocal labour is concerned, it has been argued that over-emphasising the perspective of older informants has led to an exaggeration of its rate of decline (Moore 1975: 282). Cf. Guillet (1980: 157-8) on reciprocal labour.

## THE POPULAR IDEAL

Being *sha' bī* is an ideal that is seen as having been more prevalent in the past than it is today, and more prevalent in the countryside or in *aḥīyā' sha' bīya* (*quartiers populaires*) of the city than in middle- or upper-class urban settings. The assumption is that in the past all Moroccans, rural and urban, were *sha' bī* but today only rural Moroccans and particular urban Moroccans remain so.<sup>36</sup> It is telling that they describe themselves or others as 'still' (*bāqī*) doing this or that which makes them *sha' bī*. They 'still' sit outside in the evenings. They 'still' go in and out of one another's houses. They 'still' say '*s-salām 'alīkum*' (peace be upon you) when they meet people on the street.

*Sha' bī*, the adjective of *sha' b* ('a people' in the sense of ethnos, a populace),<sup>37</sup> is often translated as 'folk' in English, or *populaire* in French, as in *al-bank ash-sha' bī*, *Banque Populaire du Maroc*, whose advertisement campaign (2012-13) on television, radio and billboards featured Moroccan 'stars' saying how *sha' bī* or '*populaire*' they are (see Figure 3). The qualities of these public figures are projected onto the target-audience and onto the bank itself,<sup>38</sup> which boasts a closeness to and knowledge of the

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Rodary (2002: 118) on the *sha' bī* quarter of Sidi Youssef bin 'Ali in Marrakech, in which *sha' bī* is characterised as an attachment to tradition, and Ossman (1994) on Casablanca's Aïn Chok which she calls '*populaire*' in the sense of working class. Crawford (2008: 2) argues that "'traditional" amounts to a fantasy rearview mirror, a staid past juxtaposed to the dynamic present and the postmodern future. This is one way the self-consciously modern world understands itself: by constructing rural life as what the modern world is not, and especially what it is *not anymore*.'

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Singerman (1995: 11-3).

<sup>38</sup> The radio advert goes as follows:

[In Moroccan Arabic] 'Welcome to your programme: "Talking with Stars". Si Boustawi, the audience love you a lot. What is the secret of *sha' bīyik* (your *sha' bīya*, in this case, your popularity)?'

'Well, my *sha' bīya* comes from my audience who are always with me, like my bank.'

[Switch to standard Arabic voiceover] 'Yes, you [pl.] are distinguished for *ḥisin sha' bī* (a *sha' bī* feeling), and we are like you. We work in *sha' bī* feelings. *Banque Populaire*, a bank for you.'

[In Moroccan Arabic] 'Mouna Fettou, you have lots of fans. How do you live this *sha' bīya*?'

needs of ‘ordinary people’. Whilst being *sha’bī* is portrayed here as a positive quality, it has negative connotations in other contexts. Some residents complain in fact that l’Océan is too *sha’bī* for comfort. Such people are keen to distinguish themselves from those who are, in their opinion, too working class or common, or not affluent enough or refined enough, to make easy neighbours. But attempts to locate the term *sha’bī* within a simple economic framework are misguided. The *Banque Populaire* would fail in its publicity campaign if it appealed only to those who identified with a working class (Fatima, we saw, does not have a bank account and considers herself *sha’bīya* but of the ‘toiling class’) and the bank advertisements are appealing mainly to a middle-class clientele.



**Figure 3: “I am *sha’bīya*”: *Banque Populaire* billboard advertisement, featuring Moroccan actress Mouna Fettou.**

‘I live it with pride. And when you are *sha’bī* you always have to take an interest in every person, just as my bank does.’

[Switch to standard Arabic] ‘Yes, you (pl.) are distinguished for *hisin sha’bī*...’

Thinking about *sha' bī* in terms of an identification with the past is more helpful than mapping it onto a scale of income brackets. 'Traditional' might be a suitable translation in certain contexts, such as when talking about *sha' bī* music or dance, but also when referring to certain forms of life and ways of relating to others.<sup>39</sup> *Sha' bī* parallels in these respects the Egyptian identity concept of 'ibn al-balad' (lit. son of the place or country).<sup>40</sup> Because the past and present were valued differently by different Egyptian classes, *ibn al-balad* took on a class dimension. The upper-class in Egypt had, prior to the 1952 revolution, assimilated to western lifestyles and 'uprooted itself completely from its past, that is, [from] the *awlād al-balad* identity' (plural of *ibn al-balad*), while the masses, on the other hand, 'became isolated within that identity' (Messiri 1978: 104).<sup>41</sup> Thus an *ibn al-balad* values what is local over what is foreign as well as what is traditional over what is new while treating powerful foreigners and their local acolytes in class terms. Drawing on Messiri's essay, Early (1993: 85) defines *baladī* through a series of *baladī: afrangī* (traditional versus modern, or foreign) oppositions: 'There are *baladī* ways and there are *afrangī* ways to earn a living, practice religion, celebrate a wedding, cure a disease, talk to a friend, or solve a problem'. In the same way, there are *sha' bī* and non-*sha' bī* ways to do things in Morocco, including ways to get someone to do your housework for you.

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<sup>39</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod (1971) distinguishes 'traditional urban' from rural and modern or 'industrial' urban. Messiri follows her observation that in Cairo 'traditional urbanism', or 'the community of *ibn al-balad*' is most strongly linked to the physical spaces in the city which are the oldest inhabited, i.e. in which traditional activities survive despite the mobility of populations (Messiri 1978: 58).

<sup>40</sup> The feminine form, *bint al-balad* (daughter of the *balad*) is equally common. The meaning of *balad* varies according to the context. It can refer to a town, place, region or country. In the case of Cairo it usually means the city itself. Armbrust notes that those Egyptians who consider themselves not *baladī* use this adjectival form, while *ibn al-balad* 'incorporates a strong sense of self-identity.'

<sup>41</sup> *Sha' bi* and *baladī* coexist as distinct terms in Egypt. Messiri maintains that the term *sha' bīyya* 'has been commonly used since the '40s. [It] was first used by the media but has now infiltrated into common colloquial language. The media's current preference for this term results from their wish to avoid the usage of the value-laden concept such as *baladī*.' More specifically, 'the term *al-ahyā' al-sha' biyya* seems to be a recent one which came into vogue when the 1952 Revolution put emphasis on the *sha' b* (people), or folk' (Messiri 1978: 46). Moroccans use '*bildī*' (i.e. *baladī*) to refer to authentic Moroccan produce, for example, *z-zīt l-bildī*, olive oil.

In Armbrust's discussion of the Egyptian television serial 'White Flag', *ibn al-balad* is 'a real Egyptian, a regular guy; sometimes the salt of the earth, in other contexts a rough diamond' (1996: 25). Similarly, *sha' bī* Moroccans consider themselves 'real' Moroccans, ordinary people who do not 'put on airs'. The significance of this for domestic work is that *sha' bī* employers point out that they do not 'make a difference' between their own children and their domestic worker, a claim we return to in later chapters. When employers state that a live-in domestic eats with them or sleeps in the same room as their children, '*beḥel, beḥel* ([they are] the same)', this is often followed by '... we are *sha' bī*' by way of explanation. My conversations with security guards and chauffeurs outside villas in the decidedly less *sha' bī* Souissi and Bir Qasim residential areas suggested this rhetoric is absent there. Talking about l'Océan one security guard said:

Yes, but that's a *ḥay sha' bī* (a popular quarter). The people are *muwazzafīn* (office workers), teachers, people working in the government offices. Here they are the ministers themselves, and the CEOs and principals of private schools. This is not *sha' bī*. There's no, 'my son', 'my daughter' here. They don't want you to be that to them.

Whilst *sha' bī* behaviour is not normally associated with the upper class,—in fact, the upper class often provides a rhetorical contrast to *sha' bī* in Morocco, as it does to *baladī* in Cairo—wealth does not in itself preclude people from identifying themselves as *sha' bī*. One of Messiri's interviewees in Cairo commented that: 'It is not so much the *amount* of wealth that one possesses as what one does with it which identifies one as an *ibn al-balad*. For example, a coffee-shop owner, or a butcher, could become very rich but still follow the customs of the group, such as staying in his quarter, helping and cooperating with the neighbourhood, preserving his family relationships as well as friendship ties' (Messiri 1978: 42). Wealth in the Moroccan

*sha' bī* ideal is associated with generosity, particularly as far as food is concerned, and allows inequality a moral form. Several domestic workers and employers noted the difference between *sha' bī* employers and those who 'count Danone' (Danone is the prevailing brand and therefore the generic term for yoghurt. Its portion-sized pots, costing around 2dh each, are inexpensive but easily counted and therefore often a trivial subject of contention between employers and workers).<sup>42</sup> One employer said: 'Well-off people (*nās lā bās 'alīthum*) keep food locked away. They count it. But we *sha' bī* people, we can't count food. It is *khayr* (goodness, blessing, a gift) from God. We say, "Just take it!" One could do this whether rich or poor.

The meanings of *sha' bī* are so contextualised that a case-by-case understanding is more helpful than a wholesale translation. Nonetheless, a group of Moroccan students enrolled on a Masters programme in *thaqāfa sha' bīya* (popular culture), when asked about the meaning of *sha' bī* in the context of *Banque Populaire*'s advertising, came up with a single factor. They responded that *sha' bī* involved openness to people. This is why *sha' bī* people say hello in the street, or sit outside their houses in the evening (although l'Océan is said to be not quite, or rather no longer, *sha' bī* enough for this). But more so than with the artists of *Banque Populaire*'s advertisements, in the context of a community such as l'Océan or the neighbourly past described by my host-father, *sha' bī* is specifically a *safe* openness; an openness to people who are 'known'. As soon as there is an influx of foreigners whom the older residents have no wish to meet, or the apartment buildings become too large, concentrating more people in one street than the

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<sup>42</sup> In nineteenth-century England a similar trope describes 'proper gentlemen' (those who see no need to count the cutlery) as distinct from people of 'new money'. An early twentieth-century cook in the Harborough area whose account of service features in Mullins and Griffiths study observed that: 'The better bred people, the real gentlefolk, do treat their employees as flesh and blood, the "jumped up rich middle class" as cattle' (1989: 15). In fiction see for example Surtees' *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853) in which Sponge asks a servant about the profligate Sir Harry Swift and is told: 'He was a *real* gentleman now, if you like—free, open-handed gentleman—none of your close shavin', cheese-parin' sort of gentlemen, or imitation gentlemen, as I calls them, but a man who knew what was due to servants and gave them it. We had good wages, and all the 'reglars' ([1853] 1981: 74).

inhabitants of the street can possibly know, people will stop saying hello to one another.<sup>43</sup> This is what is happening in l'Océan and why someone can point to my street and say, 'this half is still *sha' bī*, that half less so.' The *sha' bī* half is lined with houses and smaller apartment buildings, the less *sha' bī* half with newer, taller apartment buildings in which dwellings are not designed with neighbourliness in mind.<sup>44</sup>

Different forms of neighbourliness in country and city meant Moroccans from the countryside found l'Océan was not *sha' bī* enough. They felt keenly when those they met on the staircase of their building or in the street did not respond to their greeting. In the words of Fatima's sister, Selwa:

It's like you are a foreigner in your own country. Though you are in Morocco and everyone says they are Muslim, it's not the same. It's like another country. People don't say '*s-salām*', don't ask after you, don't knock on the door. You could die and your neighbours wouldn't notice. Rabat is not nice. Casa, Marrakech—people there would ask after you. It's just Rabat that's like this.

For Selwa, greeting people in the street was both a Moroccan and a Muslim thing to do. When people failed to greet her they were failing to affirm that she and they belonged to the same community (*umma*), so she felt alienated.<sup>45</sup> Others stressed that greeting people was required of Muslims. Hafida, on a return visit to her home village in the Gharb, was greeted by everyone who passed. She commented:

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<sup>43</sup> Eickelman argues similarly that for ties of 'closeness' or kinship within a *darb* (cluster of streets), 'there is an optimal range, above and below which such ties become untenable' (1974: 287). Community features as an exception in writing on globalising Arab cities. To take an example from the Gulf, Al-Za'ab, named after its inhabitants, *Za'abīs* who arrived as a group in Abu Dhabi in the 1960s, is 'the one predominantly "national" area on Abu Dhabi island where one sees people outside their houses in the evening talking to neighbors' (Dresch 2006: 207).

<sup>44</sup> Those in l'Océan who distanced themselves from the *sha' bī* identity were keen to point out that they did not like to intrude on others, explaining that 'it is shameful', whilst those who would have liked l'Océan to be more *sha' bī* complained that no-one came to see them.

<sup>45</sup> Early noted similarly that the inhabitants of Bulaq, a popular quarter of Cairo felt that modern, westernised Cairenes, 'ignore the most basic human obligations: to assist and to pray for others' (Early 1993: 85).

Everyone knows me here, not like in the city. There, no-one says ‘*s-salām*’, no-one knows you. Even the neighbours who live in the flat opposite me, they don’t reply when I say ‘*s-salām ‘alikum*’, and that’s something God asks for. ‘*S-salām*’ is for God, not for them, but they don’t even reply. Everyone just thinks about himself in the city.

Hafida, she says, is greeted in the countryside because she is known. The size of her village partly accounts for this, but in urban contexts involving similarly small numbers of people ‘knowing’ others was not a given. I asked a *gardien* (a watchman) if he knew the residents in the complex of apartments he guarded in Mabella, a ‘*hay rāqī*’ (upper-class quarter):

“‘*S-salām*’ doesn’t exist here. Some people won’t even look at me. They are *shab ‘ān* (full, i.e. not hungry). They are not going to die.’

‘We are all going to die.’

‘No, they are not going to die. They have 4x4s. Us, we have God.’

In the watchman’s view, the residents’ illusion of self-sufficiency meant they felt no need to relate to him. He was also hinting at their comparative godlessness (‘*s-salām*’ is linked to a duty towards God) and their lack of concern for consequences in the hereafter: ‘They are not going to die.’ When I recounted this conversation to my host-father and sister, my host-sister said: ‘No, people are no longer *sha ‘bī*.’

Separated from the working-class community in the way European arrivals once were, new-comers to l’Océan—those who make the move for career reasons, who buy the new apartments in the tall buildings which make the area less *sha ‘bī*, park their cars in the basement and take the lift directly to their floor—would not know whose door to knock on if they needed help with spring-cleaning, and their mothers are too far away to babysit children.<sup>46</sup> These people, like residents of Hassan or Agdal, tend to have higher

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<sup>46</sup> For middle-class Bengalis in Kolkata, the difficulty of hiring servants was a deterrent to moving into new residential areas. Apartments designed for nuclear families where young mothers would have to bring up a child without the help of the extended family were to be avoided (Donner 2013).

incomes and ‘busier’ lives. The imperative to have a domestic worker to maintain ‘proper’ family life then outweighs a fear of strangers so they are likely to employ someone unknown and see how it goes. To find a worker they might have recourse to an agency, flick to the back of *Le Matin* for the classifieds, or search online. We turn to these different marketplaces in Chapter 4. First, however, I shall introduce Dār Sebbari, a family whom almost everyone could agree are in some sense *sha‘bī*.

### **DĀR SEBBARI: A *SHA‘BĪ* HOUSEHOLD**

The Sebbaris are not, relatively speaking, new-comers to l’Océan. Latifa was born in the late 1930s, in the *medīna* of Rabat. Orphaned, she was brought up in the house of her maternal grandfather, who after the death of his first wife, married the daughter of a high-ranking official of Sultan Hassan I (r. 1878-94).<sup>47</sup> This step-grandmother, who did not have any daughters of her own, was good to Latifa: ‘better than a mother’. This may have been the inspiration for Latifa’s own career as a foster-mother of sorts which we come to in the next chapter. The family in which Latifa grew up was reasonably well off, owning farmland next to Temara, now a suburb of Rabat, which was sold to the state to make way for the *autoroute* (completed 1987), and *Mui* (mother) Latifa, as most younger people call her, told me that her grandparents did not let her do housework. They had two *dadas*<sup>48</sup> and a male slave ‘from the Sahara’ who bought the household’s

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<sup>47</sup> Historical demographic studies of England (e.g. Laslett 1965) demonstrate the importance of such foster arrangements in a context in which it was rare for people over a certain age to have both parents living. The idea is taken up in Willa Cather’s American novels describing the years around 1900. See for example, her *My Antonia* (1918).

<sup>48</sup> A *dada* was originally a female slave assigned to the care of the children of the house. See Goichon 1929: 18. Retainers of the kind who were once slaves (in particular *dadas*) are hard to assess but were a fixed part of the household. My host-father was nursed as a child by a Saharan ‘*dada*’ whom his family

daily provisions at the market and did the cooking. Latifa was still at school when her grandfather decided to marry her to Hamza Sebbari: ‘I cried and cried, but my “mother” would not go against my grandfather’, so Latifa left school and went to live in her husband’s family’s household. It was there that she learnt to cook, under the watchful eye of her mother-in-law.

In the 1980s Latifa, Hamza and their children (five daughters and one son) moved out of the *medīna* and bought a *bildī* house (a traditional house with a courtyard) halfway down rue Vérone (a fictionalised street name) in l’Océan, where they occupied the downstairs and let the upstairs to another family. In the 1990s they demolished the house and constructed an apartment building, one floor at a time, on its site. Latifa’s late husband designated the spacious ground-floor flat with its private courtyard for their own use, and the family with whom they had shared the *bildi* house took one of the first-floor apartments. *Hajja* Jamila, the mother of this latter family, now lives there alone, all her children having moved out: ‘She’s my oldest neighbour—like family’, *Mui* Latifa told me. The two women drink coffee together every evening. The other apartments in the building were taken by ordinary families of moderate income. One of *Mui* Latifa’s daughters, Nadia, married the son of the family who occupied the other first-floor apartment (next to *Hajja* Jamila) thus solidifying the bonds between the households on the lower floors of the Sebbari building.<sup>49</sup> Nadia’s husband, like many Océanis, was ‘in buying and selling’—he imported clothing and sold it to local traders.

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brought with them when they moved to l’Océan. The *dada* eventually married and set up her own household in l’Océan but even after her death, her son’s wife regularly paid visits to my host-mother.

<sup>49</sup> Although some researchers assert that co-residing extended families are no longer the norm in North Africa (Kapchan 1997, Guerraoui 1996), Holmes-Eber’s study of women’s kin networks in Tunis demonstrates that many families are only nuclear in appearance: ‘socially and psychologically they still live with their extended family’ (Holmes-Eber 2003: 74). She argues that ‘the extended household has simply “gone up” or “out”, becoming instead the “extended street” or “extended apartment complex”’ (ibid. 70).

During my fieldwork Nadia's door was often left open, usually revealing a domestic worker in the kitchen. The door of *Hajja* Jamila's apartment, though shut, was never locked, allowing people from Nadia and *Mui* Latifa's households to come and go without knocking. Nadia's daughter, Zahra, in particular treated the neighbour's apartment as an extension of her home, not least because, having no bedroom of her own, she slept there, along with Nadia's current domestic, usually a young woman from the Moroccan countryside.<sup>50</sup> Nadia's household also shared the use of *Hajja* Jamila's landline. Sometimes they would ask Jamila to join them for lunch and there was much to-ing and fro-ing of cups of olive oil, paper screws of spices, or preserved lemons when someone found herself short. This coming and going among households is stereotypical of *sha' bī* Moroccans.

*Mui* Latifa's only son also took an apartment on the second floor, although, since his divorce, he ate most of his meals with his mother and unmarried sister downstairs and his mother's domestic worker would come up to his apartment to tidy and clean.<sup>51</sup> When he went to stay with one of his sisters in Tangier for the summer he put his apartment up for a short-term let, which suited my needs on arrival in Rabat. The *samsār*, or broker, whose office was across the street from the Sebbaris' building and

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<sup>50</sup> As I shall discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, turnover for this post was high. We are reminded of the kitchen-maid in Proust's *Swann's Way* (1922) which Fortes (1987: 252) cites in his discussion of personhood: 'The kitchen-maid was an abstract personality (fr. *une personne morale*), a permanent institution to which an invariable set of attributes assured a sort of fixity and continuity and identity throughout the long series of transitory human shapes in which that personality was incarnate; for we never found the same girl there two years running' (Proust [1922] 1973: 54).

<sup>51</sup> The Moroccan proverb, '*al-qatt bi yimmah ma isad* (the tomcat that has its mother will not hunt)' (Munson 1984: 185), might be applied here. *Mui* Latifa would not allow her son live in her apartment as he made too much mess. As well as leaving Latifa largely responsible for the burden of her son's domestic work the divorce deprived her of having a daughter-in-law to serve her.

was finding me a place to live, told me: 'It's a family building. It will be like you're living with the family. It's shameful to live alone anyway. This is better for you.'<sup>52</sup>

Excepting the son's apartment, each household carried out their daily domestic work independently but sharing of labour took place in times of need. *Hajja* Jamila employed a woman who lived further 'down' in l'Océan to do the cleaning a couple of times a week,<sup>53</sup> and when Jamila's domestic was not there Nadia's worker would sometimes be asked to help with heavy or messy jobs. *Mui* Latifa employed her own domestic. Turnover was high but typically she was from Yacoub El Mansour, a working-class quarter in south-west Rabat, or from a poor area of Salé, and so commuted daily. When a domestic could not be persuaded to work on a live-in basis, *Mui* Latifa arranged with her daughter Nadia for a share of her worker's time, namely at breakfast before the live-out worker arrived and at teatime after she had gone. Nadia's own domestic (always live-in) would then complain of having to do 'two jobs', a fact not reflected in her wage. Another woman was employed to clean the stairs two or three times a week. Sometimes this was a relative of one of the workers employed in Nadia or *Mui* Latifa's households, sometimes it was a neighbour. In short, the extended household of Dār Sebbari controlled a good deal of domestic labour.

None of the other households in the building, all with one- or two-bedroom apartments, employed a regular domestic. The other tenants were amused by my asking them if they had such workers.<sup>54</sup> There was not much to do, and what there was they did themselves; as for a live-in worker, there was not space, and they were not used to

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<sup>52</sup> When the son returned at the end of the summer I moved to a host-family one street away, and eventually to my own place closeby, but continued to visit at Latifa, Nadia and Jamila's apartments regularly until I left the field.

<sup>53</sup> This woman was introduced to me as 'from the family'. She was related to an ex-domestic of *Mui* Latifa's.

<sup>54</sup> They were shopkeepers, secretaries and teachers.

having a domestic anyway. Life without paid help was plainly possible. *Hajja* Jamila's age, ill health and poor eyesight prevented her doing housework easily herself, but in Nadia's household this was not the case. Although Nadia worked full time, her daughter Zahra, an able-bodied 18-year-old who was taking a year off before university, had time on her hands. Yet the housework did not fall to her. In this respect Nadia's household, despite living in the same number of square meters as her neighbours, was a cut above them. Accustomed to employing a domestic, they coped poorly when a worker left and they had to go without until they found a new one.

*Mui* Latifa's apartment, being the largest in the patronymic group, was the social centre of the Sebbari family. On Fridays, the whole family, and their dependents, were invited there for couscous. If several guests were expected Nadia's household (specifically the domestic worker under Zahra's instructions at the time) might also cook a quantity of semolina grains to be added to the dish downstairs. These meals were useful for mapping how people were related to the house and their relative status.<sup>55</sup> Before the main dish was filled and brought to the salon table, a number of small dishes would be made up in the kitchen, and *Mui* Latifa would direct the domestic worker as she ladled out portions—more meat here, less there. These would then be kept back for family members not present or taken to various people in the neighbourhood. One medium dish would be taken to the people who rented the basement of the apartment building as an office and another, smaller dish across rue Vérone to a retired domestic, Imane, who shared it with two others, Hajar and Kowtar (the three of them always ate lunch together). These women, originally from rural Morocco, were (ex)servants who

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Appadurai (1981) on gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia.

lived in the *dawīra* (little house).<sup>56</sup> Imane no longer worked for the owner of her house, who had gone abroad but allowed her to stay on rent-free in the *dawīra* while the main house was let out. *Mui* Latifa thus saw Imane as her responsibility and at the end of every week she paid for the milk Imane took daily from the *ḥānūt* (little shop) on the street.<sup>57</sup>

Although a small dish of Dār Sebbari couscous was always sent to Imane, neither she, nor Kowtar or Hajar, were invited to eat with the household. Those who ate in the house either had a higher status or were current or former domestics with a closer relationship to Dār Sebbari. And, although everyone ate from one dish in the *sha' bī* fashion demanded for most meals and especially for couscous, the seating arrangements indicated who was who. Non-servile guests were always encouraged to sit on the couch at the back of the room, facing the door, together with older family members, *Mui* Latifa herself, her sister, and *Hajja* Jamila.<sup>58</sup> These seats had to be filled first and vacated last as the people on couches either side of the table blocked the way through, so those seated at the back were least expected or able to get up and take dishes out or fetch things. *Mui* Latifa's retired, unmarried daughter, Jihane, might sit on one of the side couches, as would Nadia, if she came home from work for lunch. Nadia's daughter Zahra might take one of these places too. The side of the table near the door had no couch but various chairs and stools would be pulled up by the domestics who remained

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<sup>56</sup> The *dawīra* was a tiny kitchen where the meals for the big house were traditionally prepared, with stairs up to a sleeping area above. These rooms, next to the frontdoor, were windowless and there was not space for more than two or three people to sit down on stools between the sink and the stove.

<sup>57</sup> Latifa did not do this for Hajar and Kowtar because 'they are paid.' Hajar received 1000dh a month as a pension from her deceased employers and her niece Kowtar (who had been 'brought up' in the household where Hajar was a domestic) worked in a crèche to earn about the same amount. They had been renting a room elsewhere in l'Océan until the son of their late employer tracked them down and suggested they come and live 'for free' in the *dawīra*. Afraid of losing the 1000dh 'pension', they returned to the *dawīra* where living rent-free meant doing the housework in the main house where the son lived and cooking all his meals.

<sup>58</sup> Male guests, such as Latifa's brother, were often given their food separately, prior to the main gathering.

ready to go to the kitchen whenever anything was wanted, and when everyone had finished, to carry the heavy couscous dish back to the kitchen, bring a cloth to wipe the table and begin making tea and washing up. The women who took these places at the table were not just the domestics currently employed by *Mui* Latifa and Nadia but also those whom the family had brought up and who came to visit often. We shall meet these women in the next chapter. Many of them *Mui* Latifa referred to routinely as her ‘daughters’.

## CONCLUSION

I have outlined the unusual demography of l’Océan. At the time of my fieldwork the self-conscious mingling of urbanites and countryfolk, serving and employing classes, made for a relatively *sha’bī* neighbourhood where the street remained a meaningful social space in which interaction occurs. This was, however, being threatened by un-neighbourly newcomers. Whilst few people in l’Océan could still get a neighbour to do their housework, neighbourly cooperation remained an ideal which influenced the way people thought about who they should be employing: emphatically not a complete stranger.

We see that a *sha’bī* household, illustrated by the Sebbaris, is one with open doors, whose members spill over into the homes of neighbours and whose wealth (in this case, in the form of milk-money and couscous) finds its way across the street. Hierarchies within and without the household are expressed through naming practises—*Mui* and *Hajja* for instance, are respectful terms of address for one’s elders, through space—who is invited, who sits where, who is expected in the kitchen, and through

food—who is assigned more meat. So although everyone is connected ‘like family’, not everyone is really ‘*beḥel beḥel*’ (the same). Known domestic workers are easily brought inside the boundaries of the household and slot into a ready-made subordinate ‘daughter’ rung. When workers known through kinship or vicinage are not available, the most *sha’bī* of Moroccans will probably go without employing a domestic. In less *sha’bī* settings a daughter-shaped space awaits an outsider.

## CHAPTER 2

### **MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS: MOVING BOUNDARIES, NOMADIC WORKERS**

It is common to hear Moroccans say that so-and-so took in a girl ‘to help with the housework’ and treated her ‘like a daughter’. This familial model of domesticity harks back to the widespread long-term placement to wealthier households of the daughters of poor families, often from the countryside. Mernissi stated in the 1980s that ‘the domestic who is paid a wage is a new phenomenon; traditionally domestics lived in and were supported, but received no actual wage’ (1982: 31).<sup>1</sup> Of interest then is the continued use, in another setting, of idiomatic kinship for shorter-term waged employment which in many respects follows the logic of the market rather than the family. In this sense Moroccan households resemble Lévi-Strauss’s concept of houses in ‘*sociétés maison*’ where economic interests ‘borrow the language of kinship, though it is foreign to them, for none other is available’ (Lévi-Strauss 1983: 186-7).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jansen attested to an increase in the importance of market relations over patronage relations in Algeria by the 1980s: ‘There is an increased tendency to pay [women workers] with money, rather than gifts and fictive kinship’ (Jansen 1987: 241).

<sup>2</sup> Lévi-Strauss argued that kinship terms naturalise rank differences in the transition between kin and class based society. See Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995: 10). The theme runs throughout my thesis.

## PRACTICAL KINSHIP

The use of idiomatic or ‘practical’ kinship is not restricted to domestic work in Morocco but applies to waged service around the globe.<sup>3</sup> Writing on South-African domestic service, Cock argues that fictive kinship blurs the boundaries between paid and unpaid labour but, ‘in no case was there the sharing of power and resources that authentic family membership might be thought to involve’ (1980: 132). This, of course, is a naive idea of family equality. Ray and Qayum meanwhile argue that in Kolkata, India, the ‘one of the family’ rhetoric indexes both the hierarchical structure of family in which the servant stands ‘on the lowest rung’, and the characteristics of love, loyalty and generosity which family members (and servants) are expected to manifest (2009: 96). Of Tanzanian domestic service, Bujra writes: ‘the intimacy between family members is brought into uncomfortable liaison with the distance required between class unequals’ (2000: 87). An obvious solution is to employ an ‘unequal’ family member. The tendency to ‘foster’ rather than simply employ, familiar from English literature and history, is a way to mediate the tension.

This idea led, in the Bertram household of Austen’s (1814) *Mansfield Park*, to ‘a reliance on the lower-class stationary niece’, Fanny, who was ‘useful’ for running errands, ‘as defence against the dangers of “encroaching” employees’ (Sutherland 2003: xxx). Similarly, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Margaret Hale in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855) each stayed in their youth with wealthier relatives. But if someone is not kin, calling them kin might be the next best thing. Lethbridge argues that when ‘lady-helps’ came into vogue in early twentieth-century Britain, they

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Childress (1956), Drummond (1978), Colen (1989), Bakan and Stasiulis (1997), Anderson (2000), Búriková and Miller (2010). For an example outside domestic service of the use of family idiom to exploit, see Bailey’s (1968) essay on peasants in Orissa, India.

looked ‘something like the older form of [female] dependant that one might have found in the seventeenth-century English household: the relative, widowed perhaps or unmarried, who occupied a place in the house’ (Lethbridge 2013: 170-1). Significantly, the first agency offering this kind of help in Britain (established in 1921) used a kinship term in their name: ‘Universal Aunts’ (ibid. 175-6); ‘Country Cousins’ was another agency which specialised in placing ‘well-born ladies with no money’ (ibid. 283).

If ‘daughter’ is the kinship term most commonly used by Moroccan employers to refer to their domestic workers it is important to think what it means to be a daughter in Morocco. My own experience echoes that of other fieldworkers—the longer we stayed, the more ‘like a daughter’ we became, and the more our hosts assigned to us household tasks. The mediator who introduced me to a Marrakechi family I stayed with in 2006 said that because I was paying I was not expected to contribute to housework. I thought nothing of this at the time and, often out of boredom, did ‘help’ with housework, although my help/hindrane was not solicited. My host-parents always said that I was like a daughter to them. ‘Not exactly’, I thought, ‘since I pay you rent and you never tell me to clean the floor.’ But as I continued to visit over the years, more as a friend or pseudo daughter than a lodger, my host-mother began to ask me to do more, particularly when she had guests.<sup>4</sup> She would instruct me to heat water, wash dishes, or to *sekhkher* (run errands), go to the shop or ‘street oven’ (jobs usually given to prepubescent girls) so that she need not put on her headscarf. Just before I started my doctoral work my host-mother, bemused by my sudden interest in domesticity, seemed

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<sup>4</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod describes this progression in her fieldwork among Egyptian Bedouin: ‘Although I never completely lost my status as a guest in their household, my role as daughter gradually superseded it ... I became part of the backstage when we had company, found myself contributing more to household work than I wished, and had my own chores’ (1986: 15). Scheele, living with a Kabyle family in Algeria, notes a similar transformation from ‘honoured guest’ to ‘daughter’ (2009: 7).

more conscious of my (tiny) contribution. She began to give me tasks with a twinkle in her eye: ‘Come on. So you can tell your mother you worked for us as a skivvy!’<sup>5</sup>

That being a daughter is associated with service was made explicit when I spent the afternoon with a neighbour in l’Océan whom I called ‘*khālī* (aunty)’ because she was about my mother’s age. As she was kneading the dough for *ghayf* (pancakes) she asked me to take a frying pan out of the cupboard, saying, ‘*kan-kheddemik* (I’m making you work)! *Ṣāfi* (that’s it), you’ve become my daughter!’ But there is another dimension to being a daughter. ‘Aunty’ wanted to give me some *ghayf* to take home with me. I told her not to trouble herself, but she responded: ‘You’re our daughter,’ which involved not only giving but also receiving care. Because Moroccan daughters are expected to work, it makes sense that those who work are classified as daughters even if they are not biological relatives. And because Moroccan daughters receive care (food, shelter, clothing, love) it also makes sense that a young woman living in the home of an employer and receiving some or all of these things should be classified as a daughter.

When employers call their workers ‘my daughter’ they invoke the logic of a patriarchal economy which is based on a ‘total’ intergenerational contract,<sup>6</sup> where *don* and *contre-don* link one generation with another. In Morocco daughters owe their labour to men and older women, and will receive their recompense, such as being served in turn by younger women, only later in life (Crawford 2008: 50). But while a mother effectively says to her biological daughter, ‘work for me now and when you are a mother, your daughter will work for you’, domestic workers, as eternal ‘daughters’,

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned above, *sekhkhāra* (lit. errand-runner) is equivalent to *kheddāma* (worker) in some contexts, particularly further south, but is more pejorative.

<sup>6</sup> See Aboderin (2006) and Alber et al. (2008) on the ‘generational contract’ in Africa. This sort of language only becomes plausible when paying someone else to care for one’s relatives becomes an option and one is not dependent on parental support.

rarely come to be recompensed in this way.<sup>7</sup> The unequal long-term exchange of the old model in which domestics are ‘brought up’ by patrons who profit from their social sterility, as it were, is replaced in the market economy by a short-term exchange of work for monthly pay.<sup>8</sup> A worker can walk out with her payment in hand. Thus a ‘daughter’ may suddenly leave for a more lucrative post or one with better conditions, calling into question the permanence of relatedness. A well-off government employee from Salé, whose husband was a doctor, searched for the right word,

They are ... [long pause here] ... ingrates. You take her to the club with you, you take her to visit other towns when you travel, you fill the fridge for her to help herself, you buy her things, heaps of clothes—to satisfy her. But in the end she will leave you as though you’ve done nothing for her.

As Bloch argues, for the Merina and more generally, long-term relationships are characterised by a high degree of morality: ‘balance is not sought in the short-term because the relationship is assumed to endure’ (Bloch 1973: 76). He stops just short of stating that kinship is the moral relationship *par excellence*. If workers are not staying long-term, however, the relationship can be assumed to have a low moral content, and kinship-terms are misnomers: unconditional terms for a conditional relationship of pay for work.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In pre-1800 England ‘life-cycle service’ usually involved servants who were social equals to their employers, but simply younger. When they grew older these women employed servants of their own (Wall 2004: 21, following Sheila Cooper’s 2002 unpublished paper).

<sup>8</sup> See Caplan (1971) on the different uses of cash and kind in Nepal. He argues that ‘transactions in the market place are market exchanges, meaning short-lived, “self-liquidating” relationships involving almost exclusively a cash medium’ (1971: 271). He found that cash was unsuitable for bribing officials since ‘in its “untamed” state, [it] demands an immediate and equivalent return, ignores status differentials between the parties to the transaction and is therefore not, like kind, a suitable medium for transforming simplex into multiplex ties’ (ibid. 276).

<sup>9</sup> Combs-Schilling’s (1985) study of merchants in Imi-n-Tanout, Southern Morocco supports Bloch’s theory. See also Parry and Bloch (1989) who argue that short-term exchange cycles belong with individual acquisitive activity while long-term exchanges occur to reproduce the social order.

In the absence of a legal framework for domestic work in Morocco, workers and employers have always imposed limits on the totalising relationship between them according to their relative positions of power. An increase in the proportion of girls in education and a focus in the media over the last two decades on the abuse of child workers<sup>10</sup> mean that domestic service has become less a matter of ‘*petites bonnes*’ (child domestics),<sup>11</sup> than of adult workers who are capable of refusing the manipulative and infantilising aspects of fictive kinship, whilst profiting, on a temporary basis, from other aspects of such a relationship. Following Bodenhorn (2000), whose analysis of the Iñupiat of Alaska problematises the permanence of kin-relatedness, I suggest that employers and workers together negotiate the limits and meanings of ‘mother-daughter’ relationships, which are often ended abruptly by the departure of the worker.

## FOSTERAGE

Increasing the number of hands available for work by taking in a dependent, often a child or teenager, is common in many societies. Meillassoux points to the transfer of children in rural Africa as a means of correcting the discrepancy between natural reproduction and the exigencies of material production in family units (1975: 76), but children are also transferred to help with ‘unproductive’ housework. In colonised Zambia many households ‘kept’ young relatives who did household work without pay

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Grotti (2004), Ksikes (2004), Azizi (2005), Deback (2010), *Le Parisien* (2011).

<sup>11</sup> This is common in Morocco despite the ratification by the Moroccan government in 1993 of ILO’s convention on the Rights of the Child which prohibits the employment of children in work that is dangerous, will harm their development or interrupt their education. On child domestics in Morocco, see Pelham 2000, Sommerfelt 2001, Lahlou (n.d.). Recently child domestics have inspired fiction such as Bougdal’s *La petite bonne de Casablanca* (2010) and Fihri’s historical *Dada l’yakout* (2010), neither of which make for comfortable reading.

(Hansen 1986: 18). Marshall (1964) notes that during the early years of marriage a Yoruba tradeswoman takes into her home an older child as a helper so she can continue trading (cited Brown, J. 1970: 1075), and a broader comparison can be drawn with ‘life-cycle service’ in pre-industrial England where most offspring left the home for a period of service anytime after the age of twelve (Laslett 1965, Mayhew 1991). In Morocco we might call such arrangements fosterage, although the term covers a range of meanings (Maher 1974: 5) and, if used indiscriminately, hides more than it reveals.

Fosterage overlaps in many respects with adoption but while the former tends, in comparative work, to denote temporary arrangements in which children maintain their initial status, the latter is often used of arrangements where a child is given the name of his or her adopting parents and stands to inherit from them.<sup>12</sup> Those, like Goody (1969), who adhere to this distinction point out that whilst caring for an orphan is meritorious in Islamic teaching,<sup>13</sup> adoption (*tabannī*, ‘to make one a son’) is forbidden.<sup>14</sup> The separation of adoption and fosterage does not, however, go uncontested in comparative literature. Brady (1976) observes a continuum between the two in Oceania, noting that arrangements are sometimes ‘inclusive’ and sometimes ‘exclusive’ as regards

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<sup>12</sup> Africanists have analysed the circulation of women and children in various descent groups (E. and J. Goody 1967). See J. Goody (1969) for a comparative survey of the literature on adoption in Hindu, Chinese, Greek, and Roman societies. Lallemand (1988, 1993) discusses the circulation of children in terms of alliance (like marriage). Despite these studies, the literature on adoption and fosterage is smaller than it might be due to a genealogical bias (Etienne, M. 1979: 66). Etienne’s focus on women’s agency in adoption among the Baulé (Côte d’Ivoire) attempts to redress this by lifting maternity from its biological trappings into the social (Etienne 1979: 65).

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad himself was orphaned and cared for by kin (*Qur’ān* 93:6). The *Qur’ān* commands believers to do good to orphans (2:177, 4:36), spend their wealth on them (2:215), feed them (76:7-10), and not to appropriate their property (4:2, 4:6, 4:10, 6:15). It also states that treating an orphan with harshness is a sign of someone who does not believe in the judgement/recompense of God (107:1-2). Just treatment of orphans is also a subject in *ḥadīth* (Hamid 2003: 29).

<sup>14</sup> The prohibition of *tabannī* is based on *Qur’ān* 33:4-5: ‘... nor has He made your adopted sons your sons ...’ Family law in Muslim states follows this prohibition with the exception of Tunisia (Borrmans 1977, Charrad 2001: 227). Culturally sanctioned forms of social parenting are not limited to Morocco. Studying ‘new kinship’ in Muslim communities in Lebanon, Clarke gleaned from conversations with lawyers and orphanage staff that ‘fostering arrangements often shade into adoption in fuller senses’ (2008: 164). Sonbol (1995) provides a historical overview of adoption in Islamic societies.

inheritance, authority and incest-prohibitions. Bargach argues against a ‘legally oriented Eurocentric definition of adoption’ which ‘denies, in general, the Muslim world its share and contribution to this phenomenon because of a religious prohibition’ (2002: 7). Pointing out that the absence of the *legal* category of adoption does not preclude the practice of *culturally* sanctioned forms (ibid. 27), she describes three forms of social parenting in Morocco: *kafāla* (informal or legal guardianship),<sup>15</sup> *trebbī* (family or customary adoption), which is not formalised and looks from the outside something like ‘an interminable visit’, and extralegal, secret adoption (*tabannī*), where parents pass off as their own the biological child of another (ibid. 27-9).

A central concern in the literature on adoption and fosterage is whether it fills a need in the foster-family, what Barraud (2011: 9) calls ‘*kafāla* utilitaire’—for instance, by providing an heir (Waltner 1990),<sup>16</sup>—or is for the benefit of the child, often orphaned or poverty-stricken (Goody, J. 1969: 57-8, 65, Etienne, M. 1979: 79). Fosterage seems most likely to occur where the child, the birth-family *and* the fostering family benefit, but where mutual gain is not automatic, labour is a way of settling the balance. This is the case when the fictional Anne of Green Gables was nearly adopted by Mrs Blewett: ‘I’ll expect you to earn your keep, and no mistake about that’ (Montgomery, L. M. [1908] 1994: 55).<sup>17</sup> It is also the case for ‘schooling fosterage’ (Goody, E. 1982). Fostered schoolchildren among the Baatombu (Benin), for example, are expected to make themselves useful to their host-families by performing housework

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<sup>15</sup> *Kafāla* which involves guardianship without filiation was legalised in Morocco in 1993. The term is applied across the Arab states to a wide variety of arrangements, including, in the Gulf, a means of controlling foreigners (Dresch 2005, *Migration News* 2012, Khan 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Waltner is writing on late Imperial China. Generally little is said anywhere of the adoption of females, which must obey a different logic as far as property transfer is concerned.

<sup>17</sup> Mrs Blewett’s expectations of Anne had a precedent further south; the Indianan poet Whitcomb described this role in 1885: ‘Little Orphant Annie’s come to our house to stay, / An’ wash the cups an’ saucers up, an’ brush the crumbs away, / An’ shoo the chickens off the porch, an’ dust the hearth an’ sweep, / An’ make the fire, an’ bake the bread, an’ earn her board and keep, / ...’ (Turner 1969: 19).

(Alber 2010). Historically Baatombu fosterage was reciprocal but it is rare today for a rural family to foster urban children. Both sides now feel disadvantaged: ‘The urbanites complain about the burden of accommodating foster-children and villagers fear their children’s exposure to exploitation’ (ibid. 74).<sup>18</sup>

The balance of charity and gain was invoked by the Moroccan Sultan in 1883 when he brought to order a *qā'id* (rural headman) who had taken in the daughter of a free man during a famine and effectively enslaved her to his household. In response to the father’s plea the Sultan ordered the *qā'id* to return the girl: ‘One does not appropriate free people for one’s personal use. Even if you did acquire her during a famine, and fed her for the love of God,<sup>19</sup> do not render useless your good work’ (cited Ennaji 1999: 87). Ennaji explains that during nineteenth-century famines it was common for a child to be ‘given away for a bit of bread, or “confided to the care” of a third party, while waiting for better times to come’ (ibid. 80). Only those with extended families managed to protect themselves against hard times, and marginals had no option but to seek protection with patrons (ibid. 88).<sup>20</sup>

A number of characteristics of Moroccan society sustain the incorporation of dependents into the domestic labour-force of wealthier households. Not least, social parenting is practiced widely among relatives; girls in particular are frequently fostered by uterine kin (Davis, S. 1983: 164-5, Maher 1974: 132),<sup>21</sup> and I met several women in the countryside and in a *sha'bi* urban context, who were bringing up their granddaughters or nieces for indefinite periods of time. When I asked the reason, people

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Apt (2005) on the link between fosterage and domestic work in Ghana.

<sup>19</sup> An echo of *Qur'an* 2:177: ‘... it is righteousness ... to spend of your substance, *'alā ḥubbihi* (out of love for him), for your kin, for orphans, for the needy ...’

<sup>20</sup> Shah, S. (2000) records a similar pattern of ‘fosterage’ in contemporary Nepal: marginal households place children to work in the home of a patron as surety or interest on a loan.

<sup>21</sup> See Channa (1996: 21-35) on a Moroccan child who was ‘given’ to her aunt.

sometimes referred to previous arrangements which were now being reciprocated. Rachida's explanation of why she was looking after her niece, Amal, is typical: 'Amal's mother, my sister, brought up our little sister anyway, and I was brought up by Dār Sebbari, and I brought up the daughter of my brother, and my other sister's daughter stayed with me for 6 months, and another one for 4 months ...' Hardly anyone in Rachida's family had spent all of their childhood with their biological parents. There was a sense in which women within this kin-group took turns in bringing up the group's children. In a rural community one reason given was that the child had 'got used to being with us. When her mother took her away to sleep with her she didn't like it and cried, so now she stays with us and we bring her up.' There was no criticism of the child's biological mother in this statement. It was just that the child preferred staying at her grandmother's.

It is only a step further from these arrangements between close family members to send a child to more distant kin. Tahara, whom I met in Salé, was brought up in l'Océan by the sister of her paternal aunt's son, who had had several miscarriages. She explained: 'It was poverty that let my mother [give me away].' Tahara called her foster-mother '*māmā lī rbbātī*' (mother who brought me up), or just *māmā*, as opposed to '*māmā f l-blād*' (mother in the countryside), her biological mother. Tahara was strongly attached to the family who brought her up but disagreed with the practice in general. When a relative had asked her to give away one of her own girls, she had refused: 'A mother has to bring up [her child]. Yes, a mother has to give birth, but a mother also has to bring up.' Tahara maintained that she herself was not fostered to help with housework. But she did not go to school, and when she was twelve she began to take responsibility for things in the house:

It came from me. And I see the same thing in my daughter. [Tahara pointed towards her eldest pre-teen daughter]. If I'm out, I come home and find she has gathered her sisters and put food on the table and shut the door of the house. How does she do it? She feels responsible, as I did.

Later in life Tahara cut short her time working as a domestic in a Bahraini palace (organised through Mehdi's agency in l'Océan, of which more in Chapter 4) in order to stay at home and care for her ailing foster-mother so that the biological son and daughter (born after Tahara was fostered) could pursue their careers.<sup>22</sup>

The link between fosterage and domestic work is well documented in literature on Morocco. Maher argues that, although there are many motivations for fosterage (death, divorce, sterility, maintenance of kinship bonds, schooling), it occurs most often in the interest of the adults involved (1974: 133). Not without exaggeration, I suspect, she states that, 'foster-children are essentially servants' (ibid. 136). A quarter of the households in her small-town sample contained foster-children, 'generally maids-of-all-work', many of them kin of their foster parents (ibid. 71). Significantly, fostering enabled childless couples to enact norms of status and seclusion as the wife could 'send her small minion on missions to the outside world' (ibid. 133). She might also equip the child to deal with the world and thus discharge a carer's duty.

The institution of *muta' llima* (lit. learner, pl. *muta' llimāt*), noted by Davis in her Moroccan village-study, closely resembles fosterage:

Often their families live in the country and can barely support all the children, and so are relieved to send one off to a wealthier branch of the family. Neither she, nor her family, receives any remuneration, but she is fed and clothed *like a member of the family* ... Girls from 7 to 8 years old may work as *mta' llimat*; until they are married (1983: 78, emphasis mine).

<sup>22</sup> Hatem's (1999) discussion of the life of Aisha Taymur, a nineteenth-century Egyptian literary figure and activist (b. 1840) provides a historical parallel. Taymur recorded that when she transferred her domestic responsibilities to her twelve-year-old daughter, Tawhida, who 'managed the household, including all of the servants and dependents', she 'was able to find areas [*zwayya*] of relaxation' (cited in Hatem 1999: 202). Elsewhere Hatem argues that the fluid boundaries among Egyptian women allowed them to 'make use of group resources and supports provided by other women' (1987: 300).

By putting the stress on the girl's role as a learner—a kind of domestic apprenticeship—the shame of working for another household could be muted. This also relieves employers of the responsibility to pay a wage.<sup>23</sup> Salahdine documents how during the 1980s a Moroccan woman who was 'training' a 13-year-old apprentice stated that she *paid* her nothing but *gave* her parents 200 or 300dh when they visited three or four times a year. She stressed that this was not remuneration for housework performed by the girl, claiming that the burden of keeping her (the cost of her training, broken plates, food, clothing) outweighed the gain from any work she did: 'It's she who ought to pay me, not the other way round' (Salahdine 1988: 108).

As with apprenticeship, the re-classification of unequal relationships as 'fosterage' (*trebbī*) reduced the implication of shame. In her Algerian study Jansen found that those *Women Without Men* who had to work, had preferred to serve Algerians rather than the French so the relationship could be seen as fosterage and was therefore less dishonourable (1987: 204). While the girl's status as a daughter saved her from the stigma of working as a servant, 'she had no right to any pay' (ibid.). As a daughter the girl could expect her foster-family to arrange her marriage and provide her with a dowry but expectations often diverged, the employer seeing 'her maintenance through the years as sufficient pay for her services, and the arranging of the marriage as an extra' (ibid.). Where families did arrange and finance the marriage of their foster-daughters, they were 'quick to point this out to others in order to get full credit' (ibid. 205).<sup>24</sup>

Goichon points to similar arrangements in Fès during the 1920s. As the use of domestic slaves declined, the bourgeoisie sought orphans or poor children as '*petites*

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<sup>23</sup> For working children in Cairo, Farag observes that 'frequently, their work is not conceived as labor at all, but disguised as some form of apprenticeship or training' (1995: 239).

<sup>24</sup> To avoid long-term responsibility for a foster-daughter, 'it was sometimes easier to pay them a small wage and send them away when they reached puberty' (Jansen 1987: 205).

*bonnes, muta llemāt* (Goichon 1929: 43).<sup>25</sup> Most families treated these children somewhat like the children of the house, occupying them ‘according to their capabilities, to wash the *zellj*,<sup>26</sup> a bit of laundry, to help in the kitchen, bring the table and the dishes for meals’ (ibid. 44). They were allowed to play with the other children: ‘even though the latter were not completely fraternal with them’ (ibid.). The longer a domestic stayed, the more she was treated as a member of the family, but always with ‘a nuance of inferiority’ (ibid. 48). The role of the *maîtresse* vis-à-vis her *bonne* extended beyond the latter’s marriage and departure from the household—she was maternal but not intimate: ‘the mistress goes to see them, and might even stay one or two nights with them if her husband permits—but this proof of intimacy is rarely given. She gives them presents from time to time’ (ibid. 47). Not all girls were treated as ‘one of the family’; Goichon found some overworked, beaten and covered in burn marks.<sup>27</sup> A sick domestic, unlike the slave whom she had replaced, could be dismissed at no loss, and another procured at no cost (ibid. 45).

During my fieldwork I came across many domestic workers who were, or had in the past been, ‘brought up’ by the households they served until they were married. At Dār Sebbari in l’Océan I got to know several such ‘daughters of the house’ who had been raised by *Mui* Latifa. Though they lived elsewhere, their on-going membership of the familial group required continual work from both sides—work in the sense of housework as well as the symbolic work of acting as family. They were certainly not slaves, but neither could one call them free.

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<sup>25</sup> Bargach argues that ‘adoption’ replaces indentured service in Morocco: ‘Given the difficulty of finding domestic workers ... a number of people have resorted to “adopting” older girls from orphanages in order to employ them as maids’ (2002: 98). See also Barraud (2011: 11).

