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Los Angeles

The Pursuit of Happiness and the Other: Being a Syrian Refugee Child in America

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

by

Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Pursuit of Happiness and the Other: Being a Syrian Refugee Child in America

by

Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Alessandro Duranti, Co-Chair

Professor C. Jason Throop, Co-Chair

This dissertation is based on the accounts of four Syrian refugee children who now live in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. It focuses on the children's narratives of their treacherous flight out of Syria into refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey, their accounts of their daily lives in the Bay Ridge area, and their views about the future. Each child has had similar experiences, coping with the tragic loss of family members and friends during the Syrian Civil War. Through their journeys the loss of the other destabilizes the self, forming a mode of being-with-other that allows the dead the possibility of "living-after." It opens the children to being responsible for the

wellbeing of the dead other, shaping the children's narratives as a response to the non-responsive other. For the children, the dead other stimulates a way of being-in-the world that is constantly (re)orienting their moral experiences. The dead other becomes an open-ended engagement.

This intersubjective relationship to the dead other is examined through Islamic ethics and Sūfī ideals the children have been socialized into and have learned to uphold. The dissertations focuses on Islamic philosopher al-Ghazālī's concept of "happiness" and philosopher Ibn 'Arabī's notion of *barzakh* ("obstacle" or "separation"), the in-between space of "the world of imagination." These concepts emphasize Islamic and Sūfī ideals as lived experiences for the children, informing individual virtues as a set of characteristic patterns of knowledge, rationality, motivation and action. The significance in examining Islamic ethics and Sūfī ideals in relation to the children's lifeworlds is the understanding of ethics as a relationship between moral norms and unpredictable situations. These situations of unpredictability, exemplified through the openness towards the dead other, are a form of being and becoming for the children shaped through their dynamic (re)interpretation of the past and the unpredictability of the future.

The dissertation of Farzad Amoozegar-Fassaie is approved.

Marjorie Harness Goodwin

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University of California, Los Angeles

2020

In the loving memory of my father

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I remember the first time I talked to children in a refugee camp. The experience continues to shape my academic trajectory and my path as a musician. During my initial encounters, I would ask myself what gives a child who had endured so much hardship the will to hope fora better future? What motivates him/her to sing a song, play games in the playground or help in the local mosque? What gravitated me towards this project/research was deep admiration for how the everyday lifeworlds of refugee children, full of obstacles, are also filled with moments of inspiration, highlighting an instrumental human power for love and hope. I found their everyday and "ordinary" to be overwhelmingly powerful. How does a child learn to cope in the midst of war and carnage while having the will to imagine a better future? This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to the children and their families who spoke to me about their past ordeals, present hopes and anxieties, and their future of hope and aspiration. Their dedication to living a better life, their joy and love for humanity, must be heard.

I am grateful to Professor Alessandro Duranti, who in addition to sharing his expertise in linguistic anthropology and jazz music, has been a wonderful mentor. I have had the good fortune to talk to him about philosophy, music and improvisation. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Jason Throop. As my co-chair, Professor Throop has been a mentor, the person who really introduced me to phenomenology and the ethical turn in anthropology. Be it phenomenology, hockey or Canada, Professor Throop and I share many common interests. In addition, Professor Elinor Ochs has been a mentor, a scholar with an impressive research background, and a champion of all the students in the department, including me, from the first day. Professor Marjorie Goodwin has opened my eyes to crucial issues in linguistic anthropology. She has also been a mentor and of instrumental support in my academic trajectory.

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The past year has been difficult personally; I wrote most of my dissertation after the passing of my father. His loss has created a huge void for me. I hope the completion of this dissertation is a small symbol of my appreciation and indebtedness to him. I am forever grateful to my family, particularly my sister Farnaz and my two beautiful nieces. I am also grateful to my mother, who has supported me, especially in the absence of my father. My uncle Nezam in Canada has, for the past sixteen and a half years that I have embraced post-secondary education, been by my side, providing his wisdom and experience with no hesitation. To a good friend, Mitchell Gray, who has been a great support, providing me with insightful and caring views. To my aunts, Fatameh and Shahla, who from the other side of this planet have given me their unequivocal support. Finally, to Behzad Nadimi, Ramesh Khorsand and Soheil Nadimi; I am so grateful for their support, care, friendship and encouragement.

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VITA/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

PhD, Ethnomusicology; University of California, Los Angeles (2018)

MA, Anthropology; University of British Columbia (2012)

MA, Ethnomusicology; University of British Columbia (2010)

BA, Music & Middle Eastern Studies; University of Toronto (2008)

CHAPTER ONE: THE "PURSUIT" OF HAPPINESS

I began my ethnographic fieldwork focusing on seven Syrian children from the Arabic-speaking cities of Aleppo, Daraa and Homs, as well as the Kurdish city of Raqqa. The children all live in the Bay Ridge residential neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. They are part of the United States Resettlement Program, and have resettled, along with their families, in the United States after 2017. Bay Ridge is predominantly a middle-class neighborhood, home to three vibrant Arabic-speaking communities of Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians. The children had daunting backgrounds—all had tragically lost members of their immediate family or close relatives in the Syrian Civil War—that reminded me of life in the West Bank refugee camps, the site of my initial doctoral research. I began my ethnographic study intrigued by a crucial question: what does "happiness" mean to a Syrian "refugee" child no longer experiencing the civil war, yet haunted by memories of the conflict, troubled by the death of loved ones, and having endured the challenges of United Nations refugee camps in Jordan or Turkey? The children began their lives in the United States as President Donald Trump and his administration's nativism, nationalism and anti-immigration rhetoric and politics became part of the daily news cycles.

As an ethnographer, what interested me most was contemplating how "happiness" (what Aristotle calls "flourishing" or "living well") related to the Syrian children's ethical practices, religious beliefs and social norms. The dynamic of my fieldwork in Bay Ridge was much different than in Palestine. During the first months in Bay Ridge, meetings with the families and children were difficult, most often taking place in the offices of the Arab American Association of New York. With time, I became close to four families and their children—Nabilā, Amir,

Jamilā and Lylā—who are the main interlocutors of my dissertation. The lifeworlds of these four children usually involved hours spent in school, doing homework during evenings, extracurricular activities, family time (usually in the kitchen or around the television), household chores, video games, the local playground or the park, art classes, and gatherings at the Brooklyn Islamic School and the Bay Ridge Mosque's community center.

This dissertation focuses on four main interlocutors—Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā—partly due to logistics of the neoliberal urban centers and the individualistic tendencies in North America. These phenomena means that the privacy of the home and selective public spaces are more emphasized by the general public, contrasting with much more intense social intercourses I experienced in Palestine. Additionally, in relation to other immigrant and refugee communities, there are a limited number of Syrian families in the United States, particularly since the Trump presidency fewer have been able to come. Moreover, due to their traumatic past and the current political situation in Syria and the United States, not every family was eager to share intimate and personal accounts. Equally importantly for me, and due to the nature of my fieldwork, I was interested in carrying out person-centered ethnography (Hollan and Levy 1998), which required intimate knowledge of only a number of children, their families and their community networks.

This dissertation is based on the narratives of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā who now reside in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. It centers on narratives about their flight out of Syria into Jordanian and Turkish refugee camps, their accounts of their daily lives in the Bay Ridge area, and their perceptions about their future. The dissertation is divided chronologically into three parts: I) "Fleeing the War and Imagining the Other" is a detailed ethnographic depiction of Nabilā and Amir's journeys out of Syria into Jordanian and Turkish refugee camps; II) "The Vulnerability and Delight in the Everyday" describes the everyday lives of Jamilā and Lylā now

residing in Bay Ridge; and III) “A Future of Forgiveness and Giving Back to the Community” brings Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā in conversation to highlight how anticipation and anxiety shape the children’s perceptions of future possibilities and limitations. Each chapter is constructed around a theoretical concept while mapping out a particular child’s views by focusing on his/her lifeworld. The division of the dissertation draws on three spatial-temporal constituents of the children’s lifeworlds: transitional spaces (journey out of Syria and life in Jordanian and Turkish refugee camps), a permanent space (life in Brooklyn) and imaginary space (the future and possibilities).

The dissertation begins from the last days when Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā’s families decided to embark on a journey out of Syria towards the Jordanian or Turkish borders. The task of the dissertation is to understand how they respond to their lifeworlds as they take on this enormous journey in the pursuit of happiness. The psychological and linguistic analysis of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā’s narratives illuminates the ethical inquiry into what Syrian children view as “happiness” and how pursuing a good life for them creates feelings of guilt and sin as they deem themselves responsible for the death of those they left behind. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā all share a similar experience, coping with the tragic death of a family member or friends during the Syrian Civil War. Their narratives highlight their intersubjective relationship with the dead other. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā’s accounts illustrate a pattern of their response to the non-responsive dead as a mode of being-in-the-world with the other who no longer exists. This opening that allows the dead other the possibility of what philosopher Emmanuel Levinas calls “living-after” for Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā. This mode of being in the world is examined through the ethical writings of Islamic philosophers al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) and Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240). I focus on al-Ghazālī’s concept of “happiness” and Ibn

‘Arabi’s notion of *barzakh* (“obstacle” or “separation”) in the in-between space of “the world of imagination.”

I joined Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā regularly as they walked to school, visited family, and enjoyed playing in the park. My initial subjects of inquiry with them included: 1) their school routines (e.g., homework assignments or extracurricular activities); 2) their interests in the arts, sports and other activities; 3) their friends and after-school activities; 4) their habits; and 5) their favorite television shows. I gradually asked the children other questions: 1) How do they describe their daily lives? 2) What do they remember from Syria? 3) What are their motivations and concerns now that they live in the United States? 4) How often do they speak Arabic and do they pray?

I also conducted in-depth ethnography with schoolteachers, counselors, refugee resettlement organizations in Brooklyn, local and international non-profit organizations (e.g., Arab American Association of New York), music teachers, sports coaches, the clergy in the local mosques and the children’s parents. My questions included: 1) When do the children speak about their desires and anxiety? 2) How do they enact their pleasure or distress, and how long does it last? 3) Where are the physical spaces and what are the cognitive incitements that make the children happy or nervous? 4) What visible or emotional indications appear when the children experience happiness or feelings of guilt? and 5) What are the children’s coping techniques for managing their new lives? The adult respondents offered answers as to how children understand their lifeworlds. These inquiries help to highlight the construction of the children’s meta-narrative discourses about the good life and the ways in which guilt evokes feelings of remorse and responsibility towards the other.

This period is Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's lives commonly referred to as "middle childhood." In this stage, parents begin to encounter "both maturational changes in children and [changes] from socially imposed constraints, opportunities, and demands impinging on them" (Collins et al. 2005:73). At the age of five, in many societies, children start to enter the social world and "begin to determine their own experiences, including their contacts with particular others, to a greater degree than previously" (ibid.). During middle childhood, "transitions occur in physical maturity, cognitive abilities and learning, the diversity and impact of relationships with others, and exposure to new settings, opportunities and demands" (ibid.). Historically, middle childhood has meant that the children become absorbed into the lifeworlds of adults (e.g., helping adult family members with responsibilities and tasks). For the Syrian children, the age of six was when most began their compulsory schooling (kindergarten and for some, summer Qu'rān classes). The educational experience "provides a distinctive social definition for children and social structures that constrain and channel development during this period" (ibid.).

The psychologist Jean Piaget refers to this stage as "morality of constraint," that is, when "the young child is awed by the superiority of adults and is constrained by it" (Lapsley 1996:17). In this view, "moral obligation and duty are judged in terms of whatever upholds the commands of adults. The child has an absolutistic sense of morality: there is an absolute sense of right and wrong, as parents will tell us" (ibid.). However, for Piaget, the moral understanding of a child is transformed with greater experience of peers. Blind obedience gives way to a more peer-focused understanding, where reasoning and explanations of the rules are "socially constructed flexible arrangements that serve pragmatic ends and are binding as long as consensus prevails, mutual interests are served, and the bonds of solidarity are protected" (ibid.). Piaget refers to this moral construction within a peer group as "morality of cooperation" (Lapsley 1996). The middle

childhood social world allows more diverse peer groups, where questions and reasons can be developed and contemplated by the children. If "the morality of constraints is grounded by the unilateral respect that children have for adult authority, the morality of cooperation is grounded by the mutual respect that characterizes a society of equals" (Lapsley 1996:17).

From Cities in Ruins to Exquisite Skylines

It is estimated that from 2015 to 2018 each week about 520 civilians were killed and thousands more injured in the Syrian Civil War (Graham-Harrison 2015). The civil war began in March 2011, as the wave of the Arab Spring brought hope and defiance to the shores of Syria, a country ruled by the Assad family since 1971. The opposition strongholds—particularly the cities of Raqqa, Darra, Homs and Aleppo—became centers of harsh and unforgiving violence, where the pro-Assad Syrian Armed Forces responded to protesters with excessive and atrocious force. The children presented in this dissertation all came from these four mentioned cities. Over time, public protests became more frequent (especially after the Friday prayer), as did the brutality of Assad's government. The Syrian Civil War began as Sunnis, Kurds and Druze joined other oppositional and regional factions, while receiving money and weapons from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Meanwhile, Iran and Hezbollah of Lebanon became the two regional actors significantly aiding Assad's and his *Alawīyah* minority ruling elite's hold on power.

Alawīyah is a sect of Islam, part of the Twelver School (*Athnāʻashariyyah*), which is a derivation from a branch of Shīʿah Islam (Bar-Asher 2010). The Assad family have utilized an effective political discourse that depicts Shīʿah values under attack from the Sunni's geopolitical actors in Syria. Since the Assad family came to power (Hāfiz al-ʾAssad became president of the Syrian Republic in 1971), the *Alawīyah* minority has helped intensify the religious rifts in Syria,

generating a divisiveness that inflamed sectarian violence. When Hāfiz al-ʾAssad came to power, he organized the Syrian Republic along two religious sects: the Sunnis became the head of political institutions, while the *Alawīyah* controlled the military, intelligence and security apparatuses (Amar 2012). As Assad's grasp on power solidified, the Sunnis were pushed out of important positions and marginalized (Kassab 2018).

The Syrian Civil War quickly swirled into a regional proxy war, as Russia and the United States began to intervene on the ground. The intervention of the world's powerbrokers ensured Assad's control in parts of Syria, while creating an enormous vacuum of political authority in other parts. The lack of political authority led to the insurgence of Islamic extremism (Kassab 2018). The Assad government continued to perpetrate an all-out assault on its citizens, as the Islamic State began a reign of terror in Syria's northern provinces.[1] Since the beginning of the war, more than half a million Syrians have been killed, over six million have been internally displaced, while about five million have sought refuge abroad (Human Rights Watch, n.d.). As the number of displaced Syrians increased, the country witnessed a mass exodus to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and European countries. Jamilā was eight years old at the time her family left Aleppo for Turkey:

> My father had talked for months about how bad things were getting. All the kids were told to stay inside all the time…not even go to our backyard. My father said there were army people, bad people, on the rooftop of the buildings shooting. They would wait for us to come out so they could kill us. Every time I heard a gunshot I thought someone had been killed or injured. Many times injured people, or who were scared and running away knocked on our door. My mother and my dad would give them water or help them like doctors do. Every day, there were gunshots and loud noises, like explosions. My father told me that one day they will come looking for us, too. He said: "They don't like us. They don't want to see us alive." That scared me a lot. (Interview conducted in March 2018)

[1] The Islamic State (in Iraq and the Levant) is a terrorist militant group, and an unrecognized proto-state caliphate-like leadership based on a Salafi jihadist doctrine of Sunni Islam.

For many, travel to United Nations refugee camps, erected in border cities of Syria's neighboring countries, became an unsafe but pervasive journey. The makeshift and overwhelmed infrastructure of the camps meant that the host countries did not have the ability to, or were reluctant to, acknowledge and address the realities of poverty and unsanitary conditions for the refugees.

Forced migration is "the process whereby a group of people flees across a border to escape conflict, drought, famine, or natural disaster" (Hammerstad 2017:200). The Syrian Civil War resulted directly from drought and regional geopolitical changes (the Arab Spring). The mass exodus was the immediate results of bullets, bombs, arrests, persecutions, tortures, and the use of weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons like the mustard gas used by Assad's government). The indirect causes of the forced migration were the results of infectious disease, mental health challenges, lack of education (schools and universities closed), and the infrastructure destruction of a vast number of social and cultural institutions (Blackburn and Lenze 2019). The Syrian refugee crisis represents the world's second-largest refugee population exodus after nearly five million Palestinian refugees (Nebehay 2015). The number of Syrian refugees is on the rise, where

> estimates from September 2015 suggest that just over 2 million children have fled Syria and are living as refugees in neighboring countries in the Middle East, or North Africa; nearly 11,000 children crossed the Syrian border on their own; and more than 140,000 were born as refugees… The United Nations and a number of charity organizations provide humanitarian assistance in the form of food, shelter, and medical aid, but the sheer number of refugees and funding shortfalls make it difficult to meet even their most urgent needs. Amid deteriorating conditions in countries of first asylum, growing numbers of Syrians have sought protection outside the region. Though many countries have increased the number of refugees they will accept through resettlement, family reunification, and humanitarian admission programs, demand far outstrips supply. (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin 2015:5)

The vast majority of these Syrian refugees, nearly 2.5 million, are registered in Turkish camps (Maadad 2019; also see UNHCR 2016:7).

The Syrian children discussed in this dissertation all made the journey north to Turkish refugee camps. Jamilā continued to speak about her journey out of Aleppo:

> When I arrived to Turkey, it was very cold. It was a happy time, because I was safe, my family was safe—that mattered the most. I didn't need to worry about the bad guys anymore. When I lived in Syria, every time I closed my eyes the bad guys were looking at me…they were in my head, on my thoughts. My dad said to me: "now that we are in Turkey we are safe"—that made me very happy. But it was really hard to live in our small and smelly tent…all of us in the same tent with a dirty public bathroom far away. I did not take a shower for more than two weeks. I didn't know anyone there, so I just wanted to be close to my dad and mom. You could hear other families all the time, it was really crowded. Sometimes the kids would cry and I thought to myself maybe they are worried about their families getting killed. There were so many people like my family…so many kids like me. (Interview conducted in March 2018)

Since the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkey had implemented an "open door" policy (Simsek 2015). After arriving in Turkey, Syrian refugees are registered by the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Organization, and settled in refugee camps created by the Turkish government. Receiving states, including Turkey, have often failed to provide Syrian refugees with access to resources and their fundamental rights, and have failed to develop practical and long-term solutions needed in terms of the labor market, accommodation and education (Garces and Penninx 2016). Turkey's "open door" policy has resulted in the creation of 25 refugee camps in its southeastern provinces alone (Simsek 2015). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Syria Regional Refugee Response team, since 2016 there have been more than six million internally displaced and about five million have crossed into other countries (about three million into Turkey) (2019). Due to the overcrowded camps, since 2013 some Syrian refugees have been able to settle in towns and cities with relatives. Nonetheless, while taking shelter in urban areas, there is limited access to accommodations,

social services, schooling and job opportunities. Living in urban areas has meant working in the informal economy under exploitative conditions with extremely low wages.

The Syrian refugees who have been resettled in the United States first applied for refugee status with the UNHCR. The applications are reviewed by UNHCR, where it is decided who can be declared to be a "refugee." The guideline used by UNHCR to determine "refugee" status is based on a person who is:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR 2016)

If UNHCR accepts an individual as a refugee—children's applications are determined based on their parents' status—he/she is referred for resettlement to another country. The Syrian families I worked with were all referred by the UNHCR to the United States between 2014 and 2016 (during President Obama's second term in office). The families' refugee applications were processed by a Resettlement Support Center in the United States. The Resettlement Support Center interviews the refugee, then he/she is put through an intensive screening process (other interviews, medical evaluation, and an interagency security-screening process). These processes are meant to ensure that the refugee does not pose a threat to the United States. The vetting process includes agencies such as the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Defense Department, the National Counterterrorism Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Once all these agencies conclude their background checks there is another layer of screening called the Syria Enhanced Review process.