<sup>26</sup> Tilework made from enamelled terracotta.

<sup>27</sup> If gold jewellery is the essential trope of the Moroccan rags-to-riches tale of a foster-girl being accepted as ‘one of the family’, burn marks are the *sine qua non* of abuse narratives. Stories of girls whose treatment falls between these poles tend to go untold, reinforcing ‘the almost mythic quality that the character of the maid is acquiring in Moroccan female society’ (Kapchan 1996: 223).

## MILK TEETH AND PHOTOGRAPHS: *MUI* LATIFA'S 'DAUGHTERS'

'Do you know how many *bnāt* (girls, daughters)<sup>28</sup> I've brought up (*rbbīt*) and married off?' boasted *Mui* Latifa, holding up ten fingers. 'They came to me very young. They lost their milk teeth with me!' This was my introduction to Khadija who had come with her three-year-old son to visit. It was the first time I had met one of the 'daughters she brought up', as opposed to *Mui* Latifa's biological daughters. Khadija, originally from Ouazzane, was brought to Dār Sebbari aged seven by her father who wanted to remove her from family disputes which were raging at the time. She saw her own family once a year but claims she did not miss home because the Sebbari house was always so full of people. That Khadija stayed at Dār Sebbari until she was married was in accordance with custom,<sup>29</sup> except that she married late: 'I stayed (*gālsa*) with them thirty-three years'.

The word *gālsa* (remaining, sitting) conceals a large contribution to the work of the house: cleaning, errands, cooking, and laundry. But *Mui* Latifa insists that Khadija is not a *kheddāma* (a servant, a paid worker): 'Khadija is *bintī* (my daughter). Haven't you seen the photo of her son on the chest-of-drawers?' Indeed, the little boy who sat next to Khadija on the settee also smiled, sailor-suited, from a golden picture frame next to the television. Proof of an authentic line of descent. I noticed too that Khadija had the same mannerisms as *Mui* Latifa's own daughters, particularly the way she tightened then loosened the muscles around her mouth at the end of a sentence, and patted my arm for emphasis as she talked. The words of one of *Mui* Latifa's biological daughters to her then domestic worker came to mind: 'I'll knead you like dough in my hands.' *Mui*

<sup>28</sup> Moroccan Arabic, like French, uses one word for both girl and daughter (*bint*, pl. *bnāt*).

<sup>29</sup> On guardians marrying off those in their care see Maher (1974: 134). This is not restricted to Morocco. Jacquemin notes that domestics recruited as '*petites nièces*' in Côte d'Ivoire are given a trousseau (2002: 310).

Latifa had shaped Khadija to the form of her own daughters. Only her darker skin<sup>30</sup> and curlier hair suggested she was not a blood relation.

*Mui* Latifa was *ma'rūfa* (known) for taking girls in; everyone talked about it. But what I did not discover for many months was that she sent one of her own daughters, Jihane, to be brought up in her uncle's household, where she stayed until she completed her studies. Jihane showed me photographs of herself with *bnāt 'ammhā* (her paternal cousins, f.), wearing short dresses in front of fountains and monuments in Paris, at Versailles. These people clearly had money to travel and were of a different class from their cousins in l'Océan. Jihane, now in her sixties, never married. Did being brought up between two worlds have something to do with this? Potential suitors of her own class might have seemed unpromising in comparison with the kind of men her cousins were destined to marry but, like Austen's Fanny Price, Jihane was probably not considered her cousins' equal in status, style or accomplishments.<sup>31</sup>

Jihane had moved back to her mother's house in l'Océan and begun work as a secretary in a government ministry by the time Rachida joined Khadija as a domestic there. 'Jihane didn't know how to do anything in the house except shout instructions', Rachida remembered. 'She wasn't brought up that way. Her cousins are *shīkī* ('posh', from Fr. *chic*). At *Mui* Latifa's they are much more *sha'bī*.' One of Jihane's photos showed a manservant pouring the tea. His job was also to guard the family's villa in the upper-class Souissi quarter. Because the servants did everything at her cousins' house,

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<sup>30</sup> Moroccan ideals of beauty show a preference for fairer skin because darker skin is seen as a marker of someone forced to spend time working in the sun, or of slave origins. On the disproportionate amount of earnings working-class Moroccan women spent on skincare products and sunscreen see Cheikh (2011a: 177-8).

<sup>31</sup> Fanny Price's uncle was concerned she should know her place: "There will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris," observed Sir Thomas, "as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up: how to preserve in the minds of my *daughters* the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*" (Austen [1814] 2003: 12).

Jihane never learnt to cook or clean. *Mui* Latifa's household, by comparison, had no manservant, just little girls like Khadija and Rachida, and Jihane's sisters who remained in l'Océan were taught housework alongside the domestics, as is common in *sha bī* households. 'We had a woman who did the housework but my father told me to help so that I would learn from her', said one l'Océan resident. Another related how the domestic worker would say to her, 'Do you want to go out? ... Then go and clean the downstairs.' She acknowledged: 'I benefited from it. If it hadn't been for her, I wouldn't know how to do anything.'

Jihane alone was fostered 'out' from Dār Sebbari, but Khadija was one of many who was fostered 'in'. One evening I dropped in at *Mui* Latifa's when three of her '*bnāt*' (daughters) had gathered there for evening coffee: Khadija, Hinde and Rachida. 'We were *Mui* Latifa's '*équipe* (team)', joked Hinde. 'Rachida brought me up. She used to smack me!' she added with a swipe of the tea-towel in Rachida's direction, revealing their difference in age and the hierarchical relationships that had maintained order in the kitchen. In contrast to *Mui* Latifa's biological daughters, who attended school, these girls were educated at home: 'I taught them to cook well and to make *helwa* (sweets),' Latifa explained with pride. These were skills that prepared them for their current occupations: Khadija cooks in a '*snack*' (small café), Hinde sells her homemade *helwa*, and Rachida takes jobs, off and on, as a domestic worker. Even in their absence, the traces left by these women at Dār Sebbari show the extent to which they remain associated with their former role. *Mui* Latifa would make off-hand remarks like: 'There's the carpet that Khadija washed when she was here yesterday', or 'taste these *helwa* which Hinde came to make for me ...'. And when I was invited to *Mui* Latifa's to share Friday couscous, it was often Rachida I found in the kitchen: 'They are crazy

about my cooking. They've got used to it. The other day I made them *trīd*<sup>32</sup> and they ate it all, and their hands too!

Rachida came to Dār Sebbari from Azilal in 1975. She was aged eight and had already lost her milk teeth, she is sure of it. The *qā'id* in her region of the countryside was from Bani Mellal, where one of *Mui* Latifa's own daughters was living at the time, and it was through him that the arrangement was made. Rachida stayed until she was married to a carpenter who came often to fix *Mui* Latifa's shelves and cupboards and whose mother worked as the domestic of a Moroccan ambassador. Rachida, a domestic, married the son of a domestic. There was no sense that being brought up in Dār Sebbari gave Rachida access to people of the Sebbaris' class who were educated for white-collar, albeit relatively low-ranking, jobs.<sup>33</sup> Her fosterage did, however, probably mean the difference between marrying in the city or in the countryside.

One afternoon Rachida's mother-in-law, *Mui* Fatiha, showed me her photo-albums. The pictures had captured the mixing of two classes at shared rites of passage throughout her forty years of service. Along with photos of *Mui* Fatiha ironing or standing next to a long table covered in silver dishes<sup>34</sup> there were passport-photos of the ambassador's sons at various ages. 'Can I have one too?' she must have asked every

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<sup>32</sup> *Trīd* is a labour of love, a time-consuming dish which involves first making many wafer-thin pancakes then tearing them into tiny pieces over which a spiced lentil and chicken stew is poured.

<sup>33</sup> There are exceptions. Najat, another 'daughter' brought up by *Mui* Latifa was married to the son of Nadia's husband's mother's sister, the son of a wealthy man. This fact is brought up as a trump-card by supporters of the house like Rachida whenever the question of whether Dār Sebbari fostered in a utilitarian or a charitable way came up in conversations between current and former workers. Those, like Huriya, who considered such relationships exploitative, suggested that the triumph of Najat's social climb was undermined by the fact that her husband is now considered *ḥamāq* (mentally ill). The debate pursues the question of whether the Sebbaris saw signs of this when they married Najat to him twenty years ago, which seems unlikely.

<sup>34</sup> Light's (2007) book on the servants who worked for Virginia Woolf and others in the Bloomsbury group discusses the importance of similar photos of the servants: 'After George Duckworth died in 1934, Lady Margaret gave Sophie some photographs from the family holidays in Cornwall in the 1880s, nearly fifty years before. Typically, Sophie sent them to Virginia. ... Like others trained in self-sacrifice she felt more comfortable giving away what she had. "I can always see myself in the glass," she wrote. It was more important to be reflected in Virginia's life' (Light 2007: 73).

time they came back from photographers. There was a photo of *Mui* Fatiha next to a boy riding a bicycle down a European street, another with her arms round the shoulders of well-dressed adolescents in a Moroccan embassy somewhere. In another the wife of the ambassador was smiling while the grandson of her domestic (Rachida's son) blew out the candles on his birthday cake. Rachida's daughter was later named after this lady, memorialising the intersection of the two families' trajectories. *Mui* Fatiha also showed me photos from Rachida's wedding. It clearly took place in *Mui* Latifa's house—the one in the *medīna*, before they moved to l'Océan, but surprisingly *Mui* Latifa only appeared in the corner of one or two pictures, seen from behind, or with half her face cut out of the frame.<sup>35</sup>

The photographs raised the question, who *is* Rachida's mother? Her biological mother, still living in the *blād*, who must have been present at the decisive moment when Rachida lost her milk teeth? Or *Mui* Latifa, who 'brought her up'? Or *Mui* Fatiha, her mother-in-law, with whom she and her children live today, although her husband, the carpenter, lives elsewhere with a second wife? How are these mother-daughter relationships constructed, cut off or continued? Just as *Mui* Latifa's photo of Khadija's sailor-suited son served to include him in her genealogy, the photos in *Mui* Fatiha's album framed Rachida with her in-laws leaving *Mui* Latifa, a rival mother, out. Contrary to the story told by her mother-in-law's album, Rachida has not cut *Mui* Latifa off, but works hard to maintain the relationship with her, as well as with her other two

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<sup>35</sup> It was only later that I was shown Jihane's photographs which told the other side of the story. Of the photos from Rachida's wedding Jihane had kept those that showed *Mui* Latifa, herself and the other biological Sebbari daughters alongside the bride. The photos in *Mui* Fatiha's album, which featured the groom's side of the family and in which *Mui* Latifa was cut out of the picture, were simply the ones the Sebbaris did not want. A few of Jihane's photographs showed young girls with darker skin pictured with her sisters. Each time I asked who these girls were, Jihane, would reply, 'a girl who was staying (*gālsa*) with us.' She did not recall their names.

‘mothers’.<sup>36</sup> Women like Rachida contrasted, however, with a newer kind of worker for whom Dār Sebbari represents only a short stage in their career.

When her husband took a second wife, Rachida went to work as a domestic for various employers, many of whom were foreigners who came and went. Whenever *Mui* Latifa heard Rachida was *gālsa* (‘sitting’, implied, at home) without work she called her to come and help at Dār Sebbari: ‘I can’t say no, she’s like my mother’, Rachida explained. Rachida often fulfilled the function of managing and assisting the work of the current paid domestic in *Mui* Latifa’s or Nadia’s apartments, thus saving the family from having to oversee the work.<sup>37</sup> Two other daughters of Latifa, and a now grown-up granddaughter whom Rachida had nursed as a child, would also call her for help with *l-‘awāshīr* (thorough cleaning before feast-days). On these occasions Rachida’s identification with the house comes across clearly in contrast to the paid domestic’s attitude, as illustrated by her criticisms of Mina’s cleaning while doing *l-‘awāshīr* at Nadia’s:

Mina: ‘It’s so dusty!’

Rachida: ‘You’re the one who is here all the time.’

Mina: ‘Well, dust comes every day.’

Rachida: ‘That’s not daily dust, that’s the dust of a year.’

Again, *Mui* Latifa asked Mina to help her current paid worker, Jamila, to roll up a carpet that had been cleaned and left to dry. The carpet was still damp and Mina pointed this

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<sup>36</sup> Not all fostered girls maintained a relationship with their birth families, particularly in the case of a deceased birth-mother. Wafa, for example, was brought up in the house of *Mui* Latifa’s sister in the *medīna*, primarily at the hand of her daughter whom Wafa called ‘*Māmā*’. The daughter’s son Wafa called ‘*khūyā* (my brother)’ and her mother, Latifa’s sister, ‘*jiddatī*’ (my grandmother). She told me: ‘Anyone who stays with people for a while will become one of the family’. I pointed out that several women had stayed at Dār Sebbari for many years without calling anyone ‘*Māmā*’ although they might describe *Mui* Latifa as ‘like *Māmā*’. ‘Well, it’s because I don’t go anywhere else’, Wafa responded. She had been with the family twenty years and not returned to the *blād*. The fosterage was formalised through *kafāla* but Wafa clearly had a lower status than her hosts.

<sup>37</sup> In wealthy Victorian households a large staff allowed some servants to perform this protective function whilst ‘those who were closest to defiling and arduous activities were, whenever possible, to be kept out of sight. In great houses their very existence was denied’ (Davidoff 1995: 26).

out but Jamila's response was: 'That's her problem, not our problem.' They rolled up the damp carpet. I remember thinking, had Rachida been present she would not have allowed this; for Rachida, *Mui* Latifa's problems were her own.

The fluidity of boundaries between Rachida and the Sebbaris throughout her childhood and adolescence made her willing even twenty years on to undertake free labour for them:<sup>38</sup> 'When I work there, I feel as though I'm in *dārī* (my house) ... There are no other families like them, who let you go wherever you want in the house, who get you to eat at the table with them. They never made any difference between us.' Rachida was not, however, ignorant of the difference between herself and Latifa's biological daughters. When *Mui* Latifa was seriously ill for a while, Rachida went to visit her and relayed to me what Latifa said: that *l-bnāt lī rbbāthum* (the girls she brought up) are very dear to her; that first are her brothers and sisters, second her own children, then come the girls whom she brought up; that she had asked *l-bnāt diyālhā* (her own daughters) to take care of *l-bnāt lī rbbāthum* after she is gone. Rachida was delighted: 'So it's us who come third in all the world for her!' She congratulated herself on being included in the group of loved ones whom *Mui* Latifa had delimited, rather than dwelling on other boundaries which excluded her from the inner circles of the Sebbari family. A daughter 'brought up' by *kafāla*, informally or formally, does not legally inherit. But *Mui* Latifa hinted that her biological daughters will inherit her role of 'patron' to Rachida as a 'client' and the responsibilities that come with that.<sup>39</sup> This

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph argues for the existence in Arab societies of a specifically *patriarchal* connectivity in which the production of selves is organised to 'privilege the initiative of males and elders in directing the lives of others ...' (1999: 12-3). The literature is less vocal about matriarchy which tends to be obscured under the rubric of kinship in which interest in the mother-in-law – daughter-in-law relationship eclipses mother – daughter relationships. More generally for the Middle East we have literature on kinship and gender but less on households, perhaps because fieldwork is largely done by young people without long term constraints (Dresch 2000: 125).

<sup>39</sup> Whilst Rachida's contribution to the housework for Dār Sebbari is unpaid, she sometimes asks, for example, for help paying medical expenses.

configuration of concentric boundary lines around the family meant Rachida played the role of daughter towards *Mui* Latifa in the sense that she could not say ‘no’ to her demands for labour, but not in the sense that she will receive an inheritance equivalent to that of *Mui* Latifa’s biological daughters. The boundary line between ‘family’ and ‘non-family’ is therefore a floating one. It can include a domestic worker as a ‘*bint d-dār*’ (daughter of the house) for certain functions and exclude her for others.

### ‘I’M NOT THEIR DAUGHTER’

Dār Sebbari illustrated for me the legacy of fosterage for domestic work, the traces of the past in the present, but most of the time when employers said of their current domestic workers, ‘this is my daughter’, it was code for ‘we take care of her’:

We don’t make a difference between her and us. We are *kīf kīf* (the same). If something hurts me, it hurts her; if it hurts her, it hurts me. This is my daughter.

Hafida: ‘So you’ve just got two daughters?’

Hayat: ‘I’ve got three daughters! One very old, (pointing to her domestic worker) and the others very young. There’s a big gap between them!’

Hafida: ‘*Allāh ykhlīhum lik* (God keep them for you). God keep them for you, the three of them.’

Touria: ‘It’s hard for me to say *kheddāma*. She was my daughter. Hiba was very beautiful. When we went out or if she went to the market I would tell Hiba to comb her hair and put on nice clothes. She looked lovely.’ She narrated how they had taken Hiba to hospital to have her eye treated and on their way home a neighbour saw them and said, ‘Hey, hey, it looks like you’re the *kheddāma* and Hiba is the *mulat d-dār*.’ Touria had replied, ‘Good. I’m glad you think that. It means there’s no difference between me and her. She’s my daughter. I don’t want her to look like a *kheddāma*.’<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Other employers joked about such role reversals: ‘This one (pointing to her mother), had a worker and the worker would just sit there and she would serve the worker!’

The use of the term ‘daughter’ in these examples did not signify fosterage to anything like the extent that was common practice when Goichon was writing in the 1920s or even when Rachida was brought up in the 1970s. Significantly, most workers did not call the *mulat d-dār* (lady of the house) ‘*māmā*’, although *khāltī* (‘aunty’) was possible. It was simply the conventional *sha bī* way of talking about one’s domestic. Although some workers rejected employers’ attempts to affiliate them, others resented the way employers paid lip-service to this model, using the vocabulary of a mother-daughter relationship without acting that way. To quote Safae: ‘What upsets me the most is that they say, “you are like our daughter!” and that is not so. They say, “you are like [name of daughter] and [name of daughter]”, but I am not.’ Similarly, the neighbour who had got me to help her make and eat pancakes, both on the grounds of my being her ‘daughter’, argued:

There are few that treat them like daughters. It’s just from their mouths [i.e. it’s just words]. If she is their daughter they have to give her money for the *ḥammām* (public bathhouse) and take her out once a week and dress her and give her presents at *īd*. Their daughter goes to school and comes home and puts her things down and the *kheddāma* has to pick those things up and give her food and wash her clothes. She is not the same as a daughter. People who say that are *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites). They say one thing and do another thing. And a worker who says [of her employers], ‘these are like my parents, I treat them like my mother and father’, she is only saying this so she can cheat them and steal from them.

For the worker, indeed, the question is not always, ‘how to be included in the family?’ but sometimes, ‘how to distance myself?’ Writing about domestic workers in Britain, Todd argues that in view of servants’ readiness to leave their positions when other economic sectors were expanding in the first half of the twentieth century, servants’ relationships with their employers were characterised by ‘detachment’. This, she suggests, is a more useful concept for social historians than deciding between ‘deference’ or ‘defiance’, which had been a preoccupation of academic writers between

the 1960s and 1980s (Todd 2009: 183). Without using the term ‘detachment’, Steedman argues for a similar attitude in (fictional and nonfictional) servants in late eighteenth-century Yorkshire. Their ‘disaligned, disconnected stoicism’ (2007: 213) in the face of employers’ idiosyncrasies showed that: ‘They are not mothers, daughters, sisters, wives but domestic servants, hired hands ...’ (ibid.), who worked primarily to put aside some savings. In a discussion of Emily Brontë’s (1847) *Wuthering Heights* Steedman contrasts the figure of Joseph, ‘a very old servant, and a very old servant-type’, who has lived and worked 60 years at the Heights, with that of younger Nelly Dean, who, despite being brought up as a kind of foster-sister in the Earnshaw household, ‘is the modern type, flitting over the hills from one hiring to another, calculating her wages with a very nice reckoning of what she will and will not do, and when and whom she’ll love’ (Steedman 2007: 215). This kind of detachment rings true for many domestics in Morocco, and contradicts Borrmans’ rose-tinted vision of domestics in Algeria in the 1950s: ‘the Muslim woman, traditionally family orientated, has just one wish, to be allowed to take part in the family life of her employers’ (Borrmans 1955, cited Brac de la Perrière 1987: 123).

Just as the servant-types of Joseph and Nelly overlapped at the *Heights*, two modes of serving were evidenced under the same roof at Dār Sebbari. One floor above *Mui* Latifa’s apartment lives her daughter Nadia, a clerk in one of the government ministries and mother of three adult children. Far from enjoying thirty-three years of service as her mother had, it is difficult for Nadia to get a domestic to stay more than three months. When I first moved into the building I met Malika (21 years old) who was introduced to me as ‘the friend’ of Nadia’s 18-year-old daughter, Zahra. Malika, who grew up outside Fès in a squatter settlement slowly being rebuilt as official housing, left Nadia’s after six weeks. She complained that they wanted her to be ‘like a daughter’:

‘There should be *hudūd* (boundaries) between the employers and the *kheddāma*, but they have taken away all the boundaries.’<sup>41</sup> Her words made me think of what Zahra had said about a former domestic: ‘Hanane was my sister. We were the same age. We slept in the same bed and she would hold me in her arms.’ This embrace would have horrified Malika: ‘I’m *not* their daughter’, she told me, ‘I work in their house and that is all.’<sup>42</sup> In contrast to Hanane, Malika did not like it when Nadia greeted her with a kiss, did not want to listen to Zahra talk about boyfriends (‘I don’t give her the chance!’), nor take photos of Zahra in numerous outfits, which she demanded at 11 o’clock at night. Nor sleep in the same room.

The smallness of Nadia’s apartment—comprising one salon and two bedrooms (one for the parents, the other for the two sons)—meant that Zahra and Malika spent the night in a small spare-room in *Hajja* Jamila’s apartment, the neighbour on the same floor who had shared the *bildī* house with the Sebbaris when they first moved to l’Océan. Malika repeatedly told me how other employers had given her the run of entire floors of their villas. It is therefore not surprising that she felt herself too much in proximity with Zahra. When in Fès, Malika sleeps with her five siblings in one room about the same size as this one, but sleeping in the company of others clearly sat ill with her idea of a workplace. Her strict code of dress and behaviour (Malika wears the *hijāb* and avoids contact with men) also presented challenges in this small apartment where

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<sup>41</sup> The problem of boundaries between workers and employers is a common complaint. For instance, Cheikh’s study of women sharing accommodation in Casablanca records a conversation between Atéka, a live-out domestic worker, and a potential employer whose probing questions: ‘What are you doing here? Why aren’t you with your family?’ provokes the comment: ‘but you know these people do not know their limits, they only stop once they’ve properly hurt you ...’ (Cheikh 2011a: 180).

<sup>42</sup> A Japanese domestic who left service for factory work described in the diary she published in 1912 a similar rejection of the daughter-role as she refused her employers’ offer of adoption (Nagata 2004: 224).

three unrelated men came and went and she did not have anywhere private to change her clothes.<sup>43</sup>

For Malika, being ‘their daughter’ signified being available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. She did not have fixed working-hours and had to say she was feeling ill in order to go to bed before Zahra. For her part, Zahra slept in each morning during the summer holiday period which coincided with Ramadan, but Malika had to get up to do the housework. ‘*Bint d-dār*’ to work at all hours but not ‘*bint d-dār*’ to rest during the morning in Ramadan, Malika did not have any days off: ‘The weekend is the worst because the bosses are there the whole day to pester me.’ Although the Moroccan ‘*code de travail*’ stipulates a maximum of 44 hours of work and at least a day of leave each week, it does not include domestics and the law specific to domestic workers, still in draft, does not stipulate working-hours. For the majority of domestic workers, therefore, the hours they are expected to work are revealed bit by bit on the job, and are subject to sudden modifications. Rouqia, for example, with whom I regularly spent Sunday afternoon, was often faced with the news that her day off was cut short. When an employer telephoned to tell her to come back and look after the children earlier than usual so she could go out herself Rouqia complained:

‘It’s my day off. She should give me space. *Kayfūtū ḥudūdhum* (they overstep their boundaries)’.

‘*Their boundaries?*’

‘Yes, it’s they who set the conditions because it’s their house and we live at theirs. *Mktūb* (it is written).’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In Shi’a Muslim households in Iran temporary marriage-contracts which made a *na-mahram* (someone whose kinship does not represent an impediment to marriage) into *mahram*, simplified the sharing of the household space with servants (Khatib-Chahidi 1981). Servants, both male and female, had temporary marriages contracted for them with relatives of the head of household, usually infant sons or daughters thus making the servant a son or daughter-in-law to the head of the household. They were then subject to the sexual and marital prohibitions of unconsummated marriages so that women did not have to veil. Historically, another solution (open only to the wealthiest) was confining women to a *ḥarīm* guarded by eunuchs.

<sup>44</sup> Rouqia was referring to divine predestination rather than to a written contract.

The question of limits and boundaries is particularly pertinent for those who work ‘*b l-embāta*’ (lit. with staying the night, i.e. live-in workers). Fatima explained: ‘No-one wants to work *b l-embāta*. They double your work. Like *Itiṣālāt!*<sup>45</sup> You never finish. It’s as though your entire person belongs to them ... ; you need *ḥudūd* (boundaries) to live your own life.’

Just as some workers prefer to live out so as to maintain boundaries around their personal lives, some employers prefer to employ a live-out domestic for the same reason. Usually they have had a bad experience with one or more workers. One employer spoke of a series of thefts and concluded: ‘I prefer to employ someone who comes and has her hours to work and then leaves rather than someone who is always there. Then everyone knows her boundaries. She won’t go through your stuff for example.’ Some women who employed live-in workers operated a policy of changing them often ‘otherwise they start to take advantage of you’. This approach is of course open to both sides.

## TEMPORARY DAUGHTERS

Nadia’s house was the tenth house in which Malika had worked in three years.<sup>46</sup> Malika was replaced at Nadia’s by Loubna who barely stayed a month. *Mui* Latifa, too, seemed to have lost her hold on people. In the twelve months I knew the family, I saw four

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<sup>45</sup> A reference to Maroc Telecom’s (*Itiṣālāt l-Maghrib*) promotion which doubles the value of prepaid telephone credit.

<sup>46</sup> On workers who moved frequently in early twentieth-century Britain, see Scadden (2013: 124). One Welsh worker claimed to have had 43 jobs in one year. On high turnover in England and France in the nineteenth century see McBride, T. (1976: ch 4) who links it to both upward and downward social mobility.

successive domestic workers come and go in her apartment. Malika explained, from the worker's side, this strategy of short-term work:

At the beginning, she [the employer] treats you well, she greets you, she says: 'Welcome, you will be our daughter.' For a while, she respects your working hours, allows you to rest. But after a month she tries to exploit you. Then you leave and you find another household.<sup>47</sup>

I retold Malika's story to Rouqia, who suggested that hers was an extreme case: 'It is *khayb* (bad, lit. ugly) like that. You really need to stay a bit longer in a household.'

Rouqia agreed nonetheless that the behaviour of employers often changed after a honeymoon period:

Yes, at the beginning they are very nice. 'Do you need anything?' ... But they soon cease to *yhssū bik* (be sensitive towards you, lit. feel for you). And when you live with someone there are always things you argue over. So you leave. It's also true that you get bored; you leave for a change of scene.

Discussing the high turn-over of workers at Dār Sebbari, Rachida commented: 'They want someone to stay always, just as we stayed. But they won't find anyone like that these days.' Rachida, Khadija, Hinde and others who had not only stayed a long time but, once married, had stayed in touch, served as points of reference for comparisons with current workers at Dār Sebbari. Salahdine observed Moroccans in the 1980s making the same comparison between contemporary domestic workers and *dadas*:

It used to be *dadas* respected us, they never dared to raise their eyes to us. We were everything for them, their parents, their family. Today everything has changed; not only are they no longer respectful and feel no attachment but at the slightest reproach, they leave you because they are sure they will end up finding another house and a higher salary (Salahdine 1988: 112-3).

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<sup>47</sup> Brac de la Perrière (1987: 103) records similar approaches in Algeria. See also Ali (2009) who cites Hayat, a 28-year-old divorcee who works as a domestic: 'I move frequently from one house to another ... Luckily there is plenty of work. When humiliation reaches its height, I disappear'.

Employers complained that the flightiness of ‘nomadic’<sup>48</sup> domestics is disruptive of family life (ibid. 113 fn.1). A middle-class Moroccan suggested a parallel with the divorce-rate which she believed to be increasing:

Half of my friends who married are now divorced. People have realised they have options now. Divorce is an option. People say, okay, I’ll divorce then ... Because all relationships require work. You have to work to maintain your relationships in the workplace, with your boss, with your family, with your maid even ... This high turnover, it didn’t used to be like that. I remember we had a driver who stayed with us ten years.

Rachida did not offer an explanation for why long-term workers like herself are not to be found these days, but in another conversation, ‘girls all want to go to school now’ was suggested as a reason, indicating that it was largely child-domestics who had stayed a long time in one household. Others maintain that this mobility is motivated by a new desire to ‘follow the money’.<sup>49</sup> A fairer assessment would be that workers will move jobs to better their overall conditions, a nexus which includes money but is usually not solely determined by it. According to domestics a good salary (*temen*) and good treatment (*mu‘āmela*) do not always go hand in hand. A third element is the volume of work (*temmāra*—hard, daily work). In making decisions about taking or leaving jobs some workers prioritised one of these three factors, others another. The difference between Malika and her younger sister Ikram illustrates the point. Malika reminisced:

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<sup>48</sup> Borrmans’ (1955) Algiers study opposes domestics who stay long-term: ‘*sédentaires*’, with ‘*nomades*’ who change jobs frequently (cited Brac de la Perrière 1987: 92).

<sup>49</sup> ‘Follow the money’ seems to be a newer form of the phrase ‘follow the bread’. Bread, an essential part of almost every meal in Morocco, stands symbolically for the bare minimum needed to survive. When patron-client relationships were no longer profitable for clients, they might say: ‘my bread has dried up here’. ‘Following the bread’ emphasises the necessity of working for a living; ‘following the money’, by contrast, implies greed. A remarkably similar discourse surrounds changes in employer-domestic relations in Kolkata as the loyal family retainers who served the same family for generations are replaced by part-timers who ‘follow the money’ (Ray and Qayum 2009).

I was thinking about the people with whom I spent Ramadan last year. They were nice. They treated me like a daughter—they only had sons. They took me on outings, bought me things ... Whenever we walked around the neighbourhood people who knew the sons asked them who I was and they replied that I was their sister. The people would say, ‘I didn’t know you had a sister’ and the sons would say, ‘well, now we do.’

Malika related how when a boy hassled her in the street, one of the sons defended her, shouting: ‘Don’t hassle my sister!’ The two boys fought and Malika ran inside to alert the mother who, on learning the reason for the fight said: ‘Good. Let them fight.’

Given that for Malika both the willingness of this son to defend her, and the mother’s approval of his action, were signs of the sincerity of family feeling towards her, I wanted to know why she left them. ‘The salary was low,’ she replied.<sup>50</sup> In this household Malika had not rejected the mother-daughter relationship, nor the brother-sister relationship, in the same way that she rejected it at Nadia’s, where she associated it with exploitation and a violation of her private life, her modesty even. She did not, however, (I imagine to the great disappointment of this daughter-less mother) see herself as a ‘daughter’ to the extent that she would stay with them when a position with a higher salary presented itself. Although they treated her well, *temen* (wage) took precedence over *mu’āmela* (treatment).

Malika’s younger sister, Ikram (18 years old) evaluated things differently. She too had worked in numerous households. On a single journey into the city she pointed out four houses where she had worked, naming the monthly wage like a price tag attached to each. After leaving Nadia’s sister in Casablanca, Ikram had gone to Assilah.

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<sup>50</sup> Ilham made the same evaluation in one of her jobs:

‘[My employers are] good.’  
 ‘So you don’t want to change your job?’  
 ‘Yes, I might change because of the *temen*. *T-temmāra mā kaynash, ū l-mu’āmela miziyāna, walakin t-temen qalīl* (there’s no hard work and the treatment is good, but the pay is low).’

Ilham was paid 1600dh a month.

The wage was low but Ikram was ‘*mertāḥa*’ (at ease, comfortable): ‘They were *mhallīyīn fiyā* (taking care of me). They would take me out with them ... She [the lady of the house] would have lunch with me.’ But Malika persuaded Ikram to leave this position and replace her in another Casablančan family, saying they would pay more.<sup>51</sup> Ikram told her employer that her mother was ill (‘God forgive me. But it’s true—she’s been ill for two years!’), and packed her bags. Concerned, the employer instructed her chauffeur to take Ikram all the way to the door of her house. They arrived in Fès at one o’clock in the morning and the chauffeur turned around to make the return journey: ‘I felt sorry for him’, said Ikram, who took the train to Casablanca the following morning.<sup>52</sup> The next Sunday I met up with Ikram, who deeply regretted her move: ‘They don’t have much *temmāra* (hard work), but there’s no *mu‘āmela* ([good] treatment) either. They don’t take care of me like the family in Assilah.’<sup>53</sup>

‘Taking care’ is specific to the *sha‘bī* context. This became clear in a conversation between Hafida, a worker from the Gharb, and Hayat, a high-ranking government employee living on the main avenue of *centre-ville*, about recommending Hafida’s younger sister to some friends who were looking for a worker. Hafida voiced the concern of her parents: ‘The main thing is that they are a good family, reasonable, who will *ythallāw fihā* (take care of her).’ ‘How?’ asked Hayat. ‘In what way would they take care of her?’ Hafida looked confused. This ‘*ythallāw fihā*’ was a formulaic

<sup>51</sup> It was common for older sisters to dictate to younger sisters where they should work, almost acting as a broker for them.

<sup>52</sup> An almost identical story, where an older sister persuades a younger sister to change jobs and the excuse of a mother’s illness is given, is told by a Welsh domestic in Scadden’s study of service in interwar Britain (2013: 122-3).

<sup>53</sup> *Hajja* Jamila’s family, as employers, posited a similar contrast between their own offer of lower wages coupled with parental care and a situation with high wages coupled with neglect. They told the story as follows: Jamila’s husband looked after the girl, buying biscuits for her the way he did for his own children. He would check if she was covered by a blanket at night so she wouldn’t catch cold. Once a year the girl’s father came up from near Marrakech and was given 300dh for every month. One time he asked for more. They said, ‘no, because she is fed, housed, clothed and looked after’. He took her to another house where she slept in the kitchen and her things hung in a plastic bag from a hook on the back of the kitchen door. The girl ran away from that house and came back to *Hajja* Jamila’s family.

way of eliciting a guarantee of reasonable treatment from employers—at the very least assurance that there will be no physical abuse, that the worker will receive food and be allowed to rest enough. But Hayat’s friends were not *sha’bī* employers and thus were not looking for a ‘daughter’ to take care of. The job in question was in Les Ambassades, a part of the city which is home to a similar class of employer to those whose security guards I had spoken with in Souissi and Bir Qasim. Hayat explained to Hafida that Aziza’s position would be more like working in a hotel than a family; there would be a hierarchical team of staff and the *mulat d-dār* (lady of the house) would not ‘interfere’, i.e. would have little contact with the worker herself.

## CONCLUSION

Most Moroccans, even *sha’bī* ones, do not behave as though domestics *really* are their daughters, for in the words of a worker’s sister: ‘It’s impossible. Think how they gave birth to their daughter and they brought her up all these years and they love her and then you come and they say you’ll be the same as her to them. You can’t be.’ Rather, what is noteworthy is that the pretence is so necessary. Because *sha’bī* Moroccans extend kinship to those with whom they interact (until recently these were almost always well-known neighbours), to *not* speak about a worker as a daughter leaves a silence which suggests mistreatment and inequality. Given the stories of abuse that make the news almost weekly,<sup>54</sup> everyone suspects everyone else of abuse anyway.

As we have seen, the boundary lines between ‘family’ and ‘worker’ are negotiated by both sides. Because relatedness is neither simply biological nor

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Zerrouk 2011, *Au fait* 2013.

permanent, inclusion as family requires constant work: we show photographs and tell stories about milk teeth to claim our maternity, we clean carpets and make couscous to keep our filiation up to date. As workers, meanwhile, we can invoke our identity as daughters in the sense of members of the household who have a right to 'care' (gifts, outings), and reject this identity when it comes to responsibilities (remaining 'faithful'), or exploitation (working without holiday), or when it no longer suits (leaving for a higher salary). As employers we can include workers as daughters to get them to pack our suitcase late into the night before we go on holiday, but exclude them from actually coming with us. What jars with both employers and workers is seeing that the two sides of this fictive filiation, helping to make the pancakes and helping to eat the pancakes, are not in fact inextricable but instead, like oil and vinegar, separate as soon as you stop stirring.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHARITY, REWARD, AND GRATITUDE

This chapter explores what happens when people stop being ‘family’—for instance when domestic workers leave or are dismissed, and discusses the effect of serial placements for ‘nomadic’ workers. First, however, we uncover the importance of charity (*khayr*), religious merit (*ajr*) and gratitude which, hand in hand with the ‘daughter’ rhetoric, obey a particular spatial and temporal logic. Geared to play out among neighbours (or at least among well-known clients) over the course of a lifetime, these ethics are disrupted by the easy-come-easy-go of the modern stranger-domestic. As convenient recipients of charity, domestic workers have been instrumental in defining the pious wealthy, and this is one of the points where an emerging market poses new problems.

#### ACTING GRATEFUL

The ‘untimely’ departure of a domestic worker contradicts the image of a daughter’s faithful dependency and is taken as a mark of ingratitude for the employer’s care. Hayat,

a high-ranking government employee, thus complained about her worker Zineb.

I took her to the dermatologist, but it's as though ... [she shrugged her shoulders]. Gratitude is everything. I'm someone who treats everyone well. I love people. You can't imagine what I would do for someone. I could give my eyes, on one condition: that people would give back to me—that they would be grateful.

Such comments, which sound like a mother complaining that her child's waywardness is a poor return for the labour she spent in child-bearing and rearing ('I did all this for you, and what do I get in return?'), place the working relationship squarely in the realm of the familial. Notions of giving and gaining are particularly ingrained when it comes to children. In Morocco children are called '*khayr min Allāh*, (goodness, a blessing, or gift from God), but are expected to 'do *khayr*' towards parents by taking care of them in their old age. With the out-migration of junior members from rural families, and the spread of paid work in towns, the terms of this 'intergenerational contract' seem to become more explicit. Affection and the warmth of proximity, with all the imbalance of autonomy those conceal, give way to calculation at a distance; investing in a child's socio-economic climb is to invest in one's own future.

The role of charity and gifts given by employers to domestic workers has been documented in the literature on domestic service world-wide,<sup>1</sup> and Katzman (1978: 153) introduced the term 'maternalism' to characterise the 'benevolent role which some employers assumed toward their servants.' Since Mauss's (1925) *Essai sur le don*, it has become commonplace in anthropology that gifts often do as much for the donor as the recipient: to give is to show one's superiority, particularly if the receiver cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Hill (1996: 136) argues that 'the training of children of the poor as servants was the main objective of much eighteenth century philanthropy'. See also Horn (2004: ch 5) on both charitable institutions and private endeavours which involved training poor girls as domestics and on the importance of the Poor Law and settlement for domestic service. The religious nature of these efforts is underlined (Horn 2004: 130).

reciprocate.<sup>2</sup> Domestics receiving unwanted gifts (often used items) from their employers are expected to show gratitude. A worker in Boston acknowledged: ‘I didn’t want most of that junk. But you have to take it. It’s part of the job, makes them feel like they’re being so kind to you. And you have to *appear* grateful. That makes them feel good too’ (Rollins 1985: 190). By pretending to welcome employers’ charity, the domestic plays the role expected of her, ‘someone who will accept others’ devalued goods’ (ibid. 193), a pretence which helps to create the powerful benevolent person of the employer.

Here, I follow Graeber (2006: 74) who observes that: ‘It is sometimes said that the central notion of modernism is that human beings are projects of self-creation ... We are indeed processes of creation, but most of the creation is normally carried out by others.’ Graeber illustrates his point with the example of mourning. He argues that ‘ancestors, martyrs, founders of institutions, can be far more important after their death than when they were alive,’ their political careers rarely ending in death (ibid. 74), and points to Bloch’s (1982) conception of mourning as creating dramatic contrasts between the transitory and the transcendental, thus creating the person of the deceased.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, the burden of this people-making falls on subordinates, particularly women. A Hindu widow renounces tasty food, and a Catholic woman in the rural Mediterranean wears black for much of her life, yet neither receives the same

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<sup>2</sup> Ueno (2010: 89) observed domestics in Singapore giving brand-new gifts to their employers—an attempt to reverse maternalism by outshining employers’ generosity. Ueno does not comment on how such gifts were received but their nature (a bed for the employer’s cat, T-shirts for family members, presumably children) indicates that workers were tactful to give indirectly, with gifts for employers’ loved ones rather than for the employers themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Bloch argues that through practices of self-negation, such as wearing sackcloth and ashes, cutting off one’s hair or self-mutilation, mourners dramatically embody a transitory sphere which effectively creates the idea of a contrasting transcendental sphere in which the dead are made to exist. Domestics in Morocco historically had their heads shaved (Mernissi 1982: 5, Bin Ashu 2013: 7). Cutting domestics’ hair is not unique to Morocco. Constable recounts how, in Hong Kong, an employer drove her new domestic from the airport directly to a barber for a man’s haircut (1997: 539). Ueno (2010: 86) describes how Indonesian domestics enter Singapore via training centres where their hair is cut short.

recognition on her own death. Graeber argues that, ‘symbolic distinctions between high and low do not come from some pre-existing “symbolic system”; they are continually constructed in action’, adding the nuance that ‘the work of doing so is done disproportionately by those who are effectively defining themselves as lower’ (Graeber 2006: 75).

So too with domestic service: the person of the employer is made by ‘lower’ others. Domestic service, like mourning, is a labour of people-making in which having someone *act* inferior, creates the illusion of the employer’s superiority. The argument that domestics help to create the person of the employer is not new. Rollins writes of the ‘self-enhancing satisfactions that emanate from having the presence of an inferior’ (1985: 156), and Anderson, following Hegel’s conception of the interdependency of master and slave, argues that ‘[the domestic’s] presence emphasises and reinforces her employer’s identity’ (2000: 19–20). Their focus, however, is on the commodification of the domestic’s *person* rather than her *performance*, and that performance I define as labour. To take an example from theatre itself, Sartre argues in his introduction to Genet’s play, *Les Bonnes*: ‘In the presence of the Masters, the truth of a domestic is to be a fake domestic and to mask the man he is under the guise of servility’ (1982: 20).

The domestic is not alone in this role-playing; it applies more generally to the category of ‘the poor’. Simmel points to the poor person as a ‘personality’ who performs a specific role, but he plays this role only ‘when society—the totality or particular individuals—reacts towards him with assistance ... The poor, as a sociological category, are not those who suffer specific deficiencies and deprivations, but those who receive assistance’ ([1908] 1965: 138).<sup>4</sup> Simmel’s poverty is, meanwhile, relative: ‘He is poor whose means are not sufficient to attain his ends’ ([1908] 1965: 136), and

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hénia (2003) on the poor outsider serving as a contrast to the rich insider in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tunis.

people's 'ends' differ according to what is considered necessary or normal in their social group. For domestic workers, who are 'poor' among the 'rich', the relativity of poverty takes on particular significance. Hayat's taking her domestic, Zineb, to the dermatologist is an example. Although Zineb's skin had always reacted strongly to the sun, giving her freckles, she had never seen this as a problem until she started working for Hayat. Zineb then became someone who could not afford to treat her own malady ('poor Zineb') and the recipient of financial support for medical treatment ('lucky Zineb'). Hayat, for her part, became the donor of charity ('Hayat does good works'). Zineb's apparent lack of gratitude left Hayat unaffirmed in her role as do-gooder.

Rather as in Eliza Haywood's (1743) classic *Present for a Servant-Maid*, a manual for conduct which boasted to be '*The Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem*'<sup>5</sup>, Latifa's gifts to Zineb sometimes came in the form of instruction for her betterment. Zineb was talking on the phone to her family in the *blād* while watching over a pot of steaming couscous on Latifa's terrace. From inside the kitchen, Hayat whispered, signalling with her hand, 'Speak quietly, Zineb. The neighbours!' Zineb looked up but carried on talking without lowering her voice. When she hung up Hayat said, 'Zineb, it's good to talk quietly so that other people can't hear you, or know what you are talking about.' Zineb said nothing. Hayat asked gently:

'You didn't like it when I made that observation?'

'No, no...' Zineb mumbled. 'Even if you tell me, I...' [She didn't finish but it was as though she was trying to say, 'It's not going to make me change my ways. That's just how I am; I speak loudly.']

Hayat said, half to me, half to Zineb:

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<sup>5</sup> Haywood's instruction was organised under the following headings: 'Observance. Avoiding sloth. Sluttishness. Staying on Errands. Telling Family Affairs. Secrets among Fellow-Servants. Entering into their Quarrels. Tale-Bearing. Being an Eye-Servant. Carelessness of Children. Of Fire, Candle, Thieves. New Acquaintance. Fortune-Tellers. Giving saucy Answers. Liquorishness. Apeing the Fashion. Dishonesty. The Market Penny. Delaying to give Change. Giving away Victuals. Bringing in Chair-Women ....'

It's good to be in accordance with your surroundings. In the countryside you speak loudly, everyone does. It's true, they speak loudly; it's their custom. I too speak loudly when I'm in the country. And the houses are big so if you want to talk to someone far away you need to shout. But in the city you speak quietly. Everyone is nearby.

Zineb still said nothing. The term workers used to describe this kind of intervention by employers was *qma* ' (to tame, curb, subdue). They generally acknowledged that although employers probably saw their input as kindness it makes workers feel inferior. The maternalism of employers coincides here with a broader civilising project in which differences between urban and rural Moroccans are accentuated as markers of progress in a consciously modernising nation. Thus, taking in an *'arūbīya* (country girl) involves transforming her into a *bnī ādam*, a human being (Moujoud and Pourette 2005: 1099). My former Marrakechi host-mother once related how a neighbour of hers, an older woman living alone, had a girl brought from the country to help her with housework. The neighbour treated the girl 'like her own daughter', took her to the hairdressers ('She didn't even know how to brush her hair!'),<sup>6</sup> bought her clothes and gold jewellery and eventually married her off. This 'civilising' narrative also contains the signifiers of parental care: gifts of gold and the arrangement of marriage.

Workers had to pretend to be receptive and grateful for this generosity, whether material or educational, on the part of employers, even if they were not. Only those who were unconcerned with preserving a working relationship overtly questioned the value of employers' gifts or the motivation behind their beneficence. Malika, who worked for Latifa's daughter in Dār Sebbari, thus recalled how one former employer brought back from France two bags of clothes, one for Malika and one for her co-worker, 'and the clothes still had the labels on them! Or she would give us nice things that just didn't fit

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<sup>6</sup> An emphasis on personal hygiene is typical of employers of domestic workers. Gill found that urban Bolivian women lectured their young Aymara maids on washing regularly (1994: 115).

her anymore. But mostly employers give you old things. They think we are poor and are happy to wear old clothes.’ When Malika left Dār Sebbari, Nadia begged her to stay: ‘so that I can give you one of my *jelālib* [plural of *jellāba*, traditional hooded over-garment] for your mother at the *ʿīd*.’ Malika was offended: ‘*ʿīd* doesn’t require someone else’s old clothing. It requires new clothing. My mother has already had her new *ʿīd jellāba* made.’<sup>7</sup>

### **‘KIND’ PAYMENTS: SIGNS OF CARE AND *KHAYR***

The ‘religious’ imperative of new clothing at *ʿīd ṣ-ṣaghīr*,<sup>8</sup> which marks the end of Ramadan, meant workers saw this as a kind of right and expected employers to provide it. Soraya, a 14-year-old girl who was working at Dār Sebbari during her summer holiday ‘to earn money for school books’, almost cried when she recounted how although Latifa’s Belgium-based daughter had given her a brand new outfit, neither Latifa herself nor Jihane, the unmarried daughter who still lived with her mother, had given her anything: ‘... not a thread to floss my teeth with!’ The Sebbaris probably considered the clothes from Belgium to be a gift from the family as a whole. But plainly these kinds of gift have a value above and beyond the monetary. It seemed that Soraya would have been more satisfied with less expensive clothing from her own employer than with this relatively expensive clothing from another woman. Why?

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<sup>7</sup> Employers often seemed to misjudge the level of need of their workers, giving gifts that were offensive. A French woman living in Morocco related how someone had given the carpark attendant in their street some money, ‘to buy shoes for your children.’ The man had replied: ‘That will be difficult. They’re in the United States for their studies.’

<sup>8</sup> Lit. ‘the small *ʿīd*’, also known as *ʿīd l-ḥīr*, the breaking of the fast. Moroccans celebrate with a special breakfast; men attend prayers at the mosque and women undertake reciprocal visiting among family and, in *shā bī* contexts, neighbours. This is the arena in which new clothes are displayed and admired.

When talking about the *mu'āmelā* (treatment) of domestics, both workers themselves and employers frequently pointed to something particular that demonstrated how a given worker was 'like a daughter'. These were formulaic signs of care. Often mentioned was that employers made sure young live-in workers were well covered by their blankets at night, ate with the family, and were bought the same treats (biscuits, sweets etc.) that the children of the family were bought. Gifts of gold, associated with femininity and feminine power (Kapchan 1996: 225), equated workers symbolically with beloved daughters.<sup>9</sup> Another common sign involved paying for the worker to go to the *ḥammām* (public bathhouse) each week (costing 10 or 12dh) and buying the necessary toiletries, particularly soap and shampoo (another couple of dirham).<sup>10</sup> These things, like clothes for *'īd*, took on an importance disproportionate to their monetary value.<sup>11</sup> For Safae whether shampoo was provided as part of the job was a deciding factor in choosing to stay or move on and my suggestion that she calculate whether the amount she spent in buying these things for herself was more than the difference in salary between the two jobs in question fell on deaf ears. It was a matter of principle: 'They have to pay for our shampoo, our *ḥammām* money, everything. We're living with them.'

Others did make calculations or scorned employers' attempts to substitute for a decent wage the promise of provision in kind. When Sukaina's employer offered her very low pay but said: 'I'll buy you clothes and things', Sukaina's friend objected and

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<sup>9</sup> Kapchan records the story of a Moroccan family who gave their domestic a gold necklace—a sign of her treatment as one of the family: 'She'd bought [it for her] because they were bringing her up. She treated her like her daughter' (1996: 223) But the domestic gave the necklace to a lover who refused to return it. She was criticised for failing to seek the mediation of the household-head and allowing the gold to leave the family network (ibid. 224).

<sup>10</sup> On the provision of toiletries see also Human Rights Watch (2012: 23-4).

<sup>11</sup> For Algerian domestics in the 1950s Borrmans noted similarly that, 'to be the object of attention, to receive gifts, was more important than the salary they earned through work' (cited Brac de la Perrière 1987: 123).

wanted to talk to the employer. ‘She can’t do that—pay her little and then make up for it by buying the cheapest clothes she can find! No, Sukaina should have money to buy what she wants herself.’ Not only did the promised provision of clothing turn out to be very basic but the arrangement threatened the independence of this 30-something worker. For Atéka, a former domestic who features in Cheikh’s study of women living in shared apartments, independence of choice in clothing was a primary advantage of having left her live-in position: ‘Atéka manages to buy her own clothes and dress the way she wants, no-one is there to give them to her out of charity or to tell her they are too figure-hugging ... Her clothes are not very beautiful but at least she chooses them herself’ (Cheikh 2011a: 174). In fact, workers’ clothing is often a point of contention. Giving ‘gifts’ of clothing not only means employers feel they can pay lower wages but also that they can control to some extent the appearance of the worker by making choices for them, as a parent would for a young child. As the literature on domestics world-wide suggests, female employers prefer workers to dress unattractively, not only out of fear that their husbands will be ‘tempted’ (Kapchan 1996: 226, Constable 1997) but also to appear more attractive themselves by contrast. By employing poor women from the countryside whose ‘hair is a mess’ (Kapchan 1996: 216), wealthy and well-groomed women in Moroccan cities can enjoy a sense of superiority. If the domestic happens to be attractive, unflattering clothing can be bought for her.<sup>12</sup>

In-kind payments are reminders of the days when domestics and slaves were not paid at all but rather supported – a fact which protected them from sudden variations in

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<sup>12</sup> Workers, like most Moroccan women, wear pyjamas as day-wear in the house but would usually change into ‘street clothes’ to go out. Ikram, who was natty with clothing and when given a chance could pull off a very ‘chic’ look, complained that her employer, Salima, never allowed her to change when she went out but would insist she accompanied her, even to a distant and upmarket shopping mall, in her pyjamas. Onlookers would have no doubt that pyjama-clad Ikram was Salima’s domestic. The same logic meant domestics in nineteenth-century Britain appeared in church in regulation bonnets—so that staff would not be mistaken for one of the family (Lethbridge 2013: 43). Cf. Styles (2007) on eighteenth-century English working people, who dressed so well that foreign visitors confused them with their masters and mistresses.

the cost of living, such as the price of grain (Sarasúa 2004: 518). A general argument about modernisation in Europe is that eighteenth-century economic rationalisation eroded the ‘moral economy’ (Thompson 1991) in which landowners were obliged to provide for labourers, so that labour became commoditised and payments monetised, although this has been criticised as an overly bipolar view of the period (see, for example Meldrum 2000: 194),<sup>13</sup> and being paid at least partly in kind (usually food and lodging, and often clothing), has continued to be a feature of live-in work globally. In eighteenth-century Spain payment in kind accounted for about three quarters of remuneration (Sarasúa 2004: 452-5, cf. McBride, T. 1976: 240). The draft labour-law for domestics in Morocco, which we will discuss in Chapter 7, stipulates that workers should receive 100% of the minimum wage if they live out and 60% if they live-in. It is unclear how equivalences in kind of the remaining 40% are to be ensured, given huge disparities in, for instance, the quality and quantity of food provided in different households. Jansen’s (2004) article on Algerian midwives meanwhile showed how payment in kind (soap, food) contributed to defining the work of delivery as a good deed so the midwife could avoid the shame attached to having to earning a living. From the Moroccan employer’s point of view, payment in kind which, whether clothing or other items, could easily be labelled ‘gifts’, also stood for something: it meant she, the *mulat d-dār* (lady of the house), was doing *l-khayr* (good works, charity).<sup>14</sup> More than a monetary reward, such payments, as in Britain, ‘favoured paternal social control because they appeared simultaneously as economic and as social relations, as relations between persons not as payments for services or things’ (Thompson 1974: 384).

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hill (1996: ch 4) on the decline in non-monetary payments for eighteenth-century English servants.

<sup>14</sup> This seems to contradict the fictive kinship applied to domestics: one does not usually do charity towards close kin. The tension between giving to strangers and giving to kin is a theme of Bornstein’s (2012) study of giving in India. In the context of caring for kin she writes that: ‘Such obligations are not announced and they are understood as duty; they are only marked if unfulfilled’ (Bornstein 2012: 150). On gifts between family members see also Godbout (2000a).

Salima, Latifa's Casablanca-based daughter gave Malika's younger sister Ikram some clothing during the few weeks that she worked for her. But when Salima, on a visit to the Océani branch of the family, announced that she had done this, Malika was disapproving: 'In front of everyone! God sees the *khayr* (good) you do to people, you don't have to tell everyone.'<sup>15</sup> When Ikram left Salima's employ she came to spend the night with Malika, who was still working for Nadia in the Sebbari building. Salima phoned Nadia's landline and told Malika to direct Ikram to leave the clothes she had given her with Latifa. Ikram was outraged: 'She gave me the clothes—they are mine now! She can't ask for them back!' But Malika saw the opportunity for moral high ground, instructing her sister: 'Fine, leave her clothes here. You don't need them. You have things to wear.' Down the phone to Salima Ikram said: 'Fine, I'm going to leave your rubbish here', to which Malika added with sarcasm: 'So you can do *l-khayr* again, and help someone else!' Malika was playing with the idea that if one wanted 'brownie points' for being charitable, recycling a gift was a cheat's way of earning double points.

## DOING AJR THROUGH HER

Muslim Moroccans believe that because God sees when they do *khayr*, it is a way of earning *ajr*, a word which paradoxically enough has connotations of work for wages.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See *Qur'ān* 2:264, 'O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day', and *Qur'ān* 2:271, 'If you disclose your charitable expenditures, they are good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you, and He will remove from you some of your misdeeds [thereby]. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] Acquainted'.

<sup>16</sup> See *Qur'ān* 2:110, 'And establish prayer and give *zakat*, and whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. Indeed, Allah of what you do, is Seeing.' Parry (1986) deals with the tension between a free gift and a spiritual gift. Cf. Dresch's (1998) discussion of Middle Eastern societies in the light of Mauss's analysis of *Qur'ān* 64.

The terms can be used interchangeably in some contexts. Although *ajr* is something from God, Moroccans talk about ‘doing’ *ajr* in the same way they talk about ‘doing’ *khayr*, and the word cropped up repeatedly in conversations about domestic work. In Modern Standard Arabic *al-ajr* (pl. *ujūr*) means ‘wages, pay, honorarium ... price, rate, fee’ (Cowan, J. 1994: 6). But when Moroccan workers and employers used the term colloquially they were not talking about payment in dirham for physical work<sup>17</sup> but rather religious merit for charitable work, credited to them by God in the hereafter.

Taking *ajr* into account influenced people’s decisions and turned evaluations of circumstances on their head. Giving meant gaining. People thus rejoiced in misfortune. Bad weather while travelling to visit someone in hospital meant extra *ajr*. News of a sick person in your family who needed care was met with: ‘Lucky you! You can do *ajr* through her.’ *Ajr*, as merit accumulated on each person’s *ḥisāb* (account) with God, appears in numerous Quranic passages<sup>18</sup> and forms a basis of ‘practical ethics’ (cf. Schacht 2012). A number of metaphors are used to illustrate this reckoning: books with good and bad deeds listed, weighing scales (Nieuwkerk 2005) or, in Lebanon, rather oddly in a Muslim context, a ‘piggy-bank’ (Deeb 2006: 195). According to these understandings, the more *ajr* one has, the more likely one will be admitted to paradise. *Ajr* involves *qurba* – coming closer to God (Hoexter 2003: 146-7)—and some thus believe that one’s *ajr*-account determines not only entry to paradise but also one’s place there, nearer or further away from God. Others envisage extra comforts such as a tree for shade (Buitelaar 1993: 122) or accommodation of various qualities. For instance, a fellow train passenger who attempted to convert me to Islam was told by another woman that her success would secure her a *bīt* (room) in paradise. ‘Janouba’, a member

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<sup>17</sup> Moroccans call the monthly wage *shahar* (lit. month).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example *Qur’ān* 3:336, 12:57, 16:41, 68:3.

of the ‘Yabiladi’ online forum, regularly posts requests in this manner to help needy Moroccans she knows. She incites people to ‘buy a house in paradise, God willing, by helping these poor orphans’.<sup>19</sup>

Ethnographic accounts which discuss *ajr* in North Africa, or elsewhere, are scanty. Westermarck’s (1926) work on Moroccan Islam which discusses the *ajr* gained through sacrificing various animals is a first point of reference. In her study of Moroccan women in an Atlas town Maher links *ajr* to folk Islam which lays stress on ‘generosity and lavish hospitality, on devotion to parents’ (Maher 1974: 99); Ensel’s account of saintly (‘Sharif’) and servile (‘Drawi’) castes in Southern Morocco describes how Drawa are not paid but claim they earn *ajr* by helping the Shurfa ‘only out of goodness’ (1999: 200-3). Buitelaar’s (1993) work on Moroccan women’s role in feasting and fasting meanwhile situates *ajr* alongside two other cultural concepts, *tahara* (purity) and *umma* (community). She describes the ways women can gain *ajr* during Ramadan in particular: visiting mosques and graves, praying, giving alms, distributing food to the poor, painting others’ hands and feet with henna. Unlike praying five times a day and giving *zakāt* (alms), these acts are *mandūb* (recommended) by the *sunna* but not obligatory (ibid. 120). Buitelaar observed that older believers are more concerned with *ajr* than younger ones because they are nearing death and so think more about preparing for the afterlife. Women, too, are said to pay more attention to the concept than men (ibid. 4).<sup>20</sup>

Jansen’s (2004) article on midwives in Algeria during the 1980s argues that *ajr* is part of women’s economic subjugation because it enables certain types of work to be

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<sup>19</sup> Janouba, blogging in French, also used the term *ajr* more generally to motivate people to donate: ‘*n hésitez pas vous gagnerez alajr* [sic].’

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jansen (2004: 3), Nieuwkerk (2005: 128). Men, argues Buitelaar, are concerned with purity and may gain *ajr* through additional prayers whereas women are disadvantaged in this area by menstruation so compensate with *ajr*.

classified not as labour deserving wages but as ‘meritorious acts’ for which reward is delayed until the hereafter. Nieuwkerk (2005) discusses changes in ways of collecting *ajr* according to Moroccan women in Holland, who complain of a lack of connections with poor people in their community making it difficult to earn *ajr* through giving alms. Others discuss more generally the relationship between poverty, charity and religious and social ethics in Muslim societies (Bonner et al. 2003, Sinemillioğlu 2007, 2009, Benthall 2012), particularly in light of anthropological perspectives on giving and reciprocity to evaluate the blend of interest and disinterest in charity (cf. Singer 2003).

In Chapter 2 we touched on the idea of fosterage as a meritorious act.<sup>21</sup> When, in 1883, the Sultan warned the *qā'id* that continuing to enslave the daughter of a freeman would ‘render useless’ his good work (Ennaji 1999: 87), he must have meant that the *ajr* gained through the initial charitable act of providing for the girl during famine would be cancelled out by the wrong the *qā'id* was now doing.<sup>22</sup> Goichon observed similarly that taking in and educating a girl in early twentieth-century Fès was seen as meritorious (1929: 47):

Ladies undertake the education of their *petite bonne* as a pious deed. If she is intelligent and good natured, they treat her like a child that they are responsible for training up to be a nice, domesticated woman, not with the intention of keeping her, but of marrying her to a good boy and founding an honest and happy family (Goichon 1929: 47).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The same discourse surrounded the employment of young girls as domestics in Ottoman Salonica where ‘any payment was portrayed as generosity stemming from the employer’s goodwill and not from any commitment’ (Ginio 2003: 174). That charitable employment was widespread in Britain can be gathered from any Dicken’s novel; Guster and Charley from *Bleak House* (1853) immediately spring to mind.

<sup>22</sup> The cancellation of good deeds by bad, termed *iḥbāt*, is a Mu‘tazilī doctrine. See Weir 2012. The doctrine is frequently brought up during fasting when people are concerned to not do anything which would discount the merit of each day’s fast (Buitelaar 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Finding marriage partners for orphans and providing for their weddings was also seen to be a meritorious act in India (Bornstein 2012: 101).

Note the long-term aspect of this relationship and the way the arrangement hinged around a suitable marriage. Instances of more direct reference to *ajr* as the motivation for or consequence of taking in a girl are manifold. In a stationery shop in the *medīna* I overheard one woman suggest to another: ‘Let’s take in a couple of girls and *ndīrū fihum l-ajr* (do *ajr* through them).’ *Mui* Latifa similarly believed that she had accumulated a large amount of *ajr* from bringing up and marrying off so many girls, and Rachida, as a beneficiary, agreed that what Latifa had done for her gave Latifa ‘*ajr bezāf* ‘and *Allāh*’ (a lot of *ajr* with God). But Huriya, who worked for one of Latifa’s daughters, had her doubts where Rachida’s failed marriage to the carpenter (he lives elsewhere with a second wife) was concerned: ‘Brought her up? Married her off? *Ajr*?! What sort of marriage is that?! No Latifa didn’t do any *ajr* through her.’ Huriya implicitly accused Latifa of not being careful enough selecting a husband for Rachida, rejecting the notion that Latifa’s good intentions for her domestic’s future married life could be treated as meritorious.

*Ajr* is not gained only through the act of fostering. Workers who lived out but to whom their employers gave extra financial benefits beyond their wage considered that their employers would be awarded *ajr* for this. Fatima explained:

Yes, these people I work for, they will have *ajr* because they took me to the doctor. And they paid for an operation. They paid 20000dh and another 10000dh for the aftercare and they also paid for my mother to have her hip operation, say another 20000dh. And now and then they give me 50dh or 100dh or 200dh. And then for the ‘*īd*’, they always buy the sheep, every single year. They get *ajr* for that too. And when I married they gave me 5000dh.

Talking about *ajr* is part of an attempt to make sense of class differences by stressing interdependency. At the foundation of this approach is the belief that God made rich and poor to be unequal. The existence of the poor allows the rich to be tested in their

generosity and given an opportunity to gain reward in the hereafter, as was observed by

Freya Stark on her travels:

The beggar in Asia, if the West has not yet touched him, comes up with no whine or servility; ... his hand is held out in a gesture of giving almost more than receiving; and when you have handed your coin, he refers you to Allah: 'Allah will repay,' as a young woman buying a hat might tell them to send the bill to her husband.

This is all a result of the acknowledged certainty that, whatever the beggar's own moralities may be, he is the cause of virtue in others (Stark [1948] 2013: 94).

This is not unique to Islam: in medieval Christendom alms-giving was seen as a way of redeeming sins, thus making the poor appear part of God's plan for salvation<sup>24</sup> (Troeltsch 1931, Geremek 1994: 18, 20), although, as Silber (2000) points out, the anthropological literature on religious giving has focussed disproportionately on Buddhist and Hindu traditions of India and Southeast Asia.<sup>25</sup> Significantly *ajr* in Morocco is not done 'for' (*li*) but 'through' or 'in' (*fi*) the poor so that helping them is a means to an end for the better-off. Hayat, the high-ranking government employee we encountered earlier, explained: 'God made those who have and those who don't have so he could see if we help each other.' A villa's security guard in the wealthy Mabella district expressed a similar idea:

'God created us all, people who have and people who don't have, for one thing.'  
'What's that?'

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<sup>24</sup> Simmel points out that at times '...the poor disappear completely as legitimate subjects and central foci of the interests involved ... When Jesus told the wealthy young man, "Give your riches to the poor," what apparently mattered to him were not the poor, but rather the soul of the wealthy man ...' (Simmel [1908] 1965: 121).

This seems common to 'ethicised salvation religions' in which 'rewards are contingent on conduct' (Parry 1986: 467). For a secular version of the problem see George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* in which Tanner accuses Octavius of 'regarding the world as a moral gymnasium built expressly to strengthen your character' ([1903] 2004: 68).

<sup>25</sup> *Ajr* resembles the Hindu gift, *dāna* (Parry 1986, Laidlaw 2000, Bornstein 2012) in so far as it must be given without expectation of return from the recipient although generosity is thought to enhance the donor's state in the next life.

‘So that the rich can give *ṣadaqa* (voluntary alms).<sup>26</sup> If there were no poor people who come knocking and say, “Give me *ṣadaqa*”, then how would the rich give alms on behalf of their parents?’

The guard explained that when parents or other relatives die, one gives money to a person in need and God transfers the merit to the deceased in the form of *raḥma* (mercy).<sup>27</sup> ‘How else would they get *raḥma*, if there were no needy people?’ In a similar way, a domestic day-worker saw inequality as necessary for balance in the labour-market: ‘God has made rich and poor to help each other. If we were all rich there would be no-one to work for the rich.’<sup>28</sup> She makes a good point; the industry depends on the existence of relative poverty. Because domestic service is a job wealthy people are not prepared to do, employing a domestic almost necessarily brings even Moroccans of modest means into contact with a person significantly less well-off than themselves. Intimacy, however, brings moral danger and sudden reversals of affection.

Theft, or the suspicion of it, is a problem of allowing strangers into one’s home, as well as a consequence of stark economic difference. This is in no way confined to Morocco. The recent trial in Britain of celebrity chef Nigella Lawson’s personal assistants, Francesca and Elisabetta Grillo, prosecuted for unauthorised spending on company credit cards showed how familial sharing stands at odds with the language of transactions and contract: “It’s like if you wake up one morning and your mother says

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<sup>26</sup> *Ṣadaqa*, as voluntary alms, stand in opposition to the obligatory *zakāt* (a kind of tax, to be paid yearly, thus purifying the remaining wealth), although in Morocco *zakāt* are not organised or collected by the state but left to private conscience.

<sup>27</sup> The assertion that merit from *ṣadaqa* is transferable is contested by some jurists (Weir 2012).

<sup>28</sup> This idea may be based on *Qur’ān* 43:32, ‘Is it they who apportion thy Lord’s mercy? We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of the world, and raised some of them above others in rank that some of them may take labour from others; and the mercy of thy Lord is better than (the wealth) that they amass.’ The worker was, however, keen to stress that being rich did not make one ‘better’ (*ḥsn*) in God’s sight. She continued by quoting from *Qur’ān* 49:11, ‘O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them’, and gave the example that sometimes when she is working she stops to pray and the *mulat d-dār* says, “‘Oh, you’re praying. I haven’t prayed yet. God forgive me.” Well that “God forgive me” isn’t enough. She should pray.’

I'm not your mother anymore, sorry, you have been with me all your life but I don't know you anymore," Francesca said' (Dixon 2014).<sup>29</sup> Legal customs in medieval England also reflected this clash of family and business in the choice disputants had between proceeding by 'love'<sup>30</sup> to make peace out of court, or by 'law', that is formal pleading (Clanchy 2003).

Family is to be held at all costs out of reach of law, which these days means the state. A large sum of cash disappeared from the room I shared with my Océani host-family's daughter. Since the incident occurred during a party which filled the house with relatives and neighbours there was no suspicion on the daughter or other members of the household, who could have taken the money any time. But in order to claim from insurance I would need a police certificate, and the very mention of the police sent my host-mother into a frenzy: 'How can you say you will bring the police here when we have treated you like family?! Will you bring the police to question your sister? Your brother? Your uncle?' (I called my host father *'ammī*, my paternal uncle). They privileged love over law but our relationship never fully recovered from this *faux pas* and I moved out at the end of the month. Workers and employers, assumed to relate to one another by 'love', as mothers and daughters, are similarly shocked when this is betrayed. As in the Nigella Lawson case, the reversal is unintelligible and therefore bitter.

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<sup>29</sup> The assistants claimed there were no ground rules for their spending (Dixon 2014) and Elisabetta, who had worked for Nigella since 1999, was described by the latter as her 'rock, and 'like a member of the family'. In this familial atmosphere where boundaries between familial and company expenses were not clear-cut the accusation of theft plainly came as a shock to the Grillo sisters. Cf. Styles (1983) on the shifting borderline between customary rights and illegal embezzlement in England before the factory.

<sup>30</sup>Clanchy (2003: 50) describes 'love' not in terms of sentiment but as 'a bond of affection, established by public undertakings before witnesses and upheld by social pressure'. Such a bond linked a lord and vassal in medieval England. The downside of 'love' for peasants was that it meant payments ('love boons' and 'love silver') or service. In the fourteenth century, 'On the estates of St Albans abbey to make love meant to do an extra piece of work for the lord ...' (ibid. 48).

## CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

Moroccan workers are often the closest or the only ‘poor’ person with whom the employer is in contact on a regular basis. As such, workers not only provide a scapegoat on which the disappearance of valuable items can be blamed, but also an immediate answer to any practising Muslim who knows she must give but is not sure to whom. For as Caillé, writing on the gift in general, points out,

In the framework of a small, symbolically solid society where roles and statuses are clearly distributed, ... the question is fairly easily resolved. As soon as the identity of this small society crumbles, the question of possible recipients of a gift explodes ... (Caillé 1994: 272).

The *Qur’ān* and *sunna* assign priority for giving alms to close kin and neighbours, and in the context of weakening neighbourly ties between rich and poor Moroccans, servants must bear the brunt of receiving from the wealthy. The same appears to have been the case in early modern Europe. Jutte notes that in seventeenth-century Sienna gifts to servants had overtaken all other charitable giving to the poor: ‘For testators their servants were in a sense the most respectable of all the needy’ (Jutte 1994: 93). It has been noted that in general people prefer to give to a cause where they can see the ongoing beneficial effect, as with schemes in which donors stay in touch, via letters and photographs, with a child they ‘sponsor’. Giving to servants is a way of giving to one’s own.<sup>31</sup> This is problematic for Kuran who argues: ‘The rich could offer assistance to their own servants or to the beggars in their own neighbourhoods and, without giving any thought to the challenges of overcoming the causes of need, consider their *zakāt*

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<sup>31</sup> Mandeville linked giving to one’s own with honour in his ‘Essay on Charity’: ‘When a Man acts in behalf of Nephews or Neices, and says they are my Brother’s Children, I do it out of Charity; he deceives you: for if he is capable, it is expected from him, and he does it partly for his own Sake: If he values the Esteem of the World, and is nice as to Honour and Reputation, he is obliged to have a greater Regard to them than for Strangers, or else he must suffer in his Character’ ([1732] 1988: 286).

duty fulfilled' (Kuran 2003: 283). Moroccans did not usually talk about gifts to their servants as *zakāt* or *ṣadaqa*, but when answering questions about how to earn *ajr* they would talk about these alms as well as about generally 'doing *khayr*'. The prevailing approach seemed to be that specific duties regarding *zakāt* were generalised into doing good where one encountered need rather than donating a calculated portion of one's wealth to a distant cause.<sup>32</sup> Employers who engaged in this face-to-face, personal kind of giving which involved empathising with workers were vulnerable to disappointment and emotional pain as Bouchra's story illustrates.

Bouchra had recently dismissed a young worker who she believed had stolen, among other things, some Italian blouses. Bouchra refused to let the worker have back a winter coat she had left behind, 'so she learns what it's like to have things taken from her.' Bouchra now suspected her new worker of lying about her need for financial help:

She always says: 'Give me, give me, give me ...' I said, 'Enough!' 33000 riyal [1650dh] she took from me in less than a month. That's on top of her wage. ... I can't live with a liar. Because if someone is lying to you, what can you do with them? It's hard when you give from your heart and then you find that they were lying. She came to me crying and I cried with her. Now I want someone older who will come and respect the hours of work and I'll pay her and she'll go home.

When I mentioned that other women had argued for *hudūd* (boundaries) between employers and workers, Bouchra's response was: 'But you can't. You can't live under the same roof with someone who is in need and not help them.' As suggested by Light in her book about Virginia Woolf and her servants in early twentieth-century Britain: 'Philanthropy had made sense of being a mistress. It was a way of managing the differences, the emotional housekeeping, which kept the tensions between rich and poor

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Rorty (1998) on justice as a larger loyalty: because abstract notions of justice are at odds with loyalty to a smaller group, we might contract our circle for the sake of loyalty, or expand it for justice (1998: 46).

women under control' (Light 2007: 83). Bouchra's 'impulse to give' (cf. Bornstein 2012: 47) was a desire to lessen the difference between her financial situation and that of her worker as the latter portrayed it. But if the worker was exaggerating her need, Bouchra was giving charity to someone more on a par with her than she had thought; she was being taken for a ride.

Had Bouchra known the worker as a neighbour or member of a family network, lies or the suspicion of them would not have featured so prominently. She would *know* the worker's situation because it would be *ma'rūf* (known) in the community as a whole.<sup>33</sup> The term '*ma'rūf*' figured in the jurist Shafi'i's rulings on entitlement for *zakāt* which prioritised giving to local people before strangers, not only to relieve social tension between rich and poor neighbours, but also because of community knowledge of poverty:

Shafi'i implies that the requirement to give charity to those to whom one is closest—in a locational or familial sense—is simply the most efficient and effective way to take care of the poor. A rich person should give first to those who live closest to him and to relatives in the area because no one else is in a better position to know that the people are needy ... This will save the needy from having to beg, because their neighbors and relatives who know them will take care of them (Mattson 2003: 40).

The concern with identifying who is closest is all the more pressing when people are mobile and 'proximity' becomes a matter of ascertaining how people are related. In Mark Cohen's study of the disbursement of alms in medieval Egypt, 'Knowing the person, or at least obtaining the testimony of someone who knew him or her, was an important key in the verification "system", employed in both public and private charity' (Cohen 2003: 61). Strangers arriving in the Jewish community of Fustat in eleventh-

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<sup>33</sup> The same applies to the relatives of workers who are so often reported sick by domestics wanting to return home. Even if an employer thought this worth verifying, it would be difficult to do so, given the unconnectedness of her family to that of the worker and the geographical distance that usually separates them.

and twelfth-century Egypt carried letters with multiple signatures ‘vouching for their neediness in anticipation that communities or individuals might be reluctant to support unknown persons from distant locales’ (ibid. 55), and in lists of alms-claimants foreigners were entered as *ma‘rifat X*, ‘the person known by X’, so their deservedness (*istiḥqāq*) could be personally verified (ibid. 61).

## WAITING FOR JUSTICE

In all this it seems the working relationship provides opportunity for employers to ‘do’ *ajr* through their workers. I was interested to see how workers—generally thought of as receivers rather than givers of charity—might themselves do *ajr* through their employers. I asked Ilham if she would gain *ajr* for her work:

‘Yes, if I do it *min qalbī* (from my heart).’

‘And if you don’t do it from your heart? You don’t get *ajr*, you just get your wages here, and that’s it?’

‘Exactly.’

Doing work ‘from the heart’ seems to be a paraphrase of the Quranic concept of *niyya* (intention). I heard the term used in this context when Nawar was praised by her uncle for working ‘with her *niyya*’ as opposed to those who ‘just clean where it shows’ and watch television while the employer is out.<sup>34</sup> Malika, although she did not mention *ajr*, also expressed the importance of working conscientiously even when Nadia was not there to see. Despite complaining about not having time off, she said: ‘But I want to work well so that I can say that I’m worthy of this wage, that I really worked.’ Working

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<sup>34</sup> Related to this is the fact that strictly speaking *niyya* must be declared before pious acts are undertaken in order to earn *ajr*. This may explain the prevalence of what often sounds like self-seeking calculation or immodest boasting.

well was a moral rather than economic matter: it would not give her more or less pay but it might make her feel better about herself.

*Ajr* was to be gained not only through working well but as a kind of compensation for poor conditions.<sup>35</sup> Fatima claimed she would receive *ajr* from God to make up for what her employers (who, as already noted, gave her money for medical bills, wedding expenses etc.) *failed* to give her:

Because they haven't done my papers<sup>36</sup> even though I have worked for them for 13, 14 years and brought their children up and everything. They should have paid into my national security account. When I leave, if they don't open an account and put money in it for me to live off as retirement, and I forgive them, then I will see that returned to me in the *akhīra* (the afterlife). Because that is my right (*min ḥaqqī*) but I forgave them. Everything you do, God sees. He will *ḥsb lik dak shī* (take that into account for you).

So both Fatima and her employers are to be recompensed in the afterlife: they for giving above and beyond in certain areas, and she for not receiving enough in other areas and not holding this against them. The employers' failure to respect their worker's 'rights' did not, in Fatima's eyes, cancel out the *ajr* they earned through generosity to her on other fronts. 'Love' and 'law' did not contradict one another.

Workers reminded each other of *ajr* as a comfort and motivation for putting up with poor conditions. Over and over I heard one worker tell another to '*ṣabrī ū sāfī* (just be patient)'. The same is said to daughters-in-law suffering the demands of their mothers-in-law to whom, according to the traditional virilocal model, they owe labour (Davis, S. 1983). The *Qur'ān* suggests believers will receive later recompense for patient endurance in this life (*Qur'ān* 23: 111), exhortations to patience often being

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<sup>35</sup> This seems a general principle in Islamic ethics. Weir (2012) observes that, 'Not even affirmative action is required, for a Muslim whose property is stolen is credited with having given it as *ṣadaqa*.'

<sup>36</sup> It was never clear what these papers would be. Fatima did not know herself, except that they would involve a record of the length of time Fatima had worked for this employer which would enable her to access some form of benefit after retirement.

accompanied by reminders of paradise, or the final ‘home’ (*Qur’ān* 13: 24). Demonstrating *ṣabr* or patience in the hope of delayed gratification is seen as a specific female quality (Buitelaar 1993: 129-33, 178).<sup>37</sup>

As well as talking about *ajr* directly, Moroccans’ comments indicated a belief that God gives people what they deserve and repays what they give, if not in this life, then in the next. This takes on significance in the context of the modern domestic-labour market where actors are in practice unknown and both workers and employers take a leap in the dark with new arrangements. When talking about the risk of ‘falling on’ bad employers workers often said: ‘Because you are *miziyāna* (good), God will bring you to *nās miziyānīn* (good people).’ This logic of divine justice was generally invoked by those who had not had trouble. Others called on God to bring justice to situations where they had been the loser with phrases such as: ‘*Allāh y’aṭīk ‘alā qadd niyytik ū Allāh y’aṭīnī ‘alā qadd niyytī* (God give to you according to your *niyya* [intention] and God give to me according to my *niyya*).’ In the same way, people were adamant that thieves will not prosper. Safae thus explained: ‘*Flūs l-ḥarām* (illicit money) does not last. For example, she steals 200dh from the employer’s handbag ... But that 200dh, what will she do with it? She’ll fritter it away and it’s like nothing. It just goes...’ Similarly a domestic day-labourer reassured others that ‘When a woman works for *nsārā* (Christians) and steals from their house, this worker will go down to hell with the unbelieving people of the house.’ An employer who complained that workers do not take responsibility, (‘They say, I am sick or I had to go to see my mother. I know they are lying but I always pay them for the full month’) comforted herself that, ‘God sees.’

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<sup>37</sup> Qureshi, writing about *ṣabr* among Pakistani women in Britain, emphasises the transformative role of *ṣabr*, ‘a show of inner strength that is directed towards God as well as a capacity that is granted by God’ (2013: 121), to add an ethical dimension to forbearance in the face of illness and labourious kinship obligations. Paradoxically, although informants stress that *ṣabr* involves silent suffering, its narration ‘amid a flow of interpersonal relationships and tensions’ (ibid. 135) also gives it force.

Incidentally, Nigella Lawson's former personal assistants 'mouthed "*C'e un dio*" ("There is a God")' as they 'walked free' from Isleworth Crown Court (Milmo 2013).

Ideas about divine justice reflect a preoccupation with recompense which also figures in everyday ways of thanking and asking: *Allāh ykhelif*, (God compensate you), is said to hosts after a meal. Requests may be accompanied by any one or a number of the following: *Allāh y'aṭik r-riḍā* (God give you contentment), *Allāh yraḥamlīk l-wālidīn* (God have mercy on your parents for you), *Allāh y'aṭik s-stir* (God give you protection), *Allāh ynajjḥik* (God make you succeed), and the list goes on.<sup>38</sup> These expressions all come down to the same thing, recompense later for your service now. Sometimes there was a dislocation, as with the form of *ṣadaqa* explained by the security guard: the reward for your service being transferred to someone else. I was asked to do my host the favour of eating a second egg one breakfast-time by being told that: '*fiḥā r-riḍā d māṃāk*' (your mother's contentment is in it). The mind boggles. To refuse was to deny my host the opportunity to demonstrate generosity and earn merit and thus also to deny the named person, in this case my mother, merit which God would transfer from the giver to them in the form of contentment. One cannot refuse. Invoking a God who keeps account of all things can thus be used to encourage people to do a good deed, but also to threaten them. When Latifa's daughter Salima refused to provide Ikram, whom she had just dismissed, with her trainfare back to Fès, Malika, as Ikram's older sister-cum-agent, responded with: 'If you don't give it to her then you won't *trebḥī f yawm l-qiyāma* (profit on the day of Resurrection, i.e. you will be punished on judgement day).'

Workers who felt hard done by did not always call down hellfire on their employers. A common way of ending a tale of injustice was to say: '*Allāh y'afū*, God

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Piamenta (1983) on the Muslim conception of God and human welfare as reflected in everyday speech.

forgive'<sup>39</sup>, as Nawar often said. Nawar seemed deeply moved by the fact that her employer was suffering with cancer but, at the same time, my initial meeting with her in the city was the first occasion she had been allowed time off for a month. Nawar kept shaking her head: 'God forgive, God forgive.' She seemed to feel sorry both for the employer and for herself for having to work for her but she would not leave the employer. One thinks of Gloucestershire-born Winifred Foley's (b. 1914) account of domestic service. Foley worked for an elderly woman who assigned her an insalubrious attic as a bedroom:

Because of her rheumatics I had to act as 'kneel in' for the old lady's prayers. I thought she had a fat chance of getting to heaven with that attic on her conscience and two spare bedrooms in the house! But she was old and pitiful, so just in case there was a God up there listening I put in a plea for her on the quiet (Foley [1974] 1991: 133).

Forgiveness was also related to being a 'daughter'. Sabah, now married with children, recalled working as a domestic as a child. Her employer's husband had accused her of stealing a ring and she left in disgrace. Some time later, the employer came looking for her: 'She didn't believe I stole the ring; she hugged me and said, "you're my daughter, forgive me!"' Some workers believed, along with Fatima, that the very act of being patient with employers and forgiving them for failing to give them 'their rights' earned the worker *ajr*. Incidentally, forgiveness curiously figured on the wall at the Ministry of Employment in Rabat. Outside the *inspecteur du travail's* office a row of plastic chairs had been placed for people to sit on as they waited to have their complaint heard, and opposite the chairs a framed notice read in characteristically rhyming literary Arabic: '*Daqā'iq al-intizār, imla'hā bi al-istighfār* (minutes of waiting,

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<sup>39</sup> Workers often used this phrase and another, 'God guide her/him/them', which suggests a person is doing wrong but does not know any better. Sometimes the phrase, 'God guide us all', is used, implying that no-one is without blame. This is often used to close a conversation about someone else's wrongdoing.

erase them with asking forgiveness)'.<sup>40</sup> In the moral economy of domestic service, asking God to forgive employers was one way workers felt they could score long-term gains.

## IT'S OVER

Waiting patiently for justice was a plan for delayed gratification, just as the 'you're my daughter' rhetoric made use of a long-term logic of give and return which moved in step with the generational cycle. By staying like dutiful daughters despite unfair conditions workers could earn *ajr* in the hereafter, but in this life would never be served by the next generation as they would be if they really were family. By quitting, workers perhaps forfeited the chance to earn *ajr* for the afterlife but could make tangible gains here and now. Meanwhile, for employers, who saw service as a sign of recognition for their care and gifts, leaving was an affront—a display of ingratitude. Viewing their action towards domestics as *ajr*, with its 'break in reciprocity',<sup>41</sup> did not prevent employers from also expecting gratitude and/or a return service from the object of their charity. Many people, however, did not see gratitude and *ajr* as mutually exclusive: receiving both seemed important for people like Latifa who was keen to point out that the women she had

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<sup>40</sup> An online search revealed that this is a catchphrase, reproduced for downloading in many graphic forms.

<sup>41</sup> A return does not come from the recipient but from God. Nieuwkerk (2005: 131) describes a case where receiving a thank-you gift for charitable work destroyed all hope of *ajr* for a pious woman who believed merit to be gained only when earthly recompense was absent. When a return for the donor is expected to come not from the recipient of a gift but from God, this has been termed a 'break in reciprocity' (Parry 1986, Silber 2000: 121). As Dresch (1998: 130) points out, although Parry's argument aligns alms with deferred reciprocity 'Islamic tradition argues quite the opposite'; the Muslim donor must give expecting no return.

taken in as girls thanked her when they came back to visit.<sup>42</sup> Their continued occasional help with the housework could be seen as homage to her as a patron, another sort of return for the *khayr* she did for them (cf. Benthall 1999: 36).

Debt was not explicit but implicit in my informants' comments about gratitude, but studies of bonded labour elsewhere shed light on the matter. For example, Brass's (1986) study of Peruvian peasants concludes:

Idioms of patriarchal authority, duty, obligation and reciprocity can be utilized to control a workforce of debt bonded labour composed of godchildren, parents and classificatory co-parents while at the same time disguising the class basis of this control (1986: 63).

For Moroccan employers who saw themselves as charitable, workers owed it to them to stay, or if they had to leave, to stay in touch. Hayat, the high-ranking government worker who took Zineb to the dermatologist, told me how Rahma, a worker she had made into her 'daughter', left her after nine years:

I told her: 'even if you leave, we stay in touch.' But it was always me who called her. I asked her, how come she never called to ask how I was or how the girls are? She said she never had credit on her phone, but you know, if you want to do something, you can. I'd say: 'Just call and hang up so I can call you back. I'll pay for the call.' But she never did. And that hurt me a lot. I spent three months completely alone, and also destroyed. I always say that you should never 'cut' someone [off]. A relationship is a tree; you should never chop it down.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Of course, not everyone spoke about *ajr* at all. Hayat, for example, seemed to seek gratitude rather than *ajr* as a return for the *khayr* she had done.

<sup>43</sup> Winifred Foley's account tells of the gratitude she never expressed to an employer who kindly sent her home when her younger sister was ill:

'When your little sister is better, promise you'll come back and work for me.'

... I promised her that I would. I would have promised anything without scruple, as long as I could get home to my little sister. But I had no intention of coming back.

Kind Mrs Fox! She made up a parcel of warm vests and clothes from her children's plentiful store. I took all her kindness; and I'm ashamed to admit I never even wrote to her (Foley 1974: 131).

Other employers had different ways of dealing with the loss of ‘daughters’. Departed workers at Dār Sebbari often became the subject of censure amongst family members and close visitors. Malika, who, during her stay, has been introduced to outsiders as ‘like a daughter’ was talked about for weeks after she left as a thief.<sup>44</sup> Oddly she was also labelled a hypocrite for adhering to her self-consciously modest dress-code ‘in front of people’ but sleeping ‘naked’ (in a vest and leggings), despite the fact that the only person who saw Malika’s night-time attire was her roommate Zahra (Nadia’s daughter), in front of whom modesty was not an issue. I did not hear criticism of this fact before Malika left, although other complaints were sometimes voiced when Malika was not in the room. Similarly Soraya, the fourteen-year-old who worked for Latifa, was introduced to me as a ‘daughter of the house’ but after she left was referred to as a *sheffāra* (thief). The dramatic contrast between ‘daughter’ and ‘thief’ seems a way of detaching or disowning the ‘daughter’ by suggesting ‘we never liked her anyway’.

Writing on Latina domestic workers in the US, Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that looking at how domestic jobs end ‘exposes the degree to which domestic labor is viewed as something other than “real work”’ (ibid. 56). She observes that domestic arrangements:

end more the way relationships do than the way jobs do: with white lies or alibis, designed to spare feelings or avoid conflict. Often, both parties know that the real reason an employee leaves is not a sick relative or a return to her home country (2003: 55).

This is even more the case in Morocco. Although in practice periods of time are sometimes agreed upon, work for domestics is conceived of as a relationship to be

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<sup>44</sup> Having lent Malika some money to send to her family mid-month, Nadia then forgot to deduct it from her pay when she left.

altered only by marriage.<sup>45</sup> It is thus virtually impossible to leave an employer without causing offence. A son or daughter would not leave. This is why workers, particularly live-in workers, rarely gave notice but often used the excuse of an ill relative, real or fictive, as Ikram did when she left the family in Assilah (cf. Foley [1974] 1991: 131).

An alternative was simply to leave without telling the employer. A common feature in exit plans was to ‘go *khafifa* (light)’. A worker would gradually move most of her belongings from her employers’ house, taking a little to a friend each time she had a day off, so when she finally left she would only need a small bag and employers would not realise she was gone for good. (One worker planned that if her employer saw her with some of this pre-exit luggage she would say that it was winter clothing that she no longer needed.) Safae went to the *blād* (her home region in the countryside) for five days’ leave without telling her employer she had no intention of returning: ‘I couldn’t tell her I was leaving as she didn’t treat me well.’ She changed her mobile number so the employer could not get in touch with her: ‘She treats me badly, I’ll treat her badly.’ Hafida waited until her employer, *l-Hajja*, went on holiday, sending her home until she should call her to return, by which time Hafida planned to have found work elsewhere. She felt she could not leave her employer overtly but would use the fact that she could not have remained without work (the imposed holiday was unpaid) as an excuse when the employer called. Workers were not without scruple. Some, despite wanting to leave, waited until a certain period of time they had verbally agreed to work elapsed, despite no written contract existing. Workers also stated that it was particularly *hashūma*

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<sup>45</sup> Changing allegiance is not a problem in that case: one would then owe labour to one’s husband or, particularly so in the past, his family.

(shameful), or *khayb* (bad, ugly), to leave an employer in the lurch (*tsmāh fihā*) during Ramadan.<sup>46</sup>

Disappearing without trace is all very well for live-out workers from the countryside, but workers based in l'Océan, like Salma, my host-mother's former domestic, whose house was just two streets across and one street down towards the sea, could not easily avoid a former employer. The arrangement had ended because Salma no longer needed the money,<sup>47</sup> but my host-mother, Touria, would regularly ask Salma if she would still come and 'help' her. Salma never seemed to want to, but did not like 'to face someone and say no', so she gave excuses such as having to look after her young nephew. To simply say she did not need the extra money would have seemed selfish in view of Touria's 'need' for help. Other l'Océan-based workers were potentially trapped in poor jobs because if they left, they would still bump into their employers.

An important consequence of the high turnover in domestic service is that knowledge gained by workers as temporary 'daughters'—intimate details of life in the 'first world of secrecy' (Bourdieu 1965: 223), that of the household—stays with them when they become 'daughters' elsewhere. Goichon noted that in early twentieth-century arrangements in Fès, relations would be severed if the domestic left to place herself with another family as she posed a threat to the privacy and honour of her initial employers: 'They will have been telling, one thinks, all the stories of the family to the new masters' (Goichon 1929: 48).<sup>48</sup> This is only a serious threat if the domestic worker goes on to

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<sup>46</sup> See Stringham's (2011) discussion of the importance of internal (moral) constraints in the absence of external constraints such as contract law and Macauley's (1963) study of non-contractual relations in business.

<sup>47</sup> Salma's husband stopped providing for a mistress so his income was now spent on his family and Salma could afford to stop doing paid domestic work.

<sup>48</sup> The *Nueva Recopilación de Leyes del Reino* which regulated domestic service in Spain until the nineteenth century ruled that servants who left their masters without agreement must leave the region,

work for someone in what Bourdieu (1965: 223) termed ‘the next concentric zone’—people in the same community, the same street or quarter. In the past this was structurally possible as people ‘employed’ their neighbours, but it was not usually the case for workers I met during fieldwork who have increasingly worked for unknown employers, geographically distant and socially unconnected to those they have worked for previously. Workers from the Gharb region often switched between the cities of Rabat, Tangier and Casablanca, making it even less likely that secrets revealed could be damaging.

Usually workers left families in such a way that their services would not be recommended to employers’ acquaintances anyway. When I was with workers about town they did, however, sometimes see ex-employers in the city centre, and workers often recalled details of their personal lives which could have been damaging if revealed to people who knew them. But a main concern for domestics who saw former employers was to avoid recognition; meeting would only be embarrassing. When Miriam spotted an ex-employer across the street she suddenly linked arms with me and talked animatedly. Later she explained: ‘I wanted her to think: “That can’t possibly be Miriam, talking to a foreign girl. It must just be someone who looks like her.”’ This embarrassment of domestics meeting former employers, akin to meeting an ex-boyfriend in the street, is related to the fact that a relationship that was private now features in a public space. Problems of equality which were kept under control by the reinforcement of a household hierarchy making one woman superior to another are flaunted. The two appear on an equal footing; both may be out for leisure, both may be wearing designer jeans.

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while dismissed servants could work at another house in the same locality (Casares 2004: 205). On domestics’ gossiping see Horn (2004: 228) for Georgian England, and Dresch (2006: 212-3) for the Gulf: Sharjah’s citizens demand that the state discipline public space to eliminate ‘disturbing gatherings’ of Asian domestics who may disseminate ‘the secrets of citizens’ houses’.

The indefinite quality of domestic arrangements worked, of course, both ways. Rarely were trial periods agreed upon, so employers who wanted to get rid of workers they had initially welcomed as daughters felt they had to come up with excuses such as long vacations or house-moves in which the worker would no longer be required. Others, sensing workers were going to quit, showed detachment: ‘If you want to leave, just leave. What are you waiting for? Do you think there’ll be a firework display?’ was how this employer Miriam was trying to avoid had said goodbye. Not surprisingly I sometimes heard contradictory versions of an exit story, the employer claiming she told the domestic to leave, the domestic insisting she told the employer she was quitting. To take up Hondagneu-Sotelo’s point, it was reminiscent of people who, sensing a break-up is imminent, rush to be the first to say, ‘you’re dumped’. In both contexts power, or at least avoidance of hurt, is on the side of the decision-maker.

The end was nearly always emotional. The lack of contract which meant Rahma left Hayat after nine years also meant Hayat could dismiss Zineb, her new worker, when Rahma suddenly came back. It was Zineb’s turn to be hurt: ‘They were like my little sisters,’ said Zineb of Hayat’s young daughters—for whom she had cared for two months. ‘It’s like I’ve got a hole in my heart ... I never want to be *mrsma* in a house again.’ Zineb pulled her elbows in to convey a sense of being trapped. *Mrsma* comes from the root r-s-m, like *rasmī*, ‘official’. Another worker explained: ‘... like when you have an official job, with a contract saying you will always work for them.’ The implication was that being *mrsma* meant not having the freedom to move on. But Zineb did not have a contract, so the lack of freedom she sensed came from an emotional tie, in this case to Hayat’s children. By remaining unattached, working here and there for various clients, Zineb would avoid forming another such tie and would be the one in

control. Otherwise, ‘people will just bring someone else in your place and, “byebye to you!”’

Fatima, my Océani friend of the ‘toiling class’, commented on Zineb’s dismissal saying: ‘She’s not savvy, that one. She doesn’t understand. She should say in the beginning, if you don’t like me, give me a month’s notice ... Don’t wait until you’ve found another girl and then employ her before telling me.’ This preemptive defence is more commonly used by older women with greater experience than workers of Zineb’s age and is seen by many employers as a new and shocking development. One said: ‘Now it’s they who impose conditions on us. They state their hours, refuse to do the ironing, or to stay the night. “If that doesn’t suit you, *Allāh y’āwenik* (goodbye, lit. God help you).”’ Such stipulations which remove workers from the unconditionally loving ‘daughter’ role sit ill with the patronising view that they should be grateful to have work and are therefore a suitable recipient of charity. That workers show themselves to be choosy is no doubt the cumulative effect of having worked for several households; they are equipped with knowledge of work elsewhere and are able to make comparisons.

Malika, having worked in ten households, made numerous comparisons of Dār Sebbari with other *ménages*, starting with the size of the apartment and the lack of space assigned for her own use, and moving on to household management and décor. A major criticism was that the Sabbaris were ‘not clean’. Nadia asked Malika to mop the floor twice daily and on return from work would often take off her socks to walk across the floor barefoot in order to detect dirt.<sup>49</sup> But Malika pronounced: ‘If she wants to be clean, she should have a *système*’, as in other households for whom she had worked, whereby indoor sandals were left at the front door to be worn by anyone who came in. The floor

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<sup>49</sup> Tom McDonald (2011) examines relationships between people and floors in China and, inspired by Ingold’s ‘barefoot’ approach (2004), suggests much is to be gained if anthropologists attend to the ground beneath their feet.

then would not need a second mopping. Malika further criticised Nadia's failure to separate out different garments for washing: 'Underwear should be washed separately, in a separate bucket that isn't used for anything else.'<sup>50</sup> This was brought on by Nadia placing a flannel she had used to wash herself on the kitchen side. 'The kitchen side! I wasn't going to touch it. It stayed there for hours. Then I picked it up with a plastic bag and poured bleach everywhere.' Dirt, which Douglas (1966) defined as 'matter out of place', was probably categorised differently in each of the ten houses where Malika had worked. She had absorbed each household's theory of dirt to the extent that almost everything was dangerously dirty to her and her hands were suffering from the use of so much bleach. At home in Fès her mother, sisters and aunts accused Malika of *l-weswās* (neurosis, whispers in the head): 'You weren't like that before you started working in houses.'

By drawing on outstanding practices from each of her ex-employers Malika was able to make unfavourable comparisons with her current ones, thus fuelling a claim of superiority over them. This probably served to counter her more general feeling of inferiority.<sup>51</sup> The complement of this is that women who had employed many workers could also make comparisons between them, as Nadia did: 'Soraya didn't complain when we asked her to scrub all the pans with *jīkz* (wire wool) and *ṣābūn* (traditional soap), and she's a lot younger than you!'

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<sup>50</sup> On the rationalisation of housework in this style in England see Lethbridge (2013: 23).

<sup>51</sup> Malika once remarked to me that Zahra was friendly with her when no-one else was around, but whenever Najat (whom Latifa had brought up and with whom Zahra was particularly intimate) was there, Malika felt ignored. 'I'm like a stone. You can leave me on the shelf, pick me up, put me back, throw me against the wall. I'm just a stone to her.'

## CONCLUSION

While the mercenary approach of workers who ‘follow the money’ goes unremarked in other professional contexts, it is often criticised in the context of domesticity.<sup>52</sup> As Carrier (1997: 18) suggests, ‘Criticisms are likely to be most articulate when areas of life hitherto outside the Market realm become incorporated within it.’ Domesticity in Morocco has always been a ‘family’ thing, a charitable thing, the very act of making kin out of poor people constituting a good work. Complaints about materialistic workers perhaps mark a transitional phase in which their profession, in a half-baked way, is becoming part of the labour-market. In other sectors, a contract and a stated wage delimit the working relationship, protecting the two parties so that neither is dependent on the potentially changeable *khayr* of the other: the kindness of providing and caring like a mother and the reciprocal kindness of staying and serving like a daughter. So whilst ‘staying put’ is elsewhere a matter of fulfilling a contract rather than being grateful, Moroccan domestic workers are charity cases, whose departures signal an unthankful rejection of the gift of maternal care.

We have discussed the controlling and infantilising aspect of gift-giving. By paying the worker a lower wage and ‘making it up’ in kind (clothing, unwanted items, presented as gifts rather than payment), not only is *ajr* accumulated and the identity of the rich donor constructed through a contrast with the ‘poor’ recipient but a sense of debt is also created. Historically this meant no contract was required to insure workers stayed—they owed their patrons loyalty and depended on them for support. Today increased mobility, connectivity with strangers, and awareness of the availability of

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<sup>52</sup> Carrier gives the example of reproductive technologies by which ‘natural impossibilities’ become choices that can be purchased. Natural resources are another domain whose incorporation in the market excites controversy. Cf. Duxbury (1996) for a criticism of arguments for restricting the scope of markets in such domains and Sandel (2012) on the moral limits of markets.

jobs, mean workers have other options, and usually still no contract to bind them. Added to this is the fact that paying even live-in workers a monthly albeit derisory wage has become standard practice which effectively gives them a regular chance to walk out with cash in hand.<sup>53</sup> The very fact that workers are unknown to employers (even if they arrive by a chain of connections which enables them to be *ma'rūfa* in name) means arrangements are disembedded: there has been no sharing of life, no multiplex ties to make leaving complicated. And because they often hail from elsewhere (l'Océan, as we saw, is something of an exception), workers who leave employers in the lurch will probably never have to face them again.

It is easy for both employers or workers to point the finger at bad practice, but the root of the conflict seems to be the incomplete transition of this sector into the market, which leaves arrangements to be regulated by contradictory sets of values. Most people were trying to do 'the right thing' whilst also protecting their interests in a context where everyone feels somewhat hard done by: employers because domestics no longer seem as 'faithful' as they used to be and workers because they are still not treated like other kinds of worker. In the Moroccan domestic-service sector, modelled on quasi-fosterage, the door is open to trust, affection and generosity, qualities which supposedly characterise moral relations between members of a household. But it is also open to disloyalty, exploitation and ingratitude, not unheard of in the family either.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The availability of an 'exit' option, made possible by the punctual liquidation of debt is, Godbout argues, what characterises the market model and makes it so attractive (Godbout 2000b: 25).

<sup>54</sup> Exploitation and inequality within family groups is well-documented in the literature on household petty-commodity production (e.g. Harris 1982, Brass 1986, Lem 1991, White 1994). See also England (1993) for a critique of the neoclassical assumption that individuals do not behave as self-interested actors in relation to their families. Cf. Carrier (1997: 18).

## CHAPTER 4

### **SERVING NEIGHBOURS, SERVING STRANGERS: MARKETS AND MARKETPLACES**

In Chapter 1 we made a distinction between the help used at two kinds of parties: in l'Océan neighbours and kin were called upon, in Hay l-Fatih a professional team. These are two extremes. At one end we have the village-like model, where everyone knows everyone, neighbours are 'like family', and kinship disguises inequality in long-term relationships so that work is not always explicitly rewarded. At the other end we have people hired for a short-term purpose and with whom, once they have been paid, no relationship need continue—the transaction is atomised (cf. Polanyi 1957, Plattner 1989). In this case the actors are, or may as well be, strangers, but this does not matter too much as they stay only for the duration of the party. In between is the live-in worker, something of a cultural oxymoron, who in effect is hired to be family. This raises a series of problems, apparent in Chapters 2 and 3. If she is not a neighbour or kin, who is this hired worker and where does one find her? And can she be trusted? The present chapter explores the significance, for *sha'bi* Moroccans, of knowing people, or at least knowing people who know people, which is often something of a pretense, and how, in the absence of an everyday acquaintance between potential workers and employers, marketplaces where strangers can meet take on new importance.