Once a file is accepted, the refugee's application to the United States is sent by the Citizenship and Immigration Service to match with an American resettlement organization (a

nonprofit organization to assist refugees in the resettlement process). At this point, details of the refugee approved for resettlement are forwarded to the Refugee Data Center in New York, where the individual is matched with one of 11 voluntary agencies. Each American resettlement organization must "assure" the State Department that it is prepared to receive each matched refugee. Finally, there is another security clearance (conducted by both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and State Department), and a medical checkup to go through before being able to come to the United States.

The number of refugee admissions into the United States has dropped considerably during Donald Trump's presidency. The United States president sets a refugee ceiling each fall (the maximum number of refugees who can enter in a fiscal year). In the 2017 fiscal year, around 53,700 refugees were resettled in the United States, a sharp decline from the previous years. This figure reflects the temporary freeze on refugee admissions by President Trump's administration soon after he took office in January 2017 (Hoffstaedter 2017). The refugee ceiling has continuously declined following President Trump's first full fiscal year in office. In 2018, the ceiling was set at 45,000, and ultimately about 22,500 were admitted into the United States. In the fiscal year 2019, the refugee intake was set at 30,000. For the fiscal year 2020 (which began October 2019), President Trump has set the refugee ceiling at 18,000. Below is the chart of the United States refugee ceiling and admissions provided by the Pew Research Center:

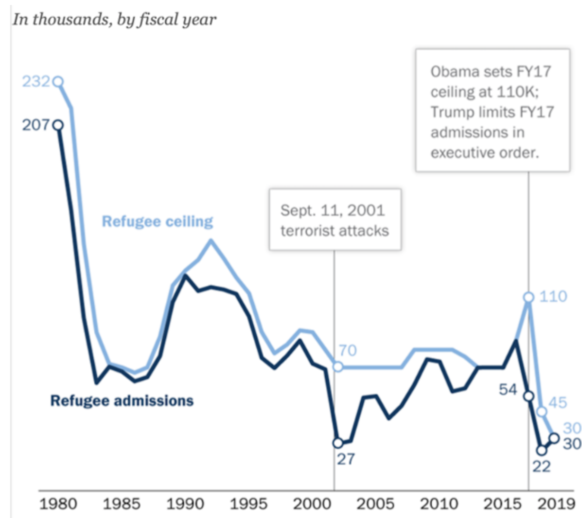

Figure 1. The United States refugee ceiling and admissions (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Between October 2011 and December 2016, about 18,000 Syrian refugees were resettled in the United States. In 2017, Obama's administration raised the celling of refugees to about 110,000, partly as a response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian Civil War. By the end of the 2017 fiscal year, only about half of the 110,000 allocated number were chosen to resettle in the United States. The refugee families I worked with are all part of the 2016 and 2017 refugee intake into the United States, arriving after President Obama left office (most of their application processes began as early as 2015 in Turkey). Salāh, Nabilā's father, talked about the refugee process:

> They make it tough for us. The process is long, many different agencies interviewed us, did many background checks…making us wonder if we would ever leave Jordan. When we heard Obama will be taking more refugees we were happy. Our application process began in March 2015…it took about two years for it to be completed. My children had lost hope…we all thought we would be stuck. Life in the camp was hard. Food was hard to come by, people would steal from each other, and there were mob-like groups who took things from others. There was no order, no law…the police didn't care...laughed at us, denigrated us…referring to us as "the people from hell."
>
> What also made me worried was how the world behaved towards us. We were unwanted and unwelcomed in many countries. It broke my heart to see my people so desperate, needing help, a hand to stand again…but many did not want anything to do with us. Not

> only they did not want anything to do with us, but considered us dangerous. We were treated as a "threat." The agencies that interviewed us kept telling us that the refugee process takes long and we have to be patient. I have to be honest with you, I was really worried about the United States. After hearing all the things Donald Trump said in his campaign and people in these crowds cheer. I was so worried when we landed in JFK [John F. Kennedy Airport in New York]. I was worried about how the political situation had changed in the United States. Even though I was anxious and worried, as our plane was landing I looked out and saw the beautiful buildings in Manhattan…looking over my daughter and son's shoulders at the tall buildings, I imagined—even if our happiness was meant for a short moment—a better future for my family. (Interview conducted in August 2018)

The *Washington Post* reported that "the number of Syrian refugees allowed into the United States in fiscal 2016 was 12,587. In fiscal 2018, the United States admitted 62" (Zezima 2019). The drop in the intake of refugees from Syria is the result of President Trump cutting the total number of refugees to a historic low of 30,000. According to the International Refugee Assistance Project, between 2017 and 2018 there was a 90 percent decline in the number of Syrian refugees accepted in the United States (Zezima 2019). In 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that, "Some will characterize the [lowering of the] refugee ceiling as the sole barometer of America's commitment to vulnerable people around the world….This would be wrong" (Zezima 2019). The number of Syrians accepted to enter the United States increased slightly to 218 for the first half of the 2019 fiscal year. The Syrian refugee intake represents less than two percent of the refugee population resettled in the United States in 2019 (Zezima 2019).

Many on the right of the political spectrum have argued that there is no direct relationship between President Trump's election and recent acts of discrimination and violence in the United States. However, since his presidency began there has been a flood of political discourse and sentiment based on nationalism and xenophobia: "'we' are threatened by 'them,' and 'we' can no longer sit idly by and watch as 'they' destroy 'our' way of life" (Anderson-Nathe and Gharabaghi 2017:2). There is no denying the fact that hate incidents have spiked under the

Trump presidency with his political slogan of "Make America Great Again" (Robertson 2019. The definition of "refugee" and the responsibilities of second- and third-party governments in relation to protecting and resettling asylum seekers is codified in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (of which the United States is a signatory). However, governments respond to asylum seekers differently based on geopolitical interests of the administration in power. Although one of the oldest social institutions, the codification of asylum remains uncertain as legitimacy and the "truth" of the other continually shifts (Fassin 2013). Moreover, distinctions between "political" and "economic" as well as "voluntary" and "involuntary" refugees are often considered under the broad and umbrella term "asylum seekers." The notion of a "voluntary" migrant or refugee illustrates the realities of structural violence and post-colonial economic inequalities that force mass movement of populations (Holmes 2011, 2013). In political discourse (and the media), little attention has been given to "the historical social, economic, or even political determinants of immigration and refugeeism, including the Syrian Civil War itself" (Holmes and Castañeda 2016:17). The continuation of violence (Bourdieu 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2003) creates political instability and also resistance, as different political discourses engage in symbolic violence to legitimatize a cause or highlight the plight of a community.

This dissertation does not engage directly with issues of asylum seekers and refugees. However, through the chapters various issues, from President Trump's nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric to resettlement and economic issues of Syrian refugee families, are highlighted. A number of the children drew images of a wall separating families, or talked about the detention centers that are separating children from their mothers. When a nine-year-old boy handed me a drawing of a family, I noticed the little boy in the drawing was unhappy. When I

asked him for the reason, he explained: “Because some of us come from a different place, we are not liked by some powerful people here. I don’t want any children to be left apart from their parents. That makes me really sad.” Then he continued playing enthusiastically with his friends.

Death and the “Demand” on the Self

What is common amongst Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā is that they all experienced a loss of a family member(s) or family friend (in the case of Jamilā). In a way, the moral experiences of the children are based on the presences of the non-presence, the dead other. The ethical question of “happiness” develops more complexity in light of how the death of the other is constantly revisited by Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā with no closure in sight. The asymmetrical relationship between the children and the dead other is rooted in the fact that the “proper” burial rituals could not take place. This work of mourning creates pain and guilt of surviving. Therefore, the death of the other is a “demand” on the self. What Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā experience is what the philosopher Jacques Derrida discusses about memory in relation to the dead. In *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida articulates the paradoxical experience of retaining the memories of another person (1986). When someone dies, typically those close to the deceased say that the person is not fully departed, but rather a part of him/her lives on within us. This is the act of retaining or preserving the memories of the other. At the same time, memory “cannot keep or preserve the other, who is irrevocably gone” (Ruin 2018:18). What philosopher Hans Ruin concludes from Derrida is that “‘memory’ thus becomes a name not just for an inner trace of the other in the self but also for the possibility of subjectively as such” (2018:18). The relation to the dead person is then a continuous relation for the self that changes and reconfigures itself in due time.

Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā exhibit a similar kind of relationship with the dead other—the other they feel the great burden of responsibility towards. What is more significant for this dissertation is to think along with Levinas's views on death. Expending on the Heideggerian view, he asserts that "death does not simply reduce the other to corpse or decomposition but instead lets the other be 'entrusted' to me, as my 'responsibility'" (Ruin 2018:20). Levinas's claim takes death into an intersubjective relationship where one always feels responsible for the dead other. The following chapters exhibit how the loss of the other for Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā becomes a shared experience with the other, where new meanings and experiences are created in due time, and also irrespective of temporal linearity. This means that "a new kind of relation is also established to something wholly other, to a time beyond time and to transcendence, forging a new community between the dead and the living, a world where the dead can prevail and where the living can be with them" (Ruin 2018:20). Levinas's concept of loss is a phenomenological examination of "living-after" that destabilizes the self and puts forth an asymmetrical relationship to the other. This belief is at the heart of Levinas's ethics, an experience that proclaims "standing before a *non-response* that is at the same time a *responsibility* and a duty to a living spirit or 'soul' of the other" (Ruin 2018:21; emphasis in the original). This creates the rupture, the opening to be responsive to the other. As the next chapters discuss, Levinas's perspective on death takes on a phenomenological importance and embraces the idea of envisioning: "death as anything other than annihilation and end of being-in-the-world" (Ruin 2018:21).

For Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, the death of the other entails a mode of *responding* and being *responsible* for the other. This opening and being-in-the world-with the other becomes a source of aspiration and empathy, as well as the basis for feelings of guilt and what the children

perceive to be "sinful acts they have committed towards the dead other. This is precisely the reason Levinas takes on a great importance in the dissertation. In light of this tension, I explore what "happiness" means to the children based on Islamic ethics and Sūfī beliefs. During my fieldwork, I noticed that the parents' (in the case of Amir, his guardian) readings and interpretations of the Qur'ān are central to the ways the children orient their ethical views. Moreover, Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā were constantly trying to navigate their position in relation to the dead other, bringing to mind how the Islamic philosopher, al-Ghazālī considered "happiness" (*sa'āda*) to be the rejection of the material world for the ever-lasting afterlife of the spiritual world.

Al-Ghazālī's "happiness" is an internal search for what the good life means and a struggle to cultivate the self. Yet, the attainment of happiness has an outward facet that relates directly to the self's attunement with the suffering of others. The constant attention to moral experience means that humans find themselves "already concerned with moral matters," and consequently one persistently evaluates the self, the other and the world "in terms of good and evil, happiness and suffering, doing right and doing wrong, virtue and vice, and so on" (Tudor 2001:1-2). Al-Ghazālī explains that human happiness is enacted by being attuned to the other's needs and vulnerabilities. His writings stress the value of responsibility of the citizens, and happiness of the community (Arabic; *ummat al-Islām*) is achieved by being attentive to others.

A TURN TO ISLAMIC ETHICS

The use of Islamic ethics and Sūfī principles in this dissertation is based on two reasons. Islamic ethics enables an detailed (and, I argue for the Syrian community, more precise) understanding of ethical practices of self-formation and moral orientation. In this way, my use of the two

Islamic philosophers cited in this dissertation, al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʻArabī, is similar to how Western philosophers are used in Western academics writings. In addition, I attempt to show how Islamic philosophy is also a taken-for-granted background that informs various Muslim communities. These issues are best answered through a careful examination of Islamic ethics and its current practices. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the anthropological literature that make distinctions between Islam as a doctrinal foundations in the Islamic law (*shariʻah*) and Islam as present in geopolitics.

The objective is to examine Islam as a lived experience "that covers a vast range of symbolic, discursive, and institutional domains" (Ahmed 2016:227). Thus, concepts like "happiness" take on a cultural and historical importance in relation to Islamic values and Sūfī ideals that the Syrian families practice. It also develops a new meaning due to the atrocities of the civil war. It is noteworthy, that the families that I worked with hardly considered themselves as religious, yet Islam and Sūfīsm gave their lives meanings and provided them with comfort—in the midst of pain and insecurity—that Allāh is the protector of all. Islamic and Sūfī ethics have a cultural capital for the Syrian families that cannot be neglected. Islamic ethics also finds new geopolitical meanings as countless people were killed, injured and displaced due to the Syrian Civil War.

An important cultural, political and artistic aspect for most Islamic communities is the prevalence of how the Qur'ān is used by ordinary people to discuss and examine day-to-day issues. The Qur'ān becomes a guidebook for most, providing answers to a host of issues from individual manners to art. More decisively, it provides meaning for what lays behind this life, while constantly reminding believers that Allāh protects those who believe in Him. In these communities the Qur'ān takes on the vernacular mode of communication; it becomes an

important way for ethics to be talked about and transmitted. There is, however, much nuance in interpreting and understanding the Qur'ān. Islamic and Sūfī views, for Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, are grounded in doctrinal absolutes—the Qur'ān leaves little room for different interpretations.

Having said that, the interpretations of the Qur'ān for the children by their parents are based on the lived experiences that differ from the purposively precise and prescriptive discourses of divine revelation. Salāh's interpretation of the Qur'ān for her daughter Nabilā differs vastly from that of Salāh's father. The children's and their parents' interpretations of the Qur'ān create views of Islam that are far from being a monolithic foundation of absolute doctrine. These nuances can come to light even more in the future as the children continue to reexamine their past and develop new understandings as their lives continue in the United States. The main thrust of this dissertation is to show how the children's understandings of the Qur'ān, Islamic ethics and Sūfī ideas are based on interpretative engagements that are inextricably and ineluctably implicated in their lived experiences while being situated in the in-betweenness of al-Ghazālīs material and spiritual worlds. Ibn 'Arabī refers to *barzakh*, an in-between space, highlighting the Islamic and Sūfī analogy of "obstacle" or "separation," the space that is neither material world nor spiritual world (see Chapter Three). Sūfīsm can be defined as the inward dimension and mysticism in Islam.

Examining the lived experiences and the flux and access of *barzakh* is the main aim of this dissertation. Islamic scholar Shahab Ahmed states that "every human act of drawing meaning from or through or by way of the Qur'ān: whatever meaning that an interpreter or community of interpreters gives to the Qur'ān is, in the first instance, contingent upon the combination of answers that the human interpreter gives to these question, and on the specific

constitution of each of those answers" (2016:228). The goal of this dissertation is to examine "Islam" and "Sūfīsm" based on what anthropologist John Bowen observes as "the centrality of speech events; the cultural importance of commentary on those events; and the heterogeneous, 'dispersive' quality of religious discourse… *dispersive* in that they cannot be resolved into a single set of symbols" (2013:29; emphasis in the original).

The accounts of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā are a step in unpacking the constitutive and representative of Islam and Sūfīsm as a reflexive heterogenous dispersive qualities of these moral codes, and more generally the Muslim communities. Rather, the aim is to utilize Islamic ethics in anthropological writings as representing social, discursive truth (not Truth), meaning and value for the Syrian families. In other words, Islamic ethics can become a way to cultivate the analytical habit of revealing norms "in hermeneutical, social and discursive diffusion, and of recognizing the presence in societies of Muslins" (Ahmed 2016:455). What is significant is to use the Islamic and Sūfī ideals important to the Syrian families to understand what gives meanings to their lives.

In this way, it is important to emphasize that al-Ghazālī's ethics or the use of Ibn 'Arabī's concept of "imagination" have publicly, institutionally and artistically shaped the sensibility of Syria and other Islamic communities. Islamic ethics forms the lifeworlds of the families; for the most part, their moral discourses are rooted in Islamic socio-historical, cultural and mystical beliefs. Frequent references are made by the children and their families to *al-Adab al-'Arabī* (Arabic classic literature).[2] For example, Nabilā discussed the esoteric journey of the Prophet to the Heavens and even his *jihad* (struggle in the context of hard work and piety). These stories carry strong Islamic and Sūfī convictions that are passed down from one generation to the next.

[2] The Arabic word used for literature is "*adab*," which means morals or etiquette.

Similar to the Greek tradition, Islamic ethics views "happiness" (*sa'āda*) as based on virtues and moral character, a position that opposes the deontological approach (duties and rules), or the utilitarian (consequences of actions).[3] The writings of principal Islamic thinkers are skillfully woven with Greek philosophy; Platonism serves as the background to an elaborate discussion of Aristotelian ethics in Arabic sources (Fahrī 1991). Continuing various aspects of the Greek tradition, particularly those attributed to Plato and Aristotle, Islamic ethics focuses on dispositions, habits and character traits that an individual ought to develop to live according to the dictates of right deeds and reason. Moral virtue is linked to knowledge and action, since most Islamic thinkers believe that the human self (*nafs*) is rational, and the ultimate goal of human life is "theoretical excellence" (the liberation of the self from the body). All other virtues or excellences are ordered to contribute to the theoretical excellence; this final stage of human achievement is an enlightened stage known as happiness.

An important aspect of Islamic ethics is its treatment by theologists, sophists and philosophers in attempts to emphasize a harmony between philosophy and religion, as well as philosophy and politics. A central point for ethical deliberation—where the concept of happiness is developed—is the demands of practical life and those of a more ascetic life. For a start, the moral codes in Islamic ethics are principally based on the Qur'ān and *hadīth* (tradition). The primary school of ethical thinking is rooted in the pronouncements and analysis of philosophers and theologians in the eighth and ninth centuries. In the eight to tenth centuries, medieval Islam

[3] Islamic theories of ethics reflect the influence of the diverse Greek schools of thought (Fahrī 1991). Moreover, Islamic philosophy presupposes "not only a thousand years of Greek thought about God and self-dependent entities, about nature and man and human conduct and action: its background in time is the amalgamation of this way of life with the Christian religion which had conquered the lands around the Mediterranean during three centuries preceding the establishment of Islam from the Caspian Sea to the Pyrenees" (Walzer 1962:1).

held in particularly esteem the theological theories of two major protagonists: a) the *Mu'tazilah* (the school of rationalist Islamic ethics with deontological presuppositions); and b) the *Ash'arites* (proponents of a voluntarist system of morality) (Fahrī 1991). A third group of thinkers who constructed a significant framework of Islamic ethics were the philosophical theorists. This group found its inspirations in the ethical writings of Plato and Aristotle. By the same token, its views on ethics are deeply rooted in Islam, metaphysics and mystical thought. The third group of thinkers are central to the Islamic theoretical framework in this dissertation.

Islamic ethics is defined as *akhlāq*, meaning character, essence and disposition. *Akhlāq* is closely related to the Arabic words for Creator (*khaliq*) and the creature, the latter including all living things, particularly human beings (*makhluq*). Islamic philosophy, to a large extent, stresses the close relationship of ethics to Allāh (the Creator) and the creature. In the majority of Islamic writings, the concept of happiness is tied to virtue, a perception centered on the Platonic human form of body and soul. The body and the soul dichotomy means that humans have two forms of virtue essential for happiness: the "spiritual virtue" of the soul or essence, and the "bodily virtue" of the corporal form (Moosa 2005). Spiritual virtue is closely aligned with good spirits or self, the angels and Allāh. Bodily virtue is akin to the animal. Bodily virtue is considered to be imperfect; the individual remains partially ill-fated by the materiality of the world and personal desire. Alternatively, spiritual virtue has an intellectual quality detached from worldly concerns, requiring individuals to continually engage in self-cultivating practices illuminated through the knowledge of Allāh's grace.

I appropriate Ibn 'Arabī's concept of *barzakh*, referring to "a liminal space between the inside and the outside" (Mossa 2005:29). This liminal space is the in-betweenness of "being and the torn-ness of human existence" (Mossa 2005:30). This space requires an articulation of self-

fashioning and the acquisition of ethical knowledge. Happiness falls into this in-betweenness, where the children reexamine what it means to live a good life. Moreover, for al-Ghazālī, jurisprudence (*figh*) is the discovery of knowledge that enables one to act appropriately to identify and then attain the path to salvation. Jurisprudence provides the awareness—Sufīs often use the metaphor of light and illumination when speaking about the discovery of knowledge—for a practice that stresses the inculcation of virtues and character traits (what is known as *adab*). These virtues are internalized and manifested through actions (or habits) of the ethical subject.