## FROM COMMUNITY TO MARKET

When talking about the *medīna* or l'Océan during the bygone neighbourly era, people often denied the existence of *kheddāmāt* (servants): 'We didn't need them.' What they meant is not that there was little housework to do but that there were always people around who could 'help'. This sort of labour is invisible in official statistics. Neighbours were one resource, family members who were staying as quasi guests were another. I asked Souad, now in her 60s, about her childhood in the *medīna*: 'Did you have servants?'

No, we didn't. We did everything ourselves. And there was always a cousin, an aunt, a widowed family member who came to live with us. They would do the kneading for bread and the washing. We didn't need a *bonne* (maid).

The use for domestic labour of women who were dependants of the household (often through some form of kinship) seems to have been common in both town and country.<sup>1</sup>

Hayat remembers how they hired *garçons* for outdoor work on her father's farm in the Taza region but had no need to hire help for domestic tasks.

My mother did the housework with us—my sisters and me. Or we would have *les dames*,<sup>2</sup> especially in the summer; the destitute, who came to stay with us. The house was always open, you see. They would come and stay a few months or they would come in the day and then go home at night. And while they were there they would help us. Especially with washing clothes, as we didn't have a washing machine, or with cleaning the grain.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The marginal dependent relative who figures often in nineteenth-century English literature is typically female; their male counterparts are expected to join a profession such as the church or the military, according to their class.

<sup>2</sup> Hayat always spoke to me in a mixture of French and Moroccan Arabic. I presume she used *dames* (ladies) rather than *femmes* (women) to imply they are not young women but women of age and dignity. If not kin, they would have been women known to the family.

<sup>3</sup> The autobiography of an Englishwoman Emily Keene, who married the *Sharīf* of Wazan, suggests this practice occurred in nineteenth-century Morocco: 'My household consisted of an English maid I had brought from England, a Spanish cook, and two Moorish women for my personal service, *and as many more as I liked to requisition, for the house was full of women of all kinds*. To a Shereef's house, which is a Sanctuary, rich and poor flock to be assisted in their different troubles' (Keene 1912: 6, emphasis mine).

Souad and Hayat's childhood homes were havens for 'floating widows', the term Holmes-Eber uses for Tunisian widows who 'move from relative to relative so that the burden of their support is shared evenly among kin' (2003: 95-6). Susan Davis points to a similar arrangement in her Moroccan village study, where a widow or divorcee can subsist by staying with kin and doing housework, 'to justify her presence' (Davis 1978: 424). The women who helped in Hayat's household were not necessarily kin but the principle is the same; they had access to food, company and a roof over their heads, and in return they helped with domestic tasks. During my fieldwork I met several older women who had lived in this way. Koutouba, in her 50s, lived for a while with a friend:

She was a little bit well-off and *dārt fiyā l-khayr bezāf* (was very good to me). The lady worked in a hospital canteen and brought food home: bananas, apples, meat, fish. She didn't have to buy it. But what did I have [to offer]? I had my arms [she indicated her biceps]. I used to sweep the floor and do the washing and the cleaning.

Zineb was in a similar position. Originally from the countryside of the Gharb, she moved to live rent-free with an acquaintance in l'Océan in order to find work. When I visited it became clear that Zineb's host relied on her for nearly all the housework. A Moroccan commented, 'People feel sorry for you: "Let me give you somewhere to live and some food, but first, sweep the floor, clean this, fetch that ..." There's nothing free.'

The principle of work to justify one's presence is central to these arrangements and adds complexities to the ideal of Moroccan hospitality noted by admiring travellers to the region. As elsewhere, visits between new friends tend to follow a pattern of declining levels of hospitality. For the first visit gifts are brought (traditionally milk and sugar) and, after food, guests will be chided if they attempt to help carry dishes out to the kitchen. But on subsequent visits gifts are superfluous, insulting even ('Don't keep

on bringing things, this is your house!') and help is no longer rejected; indeed not to help out would be an imposition. One domestic worker argued that: 'A woman has to work wherever she goes, even if she is a guest, she needs to *nudd* (get up)<sup>4</sup>, and clear away and do the washing up, then they will invite her again as she was not *taqīla* (heavy) on them.'<sup>5</sup>

Historically, and within the *sha'bi* ideal, domestic work is assigned to people one knows, or at least whose family one knows.<sup>6</sup> For *sha'bi* Moroccans domestic service is embedded, woven into the fabric of common life (Plattner 1989, Carrier 1997). Those in need receive care and give work, and it makes little sense to talk of a labour *market* for, in Gudeman's (2001: 10) words, 'The market realm revolves about short-term material relationships that are undertaken *for the sake of* achieving a project or securing a good. In the communal realm, material goods are exchanged through relationships kept *for their own sake* (emphasis his).' The *sha'bi* ideal sees domestic work by poor acquaintances as a by-product of patrons' care, not the other way around. The importance for *sha'bi* quarters of Rabat of this familial or 'cousin' labour, as I would call it, is hinted at in Findlay et al.'s (1984) demographic study. Analysing data from an unpublished 1977 employment survey they found that

In the medina 26.8 per cent of households had relatives outwith the immediate family staying with them. This may be compared with only 14.0 per cent in the 'centre moderne'<sup>7</sup> (Findlay et al. 1984: 50).

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<sup>4</sup> Writing on women in rural Morocco, Maher maintained that: 'To recommend a girl highly, people say of her "*Ka-tnud*", or in Berber, "*da-ikerr*", "she gets up", meaning that she is always submissive and ready to serve' (1974: 111).

<sup>5</sup> I wonder how a male guest, unable to counter his consumption with domestic work, avoids being a burden. Male visitors are in fact rare. One regular visitor at my former host-family in Marrakech was my host-father's brother. The women quietly complained among themselves whenever he arrived because of the extra work it meant.

<sup>6</sup> Slavery constitutes an important exception but we do not have space to discuss it here.

<sup>7</sup> The 'centre moderne' is the area originally assigned as the administrative and residential home for the French, including what is now Hassan, Residences and Centre Ville.

The fact that ‘in the “*centre moderne*” 16.8 per cent of households had a “maid” who lived permanently with the household’, compared with only 2 per cent in the *medīna* (ibid.), suggests that distant relatives staying in the household may have fulfilled the function of the ‘maids’ in other quarters.

Moroccans maintain that it has become more difficult to get people to help them on this ‘cousin’ labour basis; wage labour has become the norm for urban women, and a greater proportion of girls are now in school so fewer are available for aiding relatives, neighbours and patrons with domestic work. If people must now employ rather than simply care for those who do their domestic work, the ideal would still be to employ someone known instead of a stranger. But even this is no longer a given. The trajectory of Ilham, a worker from the Gharb, is illustrative of the shift from working for known employers to working for strangers. She told me about starting work at the age of 15 or 16 in 1996:

‘I worked in Rabat but I didn’t know the city. But in those days you didn’t have *wa ʿī* (awareness). I worked but I didn’t go out. If I had gone out, I would have got lost ... There were no mobile phones.’

‘But weren’t you scared the first time you left home to work?’ I asked

‘No, you went to people who were *ma ʿrūfīn* (known).’

‘From the family?’

‘No, not from the family but ... the one who took you there was from the family. And the people of the house [i.e. the employers] were *ma ʿrūfīn ʿandū* (known to him). *Madmūna* ([You were] guaranteed).’<sup>8</sup>

‘Ah, so that’s better than now?’

‘No, now is better. You can change if you don’t like it. You can find a job with more money ... You phone the *samsār* (broker). He says, “Okay, leave.” He phones someone else and you have another job ... He makes it easy.’

Although Ilham’s move from employers whom her family knew towards strangers is, in part, a natural progression which came with her age (she was now in her 30s) and

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<sup>8</sup> The custom of a guarantor for domestic workers has served in many societies to regulate both the treatment and conduct of workers. In seventeenth-century Japan, it was encoded in law to crack down on theft. The guarantor was required to at least be from the same province as the servant or have personal connections to the servant or his family (Nagata 2004: 214).

increasing independence, it coincides with a more general change. Note that her contact with the employment broker is facilitated by a mobile phone. Maroc Telecom's sales slogan; '*ālam jadīd yunādīkum* (a new world calls you)', is not inappropriate (see Figure 4). Dealing with strangers is a relatively new problem.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 4: 'A new world calls you'. Advertisement on Maroc Telecom's website, retrieved September 2013.

Employers struggled to find people that they know and therefore trust to work for them, because the people they would have employed through distant links of family were now picking up their phones and shopping around. Many women in l'Océan during my fieldwork articulated a choice between employing a stranger or employing nobody. The old ties that linked them to poorer people seem to have broken down, so they no longer *knew* anyone who was prepared to work for them. But the way l'Océan residents expressed this is that '*l-kheddāmāt mā baqāwsh* (there are no workers

<sup>9</sup> Some of the employment brokers I met in Rabat had been operating for at least twenty years. Salahdine's (1988) study also reports the activities of *samāsira* in the larger cities 26 years ago. There is little reason to think that they did not play a role before that too.

anymore),<sup>10</sup> a complaint that is reminiscent of ‘the servant problem’ of twentieth-century Britain. Celia Fremlin, an Oxford graduate who took jobs in British domestic service as a way to investigate class divisions in the 1930s noted the difficulty of the working and employing classes meeting:

The present chaotic methods of bringing together employers and employees ... not only discourage many girls from entering service, but also once again provide a bonus for the bad mistress and the incompetent maid. Neither mistress nor maid has any really effective method of finding out anything about each other except by the exhausting and wasteful method of trial and error (Fremlin 1940: 168).

Several women on my street in l’Océan claimed to have employed a domestic worker in the past but to have given up the practice because of the growing impossibility of letting a stranger into the house: ‘How can you know what she will be like? *T-tiqa mā baqātsh* (there’s no trust anymore).’<sup>11</sup> Again, this was expressed in general terms, and as a new phenomenon. Trust linguistically is expressed as something that is *in* people.<sup>12</sup> But practically it exists *between* people; it is a product of people knowing each other, so the apparent scarcity of trust stems from a lack of relationships rather than a national shortage of trustworthy people.

I would argue that trust between strangers never has been particularly strong.

Writing on Jordan, Shryock argues:

If Balgawi hosts must ‘fear’ their guests, it is because hospitality creates a momentary overlap of the inner and outer dimensions of a ‘house’ (a *bayt* or *dar*). As both a name and a space, a *bayt* can be identified with a set of physical

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<sup>10</sup> Studying the fishing industry in North America Doeringer et al. (1986) similarly found that Italian captains who recruited from among Italian kinsmen, ‘often complain about the “shortage” of crewmen. Their complaint means, however, that they could not find enough men whose families and friends they know—not that there was a true shortage of qualified job candidates’ (1986: 51).

<sup>11</sup> One Moroccan employer whose family originate in Meknes but who has lived in Rabat many years suggested original Rabatis are particularly ‘*méfiants*’ (mistrusting): ‘They are afraid of new people and don’t welcome others. But if you get close to them, you find them ‘*extra*’ (extraordinary. i.e. excellent).’

<sup>12</sup> To express that a person is trustworthy Moroccans say: ‘*fiḥū/fihā t-tiqa* (lit. in him/her is trust)’.

structures, the kin who inhabit them, and the persons and properties attaching to these. Throughout the Arab world, houses are marked by a strong desire to receive visitors and, at the same time, to safeguard their own interiority, which is often described as *hurma*, as ‘sacredness’ or ‘inviolability’ ... Because guests are not members of the house, they must be delicately received ... Hospitality creates a moral space in which outsiders can be treated as provisional members of the house, as aspects of its *hurma* (Shryock 2004: 36).<sup>13</sup>

If ‘the problem of how to deal with strangers’ (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 94) is solved by hospitality, the problem of how to employ strangers requires a different sort of hazard protection. It is a modern problem—in the past people employed those they knew. When the known people no longer want to do domestic work for people they know, or the people who work are no longer known, some *sha’bī* households cease to employ—it’s not worth the moral risk. Those ex-employers I met in l’Océan were now getting by on their own; either children were grown so did not need constant attention, or grandmothers were present to take some of the load.<sup>14</sup> A woman could be called in every other week to help with the *grand ménage*, or what in nineteenth-century England was called ‘the rough’, ‘the scrubbing, elbow grease and heavy work’ (Lethbridge 2013, Light 2007). This could be someone whom they had employed on previous occasions or a woman from the *mūqef*, the day-labour market (lit. a stopping or standing place). A

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<sup>13</sup> The Muslim institution of *ḍayf Allāh* (lit. guest of God) which facilitated travel in strange country has largely fallen out of use because people are afraid to host strangers. Significantly, the time frame in which damage could occur was limited to three days only. Cf. Rivière on hospitality amongst the Amerindians, ‘extended more through the fear of strangers and as a form of self-protection rather than through any charitable motives’ (1984: 81), and Dresch (2012) on *aḥkāṁ al-man’*, roughly ‘laws of protection’ which deal with escort, refuge and hospitality among Yemen’s tribes.

<sup>14</sup> Chant (1991) similarly found that Mexican women’s entrance to the labour-force was followed by the aggregation of new household-members—often mothers, who move in to help with housework and childcare. Pasternak et al. (1976) use cross-cultural data to argue that extended-family households often develop when a woman’s work outside the home makes housework and childcare difficult. Yanagisako replied that we might just as easily conclude that extended-family households encourage women to work outside the home as the other way round (1979: 173). Nevertheless, when a shortage of labour is felt, asking additional kinswomen to co-reside seems a likely option. Conversely, conflict between household women is often cited as a reason for the fragmentation of extended households into separate units (Cuisenier 1976: 147). Cf. Hamadeh (1999) on Lebanese co-wives. Lamphere (1974) isolates factors promoting the cooperation or conflict of women in domestic groups.

worker recruited here may be a stranger but at least she would come, do her work, and leave, minimising the potential consequences of a lack of trustworthiness.

My host-father pointed out that these labour-markets, instigated by the French to tidy the droves of *chômeurs* (the ‘unemployed’) into places where Europeans could conveniently hire them, are not to be found in quarters of the city originally inhabited by Moroccans, but only in newer quarters that were once all but wholly European. The *mulīn d-diyūr* (household heads) of the *medīna*, like those of the bygone l’Océan that he spoke of nostalgically, had no need of a marketplace for locating workers; they could knock on the door of a likely candidate, or better still, send someone small to fetch her. The need for grounding the labour-market in a physical place is evidenced in the literature on the Protectorate period when the most common encounter between ‘Muslims’ and ‘Europeans’ was that which took place daily between a domestic and her female employer (Brac de la Perrière 1987: 14).

## **THE MŪQEF**

Academic literature uses the term ‘day-labour market’ and attention is fixed on male day-labourers.<sup>15</sup> The North African women’s *mūqef* has not been the subject of serious ethnographic study, but something of its history is traceable through passing references and oral accounts. For example, French researchers in Douar Doum, one of the *bidonvilles* that sprang up around Rabat, reported female day-labour in the 1930s (Baron and Baron 1936: 176). The predominance of laundry-work (this has lessened in

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<sup>15</sup> Planel (2008) discusses day-labourers in a Yemeni town. Blaauw et al. (2006) and Harmse et al. (2009) provide South African examples. Ordonez (2012) studied Latino immigrant day-labourers on street corners in California. See Valenzuela (2003) for a review of the day-labour literature.

importance since washing machines entered middle-class homes) meant the women who hired themselves out by the day to work for Europeans were called ‘*femmes ṣābūn*’ (soap women, from French *savon*; the Moroccan Arabic verb to launder is *ṣbbn*). In his study of domestic workers in Algiers during the 1950s Borrmans wrote that, ‘on certain streets in Bab-el-Oued, there is a “Fatma”<sup>16</sup> market ... A woman calls them or shouts for them from her second or third floor: “come up, there’s work today”’ (cited Brac de la Perrière 1987: 55). Thirty years later Jansen noted that the *mūqef*, or day-labour market, in an Algerian town provided work for mature women who were not prepared to accept the conditions of a live-in maid while they waited for a better position (Jansen 1987: 208).<sup>17</sup>

Whilst other domestic workers are hidden from sight in people’s homes, *mūqef*-workers are by necessity in public space. Because of the general separation of poorer neighbourhoods from wealthier ones, people who know where these women live are people like them, not people who would employ them, so there is nothing to be gained from waiting at home for a knock at the door. Women must appear in the streets where potential employers pass by. Just as parents are warned in a handbill about the dangers of Northhamptonshire mop-fairs in 1870, where employers could pick up new domestics (often runaways from other jobs), *mūqef* workers are ‘stared at and picked out’, by ‘masters about whom they know nothing and who know no more about them than the car or horse which they judge by appearance’ (Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 8-

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<sup>16</sup> The French literature gives the impression every Moroccan domestic was called Fatima. In Algeria, ‘*une Zohra*’, was the term for a maid. There are parallels with Irish ‘Bridgets’ who came to work in England.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Salahdine (1988: 123-4) on the Moroccan *mūqef* for domestic workers and Ossman (1994: illustration no. 13) on a plumbers’ *mūqef* in Casablanca.

9).<sup>18</sup> The public aspect of their work brings them dangerously close, in local opinion, to prostitutes.

The first passers-by I approached on day one of my fieldwork were able to point me towards a *mūqef* in the city centre where women sat along a wall on the perimeter of a public park. This was known as l-Jarda ('the garden') and was considered the *mūqef* most associated with 'corruption' (*l-fesād*), in this context meaning prostitution. Other labour-markets were to be found in l'Océan, Agdal, Hassan, Hay Salam (Salé), each with its own feel. The Agdal *mūqef*, located next to the general market, is one of the largest. As I approached, a woman standing in the middle of the road raised her right hand and moved it from side to side with her fist closed, a charade of scrubbing a wall, accompanied by the shout '*kheddāma?*' Women sat or stood alone or in twos or threes along the road and when cars approached, raced each other to the driver's window. I was told that the *mūqef* in Agdal never empties from morning to night. As with l-Jarda, a shift in the type of work offered is said to occur partway through the day making some women avoid the place completely. In the words of a l'Océan *mūqef*-worker:

They do two jobs. When you clean and you dust, you finish your work and you go out the door with your honour (*karāmtik*). But if you clean and dust and then you go with *mul d-dār* (the man of the house) you don't leave with your honour. If you have *l-fesād* (moral corruption) in you, you can become rich but you can't have your honour.

Some maintain, however, that at the Agdal *mūqef* domestic workers to serve or wash up at an evening party can decently be hired later in the day.

By contrast, the women in l'Océan go home at the noon call to prayer if they have not been hired by then: 'It's shameful to stay any longer,' explained one. Their numbers are small and they nearly always sit together in a tight row on one side of the

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<sup>18</sup> On open-air labour markets, primarily for agricultural workers but including some domestics, see also McBride, T. (1976: 75).

road. They claim a special status for their *mūqef* which sets it apart from those associated with ‘corruption’ (*l-fesād*), because it is located where there used to be a *bīrū* (from *bureau de placement*, employment office). One of the *mūqef* workers related that a young worker placed by Mehdi, who ran the *bīrū*, jumped from a high window; the *bīrū* was investigated and shut down, and rumour has it that Mehdi went to France. Despite the tragic circumstances of the *bīrū*’s closure, the comparative respectability of a *bīrū* that existed in the past casts a shadow of decency on the site today, and whenever anyone mentioned the shame (‘*ayb* or *hashūma*) of sitting on the street, they were reminded that ‘there is no ‘*ayb* because everyone knows there used to be a *bīrū* here, so this is where women sit for work and nothing else. It’s *ma ‘rūf* (well known).’ The *mūqef* in Hay Salam (Salé) is a middle-ground between the l’Océan *mūqef*’s respectability and close-knit community, on the one hand, and the volume of workers and employers that pass through the Agdal market, on the other. A newspaper article claims the Hay Salam *mūqef* is 25 years old but gives no details about its origin (Amrani 2012).

Seasonal work is usually associated with the tourist trade and agriculture but domestic work too, has its seasons. We are familiar, after all, with the term ‘spring cleaning’. The l’Océan *mūqef* was empty on rainy days, only in part because the women do not want to get wet waiting for work; thorough cleaning involves taking mattresses, cushions and carpets up to the roof terrace or balcony to air and rid them of mites, which is not going to be done on rainy days. But as well as being weather-dependent, demand for domestic work ebbs and flows with cycles of the calendar. The extra outlay for the year’s schoolbooks in September, for example, meant many families could not afford to hire a worker that month. On a weekly cycle, Fridays—a holy day when male attendance at mosque prayers is higher than other days—are low days for domestic

work. Women are too intent on preparing the special Friday couscous<sup>19</sup> to think about getting someone in for extra cleaning.

A Moroccan equivalent of our term ‘spring cleaning’ might be *l-‘awāshīr*, which could be translated ‘festivities’. Moroccans will usually do a thorough clean or ‘*grand ménage*’ before feast days,<sup>20</sup> but they will sometimes call doing a big clean ‘*‘awāshīr*’ even if no feast day is coming. In the run up to any ‘*īd*’ hopes for work at the *mūqef* will be higher than at other times but women who attend only during ‘*awāshīr*’ periods will not be looked on kindly by more regular workers. Whilst there is more domestic work during this time, workers themselves need more cash because festivities mean extra expenses. Essentials become dearer as traders know people will pay a high price, ‘*īd*’ not being a time to go without. A discussion just before the Prophet’s birthday demonstrated that work at the labour-market was considered a limited good (cf. Foster 1965, 1972). A worker complained:

‘This month is ‘*ayān*’ (tired i.e. there is little work). People, even the *muwazzafīn* (office workers), don’t have enough to pay us.’

‘No, I’m sorry but [office workers] are not like us. They have some money’, another woman chipped in.

‘The problem is that there are more washing machines than women. And we Moroccans have lots of children. *Qūwat l-bashar* (too many people). When there are too many people in a country, that’s when we should make a war. To get rid of some. Then there would be more for everyone.’

The shortage of work meant that women ran into difficulties if they appeared to be working for the ‘clients’ of others. Workers throughout the year at the l’Océan *mūqef* often talked about moving to a different *mūqef* where they supposed there would be more work. To my knowledge these plans were not carried out, probably because new-

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<sup>19</sup> This dish takes around three hours to prepare.

<sup>20</sup> This is a religiously meritorious act believed to earn *ajr* (Buitelaar 1993: 180). See Chapter 3 of the present study for a discussion of *ajr*.

comers would be received as a threat to the women who habitually frequented the other market.

Usually a *mūqef* is not subject to any regulation but the women's own.<sup>21</sup> Often clients came in search of a particular worker whom they have hired from the *mūqef* on previous occasions, but when new clients did not specify whom they wanted the workers tried to refer the decision back to the client. For example, when a *mulat d-dār* said to a worker, 'you come, and bring one other', another of the workers told her: 'Decide which one you want and take her.' This saved workers from being accused by others of taking jobs out of turn but meant they had to endure being looked up and down by clients.

Although everyone had as much or as little right to be there as anyone else ('the street belongs to the *makhzen*'), young women were discouraged by other workers. This seemed to be done out of kindness as much as fear that they would take older women's work. In Hay Salam one morning I noticed a woman much younger than the others. Someone nodded towards her saying: 'It's her first time here today. See, her face is still white, not like ours.' The young woman, Hakima, related how she had seen the others sitting there before, had recently lost her job in a factory, and decided to join them until she found something else. Hakima had worn her oldest *jellāba* and covered her dyed and styled hair with a scarf, but despite her best efforts did not look like a *mūqef*-worker. On arrival the women told her: 'It won't suit you. You are still young and the work is hard.' Youthfulness, I discovered, is not something employers sought. Indeed, when I had ventured that I could make up a second person for a job as only one worker

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<sup>21</sup> Although policemen often patrolled the grocery part of l'Océan's marketplace asking oversized stalls to tuck themselves in or move elsewhere, they did not approach the *mūqef*. Women in Agdal reported being taken by the police during the international music festival to a 'charity' where they are fed bread and lentils: 'as though we are in prison,' and locked in until evening: 'They cleared us up so they could say we don't exist ... They don't write on our papers that we are workers. They write that we are beggars. All we want is to work for our children.' The problem is one of association. The words 'street', *kheddāma*, and prostitute are all part of the same lexical bundle.

had attended the *mūqef* that day, the woman of the house had looked me up and down: ‘You’re *ṣaghīra* (young, small). You’d faint. It needs someone who has ...’ She patted her biceps. When paying a stranger to work by the day, clients judged, on appearance, a worker’s ability to get heavy work done quickly.

Dress also played an important role. A worker in Agdal said she does not wear ‘nice clothes’ to the *mūqef*: ‘They won’t hire you. Or they won’t pay you. They’ll say: “You’re wearing a *jellāba* that’s better than mine.”’ Hiring a worker who looked needy amounted to a charitable act which could earn them *ajr*, and cast the wage-labour relation back to the *sha‘bī* days when everyone looked out for everyone else. Moreover, needy workers were thought likely to accept work for lower wages, as indeed Hakima was. The *mūqef* workers had not forcefully turned her away, and when a client came looking for cleaners she had gone with two workers to the house, but the others refused the job when they saw paint needed scrubbing off the floor and the pay was only 100dh each, so the client dropped them all back at the *mūqef*. Hakima thus went home at midday with nothing, commenting that she would not come again. She was so desperate for cash that she would have accepted the work for 100dh but she was restricted to working only under conditions that the others thought appropriate.

The pay on offer at l’Océan’s *mūqef* ranged between 50dh and 200dh a day; the hours varied hugely and it was not uncommon for work to begin only at 12 noon. Employers sometimes refused to name a price until they had shown workers the property or even until the work was completed. They often downplayed the difficulty of the job. For example, the *mulat d-dār* who had turned her nose up at my biceps told another worker that the job was ‘dusting, washing the dishes.’ That worker declined the work, commenting, ‘There is no such thing as dusting! It will be *temmāra* (hard work) ... I’d be better off staying at home.’ In l’Océan elderly residents, probably not of an

employing class, but too frail to do the work themselves, tended to offer the lowest pay. On these occasions Nafisa, who lived in one of the divided-up Spanish houses on the *mūqef* street, often persuaded women to accept the work.<sup>22</sup> As a long-standing *sha bī* neighbour to these elderly residents she upset the otherwise impersonal approach of the *mūqef* workers, who by definition were not neighbours, by persuading them to take on charity cases. When an elderly man wanted two workers to clean his house for 80dh each, Nafisa said to the two women present: ‘Well, go with him!’ She shook her head: ‘Otherwise they’ll just sit here all morning!’

The workers did often sit there all morning. Some days there were maybe eight women at the l’Océan *mūqef*, but rarely were more than two hired, and often no-one. In fact, demand for workers seemed too low to justify the outlay for the journey, one or two bus rides at 4dh each (a journey that could take almost two hours) and the same back again. What motivated their attendance at the *mūqef*? And why the *mūqef* over regular work? Several women had work for regular clients in l’Océan one or two days a week but would still pass by the *mūqef* on the way to employers’ houses. A well-documented fringe benefit of markets is the sharing of information (Crawford 2008: 110). Workers gave others the low-down on clients who chanced to be walking by and shared advice on economising: where to buy cheap food, work opportunities for their menfolk, and guidance on accumulating *ajr* for the hereafter. *Mūqef* workers would also borrow money from one another and most days receive gifts of charity (bread or coins) from local residents. Some of the workers performed charitable acts of their own

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<sup>22</sup> Nafisa would sit with the women on her way to or from the market but she never took a job herself although she needed money. Nafisa often asked me to find her a ‘girl’ like myself who could lodge with her to help her pay the rent. The time I had offered my own elbow grease and been turned down, the *mulat d-dār* had asked Nafisa who was sitting with us, if she would not make up a second worker. Nafisa had replied, ‘there’s no shame in it.’ The *mulat d-dār* had said, ‘no, there’s no shame in it. These days, work is work, whether you write, or you work with your hands, or you work in houses, it’s all the same.’ All this to say, that it was out of the question that Nafisa would do this work; if she became that desperate for money she would go to a *mūqef* further away from her house.

towards neighbourhood cats: ‘God commands us to look after them.’ And so the mornings passed productively whether or not anyone was hired.

I frequented only one *mūqef* regularly, naively choosing the one closest to my house in l’Océan. Workers never go to their nearest *mūqef*. A complete reversal of the *sha’bī* ideal of helping one’s neighbours, the public element of *mūqef* work propels workers as far from their homes as practically possible. Those who live in Salé thus pay for the bus ride to a *mūqef* in Rabat. Those who live in l’Océan or the *medīna* do not go to the l’Océan *mūqef* or the nearby l-Jarda but to Agdal or Hassan. On Nabila’s way to l’Océan from her home in Salé, her bus passes near the Hassan *mūqef* and terminates just beyond l-Jarda where she gets off and walks another 15 minutes to reach the l’Océan *mūqef*. Her reasons for not frequenting l-Jarda, like those of many of the other women, were based on ideas about its reputation.<sup>23</sup> But why not go to the *mūqef* in Hassan?

‘My brother lives there.’

‘But what’s the problem?’ I asked.

‘It’s not nice to be seen in the *mūqef*. It is *hashūma* (shameful).’

‘This is the lowest of jobs’, another worker interjected.

‘But they know you do it, don’t they?’

‘No’, replied Nabila, ‘my brothers do not know I come to the *mūqef*. I tell them I work by the month [i.e. a semi-permanent position with one family].’

One morning I spotted one of *Mui* Latifa’s daughters, Raja, making her way along the stalls of secondhand clothes at the market-end of the street. I instinctively did not want to be seen and leant back behind Nabila, who noticed and asked me what was wrong. ‘I know that lady—I don’t want her to see me here.’<sup>24</sup> I was afraid Nabila would

<sup>23</sup> The workers quoted proverbs warning against spending time in the wrong company: ‘*Hota waḥeda katkhanniz sh-shawārī* (one [bad] fish makes the basket go off)’; ‘*Ma’a min shuftik ma’a min shabbahatik* (the one I’ve seen you with is the one who is like you).’

<sup>24</sup> Nabila proceeded to give me an account of all her dealings with that household. Everyone at the *mūqef* knew Dār Sebbari—they would hire a *mūqef* worker if a regular worker left them in the lurch and they could not get a former worker to cover.

be offended at my not wishing to be seen in the *mūqef* (saying hello to Raja would raise the question of whether I should introduce Nabila and the others to her, women with whom I knew she would not wish to appear to be on too friendly terms) but I later learnt that although being seen is vital for hiring,<sup>25</sup> no-one wants to be seen there by those they know personally.

That first time I saw Latifa's daughter Raja, she moved on without seeing me but a second time, she caught me sitting on the pavement with four workers.

‘What are you doing here?!’

‘She's come to see me,’ Nabila was quick to respond.

‘Yes, I've come to see my friends.’

‘These are your friends?’ Raja's eyes were laughing. Once she had moved on, another worker observed,

‘You saved her there, saying she'd come to see you.’

Nabila had wanted to make sure Raja did not think I was at the *mūqef* as a job-seeker because of the shame they associated with this work. What I wanted to avoid, however, was the repetition of the story to *Mui* Latifa and her other daughters next time I visited Dār Sebbari. This is precisely what happened and the usual warnings were issued, ‘be careful Mary! Not everyone is good, not everyone is like us. Don't trust everyone!’ The *mūqef* women were not people of l'Océan, nor did they come with any wider family to recommend them. They were to be approached with all the risks associated with detached, unvouched-for strangers. Because of the lack of trust people had in them, they usually worked under supervision, a precaution only practical for short periods of time.

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<sup>25</sup> This is taken to an extreme by women in Agdal who stand in the middle of the road. The l'Océan workers content themselves with sitting on the pavement but complain loudly if people park cars directly in front of them thus blocking them from view.

## EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Employment agencies, which have sprung up world-wide since the 1980s, offer the convenience of a *mūqef* as a place where workers may be hired, with the added dimension, supposedly, of a screening and matching service. In contrast with the *mūqef*, agencies also deal in requests for long-term live-in workers rather than just day-work. The transactions which occur here are modern in that they are atomised and disembodied—people otherwise unconnected to the agency staff can be recommended through it to people equally unconnected. Domestic work is the only point at which the parties relate to each other, but the worker will be coming into the employers' house repeatedly or semi-permanently.

Academic studies have questioned the contribution agencies make to formalising the industry (Blackett 2011: 27-8, Tsikata 2011), but Moroccans who ran agencies were keen to stress to me how they differed from the 'illegal' service offered by a broker or *samsār* (f. *samsāra*), of whom more below. Nonetheless, the term *samsār* is sometimes still applied colloquially to people running agencies because they functioned as *samāsira* (plural of *samsār*) before they set up offices. Fouzia, whose office was in a low-income neighbourhood in Salé, told how she had been a *wasīta* (intermediary):<sup>26</sup> 'I just did it for friends ... But there were always problems—girls would not be paid, or would quit, leaving children alone in the house.' This led her to set up a *sharīka* (company) whose 'legality' in her eyes, made all the difference to how the girls she placed were treated:

It's *qānūnī* (legal). The girls must be paid. They must be fed, they must feel comfortable in the house. If these things are in place, of course, she will work well. The girls cannot just leave suddenly. If they have a problem, they

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<sup>26</sup> The word *wasīta* does not have the negative connotations of *samsāra*.

telephone the agency and the agency finds another worker for the household head and another job for the girl. They work it out. But they don't just run away.

Naima, who had worked in this field for twenty years, made the comparison of conditions for live-in work between when she started and now:

They used to sleep in the kitchen, to be beaten, not given good food, eat on their own, to never take their aprons off the entire day, not be allowed to change into their [non-work] clothes, no holiday. Now that doesn't happen. They are treated well. They have the weekend off and 20 days holiday a year. They used to earn just 800dh a month, now they earn 1500, 2000, 3000, 4000 even.

The transition from agent to agency for both Naima and Fouzia involved locating themselves in offices, distinct from their homes,<sup>27</sup> and producing literature with a name, address and description of services, or at least, in Fouzia's case, a sign on the office door. Fouzia's agency was called after the family name; Naima's had an anglicised name (along the lines of 'International High Class Service') which I never heard anyone use. Her office was simply referred to as '*and Naima* (at Naima's). The rest of Naima's publicity flier was in French:

**NEW COMPANY FOR MADE-TO-MEASURE SERVICES !!!**

Domestic workers, nannies, nurses,<sup>28</sup> gardeners, cooks, chauffeurs, carers, security guards, are all professions that we handle.

...

Cleanliness, discretion and confidentiality will be assured by our team and our made-to-measure contracts.

Her agency may be 'new' but 'Naima' had been a household name for much longer. Her work used to be lucrative: 'We were few. In the beginning there was just Soumiya, Mehdi [of the famous l'Océan *bīrū* turned *mūqef*] and me. Now there are so many agencies.' Soumiya and her agency, 'Allo ma bonne' (again, I never heard workers or

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<sup>27</sup> Fouzia's office was in the same building as her family's home but on a different floor.

<sup>28</sup> The flier is in French but 'nurses' is oddly in English, and may refer to care workers.

employers refer to it as anything but ‘*and Soumiya*’), feature in an online article (Amrani 2006). Whilst others were chattier, Soumiya refused to grant me an interview, telling me I could find out everything about how her agency functioned directly from the government, ‘because we follow the laws of the Ministry of Work.’

Fouzia, Naima and Soumiya’s agencies functioned by matching workers and employers and charging the employers. They had clients in all the big cities of Morocco. Naima explained that she charges employers 500dh, which covers the placement of up to three workers. If the employer does not get along with the first, they have the right to a second, or a third but only within three months of the initial fee. If the employer wants a fourth worker within three months or a new worker after three months, they pay another 500dh. Naima thought she might place twenty or forty girls a month or none at all: ‘It’s not that there aren’t workers or people wanting them. It’s just that there might be no matches.’ Whilst Fouzia claimed that workers come to her, ‘one will bring her friend who will bring another’, Naima made biannual trips to the countryside to source workers<sup>29</sup> who then remained in the countryside until she telephoned to say work was available. Those who lacked skills could also stay with Naima or her daughter while they were ‘trained’.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively some employers preferred unskilled workers whom they could train themselves: ‘... then they pay them a lower wage. Maybe they would pay someone 1500dh, but a *kheddāma* who knows nothing, they pay her 1000dh and train her.’ This kind of live-in position is reminiscent

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<sup>29</sup> Aicha, the *directrice* of ‘Safmar’ agency in Rabat, interviewed by Amrani (2006) said she made trips to several rural regions (Sidi Slimane, Beni Mellal, Taza, Mehdia, Ben Guerrir) to establish a network.

<sup>30</sup> A worker, Sharifa, related that Naima had asked her what wage she expected—1500dh a month and a day off on Sundays, and what she knew how to do: ‘Well, well, you’re asking a [high] wage (*temen*) and you don’t know how to do things!’ Sharifa had protested that she was a fast learner: ‘People just have to show me how to do something once and I can do it’, but Naima replied, ‘The girl (*l-bint* – the worker, even if adult may be called a *bint*, unless married) has to know everything already.’ She offered Sharifa neither work nor training.

of the ‘petty places’ of nineteenth and early twentieth-century servants in Britain which were seen as ‘stepping-stones to better things’ (Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 7).

Lengths of stay varied enormously, and depended on how the employers treated the workers and how well the worker did her job. Naima explained that when she discovers that particular workers habitually leave employers, she refuses them further work; in the same way she stops providing workers for clients with whom workers never stay long. This contrasts with the rumours about Mehdi’s business—that he would create problems between workers and employers in order to earn more through further placements. This practice is reported in the press and ethnographic literature on *samāsira* (Salahdine 1988: 104), and is exactly what the ‘legal’ agencies pride themselves on not doing. But ‘legal’ (*qānūnī*) meant different things in different agencies. As I discuss in Chapter 7, the Moroccan labour-code does not cover domestic work (probably Soumiya was operating according to an idea of law calqued from another employment sector), but Fouzia and Naima, when using the word ‘legal’, seemed to be referencing a partly shared idea of what was right and fair. For Fouzia, a ‘legal’ amount of holiday was one month (August), and from Saturday afternoon until Sunday afternoon every week or two days every other week. Naima talked about ‘the weekend’ off and 20 days leave a year, to be taken when it suited the employer.

Neither Fouzia nor Naima mentioned the word ‘contract’ (although it appears on Naima’s flier), and I saw no papers on the desks in their offices, whereas Soumiya’s office was a whirlwind of paperwork. Whilst Soumiya did not want to be interviewed, I was able to build up an idea of how her agency worked from Nabila who has worked for Soumiya’s clients many times, taking live-in work on a weekly or monthly basis.

You sign a piece of paper ... The paper says whether you are going to do the cooking or the cleaning or the children or everything, if the house is small. So if you were brought to do the cleaning and they say, do the cooking, then you can

say: ‘No, that’s not on the paper. I wasn’t brought to do the cooking.’ You can phone Soumiya and she sorts it out.

I personally knew no-one who had employed a Moroccan worker through an agency. I had contact with a wealthy family in Souissi who had recently used one for the first time to employ a Filipina nanny and a Senegalese cleaner (more of this phenomenon in Chapter 7) but found their Moroccan cook through their security guard (who had asked the security guard of a neighbouring villa, who had asked his employers’ domestic, who had suggested her sister). Dār Sebbari had a tenuous link to Naima, as she was related to a girl they had brought up. Yet the Sebbaris did not take workers from her agency despite frequently finding themselves short of domestic help: Naima, they said, did not ‘know’ the girls she placed. The workers I met in Rabat who had used these agencies had jobs in Hay Riad. I suspect that much of the demand for agencies came from this kind of residential area, where people are distinctly not *sha’bī*. *Sha’bī* people do not trust agencies.<sup>31</sup>

### ***SAMĀSIRA***

Agencies seem always to have evolved from the work of *samāsira*, (sing. *samsār/a*, broker or agent). *Samāsira* are often more approachable than agencies for *sha’bī* employers, not only because they are generally more affordable,<sup>32</sup> but also because, being a person, not a company, the *samsāra* can be approached as a ‘friend’ (whether

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<sup>31</sup> A rise in the importance of agencies for placements correlated in mid-nineteenth-century England and France with an increase in urban migrants who needed middlemen to connect them to clients (McBride, T. 1976: 77).

<sup>32</sup> Fees seemed to vary from 200dh to 600dh. Malika suggested that *samāsir* adjusted their fees according to the distance they were sending the worker: from Fès to Rabat the employer has to pay 400dh, from Fès to Casablanca 500dh, within Fès 200-300dh.

she is or not is a separate matter). *Samāsira* are not in the yellow pages. One is always referred to a *samsāra* by someone else and the *samsāra* will usually want to know who this was, according to the *sha 'bī* ideal of people being 'known'.

*Samāsira* in general have a bad name in the press where they are associated with employing *petites bonnes*. Human Rights Watch (2012: 18) report that 10 out of 20 former child domestics they interviewed said an intermediary arranged at least one of their jobs.<sup>33</sup> The Moroccan press portrays *samāsira* as predators roaming weekly markets in the countryside to take advantage of the poverty of rural families (Kūwīrī 2013) and mentioning the word *samsāra* on the streets during my fieldwork made people switch to a whisper or warn me: 'Don't go with them', 'They are *khaybīn* (nasty, lit. ugly)', 'Don't trust them'. A local shopkeeper gave me the phone number of a *samsār*, but only on the condition that I not tell the *samsār* who had given me his number: 'Don't say my name, don't say "the shopkeeper", don't tell him this street, nothing.' Similarly when I told my host-mother that I was going to the home of a *samsāra* and would probably stay the night she was extremely concerned.

The *samsāra* in question, Warda, was introduced to me by a friend of a friend without the usual warnings. Warda explained how her business worked: 'It's not an agency ... This is just something I do for people ... People tell their friends.' She asserted that she placed only girls whose family she knows—for example, sisters or friends of someone she has placed before—and outlined to me an oddly formal process of obtaining permission, transfer of responsibility and a guarantee of good behaviour:

I always go to the family. Not if they are far away—in that case I go to an uncle or aunt who lives here. I say to them: 'Are you sending this girl to work?' They

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<sup>33</sup> On *samāsira* see also Human Rights Watch (2005: 13-5) and Moujoud and Pourette (2005).

say, 'Yes.' I say to them: 'Will she create problems, steal?'<sup>34</sup> They say, 'No.' So I don't have to worry about placing her? No. Do you guarantee her? Yes. They always say yes.<sup>35</sup>

A steady stream of people called either at Warda's house or the workshop around the corner where she taught women to make decorative items for the home—a project for which she had received micro-credit from an NGO.<sup>36</sup> 'Warda is *ma 'rūfa* (well known)', explained a young woman who came to the shop in search of domestic work. Warda lived in a suburb where housing is cheaper than in Rabat itself, with a high concentration of recent migrants from the countryside. She maintained a strong link with her village of origin where her mother still lived. Warda's mother could phone with news of local women looking for work and Warda would send for them when something came up.

Warda also put workers up in her home so they could leave one employer and begin working for another without having to go back to the countryside in between, thus saving transport costs and saving face. But it also seemed convenient for Warda, who never had to pay for a childminder and could come home to a cooked meal. While 'hosting' the workers Warda assessed their aptitude for domestic tasks, and although she did not emphasise 'training'<sup>37</sup> so much as 'testing' workers while they stayed with her, she offered advice and encouraged them to take opportunities to learn. She had a cookery book they could flick through to get ideas from the pictures. *Batul*, a kind of

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<sup>34</sup> Warda suggested that workers she places sometimes do steal from employers. When this happens she removes them from that client and sends them to another. 'Then I have to see if they do it again. I take their [national identity] card. They can't work if they don't have the card.'

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Graham (1988: 19) on domestics in Rio de Janeiro of whom it was required they, 'name someone to guarantee their conduct' and the dangers of hiring through agencies.

<sup>36</sup> The basic product involved covering a plastic basket or tray with printed fabric and trimming it with fancy ribbons.

<sup>37</sup> Warda claimed to send workers who did not know how to do much in the house to people who employ multiple workers so that the other workers can show the new worker how to do things.

voluntary assistant and friend of Warda's, was useful in showing transitory workers the ropes.

Wages for the women Warda placed varied between 1500 and 2000dh a month, the latter for a live-out position. She explained that many workers she placed had become like one of the family of their employers: 'Most of them stay until they get married. The employers give her a wedding party and she visits them later with her children.' This seemed to be more of an ideal than a norm in practice as Warda went on to say that: 'Today people are *mādīyīn* (materialistic). They follow the money. They might find better paid work in a café. The employer will come home and find that suddenly there is no-one to take care of her baby or cook dinner ...'

Each client pays Warda between 300 and 500dh and she might place five or six workers a week. This could easily mean taking 6000dh a month in fees, but Warda seemed to have little idea of her income from placing workers compared with her home décor business, or how much she spent in overheads: transport or phone calls. Her transactions were embedded in her social life rather than being a separate sphere.<sup>38</sup> In addition she made *ghayf* (pancakes) for sale to friends and neighbours and managed rental properties. Warda stressed the importance of this diversification: 'You can't just do one thing. It's not possible. What if there are no domestic workers one day and you have to pay the rent?' Warda's husband, meanwhile, as well as being involved in the shop ran a further line of business, hiring out construction vehicles and buying and selling used cars. Rather as the waiting domestics could be used to do odd jobs, the cars awaiting sale could be used to drive Warda and her workers to new clients.

Warda kept a notebook beside the phone in which her 13-year-old son Adam (when not at school) would write down the number of anyone who called (Warda is

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<sup>38</sup> Carrier (1997: 45) argues that from the Western capitalist viewpoint: 'The Market appears to exist only if it is a sphere of life rather than the whole of life.'

illiterate). Adam once showed me the notebook with pride: ‘Look how many people we’ve got!’ Warda and Idriss worked in contacts, that was their business. The more people they knew, the more houses they could rent, domestic workers they could place, and the more cars, pancakes, and decorative baskets they could sell.<sup>39</sup> Warda’s knowledge of people set her apart from other brokers. Just as the agency women, Naima and Fouzia, were keen to stress the difference between their business and that of ‘illegal’ *samāsira*, Warda wanted to show me what she was not. We took a shared taxi to a busy transport hub in her district, a suburb south of Rabat. ‘*Sūq n-najāh* (the market of success)!’ joked one of the other passengers. Warda explained, ‘If anyone doesn’t know where to go [for work] they can come here.’ She led me to a cluster of shelters (*barārik*) next to the roundabout and asked where ‘Halima’ was. We were pointed inside a blue tarpaulin shelter where about a dozen women, young and old, on makeshift benches sat staring back at us and Halima explained that she placed them for domestic work on a first-come, first-served basis, charging employers 200dh for each placement. Halima told us that she does not take fees from the workers, just the employers, but once we were out of earshot Warda asserted that Halima takes money from workers too: ‘A worker who gives Halima 100dh will be placed first. It’s *ma ‘rūf* (well known).’ We then walked back across the roundabout and Warda indicated a man sitting on the bench with two women next to him:

It is *ma ‘rūf* (well known) that he is a *samsār*, and he also sends girls as prostitutes. He places anyone with anyone. He doesn’t know the women, he doesn’t know their families. They could steal. We had a lady from this *samsār* and she stole the whole house. He doesn’t know the employers, or his clients. He treats the women like *biḍā*’ (goods). This is not what our Lord wants. I go and find out about the girl’s family. I don’t send workers to just any client. My clients are all *naqīyīn* (clean).

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<sup>39</sup> All contacts, whatever they were interested in, were given Warda’s business card, which mentioned only the home-décor business. Outside the shop a sign pointed people to the ‘agency’ with a picture of a key, suggesting the real-estate line of their business but not the domestic service side of things.

Halima and this bench-based *samsār* were ‘well known’ in the community in the sense that people knew what they offered and where to find them. To meet Warda people came to her home or shop, much less accessible without personal acquaintance with someone who knew her than this public roundabout. But a placement, in which I, regrettably, played a role, showed me that ‘knowing’ people is a flexible concept.

My friend Zineb had found her sister, Sharifa, a job working for a policeman’s wife (considered an excellent position because of the status of the policeman) but Sharifa did not like it. She left and stayed two nights at the house of Zineb’s employer, then Zineb asked if Sharifa could stay with me and if I would phone Warda to find her work. I told Sharifa what I believed but had no evidence for, that Warda only sent people to those she knew; I also told Warda what I did not know for sure, that Sharifa was *ma‘qūla*, (reasonable, decent—perhaps the equivalent of ‘*sérieuse*’), which I based on my knowledge of her sister, Zineb. I also said that I knew their family were good people, having stayed with them in their village. In retrospect I saw that what I had done was typical of what everyone did: overstated my knowledge of people in order to move things along and keep others happy.<sup>40</sup> Warda then did exactly the same. She met us in l’Océan, took one look at Sharifa, and telephoned the potential employer: ‘My friend from England knows them. She does research about domestic workers and she knows them well.’ I felt *very* uncomfortable. Warda went on to ask Sharifa a series of question, relaying the answers over the phone: ‘How old are you? Where are you from? Have you worked before? Have you worked with children before? Do you know how to cook?’ Once the employer was satisfied, Warda said to her: ‘The girl seems *ḍrīfa* (nice) and

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<sup>40</sup> To do otherwise appears simply antisocial. I came to ‘know’ people on both the supply and demand sides. But this was thanks to other Moroccans who had introduced me to them. I thus found myself caught up in relationships of give and return which meant refusing to make introductions was to withhold the very thing I had sought from people myself.

*derwīsha* (straightforward) to me, not one of those people who wear nail polish.<sup>41</sup>

Hearing this, Sharifa laughed, a little hurt, and looked at her hands. They were red, chapped and wrinkled.<sup>42</sup>

Idriss drove us to Agdal (in one of his cars for sale) where he and Warda struggled to find the right apartment building. It was clear they had never been to there before. When we arrived, the employer repeated her enquiry about whether Sharifa had worked previously. Warda said: ‘I look at their hands.’ She took one of Sharifa’s hands and held it up. It struck me that Sharifa’s skin would be wrinkled anyway, from washing clothes and dishes at home in the countryside. In reality her only experience of paid domestic work were the two weeks she had worked for the policeman’s wife. No attempt was made to contact the former employer for a reference.<sup>43</sup>

‘The main thing is that she takes good care of my children,’ the prospective new employer said.

Everyone agreed. A moment later Warda got up, nodding to me, ‘Let’s go.’

Sharifa looked overwhelmed; the employer panic-stricken, ‘You haven’t told me anything!’

‘Well, there she is, there you are. She is *ma rūfa* (known). *She* knows them.’ Warda nodded towards me. ‘And she is *ma qūla* (reasonable, *sérieuse*), which is what we wanted. That’s the main thing. She said 30 [i.e. the wage is 30000 riyal/1500dh pcm].’

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<sup>41</sup> Nail polish is often a point of contention between domestic workers and their employers. One retired worker told how she had once worn nail polish and her employer had said, ‘Are you on a level with nail polish?’ The employer’s husband had told his wife to be quiet: ‘What’s wrong with you?! You’re a woman and this is a woman.’

<sup>42</sup> I have not seen a Moroccan domestic worker use gloves. Lethbridge points out that until rubber gloves were manufactured for household use in 1960s Britain, the condition of domestics’ hands was a ‘painful badge of their profession’: ‘Edna Wheway cleaned fifty copper pots and pans every week with green carbolic soap; her hands became so badly chapped in cold weather that trying to grip the feathers of the pheasants she had to pluck made her weep with pain. Many servant girls recalled how ashamed they were of their hands - rubbed red and raw by silversand, vinegar and boiling water. “I always had to wear white gloves, me hands were too common looking...”’ (Lethbridge 2013: 71).

<sup>43</sup> The situation was reminiscent of recruitment in the 1930s in Britain, as observed by Fremlin: ‘I remember answering an advertisement that seemed to require the very highest of high-class references; and when I approached the lady in question, she engaged me on the spot, without asking so much as my name. As for the ‘references’ that had figured so large—I might have been the trunk-murderer, a spy, a leper, a homicidal maniac; she did not raise a finger to find out ... I have been astounded at the flimsy evidence on which most mistresses will accept the bona fides of a completely unknown female who says she knows how to wash up. Not one in six ever demands references; and not one in twenty ever takes any precautions to see that the references are genuine’ (Fremlin 1940: 21-22).

Warda even got Sharifa's name wrong. I was increasingly aware that the responsibility for 'knowing' the worker fell on me. I was the guarantor, the *ḍimāna*. The business only functions with this structured in. Someone must 'know' the worker. Back in the car Warda and Idriss discussed who might have given Nuzha Warda's telephone number:

'She is probably the daughter of someone,' said Idriss.  
 'Her husband is in Saudi Arabia, I think.'  
 'Oh, then she's the daughter of so and so.'

It struck me that neither of them knew Nuzha herself but a supposed link to one of her parents sufficed to tick the box of 'not sending workers to just anyone.'

Two weeks later Sharifa's sister phoned to ask if Sharifa could come and stay with me again: 'She left.' Sharifa claimed she was required to work night and day and that her 'day off' was from 2pm only, but the last straw had been, according to Sharifa, when her employer had accused her of hitting one of her daughters. Sharifa went back to Warda the following day to see if she had a job 'in a house without a child'. Her bad experience had not put her off using Warda as a broker again, just off caring for children. Sharifa stayed several days with Warda, during which time Warda decided she 'does not have a way with work.' Warda told Sharifa she needed to wait a few more days until something became available but Sharifa, tired of waiting (and not earning), went back to her village. Warda, for her part, was not put off sending workers to the same employer. She placed Alkabira there immediately after Sharifa had left, but this second arrangement was shorter-lived than the first. Alkabira stayed only one night: 'She's crazy! I will not work for a woman like that!'

My involvement with Warda's placement of Sharifa made me resolve not to give Warda's telephone number to anyone else. I realised that workers who asked me if I knew of a *samsāra* were taking Warda's number as though I recommended her

services and those who quoted my name to Warda would always be received as if I had recommended them. So when Lamia, the mother of some friends in a Gharb village I visited, asked me, or told me rather, to find work for her daughter, I explained that the *samsāra* I knew did not always place workers with people she knew so that there was no guarantee that the employers would be reasonable. Lamia's response was, 'Of course the *samsāra* doesn't know people. She can't possibly know them. She only knows money.' A broker is nonetheless part of the *sha' bī* world.

## NON-PROFESSIONAL INTERMEDIARIES

When I asked workers and employers who found their job or their domestic for them, the answer was often a long chain of connections: so-and-so asked so-and-so, who asked so-and-so ... Whilst I met workers who used *samāsira* or even agencies, the majority of connections, particularly among *sha' bī* Moroccans, were made by acquaintances who put people in touch with each other without payment.<sup>44</sup> Writing on Nepal, Saubhagya Shah describes how intermediaries who arranged domestic service were not paid directly by either party but accumulated 'favour', from both sides, which could later be translated into connections, jobs, patronage, or other benefits (2000: 94). In the same way, finding a domestic worker or job for a friend, neighbour or family member in Morocco is seen as *khayr* (a favour or kindness), sometimes even described

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<sup>44</sup>A preference for sourcing workers through acquaintances is not unique to *sha' bī* Moroccans. In her nineteenth-century *Book of Household Management* Mrs Beeton advised that: 'There are some respectable registry-offices, where good servants may sometimes be hired; but the plan rather to be recommended is, for the mistress to make inquiry amongst her circle of friends and acquaintances, and her tradespeople. The latter generally know those in their neighbourhood, who are wanting situations, and will communicate with them, when a personal interview with some of them will enable the mistress to form some idea of the characters of the applicants, and to suit herself accordingly' (Beeton [1861] 1907: 14).

as doing *ajr*, that is, a deed earning credit in paradise. Some Moroccans also spoke of connecting employers and workers with one another as a *wājib* (duty).<sup>45</sup> It was in this spirit that Hayat contacted me to ask if I knew anyone who could work for some friends of hers. She expressed it in terms of obligation because of her attachment to them: ‘They are very dear to me, and asked this thing of me.’ By extension, if Hayat were dear to me, I would help her to help her friends.

I contacted Hafida whose younger sister, Aziza (23), I knew to be looking for work. Having already had my fingers burned, I told Hafida that I could not recommend Hayat or her friends but that I would put them in touch so she could judge for herself if the work was suitable. I also told Hayat that I could not recommend Aziza; only that her family had been good to me and that Hafida was a good friend. Hayat and Hafida’s discussion of the job involved very few details. Most strikingly no-one mentioned the working hours or the wage. Talk about money sits ill with an exchange couched in terms of kindness, of doing one another favours. Nonetheless, the moral or faith-based economies of *khayr* and *ajr* dovetailed with the monetary market in that *samāsira* could cash in on favour accrued along chains of connections, as happened whenever someone, like myself, put people in touch with someone like Warda. Warda’s friendly persona and informal way of talking about the work made the transition between connections exchanged for moral credit into connections for cash payment almost imperceptible.<sup>46</sup>

Domestic workers like Hafida, who provided a link to her younger sister, often function as gatekeepers to the supply side of the labour-market. Workers know how

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<sup>45</sup> The distinction between *khayr* and business is not clear-cut. A newspaper reports that a sixty-something *samsār* in Hattane (Khouribga region) ‘... insists that it was never his intention [*niyya*] to trade in girls, but he was doing it ‘*min ajl fa’l l-khayr*’ (in order to do good)’. He was intermediary for 20 girls, charging their employers 1000 – 1500dh per placement and receiving gifts including old furniture and worn clothes (Mshat 2013: 8).

<sup>46</sup> On the commodification of social relations see Smith, G. (1990). Gudeman (2001: 19) points out that ‘goods may pass through phases to serve as both commodities and gifts, shifting along a continuum from market exchange to reciprocity (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986).’

well other women in their village work, particularly sisters and cousins. Ilham's sister, for example, had worked with a relative, Rouqia, and reported to Ilham that '*sūqhā khāwī* (lit. her market is empty, i.e. she is unproductive).' Ilham would therefore not consider asking Rouqia to join her on a two-worker job although they happily spent their days off together. Recommendations work both ways – family members and friends of the worker may hope that having one member of the group working for a 'good employer' will soon lead to similar placements for others.<sup>47</sup> They are sometimes disappointed, as are employers, for workers do not always wish to make introductions.

Some workers were alert to the fact that their connections were a valuable resource and took umbrage when this was not passed back to them in material form. Malika, who worked for Nadia at Dār Sebbari, sent for her younger sister Ikram to work for Nadia's sister, Salima, who lived in Casablanca. Salima had been looking for someone for two months and had wanted to telephone a *samsāra* (note that a *samsāra* for these *sha'bi* Moroccans, although more acceptable than an agency, is a last resort). When Malika offered to ask Ikram, Salima had said she would be given her *cadeau* (gift) but although Ikram worked for Salima for six weeks Malika said she received nothing from Salima. Malika complained that 'you have to pay a *samsāra* 500dh,' and felt she should have been given an equivalent sum.

Hafida's story, touched on above, presented an example of repeatedly connecting workers with an employer she knew to be 'bad'. Hafida had worked for the same employer for eight years during which time she became acquainted with a *mulat d-dār* in the same apartment building: 'She's like a friend'. *L-Hajja*, as Hafida

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<sup>47</sup> The importance of employee referrals has been noted for blue-collar workers in North America: '[they] usually provide good screening for employers who are satisfied with their present workforce. Present employees tend to refer people like themselves, and they may feel that their own reputation is affected by the quality of the referrals' (Rees 1966: 562). Cf. Heuzé, writing about Dhanbad (India) on the pressure exerted by job-seekers on wage-earners from the same village to help secure employment. He observes that recommendations always emphasise connections with the guarantor (Heuzé 1996: 96).

respectfully called this woman, had asked her to bring her a domestic worker from the *blād*. One of Hafida's sisters knew a girl, Miriam, from school. Miriam had never worked as a domestic before but her mother took one look at Hafida's pale skin and ample figure and said: 'Are you a *kheddāma*? Impossible! You don't look like one. Just by your face, I know you are *ma'qūla* (reasonable) and I'll let my daughter go with you.' Hafida and Miriam would meet on the stairs or hanging out the washing on the roof: 'I looked out for her, I was older than her and I had brought her, and told her mother I would take care of her.' Miriam only stayed one month, however. She recalled that it was Ramadan:

[*L-Hajja*] kept saying, 'clean the windows, lift up the furniture and clean the floor underneath.' All day long, and we were fasting. And I said to her, 'I'm going to spend *'īd* with my family.' She said to me, 'No, you have to spend *'īd* with me. You can't work Ramadan and not the *'īd*. I have guests coming, you need to be here to host them.' I said to her, 'No, I'm going. Give me my pay.' She gave me just 200dh to travel back home. But Hafida halved her month's wage with me. She said to me, 'You can't go back empty handed.' She gave me 500dh.

*L-Hajja* then asked Hafida to bring her another worker. Yousra, the daughter of Hafida's next-door neighbours in the village, was 13 years old when Hafida asked her parents to let her work for *l-Hajja*. 'They said I was still too young for work,' recalled Yousra. But Hafida kept asking until Yousra's parents gave in. Yousra worked for two months, and was paid only 500dh for each month. She complained: *taqarfsū 'alīyā* (they mistreated me). During my fieldwork Hafida began to work for *l-Hajja* herself, having suddenly lost her own job:

'I should never have worked for her. I knew she was like this. I've brought 13 girls to work for her and none of them stayed.'

'13?!'

'Yes, I brought the whole village ... I know she doesn't treat people well. Only in the beginning. I didn't want to work here. She was the one who made me work [for her].'

Whilst Hafida responded to pressure from *l-Hajja* to supply workers, others refused or made excuses when employers asked, and many workers recounted bad experiences of bringing friends and family members to work with employers' acquaintances. Samira had found work for a friend's sister and the girl invited a man into the employer's house: 'When something happens then *you* feel responsible,' she said. Another worker stated: 'Now I don't do it. When people ask me, "do you know a girl who could come and work for me?" I just say, "No, I don't know anyone. All the girls I know are already working."' Similarly, when my host-mother, Touria, got to know Salma at the l'Océan school gates and asked her to find 'a girl to help her in the house', Salma refused politely. She explained to me: 'I couldn't send Touria a girl without knowing her well. What if she should steal or do something bad? Then I would feel responsible and feel bad with Touria. I couldn't.' So Touria asked Salma to come and work for her herself. At the time Salma was working for another employer but Touria persuaded her to come to her house after finishing work each day. These opposing feelings—on the one hand a sense of obligation to help employers by finding workers; on the other hand, a desire to avoid a responsibility that might destroy relationships—were difficult to juggle. Salma and Hafida both ended up, through some sense of obligation, working in positions they did not want.

As well as asking current domestic workers to bring women they knew, it is not uncommon for the descendants of rural families who have white-collar jobs in Rabat to remain attached to their *blād*, and announcements of return visits are often heralded with requests from city-based friends for young women from the countryside to employ as domestics: '*shūft liyā shī bint*, (look out a girl for me).' Employers also asked villa watchmen (*hurās*, sing. *hāris*, Fr. *gardien*), or, in the case of l'Océan, the *concierges* of apartment buildings, and local shopkeepers, to bring workers from their home

communities. The majority of shopkeepers in Rabat come from the Sous valley or other Amazigh areas and maintain strong ties with those regions which are seen as fertile domestic-worker territory.<sup>48</sup>

Some refused, others expressed pity for women who did the rounds looking for work: ‘They tell me they earn 4000 riyal (200dh) a month and it doesn’t pay the rent so I try to find them something.’ Nejlae, a *mulat d-dār* on my street, told me she always asks the building’s *concierge* when she needs a new worker: ‘It’s his job to know lots of people.’ According to Nejlae the *concierge* asks current workers in the building to ask their sisters, other family members and neighbours, or brings someone from his own *blād*.<sup>49</sup> This same employer told me that she does not use an agency: ‘It’s impossible for me to let someone I don’t know into the house.’ An agency differs from a *samsār* or a *concierge* who brings workers as an unpaid ‘part of his job’ because its shopfront visibility means people who have no connection to the agent, who are not known (*ma rūf*) to anyone concerned, may turn up at the door. Although Nejlae did not require a worker she herself knew (and the only ones she did know were her former workers who would no longer work for her), it was important that the *concierge* knew someone, who knew someone ... The number of links in the chain did not seem to matter much. Nejlae’s *concierge* might only ‘know’ the worker to the extent that a *samsār* ‘knows’ the worker, the difference being that he will not charge fees. Are employers recruiting workers through their *concierge* rather than a *samsār* because they do not want to pay a placement fee? I suggest that it is more a question of trust. Employers will trust someone who is performing the service free of charge because the market is then

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<sup>48</sup> One journalist uses the metaphor of the region being a *mushṭil* (plantation or nursery) for domestic workers (Kūwīrtī 2013: 8).

<sup>49</sup> McBride, T. (1976: 75) writing on service in England and France between 1820 and 1920 notes bakers, grocers and butchers were similar channels for the recruitment of domestics.

situated within a moral economy based on ‘doing good.’ The monetary element in a *samsār*’s interactions immediately removes the exchange from this sphere.

The necessity for ‘known’ connections across class boundaries meant many women from the countryside were dependent on someone else to find them a placement. This put them in a very different position from their male contemporaries who, if they went to the cities, found work predominantly in construction<sup>50</sup> or in cafés, a difference illustrated by a conversation between Safae, a domestic worker from the Gharb, and a male friend who had suggested they both find work in Agadir. Safae explained the difficulty: ‘Their work is *bayna* (obvious, visible from the outside). Our work *mā baynash* (is not visible). I know no-one in Agadir.’ She described how men only have to choose a city and call up some *awlād l-blād* (sons of the home-country) with whom they can rent accommodation when they arrive:

They’ll then go and find a construction site and ask if there’s work and the foreman will say ‘yes’. But we aren’t going to rent. A girl needs someone to find the work for her. We need to go straight to the house.

Because they are in the public view, construction sites, like *muwāqif* (plural of *mūqef*) or employment agencies are places workers can access whether they know the employers or not. In this respect they are marketplaces, where strangers can meet. But precisely because they are public, for young women or girls to seek work in this way is risky and shameful. Safae’s predicament, of being dependent on an intermediary to provide access to a private home (‘I know no-one in Agadir’) rather than being able to walk onto a worksite, applied to most young female workers coming from the countryside. Some women with more experience in the city did rent shared apartments, often risking their reputation (Cheikh 2009); others, like Koutouba, lodged more

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<sup>50</sup> Several of the workers I knew had brothers working in construction. One brother earned 60000 riyal (3000dh) month, compared his sister’s 20000 riyal (1000dh).

respectably with acquaintances who hosted them in exchange for housework. Having a base in the city allowed these women to spend time seeking work autonomously—doing the rounds of security guards outside villas, door-knocking, attending the *mūqef* or registering at an employment agency.

## CONCLUSION

Domestic labour in Morocco has historically been arranged between acquaintances, but ties between rich and poor appear to be breaking down. Because trust is vital in the intimate sphere of the home it is still important for Moroccans to employ a domestic who is *ma'rūfa* (known), if not to them, then to someone they know. The modes of recruitment which source relatively known workers remain more prevalent than impersonal recruitment: 46% of 200 workers interviewed by GIZ and MEFP<sup>51</sup> were recruited through familial networks and acquaintances.<sup>52</sup> 25% were recruited through a *samāsira* and 19% found their job by door-knocking, whereas only 10% used an agency (Royaume du Maroc 2011). Because contacts with people of the 'other' class are valuable, particularly in a climate where trust is a 'rare pearl', connections are thus extracted from dependents (workers and concierges) and people, like myself, who are eager to please others. In these exchanges money and trust correlate negatively. When performed as a favour people were unconcerned about the number of links in the chain of connections. But paying an agent or agency to share their connections to people of another class supplied the most 'unknown' workers or employers. The possibility of

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<sup>51</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the Moroccan ministère de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle.

<sup>52</sup> The interviewees were located in Bani Mellal, Fès, Tangier and Rabat.

employing such an unknown person seemed open and necessary only to people who did not identify with the *sha 'bī* ideal.

Whilst *sha 'bī* Moroccans could, and ideally still can, arrange domestic employment through ‘markets’ in the broader sense of networks of embedded transactions which are not confined to a geographic location, Europeans in Rabat, and more recently connection-poor Moroccans, relied on ‘market *places*’ (Plattner 1989), where strangers from the supply and demand sides could meet.<sup>53</sup> We are familiar with metaphorical marketplaces, such as the classifieds in newspapers or online. The abundance of *petites annonces* concerning domestic work in *L’Echo du Maroc*, Rabat’s daily newspaper during and after the Protectorate period, suggests this was a recognised form of recruitment as early as 1914. Similar adverts appear in the classifieds today. These modes of recruitment, like a physical marketplace, do not rely on specific people and their movement between socio-economic groups. Different uses of these markets reflect how open people are to strangers, how important trustworthiness is, how much responsibility they want to bear, how much they want to ask of others and therefore owe them in return, how much to give or to withhold. From the workers’ point of view, in choosing *mūqef* work they traded off the security of having patrons to care for them with the freedom to work only when they wanted.<sup>54</sup> It was difficult to have the best of both worlds.

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<sup>53</sup> Simmel’s [1908] argument linking strangers with traders follows a similar logic; goods not available within a community have to be brought from outside and this necessarily involves an outsider coming in. Cf. Rivière (1984: 81-3) on Guiana who argues trade with outsiders is simply necessary to maintain contact between settlements, even when the incoming goods are also available locally so the scarcity of goods is artificially created.

<sup>54</sup> Ray and Qayum, writing on Indian domestics, found that, as with the Sebbari building, within one apartment building in Kolkata two different time and labour regimes existed, both family retainers strongly tied to one employer and part-timers who may work for four or five different households. They argue that ‘The coexistence of these dual regimes means that servants are aware of the gains and losses from each form of labor. While all agree that part-time work—freelancing—is preferable, they are keenly aware of the costs of autonomy (2009: 91).

## CHAPTER 5

### DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE CITY

Wage in hand, ‘nomadic’ workers embody the free, rational, individual actor, choosing what’s best for herself, and appear to lose nothing in the short term by leaving one employer for another. But they forfeit the long-term stability of being rooted in one place and the promise of a marriage arranged by their patron—a marriage which, in theory, signals the end of working as a domestic and the beginning of life as a full adult. The psychological toll of this rootless, albeit independent life, surfaces often: homesickness, tiredness, aggression, and an almost frantic search for a husband with whom to make a home. Passing a tree in l’Océan with a hefty root structure exposed above ground, Rouqia, who had worked for numerous households, exclaimed: ‘Look at this beautiful tree! Look at the roots it’s got. God willing I’ll be like that. You know, put roots down, have a family and children.’ Rouqia had taken the job of finding a husband into her own hands. Her increased mobility, knowledge of the city, and ability to deal with strangers went some way towards equipping her for this, while her day off provided her with the freedom to look around.

This chapter takes as its subject the activities of workers on their days off,<sup>1</sup> reflecting aspects of domestics' identity as lone female migrants from the countryside and particularly as individuals. I highlight a change for rural women from socialising solely with people known to their families and whose family they also know, to socialising with people who are unknown. This mirrors the shift from working for known employers to unknown ones which I outlined earlier. Existing literature badly understates the wish to form one's own family.

### **LIFE-CYCLE SERVICE, FREEDOM AND MARRIAGE**

As was the case for the majority of servants in medieval and early modern Europe (Laslett 1965, 1977) and up to the early twentieth century (McBride, T. 1976: 84), for many Moroccan domestic workers, service is a transitory stage of the life-cycle and not, ideally, to be pursued after marriage. A study of 200 domestics, carried out by GIZ and MEFP, states that 41% of workers interviewed in cities around Morocco were single, although this category broadens to 74% when widows (16%), single mothers (8%) and divorcees (9%) are included (Royaume du Maroc 2011: 19).<sup>2</sup> This was explained by employers' preference for the adaptability of younger workers who are willing to live in the employers' home and who lack other responsibilities (mainly children of their own), allowing them to dedicate themselves more fully to the work of the employers' household (ibid. 8, 19, 23). To reverse the perspective, the same concern for the

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<sup>1</sup> As Liebelt (2011), Ueno (2010), Huang and Yeoh (1998), and others have done for Filipina and Indonesian workers worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> Ages of workers also reflect that domestic service is, to a large extent, a life-cycle occupation. The GIZ and MEFP study maintains that 30% of domestic workers interviewed were aged between 18 and 25 years, 25% between 26 and 33 years, 22% between 34 and 40 years, 15% between 41 and 49 years, and only 8% 50 years and above (Royaume du Maroc 2011: 19).

undivided commitment of domestic staff was voiced by Ishiguro's (1989) butler protagonist, Stevens, in *The Remains of the Day*, whose overzealous 'professionalism' prevented him from recognising the love he felt for the housekeeper.

Not only does a person's marital status have an impact on their employability or availability for domestic service, but historical demographers have shown that service has an impact on marriage patterns. The correlation between the circulation of servants<sup>3</sup> and 'delayed first marriage' in northern Europe has been established by Hajnal (1982, 1983): Others have pointed to the effect of rural-urban migration on the matrimonial market in Europe (Fauve-Chamoux and Sogner 1994, Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 12). In seventeenth-century Europe, whilst 'being a servant was ... an opportunity to amass wages and marry at a higher social level ... the transitory stage of domestic service with its moral dangers, lasted far longer than expected, often beyond the limits of the normal age at marriage, and could become a permanent occupation' (Fauve-Chamoux 2004: 5).<sup>4</sup> My own experience of Moroccan domestics showed their situation to be similar, with many worrying that people would say of them, '*sherfat* (she's got old)', implying too old for marriage.

The difference in status between unmarried 'girls' and married 'women' in Morocco (Cheikh 2011b: 42) has made spinsterhood a particularly unattractive option so that often, as Lucy states in Surtees' *Facey Romford* 'a bad husband was a deal better than none' ([1865] 2006: 39).<sup>5</sup> Many of my domestic-worker friends looked forward to marriage as a way of establishing a family in which they would be central adult

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<sup>3</sup> This concerned farm servants rather than strictly domestic servants.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Smith, M. (1973) on the possibility of social mobility for domestic workers in Lima.

<sup>5</sup> Newcomb highlights the protective function of having a husband, even just on paper. One maid in Fès, abandoned by her husband when he took a second wife twenty years previously, had not pressed for her right to divorce and explains: 'If I were divorced, it would not be easy. People take advantage of divorced women. A wife is protected' (Newcomb 2009: 75).

members instead of marginal ‘girls’, for, to quote Lucy again: ‘there’s nothing so bad as dependence’ (ibid. 409).<sup>6</sup> Workers were not only carrying the stigma of their occupation but also that of their *état civil* which did not accord them status as ‘full persons’.<sup>7</sup> Crawford observed, ‘The shanty towns stew with men and women unable to form households, unable, in other words, to become full members of Moroccan society, where producing children is a cultural ideal – even in the city, where bearing young workers is not an economic incentive’ (2008: 15). Morocco is said to be experiencing a ‘crisis of the matrimonial sector’ (Cheikh 2011b: 36),<sup>8</sup> marked by decreasing marriage-rates and a rise in the average age at first marriage.<sup>9</sup> With fewer people able to afford marriage, men are increasingly looking for wives who earn enough to contribute significantly to household finances (Ossman 1994: 47, Ali 2010). In this climate of shortage, freedom to meet potential husbands becomes pressing, as it was in Britain post-WWI.

Fremlin’s study of domestics in interwar London consecrated ten pages to the difficulties domestics faced in finding marriage partners. A certain employer could not understand domestics’ demands for leisure time: ‘But Mrs. X is forgetting that what

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<sup>6</sup> It has, however, been argued that marriage is generally the third situation of domination which servants experience. Davidoff argues for Victorian Britain that ‘the majority of girls moved from paternal control, in their parents’ home, into service and then into their husband’s home – thus experiencing a lifetime of personal subordination in private homes’ (1995: 21).

<sup>7</sup> Abu-Lughod, L. (2002: 125). Having recorded life stories of domestic servants in Cairo, she observes that: ‘it is always a rupture to the ideal of women’s embeddedness in family and marriage that accounts for their positions doing work that is both hard and not respectable, and for their not being, in a sense, full persons.’ The social discrimination against single women in Cairo is also emphasised by Mahmoud (2001: 219), who describes relatives constantly asking why women are not married, with those who are married making fun of those who are not and emphasising marriage as a blessing even if they are unhappy in their own marriages.

<sup>8</sup> Cheikh categorises the women of her study who engage in monetarised sexual exchanges as ‘The unemployed of the matrimonial sector’ (2011b: 39): ‘They suffer indeed from a lack of opportunities for marriage and, as a consequence, of their incapacity to conform to that which, for girls without qualifications, remains the ideal of female realisation *par excellence*’ (ibid. 41).

<sup>9</sup> The average age of girls at their first marriage rose from 17 to 27 years between 1960 and 1999 (Rachik 2005: 14), although since the reform of the Moroccan family code the number of marriages of girls who are minors has increased in certain rural areas (Zvan Elliott 2009: 219).

they want time off for is not amusement, but a hard and exacting job; the job of securing a husband in the face of savage competition from the other million superfluous women in this country (1940: 132)'. Writing on early twentieth-century northern Britain, Roberts underlined workers' desire for, 'freedom—above all, freedom to meet men easily' (1973: 222), as an explanation for the decline in residential service. This is understated in much literature, which treats time off as a chance for undiluted 'agency' (being able to do what one wants, whether this is eating an ice-cream or going to the fair), when the question is rather, is there space in which workers can become full persons?

Some city-based workers, like Malika at Nadia's in the Sebbari building, in fact rarely had time off. This was not due to employers expecting domestics to work all the time, but rather to be always *available* for work. Many employers pointed to the fact that they do not prevent their worker from watching television between tasks, or as one person said: 'The worker might not work at all the whole day, and then just at night they might ask her to do something.' When it was suggested that although a worker may not be busy around the clock, neither was she free to go elsewhere, the employer responded that she had never thought of this. Fremlin (1940) describes similar blindness among well-meaning British employers in the 1930s.

What was missing in many cases was an understanding that a worker may need or desire time away from the workplace, not just periods of inactivity. This is tied up with notions of her role as 'one of the family'. In Dār Sebbari this attitude was reinforced by the women Latifa had brought up, who witnessed on visits the 'demands' of current waged domestics: 'She has to go and see her sister every single week?!' exclaimed Najat, a former 'daughter of the house', following an announcement by Huriya (Nadia's current live-in) that she would be spending the night with her sister in

Salé. Najat, an orphan, had never had any *congé*.<sup>10</sup> Where would she have gone? Time off only takes on significance when work becomes the reason for someone's presence in the house, rather than her fosterage being paramount and her work a by-product. Moroccan women do not usually take 'time-off' from their own family. Domestics taking time to go out for leisure is therefore seen as a new phenomenon, often interpreted by employers as workers' getting above their station because they have developed a taste for more than the daily bread the employing family provided.<sup>11</sup>

*Sha'bi* employers who prided themselves on treating their worker 'like a daughter' often pointed out that they took the worker with them on outings at the weekend: 'We go out together.' This was seen as an act of kindness, extending to the domestic worker the conservative principle of not allowing daughters out unaccompanied: it signified that she too was cherished and merited protection, and that employers cared for her moral reputation (and its reflection on theirs), as they did for that of their own daughter. Aged 18, Nadia's daughter Zahra did not go out without being accompanied by her mother, father, brother or one of the women whom Latifa had brought up, such as Rachida. This explained the difference where *congé* was concerned between the lot of Malika and Huriya who were both employed by Nadia. Having a married sister in neighbouring Salé provided a legitimate reason for Huriya to leave the workplace whereas Malika had never asked for a day off, assuming that, with no-one to visit, her request would be received as one to shamelessly wander the streets alone.

Most *sha'bi* households followed this pattern so that, as was common in eighteenth-century England, 'servants were either the beneficiaries of a condescending

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<sup>10</sup> Moroccans use the French word '*congé*' for both a regular 'day off' (*jour de repos*) and longer periods of leave.

<sup>11</sup> A Moroccan woman who had employed the same worker for six years told an agent on the phone that she wanted to replace the girl as she had become, 'full up from bread.' The shopkeeper who related this explained: 'She had saved money and become beautiful. She wants to go out and see things. And that's normal. So she should. But they want her to always be the shy, hungry countrygirl.'

patronage or the accessories of their masters' pleasure' (Hecht 1956: 127). Those employers who were less *sha' bī* gave more time off for the worker to spend independently, which meant she could develop a social life of her own. The Souissi security guard's comment: 'There's no, "my son", "my daughter" here', accords with having little desire to take their worker on family outings.<sup>12</sup> Thus the women with whom I spent most extended *congé*-time around the city were those who worked in non-*sha' bī* residential quarters like Souissi, Hay Riad and Hassan.<sup>13</sup>

Most workers in non-*sha' bī* households were allowed one day off a week, usually Sunday, although sometimes it was a weekday at the employers' convenience, preventing the worker from being able to go out with her friends. Days off were often cut short, thanks to the mobile phone which allowed employers to keep their workers on a short rein. Having been disturbed by an ill and fractious employer on a previous occasion, Nawar, for instance, turned off her mobile when we went to spend a day off at her aunt's house in Salé:<sup>14</sup> 'It's best if I say that I forgot to take the charger with me. That way she won't disturb me!' This Sunday connectivity had two faces, however, and workers usually wanted to have their phones switched on so they could meet up with friends.

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<sup>12</sup> This did not mean they did not interfere where a worker's morality was concerned. My friends who worked in the affluent 'Hay Riad' area told their employers that they met up with me on their days off and one even took me to the bank where her employer worked as manager to introduce me, as a way of countering accusations that she went out to meet men. On the rare occasions workers stayed the night at my apartment they would insist I speak to their employers on the phone—a reassuringly female voice.

<sup>13</sup> It is easy to see how my ethnography is limited; excepting Malika with whom I spent time at Dār Sebbari which was her workplace, and workers who were no longer employed and thus available to meet me on their own terms, all the workers I got to know well were given regular time off. It was in their time off, away from their employers that we were able to talk most openly.

<sup>14</sup> Many workers in Rabat had sisters or aunts living in Salé. Even if workers did not visit them regularly the proximity of these family members lent morality to workers' presence in the city from the point of view of their home community.

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

I came across no migrant village associations such as have been documented for workers in various sectors elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Writing on South Africa Jacklyn Cock noticed the absence in the domestic worker's social world of 'incapsulating circles' of friends or kin from home who had also migrated to the city (1980: 62, 72). Hirabayashi (1986) discusses reasons why some migrants form associations whilst others do not and argues that politicisation is the single most important development leading to the formation of migrant village associations in Latin America. He also points to studies which show that for associations to form, 'migrants to the city must be far enough from their point of origin that frequent visits home are impossible or inconvenient' (Hirabayashi 1986: 10 citing Fischer 1976; Skeldon 1980). Moroccan domestic workers in Rabat were rarely so far from home, and even less likely to be politicised, but I suspect the lack of village associations is due more to domestics frequently moving from one city to another, with only small numbers from each village in any one city at a time.<sup>16</sup> Added to this are the structural constraints of their work which allows them little flexibility in the times they can leave the employer's house. As one, unusually perceptive, employer suggested:

The problem is that domestics don't all have the same time off. Some have Saturday and some have Sunday and some don't have any time at all. And even if they did have the same day off, Rabat is big. One is in Hay Riad, another in Salé, another in Temara. They'd have to spend a lot of money just to meet. So they don't.

Get-togethers between domestics were therefore limited to those demanding minimum organisation: one or two telephone calls to fix a place and time. In fact there

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Abu-Lughod, J. (1970) for Cairo.

<sup>16</sup> This is possibly a particularity of the Gharb region to which a number of large cities along the coast are relatively equidistant. I imagine that for rural communities elsewhere, domestics are more likely to concentrate themselves in the one nearest city to their home village.

was often a marked absence of contact in the city between women from the same village. On trips home with workers at the *īd*, I was often surprised to hear the daughters of neighbours in a village discover they had been in the same city without realising it. News about other people's daughters could be garnered from phoning one's mother in the village, but then a daughter's location was not the kind of thing people shouted about: Where's your daughter? Oh yes, mine's working in houses in Rabat too. How shameful for us both! Crawford (2008: 167) noted that the women in the Atlas village where he did fieldwork did not talk about their work in the cities. In the next chapter I discuss how domestics do in fact talk about their work, but selectively and differently to various audiences.

Not only do workers telephone women from their home village whom they know to be in the same city, arranging to meet up in the city centre, but they also look out for others 'like them' to be new friends. Ilham explains: 'You meet them in the street, in the bus. You're sitting there and a girl comes up to you: "Can I sit with you?" You talk and you exchange phone numbers and then you go out together another time.' One of the first questions women ask one another is, 'Where are you from?' Most women who wander the centre of Rabat alone are from somewhere else; 'proper' local girls like Zahra are always accompanied, less proper girls would at least have friends with whom to go out. Ilham often spotted people from her own region, the Gharb, and would congratulate herself: 'When I saw you I knew you were *gharbawīya*. It's obvious!' The idea of migrant workers seeking out those from the same region echoes accounts of Welsh workers who gathered on their days off at the 'Welsh corner' in Hyde Park during the 1920s and 30s (Scadden 2013: 128-9). Stereotypes about Welsh workers among early twentieth-century Londoners probably paralleled those about

women from the Gharb region during my fieldwork: conscious of their perception as country bumpkins, pigeons not eagles, it is not surprising they ‘flocked together’.

Although shared regional origins facilitated connections between ‘*bnāt l-blād* (girls of the home-country)’, it was not a vital component of friendships. Ilham had made friends in Rabat with women from all over Morocco. Equivalence of social status was a more decisive factor, as she explained when I asked, ‘Do you have friends who aren’t from another place? Do you have Rabati friends?’

‘Wear clothes that fit you.’<sup>17</sup> Go with people who are like you. If you see someone dressed like you, then they will want to talk to you. They will be like you. They will be happy that you talked to them, and you will enjoy talking to them. There will be understanding, because you are the same. If you see someone who is just looking up, and she’s dressed nicely and wearing heels and has her hair all done and sunglasses and is all made up, then don’t talk to her. She would think, ‘Why are you talking to me?’ She won’t be interested in you. Because she will only look at the outside [of a person].

I was often surprised at friends’ ability to spot their ‘equals’ from a distance, using indicators such as hairstyle and clothing and whether or not the woman was accompanied. As Ossman notes, the street

is the only truly communal space in which people of all conditions meet; consequently, it is one of the places in which it is important not simply to *be* something but to demonstrate that identity through one’s appearance. Cars, clothes, and companions add to one’s physical ‘look’ ... The color and texture of hair, the shade of skin and eyes, the elegance of mannerisms, the style and price of clothing and jewelry, the brand of cigarette—all of these details indicate origin, social class, and even level of education. The speed and accuracy with which people can judge one another concerning family origin, educational background, and current wealth is remarkable (Ossman 1994: 40).

Such skills allowed workers to identify other domestics with whom talk would quickly turn to a comparison of their conditions of work and salaries. The following conversation between Ilham and Wafa, a woman we met for the first time in the park

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<sup>17</sup> This is a Moroccan proverb: *Lbes ‘alā qddik ywātik*.

outside Bab Chellah, is an example. Wafa, having told us she only did the cooking whilst another worker did the cleaning, asked Ilham about her job:

Ilham: I do everything.

Wafa: Everything! Alone!? The cleaning and the cooking and the children?

Ilham: No, they don't have children. It's just the man and his wife. But the daughter comes and spends time at the house with her children.

Wafa: And how much do they pay?

Ilham: 32,000 [1600dh].

Wafa: Are you crazy? You work alone for that price? And it's a villa?

Ilham: Yes, but the wife helps me. She and I do the cooking together.

Wafa: Even if she helps you, you still do the cooking. You do salads and *rūmī* (foreign cuisine) and *bildī* (traditional Moroccan cuisine) and *brīwāt* (pastries)?

Ilham: Yes, I made *brīwāt* yesterday and the day before. Two days and I've been folding them. I did ones with meat and ones with chicken. And pizza.

Wafa: Pizza? Big ones or small ones?

Ilham: That big [Ilham drew a somewhat spiral shaped circle with her finger in the air so it wasn't too clear how big the pizzas were].

Wafa: Well, you are crazy to work for that money. I'm sorry but no villa in Hay Riad has just one worker to do everything. And no-one does the cooking for less than 40,000. Some work for 50,000 now. And she gives you your day [off] and *congé*?

Ilham: I get Saturday and Sunday off and I've just been to the *blād* for 10 days.

Wafa: And she didn't take it out of your pay?

Ilham: Yes, she did. She won't pay me for those days.

There followed a discussion about paid holiday as a 'right'. Without a legal code on which to base assessments of their lot, and unionisation unheard of, workers used personal experience to generate rules which, when put together by women talking amongst themselves formed numerous 'industry standards'. These varied across networks, depending on who had talked to whom, which explains why Ilham evaluated her position differently from Wafa. Whilst Wafa was incredulous of Ilham's complacency, Ilham had considered her conditions far better than those of many of her friends who were indeed paid less and seemed to do more work. These comparisons and the catch phrase: '*l-khedma mūjūda* (work is available)!'—something like, 'Plenty more fish in the sea!'—encouraged workers to ask for a pay rise or more time off, or to quit in the hope of a better job elsewhere.

Workers who met by chance like this would often exchange phone numbers promising to telephone next time they came into the city centre on a day off though they might never actually renew the connection. Individuals did not usually have a large group of friends, but would telephone to meet up with just one or two women by preference. The other numbers saved in their phones or written on scraps of paper in their handbags<sup>18</sup> acted as standbys for days when their usual companions had no time off, had gone back to the countryside or to another city.

## SONS OF YOU DON'T KNOW WHOM

Watching and assessing others in public space had another dimension; domestic workers were aware they might be watched by a potential husband. I often spent Sunday with Rouqia and Ilham, who were both from a community in the Gharb, and one or two of their friends—all single women. When tired of walking through the markets in the *medīna*, we would usually head for the Nouzhat Hassan Park, the *place du seize novembre* or the *corniche* by the Bouregreg river.<sup>19</sup> Writing about Casablanca, Ossman identifies these kinds of space as a ‘public *vitrine*’ (1994: 45) in which one is on display.<sup>20</sup> She describes how teenagers promenade around the Arab League Park hoping

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<sup>18</sup> Literacy was often a problem; some workers could write down numbers with pen and paper but not navigate phone menus or type names on the keypad.

<sup>19</sup> On domestics striking up acquaintances in the parks of Georgian London, see Horn (2004: 229).

<sup>20</sup> This is not unlike the ‘Sunday-best’ promenading of European tradition. Collier records that in the Andalusian village of her study during the 1960s: ‘On Sunday afternoons the girls dress up and walk out along the paved road that leads from town to the main highway. The boys also walk then, and the two sexes get a chance to look each other over’ (1997: 77). Davis and Davis (1989: 118-9) describe the walk to school in the small Moroccan town of their study as a time in which boys and girls flirt with each other. In this case there is less emphasis on display. Co-education, which rose in prominence in Morocco from the 1980s and is often cited as the harbinger of courtship and companionate marriage, is of little importance for domestic workers, most of whom left school at a young age if they attended at all.

to attract potential dates. The people who see them are not ‘known’ people, like neighbours, relatives or the local shopkeeper who might report back to family. Rather, ‘a certain anonymity allows for open flirting and invitations to ice-cream parlors or cafés’ (ibid.), which contrasts with norms for interaction between men and women in smaller towns and rural areas (Ossman 1994: 208, Mernissi 1975, Davis and Davis 1989). Ossman’s point is about Casablancans from different neighbourhoods of the city mingling, but the rural domestic workers of my study, who are not from the city at all, are even less likely to be seen by people they know. This accords them a freedom to talk to men in a way that they would not in their own village.<sup>21</sup>

The degree of freedom accorded live-in domestics in Rabat nonetheless fell short when compared with other blue-collar jobs such as factory- or shop-work, making these a more attractive option, as they were in Britain a century ago:

The most important advantage of factory life was freedom. Factory girls did not have to endure the daily petty humiliations of being at the beck and call of a condescending mistress; of having no set hours to call their own, of having pitifully few opportunities to meet men (or even other women) (Lethbridge 2013: 94).

In Morocco comparisons are often made between the freedom enjoyed by ‘city girls’ and by their country sisters. Generally speaking, migration for service increases the number of potential marriage partners (Wall 2004: 20) and this is reflected in the way those left behind in the countryside tease returnees from the city who are ‘*still* not married’, insinuating: ‘despite all those men you must have met!’ A GIZ - MEFP study maintains that single women from the countryside sometimes justified their decision to

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<sup>21</sup> Cheikh similarly notes for women sharing apartments in Casablanca and Tangier that: ‘the distance of their families means these women are no longer constrained to rules regarding women in public places (going out frequently, without a precise goal and at night is not tolerated, even forbidden)’ (2009: 5). This is not to say that women do not talk to men in their own village. See Hoffman (2008: 59-61, 149-55) for an account of courtship and mixed group gatherings in an Anti-Atlas community. But these interactions are with known men and certain rules for behaviour are followed, at least in the presence of others.

work as domestics in cities in order to: ‘gain in freedom and mobility when they leave their village. Paradoxically, it should be noted that living with employers has a major impact on the freedom sought by workers’ (Royaume du Maroc 2011: 23). Indeed, a Moroccan woman explaining why, ‘it’s hard to employ someone you trust these days’, pointed to a change in the level of freedom allowed women in the countryside—it had potentially overtaken that of domestics in the city, leading to a decline in the appeal of such work:

People don’t want to work as domestics these days. Women where we live in Azzrou will do hard agricultural work in the fields, but not work in houses ... They want to go out. Women used to just stay in the house ... Now they’ve started to have a bit of freedom, to go to the market or to town. They don’t want to give this up by going to work in a house where they won’t be allowed out ... Things are changing.

Women’s purpose in spending time in the city park was often verbalised amongst themselves: ‘*Debberū linā kāmlīn* (find [husbands] for us all!) Find four of them and let me know!’ a worker commissioned us as she left our group in the Nouzhat Hassan Park to return to her employers a little early one Sunday. ‘Let the work continue in my absence!’ On one level it was a joke, but the two other women who remained with me nodded in agreement: ‘O Lord, bring me *shī weld n-nās ma ‘qūl* (a serious, lit. reasonable, son of the people)!’ *Weld n-nās*, used widely in profiles on Moroccan dating websites, is code for ‘an ideal husband’, even an ideal son-in-law. The ideal husband is someone’s *son*. That Moroccans translating the term into French rendered it as ‘*filz de bonne famille*’ suggests that *nās* involves the idea of respectability. This is more evident in *bint n-nās* whose foil is *bint s-sūq* or *bint z-zinqa* (girl of the market, or of the street), i.e. a prostitute.

That the search was for a *son* to marry was clear from the outset. One of the first times I ‘went out’<sup>22</sup> in Rabat with Ilham, aged thirty or more, and Rouqia, in her mid-twenties, we were sitting on a bench in the park at *place du seize novembre*. Rouqia’s phone rang. She jumped up, answered and walked away from us to talk then returned saying: ‘I’m going to go and meet him. He told me to tell you I’m going to run an errand!’ She laughed—no need to lie to her best friend, Ilham. She left us, and Ilham and I carried on talking. Soon a man approached and sat on our bench. He greeted us both then spoke to Ilham in a low voice and passed her a piece of paper on which he had written a phone number. I could not hear what he said but the response was clear: ‘No, I’m with my friend, I only see her on Sundays. We’ll speak on the phone.’ The man went away and Ilham explained that he wanted to take her for coffee and that he had followed her all the way from Bab Chellah, where, an hour before, she had got off the bus. I expressed what had been rooted in me since childhood: ‘Don’t talk to strangers!’ But Ilham responded:

Look! How else are we going to marry? If we were in the village, *weld shi hed* (the son of someone), or someone whose family we know, would come to the house and the families would arrange the engagement. But we are here, and we don’t know anyone.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Khorij*, to go out is used for any outing for enjoyment, day or night. *Khorij*, as opposed to just going outside is marked by changing from pyjamas (one might go to the local shop or run an errand in the neighbourhood in pyjamas) into ‘street clothes’ and generally a significant amount of time being spent on hair and make-up. *Khorij* can also have connotations of going out explicitly to meet men. Cheikh argues that ‘*sortir*’ (to go out) ... encompasses all acts contrary to good female behaviour (to go out in the street, to go out for fun, to go out with a boy)’ (2013: 270).

<sup>23</sup> This sense of exclusion from circles of known people who would provide a *fiancé* may well have been more trenchant when frequent communication between the city and the *blād* was more difficult. Family members sometimes visited the daughters they placed with richer city-folk only once a year. This was the case with *Hajja* Jamila’s former domestic, who became mentally ill when she passed the age at which she would have married had she remained in the *blād*. *Hajja* Jamila’s daughter remembered: ‘We took her to the doctor and he said, “There’s nothing wrong with her. She just wants to get married.” We took her back to her village and we found all the people of her age had already married.’

Like *weld n-nas* (son of the people), the hypothetical fiancé in the countryside is *weld shi hed* (the son of someone). That a husband is first and foremost somebody's son is equally apparent in Hoffman's ethnography of Sous valley and Anti-Atlas Berbers in which one woman explains: 'My father and my husband's father are friends, and they proposed we marry, and so I said okay' (Hoffman 2008: 149). Such marriages, arranged by elder family members, serve more to strengthen ties between families than to satisfy the needs of their sons and daughters as individuals.<sup>24</sup> That a woman worked in the city did not prevent a man from going, during her absence, to her family in the countryside to ask for her in marriage but the problem is that once workers had lived in the city, most did not *want* to marry someone in the countryside.<sup>25</sup> The following are typical of Gharb workers' responses in the village about their hopes for the future:

I want to marry in the city. Here, life is hard, if you don't have this (she flexed her arm and patted her biceps with her hand) you don't live.

I don't want to live here. *Kaytaqarfsū* (they suffer) here.

I want to get married so I can stop doing this work. [I want to live] in the city. I wouldn't mind working if my husband worked too. We'd both help out [with household finances].

When I think about marriage it will be in the city. I live in the city now and I see things. I dream about them. Am I going to marry in the country?! *Ntaqarfs* (to get dirty) in the mud?! No, I've worked hard, I've suffered. When I marry it's to have a good life ... I don't want to have children myself. I have had enough of

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<sup>24</sup> On arranged marriages in the context of a small Moroccan town during the 1980s see Davis and Davis (1989: 105-7). They stress that: 'the main concern is the girl's reputation. If she is a relative, her behaviour and personal qualities are well known. When spouses are related the larger family provides an interested support group in times of marital stress' (ibid. 106).

<sup>25</sup> Salahdine argues that exposure to the comfortable life of wealthy urban employers means domestic workers are less likely to be content with marriage to a man who can offer them only the bare necessities (Salahdine 1988: 102). See also Hoffman (2008: 60, 71) on women's hopes to marry out of the Moroccan countryside. This is quite a widespread motif. Cf. Bourdieu (1962) and Jenkins (2010: ch 6) on discontented peasant bachelors in rural Southern France, local women preferring to marry urbanites.

looking after them. I'm bored with these problems ... I have never lived a white day, I've lived only black days. I want to change my life.

Huriya, who worked (following Malika and Loubna) for Nadia in the Sebbari building told me how a rural man who knew her family had asked to marry her whilst she was in the city: 'They engaged me to him, but I told them: "No, I don't want to." I've got used to the city.<sup>26</sup> And *anā ma 'arifa ma 'a* (I'm getting to know) a man from Tunis, only by phone. He sends me phone credit.' By the time I left the field Huriya had never met face to face with this Tunisian (she had been a willing victim of random dialling on the man's part)<sup>27</sup> but was looking forward to his visiting Rabat and expected he might ask to marry her.<sup>28</sup>

Huriya's story shows a divergence between old and new marital strategies. Ethnographic literature suggests that companionate ideals evolve with the rise of individuality: 'the idea that one particular person would be a more satisfying and pleasurable partner than any other because of his or her specific characteristics' (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006: 5). Domestic workers' migrant status, separation from their families, and reliance on their own labour reinforce their sense of individuality (Abu-Lughod, L. 2002: 124). Wage-labour generally—because it allows for women to be less financially dependent on their families or potential husbands (Ahearn 2001, Collier 1997), and commodity consumption (Illouz 1997), have been argued to be key elements

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<sup>26</sup> Hanane, who worked for Nadia at Dār Sebbari before my arrival on the scene, had to leave because her family engaged her to a man in the *blād*. According to Nadia's daughter Zahra, Hanane had not wanted to marry and had attempted to run away from her family and return to Dār Sebbari before the marriage took place: 'She was used to being with me.'

<sup>27</sup> I was surprised at the frequency of 'wrong number' calls I received until I realised men dialled at random in the hope of being able to engage a woman in conversation (cf. Cheikh 2011a: 179 f.n.). My host-sister would often play along with this technique, even arranging *rendez-vous* which she had no intention of keeping, as a safe way of having some fun with men. She never revealed her full name or where she lived. It happens the other way round too; Dresch's male friends in Dubai were often called at random by women in Morocco hoping to migrate by marriage.

<sup>28</sup> One of Cheikh's informants was also proposed to by a man she met on the phone (Cheikh 2011a: 178).

of the shift towards ‘companionate’ ideals elsewhere, though how far the ideals are actualised is seldom clear.

It is not incidental that mobile phones loom large. For Ilham, Rouqia, and Huriya their phones played a vital role in facilitating access to and ongoing acquaintance with ‘a new world’ of strange men. It has been argued that the independence of space of a mobile phone is part of a process of individualisation (Garcia-Montes et al. 2006: 69), and Cheikh notes the women of her Casablanca study spent a large portion of their income on telephone cards, topping up mobile credit being the first thing women did when money came in, sometimes passing whole nights on the phone to men (2011a: 183 f.n.).<sup>29</sup> Most workers owned a bottom-of-the-range mobile, costing around 200dh, that is about four days’ wages for a typical live-in. When network providers had promotional deals, workers could purchase cards which allowed them an hour’s talk-time for 20dh—just under half a day’s wage. Ilham juggled three mobile phones so that she could have a different SIM card in each and make the most of the promotions of one network provider after the other.

Talking on the phone allows men and women to get to know one another at a distance.<sup>30</sup> Even when men approached them physically while out and about, women like Ilham preferred to pursue the relationship over the phone at first. This way she could ascertain the man’s intentions without compromising her reputation. Ilham disapproved of going to cafés with men as her friend Rouqia did—it was ‘shameful’.

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<sup>29</sup> Domestic workers I knew often asked employers for advances on their monthly wage in order to purchase phone credit although this was used for talking to family back home as well as to men.

<sup>30</sup> The same is true of online chatting although few domestics engaged in this due to low levels of literacy. See Newcomb on mixed-gender conversations in cyberspace in which ‘Women control to whom they will speak and what they will reveal, and whether to arrange physical meetings or limit their encounters to the printed word’ (2009: 146). The significance of mobile phones for social mingling between men and women is not unique to Morocco. Writing generally, Ferraro and Andretta state that, ‘Cell phones and text messaging now permit both men and women to circumvent the traditional prohibitions against premarital social interaction’ (2012: 218). For another Muslim society see Bano (2012: 139) on Pakistan.

This notion of shame for certain women seemed unaffected by their family's absence, suggesting that it was to some extent internally, as well as externally motivated. For Ilham the ideal would be that a man state straight away that he would like to marry her. This had happened to her several times, as she explained: 'They come up to me and say, "Excuse me, my sister,<sup>31</sup> can I talk to you?" "Yes, go ahead." He says, "I saw you and I liked you. Can I marry you?"<sup>32</sup> I tell him, "Give me your telephone number and we'll talk."' But these encounters had not yet ended in a marriage. The following Sunday she and I met in the usual park and she recounted the next part of the story regarding the man who had sat on our bench and slipped her his mobile number:

'I telephoned him and he said to me, "If you just want to have fun, then no, if you want to marry me, then yes." I said to him, "That's what I want too, marriage." [Pause] They all say the same thing! It's just lies.'

'How do you know he wasn't being truthful?' I asked.

'Because he hasn't called again!'

As for Rouqia, she would leave us more and more often, almost every Sunday, to have coffee with men who signalled to her from some way off, or telephoned her after a prior meeting. When Ilham began to criticise her, I came to Rouqia's defence: 'She's only trying to find a husband', but Ilham corrected me: 'No, I'm sorry but the men you meet here, they are *never* going to marry you.' After several disappointments, Ilham was starting to doubt the effectiveness of meeting men who *kayṣīdū* (lit. hunt or fish)<sup>33</sup> in the squares and parks of Rabat. She said: 'It's not like that that you find a

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<sup>31</sup> When approaching unknown people, the use of kinship terms such as 'my brother' or 'my sister' is polite and unthreatening but also implies equality and hints at an obligation to help the addressee.