The relevance of Islamic ethics in this dissertation is the understanding of how the ethical subject relates to the self. In other words, the self relates to actions rather than pure intentions. The self becomes the locus of responsibility and a space of transformation. The modes of responsibility and the transformation of the self is where the significance and applicability of Islamic ethics, particularly from al-Ghazālī becomes applicable to this project. Moreover, al-Ghazālī's ethics can be examined in relation to the vulnerable other. Al-Ghazālī believes that "the other is encountered at two levels: at the level of an intersubjectivity with other human beings in history, and at the level of a transcendental intersubjectivity in relation to God" (Moosa 2005:229). An in-depth reading of al-Ghazālī brings forth a conversation about jurisprudence, ethics and *'ilm al-nafs* (Arabic; the knowledge of the soul) (see Chapters 2 and 3).

A Few Words on Language

The language used by children to express their feelings of guilt interprets, addresses and describes the individual lived experiences of distress, torment and grief in what psychoanalyst Thomas Szasz refers to as "problems in living" (1961). On the one hand, the language of guilt represents "the incommunicability of pain" (Das and Das 2007) that can push individuals toward

isolation or the brink of self-destruction. On the other hand, it offers distressed and disenfranchised people an indispensable medium for conveying thoughts that are "shaped, moulded, given expression, judged and responded to in terms of certain languages of description and explanation" (Rose 2006:479). The children's accounts consist of "moral narrative" (e.g., the virtues of enduring the past) and "interpersonal narrative" (e.g., religious values of sacrifice and tolerance) (Shweder et al. 1997:127).

The children's narratives are evoked by their lived experiences of suffering, and at the same time these same narratives shape the experiences of distress (Capps and Ochs 1996). In addition, narratives interface "self and society, constituting a crucial resource for socializing emotions, attitudes, and identities, developing interpersonal relations, and constituting membership in a community" (Capps and Ochs 1996:19). For the children, narratives create a language of suffering that is not "monomodal" (Capps and Ochs 1996). Thus, narratives offer the children a medium to express their feelings of guilt and sin through not only language, but also a multitude of communicative avenues such as gestures, performance or the of use of artistic representation (see Chapters Four and Seven).

In addition to the structures and compositions of narratives, this dissertation draws on Duranti's explanation of "intentions" and their "modification" in language socialization (2015) to focus on the relevant ethical issues. Based on the work of philosopher Edmund Husserl, Duranti explains that intention is the result of "bringing some object to the foreground while leaving others in the background …. [That] is one of the ways in which the temporality of our being-in-the-world gets realized" (2015:187). I use "phenomenal modification" (Duranti 2015; Husserl 1991) to illustrate how children are socialized into utilizing certain words in the Qur'ān to describe what it means to be happy. The adults' use of Islamic language is an attempt to

reshape the children's perspectives on *sa'āda* through the "modification" of their "natural attitude" (ibid.). Duranti argues that

> socialization can be conceptualized as a series of attempts to shape children's and novices' phenomenal world through a series of 'modifications'…. In some cases, the modification is more complex, consisting of a change of perspective whereby a person moves out of what Husserl called 'the natural attitude' to assume a 'theoretical attitude.' (2015:188)

The role intention plays in phenomenal modification is vital, as it highlights the ways in which individuals create meanings and shape intentions (Duranti 2015). As Duranti states, "when the type of intentional act we entertain toward something or someone changes, e.g., from admiration to fear, from disapproval to approval, from seeing it as something alien to seeing it as a member of a familiar group, we are experiencing an *intentional modification*, that is, the 'phenomenon'—in the sense of what it appears to be for us—changes as a result of our way of relating to it" (2015:191; emphasis in the original).

Overview of the Chapters

Part I of the dissertation, "Fleeing the War and Imagining the Other," consists of three chapters that examine Nabilā and Amir's accounts of fleeing Syria for Jordanian and Syrian refugee camps. Chapter Two, "The Bullet Holes in Our Front Door," discusses Nabilā's last days in Daraa, and her family's daring journey into Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp. Nabilā is now a twelve-year-old girl who resides with her family in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. Nabilā's narrative highlights how she sees herself as growing distant from her impression of what a "pious" and devoted Muslim must adhere to, being convinced that she abandoned her grandmother when she was forced to flee Daraa. She spoke about a shift in her ethical orientation

from what al-Ghazālī refers to as the spiritual world of happiness (*sa'āda*) to Ibn 'Arabī's imaginal (not "imaginary") in-between space of *barzakh*, where one is less concerned about attaining proximity to Allāh and is more immersed in the material world of individuality and personal desire.

Chapter Three, "A Soccer Ball and the New Teammates," focuses on Amir's accounts of his time in the Suruç Refugee Camp, a tent camp located in the Şanliurfa province in southeastern Turkey. Amir is an eleven-year-old boy, who lives with his uncle, Atā, in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. Amir and Atā fled their home in the Kurdish-held city of Kobanī after their house was destroyed during an attack by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Through his relationship with the soccer ball he brought to the camp after his parents were killed, Amir creates an empathic bond with children by organizing practices and matches. This chapter examines Amir's initiatives in organizing a soccer team, the way the soccer ball becomes part of his "world of imagination" to relate to his parents, and the soccer ball as an instrument of moral imagination. I draw on Ibn 'Arabī' to discuss how *barzakh* is "the world of imagination" between the corporeal levels of existence and the spiritual world.

Chapter Four, "Language, Guilt and the Other," is based on a psycholinguistic examination of Nabilā and Amir's Arabic statement *baḥis bi al-dhanb* ("I felt guilty") evident in their accounts in Chapters Two and Three. This chapter provides additional ethnographic vignettes of Nabilā and Amir's lifeworlds, however, it does not follow a chronological order as in Chapter Two and Three. I analyze how Nabilā and Amir's Arabic utterance of *dhanb* (guilt) sets out a certain moral orientation and establishes a particular worldview. Throughout the dissertation research, Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā all chose to speak English (and seemed much more comfortable doing so). However, certain words, like *dhanb* were only uttered in

Arabic. I analyze how the use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* is a means for Nabilā and Amir to articulate their responsibility to the dead other. It also speaks to an utterance that is meant to be frozen in time—the emotional burden of guilt never ends. The use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* creates an asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relation to the other, while at the same time maintains the openness and responsibility of Nabilā and Amir to the dead other.

Part II, "The Vulnerability and Delight in the Everyday," draws on the everyday lives of Jamilā and Lylā, who have recently resettled in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. It draws on Jamilā's story-writing and dream as well as Lylā's musical experiences to examine their mode of being-in-the-world vis-à-vis the dead and other. Chapter Five, "A Story and Dream of the Other," discusses how Jamilā imagines Safiyya (an elderly neighbor in Aleppo who was killed during an air bombing) through her story-writing and dreams. Jamilā, now a 13-year-old girl, wrote a story about Safiyya as a young girl who learns to ride horses in the Syrian countryside. Meanwhile, her dreams of Safiyya centers on an image of an old women in a white burial cloth prominent in Islamic ritual. Jamilā's dream became a "selfscape" (Hollan 2004) of her moral experiences and emotions towards the dead other, Safiyya. The discussion of dreams centers on the Islamic theories on "vision" and "dream" and also the symbolic meanings of her dreams, partially Sūfī beliefs relevant in Syria. This mode of relationality highlights the idea that ethics entails infinite responsibility to the other.

Chapter Six, "Music, Imagination and the Other," analyzes how Lylā's music allows for moments for her to discuss how she imagines her mother, who died when she was fleeing Aleppo. Lylā, now 12 years old, lives with her father and two younger brothers in the Bay Ridge area. Playing Arabic music with her father helps lessen the burden of the past, helping Lylā speak about what she described as the "happy" and "sad" face of her mother. Through music-

making, she was able to evoke moments where her mother's face was manifested (both pleased and miserable). I draw on Ibn 'Arabī's assertion about "His Face" to draw a distinction between Lylā's two imaginative worlds of her mother. The "face" is examined through Islamic symbolism and Sūfī ideals. In short, music becomes a site of moral tension and a space for Lylā to be-in-the-world with her mother.

In Part III, "A Future of Forgiveness and Giving Back to the Community," the main interlocutors—Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā—are presented interchangeably to highlight their aspirations and anxieties about their future. Chapter Seven, "A Language of Repentance and Forgiveness," is a psychologistic analysis of what the children's intentions are in using the Arabic phrase *ghaltah kbīrī* (great sin) in their accounts about the dead other. There is a significant shift from feelings of guilt to what the children perceive to be their "sinful" deeds towards the other. This chapter examines how *ghaltah kbīrī*, sin as transgression against divine law, becomes part of a language for the children for repentance (*tawba*, "to return"; the Islamic doctrine of retreat from past sins) and Allāh's forgiveness (*afw*). For Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā the use of *ghaltah kbīrī* is a way of asking for Allāh's forgiveness. This is based on an ethical practice of al-Ghazālī, who speaks about forgiveness as a virtuous practice of following Allāh's character as "the Most Merciful."

The dissertation concludes with Chapter Eight, "After Forgiveness: Moral Repair and Giving to Allāh." This chapter examines Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's perspectives on what they perceive to be their future "wrongdoings"; this form of moral repair becomes a way of reconstructing a future that finds its deepest enticements in the Islamic act of charity (*sadaqa*). It is a way for the children to give back to Allāh. This chapter highlights how the children imagine a future where happiness is giving back to the Syrian communities they left behind, which serves

a large goal of giving to Allāh. Moral repair is a mode of reconstructing the future and reaching out to the dead other through the Islamic act of charity and virtue of patience. In light of this Islamic doctrine, the dissertation ends with examining a prevalent theme for the children throughout my ethnographic fieldwork: what does it means to be an "exemplary" child?

<u>Part I. Fleeing the War and Imagining the Other</u>

"*And as for those who are felicitous, they shall be in the Garden, abiding therein for long as the heavens and the earth endure, save as thy Lord wills—a gift unfailing*."
--The Qur'ān (*Hūd* [prophet Hud]; XI, 108; trans., Nasr 2015:585-6)

Part I of the dissertation focuses on the life stories of two Syrian refugee children who had to flee Syria with their families and now live in Brooklyn. It explores the subtle interplay of what the children accept or submit to and the traumatic experiences they cannot change or reenact. This back-and-forth between anguish and tolerance is what Hannah Arendt calls the "existential dialectic" between suffering (being subjected to the actions of others) and agency (being author of one's own life). In *The Human Condition*, she explains that since "the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer. To do and to suffer are like opposite sides of the same coin" (Arendt 1958:190). Nabilā and Amir—the protagonists in Chapters Two, Three and Four—struggled and succeeded in accepting events as they transpired, in all its intricacy and contradictions.

Chapter Two, focusses on Nabilā's journey from Daraa into the Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp. Nabilā is now a twelve-year-old girl residing in Brooklyn. She lives with her father, mother and younger brother in the Bay Ridge area. She attends a New York City Public School and has been taking guitar classes for the past two years. Nabilā was seven years old when she fled from Daraa, located in southern Syrian, to Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp. After a two year wait in the camp, Nabilā's family's visa application was approved by the United States under President Obama's Refugee Resettlement Program in 2017. Chapter Three, centers on Amir's experiences in the Turkish Suruç Refugee Camp. Amir is now eleven years old and lives in the

Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn with his uncle, Atā. In 2014, Amir, alongside Atā, fled from their home in the Kurdish-held city of Kobanī, after their house was bombed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Amir has been living in Brooklyn since 2017 when his refugee status was approved by the United States, and now attends a New York City Public School. He is an active member of a Bay Ridge local youth community soccer team.

Part I depicts how Nabilā and Amir's grappled to accept the events that transpired throughout their journeys from their cities into refugee camps. The "in-betweenness" they faced consists of flux and uneven bond to the other similar to Emmanuel Levinas writings about the asymmetrical relation of self and the other. This distinction is made to resist binaries of inner and outer, individual and collective and ethical practices (as important as Islamic ethics are two both Nabilā and Amir). The goal is to address relationalities and lived experiences. If the process of "capturing or commanding life is a capacity to *move*" to pursuit happiness, or "to *orient* oneself to find other possibilities" (Jackson 2013:3; emphasis in the original), then how do Nabilā and Amir account for the other? What does it mean for Nabilā and Amir to live through what Levinas calls the "ethical itself" (1991:xxiii), where responsibility is to put oneself in the place of other? Responsibly in part equals to intersubjectivity. The in-betweenness becomes a space that takes on "the weight and consistency of one [who] bears the burden of being, of alien being and of the world" (Levinas 1991:xxiii). But the word "life," for Nabilā and Amir, is intertwined with an ethics of wishing to live well (*sa'āda*; "happiness"), that forces the children to ask, in Levinas' vein: "what *ought* I to do"?

To live well is Nabilā and Amir's attempt to navigate indeterminate status and ambivalent emotions that places them even more in a "state of exception" (Agamben 1998). Nabilā and Amir (like other refugee children discussed in this dissertation) are reminders of

Giorgio Agamben's figure in *Homo Sacer*, where life is diminished to a "bare" state, merely the physical or "biological" life (*zoe*) which omits the life (*bios*) of the *polis* (1998). The following three chapters examine Nabilā and Amir's accounts of facing the atrocities of the Syrian Civil War, followed by the displacement, homelessness and statelessness they experienced in the hope for a better life. The aim is to discuss how suffering, enduring and action lead to both experiences of guilt towards the others left behind, and also grant Nabilā and Amir the agency to be responsible for the new people they befriend along their journey. How could a child find a way to exist and give meaning to life, when they, like Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, "may be killed and yet not sacrificed" (1998:12)? How do Nabilā and Amir go on with their everyday in conditions similar to what Arendt considers to be the "same essential rights that were claimed as the inalienable possession of all human beings," and are only claimed as the "specific heritage of specific nations" (2004:297).

In the midst of Nabilā and Amir's struggle with their horrifying past and continuous challenges to survive their journeys, they find ways of reconciling and paving—imagining—a future of possibilities. Through their journeys, Nabilā and Amir find themselves separating from the spiritual worlds of devotion to Allāh and care for the other they had been socialized to practice and uphold. Yet, their daily challenges are far removed from the pleasure and delight of the material world. They find themselves in a between space of pondering and reflection on the past that evokes experiences of guilt for them. The in-between space also allows them a certain level of creativity and spontaneity to reach out to others, finding themselves responsible to the new bounds of friendship.

To discuss the in-between space, I draw on the Islamic and Sūfī analogy of *barzakh* ("obstacle" or "separation"), the space that is neither material world nor spiritual world. I place

Islamic views on *barzakh* in conversation with Gilles Deleuze, who expands the in-between space of inventiveness, imagination and agency (2007). I aim to put philosophy (particularly, Islamic ethics) in conversation with the open-ended—"cartography" instead of "archaeology" (Biehl and Locke 2017:7)—processes of social forces that drive the ethical subject to reorient based on the uniqueness of situations. As vital as Islamic ethics are to Nabilā and Amir, the following chapters aim to break through the impasses created by totalizing modes of power and knowledge, to demonstrate the uniqueness of the nonlinear space-time of becoming. Within this in-between space, I also find Levinas' "responsibility"—basic implication of exteriority in subjectivity—vital in how Nabilā and Amir recognize, imagine and acknowledge the other. An important question is, in light of practicing (or being socialized into) *sa'āda* (happiness), how far does Nabilā and Amir's responsibility extend? In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas stresses that responsibility is to "bring to light a bond in which one is already held, and where there is still a demand to be answered" (1991:xiii). Part I examines how these bonds of moral codes are kept intact *and* altered as Nabilā and Amir flee their homes to refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey.

Chapter Two, "The Bullet Holes in Our Front Door," examines Nabilā's accounts of her last days in Daraa, and her family's dangerous journey into Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp. Throughout this journey, Nabilā found herself growing distant from her impression of herself as a "pious" and devoted individual, believing that she had abandoned her grandmother as she was forced to leave Daraa. Nabilā spoke about a shift in her ethical orientation from the spiritual world of *sa'āda* towards an unknown world of *barzakh*, which was less spiritual and yet did not resemble the material world of individuality and personal gains. The in-betweenness of *barzakh* is made meaningful through Nabilā's responsibility towards, and feelings of guilt for, her

grandmother. This transformative space evoked feelings of guilt for her, but it also opened up a space of imagination and agency from which she could reach out to others.

Chapter Three, "A Soccer Ball and the New Teammates," is based on Amir's descriptions of his time in the Suruç Refugee Camp, a tent camp located in the Şanliurfa province in southeastern Turkey. Now an eleven-year-old boy from Kobanī, Amir's discussions of his soccer ball and his efforts to train other kids in the camp highlights how creatively and spontaneously one can redraws ethical orientation and the responsibility towards others. Through his relationship with the soccer ball, Amir created an empathic bond with other children in the camp and, at the same time, remained attuned to his family. This chapter focuses on three themes: a) Amir's involvement in organizing soccer practices and games; b) how the soccer ball became part of his "world of imagination"; and c) moral imagination and Amir's soccer ball. I draw on Ibn 'Arabī' (1165-1240) to discuss how *barzakh* is "the world of imagination" (op. cit., III: 42) between the spiritual world and the corporeal levels of existence. He states that through the unveiling of the "heart" an imaginal (not "imaginary") perception is created in *barzakh*, where the imaginative faculty complements the human intellectual capacity (in what he calls "the two eyes").

Chapter Four, Language, Guilt and the Other, is a psycholinguistic examination of Nabilā and Amir's Arabic statement *baḥis bi al-dhanb* ("I felt guilty"), which becomes more apparent as the reader proceeds through Chapters Two and Three. This chapter provides additional ethnographic vignettes of Nabilā and Amir, but unlike the other two chapters does not follow a chronological order. I analyze how Nabilā and Amir's Arabic accounts of *dhanb* (guilt) set out a certain moral orientation and establish a specific worldview. Using English as their dominant language helped them separate emotionally from the traumatic events of their past, a concept

known as "detachment effect" (Marcos 1976). I explore how *baḥis bi al-dhanb* is a means for Nabilā and Amir to express their responsibility, uttered in a way that is frozen in time. This use of Arabic stresses the asymmetry and nonreciprocity of their relation to the other.

All the narratives provided in Part I are based on my encounters with Nabilā and Amir in the Bay Ridge area in Brooklyn. My conversations with Nabilā and Amir were all in English, except for a few (but critical) times when they used Arabic phrases or terms to discuss their feelings of guilt (see Chapter Four). Although they spoke Arabic at home to their parents, they chose to speak English with me and their friends. My conversation with the two adults in Chapters Two and Three—Salāh (Nabilā's father) and Atā (Amir's uncle)—were in Arabic (Syrian dialect). My encounters with Nabilā and Amir included observing them in their school and afterschool programs. I met Amir at the Arab American Association of New York and also watched him play soccer many times. I had the good fortune to be invited to Amir's house for tea and dinner. We also met in the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge and during festive holidays, which initiated the theater play we created (see Chapter Six). While Nabilā and Amir are reintroduced in Part III of this dissertation, I found their narrative to concentrate more on their past lifeworlds. Most of my interactions with Nabilā and Amir exhibit how vital it was for them to make sense of their future by presenting the past.

Presenting the Past

Part I provides a window into how a refugee child begins a strenuous journey from his/her home into a refugee camp. Undoubtedly, any examination of a refugee child's lifeworld must consider how the past relates to the present and the future. Memory provides a window into the relationship with the self, the other (real or imagined), the community that bears these memories

and social institutions and moral codes. Nabilā and Amir's narratives of their past illustrate how their memories are based on certain experiences, which in turn, shape their memories. Memory is a form of practice that shapes identity; to borrow Ricoeur's concept, it is a dialectic between "appropriation" and "distanciation" (1976:43). In discovering the links between past and present, "memory operates most frequently by means of the threads of narrative" (Antze and Lambek 1996:xvii).