<sup>32</sup> The direct link between 'seeing' and wanting to marry is also documented by Ossman whose friend Bouchra told her: "I always try to look nice. What if a nice guy sees me out with my friends? You never know when he might come along." Bouchra expects that once this suitor's gaze has been captivated by her beauty and good taste in clothes, he will hope to marry her' (Ossman 1994: 46).

<sup>33</sup> On this term see also Davis and Davis (1989: 121).

husband. God brings you your husband.<sup>34</sup> If he is serious, he will follow you to the *blād*.' A serious suitor would ask directions to one's family. If a man 'sees' someone he would like to marry in the anonymity of public space the ideal is still to seek approval in the private realm of the family, for as Ossman notes, 'the world of the open street and that of the home and the family remain radically separate' (1994: 49). The vastness of the city where people are not necessarily 'seen' near their homes or amongst groups of kin with whom enquiries can be made means a man who wants to marry a certain woman must approach her directly.<sup>35</sup> The length of time which then passes before family approval is sought varies, a delay sometimes calling into question the intentions of the woman or the man.

Hafida complained, like Ilham, that she could not trust men who wanted a period of *ta'arruf* (acquaintance) before seeking family approval. She and I often chatted while watching a series like *Ḥubb fī mahab ar-rīḥ* (Love in the Wind), a Turkish soap opera dubbed into Arabic, in which the daughter of a rich family falls in love with the domestic worker's son but is forced instead into an engagement with a wealthy man

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<sup>34</sup> Both Ilham and Rouqia oscillated between professing a trust that 'everything was in God's hands' (as the prayer 'O Lord, bring me *shī weld n-nās ma 'qūl*' indicated) and implying that they had a decisive role to play, as the verb '*debber*' 'to find, to [manage] to get hold of' (Haloui and Bowman 2011) indicates. Women could increase their chances with men by taking care over their appearance, positioning themselves in certain places and welcoming the approaches of strangers. One worker's response to my own singleness was also telling: 'It's because you don't put yourself in situations which allow you to get to know men!' It was my own fault. On the other hand, the passive role of Moroccan women in securing a husband is emphasised Davis and Davis (1989: 105) and by Mahmoud (2001) for Egyptian women.

<sup>35</sup> One of Lila Abu-Lughod's domestic-worker informants in Cairo related that: 'When a plumber who saw her at work asked about the possibility of marriage, she sent him to discuss it with her brother-in-law' (Abu-Lughod, L. 2002: 123). Similarly, when one of Mahmoud's informants, a mosque volunteer, is approached by a colleague who asks for her hand in marriage, the advice given by a pious friend is 'to tell this man to approach her parents formally to ask for her hand in marriage, and allow her parents to investigate the man's background in order to ascertain whether he was a suitable match for her' (Mahmoud 2001: 218). When Mahmoud questioned the 'correctness' of this approach, as I had done with Ilham, she was told: 'But there is nothing wrong in a man approaching a woman for her hand in marriage directly as long as his intent is serious and he is not playing with her. This occurred many times even at the time of the Prophet' (ibid. 219).

who turns out to be a criminal.<sup>36</sup> In the advertisement-breaks Hafida, a divorced worker in her 30s, would talk about her own unrequited loves. When a man ‘from the Sahara’ approached her in Rabat and talked of marriage, Hafida was unsure how she felt: ‘My heart did not go with him’. She eventually decided to broach the matter with her family to gauge their opinion. Rather than introducing the suitor in person (this would be too public and would commit her to him in the eyes of her entire village) she asked him for a photo to show her family. It was significant that they could accept or reject the man on the basis of his appearance; the suitor had dark skin compared with Hafida’s family who were fair. The time for her next visit to the village came but the suitor did not provide the photo, an indication, in Hafida’s eyes, that he was not serious.

Next, the teacher of the literacy classes<sup>37</sup> that Hafida attended in a local mosque told her: ‘*a’jbīnī* (I like you), I’d like to get to know you.’ They had coffee a couple of times and he told her on the phone, ‘I miss you, I wouldn’t mind hearing your voice every day.’ Hafida’s response was, ‘Well, let’s talk about marriage then.’ He had agreed, ‘Yes, that’s what I’d like, *in sha’ allāh* (God willing).’ ‘*In sha’ allāh*’, repeated Hafida bitterly. ‘I don’t like it to be *‘alāqa* (a ‘relationship’, in contradistinction to marriage) like that. He says, “not yet, not yet. I need to get to know you better.” But I don’t trust them when they say that.’

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<sup>36</sup> Latifa’s brother vehemently criticised the broadcasting of these Turkish soaps on Moroccan channels: ‘They do not even correspond to Moroccan society!’ The impact of television on ideas about love and marriage is well documented: on Morocco see Davis and Davis (1989: 115), and on Pakistan Bano (2012: 139). For Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod argues that ‘emotions in Egyptian melodrama might provide a model for a new kind of individuated subject’ (2002: 117), thus shaping the personhood of viewers. See also Abu-Lughod, L. 2005. For domestic workers who watch several hours of television every day, the importance of media far outweighs that of co-education which Davis and Davis discuss (1989: 93, 97-8).

<sup>37</sup> Her employer suggested that Hafida, who could neither read nor write, enrol in free classes which were offered two evenings a week but allowed her less time off at the weekend to compensate. Simply going out to attend the classes boosted Hafida’s self-esteem: ‘Dressed up and carrying my folder in the street, you’d say, “There’s a student going to university!”’

Despite the fact that all the single workers I interviewed stated that they wanted to marry in the city, the younger<sup>38</sup> married workers or ex-workers I knew had married relatives or ‘sons of the country’ who approached their families at home before a period, brief if it happened at all, of *ta ‘arruf*.<sup>39</sup> Others, like Loubna who worked a month for the Sebbaris to earn money for her wedding, were married to men with whom they had worked on other jobs and so had regular contact over an extended period.<sup>40</sup> Marriage with an urban stranger was not a common occurrence amongst my circle of domestic-worker friends.<sup>41</sup>

The city men who flirt with domestic workers and whose families are unknown contrasted with the ideal of the ‘*weld l-blād*’ who ‘can be trusted’. Miriam, another unmarried domestic in the city, was going out with a man from a village near her own, although she had not known him in the countryside. He, like most of his friends, worked in construction. Her sister, Safae, on the other hand often talked and exchanged phone numbers with strangers she met in the street. Miriam underlined the difference, pointing to the group of young men, among whom was her boyfriend: ‘These are *awlād l-blād* (sons of my home-country). They are trustworthy, not like those my sister goes out

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<sup>38</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, workers of an older generation who stayed with the same family for a long period, like Rachida, were married off by their employer-guardians.

<sup>39</sup> Cousin marriages are common in North Africa and the Middle East (Tapper and Tapper 1982-3, Tillion 1983, Holy 1989). Amongst my informants spouses could be a cross-cousin or parallel-cousin, paternal or maternal. Hafida’s sister was married to her mother’s brother’s son; Malika was proposed to by her father’s brother’s son although she refused him and soon after received an offer from an acquaintance whom she accepted. Shortly before leaving the field I attended their wedding in her family’s newly built home next to their former shanty town. The house had been built partly with Malika’s earnings but she was not to live in it. Malika’s husband had an apartment in a *sha ‘bī* quarter of Fès so she avoided marrying back into the deprived setting in which she grew up.

<sup>40</sup> From opposite ends of the country, Loubna (a *jiblīya* or ‘mountain girl’ from near Ouezzane) and her husband (from Tiznit in the South) met working in a café in Rabat. Similarly, Ikram developed a friendship with a man with whom she had worked planting onions on a farm near her home. He asked her to marry him but later withdrew the proposal having heard that one of Ikram’s sisters smoked in public. Being ‘known’ was not always to one’s advantage.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Zontini (2010: 114-23, 174-84) on marriage strategies of Moroccan women working in Bologna and Barcelona, some of whom find partners on return visits to the *blād*, whilst others marry men they meet through friends or strangers they encounter in public places.

with, *lī mā kat 'arfīsh awlād min hadūl* (whom you don't know *whose* sons they are).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in Collier's study of courtship in the Spanish village of Los Olivos, informants contrasted 'local boys who knew the girls' families' with 'boys from other towns' who 'might regard any Los Olivos woman as fair game' (Collier 1997: 92). The same logic, applied to the context of crime, causes the Botswanan heroine of McCall Smith's detective stories to reflect:

Life was far better, thought Mma Ramotswe, if we knew who we were. In the days when she was a schoolgirl in Mochudi, the village in which she had been born, everybody had known exactly who you were, and they often knew exactly who your parents, and your parents' parents, had been (McCall Smith 2005: 3).

Being known meant actions had long-term consequences, so people adhered locally to norms for morality in a way they did not amongst strangers in larger towns further afield. Knowing people in an ideal sense is expressed in Morocco in terms of filiality: those 'whom you don't know whose sons they are' stand in opposition not only to the trustworthy *awlād l-blād*, but also to the *weld shi hed* who is out of reach for Ilham in the city, and the *weld n-nās* whom the women in the park prayed God would bring them. Trust is implicit in someone whose relatedness to others is known since the other people referenced by the use of the term *weld* act as a safety net: a son has a father, a mother and by extension a wider family. These people could be called upon if the bride's family had cause for complaint.<sup>42</sup> The same logic makes cousins the safest marriage partners as they are sons of one's own kin. Knowing someone in this way is binary: one either knows whose sons they are, or one does not. It contrasts with a different kind of knowing, the *ana ma 'arifa ma 'a* (lit. I am knowing with) of Huriya. Her use of *ma 'arifa*, the active participle, implies a process of increasing acquaintance

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<sup>42</sup> Writing on the arranged marriages and love marriages of poor women in Delhi, Grover argues that in the latter, 'The couple's respective families may have no contact and communication with each other, and may therefore be unable to mediate during times of marital distress and conflict' (Grover 2009: 3-4).

that starts from nothing. Her friend is simply ‘a man’. His parents do not feature at all; rather the individual, disassociated from his family, is foregrounded.

Many of the domestic workers I knew were past the usual age for marriage (early twenties) and seemed to be stuck between, on the one hand, a desire for a love-match which the presence of men who ‘hunted’ in Rabat’s parks made seem possible, and on the other hand a preference for the known, safe, son-of-a-family-friend who, however, only provided the country life that workers have left behind. The latter would be hard to settle for as long as hope for the former renewed itself in the park each Sunday. And yet the former was unlikely to come to anything seeing as these apparently kinless men could take advantage of rural women for as long as they wanted to avoid the cost and responsibility of marriage, without any wider circle of acquaintances calling them to account as *sons*. Ossman argues that these new interactions between strangers in public places are not yet governed by a ‘socially validated script’, thus even mature women giggle nervously when men approach (1994: 47). Newcomb writing about women in Fès argues similarly that, ‘rules for women’s behaviour in new spaces are not always clear, women themselves navigate among competing ideologies to occupy those spaces according to their own standards’ (2009: 147). Although women knew they could choose a partner they were unsure how to go about it.

## **IDENTITY, CONSUMPTION AND LEISURE**

Walking around the city, domestic workers were keen to point out anyone they thought was a domestic with her employing family. Comments were usually accompanied by the epithet ‘*miskīna* (poor thing)’, more because the woman in question was unable to

hide her identity (a skin colour darker than that of her companions or a different style of dress gave her away), than that she was doing this work in the first place. In the anonymity of modern urban life domestic workers who were allowed out alone had the opportunity to appear as someone different. Zhor, a domestic worker interviewed by Mernissi in 1985, would spend summer Sundays at the beach and maintained that: 'When you're in a swimming suit, it's difficult to tell if you're the daughter of a millionaire or of a bird and cage seller' (1982: 18).<sup>43</sup> Zhor claimed that none of her friends knew she worked as a domestic and was shocked at Mernissi's suggestion that a boyfriend might telephone her at an employer's house:

My God! At my employer's place! So that he'll know that I'm working as a maid? ... You know that in our country, to be a maid is the lowest of jobs; nobody respects you. Nobody wants to go out with a maid or have a friendship with her. Moroccans despise maids and ridicule them (ibid. 16-17).

The person Zhor revealed in public was 'a facade. It's not possible for them to know the true Zhor' (ibid. 17).<sup>44</sup> The men she met on the beach sometimes expressed an interest in marrying her, but Zhor felt she could never marry a wealthy man because the relationship would be based on inequality and she would not be respected:

The first time I do something wrong or have a difference of opinion with him or his mother or his sister, they would say, 'You should talk, you, whose father threw you out into the street. You, a maid, who washes people's dishes and toilets' (ibid. 19).

Because so much can usually be judged by appearance, those whose physiological features did not link them to a certain background were able to manipulate

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<sup>43</sup> On young maids in Kolkata who dressed to 'pass' as middle-class women see Ray and Qayum (2009: 156-8), and on carers who pretended they were residents rather than workers in an exclusive, resort-style, care home in Israel, see Liebelt (2011: 99).

<sup>44</sup> A nod towards Goffman (1971) seems appropriate. Goffman argues that we have onstage and off-stage personas to manage other people's perceptions of us. Differences in Moroccan dress for the home and for the street vividly mark the boundary between on and off stage.

through dress the impression they gave to others. Some workers, like Malika's younger sister Ikram, had a talent for this. On her day off Ikram wanted to go to a telesales office to enquire about a facecream she had seen advertised which she thought might get rid of scars a childhood accident had left on her forehead. The cream started at 700dh, almost half her monthly wage (1,500dh), but wearing a pastel pink trench coat over figure-hugging jeans and with her hair in curls around her shoulders, Ikram looked like someone who might spend that much on facecream. I noticed there were a couple of staples in the hem of her coat from the dry cleaner's label, indicating the effort she had gone to. I felt sorry for her, and for the salesman who was wasting his time. Ikram declined his offer to deliver the cream the following day but was asked for her contact details and address. Having missed large parts of her schooling, Ikram could hardly write and did not know her employers' address in full. But rather than explain this, and the fact that she did not want to be contacted at her employers' house, she simply said, 'Well, you've got my telephone number. I'll come back next Sunday.' The whole episode was about playing a part, not letting on that she did not have her own address, that she was not from the city<sup>45</sup> and that she could not afford the cream anyway. Going to the office and enquiring was the closest she would get to obtaining this product and realising her dream of a scar-free face.

I had similar experiences with other domestic workers who felt they had to play a part even to enquire of cosmetics-sellers about products they had seen their employers

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<sup>45</sup> Ikram probably gave this fact away by failing to be familiar with various landmarks the salesman gave her when directing her to the office; she had to keep phoning to ask for more help finding her way. It struck me that not only did Ikram not know the city well but that she did not know how to navigate unknown places. She would ask passersby in the city centre if they knew where a specific named apartment building was, lacking an understanding of how large the city was and the relative insignificance of any given building. On the way home Ikram asked the taxi-driver to take us to 'the roundabout' (Which roundabout? 'You know, the big one, with the fountain on it'), as though there was only one roundabout with a fountain in the whole city. Rouqia had similar problems arranging *rendez-vous* with the men who invited her for coffee: 'You know, the park...' she would say on the phone. In Jorf, the nearest town to Rouqia's village, there was only one park to speak of.

use.<sup>46</sup> Ilham had noticed her employer's daughter's skin grow fairer over time and had one day seen her apply a cream. She had asked the daughter where she bought it and decided to save up to buy the same herself. Rather than enquire directly about a cream she was unlikely to be able to afford, Ilham tried to make it look as though I were interested. When she had discovered the price (35dh), she looked at me pointedly asking, 'Are you sure that's the one?' Confused, and thinking Ilham was indirectly asking me to lend her the money, I handed 35dh to the shopkeeper. Once away from the shop Ilham explained that she had wanted me simply to say, 'No, that's not the one'. She nonetheless took the cream and repaid me 35dh the following week.

It has been argued that consumer practices such as these go hand-in-hand with a process of individualisation (Appadurai 1996: 7, Bauman 2000: 105). Writing on post-socialist Poland, Dunn (2001: 277) argues that, 'Consumption is heightened when people believe they are the aggregate of potentially divisible qualities that they can act upon by purchasing specific goods (i.e., a young woman's attractiveness can be improved by face cream)'. In this respect domestic workers like Ikram and Ilham were 'choice-making "entrepreneurs"' (ibid.) who, Dunn argues, must also be owners of all their properties, including their labour. Ideals of a more individual personhood and the commoditisation of labour with its potentially short-term contracts, are, however, complicated by ongoing practices such as the worker's family appropriating her wage to tile their courtyard in the village (more of this in Chapter 6) or insisting she marry instead of continue in paid work (cf. Long and Villareal 1999). Moreover, the purchase of face-cream and clothing seemed part of aspirations for marriage, workers' ultimate

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<sup>46</sup> The imitation of employers' styles greatly concerned colonial social scientists who saw this as a sign of declining morals but also a threat to the boundary between the local and European populations. Montagne, for example, wrote that: 'Others, more brazen, sometimes wear a European dress and shoes, borrowed or received as presents, use their employer's lipstick, and take a chance on mixing with the western crowd in the street for a few hours' (1952: 240).

goal in the city, as Crawford notes for both male and female migrants, being ‘not to own commodities but to establish a household’ (2008: 185). Until they formed their own, most workers supported their natal households. Either way workers ultimately spent their money in support of the ideal of households rather than atomised individuals.

Not for consumerism so much as the space in which it occurs, markets and shopping arcades were domestic workers’ pleasure grounds; they could look, touch, turn over, try on and imagine owning items, without having to buy. And unlike the parks and squares where anyone idling was presumed available, or the cafés and patisseries where only paying customers could relax,<sup>47</sup> everyone was welcome to spend time here. Picking through stalls lent a purposeful air to women who had nothing better to do and nowhere else to go than back to their employers’ houses. In Rabat’s *medīna* Hafida and Sukaina, friends from the same village, would stand over piles of secondhand clothing pulling out garments at random and holding them up only to throw them back on the pile, but all the while exchanging stories about what their employers had said and done. It was here, in the hustle and bustle, rather than in the apparent tranquillity of the park that women could talk in peace.

Although there were some covered arcades, markets were usually set up in the open air. Indoor leisure beyond the home being the preserve of men (who could acceptably spend hours in cheap cafés) and wealthy women (who could afford refreshments in expensive women-friendly patisseries, clubs and hotel spas), workers did not usually leave the employers’ house if the weather were very bad. Still, I spent hours wandering the city in the cold wind or oppressive sun with domestics who had

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<sup>47</sup> Ideas about who ought to be consuming what and where provoked comments when people were seen to be out of place. Asmae, a middle-class employer who took me for a walk around MegaMall, Rabat’s largest western-style shopping centre, remarked that most of the shops and cafés were too expensive for her own family so, why were there a number of Filipinas (it was assumed that they were domestic workers) sitting with friends in the food court? ‘Why are they here?! They can’t afford it!’

nowhere to shelter.<sup>48</sup> Because home was work, workers were effectively homeless on days off, unless they chose to stay at their workplace.<sup>49</sup> Many did not have their own room but slept in the living room or shared bedrooms with children or other family members so staying at home would not guarantee any private space even if it offered the right to rest.<sup>50</sup> Leisure and relaxation, therefore, had to happen in public—either the smaller public of the employing family<sup>51</sup> or the greater public of the outside world. In this respect, the situation of Moroccan domestics is paralleled by that of domestics globally: Filipina workers in Hong-Kong congregate in public places including the steps of the national bank where they perform ‘private’ rituals such as painting their nails and cutting hair (Constable 1997: 540). In Tel Aviv Filipina domestics socialise at the Central Bus Station (Liebelt 2011: 145-55); in Singapore, at the Lucky Plaza Mall (Huang and Yeoh 1998: 593); in Rome, the Termini train station (Parreñas 2001: 202-4).<sup>52</sup>

Added to this difficulty of exposure, to the public eye as much as to the elements, was the fact that workers rarely ate properly on days off. Some would bolster

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<sup>48</sup> Mrs Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* suggested servants should be ‘given opportunities for welcoming respectable friends in their employer’s house, and need not be forced by absence of such a provision for their comfort to spend their spare time out of doors, often in driving rain, possibly in bad company’ (Beeton [1861] 1907: 15).

<sup>49</sup> Exceptions were those who had sisters or aunts living in nearby Salé where they could spend the day.

<sup>50</sup> Chen, borrowing Woolf’s idea of *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), argues that an alternative ‘space’ is required for a ‘self of one’s own’ (2005: 336). She describes how Taiwanese immigrant women, as converts to Buddhism and Christianity, use these religions as spaces to construct a sense of self, distinct from their employing family. Faith-based activities, such as the pilgrimages organised for domestics by evangelical churches in Israel also helped domestics carve out an identity (Liebelt 2011: 248). Ueno (2010), studying strategies which Indonesian and Filipino domestics used in ‘identity management’, describes how workers in Singapore sought to gain additional roles through volunteering or church activities in order to define themselves as ‘more than just a maid.’ I was not aware of any such alternative spaces accessed by domestics, with the exception of literacy classes and attending prayers at a mosque.

<sup>51</sup> Parreñas, writing on Filipina domestics in Rome and Los Angeles, saw domestics choosing to eat alone when employers gave them the option of eating with the family as ‘an act of reclaiming their own space away from that of the employer where their identity is that of a perpetual domestic worker. Confining themselves to their own space within the workplace is possibly a creative act of retreat – a break – from their role as a worker’ (Parreñas 2001: 166).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Gill (1994: ch 5) on the lives ‘away from the workplace’ of Bolivian servants in La Paz.

themselves with a large breakfast before leaving the employers' house while others, desperate to leave, would skip food entirely. Few employers gave workers money specifically to buy lunch (the main meal of the day in Morocco) but some would set a portion of the family meal aside for them to have on their return. Ilham often packed snacks (leftovers, fruit) in her bag which she shared with others. Rouqia on the other hand never planned what she would eat, but readily accepted invitations to cafés, where men presumably paid the bill. Miriam, who spent her day off with her sister, her boyfriend, and other *awlād l-blād* could afford to buy a tuna baguette for lunch but restrained herself when with the group knowing that her boyfriend would feel embarrassed that he could barely pay for his own lunch.

The amount of money domestic workers spent on these days off varied according to their stage in life, how many others were contributing to family income, and often, the stage of the construction of their family's new house in the countryside. Ilham explained: 'I don't buy [anything] because we haven't painted our house yet.' She would, however, buy things for a special occasion like a trip home for *'īd*, which required a new outfit. Rouqia, on the other hand, had that very day bought a faux-leather jacket and some fancy underwear. Ilham explained that Rouqia, 'has now started to buy things, but there was a time when she didn't. Her house is now finished and she is not the only one in her family working either. I am the only one in my family who works.'

## CONCLUSION

Days off for domestics amounted to a small fraction of their total time in the city but these days revealed a disproportionate amount about their conditions, identity and

desires. Not only was the day off a time when work, so often conducted alone, could be discussed and compared with others, out of earshot of employers,<sup>53</sup> but it also provided an anonymous space in which women were free to be someone other than subordinates.<sup>54</sup> Being consumers was a large part of this; being girlfriends or potential wives was another. In contrast to the daily grind (in the words of one domestic, ‘what you do today, you do tomorrow’), days off were about futures, towards which workers moved on individual projects of self-improvement.

Whilst workers joined up with others to help achieve these goals, there was always a sense of the fragility of the links that bound them, made evident every time Rouqia dropped us for one of those men in the park, or whenever someone left Rabat for a job elsewhere. Workers were individuals and moved as such. At the end of the day everyone went home to their own employers. Getting someone’s phone number was only important because one could not be with them always. The recent changes which have allowed workers to get to know the cities as well as the houses where they work, to meet unknown employers and to get to know unfamiliar men, are facilitated by and epitomised in the object of the mobile phone. Every worker has her own (cf. Geser 2004) and takes it wherever she goes, a fixed accessory in the flux of modern life. In the next chapter I describe my experience of accompanying workers to visit their homes in the *blād*. This was not a world of atomised individuals but of families and neighbours amongst whom everyone is known as someone’s son or daughter, and where mobiles are abandoned on windowsills, drain of power and blink out.

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<sup>53</sup> Talib’s ethnography of stone-quarry workers outside Delhi highlights the importance of worker’s sharing stories together in leisure time to make sense of their work experience as part of ‘symbolic worldbuilding’ (Talib 2010: 237).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Khosravi (2008: ch 4) on the self-fashioning of Iranian youths ‘idling’ in a Tehrani shopping mall.

## CHAPTER 6

### **DOMESTIC WORKERS AT HOME**

The home life from which workers migrate is something that studies of transnational domestic workers often lose sight of. By home life I do not mean a region of origin but a familial space in which the worker grew up. When the domestic contexts of employer and worker are separated by thousands of airmiles the study of households at both the supply- and demand-end is scarcely feasible: the point in time and space where employer and worker meet (the employer's home) becomes the locus of study, without reference to the way households at the other end organise housework and hierarchy. If domestic life is of more than economic value, however, we should consider the extent to which the worker retains her position within her natal household once she has spent time away. Moroccan domestic service, to take just this case, is an element in the much wider context of domestic labour, unwaged and waged.

Literature on domestic work makes a theoretical distinction between someone who cleans a floor to earn a wage and someone who does it for other reasons, e.g. because she is the youngest capable household member. I suggest, however, that we can gain a better understanding of the 'persons' made through housework by treating those who perform domestic tasks—both paid and unpaid—as of the same kind, in

contradistinction to those who do not perform those tasks. The waged domestic work that has been our focus so far is at the far end of a scale where labour is exchanged for money in a short time-frame. At the near end of the scale is family, where who extracts value from whom, through which tasks, is subject to flexible hierarchies and ‘people are not paid money for their time but are instead provided with food, shelter, love and security’ (Crawford 2008: 50). Here, as Crawford argues, the time-frame of give and return tends to be longer: duties mean rights but not straightaway.

## HOME COMING

‘Be careful of thieves. And, don’t wash your clothes there. Bring all your dirty washing home. You’ll see, they don’t know anything there; it’s just the countryside.’ Such was the advice my host-mother gave me as I left her house in l’Océan to accompany Hafida to her home village for ‘*īd l-kabīr*’ (the great feast).<sup>55</sup> I didn’t tell her that I hardly knew Hafida and, at the time, had only met her once. It was thanks to another worker, Miriam, that I was making this trip. Miriam worked on rue Vérone, a couple of buildings up from the Sebbaris, and had answered the door to me while I was attempting a survey. Her employer was out and we had talked with the door six inches ajar (Miriam later told me: ‘I didn’t trust you at first’), but she had taken my phone number. Days later she phoned to ask if I knew the way to a quarter of Rabat where her friend Hafida was working, and we went together. Miriam did not stay more than a month with this employer but when she left, she invited me to visit her in the *blād* for ‘*īd*’, and suggested that I go with Hafida, from the village next to hers. I accepted, despite my host-mother’s

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<sup>55</sup> Called ‘*īd al-Aḏḥā*’ in standard Arabic, meaning the feast of the sacrifice. A sheep is slaughtered to commemorate Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his first-born son.

concerns for my laundry, and met Hafida at the train station at 7:00am on the day before the *ʿīd*.

It was the end of October. Hafida had not been home since July, when she had stayed six days, and she had chosen not to return at all for *ʿīd ṣ-ṣaghīr* at the end of Ramadan so that she could stay a full ten days this time. As is not uncommon for workers returning home, she had slept badly and been sick in the night. The stress of preparing to travel, packing, buying gifts, completing the extra work employers demand so they have less to do in the worker's absence, and sometimes dealing with disputes over leave and pay, combined with excitement and anticipation at seeing family again, often prevented workers from eating or sleeping well. Once on their way they expressed peace and relief (*rāḥa*), and commented on the contrast between these homeward journeys and their return to the city. Hafida told me: 'I'm so happy to be going home. I miss them so much. I'm always happy to go to our *dār*. But then when I'm coming back the other way, *kanḥess b dīq* (I feel a tightness, constraint, hardship).' The train was so full of people going home for the feast that we had to push our way on to join crowds standing in the corridors, and at Sidi Kacem, where we got off, we followed hundreds of wheeling suitcases up the road to the 'grand taxi' station. The drivers had doubled the fare for the festive season. 'We are people too, just trying to get home,' complained Hafida, and at 30dh each, together with the 45dh train ticket and the 5dh shared taxi to the village, the journey's cost was pushed up to two days' wages. Figure 5, below, shows the stages of the trip.



**Figure 5: Map showing Hafida's journey from Rabat to Jorf El Melha. Purple indicates travel by train; green a shared taxi. Map data ©2014 Google, basado en BCN IGN Espana.**

It was raining heavily by the time we got to Jorf El Melha (lit. cliff of salt), so called because of salt deposits in a cave nearby. Located on a rise in the plain between Meknes and Ouezzane, it is often referred to simply as Jorf or, amongst those who live in smaller settlements just beyond it, *l-flīlāj*, from French *le village*, but by European standards, it is more a town. With around 20,000 inhabitants Jorf is central to the lives of people in the region: this is where nearly all their marketing is done, where they visit the doctor or, more often, the pharmacist, and go to secondary school.<sup>56</sup> Hafida's father was in Jorf. A retired butcher from a family of butchers he used to work here daily. We

<sup>56</sup> The 5th journey from the village to Jorf is, however, too expensive for many families and the walk considered too far and risky for a girl. Hafida's niece (11 years old) therefore stays with family in another town where the school is close to their house rather than making this journey every day. Other girls rely on the compassion of the taxi drivers to count them as 'half' a passenger or not charge them for every journey.

left our luggage with him while Hafida made some purchases. As I watched her buy 2 kilos of apples and bananas and another 2 kilos of chicken, and then spend 100dh (more than two day's wage) at a general store on 14 pots of yoghurt, 10 packets of biscuits, 24 cheese triangles, 5 litres of milk and a large tub of margarine I began to feel my own gifts would be inadequate. This pattern of buying was repeated on every trip I made with a domestic to her home village. Sometimes the timing of the visit was even planned to coincide with the weekly market where better quality and value made provisioning more worthwhile. Added to these homecoming purchases were gifts bought in the city. Food is much cheaper in the countryside, so apart from some *helwa* (sweets) and *ghayf* (pancakes) one employer 'sent' home with her worker (which the worker helped to make), these were rarely food items, but rather toys and clothing for the children of other family members.<sup>57</sup>

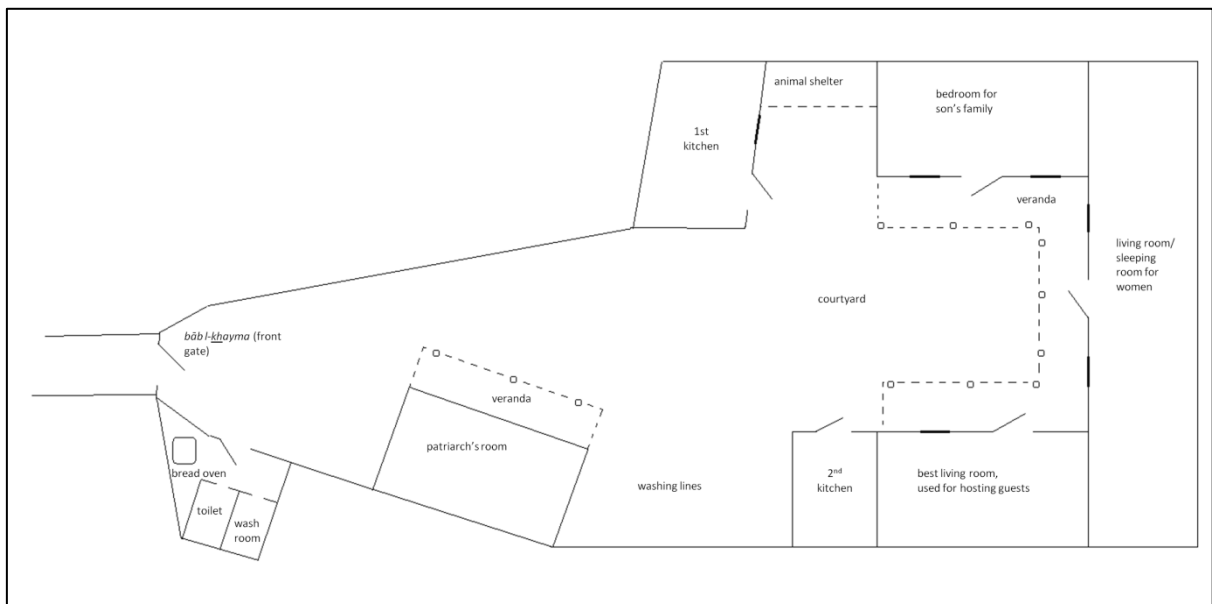
We were dropped off at the top of Hafida's village, Douar Ba Karim, where she sent a couple of children running down the muddy path to alert her family to our arrival while we waited by a pile of luggage and shopping. Everyone who passed welcomed her warmly, '*alā salāmtik*', ([Praise God] for your safety)!' and offered to help carry something, bringing home to me the context of rural Moroccans' complaints about the failure of city neighbours to greet one another in the street. By the time Hafida's sisters appeared, wearing headscarves and brightly coloured pyjamas, some with gingham aprons around their waists to hide the shape of their thighs as well as keep their clothing clean (see Figure 11 below), there was little left to carry. Hafida stood out from the others; she had gone to a salon to have her hair blow-dried the previous day and was

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<sup>57</sup> This pattern is reported by Cheikh elsewhere in Morocco: women returning home, 'load themselves up with presents for their sisters, brothers and parents but sometimes also for aunts and even neighbours, as though to compensate for and justify their absence honourably' (2011b: 38).

dressed in fitted black jeans and a checked shirt. Her high-heeled shoes with pointy toes were not faring well in the mud, though. The other women wore plastic sandals.

Hafida's family's *khayma* (lit. camp) was a large, walled compound, roughly triangular in shape owing to part of the original space being sliced off to make a separate compound for another branch of the family (see Figure 6). The rooms (*biyūt*, sing. *bīt*) and veranda were arranged around three sides of the courtyard with a separate *bīt* for Hafida's father where his meals were brought to him. Hafida's house and courtyard were larger and had more *biyūt* than many others in Douar Ba Karim. With the exception of recently built dwellings, the roofs in the village were thatched or of corrugated iron; the walls white-washed adobe, with stripes of blue, yellow, pink or turquoise around the bottom and sometimes the top of the wall. Hafida's had pink and yellow stripes and flowers on the walls too—all done, surprisingly, by the daughter-in-law (Hafida's brother's young wife), Dawiya.



**Figure 6: Diagram showing layout of Hafida's family's *khayma* (not to scale).**

There were probably a little over a hundred *khiyām* ('camps') in each of Hafida's and Miriam's villages. Government statistics are not available and the time frame of my stays, and my hosts' concern that I not venture out alone, allowed me only to gather information from people I was introduced to. Miriam's sister, Safae, named twenty-three women in their village, Awlad Ahmed, who worked as domestics in cities, including Rabat, Tangier and Casablanca. In Douar Ba Karim, Hafida's village, six young women and girls were identified as working in city houses, and three others had recently stopped working to get married. I felt there were probably more. I was told that the next village (further away from Jorf) has a greater proportion of women working in agriculture and almost no-one working in city houses but I wondered if this was a function of facts being hidden from outsiders.<sup>58</sup> I gathered from the Ba Karim women that numbers of girls and women who went to the cities for domestic work had dropped in the last two decades. Whilst there used to be 'three or four in each *khayma* who worked in cities', one of Hafida's neighbours explained: 'Now men go to work instead of girls. Girls don't go to work anymore. [Those who do are] few. They used to marry late, 30, 35. Now they marry early, 15, 16, 17, 18, so they don't have to work.' Notions of appropriate life stages for work varied from one household to another. Hafida's father had taken his girls out of school when they were young because he did not want them to walk there alone but had not allowed them to work until they were older: 'It's better that we live on what God has written rather than labouring to get more.' The men from Douar Ba Karim and Awlad Ahmed migrated to the cities for work in construction or cafés. Those who stayed behind were farmers (arable and pastoral) or labourers in the

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<sup>58</sup> Zineb's village, also in the Gharb but on the coast north of Kenitra, was presented like this. Women were occupied in family-based agriculture (bananas and strawberries, cows, goats etc.) for sale and subsistence, and Zineb and Sharifa claimed to be the only ones from their village who worked as domestics.

fields, orange groves and orchards around the village, an option also open to women,<sup>59</sup> or worked in Jorf as butchers (like Hafida's father), shopkeepers, painters, builders, mat makers. Some sold goods (such as clothing, sandals or vegetables) in the regional markets, going to a different one on each day of the week.<sup>60</sup>

## WORKING FOR THE HOUSE

On the second day of the *'id* Hafida and I hitched a lift back towards Awlad Ahmed and went to Miriam's house. Miriam (21) and her younger sister Safae (20) lived with their mother Lamia; the girls were born to a Moroccan whom the mother met in France but who had abandoned the family when Miriam and Safae were small. Lamia and the girls had returned to live in her natal *khayma*. In the last few years Miriam and Safae had persuaded their mother to use the money from their earnings to build a new breezeblock and concrete house on the site of their former adobe home in the corner of their grandfather's *khayma*. Rebuilding was widespread in Awlad Ahmed, new dwellings almost outnumbering adobe ones; less so in Ba Karim where people still worked hard to maintain the adobe walls, thatched roofing and wood and bamboo ceilings which are easily damaged by rain.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> There were apples, oranges, lemons, figs, peaches, quinces and pomegranates. Safae took me to an orchard near Awlad Ahmed and pointed out the different trees, telling me the season of each one's fruit. She claimed she had never worked in fruit picking although her sister and mother had: 'It's hard work. But to tell the truth, though it's hard, it doesn't have problems like work in houses. Everyone tells you work in houses has problems, right?'

<sup>60</sup> Jorf's market was on Sunday, other towns in the region had their weekly market on different days so market men did the rounds.

<sup>61</sup> When Yousra showed me the site where her family were building a new house, she pointed to breeze blocks piled up, saying, 'This is better than our other house – it stays clean. The other has to be redone and redone.' Home improvements financed through remittances are a visible outcome of migration everywhere. In the Kabyle village of Scheele's ethnography, for example, patriarchs built large houses to

Miriam's house was almost complete by the time of my visit. A metal door led into the courtyard which, in contrast to Hafida's where the heavy rains had made a muddy pool, was of smooth concrete with a drain which let the water out. 'It's the best thing you've done, this courtyard', said Hafida, 'If you could see the mud at ours ... !' Figures 7 and 8, below, depict this contrast. On one side of Miriam's courtyard, steps led up to the roof terrace; on the other side was a small kitchen where a waist-high counter, used more as a shelf, reflected urban designs for cooking spaces (see Figure 9 below). Washing up at Miriam's was, however, still done in a bucket by the tap in the courtyard, and cooking on a small gas burner placed on the floor. The main part of the house comprised a living room with mattresses on the floor facing the television, a guest room with higher couches and a table, and a small dressing room, where clothes, blankets, and valuables were stored in locked cupboards. Whilst the skills for building an adobe house could be found from within the familial group, these new homes were built with materials and labour (local workmen) purchased on the market, thus reinforcing integration with the cash economy. Miriam explained that they would save their wages for three or so months, then come home and put the money towards work on the house: 'If we give mother money every month she just spends it on this and that.'<sup>62</sup>

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which they hoped (pretty much in vain) their sons would return with their own children (2009: 118). For Latin American examples, see McBride, B. 2007.

<sup>62</sup> As well as paying for the house, the workers I knew saved for gold to put by for themselves.



**Figure 7: Washing-up done by Hafida's sister is left to drain well clear of the mud.**



**Figure 8: A concreted courtyard makes life easier at Miriam's house. They have plans to tile it.**

Whilst there was a general feeling that keeping earnings back for oneself was shameful,<sup>63</sup> especially when one's family was still 'building', workers did so to varying degrees. Crawford wrote that the young in the Berber village of his study worked for their fathers' households but 'have ways of resisting by siphoning off a portion of their earnings for themselves or by avoiding labor that their fathers expect of them. Ultimately, the young resist by abandoning the village altogether, along with their responsibilities to their natal households' (Crawford 2008: 172). Cheikh's young female informants in Casablanca kept a large part of their income (derived from multiple sources, including men with whom they had sexual relationships) for themselves, and Cheikh suggests this was made possible by the fact that 'they live far from their families and can therefore better control information about their income' (Cheikh 2011b: 41). Having supported her family for a year and a half, one of Cheikh's informants, 'progressively diminishes the amount of money she gives to her mother and thus forces her sister to help her' (ibid.). Rouqia, also from Awlad Ahmed, explained similarly: 'I used to give half to my parents and keep half back for me. But that half wasn't enough for me to buy clothes and things for myself so I stopped giving my parents anything.' A friend commented that this was acceptable because Rouqia's family had completed their new house.

Some domestic workers, particularly those whose families had also finished building, made no bones about saying, as Zineb did: 'I work for myself'. When she went to her family in the *blād*, she did so as a visitor rather than a member of the

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<sup>63</sup> One of Malika's older cousins who, together with a sister had worked in carpet-making, explained: 'We didn't even touch the money we brought home. What I earned I would bring home to my mother without a *riyāl* (a twentieth of a Moroccan Dirham) missing from it. *Hashmnā* (we were too ashamed, respectful) to ask her to give us [some money] to buy something for ourselves. But mother never deprived us of anything. Praise God, I won't complain but I'll just say that it's not the same story with our husbands. *Ṣabr ū ṣāfi* (patience, that's all).'

See also Rodary (2002: 124, 200) on the earnings of Marrakechi women and the shame of keeping money for oneself.

household. As such, she brought gifts rather than contributing her wage. Hafida did the same, putting her earnings into a post-office savings account. As a divorced woman, if she were to return to live permanently in her natal home she would need to contribute in some way, but by living and working in the city Hafida maintained her independence from her own family, though not from others. In some respects, this gave these workers a position above that of their families, even senior members, who were recipients of gifts or loans to meet specific needs.<sup>64</sup> I watched as Zineb asked her father to return 400dh she had lent him, and there was something cheerless in seeing an ageing man dig into his pockets to pay debts to his own daughter. The country and city economies are hardly more separable than in the nineteenth-century.

## COMPARISONS: HERE AND THERE

Whilst an idealised view of the countryside is that everyone is neighbourly and helps others, another perspective dictates how much time migrant workers are prepared to spend there. Ilham had not left Rabat to go home for several months when Rouqia asked her in the city:

‘Don’t you miss the *blād*?’

‘No, what would I miss about it? I’d only be washing the dishes there.’

‘And us, don’t we wash dishes here?’

‘There, you’re washing them in cold water...’

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<sup>64</sup> Zontini argues similarly for Moroccan domestics in Europe: ‘... in spite of the ideal of the male breadwinner, many Moroccan women have found themselves as the economic pillar of their families—a role that gives them both new prestige and further burdens’ (Zontini 2010: 164).

These negative associations of the countryside contradict the feelings of *rāḥa* expressed by homeward-bound workers. In his ethnography of an Atlas mountain community, Crawford argued:

It is not surprising that for young village women the city almost always looks desirable. They dream of indoor plumbing, a gas stove as opposed to a wood oven, indoor rather than outdoor work, a cement roof and a room with furniture rather than a leaky mud roof in a room bare except for some old carpets to sit on (2008: 15).

Salahdine also noted that domestics made comparisons between their home and that of their employers (1988: 102). My friends in Rabat did the same. Whilst workers usually looked forward to going home they often complained once they were there. Boredom had a lot to do with it. On my second day at her family's house, Zineb said: 'I'm fed up. We'll leave tomorrow.' She had watched enough television. Women in the countryside passed their time predominantly by doing work, sometimes dragging out what might have been a quick task over several hours—why hurry? Workers' feelings of boredom were thus exacerbated by their understandable unwillingness to pitch in with domestic tasks, saying they had come to rest not work. Stay-at-home sisters who felt they were doing all the work without thanks or compliment had to listen to their city-based counterparts who, in their idle state, scrutinised the minor details of domestic life. When Hafida, for example, sat down to rest on the mattresses placed on the floor around the edge of the room she sighed: 'I'm used to high couches, these are really low. I don't like them.'

If workers did housework on visits home, it was mostly confined to cooking. Staying with Zineb and her family I noticed that she took over the kitchen, making comments like: '*n-nās l-kebār* (important people) in Rabat, like my food. Doctors eat my food.' In order to feel superior to her sisters, Zineb aligned herself with her

employer's status as had done many domestics who worked for the French in Algeria (Jansen 1987: 204) and as those who identified themselves in court as 'gentleman's servant' had done in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London (Meldrum 2000: 132). In Moroccan cities cooking was a cut above other paid domestic jobs and cooks earned a higher wage than workers employed to clean, so it was natural that women emphasised this part of their role. In the countryside, however, cooking was more on a par with other jobs. Hafida tried to explain urban cooking to an aunt who was surprised to hear of the pay difference: 'But in the city cooking is complicated. You have to do several dishes and salads, put out forks and spoons.' Even when showing off was not in the worker's nature, family members expected to be given a taste of 'city' dishes. This was the case for Rachida, the Sebbaris' former domestic, who returned extremely tired from a visit to her mother in the *blād*. I assumed her fatigue was from travelling such a distance but Rachida added:

'Also from the work there. I didn't stop. They wanted me to cook roast chicken.'  
 'Didn't they have anyone who could cook?'  
 'They don't know how to cook that stuff. They don't have that in the *blād*.'

The recipes and methods which workers learnt in the city often involved ingredients or appliances they did not have in the *blād*, and differences in available or affordable produce caused further tension.<sup>65</sup> During a meal of sheep's trotters and chickpeas with her family Hafida remarked:

'It's nice, but something is missing.'  
 'What?' the others asked.  
 'Salad.'

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<sup>65</sup> This caused problems in the city too—one worker recalled putting clean plates away in the refrigerator on her first job, never having seen one before and thinking it was a cupboard.

Salad is not generally considered a vital part of meals in the countryside but workers are usually asked to make salads in the city and grow accustomed to the more varied diet. A similar problem occurred when Malika, who took over the cooking at her home, mobilising the labour of all three younger siblings to get done what she wanted, made *ḥarīra*, the spicy tomato soup with which Moroccans of all classes break the fast in Ramadan. Her mother's kitchen was not as well stocked as that of her employers. The soup wanted meat, of which there was none, and *smen* (fermented butter), but there was none of that either. Malika's 13-year-old brother commented dryly that Malika was, 'doing things the way *n-nās l-kebār* (grand, important people) do things, *nās lā bās althūm* (well-off people).' Indeed, on arrival in Fès after leaving Nadia's, Malika had gone to the market and purchased a secondhand food-processor, a frying pan for making the crêpes which Nadia's daughter had taught her to do, and a metal cheese-grater (see Figure 9) exactly the same as Nadia's.



**Figure 9:** Malika's family's half-finished kitchen. The new cheese-grater hangs in pride of place on the right-hand wall. Washing-up in a sink at waist-height is also a novelty.

The list of missing items seemed inexhaustible. Malika later complained that there was no ladle of the right size which meant the pancakes did not come out quite right. On another day she bought a flan dish for quiche (something else she had learnt to make at Nadia's), and a stand for kitchen roll, like the one on Nadia's table. These purchases reflected a desire to reproduce the *f̄tor* (breakfast) table of her former employers, for whom, if we recall from Chapter 2, Malika did not have much respect, asserting that 'They don't know how to live!'

Comparisons about dress and appearance were also prevalent, and because stay-at-home girls could see the imprint of 'city life' on the physical appearance of their returned sisters they too made comparisons between city and countryside. When Hafida and I arrived in Ba Karim, a woman greeted us, and said, indicating our clothing: '*Allāh 'alā l-medīna*', which would translate as something like: 'It's *so* nice, the city.'<sup>66</sup> Inside the *khayma* Hafida and I wore 'pyjamas' like the other women but when we went out to visit among neighbours and kin, which the others did in pyjamas also, Hafida's mother always told me to change into my 'street clothes', namely jeans and a long-sleeved tunic. She seemed keen to broadcast the urban identity of her guest. Hafida changed too, although her street clothes were more tight-fitting than my own. Sara, Hafida's younger but married sister, told me that her family thought the clothes Hafida wore were *hashūma* (shameful), but that they, 'let her do what she wants as she has been living in the city. People here know that, so it's okay for her to dress this way.' Safae, however, in a knee-length skirt and wedge sandals, went too far in Sara's opinion:

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<sup>66</sup> Writing on domestic service in the British Shires after WWI, Mullins and Griffiths note that, 'For most girls, holidays meant an annual week or two at home with mother and a chance to show off acquired finery and fashions to her peers: 'I didn't go home for about two years. You didn't have money to buy a lot; I bought a nice coat and a nice dress once and lent them to my friend and she went home, in my coat! ... I had saved and gone without, and I went home. I went home every year. Mother used to like to hear everything; dinner parties, "Oh fancy all that food", she used to say. [Housemaid from south Wales, London 1920s]' (Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 17).

Does she think she's in Casa[blanca]? *Tak, tak, tak*. [Sara imitated Safae mincing along in high heels]. Did she go out like that in front of her mother?! Next time she comes I'll tell her, if you want to visit us again, dress *mstūra* (modestly, lit. covered). If you dress *mstūra*, you're welcome; if not, don't come to our *khayma*!

Having 'nice' clothes is widely seen as a mark of living in the city (see Figure 10). One of Abu-Lughod's Egyptian informants: 'wanted to go to Cairo because she saw her sisters, who had gone there to find work, coming home dressed well and wearing gold' (Abu-Lughod, L. 2002: 23). Having fairer, younger-looking skin is another marker for which city-based workers seem universally envied. Hafida's neighbours' daughter, Yousra, showed me her hands, all cracked with cold, and said she worked a lot in water.<sup>67</sup> 'You see Nawar [her sister who worked in Rabat], she's white and beautiful, working in the *medīna*. You wouldn't say she's from here.' Another sister commented about the newly arrived bride of a neighbour's son:

She doesn't look like *bint l-'arūbīya* (a country girl). She doesn't look like she has lived in the countryside. She has the whiteness of the city. Maybe she worked in the city. She looks like she has been working there several years. There are so many girls who work in the city and when you see them you say, she is *medīnawīya* (of the *medīna*, city) not *'arūbīya*.

Hafida, for her part, looked young for her 31 years when compared with her 26- and 24-year-old sisters and when, on returning from a visit to Hafida's family without Hafida (she could not get leave), I showed her a photo I had taken of Sara, she lamented, 'My poor sister, it's the countryside and the work that's done that to her.'

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<sup>67</sup> Although, as discussed in Chapter 4, cracked hands are taken as proof of work experience, the use of washing machines in cities means women based there probably spend less time with their hands in water.



**Figure 10:** In her best clothes, Zineb heads from Kenitra station towards the stand for shared taxis to her village. She carries gifts for her family including a blanket for her sister's newborn child.



**Figure 11:** Hafida's cousin washes her family's laundry in the river at Ba Karim. She wears pyjamas and a gingham apron. Her stance, bending from the hip, is typical for domestic tasks in the countryside which are based predominantly at ground level, and contrasts with the upright position required for working at waist-high counters in urban kitchens.

Besides what country girls could infer about life in the city from the physical appearance of returned migrants, there were first-hand accounts. Revelations about the nature of work in the city varied according to different audiences and whether workers were trying to incite pity or impress. Zineb for example, often complained about her employer, Hayat, especially her lack of generosity in food and deficiency in culinary skills: ‘A sandwich she made ... what a state it was! And her couscous, *tasteless!* She cooked it with meat and then removed nearly all the meat and put in cold chicken from the day before. Who does that?!’ But these negative comments were only expressed to her sisters; to her friends Zineb made domestic work sound a barrel of laughs, encouraging them to join her in the city:

You work in the day and then you finish and the evening and weekend is yours. We go out, to the sea. Ask Mary – we’ve been to the beach a couple of times [in fact, we had been just once and very briefly], we have picnics in the forest [this again was a one-off and the occasion of the sorry sandwich mentioned above], we go to the *medīna*. And you make friends and go out with them. And you get your 50dh a day so you can buy clothes and things.

One of Zineb’s friends responded, ‘God, that’s better [than here]. Here the work never finishes.’ That migrants on visits home depict to villagers the ‘splendour of the city’ (Majumdar and Majumdar 1978: 116) to add to their own prestige has become commonplace in the literature.