The narratives presented in the following three chapters offer a way to understand "the very historicity" (Felman and Laub 1992:62) of the events and how ethical values are marked by Nabilā and Amir. I will be discussing the linguistic relevance of narratives and memory in Chapter Four, but as a means of introduction, it is important to remember what Michel Foucault said: "Discourse is not simply that which expresses struggles or systems of domination, but that for which, and by which, one struggles; it is the power one is trying to seize" (1972:12).

These struggles manifest themselves even more in recalling experiences of living betwixt and between, as lives shift back and forth between transitive and intransitive poles. The past is also a reminder that every conception of history "is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated" (Agamben 1993:91). Part I attempts to coalesce the existential dialectics and rhythms of the enduring relationship of the past to present (Part II) and future (Part III) in the lifeworlds of two Syrian refugee children. In relation to experiences of time, what remains important in the following chapters is how certain feelings of guilt become temporally frozen while certain actions lead to delight and spontaneity.

Islamic ethics, and particularly happiness, becomes the backdrop of how these two children engage with the world, and how they struggle to reorient their ethical selves towards or

against it. Before proceeding to Chapter Two, it is vital to discuss how *sa'āda* (happiness) shapes the understanding and the lifeworlds of Nabilā and Amir.

ETHICS IN ACTION

To discuss happiness, I draw on the works of al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), whose writings on ethics illuminate a relationship between truth (Allāh as the ultimate form of the truth), action and the human subject by a way of upright guidance and practice. Al-Ghazālī's moral tenets represent a transformative exercise of the self, founded on the knowledge (or discipline) of the path to the hereafter *('ilm tarīq al-ākhira*). In *Kīmiyā-yi Sa'ādat* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*), he makes clear that ethics are to "transform the essence of man from his baseness and bestiality to the purity and preciousness of the angelic state in order to achieve everlasting happiness" (2005:3),[4] a transformation that reorients the individual away from the material world to attain the spiritual world. Al-Ghazālī stresses that the self must undergo *a practice* of attributes of perfection. The virtue of "happiness" (*sa'āda*) resides in its otherworldly nature, whereas "the varieties of pleasure have no end, nor shall any annoyance tarnish its pleasure" (2005:3). Additionally, al-Ghazālī believes that the soul (*rūh*) is created for the hereafter. In *Kīmiyā*, he states that the human self consists of the ego (*nafs*), life or vital force (Farsi, *jān*) and heart or inner soul (Farsi, *dil*).[5] He affirms that humans are responsible for cultivating the soul, whereby "happiness is the spiritual knowledge of Allāh Most High. It acquires this knowledge of Allāh Most High through the knowledge of His handiwork, and this is the totality of the universe. It

[4] The metaphorical use of "alchemy" by al-Ghazālī is a refence to the process of self-cultivation, a practice to purify the soul, similar to how alchemists aspired to transform copper into precious metals.

[5] Most of al-Ghazālī's manuscripts are in Arabic, however, *The Alchemy of Happiness* was written in Farsi.

learns about the wonders of the universe by means of the senses, and the senses are established in the body" (2005:9). In other words, the purpose of the body and the mind is to aid the soul by escaping the imprisonment of the material world and ultimately attaining the spiritual endpoint.

Amir quotes his aunt speaking about his uncle who was severely injured in Syria: "*sa'āda* is not about playing video games or watching football…it's about *mas'uliyyat al-ākhār* [responsibility for the other]. It's about opening your heart to other people, *and* more than anything being a good person to gratify Allāh." In *Kīmiyā* and in *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), al-Ghazālī emphasizes that worldly actions have a certain (although limited) value that can be used as a means to obtain happiness (Abul Quasem 1975:58). The centrality of al-Ghazālī's ethics is the fact that ethics introduce the individual and the community to a vision that facilitates human beings with "the true meaning of their individual as well as collective life" (Said 2013:92). Ethics becomes a source of enquiry and reexamination of the self. Al-Ghazālī's ethics elucidate the significance of Islamic belief, knowledge and practice as a means to be *human*. A human being who ought to strive for knowledge and conduct proper actions in his/her daily life based on the belief that Allāh is the ultimate *moral* agent (as oppose to people being moral agents because they make choices).

Drawing on al-Ghazālī's ethics, Part I examines his assertion that self-cultivation is a moral and educational exercise, a socialization process highlighting how the collective shapes an individual's life for the Syrian children. I do not claim that only one set of moral principles shapes a particular child's lifeworld, nor do I maintain that Islamic philosophy is the only ethical viewpoint. What I do argue is twofold. First, that Islamic philosophy, like Western philosophy, can be used as an analytic to help us better understand what ethical practices of self-formation and re-orientation entail in both Islamic and non-Islamic contexts. In this way, al-Ghazālī's

philosophy is no different that Aristotle's or Arendt's, it is a way of thinking ethics that can be engaged by anthropologists in their efforts to think through ethical dimensions of our existence. As Mahmood has shown in critique of Bourdieu's notion of habitus and bodily *hexis* – these notions which were ultimately derived from Aristotle, were also taken up by Islamic philosophers whose writings pose alterative, and Mahmood argues more expansive, articulations of what such concepts entail.

Second, I try to show that Islamic philosophy is also a taken for granted background that informs, often in implicit ways, individual, family, and community responsese to the events and conditions they have and continue to be confronted with in their day to day lives. In this way, it is important to emphasize that al-Ghazālī's ethics—as one of the renowned mediaeval Islamic philosophers—have publicly, institutionally and artistically shaped the sensibility of Syria and other Islamic communities. Islamic ethics forms the lifeworlds of the families; for the most part, their moral discourses are rooted in an Islamic socio-historical, cultural and mystical beliefs. Frequent references are made by the children and their families to *al-Adab al-'Arabī* (Arabic classic literature).[6] For example, Nabilā discussed the esoteric journey of the Prophet to the Heavens and even his *jihad* (struggle in the context of hard work and piety). These stories carry strong Islamic and Sūfī convictions that are passed down from one generation to the next. Sūfīsm can be defined as the inward dimension and mysticism in Islam. Again, in this sense, Islamic philosophy can be viewed as a taken-for-granted layer of background meanings and practices informing ethical modes of being in Syrian families and communities.

The children's moral discourses on happiness articulates how the individual takes shape through collective life—an important aspect of al-Ghazālī's ethical undertaking. Subsequently,

[6] The Arabic word used for literature is "*adab*," which means morals or etiquette.

ethics becomes an enquiry and self-examination of the self for—and through—the community (*ummah*). Most of the Syrian refugee families I worked with did not read al-Ghazālī, nor did they engage in philosophical issues. As Nabilā's father, Salāh, once told me, "existential questions become more important when faced with fear and uprootedness. A question important to me is what is my role towards my family and others in my community as an *insān* [human]?" Salāh's question, which stems from the concrete existential dilemmas and struggles that he and his family experiences, also raises an important philosophical issue at the heart of al-Ghazālī's ethical inquiry, however: "the highest and most perfect theoretical knowledge is no avail without practical application in one's everyday life" (Gianotti 2001:17). The primacy of practice is the most important task of self-cultivation, what al-Ghazālī (and many Sūfī traditions) refer to as the first step to following "the prophetic precedents by walking the path of piety and spiritual purification" (Gianotti 2001:18).

Salāh viewed these issues as "*al-istifsārāt al-wujūdiyyah* [existential inquiries] an individual asks of oneself when faced with *wahshiyyah* [inhumanity] and *qaswah* [cruelty]." Sitting next to Nabilā, Salāh explained,

> happiness is not about the good times. *Khalf al-sabr ashyā jamīlah tantazir* [an Arabic proverb, "after all patience, beautiful things await"]. Certainly, one is happy and pleasured when things are pleasant. True happiness, true contentment is to know deep inside me that my actions and my way of life are truly for a good cause. Life is about becoming better, seeing my family and my community happy…that all comes when you give yourself unconditionally to the *tarīqa* [esoteric or path] to the *haqīqah* [truth]. (Interview on September 2018).

Both *tarīqa* and the *haqīqah* have important Islamic and Sūfī connotations. Salāh's worldviews are rooted in Arabic literature and poetry, narratives, proverbs, and stories, *as well as* the Qur'ān, the *hadīth* and the Sūfī tradition. Al-Ghazālī was instrumental in integrating Islamic thought (particularly ethics and metaphysics) and Sūfī beliefs. A glance at Arabic literature and poetry

makes clear that the writers, the poets and narrators find enlightened and thoughtful inspiration in renowned philosophers like al-Ghazālī. The prolific Arabic writers and storytellers have for centuries reworked the abstract and difficult philosophical ideas into accessible stories and poems for the public to enjoy.

In addition, Sūfī rituals have a rich history in Syria. Amir's uncle Atā (see Chapter Three), a practicing Sūfī, finds inspiration in the classical Arabic poems. Many of al-Ghazālī's ideas have permeated through Sūfī rituals conducted by, or at least familiar to Syrians. Atā states that

> Islamic and Sūfī beliefs are deeply rooted in most of my family and people in my city. It is the way I was brought up, it is part of my being…My beliefs helped me during the war to *ataharmmal waafham alamī* [endure and understand my pain]; they helped alleviate the pain for my family. Once you can have that connection to the divine, you are at ease because what you face is not in your control, but how you respond to what Allāh decides for you is in your control. The physical pain of the war will never lessen, but that is not the right question to ask: the question is, "Why did Allāh put me on earth to face Assad's brutality? What does Allāh want from me and how do I become a *tāhir* [pious] human being?
>
> This is something I hope I can teach Amir [Amir was seated next to Atā and listening intently]. I want Amir to understanding the purpose of life and existence. To know that Allāh does not abandon our side, His servants, especially because of what we have gone through. As long as I believe in him, I fully realize why I am here facing so many challenges, I could say I have accomplished my obligations as an uncle and a human being before Allāh. (Interview on November 2018)

Evident in Atā's account is a form of self-reflexivity grounded in ontology, esoteric psychology and integrity. It also highlights a relational ethics, one that reaches up to the divine and outward to Atā's nephew, Amir. In Part I, I use al-Ghazālī's writings to illuminate how ethics become a "reflective expression" (Said 2013:92) of what it means to attain happiness for the afterlife. The end of human life is the termination of the body (physical presence) and the beginning of the otherworldly journey of the soul (*rūh*). It is the duty of every Muslim to prepare

the soul for the eternal world. Ethics, as a "reflective expression," is the work-in-progress of self-cultivation and the doctrine of the soul, whereby guidance and growth is needed to attain happiness. To become reflective means to foster the characteristic of virtue (*fadīlat husn al-khuluq*) to attain a higher self. Al-Ghazālī's understanding of the soul and virtue are both concerned with the well-being of the self and the well-being of others (the self being responsible to the other). In *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, al-Ghazālī states that the soul is the higher, more metaphysical reality (similar to Greek *pneuma*).[7] He expands on his ideas of the soul in *Munqidh* and *Ihyā'*, focusing on the psyche (*nafs*), elucidating that the psyche needs self-discipline (*riyāda*) "in order to conform to the image of God" (Said 2013:93). Accordingly, "the soul is the gift of Allāh" (*Ihyā'*, Vol. III, 4, 15; also, the Qu'rān 17:85) in need of nurturing.

Al-Ghazālī's description of the process of self-discipline traces back to the Platonic idea of the perfectibility of the human being. Al-Ghazālī's ethics strive for human perfection (*tawakhhī al-kamāl*). In *Ihyā'*, he describes the human soul as based on three elements: a) the soul that is easily irritated and provoked by emotions; b) the soul that is governed by desire; and c) the soul that encompasses human rationality (Greek logos). Happiness is attained when the third mode overcomes the previous two forms of the soul. This stage is referred to by al-Ghazālī as "the soul at peace" (*an-nafs al-mutma'innah*) (*Ihyā'*, Vol. III 6, also, Qu'rān 89:27-28).[8] The final stage is what Salāh speaks of in the previous quotation, a form of liberation or relinquishing worldly desire. Al-Ghazālī attributes this human transformation to the struggle of the essence (*jihad al-nafs*).

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[7] *Pneuma* is "breath," "air" or "breeze" from the verb *pneo* "to blow." Metaphorically, "breath of life," used in the New Testament for the Holy Spirit

[8] The three elements correlate to Plato's trichotomy of the soul as human beings pursue the good: rational, spirited and appetitive (Walzer 1962:221).

Sa'āda, then, is based on how humans flourish or prosper, as a mode of living, actively engaging with the excellence of character or virtue. An individual could exhibit excellent character whether or not he experiences delight or joy. Most teachings on Islamic ethics emphasize that happiness does not necessarily correlate to physical pleasure or emotional relish. *Sa'āda* is a practice achieved through hard work and sacrifice, an exercise to attain human excellence through pious beliefs, dedication and praxis. It is essentially the struggle of the body to enable the soul to cultivate virtue. The pertinent question is what constitutes human excellence (or perfection), and in what way can one attain *sa'āda*. Most Islamic writers stress that human beings are not rendered perfect merely through nature, nor are humans eternally perfect (unlike divine beings). For Al-Ghazālī, human excellence—the praxis of happiness—is attained through knowledge and practice. He states "there is no path to happiness…except by means of knowledge and practice." (Moosa 2005:252).

Al-Ghazālī believed that the state of the mind of an individual is vital to the actions he takes.[9] Al-Ghazālī views happiness as an action taken, a struggle to attain human excellence. What is central is how action takes on a transformative role; ethics is a practice of transforming human character based on good deeds and practices (*'amal*, pl. *a'māl*). In short, al-Ghazālī believed that *sa'āda* is a process of self-realization, self-transformation and self-actualization. He is concerned with the real nature of happiness, criticizing the hedonistic perspective that underlines a human life of delight (*na'īn*) and pleasure (*ladda*). He rejects the worldly pleasure on two reasons. Mundane pleasure is only limited to a short period of time since human mortality is inescapable. For instance, as stated below, such a perspectives is made visible in Nabilā's narratives which repeatedly stressed how she viewed her departure from Daraa as a worldly

[9] Al-Ghazālī's understanding of happiness is close to Aristotle's notion of the cultivation of virtue. Both thinkers deem happiness not only as a state of mind but also an activity in accordance with virtue.

pleasure, and her care for her grandmother as serving the pleasure of Allāh. Like most Islamic philosophers, al-Ghazālī unequivocally deems that the duration of the world—as mediated through *the* physical body—is momentary in relation to the eternal life. He states that delight with its narrow purpose in the material world cannot be the aim of humankind. Moreover, delight in the material world is an impure indulgence, every form of which is "imperfect and mixed with pain" (Abul Quasem 1975:154).

Al-Gazālī's understanding of happiness also underlines an important distinction between the body (*jism*) and soul (*rūh*). *Sa'āda* is a perpetual practice undertaken to nourish the soul. It is a process of change and transformation of the human psyche (*nafs*) and personality, similar to alchemy, where a low-quality metal is converted into precious objects. The human transformation is the gradual advancement of the human consciousness. Al-Gazālī believed that a sound ethical approach based on praxis creates the grounds for "a cognizant and self-conscious soul" (Moosa 2005:252). Knowledge and practice cultivate the soul to avoid indulgence in the material pleasures of the lower self, enhancing the potential for elevation to another state.

The next section speaks to al-Ghazālī's material/spiritual duality. It describes how *barzakh*, for him, is a place of dwelling and pondering. This view differs from Ibn 'Arabī', who defines *barzakh* as "the world of imagination" which enables individuals the freedom to imagine ideas and concepts (see Chapter Three). Al-Ghazālī's ethical writings distinguish clearly between the outer existence and the inner aspect of humankind. To reach the spiritual world, one must partake in self-cultivating practices to gradually attain proximity to the divine.

FROM PRAISEWORTHY TO BLAMEWORTHY: THE IN-BETWEENS

In *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī details his understanding of "human perfection," explaining it as the highest form of human happiness attained based on outer and inner aspects of the knowledge of "Right Practice" (Gianotti 2001:32). The outer aspect of knowledge is an action-oriented perfection of an individual's worship and social habitus (human action within a social context). The inner form of knowledge is disposition-oriented perfection of the mind or the heart. Al-Ghazālī explains the combination of the outer and inner aspects as a journey (*sayer;* also a common Sūfī metaphor) that a human being partakes to achieve "Right Practice." Right Practice is the practical wisdom that an individual ought to attain to shape his/her life for the afterlife. Al-Ghazālī states,

> Thus, the science of Right Practice divides into an exterior science, by which I mean the knowledge of the bodily actions, and an interior science, by which I mean the knowledge of the actions of hearts. That which is in accordance with the bodily extremities is either an act of worship or a habitual act. That which is received by the hearts—which are, by virtue of their concealment from the senses, from the realm of the *malakūt*—is either praiseworthy or blameworthy. It is thus necessary that this science divide into two halves: an outer and an inner. The outer half, [that is] connected with the [movement of the] limbs, divides into a habitual act and an act of worship. The inner half, connected with the states of the heart and the character traits of the soul (*akhlāq al-nafs*), divides into a blameworthy [state] and a praiseworthy [state]. Thus, all of them together [form] four divisions and any theoretical investigation into the science of Right Practice must not go outside of these divisions. (*Ihyā'*, introduction, 10)

Right Practice serves a threefold purpose: right conviction, right action and submission of the soul to Allāh. Al-Ghazālī clarifies that happiness is based on an inner state and the character traits of the soul, as long as the right convictions (what he calls *al-i'tiqādāt*; the beliefs) and right actions are followed by an individual. Perceiving what ought to be the right conviction or right action evokes binary sentiments of praise and blame. Who decides what the "right" deed consists of? In al-Ghazālī's words, what factors and social institutions produce sentiments that testify to the right "actions of the heart" (*a'māl al-qulūb*)? Al-Ghazālī does not view individual aspirations

as part of the "right conviction" or the "right action." This would make conviction and action a social construct. Happiness is for the sake of Allāh, not the individual. In other words, Nabilā and Amir's experiences of happiness are based on the outer aspect of knowledge that provides a particular meaning of distress and anguish during the time of war.

The following chapter examines the ethical implications of *sa'āda* as Nabilā flees from Daraa to Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan. It discusses how happiness prompts Nabilā to feel guilty, particularly as she parts from her grandmother; in the words of Levinas, as her "imminent relationality" to her grandmother disappears. Chapter Two highlights how happiness as a kind of habitus or unreflexive discourse in the everyday lives of Syrians, as opposed to Nabilā's reflexive redefining of her lifeworld, come into tension.[10] I begin the dissertation with the last days of Nabilā's life in Syria to depict the complexity and paradoxical nature of the ethics of happiness she experiences after she is no longer in the presence of the other (her grandmother). Throughout the civil war, Nabilā and Amir had come to understand *sa'āda* as a practice of self-cultivation for the sakes of Allāh; happiness in large part rests in responsibility and care for the other.

The larger question addressed is how a Syrian child achieves the "right conviction" and "right action" (re)defined by life outside of the social norms that define happiness based on Islamic and Sūfī beliefs. Rethinking or reimagining the self as a new ethical subject produces new possibilities, and simultaneously evokes feelings of guilt. Discussing her journey out of Syria, Nabilā said: "To care for my grandmother did not mean anything when I was no longer living with her." This is not to say that Nabilā cannot be "good" and happy outside of Syria, but

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[10] This way of thinking about ethics is, to some extent, similar to anthropologists Jarret Zigon's "moral breakdown." He refers to "morality," as the "discursive level" of an enquiry in to "a kind of habitus or an unreflective and unreflexively disposition of everyday social life," as oppose to "ethics," where the subject takes on "a kind of reflective and reflexive stepping-away from the embodied mora habitus or moral discourse" (2008:17-18).

rather the self begins a process of revisioning the “right” conviction” and the “right action” through new parameters and standards. These new parameters create a conflict between what is good and what ought to be good, whereby Nabilā, although often happy and delighted to be in the Brooklyn now, says: “leaving my grandmother behind was a sin which I will never forgive myself for.”