To more distant acquaintances in the village, however, the true nature of Zineb’s work remained hidden. When one woman asked after Zineb’s sister, Sharifa (who was at the time employed by Warda’s client as narrated in Chapter 4), Zineb replied: ‘She’s fine, thanks be to God. She’s working in a *sharīka* (‘company’, implying a factory),<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Huriya similarly told her friend from Tunis that she worked in a factory. Cf. Cheikh (2011b: 39) on the importance of ‘lies and the unsaid’ for her informants in their home settings. The true nature of their source of income, monetarised sexual encounters, was not usually talked about although family members often knew and kept quiet. The workers I knew steered well clear of this kind of woman, electing to live

the same one I am working in.’ Zineb claimed that people would laugh at them and speak ill of them if they knew they worked in houses, but I wondered why she had told her friends and not this woman. Zineb explained: ‘I know them well; it’s normal for them, it’s fine. But this woman wouldn’t understand. And she’s a bit of a gossip.’ The low status of domestic work meant it was kept private from some people but partially revealed to others,<sup>69</sup> for, as Dresch argues, ‘The social everywhere involves selective privacy, and privacy is always layered’ (2000: 112). The advantage of the distance between the village and the city is that the nature of a daughter’s urban existence can be glossed over at home. It would be a very different thing for the family’s honour if their daughter cleaned the house next door for a living.

## GOING OUT

In Chapter 5 I described workers going out in the city and mentioned that living in the countryside no longer meant young women could not go out. Most rural ways of socialising were interwoven with daily tasks; women snatched time to talk while they were getting water or on their way somewhere else. For Awlad Ahmed women, at least those whose *khayma* did not have its own well, the spring above the village was a place they could gather and talk while waiting their turn to fill containers. Men stood on a nearby hillock, presumably not exactly minding their own business though they were too far off to be party to any conversation. There was a sense that this was women’s

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in their employers’ home rather than share rented accommodation with ‘girls of the cafés’, waitresses and others whose morality was questionable.

<sup>69</sup> Writing on Oujda, Bourqia remarks that, although about five percent of the families she interviewed were sending their daughters to work in wealthy households, ‘Out of pride many families do not admit it to neighbours and strangers’ (Bourqia 1996: 32).

space but it was plainly watched by men. The women of Ba Karim, by contrast, drew water from the river where I never saw anyone linger (there was no excuse, the river being big enough for everyone's use at once), or at a shared tap if potable water was required, but the tap was too central to the village to be a place women could talk out of male earshot. There was, however, a small plot of land between two 'camps' on which nothing was being grown. Ba Karim women often stepped into this space so they could talk away from the main thoroughfare. The empty plot also formed a section of the route out to the main road if one wanted to avoid going past the *qahwa* (café), the social hub of the village as far as men were concerned. Men lingered outside the café, where alcohol was served, so that for a woman to walk past required a certain presence of mind, or as one woman put it: 'you just have to be *mhānīya f rāsk* (confident in your own mind). If you go past giggling and scared then it's going to make the men look at you.' The women joked about the fallow plot of land as '*l-qahwa diyāl l-bnāt* (the girls' café)'.

A more plainly pleasure-bent activity was going for a trip into Jorf or for a walk outside the village. In Awlad Ahmed or Ba Karim this kind of 'going out' involved a long period spent dressing. On this occasion Miriam put on jeans and a fitted jacket and brushed her long hair out down her back. Safae wore a short black dress over leggings and spent a long time on her make-up. Earlier she had washed the mud from all our shoes but they were dirty again as soon as we stepped out the front door. Hafida was with us too and all three seemed to know various men on the road, stopping to talk to them. Hafida made a phone-call to a friend who drove a taxi, asking him to come back from Jorf 'empty' to pick us up. Meanwhile we walked on towards the town with the daylight fading, stopping by a puddle where Miriam said, 'let's wash our shoes, so as not to go to Jorf muddy.' The friend with the taxi came, picked us up and returned to

Jorf where he dropped Safae, Miriam and me off in the square. Hafida took a turn with him in the car while we walked about under the streetlights and looked in shopwindows. Safae wanted to take photos on her mobile but it was too dark. A boy, barely a man, tried to chat her up from a distance. Safae shouted insults back at him and complained to me that people do not respect her. Eventually Hafida and the taximan picked us up and we rode back to Awlad Ahmed.

Such excursions could only be undertaken if one had finished all one's chores. This became clear when Hafida's mother, fearing I was getting bored in the *khayma*, and not being able to spare any of her own women from the work she wanted done,<sup>70</sup> asked her brother's family to allow one of their daughters, Hala, to take me for a walk on the ridge behind the village (I was never allowed out alone). We were gone, together with a friend of Hala's, for an hour and a half. 'Oh dear', said Hala on our return, 'the work will be waiting for me! They only gave me half an hour.' The next evening, one of Hafida's sisters 'took me out' (I felt like a pet dog) and we knocked for Hala's friend, and then for Hala, to ask if they could join us. While we waited at the *khayma* gate for someone to answer, Hala's friend joked: 'Hala was with us *b sawā'ir* (by the hour) yesterday'. The phrase '*b sawā'ir*' refers to payment on an hourly basis rather than for a day, week or month of service. It is unheard of for domestic work but common in factories. The joke that Hala was allowed out 'by the hour' pointed to an organisation of work that was strict to a degree that was out of place in the home. Though an extreme case it demonstrates the extent to which regimes of work for family members can be as inflexible as that of waged labour, and sheds light on the life of domestic workers in the city who sometimes have more freedom than girls like Hala. City and country are each idealised by those in the other, but whilst in the city one can usually seek a better

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<sup>70</sup> 'We're not finished' was a phrase Hafida's mother said to outsiders of the *khayma* who made requests for labour or to whom she made a request.

situation, the options open in the countryside are always more limited; there is nowhere to go.

## **DOMESTIC HIERARCHIES**

Ethnographic literature on North Africa points to a gendered division of labour from early childhood: ‘From about age four onwards, [girls] look after younger siblings, fetch and carry, clean and run errands’ (Maher 1984: 73). Davis and Davis describe the daily routine of Hakima, a 14-year-old girl in a small Moroccan town north-east of Rabat (1989: 17-22). Between her shifts at school, Hakima’s household tasks included folding away bedding, collecting water, washing dishes and cleaning the floor. The description of her male peer’s routine provides a striking contrast, his only remotely domestic task being to make coffee for himself before he leaves for school in the morning (ibid. 24).<sup>71</sup> When asked, ‘what’s better here in Morocco, to be a girl or to be a boy?’, girls in Davis and Davis’s study often mentioned having fewer household responsibilities as an advantage to being a boy. In the words of one informant:

... the girl does a lot of housework. The boy gets up, has breakfast and leaves. He comes back at lunchtime, has lunch and leaves. He does not care about anything. That is not the case for the girl. She has to do the laundry, sweep the floor, and cook. She gets exhausted by work (Davis and Davis 1989: 139).

Gender is not the only factor involved when dividing up labour; age is also important.

Crawford (2008: 49) writes that:

Patriarchs rarely have much to say about women’s labor, so in practice the eldest woman (often the wife, sometimes the mother of the patriarch) manages the

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<sup>71</sup> For Algerian and Tunisian examples see Lacoste-Dujardin (1985: 77) and Zamiti-Horchani (1983).

feminine labor of the household. Thus there are parallel lines of age-based authority, one among women and one among men, with each person dominating the next youngest, but these lines converge in the patriarch.

Age alone is a simplistic criterion. Van Dusen argues that ‘age, or perhaps more accurately, life-cycle status, is an important factor in separating women of the Middle East into social groups with well-defined duties and prerogatives, as well as a fairly clear pecking order’ (1976: 5).<sup>72</sup> Belghiti observes the assignment of noble and less noble tasks to different people in her study of female relations in rural families:

Generally, everything that is cleaning – sweeping, collecting up rubbish, removing animal dung, washing the dishes – is not popular work: one leaves it for little girls and newly married women who do not know how to cook. Making the stew, the bread, the couscous or pancakes is already a nobler task and reserved for the lady of the house. As for milking and making butter, it’s the oldest woman, the person who has been longest in the household, or the most highly regarded, who does this. Young brides do not have the right to raise poultry; they sometimes have to wait until they have children (Belghiti 1971: 304).

Maher, in another rural study, notes a similar ‘domestic hierarchy’ in which members of the household can lay claim to status through the work they perform: ‘there is usually a graduation from older to younger women down from the performance of tasks involving skill and responsibility for resources towards those which merely involve expenditure of energy and the removal of dirt’ (Maher 1974: 122).<sup>73</sup> She observes that domestic skills are transferred from older women as they delegate certain tasks to younger women and supervise their performance: ‘It is this constant attendance of girls on older women and

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Mundy (1979) on women’s life-cycle status and inheritance in Yemen.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas (1973, cited Guillet 1980: 155-6) writing on the highlands of Peru, observed that within the family work was assigned to specific age-sex groups according to the principle of body weight. He argued that the most energetically efficient group for an agricultural task would be the lightest which could effectively perform it. This was evident in the assigning of herding to children who expend less energy on it than adults. In Morocco, tasks which required most energy were usually given to younger girls, as long as they were capable of it. Perhaps as a result of this older women whose status allowed them to remain sedentary and order others to work were often overweight.

the involvement in their tasks which characterises women's lives ... A girl always experiences herself in a vertical relation of obedience and command' (Maher 1984: 73). This contrasts with boys who relate horizontally, playing outside with age-mates (ibid. 74). Age also played a dominant role in determining the tasks assigned to a girl in Davis and Davis's small-town study. Five- or six-year-olds watch younger siblings and run errands; ten-year-olds do the daily cleaning and buy vegetables; sixteen-year-olds can buy meat and cook it up in a stew (Davis and Davis 1989: 23). Berque observed that the child, boy or girl, is always a '*coopérateur*' (1955: 350-1).

Women in the rural households I knew organised work between themselves according to this principle of life-cycle status. The wife of the household-head was in charge, telling daughters and daughters-in-law what to do. Older sisters took on a role as junior mothers, telling younger sisters what to do. Breakfast times often functioned as business meetings in which women flagged up the work that needed doing that day and those who were in a position to do so told others what to do. Who will knead the bread? Who will do the washing up from the evening before? Who will wash the clothes? One breakfast-time at Hafida's, Dawiya, the daughter-in-law, was lamenting how much laundry she had to do; 'The washtub is full!' At this point, Dawiya's 18-month-old daughter, Iman, waggled her tongue and gargled joyfully. Everyone laughed: '*(katzagher)* she's ululating! The washtub's full and you're ululating!' In Morocco ululation expresses celebration, but there was nothing to be joyful about, just a day of scrubbing clothes in the river.

Humour was used by women who thought they had been given more than their fair share of work and to reprove those who did not pull their weight. On another occasion Hafida's sister Aziza was still in bed at breakfast time; she claimed she was ill from having done too much laundry the day before. Another sister took breakfast to her

in bed, more to laugh at her than out of concern, and her mother mocked Aziza from the veranda where the rest of us were eating: ‘Did you wake up a bride?’<sup>74</sup> Other comments which served to put people in their place were often used, such as: ‘Where have you been *lalla akhayī* (lady my little sister)?’ *Lalla*, or lady, is, almost by definition, someone who need not work; a little sister (note the diminutive), is someone who ought to. Similarly, when Miriam asked Safae to do something, Safae responded with: ‘Yes, *Madame*’, implying that Miriam was taking herself for one of Safae’s middle-class employers. The reprimands were nearly always specific to womanhood, if not explicitly then implicitly. At Malika’s home, Ikram was lying on the couch when her mother said, ‘Call yourself a woman? Well get up!’ Ikram’s mother also mocked what she perceived as Ikram’s fancy urban ways: she imitated her mincing around the house, twisting her hips and talking in a silly, high-pitched voice. If Ikram, the second-youngest of five sisters and niece to six aunts, thought she had become someone through living in the city, her mother was trying to assure her she had not.

It shocked me somewhat that Ikram and Malika took little notice of their mother, or shouted and answered back, sometimes telling her to be quiet, while the sisters who had remained at home had a more respectful attitude. Their mother, for her part, complained that ‘her word no longer passed in the house’. This is not surprising considering Malika and Ikram spent so much time away and in submission to another authority, compared with whom their mother, according to certain urban criteria (education, knowledge of cuisine, dress and manners) fell short. The same problem was echoed in Malika and Ikram’s own relationship; living apart meant the distinction which should have been maintained between older and younger sister as they grew up together

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<sup>74</sup> In the run-up to her wedding a bride is the only woman who can legitimately contribute nothing to the housework, preserving her health and beauty by resting and staying clean. In the female world this is an exceptional state of being, which does not last.

became blurred. With all the pairs of sisters I got to know, it mattered greatly that one was older than the other.<sup>75</sup> When in the city, this was manifested by the older sister acting as an agent, finding the younger one work, telling her to quit or stay and to do this or that with her wage. In their homes in the *blād*, the sisters fell into adjacent rungs of the domestic hierarchy, the older could boss the younger about, tell her to bring a glass of water, tidy the living room, attend to a child, wash the dishes and so on. Malika was third out of five daughters, Ikram fourth, but in Malika's eyes it made all the difference, or should have done. Malika, like her mother, also felt that what she said 'no longer passed in the house' and on one occasion hit Ikram for not doing as she asked. Storming out, Malika commented that the neighbours, overhearing the family fight, would laugh at her mother, meaning it reflected a mother's inability to maintain order in her household. 'You're not my mother', Malika had screamed. By sending Malika and Ikram out to work, their mother lost her status as authority figure as well as giver of care. The daughters no longer needed her (in fact the mother needed them, or their wages at least, to finish building the house), so nor would they obey her.<sup>76</sup> Ikram's refusal to obey Malika was just a scaled-down version of the same upset power-relation but Malika chose physical violence rather than mockery to try to reinstate Ikram's inferiority.

Malika emphasised that she opted for work in cities like Rabat and Casablanca, far away from her family in Fès, so that she would not be expected to go home at the weekend: 'to stay away from the troubles with my family.' It has been observed

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<sup>75</sup> Miriam and Safae, who were just one year apart with Safae expressing her will more strongly despite being younger, were an exception.

<sup>76</sup> The link between a duty to provide for and a right to discipline a child is made by one of Zontini's Moroccan informants doing domestic work in Barcelona. Selwa, a divorced mother, considered marriage but worried a new husband would not treat her child well: 'But can I tell him not to touch the child because he's not his son if I don't work and he is the one who works? When I'll ask him for money to buy something for the child he can reply, 'If I can't beat him, if I can't shout at him, I also can't buy him anything, he's not my son' (Zontini 2010: 180).

elsewhere that labour-migration is rarely motivated by economic reasons alone. Alpa Shah notes for migration to brick-kilns in India, ‘how often it was also perceived in terms of the temporary need to be in a space away from the village and from the constraints and obligations of kinship, from domestic disputes and a narrow-minded and oppressive village environment’ (Shah, A. 2006: 106).<sup>77</sup> A study of service in the English shires in the nineteenth and twentieth century records domestics’ keenness to get away from family demands (Mullins and Griffiths 1986: 4). In both this and the Moroccan context workers left home in the hope of greater autonomy, not only from family but from larger hierarchical structures, a fact early rural migrants to the city summarised by saying, ‘We have come here to be “our own *qāi’ds*”’ (Montagne 1952: 251).<sup>78</sup>

If younger sisters had a hard time, granddaughters had it worse, owing labour to grandparents, parents and older siblings. I only realised how much I had internalised the feeling of entitlement of an older family member to service from a younger when I returned from the field. The morning after I flew back to the UK, I woke up to a messy room at my parents’ house. My luggage simply added to the piles of things from past stages of my life that lay around. Particularly odious was a pot of pens, most of which probably no longer worked. ‘They need a good sorting through,’ I thought, and my niece, a 5-year-old, came to mind. ‘Ellie, I’ve got something for you to do...’ It would not have gone down well. Ellie might have enjoyed picking through the pens for a minute or two but after that it would be just work. Hafida’s niece, Fatima-Zohra, was the same age as my own. She had begun to fetch and carry, and by the time I left the

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Parry (2003) on motivations for seeking labour away from the village in India.

<sup>78</sup> Migrants did not leave all such relationships of dominance behind. Montagne wrote that the prestige of *murābiṭ* (religious teachers) and *shurfa* (descendants of Mohammed) of rural origin did not disappear if they moved to the city. He cites a Berber domestic of maraboutic origin in Rabat who received visits and ‘offerings’ from Soussi domestic workers every Friday (1952: 34).

field was given more tasks than the first time I visited the village eight months previously. Fatima-Zohra seemed to undertake these tasks joyfully. She was happy to be included, noticed, named, to exist.<sup>79</sup> She was rarely thanked but was told, ‘You’re a good girl’.

That household hierarchies are organised along two axes—the young submitting to the old, and women submitting to men—is perhaps most evident in the person of the daughter-in-law, who must submit to both her husband and her mother-in-law, her *ḥamā*. Moroccan kinship units are traditionally patrilocal: the bride moves to live with her husband’s family. This move is particularly momentous in rural contexts if marriage partners are sought from another village, as Hoffman found:

Marriage in rural Morocco was more about this change of residence than about romance. The common Tashelhit way of saying ‘She is going to marry a boy from the Tililit [village]’ was *tra Tililit*, literally ‘She wants Tililit’ and meaning ‘She is going to Tililit.’ The theme of movement was reflected in wedding verses, reinforced by their being sung while moving and in liminal moments such as during the bridal procession (Hoffman 2008: 119-20).

This displacement allows for the treatment of the bride as a stranger (Belghiti 1971: 322). Added to this is the fact that, historically, girls were married very young, in the words of one of Belghiti’s informants, ‘so that she’ll obey her husband and not be too worldly wise’ (Belghiti 1971: 313).<sup>80</sup> Rassam, studying families in Fès and Meknes in the 1970s, observes that, ‘the extreme emphasis on the youthfulness of the bride means that she will be both helpless and dependent’ (1980: 174). The closer the bride can live

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<sup>79</sup> A little girl often came and hung around Miriam and Safae’s house. They would send her on various errands, and explained: ‘Her father died and her mother is alone looking after a boy and this girl. No-one thinks of her.’ Their sending her on errands was a way of ‘thinking of her’ and the girl seemed to take real pleasure in performing these small tasks.

<sup>80</sup> This is beginning to change—reforms have included a minimum marriage age of fifteen for women (Keddie 2007: 145). The youngest daughter in the Marrakech family who hosted me as a language student was seventeen when she got married in 2011 and was interrogated by the local authorities to make sure she was marrying by her own volition. Thirty odd years ago, her mother was married at fourteen.

to her natal family the more chance she has of being defended by her own family against that of her husband.

The bride's triply subordinate identity—young, strange and female—places her at the very bottom of the pecking order within her husband's household. Maher (1984: 79) describes the life of the rural daughter-in-law as characterised by hard work, service to her husband and his male kin, subordination to female affines and inadequate provision of food, clothing and other goods. Dwyer records the words of one woman on the topic of her daughter-in-law: 'But a bride is there to cook, sweep, and launder, not to be liked by her husband' (Dwyer 1978: 3, cf. Davis 1983: 131). Mernissi (1975) sees the *ḥamā's* rule as symbolised in the key she uses to lock away the household provisions.<sup>81</sup> Kapchan's study, *Gender on the Market*, emphasises the status of the daughter-in-law as a "'good" from the marketplace', the property 'not only of the husband but his entire family, and most particularly of his mother' (1996: 212). She records the story of Khadouj who (in rural north-east Morocco in the 1920s), still prepubescent, was tattooed on her wrists, ankles and chin by her soon-to-be mother-in-law to mark her out as a 'promised article of exchange' between the two families (ibid.).<sup>82</sup>

As a low-status stranger from the market, the daughter-in-law's position is, I suggest, structurally similar to that of a migrant domestic worker. Lacoste-Dujardin, indeed, draws a parallel between a mother choosing a bride for her son and a forewoman choosing her labourers (1985: 154). Aptitude for housework was such an important criterion that the daughters of emigrants, brought up in France, could avoid an

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<sup>81</sup> Goichon also noted the importance of this in her study of the early twentieth-century bourgeoisie of Fès: 'The lady of the house ... she alone has the right to control, she is there in her uncontested domain, where her husband likes to see her, and carries her bunch of keys like a symbol of her power' (Goichon 1929: 41).

<sup>82</sup> Moroccan women were tattooed with a needle dipped in ashes to enhance their beauty but also as a marker of property (Kapchan 1996: 212). As Kapchan observes, this is rare in contemporary Morocco.

offer of marriage from the ‘homeland’ by refusing to do housework, which easily disqualifies them on ‘*le marché matrimonial*’ (Lacoste-Dujardin 1985: 155). In a similar vein, Kasriel, writing on Aït Haddidou women of the High Atlas, suggests that ‘the main wealth of a woman is her labour force’ (1989: 62-3). The equation of bride with maid is explicit in discourse recorded by fieldworkers. One of the women in Munson’s (1984) *Oral History of a Moroccan Family* is approached for marriage by a wealthy and esteemed sociology lecturer but she refuses his offer saying that what he and his mother want is the free labour of a maid. Similarly, one of Newcomb’s Fassi informants had married a widower and felt that ‘the primary reason he had wanted to remarry was to gain a caretaker and a maid’ (Newcomb 2009: 54).<sup>83</sup> As when a woman takes on a maid, gaining a daughter-in-law marks a significant change in the daily life of the Maghrebi mother-in-law. Lacoste-Dujardin’s account of the addition of a new bride to the Lâali family, Algerians living in Paris, illustrates this.

She served docilely in the house of her parents-in-law, did the housework and the cooking, while her brothers- and sisters-in-law were at school or college, under the orders of a triumphant Madame Lâali who could now be more available for shopping, knitting or crochet, visiting her friends. *Tesaâ tislit*, in Kabyle: ‘She has a daughter-in-law’, I was starting to understand what that meant: a household servant ... (Lacoste-Dujardin 1985: 57).

In Rassam’s study of ‘domestic power’ she found, somewhat surprisingly, that many girls were relatively untrained in domestic skills. Furthermore, the norm demanded that those who were trained feign ignorance: ‘A daughter-in-law who openly displays her expertise in cooking is thought to be exhibitionistic and immodest – and her action is interpreted as a direct challenge to the mother-in-law. Passivity, submission, and ignorance, feigned or real, are the ideal traits of a bride’ (Rassam 1980:

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<sup>83</sup> This is not limited to Morocco; see for example, Ray and Qayum (2009: 123) on the bride as domestic servant in Kolkata.

174). Davis (1983: 37) also stresses the importance on the part of the bride of what Hochschild (1983) would call ‘emotional labour’. Just as domestic workers are often expected to act out the part of an inferior and ‘*appear grateful*’, as discussed in Chapter 3, a daughter-in-law must manage her emotions to display deference towards her affines.

A woman’s status changes dramatically when she becomes a mother. One of Belghiti’s (1971) informants recollects that her mother-in-law stopped locking the store-cupboard with a key when she became pregnant. A woman earns particular status as the mother of sons as this assures the continuation of the patriline; her status will change again when she becomes a mother-in-law and, with this rise to power, she can finally take ‘her revenge on her daughter-in-law’ (Belghiti 1971: 328). Belghiti (1971), Dwyer (1978), Rassam (1980) and Davis (1983) all note the cyclical nature of this power relation. Davis characterises the life experience of Moroccan women as one of ‘patience and power’: ‘The daughter-in-law is expected to endure everything patiently, attempting to do the best she can to prove her worth to the household’ (Davis 1983: 131), so that one day she in turn will be *mulat d-dār*.<sup>84</sup>

While much of this literature is outdated, especially where the city is concerned, as relatively few young couples reside with parents, it seemed to ring true in Hafida’s home. Hafida’s mother would sit in the kitchen with a pottery dish for mixing *helwa*-dough on the floor in front of her and, just as Latifa did with her domestic at Dār Sebbari, ask her daughter-in-law Dawiya to pass her things, pull up the sleeves of her tunic, retie her headscarf, sift flour, fill bowls with oil, grate a lemon or rinse the eggs. The mother-in-law was the cook, Dawiya was assisting, not making the *helwa* herself. I

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<sup>84</sup> The subordination of new brides to their mothers-in-law is widespread. Brahman brides in Nepal, for instance, sought for the labor they can provide as well as their fertility, are given heavy chores and criticised openly, but receive better treatment with the birth of each child (Bennett 1983, Stone 2006: 96-112). See also Minturn on changing relations between women in-laws in Rajasthan (1993: ch 6).

thought Dawiya might have joined in rolling and shaping the sweets, but she waited by the side. Every now and then she would be told to bring more flour, sometimes to be quicker. Dawiya was mostly respectful but sometimes answered, saying something like, ‘You want *more* flour?!’

Hafida commented to me: ‘Here, marriage is hard. You don’t take a husband, you take his mother. It’s like you are *kheddāma* ‘*andhā* (her worker or servant).’ Hafida herself had gone home for a break when a man came to the village, saw her, liked her, and asked her family to give her in marriage. Hafida said: ‘I didn’t want to marry but they wanted me to and made me and I married and went to live with him in another town.’ When Hafida’s husband returned to work in Libya, Hafida was left with her mother-in-law: ‘She would just sit there and I would bring in the food and clear it away and wash up and when we went to the *ḥammām* it was I who scrubbed her.’ Although the husband made arrangements for Hafida to join him in Libya, his mother would not allow it. Hafida complained to both her father and his and finally got a divorce, but in the meantime remained in his mother’s house and felt powerless: ‘My father was ill and my mother was ill and I couldn’t work for them to help them. Because back home [i.e. in the countryside as opposed to Rabat] you can’t work unless you are divorced.’ What Hafida meant is that one cannot undertake paid work to help support one’s natal family if one is married.

## CONCLUSION

Spending time with workers in their family homes put their lives in Rabat into perspective. Generally, the way domestic service in the city was presented in the

country meant stay-at-home sisters envied their city-based counterparts more than the other way round. Working in the city not only gave workers a different physical appearance, particularly thanks to indoor work out of the sun and appliances such as washing machines, which saved their hands, but also access to and a taste for fashions uncommon in the countryside. Added to this was the knowledge of urban ways of living and cooking and prestige reflected from the status of their employers as 'important', 'well-off' people and the nature of Rabat as the 'capital' and a place for leisure (picnics, trips to the beach), which had currency within the home household and as far beyond it as gossip based on the shameful nature of domestic service was not feared. Workers who had taken control of their earnings rather than contributing these to the household appeared particularly powerful, their gifts or loans of money to parents and sisters only adding to this appearance. The altered person of the worker did not always fit back into existing hierarchies at home, her presence frequently causing tension. Mothers felt undermined and the pecking order of sisters was sometimes upset.

The hierarchy in which domestics worked under employers was a simpler version of the complex, multilateral power relations in the extended families from which workers were sometimes glad to distance themselves. Ikram, for example, left her employer where she served a couple and their two children, to come home and be bossed around by a mother and father, three older sisters, six aunts and numerous cousins. Views on the treatment of daughters-in-law in particular shed light on workers who were prepared to forgo the trustworthiness of 'sons of the *blād*' to seek a husband in an apparently motherless urban stranger. Paid work in the meantime at least had the merit of being temporary, a new employer being more easily secured than a divorce. Whilst workers complained that no-one knew them in the city, making it difficult to get married, the intimacy of village life could be claustrophobic, evident in the problem of

people ‘talking’, something which was itself much talked about. In the village, women had to pass by men who had courted and then betrayed them and everyone else knew about this. As Crawford wrote, for some of the young men who migrated from the village he studied,

alienation is preferable to the grinding domination of the local patriarchal order, anonymity and isolation are better than a world cloyingly suffused with memory, where every rock has a name, and everyone knows it. For some the city is attractive precisely *because* the market has no memory (2008: 184).

Whilst days at home were characterised by gossip, family hierarchy, poor-quality food, boredom, and in the rainy season, mud, some workers missed the *blād*. A Ba Karim girl explained that their migration was seasonal: ‘In the winter the village gets muddy and girls get fed up here and go and work in the city. In the summer when it’s beautiful here they come back and stay. It’s not necessary to work all year.’ Demand for agricultural labour peaked in the summer so work was available at this time for both men and women locally. The conception at the supply-end of domestic work as seasonal does not suit urban demands for year-round service and workers’ desire to be in the *blād* for the summer may partly explain the high turnover of urban domestic service. Workers cannot get leave, so they simply quit and then seek a new employer in the autumn.

## CHAPTER 7

### DOMESTIC WORKERS AND THE LAW

Studies everywhere reveal a story of domestic labour's exclusion from the legal codes regulating workers and employers in other sectors. Domestic service has been considered something other than work, and not part of economics, or indeed of history, a specificity which stems in part from its conceptualisation as a woman's natural role:

Domestic servants were omitted from the writings of most of the central theorists, among them Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Edward Palmer Thompson, who concentrated so heavily on the manufacturing sector that they tended to disregard the significance of domestic work. This paved the way for leaving a very central and involved group of workers—domestic servants—outside the scope of theoretical thought about the labour market, its workers, and its laws (Albin 2012: 233).<sup>1</sup>

Part of this is the 'one of the family' rhetoric which, in the Moroccan context, originates in the institution of *trebbī* (bringing up)—a mother's care and a bellyful of warm *ghayf* in return for a service which helps to make the 'mother' as much as the *ghayf*. Family is

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<sup>1</sup> Western feminists in the sixties and seventies attempted to change this conception by demanding 'wages for housework' because they saw that the value of their domestic labour, essential to the reproduction of the labour force (Marx 1867), was being extracted by the owners of the factories where their husbands worked: James and Dalla Costa (1972), Seccombe (1974, 1975), Coulson et al. (1975), Federici (1975), Gardiner (1975), Smith, P. (1978), Kaluzynska (1980), Glazer (1984), Fortunati (1995).

itself a code which appears to transcend Law with a capital ‘L’, a distinction expressed in medieval England in the alternative systems of love and law (Clanchy 2003).

In Europe early regulation of the relationship between domestics and their employers was through family law in both civil- and common-law systems, because of ‘the special characteristics of their employment relationships: direct dependency on the head of house, paternalism, subordination ... and requirements of loyalty and trustworthiness’ (Veneziani 1986: 45-6). For early modern and industrialising England the role of the Poor Law in regulating employment has been emphasised: ‘settlement’ (the right of a poor person to material relief from his or her Parish) could be gained through a yearly hiring.<sup>2</sup> Steedman (2009: 18) writes about English domestic service that ‘... as far as I can discover, the anonymous author of *Laws Concerning Master and Servants* of 1785 was the last *legal* voice to aver that “Master and Servants are Relatives”’, and underlines that service was a legal arrangement of contract. But the specificity of the location and nature of their labour has continued to set domestics apart from other workers.<sup>3</sup>

## **A SPECIAL LAW: DEFINING DOMESTIC WORK**

Article 4 of the Moroccan *Code du travail* (8<sup>th</sup> June 2004) states that ‘the conditions of employment and work for household employees who are linked to the head of the house

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<sup>2</sup> On the Poor Law and labour generally see Deakin and Wilkinson 2005; on its significance for domestic labour see Steedman (2007: ch 4, 2009: ch 4), Richardson (2010: ch 9).

<sup>3</sup> In nineteenth-century England, the nature of work in a household and the relationship between household members and their servants legitimised the exclusion of domestic servants from the protection of the Employers’ Liability Act 1880: they were ‘persons whose personal relations in the household or retinue of their masters made it inconvenient that the disputes between them and their masters should be settled before magistrates’ (*Pearce v Lansdowne*, cited Albin 2013: 239).

by a work relationship are fixed by a special law'. This meant all household employees such as gardeners, chauffeurs, and domestic workers were excluded from the general law and promised one of their own. But the 'special law' (*Projet de loi n° 19-12*) has remained in draft since 2006 when the government began work on it. On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011 the draft was approved by the *Conseil de gouvernement* and it was rapidly submitted to Parliament, but the new government, elected the following month, opted for a re-examination of the law by Interministerial Delegation (15<sup>th</sup> June 2012). Although Abdelouahed Souhail, the then Minister of Employment and Professional Training, stated in an interview that the law was a 'priority' (Human Rights Watch 2012: 33) none of the laws in draft were re-examined that year. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, towards the end of my fieldwork, it was announced on national television that the law had been approved (again) by the *Conseil de gouvernement* but with further amendments to be made. More than a year later, Parliament had not yet voted to bring the law into force. The only available text remains the draft submitted to Parliament in 2011.

The draft law defines domestic workers as 'any natural person who undertakes, on a permanent basis, for payment, tasks associated with the house', and the household head (*ṣaḥīb al-bayt* in standard Arabic but understood to coincide with Moroccan Arabic's *mul d-dār*)<sup>4</sup> as 'any natural person who hires the labour of a worker to undertake work linked to the house which does not aim to make financial gain'.<sup>5</sup> Such definitions make poor provision for the fact that the employer, in a practical sense, is

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<sup>4</sup> Note that this person is never called 'the employer'. I cite my own translation from the Arabic text of the draft law throughout.

<sup>5</sup> This is an echo of Smith's dichotomy of productive and unproductive labour—'A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers: he grows poor by maintaining a multitude of menial servants' (Smith, Adam [1776] 1986: 430)—which underlies the specificity of domestic workers everywhere and in part explains their exclusion from general labour regulation and national statistics—their work is not seen as contributing to the GDP.

not a person-sole but a household, or sometimes, thinking of Dār Sebbari where a shout from the stairs sufficed to call a worker from one apartment to another, a group of households. The domestic worker's contract is defined as that 'which binds with its governance the domestic worker to undertake specific work in the house', and the following jobs (article 2) are delimited:

- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Care of children or household members who, because of their age or condition, have special needs
- Driving the car for household errands
- Tending to the household garden
- Guarding the house

Such enumeration of roles is a move away from an understanding that domestic workers can be asked to do any task which members of a household require. Many of these demands would fall under a rubric of companion, or, historically in England 'lady's maid', and thus be excluded if work were strictly limited to roles in the above list.

Historical analysis of domestic service in Britain where, 'What men did was definite, well-defined, limited ... what women did was everything else' (Prior 1985: 95 cited Meldrum 2000: 132), suggests that the problem of an ill-defined role was particular to female workers. Whilst women 'went into service', men were more specifically grooms, butlers, coachmen, and footmen (Meldrum 2000: 132). Whilst this may be the appearance when the domestic world is viewed from a public standpoint, nineteenth-century English novels suggest that women domestics were ranked as strictly as men. Whilst on the surface Moroccan women 'worked in houses' or 'did the work of houses', probably a function of the predominance of live-in arrangements for women, among themselves they might discuss whether they did *ménage* (housework—another broad category in which cleaning is only one element), cooking or childcare or

‘everything’, as Ilham and Wafa had done. Men, meanwhile, usually stated out-right that they were chauffeurs, gardeners or security guards or a specified combination.<sup>6</sup> Whilst the Moroccan draft law leaves vague the definition of work to be performed, stating simply that ‘Domestic workers undertake work requested by, in accordance with the wishes of, and under the supervision of the homeowner’ (article 4), the legislation of some states stipulates that contracts must precisely define workers’ tasks. The Moroccan *Conseil national des droits de l’homme*, who have produced a memorandum on the draft law, cite Irish and South African legislation, the latter even including a model contract with tick-box lists for employers to fill out (CNDH 2013: 9, 14).

As in the Moroccan labour-code for general workers, the draft law for domestics requires a written contract which will comply with the *Code des obligations et contrats* (12<sup>th</sup> December 1913), with a copy for each party and a third sent to the work inspection office. The CNDH suggest that the contract include:

The type of work to be done, remuneration, how it will be calculated and the frequency of payments, all payment in kind with its monetary value, pay-rate and compensation of overtime, normal working-hours, paid annual leave and daily and weekly rest-periods, provision of food and lodging, the probation period, if necessary, conditions of repatriation (in the case of a foreign worker), a description of lodgings provided, the method for recording overtime and on-call hours worked, and how the domestic worker will have access to this information (ibid. 9).

A written contract is, however, not a straightforward solution in contexts of limited literacy. Nabila, for example, required the intermediary of Soumiya, the agency manager, to tell her what was in her contract and to sort out any discrepancies (Chapter 4).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In the past men did ‘work in houses’ too but this role has been entirely feminised in post-Independence Morocco.

<sup>7</sup> The ILO’s guide to designing labour laws for domestic work suggests responsibility for ensuring that the content of the contract is understood by the worker be placed on the employer and observes that: ‘A

A further step towards ‘formalising’ work, which, as I gathered from Soumiya’s agency, seems to necessitate a decent number of pieces of paper, comes with the requirement that the domestic worker provide for the household-head all the documents which the household-head asks for, related to marital status and information concerning name and residential address, date and place of birth, certificates of education and vocational training and a validated copy of the national identity card (article 4). Workers must also inform the employer of any change of residential address or marital status.

Much has been made of article 5, concerning the prohibition of employment of workers aged under 15 years, and requiring that permission is obtained from guardians for those aged between 15 and 18 years, punishable with fines between 2000 and 5000dh on the first offence or a three-month prison sentence in the case of a repeated offence (article 15). The president of OMDH (*Organisation Marocaine des droits humains*), Mohamed Nechnach, commented that, ‘These are derisory sanctions which will not have any dissuasive impact on the employer’ (Benezha 2013). Representatives of GIZ and Odt (*Organisation démocratique du travail*) told me that domestic work is unsuitable for anyone under 18, whether parents and guardians agree to it or not, whilst others feel the minimum age should be raised to 20 (Benezha 2013).

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noteworthy feature of the legislation of both the United Republic of Tanzania and South Africa is that in both cases the employer must ensure that the terms are explained to the domestic worker in a manner that she or he understands. Such provisions may be an important corollary to the requirement for a contract in writing, as such a legal requirement is only of practical value if the worker, who may or may not be literate, fully understands the terms’ (ILO 2012: 18).

The ILO also stresses the need for clear language in laws governing the employment of domestics, for the sake of the employer as much as the worker (ibid. 4).

## A SPECIAL LAW: REST, REMUNERATION AND *RAQĀBA*

Weekly rest days, annual leave, national and religious holidays and sick days are covered in part three of the draft law. In line with article 10 of ILO Convention 189, domestics in Morocco are to be given at least 24 continuous hours of rest per week, which can, if the worker and household head agree, be accumulated over two consecutive months (article 8). Paid annual leave, the length of which is not, however, stipulated in the draft, can be taken after 6 months of work and can also be accumulated over a period of two years (article 9). Religious and national holidays are paid rest days although these can be used at a later date if both parties agree (article 10). One wonders how easily an agreement can be reached since usually workers want to spend *ʿīd* with family but employers are reluctant to dispense with help at such peak times in the domestic calendar. It was precisely a disagreement over this which, in Chapter 4, meant Miriam quit working for *l-Hajja* after one month and returned to Awlad Ahmed with half of Hafida's wage.

If disagreements about holidays are common, so are those about time off for family events, especially as employers are wary of the excuse of an ill mother. A whole series of family events with the number of days paid leave to be allowed the worker is listed in article 11:

- The marriage of the domestic worker, 3 days.
- The marriage of one of the children of the domestic worker, 1 day.
- The death of the domestic worker's spouse, one of his children or one of his parents – 2 days.
- The death of a brother or sister of the worker, 1 day.
- A surgical operation of the spouse of the worker or one of his children.

Employers who complain that their worker may not return from visiting a sick relative for weeks and will then be surprised to find her job filled by someone else would be

glad to have a law like this, but the calculated measurement of human kindness, so many days off for this or that potentially traumatic or emotionally charged life-event, seems an inferior substitute for the spontaneous compassion of employers. The fact that such a provision is necessary also reflects the possibility that days off on compassionate grounds may otherwise be denied. Here, at least, is recognition that the worker may be part of a family other than the employing household and may therefore have commitments elsewhere.

Whilst stipulating periods of rest is important, it means little when the maximum working hours per day and week are not determined by law. Article 10 of ILO convention 189 calls for members to ensure that legislation for hours of work, overtime compensation, periods of rest and paid leave for domestic workers is on a par with that of workers generally, but whilst the Moroccan *Code du travail* sets the working week at 44 hours, the draft law remains silent on this issue and makes no provision for limiting or compensating overtime. Fatima, my Océani-based friend who worked as a daily domestic in Agdal, was one of many who complained about working hours, recognising that live-ins, some of whom, like Malika, are effectively on call for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, had it worse. Fatima described an exception; a French woman for whom she had once worked as a live-in had a chart on the wall where she recorded hours worked. She had explained to Fatima and her co-worker that she noted down the finish-time only once they had removed their aprons and she heard them close the door of their room: ‘Then I know you’ve finished your work.’ The only instance of working *b sawā`ir* (by the hour) that I came across in a domestic context (apart from jokingly at Hala’s *khayma* in Ba Karim), this was seen as a radical way of organising work and one which Fatima wished her current Moroccan employer also followed.

The ‘difficulty’ of counting a domestic’s hours is often used as a basis for not doing so. In an analysis of the labour-code’s provision for working hours, in which he notes the exclusion of domestics as well as the absence of set hours in the *Projet de loi*, Bouharrou (2014) explains that:

Domestic workers perform tasks inside houses which are distinctive workplaces. They do their work during an effective working time but are often at the disposal of their employers, the household heads. It is difficult to distinguish between working hours and their presence in the home, especially for those who are accommodated in their employers’ home, and as a consequence to establish precise working hours.

Blackett argues that the ‘work like any other’ approach calls for legislation regarding overtime whilst the ‘work like no other’ approach permits exceptions: ‘judges expressed sympathy for the difficulty faced by employers in keeping track of domestic workers’ routines’ (2011: 34). It has been argued that whilst Fordist practice reorganised the management of industrial work, domestic work has not been rationalised to the same extent because, ‘The concept of productivity ... makes no sense in cleaning or cooking, much less in caring’ (Sarasúa 2004: 538). This has an effect on regulation: ‘In industrial undertakings, rationalisation has always gone hand in hand with a reduction in the working hours of labour,<sup>8</sup> while in unrationalised undertakings—for instance, among artisans—the regulation of hours is also less effective’ (Blackett 2011: 19). Labour laws evolved in an industrialising society are ill-equipped to cope with service: ‘... to rethink labour regulation to include domestic workers meaningfully is necessarily to reimagine labour regulation beyond the industrial workplace model, while retaining from modern employment law, that which distinguished work from servitude’ (ibid. 20). ILO policy, which is heavily based on Blackett’s research as a consultant, states that:

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<sup>8</sup> Whilst perhaps true for the post-WWII economy, this is a shortsighted view of history since early rationalisation largely ignored workers’ needs.

periods during which domestic workers are not free to dispose of their time as they please and remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls shall be regarded as hours of work to the extent determined by national laws, regulations or collective agreements, or any other means consistent with national practice (ILO 2011, c. 189, article 10).

Perhaps the most contentious part of Morocco's draft law is article 12, which covers remuneration. The wage, to be agreed by both parties, is to take 'other material supplements and payment in kind' into account. The pre-2013 draft stipulates that the monetary portion of the wage must not be less than 50% of the minimum wage (SMIG, *Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti*) for the industrial, commerce and service sectors, but a government representative told me that this has been increased in the new draft to 60% for live-in workers and 100% for those who live-out.<sup>9</sup> During fieldwork, 60% of the SMIG would have meant 1400dh monthly, whilst the average wage of thirty domestics who disclosed this information to me was 1170dh monthly—more like 50% of the SMIG.

Asmae, a hospital nurse and workers' rights activist, who identified herself in Chapter 1 as a *sha'bi* employer ('...we can't count food'), surprised me by making a case for the injustice of the law: 'It's the middle class who will suffer.' Her complaint was that she and her friends and family had worked hard and educated themselves at a price. 'Now uneducated women are to receive the same salary?! ... It's *thulm* (oppression) for the *muwazzafa* (public sector employee)<sup>10</sup>, this law.' Asmae believed that paying 60% of the SMIG was too much, unless qualified workers like herself were suddenly going to be paid double the SMIG. Her own and her husband's monthly salary combined did not exceed 4,000dh. Her problem was not so much with her own wage

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<sup>9</sup> The SMIG is fixed by governmental decree and applies to all sectors other than agricultural work. The slightly lower SMAG (*salaire minimum agricole garanti*, guaranteed minimum agricultural wage) applies to the agricultural sector and takes into account the lower cost of living in rural Morocco.

<sup>10</sup> The public-sector employee is a female one, for this was not a battle of the sexes but one between women of different statuses.

but, like the labourers in the vineyard, with the difference between the value of her work and that of others. It was easier to enact the *sha' bī* notion of largesse when it came to 'Danones', it seems, than when it came to symbolically loaded dirhams. The wage, as Kessler-Harris argues, is regulated by custom and tradition, and is 'simultaneously a set of ideas about how people can and should live and a marker of social status' (1990: 7).<sup>11</sup> The same ideas had dictated to Asmae who should and should not be eating at the expensive fast-food restaurants of Rabat's Megamall (Chapter 5). Whilst being able to identify as *sha' bī* was not connected to income, being 'middle class' was; anyone can be *sha' bī* but not everyone should be middle-class.

The question of wages for domestics is complicated by lawmakers arguing that having a domestic worker has become *darūrī* (indispensable) for ordinary citizens. A representative of the MEFP explained:

The mother and father both work and need someone to take care of the house and children. It is not just well-off people, *nās kebār* (grand, important people), who have a domestic. And for someone who earns 3000dh or 4000dh or even 5 or 6000dh, it is difficult for him to pay the domestic 2000dh a month.

In the past the proportion of expenditure spent on employing a worker was significantly lower than this.<sup>12</sup> For those who view a domestic as a necessity, affordability takes on

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sonencher (1989: 194) who argues that 'the wage was a cipher in which a number of different assumptions were encoded' (cited Meldrum 2000: 196).

<sup>12</sup> Khelladi (1938) recorded the budgets of several low and middle ranking Muslim civil servants (i.e. the kinds of people who today earn 3000-6000dh/month) recruited during the Protectorate period. A single male school teacher near Casablanca's monthly expenditure of 895 francs (his salary was 1200 fr. pcm) included just 50 fr. for a *bonne* (Khelladi 1938: 265). A married teacher who had, 'three children of nine, seven and three years and a *petite bonne*', earned 1650 fr. pcm and spent 1535.50 fr monthly of which the '*bonne* (with board and lodging)'—she slept in the kitchen—accounted for a mere 30 fr. (ibid. 266). A 'Europeanised' civil servant living with three of his own children and a child of his brother, who spent 2125.55 fr. monthly allotted only 40 fr. for the expense of keeping a *bonne* (again, with board and lodgings). His noted expenditure for clothing does, however, include 200 fr. for that of the *bonne* (ibid. 276) whilst he spent 1800 fr. on clothing the other four children combined.

the qualities of a citizen's right, especially where childcare is concerned.<sup>13</sup> If legislation made domestic-help prohibitively expensive then the government would appear to be actively withdrawing provision, despite the fact that they were not the ones doing the providing in the first place; instead they have simply protected the 'right' of the rich to exploit the poor by not regulating the relationship between the two. Law-makers did not appear to consider the importance of supporting the development of care structures out of the home or promoting more flexible working hours for parents which, argues Cox (2006: ch 6) for the contemporary British context, are crucial to diminish reliance on domestic workers. The number of households employing domestic help in Britain is, however, growing.<sup>14</sup>

Although the latest draft of the Moroccan law for domestics limits the portion of remuneration to be paid in kind to live-in employees to 40%, this is still higher than in equivalent legislation elsewhere. Examples include South African law which allows a 10% reduction of salary for lodging; Spain limits payment in kind to 30% and Uruguay to 20% whilst Brazil forbids a reduction in salary for food, clothing, lodging and hygiene facilities (CNDH 2013: 16). Calculating the monetary value of payment in kind is easier said than done. 'Danones' stand out as being easily countable food because not much else is, considering Moroccan workers usually represent just one more hand dipping her bread into the common pot. Assessing the value of clothing given to workers is more straightforward but if push comes to shove and 60% of the SMIG must be paid in cash, the remaining in-kind payments will allow room for 'tiny acts of domestic economy' (Steedman 2009: 152).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Since Prime Minister Pitt's servant tax was supposed to tax luxury rather than necessity, it was gentler on employers with children.

<sup>14</sup> Churchill Home Insurance (2011) state that one in seven British people now hire domestic help.

<sup>15</sup> Writing on eighteenth-century British service, Steedman suggests that, 'The tax may have meant that some employers paid for stay-mending less regularly, decided the girl could do without a new pair of

Part of the same effort to control the non-monetary side of domestic arrangements, the ILO recommendations for accommodation seem overly prescriptive despite provisos for the local situation:

When provided, accommodation and food should include, taking into account national conditions, the following:

- (a) a separate, private room that is suitably furnished, adequately ventilated and equipped with a lock, the key to which should be provided to the domestic worker;
- (b) access to suitable sanitary facilities, shared or private;
- (c) adequate lighting and, as appropriate, heating and air conditioning in keeping with prevailing conditions within the household; and
- (d) meals of good quality and sufficient quantity, adapted to the extent reasonable to the cultural and religious requirements, if any, of the domestic worker concerned (ILO 2011: r. 201, paragraph 17).

The mere stipulation for a private room would exclude lower-middle-class employers such as my Océani friends, many of whom did not themselves sleep in a private room but rather on couches in the living room. Wealthier Moroccans might suggest that such people have no business employing a domestic but the Moroccan draft law contains no description, even adapted to allow for such customs, of appropriate living conditions and CNDH recommend that this be rectified, citing the Swiss and South Africans whose legal codes specify minimum requirements for domestic workers' lodging (CNDH 2013: 14).

The Moroccan draft law also comes under criticism for failing to address adequately the question of *ḥimāya ijtīmā'īya* (social security). Employers of other workers pay into a CNSS (*Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale*) account on their behalf and a *mrsūm* (decree, distinct from a *qanūn* as it is not coercive) had in 1971 declared domestic workers eligible to benefit from the *Caisse Nationale*, but when I telephoned the CNSS information-line to see how one would go about registering a domestic

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shoes, that she didn't really need tea to her breakfast, and that reducing her dinner would do no harm' (2009: 152).

worker, the person on the other end put the phone down. I tried three times, explaining alternately in Arabic and French (no-one else throughout fieldwork had struggled to understand me in either language), but each time the person hung up. I can only surmise they did not know the answer. A number of employers, particularly French or Moroccans who had lived in France, told me they had had every intention of ‘declaring’ their domestic worker, but on inquiry had discovered it was ‘nearly impossible’, and so gave up.

Another widely discussed problem is that of *raqāba* (surveillance or inspection). The *Projet de loi* states that ‘a special body belonging to the governmental power responsible for work will undertake surveillance of the application of this law’ (article 14). At the MEFP I was told that *raqāba* was covered by two measures: first, the copy of the contract that has to be given to the *inspecteur du travail* (work inspector) — ‘When he sees the paper on his desk he can read it and pick up on anything illegal, the wage, for example’; and second, the fact that when a worker complains the *inspecteur du travail* will summon the employer. Yet, workers and others made comparisons with *raqāba* in workplaces such as factories or schools, arguing that someone needs to survey what happens on the ground for domestic workers, i.e. inside the employer’s home. A 24-year-old domestic interviewed by a journalist asked: ‘Who can guarantee for us that the law will be applied properly?’ (Touahri 2009). In the same vein Fatima in l’Océan argued,

The gas man comes and knocks on the door, and the electricity man. They go in and check. But no-one knocks on the door to check that the *kheddāma* is given enough time off. There is no *taftīsh* (inspection), no *raqāba*. People say that now there are inspectors of the workers in factories, but not in houses.

Fatima also noted the possibility that employers might conceal illegal arrangements from an inspector<sup>16</sup> and that a worker might, out of fear of the employer, state that she is treated according to the law even if she is not. I was reminded of comments made by Moroccans when, on arrival in the field, I explained I wanted to live with a family who employed a worker. I was repeatedly told, ‘You won’t see anything. They’ll be on their best behaviour in front of you.’

## STATE SURVEILLANCE

Those people, including the representative of the MEFP, who claim that inspection of homes is impossible, cite the *horma* of the house (which I discussed in the context of hospitality in Chapter 2) and point to article 24 of the Constitution: ‘Every person has the right to the protection of his private life. The home is inviolable. Searches cannot be made except under conditions and in ways provided for by law’. Moroccan law currently allows only the *parquet* (public prosecutor) access to the home. In a number of Latin American countries, conversely, ‘the constitutionally protected “inviolability” of the home does not translate into a bar on inspections. The household becomes a workplace once a domestic worker is hired’ (Blackett 2011: 39). Elsewhere Blackett argues that,

To remain a legally tolerated component of workplace relationships, a ‘live-in’ option should carry with it the understanding that the employer must cede a certain degree of domestic ‘privacy’ in recognition that the home had become

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<sup>16</sup> Eighteenth-century state surveillance of the employment of taxable servants, for example, ‘had a perceptible effect on how households were organised, from making sure that a servant in husbandry was never seen leading the horse out of the stable (for that would make him a “stable boy” – a servant “within the meaning of the act”), to judges of the King’s Bench and Tax Office officials solemnly deliberating the question of “Labourers or Husbandmen ... Cleaning Boots”’ (Steedman 2009: 133).

both the workplace and dwelling of a particularly vulnerable category of worker (2004: 263).

In Chapter 1 I discussed the reluctance of *sha'bi* Moroccans to employ a stranger. The representative of MEFP saw this as a recent trend, commenting that: 'Already some people are not employing because they do not want a stranger in their homes.' Although Moroccans who are less *sha'bi* and envision neither an intimate sharing of space nor such a maternalistic relationship, do not place the same emphasis on the problem, they do appropriate the construct of the sacrosanct home to argue against inspection. The high walls and gates which enclose the villas in Mabella and Souissi are outward signs of this conceptualisation of the home. Historically, one must admit, it was precisely the unique position of servants on the inside of the domestic fortresses of England ('a man's house is his castle') that made them particularly useful to the law. They could provide testimony in cases of adultery and divorce because, 'in the intimate worlds of household and community life few things escaped their notice or prying gaze' (Richardson 2010: 198). In a study of court records from early modern London servants were found to make up 16 percent of witnesses who were summoned (Gowing 1996: 48, cited Richardson *ibid.*).

A productive area of study for questioning the specificity of the home as a legal space, is the largely feminist North American literature on domestic violence (Pleck 1987, Schneider 2002, Suk 2009) which argues that, 'Concepts of privacy permit, encourage, and reinforce violence against women' (Schneider 2002: 87). Those who dominate the home space can, in the name of privacy, deny others legal protection from their power, whether they be a spouse, child or domestic worker—although this literature does not mention the latter, a point made by Blackett (2011: 7) about Suk's work. Suk argues that whilst the home has historically been an exception to the reach of

law,<sup>17</sup> and was protected instead by etiquette including practices such as ‘calling’,<sup>18</sup> it is today ‘where the most basic questions about the relation between individuals and state power arise’ (2009: 3), with legal practices narrowing the difference between public and private space. Analysing US court proceedings regarding state intrusion in the home, Suk observes a gendered aspect to privacy, ‘To theorize privacy in the home is to imagine a woman’ (ibid. 130), but she also identifies a class dimension: ‘Privacy in the face of split consent (to enter) depends on whether one imagines the home and the woman in it as respectable and thus needing privacy, or alternatively, as disordered and thus needing police protection from privacy’ (ibid. 122-3). The same prejudices mean that while many British working-class families live in dread that social services may take away their children for the slightest mishap, parents whose homes are ostensibly middle-class are less fearful of intervention. Employers and workers are both women in the home, but one is imagined as respectable, the other disordered; in Morocco as elsewhere the claim of the former for privacy seems usually to have overridden the claim of the latter for protection. Interestingly the privacy of the worker is rarely problematised; if she is a live-in, an inspection of her work place also means an inspection of her home.

Shortly after the announcement of 2<sup>nd</sup> May concerning the new law, I was granted an interview with a representative at the MEFP, and his comments emphasised the symbolic rather than coercive role of this legislation. His version of the story involved the election of the new government as a ‘coincidence’ which postponed the progress of a law which would otherwise have come ‘into force’ some time ago, yet he

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<sup>17</sup> A boundary marked by statements such as: ‘The law will not invade the domestic forum or go behind the curtain’ (*State v. Black*, 60 N.C. (Win.) 266, 267 (1864), cited Suk 2009: 137).

<sup>18</sup> ‘Etiquette is a barrier which society draws around itself as a protection against offences the “law” cannot touch’ (Day 1844, cited Suk 2009: 190).

did not appear to envisage enforcement of the law even once it has been approved, voted, signed and announced. He argued instead for a progressive approach:

Of course this is a sector we need to protect, but progressively. ... We need to go with the *rūḥ* (spirit) of the times ... You have to pick up the stick in the middle. If you pick it up at one end or the other, something else is going to be negatively impacted ... There will be difficulties if we demand (*exige*)<sup>19</sup> too strongly that employers follow the law. It's delicate.

Picking the stick up in the middle recalls Asmae's argument for the middle-class *muwazzafa* to be the first to gain a pay rise. The 'difficulties', which for the MEFP representative centred on the minimum-wage stipulation, would fall on two sets of victims. First, if families stopped employing domestic workers because they could not afford to pay the legal wage, this would create 'family problems' between the husband and wife of the employing family, or dangers for the children.<sup>20</sup> Second, if a proportion of employers cease to employ, workers will 'go out into the street.'

That domestic work is the only thing that keeps swathes of uneducated women and girls out of prostitution is a widespread claim in Morocco, and elsewhere. The 'social theory – simple in the extreme – that had every dismissed maid-servant turn prostitute' (Steedman 2009: 141) was aired in Britain when Prime Minister William Pitt introduced a tax on female servants (1785) to help off-set debt incurred from the American War of Independence.<sup>21</sup> There was little evidence for an increase in prostitution, or indeed a decrease in the employment of female servants as a result of the tax, although the numbers of returned, taxable female servants, decreased as employers

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<sup>19</sup> The MEFP representative code-switched the French verb *exige* into his formal Arabic which gave me the impression that he felt to make demands in an 'unprogressive' way was a French thing to do, one that would be culturally insensitive.

<sup>20</sup> It was unclear whether the MEFP representative envisaged danger in the shape of the children being left at home alone or because they would be assigned the work the domestic worker would have done. Both are possible.

<sup>21</sup> See Steedman (2009: ch 5) and Brown, S. (2007: 17-8).

found ‘many ways through its labyrinthine system of exemptions of not paying it at all’ (Steedman 2009: 157). As Steedman argues, ‘street-walking by dismissed maidservants was a cultural text, not a sociological observation’ (2009: 149). At least public Moroccan comments seem free of the lewd jokes and sniggers which enlivened fiscal debates in eighteenth-century England and which were ‘part of the social comedy of denigrating maidservants’ (ibid.), but the feeling that ‘taking in’ a woman to work as a domestic is effectively saving her from moral downfall, plays into the notions of charity, reward and gratitude discussed in Chapter 3. At the heart of these anxieties in Morocco is the negation of all things ‘street’ as opposed to the house, where every respectable woman should be.<sup>22</sup>

The MEFP representative blamed the bad treatment of domestic workers on ‘mentalities’ which stem from ‘customs and traditions’ in which domestic workers ranked low. He opposed contemporary attitudes with the justice of early Islamic ethics: ‘Mentalities have to change. People think, “she’s just a *kheddāma*”. People need to realise that this is a human being. And [yet] the Prophet said to us: “Give the worker his wage before his sweat dries.” This *ḥadīth*, attributed to Ibn Mujah, was frequently cited by both employers and workers in the context of discussions about the mistreatment of workers. Significantly, the mistreatment in question was usually other than delayed payment, but the *ḥadīth* still served as a plumb line. The MEFP representative went on to illustrate his vision of ‘progressive’ correction with examples from Islamic culture:

As with getting people to respect the space of the mosque. If we tell people what to do they will say, ‘No, don’t interfere.’ But if we say, ‘Peace be upon you, may God reward you with goodness, my brother. I have an observation [to make], if

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Graham (1988) on domestics and slaves in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro for contrasting images of ‘*casa e rua*’: ‘House signified a secure and stable domain. To house belonged the enduring relationships of family or blood kin. To street belonged uncertain or temporary alliances in which identity could not be assumed but had to be established. Street was suspect, unpredicable, a dirty or dangerous place’ (Graham 1988: 4).

possible. I saw that when you pray you put your hands like that, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, told us, put your hands like that, because when you put your hands like this, it's like a dog sitting on the ground.' That way, he'll say, 'Ah, thank you, I didn't know...'

The official drew a second example from the 'environment' of early Islam:

People drank wine a lot. And in the *Qur'ān* it says: 'Do not approach prayer when you are drunk' [*Qur'ān* 4:43]. He did not say, 'do not drink wine.' Drink, but do not come to pray when you are drunk.<sup>23</sup> You see, we need to show people *shwīya b shwīya* (little by little).

Reminiscent of the *mission civilisatrice*, change would require 'education' and 'awareness campaigns', which approached the social problem in its entirety. Before the law was enforced, measures had to be taken to ensure the 15-year-olds who would be put out on the streets by criminalised employers would be taken care of. To act without the readiness of the *Ministère de Jeunesse et Sport* (Ministry of Youth and Sport) would only make things worse: 'There's no *synergie*'. The MEFP was not solely responsible for moving things forward; Morocco was simply not ready to follow such a law. For the moment the role of the law was, 'to make people respect domestic workers'. The representative did not seem worried that a law which the Kingdom did not dare enforce may be detrimental not only to the respect of domestic workers but also to that of the judicial system. Significantly the Employment Minister speaking at a seminar in 2013 on 'fundamental rights at work', concluded that the challenge would not only be to enrich and extend legislation for work but also to 'make sure that it is applied and respected' (Salaheddine 2013).

Others were opposed to a law for domestic workers on principle, feeling that relations between workers and employers were best regulated by the moral rectitude of employers, said to be on the rise. Journalist Ali (2009) records the sentiments of Fatima

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<sup>23</sup> Of course, a traditional scholar would be shocked by this interpretation.

Moustaghfir, lawyer and Member of Parliament, who points out that although several draft laws have been approved by the government none have made it through parliament. Madame Moustaghfir would rather ‘relations between employers and domestic workers are approached from an ethical and moral point of view’. Her own domestic worker, to whom she admits she owes the success of her career, has been with her since she was a trainee lawyer. ‘She is not yet married, because she is very tied to our family. If she marries, she will live with me. I cannot envisage my life without her’ (ibid.). Moustaghfir emphasises the importance of ‘mutual respect’: ““These women work hard”, she explains. “The best salaries do not exceed 2000 dirhams, a sum that does not reflect the effort they make”. She asks all employers to “thank them and encourage them” to keep up their good work’ (ibid.). Reading between the lines, if we thank our domestics enough maybe we can get away without passing legislation to allow them lives of their own.

A comment posted by a certain ‘Soumia’ (who claims to manage a domestic service agency),<sup>24</sup> in response to an online news article (Touahri 2009) about the then-believed-imminent law, reveals a reasoned if not evidence-based mistrust of state intervention: ‘Copying the west is not a good thing, for their laws create many more delinquents and thugs than there have been in our Arab and Muslim countries. The proof is there, all these former maids [in Morocco] are now cooks’. Soumia’s claim that leaving employers alone (90% of her clients are ‘truly *évolués* (cultivated) and ... treat their household staff well’, anyway) has resulted in domestics spontaneously up-skilling to become cooks, is the converse of the fall into prostitution and delinquency that new legislation everywhere seems to threaten. The tone of Soumia’s comment echoes that of

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<sup>24</sup> Judging from her tone of moral high ground, this is probably the ‘Soumiya’ whose agency featured in Amrani’s (2006) article and who denied me an interview.

colonial observers who envisaged the evolution of Morocco into a ‘modern’ society, and the term *évolué* could have come from Lyautey.

## **ORGANISING DOMESTIC WORKERS**

‘Why does all other work have rights and not work in houses?’ exclaimed Fatima in the context of a conversation about the ongoing protests for workers’ rights outside parliament. In Chapter 5 I touched on possible reasons domestic workers did not form home village associations in Rabat: the high mobility of workers from one city to another and the structural constraints of work which allowed little flexibility in time off. The same applies to workers’ associations. Whilst many of the workers hoped to settle in a city after marriage, they did not aspire to remain in domestic work. As Scadden wrote about Welsh domestics in London: ‘Young girls working well into the evening are not going to spend their precious free time going to meetings to better their conditions when they saw service as an interim part of their lives, a rite of passage between school and marriage’ (Scadden 2013: 127).

Writing on European domestic service, Sarasúa suggests that Marxist theories of value excluded domestics from such collective bargaining:

Since only workers producing surplus value were exploited, political activism and trade unionism made sense only among the truly exploited class. The same process that constructed factory workers (particularly male factory workers) as the real working class, constructed domestic workers (and female workers in general) as alien to it (Sarasúa 2004: 521).

She also suggests that proximity to the bourgeoisie and distance from the ‘real working class’ prevented ‘nineteenth-century revolutionaries’ and ‘twentieth-century trade

unionists' from taking domestics into their fold. Whilst the odds seem to be stacked against collective organisation for domestics on many fronts, Blackett identifies a point of strength:

Unlike the classic paradigm of the movement of most factors of production, employers of domestic workers are not footloose multinational enterprises who move across oceans in search of cheap labour pools. Rather, domestic workers' employers are very much tied to place. In other words, the work does not, indeed will not, go away... (Blackett 2004: 266).

The ILO recognises that whilst protecting rights to collective bargaining and freedom of association is vital,<sup>25</sup> these can only be realised if workers' and employers' organisations exist in the first place, to which 'the isolation of the domestic worker and the usual absence of co-workers are practical challenges' (ILO 2012: 26). It recommends that:

member states should give consideration to taking or supporting measures to strengthen the capacity of workers' and employers' organizations, organizations representing domestic workers and those of employers of domestic workers, to promote effectively the interests of their members, provided that at all times the independence and autonomy, within the law, of such organizations are protected (ILO 2011, r.201, paragraph 2).

Van Raaphorst describes domestics in the United States between 1870 and 1940 who, 'against all odds',<sup>26</sup> came together in both mainstream and independent workers' organisations. Examples from Denver included an employment office card-file for blacklisting 'cross and undesirable mistresses' and setting down 'how many children

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<sup>25</sup> See Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (1948) and Convention No. 98 on The Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (1949).

<sup>26</sup> The odds against them were: 'the individual nature of the work, the low economic and social status of the workers, the intense competition among them, their isolation from one another, their ethnic and racial origins, the low value placed on service occupations, the historic indifference of organised labor ...' (Van Raaphorst 1988: 187).

you have and how well or ill-trained they are' (1988: 191).<sup>27</sup> Van Raaphorst maintains, however, that rather than planned collective action,

Far less dramatic but far more common was the individual practice of quitting. In other words high job turnover was a fundamental characteristic of domestic service and a way the worker sought to find improved working conditions. The high degree of domestic worker turnover may well have been a reflection of the many difficulties inherent in unionization. A much simpler and seemingly more successful tactic was simply to quit (Van Raaphorst 1988: 209-10).

This tactic of quitting equates with the way Moroccan domestics I knew coped with poor working conditions as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. I suspect that once the draft law governing household workers comes into force, it will be put to use by employers against domestics who *tsmāḥ fihum* (leave them in the lurch). Significantly, the majority of master-servant disputes discussed in Steedman's study of eighteenth-century England were brought to a local magistrate by employers complaining about servants leaving before time (Steedman 2009: 23, cf. Richardson 2010: 203). If the domestic worker contracts were legalised in Morocco this could provide more reason to collectively bargain for better conditions, since the hitherto easy option of walking out would effectively be barred.

As far as I can tell, the closest thing to an organisation of Moroccan domestic workers were the guilds for specialist workers of early twentieth-century Fès. Cooks, for example, were organised in a mixed corporation (Le Tourneau 1949: 295).<sup>28</sup> Despite being a numerical minority (ten or so) the men managed the corporation; it was headed

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<sup>27</sup> See also Salzinger (1991), Romero (1992) and May (2011) for collective action in the USA and Fremlin (1940: 161) on the Domestic Workers' Union founded in Britain in 1938. On the difficulties of organising domestics in early twentieth-century Britain see also Todd (2005: ch. 6), for the twenty-first century, see Cox (2006: 126-8).

<sup>28</sup> Most corporations were all-male, the only female corporations being the '*marieuses*' and '*chanteuses*', each led by a female *amīn* (Le Tourneau 1949: 295). Despite the large numbers of women spinners and embroiderers in the *medīna* and seamstresses and menders in the *mellāḥ* (Jewish quarter), they were not organised into corporations, probably because they worked at home (ibid.). Cf. Massignon (1925) on Moroccan craft-guilds, and Snouck on late nineteenth-century Mekka ([1931] 1970: 23-31, 88).

by a male *amīn* (ibid. 562). The women numbered fifty and were all former slaves (ibid. 562), free-born women being banned ‘to prevent cooking being done by women who might have connections in Fès and who would be able to take advantage of their profession to take revenge’ (ibid.).<sup>29</sup> *Neggāfāt*, (‘*marieuses*’ or dressers of the bride), were also predominantly freed slaves: ‘it would be shameful for a woman of Fès’. The corporation of *neggāfāt* was organised into companies (15 – 40 women), each with a ‘*patronne*’ (*mu‘allima*) (ibid. 527), expert assistants (*ṣāni‘a*, pl. *ṣāna‘āt*) and apprentices (*muta‘llima*, pl. *muta‘llimāt*), many of whom would never obtain a higher rank (ibid. 528). When there was work, the *neggāfāt* earned enough to support themselves, but as most weddings took place in the summer, in the down-season, some would try to return to their old masters for a while, ‘on the condition that they take part in the housework, as previously’; others stayed a week with one client family, a week with another and so on (ibid. 529). Families readily obliged because this gave them favour with the powerful *neggāfāt*, who collectively were a force to reckon with.

The *Organisation démocratique du travail* (Odt), a leftist Moroccan workers’ union whose distinctive red and yellow placards often made it into front-page photos of protestors on Avenue Mohammed V, appeared on first investigation to take an interest in domestics’ rights. They provided me with a leaflet produced by *Organisation Yelli pour la Protection de la Fille*, which called for a stop to the employment of child domestics, but at the time of my fieldwork there were no Moroccan domestic workers among Odt’s members, only a growing number of Filipina women who had joined and formed their own sub-group, ‘Filipino Migrant Workers in Morocco’, affiliated with the union which, among other things, aims to educate Filipinas about their rights and how to legalise their status in Morocco. They seem to be some way off collective bargaining

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<sup>29</sup> It is not clear what is meant here—a fear of poisoning seems rather extreme.

for shorter working hours, for example. The formation of the group relied heavily on the passing of information through church-based social networks. The priest at l'Eglise Christ Roi in Casablanca claimed in 2012 that around forty Filipinas attended mass there each Sunday (Mounib and Lemaizi 2012),<sup>30</sup> and smaller groups of Filipinas could be seen outside both Rabat cathedral and the protestant church just off Avenue Mohammad V, whilst five or six attended Rabat International Church. Many Filipinas shared apartments where they could rest and cook together on days off, something few live-in Moroccan domestics can afford.

## **FOREIGNERS WELCOME**

The employment of Filipinas by wealthier Moroccans has become more common over the past decade, especially in Rabat and Casablanca (Lamlili 2008, Deback 2009). These workers, like Moroccan domestics, are not covered by the *Code du travail*, and most work without contracts, some overstaying their visas and remaining illegally. They are usually recruited by Moroccans living in the Gulf, agencies based in Jordan (Mounib 2012a: 21), or Filipinas living in Morocco. Asmae was involved in the formation of the 'Filipino Migrant Workers in Morocco' group, and introduced me to Maria, a Filipina who had lived in Morocco for fourteen years. As we drank expensive bottled water in the western-style café where she worked, Maria explained how she recruited other Filipinas to come to Morocco as domestics:

People see me here in [the café] because this is where the rich Moroccans come and they ask me, please will you help me and bring me over a Filipina to work for me. And I do, but I don't ask for money. And even when they offer me a

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Liebelt 2011 on the importance of church groups for Filipina domestics and carers in Israel.

‘gift’, I do not take it, because if I take it, and something bad happens with the person, then I am responsible. But if I don’t take it, then it’s not my problem; it’s their problem. I take their phone number and I give the Filipina their phone number and I tell them to call each other. Then it is between them and not me. ... Even though my cousins are here, and my sisters and everyone, I have never had problems with them. [She knocks her hand on the table – implying, ‘touch wood’]. I don’t have problems with the employers because I know them. If someone comes here all the time and I know them then I know they are good. Or if I know they are bad, I do not send someone to them.

Although she kept clear of money, Maria was unwittingly reproducing the *sha bī* rhetoric of the *samsāra* who ‘knows’ her clients.

‘There are three reasons why [Moroccans] employ Filipinas: prestige, English and they are hard workers’, explained Asmae. Maria agreed and added a fourth: ‘And because they cannot understand what is going on in the house and they cannot tell a Moroccan. You know, for example, when the man ... [Maria put her hands together, suggesting the man takes a lover]. A Moroccan told me this reason.’ The first three reasons were highlighted by Mounib’s (2012a, 2012b) feature in the *Observateur du Maroc* on the trend of employing Filipinas. Abdelouahed Souhail (Minister of Employment) stated that he had heard Filipinas are ‘kind, gentle, receptive and professional’ (Mounib 2012b: 24) while a mother of two who employs a Filipina as a nanny stated that: ‘Filipina domestic workers generally excel in the area of discipline and are very professional. Their discretion, their care, and their habitually calm mood help children to concentrate. They are perfect’ (ibid. 20). Not only had the children benefitted, but she and her husband had also improved their English since employing ‘Michelle’.<sup>31</sup> This employer did not hide the fact that she preferred recruiting ‘a Filipina nanny rather than “taking the risk” of hiring a Moroccan domestic’ (ibid.). This notion of the risky employment of Moroccans echoes that voiced by my Océani informants about bringing strangers into the home. The logic of employing a Filipina is, however,

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<sup>31</sup> See Lan 2003 for a discussion of Filipinas who speak better English than their Taiwanese employers.

the polar opposite of the *sha' bī* preference for locals. By hiring a complete foreigner, privacy becomes a non-issue: Filipinas are strangers in the extreme but this makes them less threatening since they are outside the moral, social and, as Maria's comment suggests, linguistic community of Moroccans.<sup>32</sup>

Also at stake here is the level of experience and training undergone by the worker. Many Filipinas are mature women, often mothers themselves who have left children with parents and sisters back in the Philippines. Although some learn childcare on the job, many have undergone training and psychological aptitude tests. A family I knew in Souissi employed a Moroccan to do the housework, a Senegalese to cook, and a Filipina for childcare, a hierarchical international division of labour reflecting the qualifications of the workers. Whilst the Moroccan had worked before, she was not educated; the Senegalese had done a course in massage (of questionable relevance for kitchen work), and the Filipina had completed two years' training: 'Lydia learnt how to look after children, how to change a nappy etc.', explained a grown-up daughter of the employing family.

And she speaks English. The crazy thing is the Moroccan women ask to be paid the same price as these women who are trained, so of course you take trained women who speak English from other countries. So the Moroccan women work for other families maybe, who don't want to pay so much ... Soon the Moroccan women will be saying, 'these foreign women have taken our job!' Yes, [shrugging her shoulders] that's globalisation.

Much is made of the abuse of Filipina workers, although Mounib claims the majority she interviewed state, 'without hesitation, that they find their Moroccan employers kinder than their Saudi, Kuwaiti or Jordanian counterparts' (2012a: 21). Asmae began working for Filipinas' rights after being called in to the hospital ward to

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Carsten (1989: 128) on Malays working with Chinese outsiders in the fishing sphere so that commercial disputes are not divisive to relations between kinsmen and other more lasting local relationships.

translate for a Filipina who presented herself having injured a hand escaping, via the balcony, from the apartment where her employer had locked her in. Once they had gathered together a number of Filipina domestics who were prepared to speak about their experiences, Odt held a press conference on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012, with speeches emphasising that Malians and Senegalese face similar issues in Morocco, as do Moroccans who migrate for work as domestics in the Middle East. One Filipina testified to the fact that her employer, who appeared to mastermind a network bringing Filipina workers from the Middle East, had confiscated her passport, a well-used means of retaining foreign workers in the absence of a contract. Another claimed that her employer's husband, a retired General, had 'used' her, interpreted by Odt as rape. The press printed the story as a rape case (see, for example, El-Massae 2012: 6) omitting the name of the general and his wife, who had been named in the conference, and who, as far as I know, were not charged.

My friend Fatima, hearing about the alleged rape,<sup>33</sup> cursed the general, '*weld l-harām* (son of evil)!', and commented characteristically that, 'Foreigners can do that. They can say that this happened to me, that happened to me, my employer raped me. But Moroccans cannot do that.' Fatima's point is two-fold, first that local conceptions of shame make it hard for victims of sexual violence to bring offenders to justice. Whether even foreigners could speak out was questionable: the Filipina who had testified was dismayed to discover videos of the press conference had been posted on YouTube and the news had reached the Philippines. She told me she had not planned to disclose so much but got carried away with emotion: 'Maybe God gave me strength to say it. All the Filipinas are saying "thank you, you have given us a voice!" But now all of my family know what happened to me.' And second, a point which the press

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<sup>33</sup> Later I was told the worker had resisted the General's advances until he offered money. Either way, the worker had suffered harassment.

conference failed to address: Why all this fuss about the plight of Filipinas when, with the exception of child domestics who frequently make the headlines, Moroccan workers suffering similar abuses go relatively unnoticed?

## CONCLUSION

The ‘servant problem’ in post-war Britain, brought on by the availability and relative freedom of work for women in other sectors was to be solved by enticing women back into a ‘profession’: ‘its practitioners [would be] given a professional-sounding new title like domestic houseworker, and endowed with training, qualifications, diplomas and certificates’ (Lethbridge 2013: 157). With this came a discourse of rights but, as Light argues, ‘Once women began to think of themselves as “workers” with rights then much of the idea of service made little sense’ (Light 2007: 241). The same reasoning in Morocco means resistance on the part of employers to a law which seeks to bring ‘rights’ to workers since it strips the arrangement of much that gave it meaning: the status-driven ethics of the mother-daughter relationship, charity, reward and gratitude, and importantly for people like Asmae, status differentials. Take these away from *sha’bī* employers and much of the attraction of having a live-in *kheddāma* is done away with whilst the possibility of being able to afford to legally employ and accommodate one is simultaneously diminished. Not only does the law make *kheddāmāt* into workers like other kinds of worker but it makes *mulīn d-diyūr* into employers like other employers, something the ‘one of the family’ rhetoric seeks to avoid.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In the contemporary British context, Cox found that ‘employers of domestic workers have much more complicated feelings about their position than employers in other situations and this tends to stop them wanting to take on that role in a straightforward way’ (2006: 133).

Behind opinions on the draft law, whether its progress should be hurried or held back, lies a play-off between two implied systems. On the one hand, the *sha' bī* view, presupposing inequality and connectivity, balks at the impersonalised domesticity which state regulation would enforce. On the other hand, the 'modern' state view, held by NGO workers and policy-makers at both a Moroccan and international level, sees the personal as oppressive, to be remedied by laws ensuring moral equality for atomised individuals. The two standpoints are inversions of each other, but neither is tenable. Latifa and Nigella; love and law. The stifling maternalism of the one and the cold courtroom of the other seem equally unsuitable places for domestic workers to end up. While adhering to a code of practice, and ticking boxes, would work well for many things, there are certain kinds of job that cannot be reduced to sets of explicit rules.

Scott (1998: 310-11) makes this point using the example of 'work-to-rule' action where workers achieve the same disastrous effect on production of a walkout strike by following the workshop's rule-book to the letter. Keeping things running smoothly, Scott argues, relies instead on local 'mētis' or 'practical knowledge' which state institutions generally fail to recognise. Practical knowledge of what? Common-sense, or common-courtesy ways of relating to others are based not on 'law' but on 'love': 'the strange human habit of kindness beyond the call of duty or the power of coercion, which, like the baby splashing happily in the bathwater, ought not to be thrown away' (Light 2007: 301). The call for explicit laws is based on the premise that some people are not kind, and this is not a new problem. What is new is the relationship of local communities to the state. When the price of progress is transparency to the state, local forms of empowerment disappear; things that were dealt with locally are taken on by outsiders with 'social worker' badges and clipboards. If we insist on legal entitlement at all costs, we walk away from a world where neighbours say *salām* on the stairs and lend

each other electric whisks. This is simply a rehearsal of Tönnies's (2001) conceptual distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, imagined 'community' against 'society'.<sup>35</sup>

For Moroccans who do not value this *sha'bi* world, an answer seems to have been to do away with locals altogether. By employing Filipinas they free themselves from connections with neighbours and pseudo kin. This logic has been taken to an extreme in the Gulf and is happening everywhere, and is not entirely new either: Fremlin concludes her lively study of domestic workers in early twentieth-century London with the suggestion that the solution to the 'servant problem' is, '...to employ girls of alien culture, but competent and intelligent; treat them on an entirely business footing, and give up once and for all the vain attempt to work in a spirit of casual give-and-take which, except in very rare cases, is only possible between members of the same class' (Fremlin 1940: 161). Whether Moroccan service will move more fully in this direction, with more Filipinas or other internationals, or cling to local forms of community, remains to be seen.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Dresch and Scheele forthcoming.

## THESIS CONCLUSION

Whilst Filipinas are rarely described by Moroccans as ‘one of the family’, many Moroccan workers are surprised when any other sort of role is offered them. In the case of *Mui* Latifa’s ‘daughters’ the ‘one of the family’ rhetoric is bolstered by photographs, tales of milk teeth and quantities of couscous, but more generally it has become ‘just words’ applied to a working relationship for the few weeks or months that it lasts. In either case the repetition of ‘*bintī* (my daughter)’ spins a cocoon around the exchange, a protective coating on a cosy world in which law has no place. These ‘daughters’, for the most part, are no longer from the families of clients, neighbours or friends but come rather from the ‘market’ or even ‘marketplace’. The *sha’bī* ideal, illustrated by Dār Sebbari, is of a household which exchanges with others within the community (a community that preferably straddles city and countryside), but in a potentially alien or asocial space, like the new l’Océan that is being built, the household as a moral unit ceases to exchange externally, and communality with its attendant hierarchy exists only inside the house.

## HIERARCHY AND EXCHANGE

Writing on households in a Malay fishing community, Carsten (1989) posits a gendered opposition between the unity of the house and the division represented by economic exchange between houses. Outside the household men fish and earn money in relations of exchange according to the business ethics of the Chinese, which assume individualism and competition. Their profits are symbolically transformed by women who, inside the household, cooperate in hierarchical relationships based on the morality of kinship. Both Malay and Moroccan households are organisations like firms, which operate somewhere along a continuum between ‘hierarchy’ and ‘market’ (Williamson 1975), doing some things internally and buying in others. Chapman and Buckley (1997) revisit Coase’s (1937) question,

‘Why do firms exist?’ Why, are some transactions organised through a market (buying and selling between organisations or between individuals), and others organised through hierarchy (giving and taking orders, as in a company or university)? Why is it not feasible to have all transactions organised through a market? Or, conversely, why is the world not one big firm? (Chapman and Buckley 1997: 225).

Or, for that matter, one big family? The answer is that transaction costs mean there is a point at which it makes more sense to coordinate with those we know and trust, and whose work quality we can monitor, to get something done *within* the organisation, than to exchange with the outside world. Thus, ‘...the boundary of every company is a specific solution ... to transaction cost problems’ (Chapman and Buckley 1997: 227). Decisions about this boundary are reasoned if not always rational, with considerations about, for example, the reliability of supply, often outweighing those of price.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A problem with this, of course, is that it sets up a false opposition between, on the one hand, trust and cooperation, and on the other, rationality and selfish optimisation. ‘Most inter-firm relationships, which

An ideal *sha' bī* household gets things done by simply extending its boundaries to encompass and care for those who will do its work. But Moroccans who say 'she's our daughter' of a domestic they hired through a *samsāra*, who herself may only have met the worker five minutes before, are presenting as internal, that is moral, an outsourcing of labour which was arranged through market-exchange rather than community. The fact that the worker may live in, more a consequence of the nature of her work than of her relationship to the household, masks the logic in operation. The 'daughter' kind of domestic has the appearance of a low-status insider, like a member of staff in a firm, but assuming she has no contract and may choose to leave after a month or two, is in effect as much an outsider, transacting with the household on an equal footing, as a new supplier of parts to that firm. Let us take Crawford's definition of household membership:

Being *of a household* is to be economically obligated—you either work for and receive sustenance from a particular household or you do not. It is not an affective cultural category, or not just an affective category, but an economic one (Crawford 2008: 51).<sup>2</sup>

Whilst paid domestic workers are expected to take on the affective role of daughter in the employing household, their economic obligations lie elsewhere. The value of their labour, their earnings, makes its way out of that household to another, usually the worker's natal home in the countryside.

The *mūqef*, on the other hand, represents a clear case of exchanging on the market rather than through internal hierarchy. *Mūqef* workers opt out of appearing as affective members of a hiring household. By remaining outsiders, just like suppliers to

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might be expected to display market characteristics, have about them aspects of relationship, trust, consideration, friendship, loyalty, commitment and so on' (Chapman and Buckley 1997: 230).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Seddon's use of 'budget unit' for rural Morocco: 'a group of individuals sharing a common 'fund' and exchanging goods between each other without reckoning' (1976: 177-8).

rather than employees of a firm, they can control their output and continue to exchange with others as it suits them. When I asked the workers at l'Océan *mūqef* if they were looking for 'work by the month', i.e. relatively permanent positions, all but a couple said that they preferred day-labour. 'I wouldn't work by the month if you paid me 60,000 dirham,' was Nabila's response. Saida commented that employers for permanent positions had demanded too much of her: 'Am I a JCB?' Another explained: 'we wouldn't work for someone *dīma* (always). We are free. We can work hard one day and then sleep the next, or go to some celebration.' An Agdal worker told me she had worked for people on a regular basis but stopped when she got married: 'It's hard. You can't be ill or tired. You can't have a day off. I'm tired of working every day. I just come a few times a week.'

The Sebbaris, like most households, engage in market exchange as well as hierarchy but keep the two distinct, as the following example involving Loubna's mother illustrates. Loubna had, like others we met in Chapter 2, spent periods of time as a teenager living and working in Dār Sebbari. During my fieldwork she began to work for them again, but barely stayed a month. After that time Loubna's mother, rarely finding work at the *mūqef*, would go to the Sebbaris without their calling her. She complained that they only paid her 50dh, half the going rate for day-labour. Loubna's mother saw the Sebbaris as patrons who should respond to her need: 'my daughter stayed with them lots ... They should take care of me!' By paying her so little the Sebbaris were letting her know they did not see her as their responsibility. From the *mulat d-dār*'s perspective, the convenience of *mūqef* workers lies in the fact that, as well as being easy to locate, as strangers rather than neighbours they can be hired with no strings attached. They do not take on a fictive kinship role. Risk is high, these workers

are an unknown quantity; but responsibility is low, the relationship need last only a day. Loubna's mother was no stranger and therefore did not fit the bill as a *mūqef* worker.

For people like the Sebbaris, exchange is also a possibility in community. This is evident in the reciprocal labour arrangements of both the *sha'bi* urban context (sometimes little more than a memory), and the Moroccan countryside, where the division of domestic labour within households, governed by hierarchies of mothers, daughters, sisters and daughters-in-law, stands in opposition to that between households. Households exchanging with each other assumes at least moral equality between units. In the Atlas village of Crawford's study, while men work the fields on a rota system (one household assists another and is assisted in return later), women are responsible for preparing food for the work parties and the assistance they draw from other households must also be reciprocated (2008: 61). Women's cooperation for name-giving feasts in a village near Ceuta is described similarly by Rosander (1997: 117-8).<sup>3</sup> The equality of participants in any given exchange network (whether kin-based or otherwise) has been noted for Tunis, where visits, gifts and services must be reciprocated if relationships are to be maintained (Holmes-Eber 2003: 123). While women in one network might exchange labour such as a babysitting,<sup>4</sup> a wealthier network might transact in imported goods (ibid.). Class difference between households therefore precludes the equal exchange of visits or services, much as Abu-Zahra argues for Tunisian peasant communities: If one brother is much poorer than the other, 'the wife will refrain from visiting, because her friends and neighbours may think that she is

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<sup>3</sup> Maher, writing on rural Morocco, analyses 'action sets' formed by recruiting larger or smaller circles of cooperators (1974: 121-3). For Amman in Jordan, Shami makes a distinction between 'mutual-aid units'—households that reciprocate daily in housework, shopping and childcare and 'special-purpose units'—those formed around a single task (1997: 94). Cf. Ghosh (1987) on reciprocal labour amongst *fellāhīn* in north-western Egypt and Lamphere's more general 'proximity strategy' for recruiting help beyond the residence group (1974: 102).

<sup>4</sup> On childcare arrangements between women in Amman's squatter-settlements, see Shami and Taminian (1995).

helping her husband's brother's wife with the household chores in return for money or food' (1976: 163). While exchanging labour for labour is 'neutral', the 'conversion'<sup>5</sup> of labour into something of a different order (access to work, education or material goods) has implications for the status of those involved since it signals asymmetric relations of dependency:

A married sister may also receive support from her wealthier brothers if her husband is in need ... ; in return for these services she has to help her brothers' wives with the household chores. All this would weaken the position of the husband, as he would not have exclusive rights over his wife (Abu-Zahra 1976: 166).

Crawford points out that exchanges of labour in rural Morocco operate 'over time periods that extend from a few hours to multiple generations' (2008: 17). I did not spend nearly sufficient time in any of the villages I visited to gain an idea of the long-term rhythm of give and take, but I did take part in the sharing of tasks between households related by kinship in the run up to festivities. When Hafida's sister Sara (who married the son of her paternal aunt) gave birth to a second son, *trīd* was to be served at the *sbū*' (party on the seventh day after the birth). A daughter of Sara's husband's family came to Hafida's *khayma* with the warm pancakes to be torn up, which we worked on until our fingers ached. We then sent one of our girls to take the bag back to Sara's husband's *khayma* where the pieces of pancake would be added to the rest. At the party the following day the spiced chicken stew would be poured over it and together with other guests, we would enjoy the fruit of our labour, mingled in with that of others.

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<sup>5</sup> See Bohannan's (1955) account of spheres of exchange among the Tiv (Nigeria) in which conversions between categories, e.g. access to women into brass, were morally charged. Cf. Piot (1991) on relational spheres of exchange among the Kabre (Togo).

Malika's wedding provided another occasion for understanding the way related households exchanged labour at peak times. Malika's mother had six aunts, all of whom were expected to help, together with their daughters. The mother of one of these girls found us hard at work and began arguing with one of her nieces and telling her daughter to come and do chores in her own home instead. She announced for her part: 'I'm going to *nsmāḥ fihum* (let them down)<sup>6</sup> in this wedding. No-one helped me in my son's circumcision.' Later, other family members who had caught wind of this attitude discussed how they had, in fact, all rallied round and helped for the circumcision party; the aunt owed them her labour in return at this wedding. The feeling was one of an overwhelming amount that needed to be done and the challenge was how to get people to help without their having the impression they had been invited for that reason alone. There was a tension between guests' expectations to be on the receiving end of hospitality and the hosts' expectations of support from family (referred to as 'us') in the hosting of *barānīyīn* ('outsiders'), namely the groom's family. Two of Malika's older cousins were assigned the task of cleaning and cutting up the offal from the cow that had been slaughtered. The eldest confided: 'I didn't come to do *temmāra* (hard work) like this.' She complained less loudly than some of the other relatives, and did the work anyway, but she seemed to be expressing what everyone was feeling, that this wedding was hard graft. For the wedding celebration itself, the women who were closest to the bride's mother barely showed, and indeed did not hire *taqshitas* (traditional dresses for dancing) like the other women, but remained in 'pyjamas', busy with the catering.

The distinction between us (who worked) and the *barānīyīn* (who were served, watched the spectacle, and had no idea how much had gone on behind the scenes) was exacerbated by the poverty of Malika's family. They could only afford to cater for a

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<sup>6</sup> Domestics apply the same phrase to the act of walking out on employers without notice.

select group so the best food went to the *barānīyīn* and whilst neighbours and children from the entire community had gathered to watch the procession of gifts from the groom driven on a donkey cart to the bride's house, only the groom's folk were invited in to take tea as there would not be enough cakes and sweets to go round everyone who had gathered in the street.<sup>7</sup> Malika's people held back while the groom's family were present, only eating freely once they had gone. Unlike the Sebbaris, whose wealth meant they could afford to make others into insiders to do work for them as well as giving out to those less well off in the neighbourhood, Malika's was a *sha' bī* family who used their own people to get work done and whose openness was restricted to those outsiders they could afford to host. Malika's household was characterised by a tight-fistedness in which people struggled to assert their positions: few felt they had enough, or were respected enough and nearly everyone felt too much work was asked of them. It was a difficult place to be, and I came away understanding Malika's preference for a position as a paid domestic far away in another household, until she was 'saved' by a husband.

## HOUSEHOLDS AND GENDER

The work of Carsten and Crawford is striking, not least because households have gone relatively unnoticed by ethnographers whilst kinship, albeit 'transformed' through a shift to 'new arenas of study and new conceptualisations' (Lamphere 2001: 21), is a staple of anthropological study. This is perhaps because fieldwork is largely done by

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<sup>7</sup> I did not know who was part of the family and who not during the procession of gifts to the house, and took photos of all and sundry who asked. Malika, seeing the photos later, remarked: 'Those are not family!' reflecting, as in Mui Fatiha's and Jihane's albums, the use of the photographic frame for marking the boundary between 'kin' and 'non-kin'.

young people without long-term constraints (Dresch 2000), and because anthropologists have struggled to define the household, as Yanagisako's (1979) review of the literature demonstrates. She observes that, although the terms 'family' and 'household' are often conflated, most researchers agree that family is about kinship (itself an odd-job term) whereas household is about propinquity, namely a shared living space. Although residence patterns can 'provide a basic index of the boundaries of the internal structure of domestic groups' (Fortes 1958: 3), the criterion of co-residence cannot by itself define the household. Yanagisako (1979: 164) raises the question of whether or not to include servants, apprentices, boarders and lodgers,<sup>8</sup> and why individuals living alone constitute 'households' but institutions such as orphanages and army barracks do not. These examples illustrate that a household is more than a group of individuals sharing a living space; 'some set of activities' is also shared (ibid. 165). Glossed loosely as 'domestic' activities, these most often involve food production and consumption, and social reproduction (childbearing and childrearing). People who do not live together may of course also engage in these activities. Bender (1967) therefore argues for a conceptual separation of families, coresidential groups and domestic functions which allows for a more precise understanding of what a particular social unit does, as well as the possibility of several types of coresidential groups coexisting at different levels within the same society: 'An individual may simultaneously belong to two or more nested coresidential groups: for example, a nuclear family hut, in a patrilineally extended family compound, within a patrilineal descent-based settlement' (Yanagisako 1979: 165).

Only by going beyond questions of definition are we able analyse how households connect as units to make up society. Characterised in terms of repute and

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<sup>8</sup> Laslett describes domestic groups in seventeenth-century England where 'family' encompassed the household head, his wife, paid employees, apprentices, maidservants and children (1965: 1-3).

honour, as Bourdieu (1965, 1977) does, male exchanges between households, particularly among brothers and cousins have been ready material for ethnographers. Relations among women, however, have been routinely dismissed as ‘gossip’. Meneley’s (1996) study of a Yemeni town is a rare example of a focus on female inter-household exchange. Different houses are linked together by secrecy and prestige in what she terms ‘tournaments of value’ played out through visiting and hospitality. But little has been written about relations within households, that is female domesticity and hierarchy. The mother – daughter relationship, an elementary structure of kinship if ever there was one, hardly features at all. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law fare a little better; these, after all, are relationships that result from exchange with the outside, articulating Carsten’s tension between unity within and division (enabling exchange) without, the very stuff of *parenté* in Lévi-Strauss.

Writing on Maghrebi kinship structures, Charrad also identifies these two contradictory principles: ‘a principle of unity, based on ties among men in the agnatic lineage, and a principle of division, introduced by the necessity to accept in the kin group a number of women from other lineages’ (2001: 51).<sup>9</sup> By forming a conjugal unit that might break away, the daughter-in-law represents the potential for division in the agnatic kin group. This threat can be kept at bay by relegating the daughter-in-law to a low status position, and assigning her the worst of the housework is a handy mechanism to do this. The mother-in-law, as *mulat d-dār* in charge of the domestic realm, is naturally the one who implements this subordination. Thus the young wife experiences her mother-in-law as *personally* dominating, while she is in fact merely the domestic

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<sup>9</sup> This is common to patrilineal systems. Stone (2006: ch 3) uses ethnographic data on exogamous patrilineal systems among the Nuer and Nepalese Brahmans to show that women as wives from outside are seen as divisive, a threat to the solidarity of males in the patriline, but vital to its continuity. The literature on patrilateral parallel cousin marriage in Arab societies also deals with this: FBD marriage keeps ‘the secret of family intimacy’ safe, whereas marriage with a stranger ‘creates a breach in the protective barrier which surrounds the intimacy of the family’ (Bourdieu 1965: 227-8). See further Ayoub (1959), Murphy and Kasdan (1959), Keyser (1974), Bourdieu (1977), Holy (1989).

face of the agnatic group. Implementing this subordination, the mother-in-law is masculinised.<sup>10</sup> Belghiti notes that she takes on the identity of the men of the group:

The mother-in-law is a woman in spite of everything ... but one who detaches herself from the women's group and acquires certain privileges otherwise reserved for men, such as being able to go about freely, to go to the market. The mother-in-law in fact tends to play the role of intermediary between the female and male worlds. She is rid of all the prohibitions that weigh down on the other women and tends to side with male opinion (Belghiti 1971: 327).

Thus, whilst the older woman's desire for revenge might play a role, such psychological explanations do not satisfactorily account for the perpetuation of the typically servile position of the daughter-in-law. The key lies beyond relations between individuals—in the larger structure of the patrilineage.

Feminist research has long sought to uncover why housework nearly always falls to women,<sup>11</sup> and this literature is associated with the positing of binaries such as nature : culture, outside : inside, public : private (Ortner 1974, MacCormack and Strathern 1980). A central hypothesis suggests that women's bodies link them to the care of children and they are therefore associated with reproductive rather than productive labour. This correlates with a spatial division in which woman is linked to the domestic and man to the public space, which seems everywhere to mean women's subordination (Rosaldo 1974).<sup>12</sup> In her study of domestic work in Turkey, Ozyegin (2001) found that it was performed solely by women. She follows West and Zimmerman's (1987) notion of 'doing gender' and Berk's (1985) view that the division

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<sup>10</sup> As, Hammoudi (1997) argues, are all Moroccan power-holders in relation to feminised power-seekers. Cf. Smith, Andrew (2002).

<sup>11</sup> For cross-cultural analyses of the gender division of labour see Boserup (1970), Brown, J. (1970), Murdock and Provost (1973), Rosaldo (1974), Brudner and White (1977), Ember (1983), Afshar (1985). See also Toth (1991) on gendered labour in rural Egypt.

<sup>12</sup> For critiques of the public/private dichotomy see Mathieu (1973), Pateman (1983), Lamphere (1993) and, specific to the Middle East, Nelson 1974 and Shami (1997: 85-8). See also Shirley Ardener's (1981) volume on women and space which explores the intersection of social and spatial boundaries in different societies.

of household labour facilitates the production not only of goods and services but also of gender itself. Thus ‘women make themselves accountably feminine by doing housework and men make themselves accountably masculine by avoiding it’ (Ozyegin 2001: 172-3). Ethnographic literature on North Africa points to the importance of similar normative beliefs according to which *doing* certain activities constitutes *being* a man or a woman (Rugh 1985: 276). In Morocco, we find strictly gendered divisions of labour: men ideally never work in the house. Maher recounts how, when she asked women in Berber-speaking hamlets to describe their daily activities, she failed to elicit a response: ‘Perhaps the only feasible reply to my question would have been “I have been being a woman all day”’ (1984: 74). For both men and women in subsistence settings little distinction is made between work and ‘being busy’ (Crawford 2008: 31), but as soon as there is the opportunity for marketable work this is usually taken first by men.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, women’s activities are defined as ‘not work’ and are therefore seen as part of their lives as women.<sup>14</sup> ‘Money transactions tend to transform social roles by removing the activities attached to them from the sphere of rights and duties and giving them a quantitative aspect: so much work for so much pay’ (Maher 1984: 75).<sup>15</sup>

The association between women and the domestic realm in Morocco means the act of doing housework can serve as a metonym for the feminine. What happens, then,

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<sup>13</sup> Cooking in the home is done by women; in the restaurant by men. In her town study Maher notes that: ‘All the hospital cooks are men ... There is a laundry and a bakery, both entirely operated by men’ (1974: 112). As if to necessitate a different value judgement of the work (Mead 1949), men and women may perform the same tasks using a different method: ‘In large families men may do their own washing: ‘Men always pound the clothes with their feet, thus distinguishing their activity from that of women, who crouch over the lid of a petrol drum, rubbing the clothes with their hands’ (Maher 1974: 110).

<sup>14</sup> Sacks (1974) illustrates this with African examples where a shift from production for immediate use to production for exchange causes the increased domestication of women. See Baron (1994) and Badran (1995) on the reinforcement of women’s domestic roles in modernising Egypt. Cf. White’s (1994) Turkish study in which atelier owners paid piece-workers a low rate claiming that the women did not see it as ‘work’.

<sup>15</sup> Even when women marketed, this was outside the monetary sphere. Benet discusses women-peddlars who visit the village when the men are away: ‘This uncommercial form of trade is undisputed women’s prerogative; no money is used, barter is the governing principle’ (1970: 182).

when men do housework? The idea is played with in Moroccan media. I once caught the end of a Moroccan sitcom in which a man wearing an apron and holding a duster was repeatedly offering, in a feminine voice, to make tea for his wife. At first the wife just looked embarrassed and declined but she soon appeared to crack, begging him to remove the apron and leave her alone. My host-family explained that earlier in the episode she had put a spell on him so that he would serve her, ‘but in the end she didn’t like it!’ The wife appeared deeply troubled by the usurpation of her own role and the emasculation of her husband. Moreover, the husband’s hovering around in the domestic space is felt as an intrusion in the wife’s domain—‘a husband’s place is not in the home’ (Oakley 1974: 153).<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein Morocco’s second national channel broadcast in 2011 a reality TV show, *Madame M’safara* (lit. ‘Madam is away’), which documents what happened when the wives in ten working-class families occupying the same Casablancon apartment block were taken on holiday to Marrakech. Goodbye-scenes involved quick lessons in how to cook and clean as, left behind with their children, husbands were forced to take on domestic responsibilities. The gendered division of labour was more reinforced than challenged as a result. Men were self-conscious about the ‘femininity’ of the tasks they were performing and their jokes reflected this: ‘*Anā kheddāma!*’ (I’m a servant), said one father to another as he peeled carrots, using the feminine form of the word when he could have used the masculine, *kheddām*. He felt not only servile, but also feminine.

The image of a feminised man doing housework is not new. A well-known Sufi saint, Abou Ya‘za (eleventh century), reportedly dressed in women’s clothing to wait on

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. the British cliché of the wife who complains that she married ‘for better or for worse, but not for lunch’ (Hibourne 1999). In Morocco lunchtime is in fact the only time a man may legitimately be found at home during daylight hours (Bourqia 1996: 25).

a disciple and his wife (Tādilī [1229] 1984: 218-9). In fact it was common for medieval mystical initiates to pass through a stage of ‘femininity’ in the passage to masterhood:

The *fuqarā* living in Ilgh prepare the evening meal. Within a *zāwiya* this goes unnoticed; but for men of their cohort, apart from in exceptional circumstances (such as travel or work away from home), the act of cooking would reflect badly on their masculine identity ... Those under al Haj ‘Ali’s guidance also collected wood and used a handmill to grind grain—a most typically feminine task. When they are on the move, ... they must make the master’s bed, have water ready for his ablutions, and, sometimes, wash his clothes (Hammoudi 1997: 97).

In this paradigm, the disciple ‘becomes a woman for a while’ (ibid. 148-9). The result of repeated master-disciple relationships over time is a ‘chain of men whose [symbolic] procreation does not involve women’ (ibid.). Hammoudi argues that this stylised inversion involving signs of femininity (submission and service) forms the basis of a specifically Moroccan authoritarianism, present in all spheres of life from the level of family to that of state.<sup>17</sup> Female power is systematically bypassed and the structural tension inherent in Moroccan patriarchal society (that women are needed to maintain the agnatic line) is circumvented.

States and economics versus family and hierarchy are constantly being played out in male - female terms. One of the reasons Moroccan domestic service is so problematic is that these things threaten to collapse in on themselves. The economics of market exchange are being brought by women into the familial space of the home, while the state, with its predominantly male lawmakers and inspectors, is imposing its own version of equality on local forms of hierarchical community. The institutions that differentiated ordinary Moroccan women from their hitherto social inferiors appear to be losing their sway and, noticeably, men have little to say about it. This is a matter

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<sup>17</sup> See also Combs-Schilling (1989), Bourqia and Miller (1999).

between women. In our own (European) world, for the moment, a woman can indeed 'have it all' on condition that other women do her housework.

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