Chapter Two: The Bullet Holes in Our Front Door

"*Whosoever works righteousness, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall give them new life, a good life, and We shall surely render unto them their reward in accordance with the best of that which they used to do.*"
--The Qur'ān (*al-Nahl* [The Bee] XVI, 97; trans., Nasr 2015:684)

This chapter focuses on how *sa'āda*, an ethical practice of self-cultivation, has identified and taught values and priorities for Nabilā (now a twelve-year-old girl residing in Brooklyn) to live a good life despite the horrific circumstances of the Syrian Civil War. The understanding of *sa'āda* requires one to look past worldly desires and individual aspirations, instead seeking what al-Ghazālī refers to as the "intrinsic feature" in human virtue (Treiger 2012). The intrinsic feature is based on the human predisposition of the "heart's" proximity to Allāh. This chapter examines how Nabilā's practice of Islamic ethics, as a form of authority and power, runs into complex realities of her lived experiences, where she finds herself bound by and breaking through the various obstacles and impasses that arose in the context of the distinctive social fields she has had to move through. Nabilā's narratives are mainly oriented towards her grandmother, and later her friend Nūr, as Nabilā endures a strenuous journey out of Daraa into Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp and then Brooklyn. Nabilā considers the prosperity and safety of her grandmother in tension with what she calls her "*al-nāeim fe qalb* [bliss or happiness in my heart]." Nabilā's accounts of her journey illustrate a duality between what she considers the material and spiritual worlds. She begins to find herself inside, outside and on the boundaries of an in-between world of reflexivity and pondering, known in Islamic philosophy as *barzakh*. The transformative space evokes feelings of guilt (see Chapter Five for an in-depth examination of guilt), and at the same time, allows her an openness, a sense of agency to imagine new possibilities. This chapter

examines the intricacy of moral experiences of the unfinished work of being and becoming. It depicts the extent to which neither moral codes, nor culture, nor politics neatly align with Nabilā's empirical realities. In the words of Deleuze, "society is something that is constantly escaping in every direction…so much so that the problems for a society is how to stop it from flowing" (2007:280).

The ethnographic data that is discussed in this chapter were mainly collected in Brooklyn in 2018, when Nabilā was eleven years old. Most of our conversations took place at her house, or after school when she was returning home with her father. I also accompanied her to the local mosque, the playground, and on some of her visits to the Brooklyn Arabic Cultural Center. By drawing on Nabilā's lifeworld, this chapter highlights some of the important events a Syrian refugee child experiences as the difficult decision when they are fleeing takes place. I concentrate less on the political and social events in Syria, rather than articulating the ethical responses of a refugee child who struggled to navigate events that were far beyond the scope of her or her family's control. Levinas's ethical question is never too far from Nabilā's mind: "What *ought* I to do?" This question becomes particularly important as Nabilā begins to feel uprooted, finding herself moving along multiple worlds and boundaries, some of which hinder her vision of possibilities and others that evoke her sense of spontaneity and creativity.

I DIDN'T SAY GOODBYE TO *AZIZ-JON*

Salāh, Nabilā's father, explained that "the road out of Daraa [was] as dangerous as walking into pro-Assad neighborhoods." Daraa ("fortress") is located in southwestern Syria, about an hour's drive south of Damascus and 13 kilometers north of the Jordanian border. According to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2004, Daraa had a population of close to 100,000 (Fabbe

at al. 2019). It is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Muslims, known to be a “cradle of the revolution” (Fabbe at al. 2019), and a focal point of violence of the Syrian uprising since 2011. Nabilā’s home was located close to the Omarī Mosque in the southern district of Daraa. The mosque was typically a place for anti-government protesters to congregate after Friday prayers. A short drive south on Highway 5 from Daraa is Jordan’s Al-Ramtha Boarder Crossing. Since the uprising, this twenty-minute drive has become treacherous, but nonetheless travelled by many Daraa residents with little option but to flee. The pro-Assad militia’s live ammunition detered people from escaping, and those who did manage to leave Daraa were frequently confronted with roads barracked by armed men asking for American dollars. Nabilā’s family’s swift decision to flee was due to the news that the number of *sabhīha* (“ghosts”; the Syrian government’s sponsored militias) had increased significantly in Daraa. According to Salāh “a large-scale cleansing” of those who the state considered as opposition was imminent. In addition, most Syrians kept their escape plans secret to avoid attention from the pro-government forces or sympathizers. There was little choice but to leave Daraa quietly, quickly and in unusual hours with bare essentials.

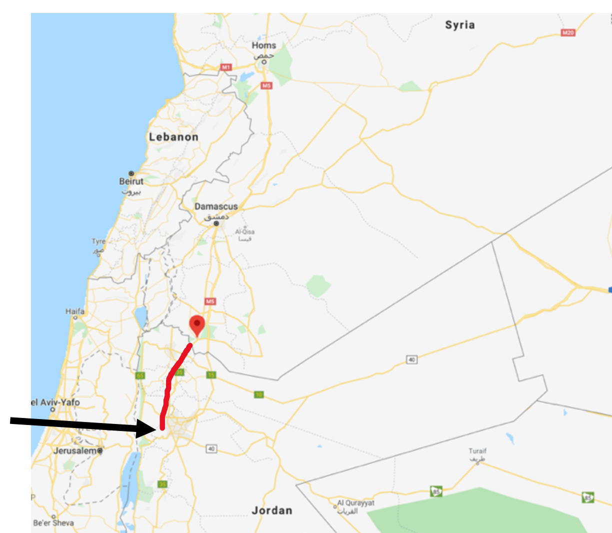

Figure 2. The red pin is Daraa and the black arrow points to Jordan’s Zaatarī Refugee Camp. The red line is the short distance between Daraa and the camp. (Provided by Google Map)

Nabilā's journey out of Daraa began on February 21, 2015, when she was seven years old. It was a cold winter night when Nabilā's mother walked into her room and told her, "we'll be leaving first thing tomorrow." Nabilā recounts her frantic last night in Daraa:

> I packed my stuff for some time…that night things moved fast. The adults were talking a lot and making so much noise; they looked anxious and sometimes argued…my mom looked really nervous. I wasn't sure what was happening exactly…after all the commotion, I went to *Aziz-jon's* ["dear one" a term of endearment used by Nabilā for her grandmother] room…I began to have an awful thought in my head that I was holding her for *one last time*…When I walked in her room, *Aziz-jon* was reciting the Qur'ān. She looked at me, smiled and held me and continued to recite the Qur'ān with me on her lap…eventually I fell asleep next to her on her bed." (interview on November 2018)

Nabilā had known for some time that her father was in danger of being arrested again. Ever since the Siege of Daraa by the Syrian Army (April 25 - May 5, 2011), violence had significantly escalated (Fabbe at al. 2019). Salāh told me, "What makes me sad is that Nabilā missed out on all the joys of being a first grader; schools were destroyed or housed pro-Assad forces. The violence was eating my child alive."

Nabilā had to cope with the absence of her father since his arrest during the Siege of Daraa. Salāh was one of the protesters on March 18, 2011, who stood in solidary outside the Omarī Mosque. The protest resulted in the Syrian Army's harsh retaliation that led to the killing and capturing of many in Daraa's ancient Roman Quarter close to the mosque. During the eleven-day siege, people in Daraa were confined to their homes, phone lines and Internet were disconnected, and major parts of the city were without water, fuel or electricity. The daily protests continued after the siege. On May 1, 2011 Salāh, like many of his neighbors, chanted from his living-room's window: "God is Great!" It was a simple message of defiance that usually took place during the early hours of the night. The *sabhīha* ("ghosts")—dressed in regular clothing—pointed a laser beam at Salāh's window. *Sabhīha* are state sponsored militias of the

Syria's al-Assad's mercenaries. The laser beam helped *sabhīha* identify the protesters during the night. He was arrested thereafter, following an intense house-to-house search. Nabilā waited four years with no news of her father, to finally see him released from prison. Nabilā spoke of her father's absence:

> It was really hard when my father was in jail. I had no idea where he was or what happened to him, I was so worried about him…I heard a lot of bad stories about the police and the jail…a few times, I drew pictures of my family and took it to my mother to mail to my father, so he would know we were okay, but my mother said she didn't know where to mail them to. She said she didn't know where my father was…*subhānallāh* [gloried is Allāh]. We are very blessed he finally came home…I heard people were punished, they were tortured. When I asked my father, he said nothing bad happened to him. He just wanted me not to worry and not to be sad. There is a large scar on his back that wasn't there before he went to jail. I am sure they punished him…I know that people disappeared after they were taken by the police. Fātameh [Nabilā's friend from Daraa who also lives in Brooklyn] has not seen her father for eight years…I shouldn't say this…but honestly…I think…her father is not coming back: *ʾastagfiru-llāha rabbī wa-ʾatūbu ʾilayh* [seeking forgiveness from Allāh; uttered when something bad is said or thought]. (interview on December 2018)

While Salāh was under arrest, Nabilā experienced two harsh famines in consecutive years, all in the midst of the harrowing and unforgiving Syrian Civil War, which some days took place just outside her home. She saw soldiers on rooftops shooting indiscriminately, tanks in the streets, and fighter jets bombing some districts in Daraa.

In Salāh's absence, Nabilā's grandmother Zeynab was instrumental in her upbringing. Nabilā said:

> *Aziz-jon* held me when I heard explosions or gun fires. When I was scared to sleep or even look out the window, she comforted me. When I missed my father, she would tell me to be strong and have faith in Allāh. She would tell me stories of her young days to make me calm, when my father was a little boy. *Aziz-jon* spoke about her family's garden, and how much she loved going there with her mother… Sometimes she would ask me to promise her something: to do my best to be a *tifl jayid* [exemplary child] and to pray for my father. She would tell me a good child is someone who's *qalb* [heart] is close to Allāh, then Allāh grants His mercy and grace. I know that Allāh is the only thing that protects us and my father…His mercy is so much stronger than the soldiers in the jail.

> When I prayed, I asked Allāh to bring my father back to us. (interview on December 2018)

These are important relational ethical practices of orientation that open up, what anthropologist Sarah Willen calls "inhabitable spaces" of welcome in painful spaces of political trauma (2019). Zeynab struggled with a left arm fractured during Salāh's arrest. When al-Assad's *sabbīha* broke in the front door, they pushed Zeynab against the wall as she pleaded with them. Zeynab had to treat her fracture at home, since going to the hospital meant fears of Assad's militias' interrogation tactics and even the risk of torture. Nabilā became her grandmother's caretaker, bringing her medication and food. They helped each other deal with Salāh's absence and provided support and care for each other. When the *sabbīha* left Nabilā's house—as Salāh was pushed out blindfolded and handcuffed—they indiscriminately shot at the front door. Salāh said that "the bolt holes were for intimidation, a way of marking our house. It was illegal to fix the door after. The holes exposed us, we were exposed to al-Assad's army and their brutality."

After Salāh's arrest, Nabilā's family were more of a target, particularly after her father's release from jail. Nabilā's last night in Daraa was full of emotions:

> I was happy to be leaving Daraa; it was really scary to live there. I was afraid all the time, worried about everything, and for my father. For me, it was not easy; I wanted to go to school, but couldn't…I wanted to go to the park, but couldn't…I wanted to go shopping with my mother, but that was not possible. But, when my mother told me we will be leaving, suddenly I had a strange felling, a sad feeling inside me. I was sad, because I was going to leave *Aziz-jon* behind. I wasn't so much sad about my friends, my cousins or anyone else, but sad about her…That night *Aziz-jon* held me, and I had a bad thought: What will happen if the army kills her? (interview on December 2018)

Nabilā remembered in great detail the morning she left Daraa, starting on what turned out to be a three-day journey into Jordan's Zaatarī Refugee Camp. She said:

> It was early in the morning and the weather was cold. *Aziz-jon* tapped me on my shoulder and held me for a short time. Then, in her soft voice, she said: "Nabilā it's time to get

> ready." I had packed my small suitcase: some pictures, my Barbie dolls, my two favorite dresses, and a copy of the Qur'ān *Aziz-jon* had given me for my birthday. The sun was just coming out, we all gathered in the living room. My mother was holding my brother, Ahmad [infant at that time]. As we walked out, *Aziz-jon* held my hand and said: "Remember to be strong Nabilā; Allāh will protect you! That's how you'll make me happy." Something inside me, like the night before, said I will never see her again. I felt so sad…I didn't want to leave. I was also scared to get into the car…As I walked to the car I told myself: *baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty] for leaving *Aziz-jon*.
>
> *Aziz-jon* walked out with me to our front door, which wasn't safe. My father had parked the car in front. *Aziz-jon* held out our family Qur'ān so each one of us could kiss it and then walk under it [an act to safeguard traveler(s) under the protection of Allāh]. I held *Aziz-jon's* hand and cried…telling her I am sorry to be leaving you. She smiled and held my head tight. We rushed to sit in the car; the streets were not safe because of the soldiers controlling things from some rooftops. All of this happened so fast, when I was sitting in the car I told myself: *I didn't say goodbye to Aziz-jon.* From the car, I looked at *Aziz-jon*, through the holes in the door, I saw her rushing inside. I waved to her but she was going inside and couldn't see me. That is the last thing I remember of *Aziz-jon*…I looked through the door at her, the holes in the door. I remember I cried…then, I remembered, again that *I didn't say goodbye to Aziz-jon*. I felt I had done something bad that was displeasing to Allāh; I felt my heart was far from Him. I wish I could have taken more time to talk to her and say goodbye. All this made me…you know… *baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty]. (interview on December 2018)

Salāh hastily drove them south towards Jordan. Nabilā's vicissitudes of attachment, separation, loss and renewal became an unavoidable aspects of everyday life. What begins to change for Nabilā was not a diminution in her daily experiences of ordeal and hardship, but rather how her grandmother provided a measure of stability in an otherwise pandemonium world.

In the opening lines of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus writes, the fundamental question of philosophy is "judging whether life is or is not worth living" (1955:1). Camus explored suicide as a human response to insufferable life situations. However, in *The Wherewithal of Life*, Michael Jackson points out that Camus failed to recognize migration and fleeing as a "'way out' or address the dilemma of every migrant for whom life in his or her home place is a kind of social death, yet for whom rebirth in a foreign land may prove illusory" (2013:2). To a large measure, fleeing your home feels like, as Salāh said, "a form of exile, far

away from anything familiar." Camus was aware of this existential crisis, and the betweenness fleeing brings. He wrote in a letter: "I could never live anywhere but Algiers, although I will travel because I want to know the world, but I'm sure that anywhere else, I'd always feel in exile" (Todd 1998:23). The betweenness makes one reorient, where "we morph and migrate, in and out of our bodies, in reality and in our imaginations" (Jackson 2013:2). Jackson explains his notion of boundary as subjective, rather than "merely discourse thresholds of tolerance for crossing the boundaries between conventionally separated categories" (2005:111-25).[11]

Betweenness has ethical and existential implications that shape Nabilā's lifeworld. Al-Farabī (872-950) believed that a virtuous state functions as a single (*wāhid*) community (*umma*). In *Reminder of the Way to Happiness*, he states that a "virtuous *umma*" is a community where its citizens partake in "a single action by which a single purpose is obtained" (1985:7). Furthermore, the Qur'ān states that "You are the best community brought forth unto mankind, enjoining right, forbidding wrong, and believing in God" (*Āl ʿImrān* [The House of 'Imrān]; III,110; trans., Nasr 2015:161). Nabilā felt a tremendous sense of strangeness towards her fractured and fighting community. Aside from the collective aspects of unhappiness, Nabilā was faced with what al-Ghazālī calls the reality of the world, the discrepancy between the material and the absolute incorporeal or spiritual world. For him, happiness, the spiritual world, is attained in the "proximity [one has] to God." In *The Book of Knowledge*, al-Ghazālī states that the "all-pervasiveness of [proximity to God's] benefit, it is not subject to doubt: for its benefit and fruit is the felicity of the next world" (2001:22). The happiness of the other world is the same form of belief articulated by Nabilā's comment about "displeasing Allāh." What is apparent in Nabilā's lifeworld (even now in Brooklyn) is her devotion to her beliefs, what she identifies as "fostering

[11] Jackson consideration of boundaries is a critique of Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), where Latour examines boundary blurring and hybridity through an objective analysis.

the heart to become close to Allāh." She deems happiness as an awareness or attunement grounded in one's proximity to Allāh, referring to it as "opening my heart to Allāh's grace and light."

Clearly, no moral code (under normal circumstances) stresses that a non-combatant individual ought to stay in an unsafe warzone. Furthermore, happiness is an ethical practice attainable regardless of the place of dwelling. The proximity to Allāh has no spatial limitations. Nabilā's feelings of guilt can partly be examined through the literature on individuals who survive traumatic experiences to later recount their stories, what is commonly known as "survivor's guilt" (Garwood 1996; Juni 2016). However, this dissertation is concerned with the way ethics, as a set of practices, is shaped by multiple systems and forces, themselves contingent and shifting that provide the children with variable degrees of autonomy. In this mode of being and becoming Nabilā finds ways to live alongside, through and despite the profound effects of war and uprootedness. The moral constraints and reorientations result in Nabilā (and Ali in Chapter Three) experiencing an intense sense of self-blame and guilt. At the same time, the contingent and altering forces open up a space for Nabilā to reorient herself as an ethical subject to invent and improvise in her lifeworld (evident later in this chapter with her encounter at the mosque).

Nabilā's unexpected feelings of guilt, evoked during her last night in Daraa and throughout her journey, pushed her to consider the uncertain and unexpected in the world, making her maintain the importance of her moral practices, while reorienting her ethical self. She experienced the push and pull between her moral codes and her "moral experience" (Throop and Zigon 2014), co-constructed through the trajectory of her experiences of both distress and delight. The co-constructed trajectory of moral experience, particularly how "aspect-seeing" and

“aspect-blindness” underlines the nuances of the lived experience of the individual sufferer (Throop and Zigon 2014:6; see also Duranti 2010).The tension arises from Nabilā being positioned in an ambivalent space situated between what she views to be the material and the spiritual worlds. Nabilā began to feel that abandoning her grandmother was the instigator for her to renounce the spiritual world. As her journey took place, her moral experiences would not fit neatly in one world or the other, thus finding herself fluctuating inside, outside and on the boundaries of a transformative and self-reflective space.

THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE

The Islamic concept of *barzakh* assists in understanding the between space that is neither part of the material nor spiritual world. According to Sūfī beliefs, this transformative state is neither for reward nor punishment, but a space between the two worlds known as *barzakh* (“obstacle” or “separation”). It’s a space to ponder actions one perceives to be wrongful, with no reward nor punishment. The word *barzakh* comes from the Persian Sūfī tradition, meaning barrier or curtain. The literal meaning speaks to the interval or the partition that separates one thing from another. The Qur’ān says, “He mixed the two seas, such that they meet one another. Between them lies a barrier that they transgress not” (*al-Raḥmān* [The Compassionate]; LV,19-20; trans., Nasr 2015:1312-3). According to Islamic beliefs, *barzakh* takes place after individual death and before resurrection. According to the Qur’ān, *barzakh* is the state for the death to remain until the Day of Judgment (*al-Mu’minūn* [The Believers]; XXIII,100). *Barzakh* provides a foretaste of the things to follow for those whose “lives [are] in transgression and wrongdoing,” where the “pain which one will experience…will be real in the sense that one will feel in full consciousness” (Siddiqui 2008:31).

Barzakh, as a state of self-reflectivity and contemplation, can be analyzed through al-Ghazālī's theory of mystical cognition of the "heart" (Ar. *qalb*, Pers. *del*). By "heart," al-Ghazālī refers to the *locus of cognition* peculiar to humans that distinguishes people from non-rational animals (Treiger 2012). In *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī refers to the heart as the "locus of [human] cognition of God (*mahall ma'rifat Allāh*) (Book 36, bayan 4, IV:427). He considers the heart to be the true reality of humans (*jawhar al-ādamī*; "the jewel of humans"). As the true reality, the heart is "a subtle spiritual essences" (*latīfa rabbānīya rūhānīya*) with a certain connection to the physical heart (*'alāqa ta'alluq*) which ultimately governs the body. The subtle spiritual essence of the heart differs from the physical due to both its immateriality and immortality. Al-Ghazālī claims that the true reality of humans belongs to the supersensible and the intelligible world, the "world of dominion" (*'ālam al-malakūt*). The clear distinction of the spiritual and physical aspects of the human heart is grounded on the peculiarity of the material and the incorporeal or spiritual world.

The relationality of the spiritual entity and physical heart can create a between space, a place for apprehension and anxiety and also an openness to the world, whereby an individual feels he/she has committed a wrongdoing. The juxtaposition of the physical and inner hearts is the root of Nabilā's uneasiness, a tension she feels between the materiality and spiritual worlds. *Barzakh* makes one ponder actions knowing that the Day of Judgment awaits. According to al-Ghazālī, the heart is the "divine command" (*amr ilāhī* or *amr rabbānī*). Nabilā's perception that she "neglect[ed] to care for *Aziz-jon*" causes her to question her understanding of happiness and stains her heart; it removes her proximity to Allāh. Heart is the place to cultivate care for and attunement to the other. It is the locus to become aware of Allāh and His majesty. According to al-Ghazālī, Allāh does "not appear *in* the heart but merely revels Himself to it" (Treiger

2012:33).[12] Al-Ghazālī states that the heart belongs to the supersensible world (*ʻālam al-makakūt*; "the spiritual" or "beatific world"). The afterlife becomes important; when death occurs the heart merely enters into another state disengaged from attachments to the sensible world.

Al-Ghazālī advances the Sūfī belief that the physical body is the prison and death is the release (or freedom) for the heart to be reunited with the Beloved. The heart is constantly in a journey (*sair*) towards Allāh. For him, heart is the foundation of the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqa*), yet his concept of the heart encompasses emotion and empathy (Treiger 2012:18). Much like Ibn Sīnā (980-1037; known as Avicenna in the West), al-Ghazālī calls the rational soul "divine secret" (*sirran ilāhīyan*) and ultimately "the real heart" (*qalban haqīqīyan*). The physical heart becomes a vassel for the mystical cogitation of the heart to find purity and find felicity in the afterlife. For Nabilā, her belief of abandonment of her grandmother disrupts the flow of the heart, the journey towards Allāh. Her feelings of guilt are based on her perception that attaining happiness now is impossible (or unattainable) no matter how much she adheres to the proper beliefs and submits to desirable actions. In the afterlife, the heart first enters a state of *hāla* (awaiting or lingering), that is either "felicity and pleasure" (*saʻāda wa-ladhdha*) or "misery and pain" (*shaqāwa wa-alam*).

Al-Ghazālī follows the Sūfī tradition to consider *barzakh* a place for those who cannot enter heaven and are confronted with their distressing past. *Barzakh* is a form of barrier between the corporeal and ethereal.[13] In colloquial Arabic, *barzakh* is not commonly used. The double

[12] The notion of the revealing of Allāh in the heart closely relates to Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the "face," discussed later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

[13] As evident in the following chapters, each of the Syrian children I worked with spoke about similar experiences of guilt.

meaning of it, as the world between two worlds, or the general state of calamity, is used in literary texts. It is, however, used deliberately at times in conversation. For instance, Salāh spoke to me several times about the general state of Syrian people: "*hālnā ka'annā bi al-barzakh* [our general state of affairs is like *barzakh*]".

In *Imaginative Horizons*, anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano discusses the Sūfī's *barzakh* as the "betwixt and between, as where two oceans meet" (2004:6). Nabilā's flight from Daraa distinguishes what she views as a self-centered material world and the selfless spiritual world. Her feelings of guilt (*al-dhanb*) are the result of an action, and her responsibility for the other causes her to question her moral obligations. She finds herself in a between place to ponder how to make sense of her absence for her grandmother (and her grandmother's absence in her life), and how to reorient herself to attain the highest form of happiness, now without her grandmother. Nabilā's feelings of guilt have three temporal components: leaving her grandmother in Daraa (the past); coming to terms with her actions (the present); and, the reorienting of the self to attain happiness (the future). The three dimensions of temporality depicted above shapes each of the three parts of this dissertation (they are also three modes of relationality). Each part examining the moral experience of different children in relation to their past, present and future. *Barzakh* has a temporal immediacy of the past, present and future all together. She recalibrates what it means to be an ethical subject while encountering the paradoxes of the material and incorporeal worlds that muddle the temporal relations to the other.

Anthropologist Stephania Pandolfo discusses how a wandering soul (*rūh*) is in a state closely resembling *barzakh*, something between life and death (1997:188). Nabilā's feelings of guilt are not triggered because she does not believe she is not a good Muslim. She says, "even when I forgot to pray, I still think about Allāh and say a little prayer before sleeping." It is worth

mentioning Salāh considers himself to be a non-practicing Muslim.[14] Nabilā is not just in *barzakh*, but rather her experience moves along and amid multiple boundaries of the material, spiritual and *barzakh*, making her escape and invent new ideals, recreating new boundaries and moral understandings.

For Nabilā, the imagine of her grandmother retreating through the door stands between the two worlds of rewarded with Paradise (leaving a war zone and individual goals) and punished with Hell (abandoning the spiritual world). Ibn 'Arabī' describes *barzakh* as

> Something that separates (*fāsil*) two other things, while never going to one side (*mutatarrif*), as, for example, the line that separates shadow from sun light. God says, "He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them a *barzakh* they do not overpass" (Koran 55:19); in other words one sea does not mix with the other…Any two adjacent things are in need of a *barzakh* which is neither the one nor the other but which possesses the power (*quwwa*) of both. The *barzakh* is something that separates a known from an unknown, an existence from a non-existent, a negated from an affirmed, an intelligible from a non-intelligible. (Chittick 1989:117-18)

For most Sūfī traditions, as for al-Ghazālī, *barzakh* is viewed as "an ontological thing (*shay' wujūdī*) upon which your eyes have fallen" (Chittick 1989:118). It is a state of pondering, but *only* for an individual who is attuned to Allāh. One needs a kind of self-awareness and attunement to happiness to be able to ponder what is deemed good. Thus, *barzakh* is a self-reflective way to reexamine the heart. In the midst of her flight from Daraa, Nabilā began to reflect and reexamine her action and her worldviews. *Barzakh* is the intermediation of "reality of the imagination,"…the world as we know it" (Crapanzano 2004:58).

Crapanzano states that *barzakh* affords a Sūfī believer an "occasion to intimate another reality—other realities—to which, through mystical discipline, one had at least partial access" (2004:59). He discusses *barzakh,* as an imaginative horizon, putting forward an ontological

[14] As stated in Chapter One, an act of devotion is only one way to uphold Islamic ethics. Islamic moral codes, as a form of knowledge, are socio-culturally learned and passed on.

reading that considers the possibilities of becoming and transformation. For Crapanzano, this space allows a Sūfī to attain the imagination of Allāh. This process of becoming and transformation for a Sūfī is more in line with what al-Suhrawardī (1154-1191) refers to as "the philosophy of illumination." Other than Ibn 'Arabī', most Islamic philosophers do not view *barzakh* a as transformative state with Allāh , but rather as a state of apprehension and lament of the past (see Chapter Three; Ibn 'Arabī' view on imagination and *barzakh*).[15]

For al-Ghazālī, becoming and transformation in *barzakh* center on the individual's inability to attain happiness. The work of ethics is always unfinished. In spite of this, if *barzakh* has a worldly dimension, it leaves room for one who ponders wrongdoings to have a chance for forgiveness. The way out of *barzakh*, as Nabilā explains in the quotation below, is through salvation. Salvation (*najat*) is a mode of rehabilitation of the heart in the material world; a way of, if not fixing the past, at least coming to terms with it. The rehabilitation of the heart allows for a space to imagine and improvise; it is a form of fostering an orientation to the other that allows one to exhibit some degree of an other-oriented agency. One could argue that a Sūfī's proximity to Allāh in *barzakh* (as explained by Crapanzano) is also a way to rehabilitate the heart. Al-Ghazālī views salvation as a way out of "dwelling in a limbo" (*al-a'rāf*; a reference to Qur'ān by him; VII,46-9), where one belongs neither to Paradise nor Hell.

For al-Ghazālī, the way to salvation is through a praxis and *theoria* relation of the heart. To elucidate the praxis and *theoria* convergence in the heart, he deploys an effective analogy comparing the heart to a mirror. The mirror analogy is helpful to understand Nabilā's lifeworld. Nabilā ties her happiness to her grandmother:

> *Aziz-jon* was selfless; she always talked about others and wanted to help our neighbors. She taught me that no matter how much wealth one has…what is important is to care for others, to help people who need help, especially in the time we are in now.

[15] Ibn 'Arabī formulates some of his thoughts based on Aristotle's *phantasia*.

> When I left *Aziz-jon*, I stopped given myself the chance to learn to be selfless like her. So I began to become friends with other children in the camp [Zaatarī Refugee Camp], just like how she wanted me to. I read in my book about the Prophet's *Hijrah* ["departure" or "journey"] to Medina. It was difficult for the Prophet, because some people wanted to kill him. He escaped from Mecca; it was very hard but Allāh helped him. So he replied by being very kind to others, because they had a difficult life…I know the Prophet did really important things…but maybe I can learn from his journey and help others. I feel like I failed; I wish I could have been there for *Aziz-jon*. So one day I began to help my mother by taking care of my brother and trying to make things better for my parents in the camp. I was scared but I thought I could help them instead of crying or being sad all the time. I feel, even today, that my heart beats heavy for *Aziz-jon*. I just wanted to find a way to feel better and do something that was good. (interview on December 2018)

Nabilā's explanation that her "heart beats heavy" is a way of blaming herself for not being responsible for her grandmother's wellbeing. At the same time, she seeks to help her parents, exhibiting a separation from her feelings of guilt. It is irrelevant the extent to which Nabilā could have stopped her grandmother's death about a year after she left Daraa. Zeynab had a massive heart attack after a car bomb detonated close to her house just as she was finishing her afternoon prayers. Nabilā's openness to possibilities in her new unknown world is similar to actions taken by someone who seeks redemption. As times goes on, the Syrian refugee children in this dissertation perceive salvation as less of a viable possibility and their actions more as sin (see Part II) .

Al-Ghazālī's analogy of the mirror highlights the importance of the practice of removing the stain from the heart. The metaphor of polishing the mirror is useful to address Nabilā's moral experiences; she finds herself in a place with a stained heart that needs to be cleaned to illuminate the light of Allāh. Keeping in mind that medieval mirrors were made out of metal and not glass, in *Kīmiyā*, al-Ghazālī explains the ascetic praxis as "polishing" (*fasl* 8, I:25:4-15) the mirror of the heart and removing "the tarnish of the vices that mar and erode its surface" (Igmatemko 2004:19). Polishing ultimately leads al-Ghazālī to say that the *mystical theoria*,

consisting of forms (*suwar*) and realities (*haqā'iq*), are reflected in the polished mirror of the heart. As an unpolished mirror cannot reflect objects clearly, the "impure heart is unable to contemplate these forms and realities" (Treiger 2012:18). According to al-Ghazālī, salvation merely saves an individual from "eternal punishment in hell," in total opposition to happiness, where the heart is in "bliss in paradise with its pinnacle, the vison of God (*ru'yat Allāh*)" (Treiger 2012:44). Salvation is reached by those who have "belief" (*īmān*). Al-Ghazālī's explanation of belief is the "unveiling, insight, and dilation of the chest by the light of certainty" (Treiger 2012:45).

For Nabilā, *barzakh* is not a constant state of being but of becoming; she finds herself inside, outside and on the boundaries of a new and ambiguous world. Thus, becoming captures the intricate relations, movements and dynamic powers that make up Nabilā's social and moral world. To become is "to create something new" (Deleuze 1995:170), where the subject carves out an unexpected path that both imposes limits and exceeds boundaries. Deleuze assists in understanding the dynamic nature of Nabilā's lifeworld, which is constantly shifting and influx. Nabilā, while having intense feelings of guilt, begins to entertain new possibilities of being "good" in the world.

Learning to Care for the Other

Barzakh is a state of being, encountered by an individual faced with the unfamiliar and uncertain. The uncertainty evokes feelings of guilt for Nabilā. Yet, it is not a permanent state of being, but is rather transformative. It transforms the self towards the other, by being attuned to the other's needs and desires. *Barzakh* is similar to a transformative impulse of being and becoming when an individual finds him/herself in between two things (Deleuze & Guattari

1987). Being takes hold "in the middle" (Deleuze 1997) in spaces where "people [are] moving along and amid multiple lines, pushing the boundaries of forms, escaping and inventing new forces, and combining with other fluxes" (Biehl & Locke 2017:9). The transformative aspect of Nabilā's life is about how to live alongside, though, and despite the profoundly relevant ethical and social structures. Speaking of her experience in the mosque while waiting to leave for Jordan, Nabilā said:

> When we left home, I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do. I kept Allāh close to my heart, but I felt there was something empty inside my heart. It was *Aziz-jon's* absence for sure, but maybe there was something else. I felt like my life changed so fast; I wasn't sure what I needed to do and what was expected anymore. When I get to the camp [Zaatari Refugee Camp] I felt it even more and every day. I knew what to say and what to act like, but at the same time I didn't know what to do and how to act. It was a strange feeling. I didn't know how to live like I used to anymore, but slowly I found ways to make things right and help some people. I learned to care for others again. For example, I helped take care of some babies for some of the families whose tents were close to us. I helped my mom cook food and clean. I also helped in our school [makeshift school run by the United Nations] to set the desks and clean the blackboard. I was scared, our situation was not good, the camp was very dirty and so many people lived there. It made me feel good to help other kids and in my school. (interview on December 2018)

Becoming, as a mode of experience, "troubles and exceeds" individuals' knowledge and action (Biehl & Locke 2017:x). Nabilā faced an uncertain and unexpected world where she experienced guilt, but also moments of contentment. Her new life was mysterious and unforeseen, and that brought her both a sense of blame and creativity.

After just a few minutes driving out of Daraa, a motorcycle Salāh was following turned onto a gravel road to avoid being seen by the al-Assad's forces. In Daraa, a number of smugglers make their living by guiding people through the backroads unseen by the al-Assad forces and road-raiders. Nabilā says:

> The car was shaking because my father drove fast. I knew if the army found us we would be in big trouble. The road was bumpy. My mother kept reciting the Qur'ān. It was really crazy. I had a strange feeling inside my head about the road, and all I pictured in my head

> was *Aziz-jon's* face and her smile. I wanted to go back! I don't know if I was scared of the road or maybe I just wanted to be back with *Aziz-jon*. (interview on December 2018)

The smuggler indicated with his hand to Salāh that an army barricade was ahead on the road. Salāh explained that they quickly drive to a local mosque close to the Daraa Dam to find shelter. The mosque was relatively safe, since some religious sites where not attacked as frequently around the Daraa area. Salāh said:

> I paid the smuggler three hundred American dollars, but as soon as he left, I knew he wasn't coming back. It was a risk many desperate people would take. Maybe the people he said were al-Assad army on the road were his friends…or maybe he worked with the army to take people's money. We were all really worried and lost. We were left with little money. (interview on December 2018)

Nabilā, overwhelmed and confused, explained that

> the first day in the mosque went by really slow…I was too exhausted and overwhelmed to think about anything. We just waited around till nighttime, some girls brought us food and we went to pray with them. When we went back to the car that night, in my head I kept picturing *Aziz-jon* standing at our door. But, this time, her smile wasn't making me happy. Her smile was actually making me more nervous; it was really strange, because I loved her smile. But at that moment, more than anything her smile made me *bi al-dhanb* [feel guilty]. I felt I was responsible if something bad happened to her. (interview on December 2018)

Life for Nabilā was the unresolved legacies of violence and unimaginable losses. By stepping outside of her everyday norms, Nabilā beared witness to the tragic and transformative reality of an uprooted refugee life. This transformation was both embracing and unsettling. For Nabilā, the space of uncertainty and unknowability called for a sense of restoration and recalibration of her ethical understandings. At the same time, her new encounters, although unfamiliar and unexpected, kept a certain mode of existence open to cope, make sense and imagine new possibilities through the complexity and wonder of her new lifeworld:

> In the mosque I kept having bad thoughts in my head; I tried to find a way to think about something happy but it didn't work. I would close my eyes and think about what *Aziz-jon* would have wanted me to do in my situation. Did she want me to smile? I heard my mother say: "*We need to learn to live again*." Even though I was younger, I knew what my mom meant when she said that: to imagine the good times with no war and nobody dying. Where kids could go to school or play music. It also meant to help others and be kind to others, like the Prophet was.
>
> During the second day at the mosque, I found it hard to just wait all day. I joined my mother to go pray and listen to Qur'ān just before noon. When we walked in the courtyard, I noticed one of the girls who had brought us food was sweeping the floor. I went to help her, I already knew her name but did not talk to her the night before. She was very shy, but happy to have me help her.
>
> Her name was Nūr. She said she had been living in the mosque for two and a half years, because her parents died during a bombing. I became very sad for her. Before Nūr, I had never actually talked to any kid who had their parents die in the war. I felt lucky for myself that I was with my family. For a quick second, I smiled inside of myself. I asked Nūr where she lived. She told me she lived in Daraa's Roman Quarter, so I guess not too far from my home. Nūr said her parents were killed by a policeman one afternoon in front of her house. All she could do was go to the neighbors after and call her uncle. Nūr told me her uncle brought her to the mosque, because he has a friend at the mosque, who knows the *Imam* [religious leader], so she could stay in the orphanage with other kids. Nūr asked if I wanted to meet the other kids? Before I could answer, she said they will be coming to pray in a few minutes. When Nūr was telling me about her life, I asked myself a good question: if Allāh is trying to teach me something important. (interview on December 2018)

This transformative experience did not alleviate Nabilā's feeling of guilt, but did provide a window into how the unpredictability of her world and the new relations she comes into contact with can reshape her orientation to the world. Nabilā's narrative speaks to what Nietzsche in *The Use and Abuse of History*, calls the "power of specifically growing out of one's self, of making the past and the strange one body with the near and present" (1955:10). Nietzsche is concerned with how individuals navigate through the structural forces of the material and symbolic world that transforms them into "becoming other and unpredictably constructive or perilous in their entanglement and over time" (Biehl & Locke 2017:4).

Nabilā's lifeworld can be understood through three related dimensions of the anthropology of becoming (Biehl & Locke 2017). While she is experiencing uncertainty in an ambiguous circumstances, Nabilā belongs to multiple networks of people, things and forces with varying degrees of agentive capacity and moral agency. In *A World of Becoming*, Connolly refers to this mode as "the mutual constitution of entangled [human] agencies" (2011), entangled in unpredictable social fields and subjectivity. The anthropology of becoming assists in understanding Nabilā's transformation and varied agencies. It also speaks to "the ways in which power itself is shifting and contingent, [seen less as a] stable entity than a product of manipulation, systematic falsehood, and ongoing struggle, and constantly punctured and put to flight by people's becoming" (Biehl & Locke 2017:6). In this way, Nabilā's experience is always at flux, allowing a space for unfinishedness in the reexamination of the self as an ethical subject.

The sensibility to the subject in relation to political power, cultural values and ethical norms also draws attention to the individual's experiences of time and space. Nabilā's encounter in the mosque is not reducible to a linear time, but rather at once embodies multiple temporalities. Her experience of time is a dynamic interdependency between the past and future in the present. Biehl and Locke call the experience "distinct from potentiality and not reducible to causality or outcomes" (Biehl & Locke 2017:6). For Nabilā, this mode of temporality is a way to keep history open and allows a window of self-examination of her daily struggles based on the subjects, events and places she encounters. The mosque is an interstitial space which produces shifting aggregates of desire and ethics within intersubjective entanglements produced as Nabilā imagines and attempts to make sense of her new and fast-changing lifeworld. Happiness, in the context of Nabilā's life, is not a decontextualized issue, but a broader set of relations in which she (the subject) is embedded and finds meanings through (see Deleuze & Parnet 2007). Nabilā's

narratives speak of stability *and* shifts in her ethical norms. Individuals are subject to the work of being and becoming. However, certain events or ruptures exaggerate the individual's attunement to what one deems stable or changing. For Nabilā, her departure from her grandmother creates a form of self-awareness to what has been constant and what is shifting.[16] At the core of the anthropology of becoming are circumstances where life "approaches the interplay between the motions of becoming different and moments of impasse or plateaus of stabilization" (Biehl & Locke 2017:6).

There was another element to Nabilā's account, namely, a certain attentiveness to the unknown, to what Nūr, as a friend, symbolized for her—an openness to the other, a sense of accountability not just to her grandmother but also to the world around her. These moments of attentiveness create conditions of possibility and responsibility. Before turning to the discussion of the conditions of responsibility for Nabilā in the next section, it is important to consider what constitutes possibility for her. Attentiveness to the unknown encompasses "open-ended engagements that wonder," where an individual's "presuppositions often prove inadequate in describing the complex realties of the lives of others" (Biehl & Locke 2017:6-7). Nabilā, while realizing that her attunement to her spiritual world has faltered, remains open to the unfathomable complexity of layered entanglements of a Syrian refugee child fleeing from Daraa. Meanwhile, she acknowledges the unknown, an openness to modes of experiences that are unstable and influx.

Deleuze's writings help to examine open-endedness in human experience, by breaking through a totalizing understanding of knowledge and power. In the case of Nabilā, the tensions between moral norms (Islamic ethics) and ethical practices (the ethical subject) are permanent

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[16] This form of self-awareness of being and becoming was evident with all the Syrian children I worked with in Brooklyn. It represents a unique form of attunement to what is stable and what is shifting in their lifeworlds.

and irresolvable; in a way, the ethics of happiness is always catching up to the reality of being a refugee child. Deleuze helps make sense of the incompleteness of understanding. In *Two Regimes of Madness*, he articulates how individuals are made of three categories of "lines" (2007) that are mutually constitutive and dependent on each other. Deleuze's first line, "molar," highlights "binary machines of social classes; of sexes, man-woman; of ages, child-adult; of races, black-while; of sectors, public-private; of subjectivations, ours-not ours" (2007:128).[17] The second group is "supple" (2007:124), a group or category that does not completely belong or correspond to predetermined sets of norms and beliefs. Deleuze refers to the last line "as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not preexistent" (2007:125).

What is significant in Deleuze's categorization of lines is how individuals move from one line to another. Becoming for him is in the middle, an in-betweenness similar to *barzakh*. In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze underscores that the middle is a space where "people [are] moving along and amid multiple lines, pushing the boundaries of forms, escaping and inventing new forces, and combining with other fluxes" (1997:1). Nabilā finds her ambiguity because she could no longer distinguish between the real and virtual, a shifting matrix of relations through which she finds herself within categories, on the boundaries and breaking away from the norms. Becoming, as Deleuze suggests, is "always 'between' or 'among'" (1997:2). He is not imposing a form or an expression on a subject, but rather a moment where a subject is no longer determined by a form of practice. This moment is both an inner self-reflective moment of pondering, but also the unknowability produces creativity (see Part II). The work of becoming, the betweenness and among-ness a subject experiences, initiates a unique attunement to the other

[17] This categorization is concerned with the Foucauldian normalizing mechanism of power (Foucault 1995).

and the surroundings. To become is “not to attain a form” but rather to find a trajectory where there are “two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another” (Deleuze 1997:63), attuned to each other until “the end of a new vision whose passages it remains open to” (Biehl & Locke 2017:9). This vision of the other allows for proximity to the other. As Arthur Rimbaud articulates, it is the condition of deep proximity to the other, where “I is an other” (1975:101).

The next section examines how *barzakh* allows a space for the individual to discover possibility through an openness and proximity to the other. This transformative space offers Nabilā a way of becoming attuned to her grandmother and Nūr, despite her feelings of guilt. By being attuned to the other, Nabilā begins to feel responsible for the suffering of the other.

THE IMAGE OF HER SMILING FACE

Salāh had no choice but to leave again during the first night at the mosque. Then, after a few minutes driving, Salāh found himself and his family stranded again and with no choice but to head back to the mosque to regroup for the next day. At this point, it was too dangerous to head back to Daraa, and too risky to proceed towards the Jordanian border. Salāh returned to the mosque for the second day knowing well the vulnerability of being exposed to looters, gangs and the army awaiting on the roads.

Through this confusing time, Nabilā constantly remembered her grandmother’s smile, speaking to me about her “saintly image,” and her “heavenly smile:”

> In the mosque, as we waited to leave again, I heard the Qur’ān. Then, I remembered it was just one night ago that *Aziz-jon* held me and recited the Qur’ān. I closed my eyes, because I was scared, and wanted to think about *Aziz-jon*. I imagined her at our home praying for us, reciting the Qur’ān with a smile. I loved the way she would read the Qur’ān; it was very calming. But, I feel her image was not a happy imagine anymore. Her smiles gave me happiness before, now her smile made me feel I did something wrong. It made me feel I was responsible for something bad. It was a sad imagine for me. Even today, that image makes me feel bad.

> I asked myself how could I not be happy to think about her smile. Maybe it was because the last time I saw her, I saw it through the awful holes…*Aziz-jon's* smile began to scare me from the time I was in the mosque. Even now, I live with the sad image of *Aziz-jon's* smile. The other day, I took the subway with my mother to Brooklyn Heights. Suddenly, I imagined *Aziz-jon's* smile. I think it was because I saw a girl with her grandmother in the subway. I don't have the chance to do anything like that with *Aziz-jon*. (interview on December 2018)

No doubt the image of Nabilā's grandmother is instrumental in evoking her emotions of guilt. Nabilā sees herself as the antagonist and instigator who abandoned her grandmother. Her feelings of abandonment of her grandmother, and her encounter with Nūr, are rooted in the question of what it means for her to live a good life. Nabilā's feelings of guilt are stimulated by her hearing the recitation of the Qur'ān, something her grandmother did daily. At this point in her journey, there is little comfort or even an illusion of a more stable life. Instead, Nabilā expresses a form of existential guilt, where her feelings and prior conceptions of the good disrupt the flow of her existence. Existential guilt "occurs when someone injures an orders of the human world whose foundations he knows and recognizes as those of his own existence and of all common human existence" (Buber 1960:27). For Nabilā, her spiritual world that encompasses care for the other has been unsettled and broken vis-à-vis her abandonment of her grandmother in Daraa, and later vis-à-vis her encounter with Nūr. Nabilā's feelings of guilt stem from the fact that she is adapting to the state of being a mere passive spectator that *barzakh* brings.

Her moral experiences were also rooted in what Deleuze understands as "becoming," the possibility of an openness and proximity to create and improvise. The between space creates a form of awareness, a closeness to the other that evokes feelings of infinite responsibility towards others. Nabilā finds herself questioning her incentive for leaving; any forms of justification that

would validate her flight from Daraa become entangled in a sense of responsibility towards her grandmother and in relation to Nūr:

> When I was in the mosque, I asked myself what I can do for *Aziz-jon*. How could I help her? I thought about Nūr, and the other children in the mosque. In the mosque, I asked my mother what my responsibilities are, especially for *Aziz-jon*…my mom didn't really answer me…I knew *Aziz-jon* was sad even though she was smiling when I was leaving. She told me so many times that even when we are sad, we should greet others with a smile to make their life better.
>
> I saw Nūr with no one in the mosque. I thanked Allāh for what I had, and wanted to help her and make her feel better because I knew she was so sad. I wanted to talk to her more and to let her know that she will be fine. But it was hard, I was not happy myself, and I am sure *Aziz-jon* was not happy either. Nūr looked happy but she I know she was sad inside, maybe like how *Aziz-jon* was when I left her. (interview on December 2018)

Nabilā's feelings of guilt are similar to Emmanuel Levinas's asymmetrical conception of "my infinite responsibility to the moral and vulnerable other," where a person is always having "one responsibility more than the other" (Pihlström 2011:16). To some degree, this asymmetrical view on guilt is similar to the religious concept of primordial sin (the original sin). The concept of sin, however, is misleading since Nabilā's experiences of guilt are a description of a condition that restrains her from performing particular acts. The in-between space is precisely where the conditions to perform certain acts become unattainable, but new horizons of possibilities open. Above all, as stated earlier, the betweenness is a condition of becoming aware of the other, an opening to see the face of the other.

Levinas discusses the *per impossibile* of guilt, the passivity related to specific action by an individual or an attempt to be a mere spectator. In *Alterity and Transcendence*, he states that, "[t]he *I* is the very crisis of the being of a being […] in the human […], because, being myself, I already ask myself whether my being is justified, whether the *Da* 'there' of my *Dasein* is not already the usurpation of someone's place" (1999:28). For Nabilā, her life and proximity to those

she felt responsible for provided her with the belief that she is working towards the highest form of moral obligation for a Muslim. Much like Levinas's concept of guilt, al-Ghazālī's understanding of happiness puts life into question. The quotation above highlights how Nabilā is questioning her existence in relation to the other, and *in* the other. The transition from happiness to guilt occurs when one at any point is prepared to put his/her entire life, *Dasein*, in question. *Barzakh* is the world that makes one question the meaning of life in relation to others. Happiness is based on knowledge and action that constantly reexamine and re-questions the origination and receptiveness of the spiritual heart. The questioning and examination of the heart also allows one to view each and every moment as uniquely meaningful (predominantly a Sūfī view).

The reexamination of the heart—the unfinished work of being and becoming—is not a strange phenomenon to an ethical subject; after all, humans engage with the world and act according to or against a set of principles critical to them and their communities. Nabilā sees her departure from Daraa as a failure of an obligation, a passiveness towards a belief. Kant states that whether one likes it or not, whether one plans to or not, he/she will inevitably treat fellow humans as mere means. In the mosque, Nabilā begins to see herself as an actor in relation to others. On a phenomenological level, Levinas speaks about how an individual always remains infinitely removed from having fully performed his/her obligation towards others. On a mundane level, Nabilā's departure from Daraa and interactions in the mosque create an existential awareness that articulates a retreat in her attempt to carry out her responsibilities toward the other. For Levinas, ethics is the understanding of an individual's continuous struggle with justifying the good (or what is right), where one's own being is called into question by the vulnerable other. The ethical subject is measured against and towards the vulnerable other.

Guilt is an awareness and coconsciousness of the self towards the outside world, the way the other affects the individual. Levinas's "immanent relationality" corresponds to that of responsibility and one's response to the "face." It is useful to think through Levinas's ethics of *Gelassenheit* ("passivity" or "calm," and "tranquility"—similar to *ataraxia*, key concept for the Stoics and Epicurus), the way "the other affects me," yet this "does not enslave but liberates, awakens, disillusions, purifies and elevates" (Visker 2000:248). Nabilā's tension between the material and spiritual worlds—her status in and out of *barzakh*—evokes moral sentiments in response to others. For Nabilā, guilt is a recognition of wrongdoing, but more importantly her inability to respond to the other. This incapability (or failure) to be responsible and attuned to the other brings a kind of trauma or hauntedness for Nabilā. At the same time, this form of inability toward the other reorients the subject to the other. Nabilā becomes aware of the suffering of the children in the mosque through her incapability to be responsible to them. Yet, this very incapability attunes her to their suffering.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas states that the other brings a kind of trauma and "paralysis" that heals (1969:145). He describes this experience as "bare skin," an openness without any interiority, leaving one completely open and empathic, "without possibility of holding anything within myself and thus without possibility of holding anything *for* myself" (Visker 2000:248; emphasis in the original). The openness towards others is similar to al-Ghazālī's view of the spiritual heart's attunement to the other. Sūfīs often use the analogy of "bare heart" while partaking in a trance-state journey towards the Beloved. The Sūfī seeks the Beloved through the other, a journey that nurtures the heart through its openness. Openness is a recognition of the other, not necessary the physical (form), but what Levinas calls the "force" or what al-Ghazāli articulates as action (*'aml*). Openness is a recognition of the bond that already

exists. Levinas elucidates responsibility "as bring[ing] to light a bond in which one is already held, and where there is still a demand to be answered" (1991:xiii).

Barzakh has a temporal quality similar to Levinas's explanation of synchrony and diachrony that maps the opposition between totality and infinity. Levinas views time beyond its "objectivity of public-science time or the subjectivity of internally experienced temporality" (Morgan 2015:212-13). Synchronicity reduces a phenomenon through a captured experience of the consciousness. On the other hand, diachrony puts forth a temporal understanding that is not reducible to representation (much like the betweenness of *barzakh*). Nabilā's responsibility towards others cannot be reduced to a linear timeline, even though her feelings are trigged by a specific set of circumstances. Nabilā's account yields an understanding of others as something that does not belong to the present. Levinas states that the other "is not merely another intentional object present before me, and the other qua other does not share my present moment" (Coe 2018:14). Thinking through diachronous time, Nabilā's account does not reduce her grandmother and Nūr to objects of knowledge, nor her responsibility to them as a freely chosen commitment. In *Ethics of the Infinite*, Levinas asserts that "time means that the other is forever beyond me, irreducible to the synchrony of the same. The temporality of the interhuman opens up the meaning of otherness and the otherness of meaning" (1984:57). In this sense, diachrony interrupts the complacency with which consciousness comprehends the world. It also disturbs the flow of the events and opens up horizons of possibilities that resist "representation or conceptual assimilation" (Coe 2018:14).

WITNESSING AN UNFOLDING TRAGEDY

By the second evening at the mosque, Nabilā had become good friends with Nūr. She still speaks about this fondly:

> After the prayer, I helped Nūr with lunch and we played in the mosque courtyard. I thought to myself that I was lucky to have a good friend. I also could not believe how happy Nūr was. She had so many problems and sadness but was happy to be playing.
>
> Nūr asked me to come inside the room she was sleeping in. She shared the same room with other girls. In a corner she had a suitecase. She opened it and showed me her toys. She also showed me a picture of her parents, which made both of us cry. We hugged each other and Nūr told me she doesn't have anyone that comes to visit her, and she feels so lucky to have me there.
>
> We were inside and then came out to play again. We played so much until we were both tired. It was getting dark and my mother called me, saying we will be leaving soon. It was again a really bad feeling. It was similar to what my mother said in Daraa before we left. I again told myself I did not want to leave. But I had promised *Aziz-jon* to be strong…I was thinking about *Aziz-jon* and then I said goodbye to Nūr. She wished me luck and we promised to write each other letters, and maybe one day even send emails. She said that she wished she could come with me and I told her, I wish I could stay with you. Then after a little while we got into the car and drove to Jordan. (interview on December 2018)

It took Salāh three days to get to the Zaatarī Refugee Camp. He said there were other anxious moments along the way, like at the Jordanian border crossing with so many questions that felt more like an interrogation than "a sympathetic welcome." He said once he arrived at the camp, and saw fellow Syrians in makeshift tents all he did was cry. Salāh spoke about their arrival and the experience of the Syrian uprising:

> When the Arab Spring started we recited a famous poem by Samir Kassir [a Lebanese-French professor of history (1960-2005)] in the streets: "When the Arab Spring blooms in Beirut, it announces the time of roses in Damascus." Getting to the camp, I had finally realized, maybe only then realized, the full gravity of the human tragedy that inflamed me, my family and my country. It was a sad return to reality, witnessing a tragedy that was different than the war but the same. (interview on December 2018)

Nabilā was reluctant to talk about her time in the Zaatarī Refugee Camp. She spoke only a few times about it, saying her time in the camp was "a horrible experience no kid should see."

Jackson writes that "stories of great hardship and sorrow often suggest that experiences which take us to the edge of what we can endure—and almost destroy us—are sometimes preludes to extraordinary transformation" (2013:100). While Nabilā considers her time in the camp as unpleasant, there is a deep wisdom that came with it:

> So many days I felt guilty about *Aziz-jon* and Nūr. I had no news. Only news from Syria was more bombs and killing. There was no way of finding out anything. I also thought about the children in the mosque and the children in the camp. So many things made me sad; we lived in a tent and my school was in a tent with a strange teacher who spoke little Arabic [a United Nations worker from Denmark]. I began to understand how difficult life is for some children and wanted to help. Many days I cried. Some children had no family, some had only one parent, and some an older brother or sister. My sad feeling never went away, but I helped some kids and parents in the camp. I also decided to work hard and learn English, because, that was the promise I made to myself for *Aziz-jon* and Nūr. (interview on December 2018)

If *barzakh* brings a sense of contemplation it also brings an openness to see the other, to attune to the face of the one who suffers. Learning English is what Nabilā saw as possible, an action to reorient herself as an ethical subject towards attaining happiness. Being open to the world, what Paul Ricoeur emphasizes as "ethics as action" (*praxis/pragma*) is where action and knowledge is predicated on what is possible and the subject's realization that what is possible is achievable (2004:42-46). The betweenness of *barzakh* creates the incapacity, a passiveness towards the other, but it also generates an influx and openness to the world. For Ricoeur, the self should not be viewed as "interiority in relation to self" but as "an opening onto the world" (1992:314). The openness to the world brings the understanding that being "fully alive means moving out into the world and making the world, in a sense, one's own" (Jackson 2013:101).

Nabilā's experience of the world is both a realization of her power to act and also her perceived sense of powerlessness. These accounts only come to life in relation to the other. Nabilā's lifeworld differs from a linear trajectory or a new lease on life. Instead it is what is

known as an "engaged surrender," a transcendent ideal "in which one's suffering is recognized and shared, and in which one has an active, self-determining role to play" (Rouse 2004:12). The lifeworld of a Syrian refugee child, like Nabilā, is a flux and uncertainty that situates her between the material and spiritual world. As it unsettles her as an ethical subject, it also opens her to novel understandings of the world and attunement to the other. She finds herself passive to the other and yet proactive in her lifeworld. In the other she attunes to engage and be responsible for, and in the other she finds a sense of self-determinacy. Nabilā (at the time nine years old), still has copies of a letter she was never able to mail to Nūr:

> I am learning English and working hard. I think I decided what I want to do when I grow up. I want to be an architect. Since you like flowers and plants and gardening, together we can design a playground for kids like the courtyard in the mosque. It would be a good idea for us to make a playground so children can play in our neighborhood.

Another letter, written later in Brooklyn reads:

> I can't believe that my grandmother is no longer around, no longer here for me to call her. All the troubles in Daraa make my grandmother a martyr. I believe in this and this will give me strength, which I did not know I had in me. Every time I think of her dying I want to collapse, but something keeps me going.

For Spinoza, life and death were not the absolute extremes of being and nothingness, since every life form "endeavors to persist in its own being" (1982:109-12). Spinoza's human struggle for being is at the center of the individual impulse towards happiness, a hope for a better life. This human struggle helps in understanding "the relation between being and belonging, since to be is also to yearn to be with others, to experience one's being as integrated with and integral to a wider field of being as integrated with and integral to a wider field of being" (Jackson 2013:6). This struggle of human life is about knowing that one's life can merge with the other and touches

the lives of others “as the overlapping worlds of nature, the cosmos, and the divine” (Jackson 2013:6).

Nabilā, during a visit to a playground in Brooklyn, told me: “Allāh creates happiness and also brings fear to those who have done bad.” She then recited from the Qur’ān:

> Whosoever works righteousness, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall give them new life, a good life, and We shall surely render unto them their reward in accordance with the best of that which they used to do. (*An-Nahl* [The Bees]; XVI, 97; trans., Nasr 2015:684)

I asked her how do we know when God brings fear to people? She said, “when we lose sight of the people that we love.” It was a reminder that the human struggle to give life meaning is worked through in relation to others. It also prompted me to remember a famous *hadīth* prevalent in most Islamic communities, where the prophet is cited as saying: “Verily God, The Glorious and majestic, by His wisdom and exaltedness created ease and comfort in contentment and certainty; and He created depression and fear in doubt and discontent” (Kabbani 2006:123).

CHAPTER THREE: A SOCCER BALL AND THE NEW TEAMMATES

This chapter is based on Amir's descriptions of his time in the Suruç Refugee Camp. Suruç is a tent camp, home to about 32,000 Syrian refugees, in Şanliurfa province in southeastern Turkey. Amir is an eleven-year-old boy from Kobanī, a city in the Aleppo Governorate, who now lives in Brooklyn. He is a Sunni Muslim of Kurdish background. The narratives presented in this chapter were documented during my visits with Amir at several locations including his apartment, while attending his after-school music classes, at the Arab American Association of New York, and a few times in the playground where I went to watch him play soccer. The interviews with Amir were all conducted in English, except for a particular Arabic phrase expressing his feelings of guilt.

This chapter examines how *barzakh* challenges Amir's responsibility towards the family he lost and in particular the ways in which he responds to his new friend and teammates during soccer practices and games. The in-between space is a site of ethical struggle against the set of moral principles and social roles to which Amir was accustomed. At the same time, *barzakh* allows for Amir's actions to take on great importance; comparable perhaps to Primo Levi's discussion in *The Truce* (1965) of the ways that trivial events can take on an out-sized significance to holocaust survivors. The ethical struggle of the self opens up a space for a world of imagination to take hold. Muslim philosophers refer to the intermediate world between material things and the spiritual as *barzakh* (barrier or isthmus), or the imaginal world (*al-'ālam al-mithal*). *Barzakh* is then a state of imagination that mediates between material things and pure immaterial phenomena.

I analyze how the imaginative space of the intermediary domain of *barzakh* becomes a place for Amir to be what Levinas calls "answerable" to his family and other children in the

camp. Imagination becomes a place to foster responsibility, as opposed to the limiting way the real world has to be, providing new ways of seeing oneself in relation to the other. In the second part of this chapter, I particularly draw on the writings of the Islamic philosopher, Ibn ‘Arabī’ (1165-1240) who distinguishes between imagination and reason as the two eyes of human perception in *barzakh*. He discusses how through the unveiling (*kashf*) of the heart an imaginal (not “imaginary”) awareness is formed in this in between space.

The Inflated Soccer Ball

One hot summer day, Amir invited me to play soccer with him and uncle, Atā, in a park near their home in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. I had first met Amir at the Arab American Association of New York in 2017, where I helped him with his homework. At the park, Amir enthusiastically showed me his skills. He told me how much he had enjoyed playing soccer with his friends in the Suruç Refugee Camp. Amir was energetic and happy playing the sport he loves. When we were finished playing, I was invited to their small one-bedroom apartment, just a short distance away from the playground. Amir has lived with Atā ever since they left their hometown of Kobanī located in the northern part of Syria. Our conversations that evening mainly centered on Amir’s enthusiasm for soccer and his desire to join an organized team. As we talked about different local soccer teams for Amir to join, he said:

> I’ve been playing real soccer since I was nine. When I left home [Kobanī] I took my soccer ball with me, which helped me get much better. My father bought the ball for me when I was little. I played with it all the time in the camp. I learned to dribble and pass, and so many other things…I loved it…I am so happy that I learned all these moves and now have good skills to play on a team…my uncle found my ball in our house after the bombing. I took it to the camp, and played with other kids there. I organized a team called The Boys Football Club, we even played against older kids with an adult referee. (Interview on August 2018)

Amir, then, showed me his soccer ball, deflated and sitting on the top shelf in the living room. It was obvious he had a deep connection to the ball. After I said goodbye to Amir, Atā walked me to the subway station and spoke about Amir and his connection to the ball:

> It was unbelievable that Amir survived the bombing. Each day, I thank Allāh that a member of my family is still with me. Amir is a gift. It was devastating; when a Syrian from Kobanī says it was *devastating* you can imagine how horrific it must have been. When I came home the next morning…the morning after the bombing, our house was totally demolished. I was with my friends the night before and had stayed at their house. When I got back home, the house was in ruins, smoke was still coming from under the remains. My neighbor came out and held me. I was speechless and really shaken by the scale of the devastation, I didn't know what to say. My neighbor told me they had pulled the bodies out and they were laying in his front yard. Then my neighbor said, Amir is sitting next to the bodies. All I remember was my neighbor saying that my nephew survived and taking me around to his yard. Amir was sitting there, looking frozen…next to the bodies. I'll never forget his face and that image of my family all lying next to one another. If the world would have seen what I saw—we were just one family of many families that this kind of thing happened to, you know—the world would have stopped all of it. It was the worst thing I could have ever imagined in all my life. Later my neighbor told me that people heard Amir's cries and helped pull him out from under the ruins. He was in shock, his face was still full of dust, it was gut-wrenching….he couldn't sleep for days and days. It was unbelievable…. Now he has the soccer ball, I guess we have the soccer ball and nothing else from our family. The soccer ball he showed you…so when I went back to the house, I found it in the yard. I'm not sure why but I grabbed it and brought it back to Amir. Maybe because nothing else survived. Maybe because that is all we had of them now. Maybe I just wanted to make him happy. When I gave the ball to Amir, he grabbed it, hugged it, and cried. He loves his ball, he never let it out of his sight; now it is a reminder of our family, it sits on the shelf for both of us to look at and remember them. (Interview on August 2018)

In September of 2014, Amir's home, on the Kurdish-held city of Kobanī, was bombed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Atā, now twenty-nine years of age, told me that there were four consecutive days and nights of bombing before their home was targeted. About two weeks after the burial of their family members, Atā decided to take Amir and head north to the Turkish Suruç Refugee Camp. Atā still regrets not being in Kobanī on the fortieth day of his family's death to commemorate their passing (a significant Muslim ritual). Amir had lost his parents and older sister during the bombing, adding to his grief was also the passing of his

grandparents (Atā's parents) who were killed in a bombing a year earlier. Atā said "there was absolutely nothing left and no reason to stay."

Amir was five years of age, when he arrived at the refugee camp. He told me "one night we walked from sunset to sunrise." It was dark and Amir could hear the guns and bombing in the distance. He arrived with dozens of other Syrian refugees, feeling confused and disoriented. Amir said "it was really hard because I lost my family and then came to the camp to live in a tent." Kobanī was under ISIL siege (September 2014 to January 2015) when Amir and Atā left their home. By September of 2014, ISIL militants had taken control of most of the Kobanī region, seizing more than one hundred Kurdish villages. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, in 2015 the Turkish Suruç Refugee Camps was home to 25,000 Kurdish refugees who fled Kobanī "when the fighting engulfed the area in September 2014" (Murray 2015). The camp has approximately 7,000 tents divided into fifteen neighborhoods with United Nations run schools, hospitals, supermarkets, television tents, playgrounds and prayer rooms.

Figure 3. Kobanī (bottom) and Turkish Suruç Refugee Camp (top) are marked by black arrows, and the redline is my estimated drawing of the route that Amir and Atā walked to get to the camp. (Provided by Google Map).

Atā like many residents of the camp, tried to find work to supplement the monthly vouchers given to each family by the Turkish authorities for food and hygiene items. Meanwhile, daily life for Amir was also a struggle, not just for survival in the camp but also reconciling with all the tragedies in his past. His family had all been practicing Sūfīs in Kobanī. In fact, Atā still listens to Sūfī music and talked to me about many of the spiritual rituals that were prevalent in his family and community. Some of the Sūfī beliefs were also evident in Amir's worldviews. He stressed that it is very important for him to practice being "a good Kurdish Sūfī since that would make his parents happy and would bring him closer to Allāh." Amir spoke about his two and half years in the Turkish Suruç Refugee Camp, "as a time of sadness, confusion, and also some happy moments." Playing soccer with his friends, he said, gave him delight even as he grieved for his parents. Amir said that while he often felt guilt, these feelings were momentarily washed away when he was playing soccer with his friends. During our next weekly visit, Amir said

> sometimes I did not feel like I was a good Sūfī person, like, I mean the way my parents practiced and prayed. They were close to Allāh. *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty] most times, but sometimes I was able to forget about it and feel good when I was playing soccer or coaching my friends. *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* but then I would feel good when I showed my friends how to juggle the ball. What made me happy was to coach my friend how to juggle the ball two times in a row, and then once he was able to do two in a row, I showed him how to do four times, which was really hard but he was able to do it. I was happy to teach him, because it is hard to learn. (Interview on October 2018)

Amir's statement illustrates that the reliance on divine providence is less about ultimately achieving well-being. His account focuses not on the future, but rather on a moment of spontaneity and creativity in spite of the feelings of guilty, that gives rise to an in-between space of reflection. His uses of the word "coaching" also implies the importance placed on mentorships and fostering of others. The Islamic ethics of happiness are the origin and initiator (much like Nabilā's lifeworld) of a perpetually unsettling oscillation between different modes of Amir's

experience of being-in-the-world. The in-between space, *barzakh*, is analogous to what psychologist Daniel Kahneman refers to as the opening, or a break, between a "remembering self" and an "experiencing self" (2011:408-9).

Amir's feelings of guilt are a way of remembering the self, as one who is not in proximity to Allāh, where happiness could be attained for a pious Sūfī. And yet, Amir finds himself still delight in recognition and acknowledgment from other children. Levinas states that responsibility "involves a recognition not of the form but of the force—vocative and imperative and not casual, informative or even indicative force—of the other, of alterity itself" (1991:xiii). Amir's soccer skills bring joy and agency to his lifeworld. In a way, he now finds himself responsible for his friend, a momentary substitution for the family members he lost. He becomes responsible to a different face, where recognizing the other is an act of "exposing, giving of one's very substance to another" (Levinas 1991:xiii). *Barzakh* challenges one's vulnerability in identifying, representing and recognizing the other. Jackson calls this "the indeterminate space *between* these ways in which we see ourselves defines a site of ethical struggle, for while a person may frame his or her story in terms of abstract moral principles or social roles, these do not necessarily determine his experience or explain her actions" (2013:198, emphasis in the original).

Why does a minor act of teaching a friend to juggle a soccer ball make Amir feel delight in light of all the tragedies he had faced? In *Moments of Reprieve*, Primo Levi discuss how in Auschwitz trivial actions or events could have significant meanings that made the difference between living and dying. These unpredictable and uncertain instances were "bizarre, marginal moments of reprieve" that could stand out as determinative and decisive (Levi 1986). Amir continues to talk about how he helped his friend learn to juggle:

> that day when I showed Alī how to juggle the ball, I found a friend who I was close with all the time. I think, I knew then, that I was able to coach the other kids with my skills.

> That made me feel good. But I also found a friend who was nice and had lost his mother in the war. I became close to my friend, Alī, he helped me organize our soccer practices so we could become better. We watched the soccer games together on television, and then practiced how teams like Madrid and Barcelona played football. By the way, all the kids were glad that I brought my soccer ball because the adults never let us use their balls. Since I had a ball we practiced whenever we liked. (Interview on October 2018)

Amir's initiative to create a team, or at least gather children in some organized form, speaks to Deleuze' view that "individuals are moving through different milieus, instead of just being effected by past events, or hidden histories" (1997:61). Biehl and Locke articulate this as a mode of becoming, and not merely being; becoming is the openness of "cartography" instead of a historical examination, an "oedipal archaeology" of the subject (2017:7). Becoming, for Amir, is to create something new in the midst of calamity.

The openness of *barzakh* also points to the importance of how Islamic ethics and Sūfīsm shape Amir's worldviews, however ethics cannot be reduced to a set of categories that individuals instinctively and repeatedly observe. Janet Bennett and Milton Bennett warn about reducing ethics to "a code to which one is obligated, a set of criteria to which one assents or subscribes" (2001:3). She also points out that ethics is amicable to the unexpectedness and uncertainties that undermines an individual's life. *Barzakh* is the space where Amir, for the most part, ponders the past. He said:

> A lot of times I thought about what happened [in Kobanī], and thought about how much I missed my family. Some days, I thought about them a lot and wondered why they were not with me. I began to pray regularly after I got to the camp regularly, I wanted to become closer to Allāh, to feel happier, but some days I felt very *al-dhanb* [guilty] about them not being with me. I wished I could do something so they could be there. Alī felt the same way, he told me about how much he cried for his mother. Together, we prayed and played soccer most days and *bi al-dhanb* [felt guilty]. (Interview on October 2018)

Amir switched back and forth between his feelings of guilt and the more pleasant world of soccer with Alī. He frequently recalled minor events that were full of happiness and a sense of

accomplishment for him. This was evident in one story he shared about forming a team with other children and involving the adults:

> Alī and I organized the other kids and we practiced as a team every day. We looked on YouTube for videos of skills and techniques we could learn or watched when there was a game on television. I asked Alī to be the goalkeeper. And then, after a couple of months of practicing, we played against other kids. For one game, we asked the adults to come and watch us. They were really busy so most of them did not come, but then I went and talked to Salām [a former semi-professional soccer player] to referee our game. At first, Salām did not take me seriously, so I asked him to come to one of our practices. He came and watched us then agreed to referee one of our games. We won that game by two goals! Some people came out to watch us play that day. We were so happy; everyone was happy after the game. I wanted that, because we played like a team. Specially, my friend, Alī, we practiced a lot to be good so we were happy. (Interview on October 2018)

Agency allows one to create a bond with the other, which gives meaning to things that are otherwise codified or demarcated. The Danish philosopher, Knud Ejler Løgstrup calls this the "sovereign expression of life" when minor experiences become a mode of redemption for humanity. Certainly, Amir's initiative to organize his team, setting up games against an opposition, and finding an adult referee are important personal achievements. His accomplishments are even more important in light of the dire situation of the camp yet small in comparison to his daily struggles and his tragic past. In human interactions power is negotiated and then held over one another. However, ethical demands also dictate that power be used to care for others. Løgstrup's relationship with the other construct "a religious proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth" to love your neighbor (1997:1) is beyond the scopes of this dissertation. But, his notion of the "sovereign expression of life" is helpful in understanding how individuals cultivate empathy and responsibility in relation to others.

The sovereignty to express agency is to contrast the deontological and teleological schools of ethics. For Amir, the ethical demands come from the fundamental condition that his life is entangled with that of others. The interdependency creates inescapable power relations and

a degree of self-exposure. One becomes aware of the other and in relation to the other builds trust, empathy and imagination. This interdependency is what Amir felt towards Alī (and Nabilā towards Nūr), as Levinas states, "I am responsible for the situation in which I find myself and for the existence in which I find myself" (1991:xiv).

Amir's responsiveness to Alī and his situation opens up a conflicting space where he organizes a soccer team and grieves his past. Below, I discuss how imagination factors into the lifeworld of Amir as a powerful intermediary, a source of existence, enabling him to remain in constant contact with the infinite possibilities and the other. I rely on Islamic philosophy to illustrate the transcendental and ontological dimensions of imagination to understand its human and divine level. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to examining the paradox of eternity (*qidam*) and newness (*hudūth*) of imagination in *barzakh*. This Islamic concept of imagination (*khayāl*) is further discussed in Part II (present lifeworlds of Syrian children) and Part III (a future of possibilities). A major distinction, as the dissertation progresses to Part II and Part III, is how the possibility and the imaginative power of the children to perceive their bond to the other is diminished. This is not to say that the children are less creative in their lifeworlds, but as time transpires the possibility of imagining a future of responsibility towards the other becomes limited and frozen. This transformation becomes evident linguistically; the narratives of the children shift from expressions of "guilt" (Chapter Four) to "committing a sin" (Chapter Seven). The resolving guilt into sin takes away spontaneity and imagination as the children's agency to care and be responsible for those they left behind becomes not only unattainable but unthinkable.

Imagining the In-betweenness

I draw on how Amir imagined a world of possibility through organizing a soccer team, while facing extreme hardship in the camp and constantly feeling guilty about his past. I explore how imagination (*khayāl*)—according to Islamic philosophy, a manifestation of the very existence—in the in-between space of the infinite and the absolute worlds becomes a place to foster creativity. I particularly focus on the imaginative space of the intermediary domain of *barzakh*. The Islamic philosopher, Ibn ʻArabī' states that "the heart has two eyes, reason and imagination, and the dominance of either distorts perception and awareness" (1989). He discusses the ontological implications of the three "worlds of imagination" vital to understanding *barzakh*. As discussed in the introduction, al-Ghazālī makes clear that the heart (*qalb*) is the locus of awareness and consciousness. For the two philosophers, the heart is "a perfect 'eye'" that consists of the rational faculty and the soul, forming the psychosomatic network in humans. Through the unveiling (*kashf*) of the heart an imaginal (not "imaginary") perception is created; this is an intellectual and imaginative endeavor to attain proximity to Allāh. Reason and imagination are central to Sūfī practices of *samā'* ("hearing"; musical ritual) and the believer's ability to achieve a trance state. Understanding imagination brings the discussion back to al-Ghazālī's view on happiness and the human's heart proximity to Allāh which is realized through the care for the other. It also points to a clear effort to move beyond a dualistic conception of the material and the spiritual worlds. *Barzakh* folds into a sphere of unity through imagination and human reasoning, since knowledge requires an examination and deliberation of subject matters. Ibn ʻArabī' is essential in conceptualizing imagination as "that which brings [the universe] together" (*al-qur'ān*) in Allāh, and human reason is the ability to "differentiates" (*al-furqān*) through acquired knowledge. Imagination perceives a unifying oneness in Allāh, and knowledge differentiates many-ness.

In the broadest sense of the term, Ibn ʻArabī' refers to the state of being as "Nondelimited Imagination" (*al-khayāl al-mutlaq*), consisting of the entire universe except for Allāh, because the cosmos is continent and evanescent. Islamic philosopher, William Chittick elaborates

> everything without exception is both God's face (*wajh*), revealing certain divine names, and God's veil (*hijāb*), concealing other names. Inasmuch as a thing exists, it can be nothing but that which is, the Real Being; inasmuch as it does not exist, it must be other than the Real. Each thing, in Ibn ʻArabī's most succinct expression, is He/not He (*huwa/lā huwa*)—Real/unreal, Being/nonexistence, Face/veil. "In reality, the 'other' is affirmed/not affirmed, He/not He" (Ibn ʻArabī, *al-Futūhāt*, 1989[1911] edition, 2:501.4).

Chittick's quotation, in philosophical terms, distinguishes the intelligible and the sensible worlds. This view foregrounds the in-betweenness to avoid the dichotomy of the material and spiritual worlds (or the mind/body divide). In other words, human "becoming wavers between spirit and body, light and darkness, wakefulness and sleep, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice" (Chittick 2007:3). This influx and transformation in, out and between these categories illustrate a more fluid processes of becoming in *barzakh*. Chittick continues this thought by stating "only because the soul dwells in an in-between realm can it choose to strive for transformation and realization" (Chittick 2007:5). As commonly observed in Sūfī practices an "imaginal reality" makes one "travel 'up' toward the luminosity of the spirit or 'down' toward the darkness of matter" (ibid.).

Ibn ʻArabī' often uses the term *barzakh* (barrier) as that which prevents the deceased soul from returning to the world (1989:100). He writes that *barzakh's* "location" is discussed in the Qur'ān as the place that separates sweet fresh water from the salty sea water (1989:25:53; 55:20). Ibn ʻArabī's aim is "to designate anything that simultaneously divides and brings together two things, without itself having two sides, like the "line" that separates sunlight and shade" (Chittick 2007:8). He develops this idea future by state

> The Real is sheer Light and the impossible is sheer darkness. Darkness never turns into Light, and Light never turns into darkness. The created realm is the *barzakh* between Light and darkness. In its essence it is qualified neither by darkness nor by Light, since it is the *barzakh* and the middle, having a property from each of its two sides. That is why He "appointed" for man "two eyes and guided him on the two highways" (Koran 90:8–10), for man exists between the two paths. Through one eye and one path he accepts Light and looks upon it in the measure of his preparedness. Through the other eye and the other path he looks upon darkness and turns toward it. (Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt*, 1989[1911] edition, 3:274.28)

Thus, the concept of imagination is based on the paradox of the eternity and newness of the world. Ibn 'Arabī' discusses three forms of being: a) "Absolute Being (*al-wujud al-mutlaq*) is the unrestricted existence of Allāh, what is necessary and self-existent (*wdjib al-wujud li-nafsihi*); b) the absolute non-being (*al-'adam al-mutlaq*) which is non-self-existent (*'adam li-nafsihi*); and c) a mediator or separator whereby these two are distinguished" (Akkach 1997:99).

Based on this division, Ibn 'Arabī' views the world to be three-fold: the higher (spiritual world of the "unseen"), the lower (the corporeal world, the senses and sensible forms of the world of the "seen") and the intermediary (*barzakh*). Moreover, he believes that it is through being in *barzakh* that "the delivery of the world from potentiality to act is effected, and the world becomes as it were, the child born from the fruitful marriage of Absolute Being and absolute non-Being" (Akkach 1997:101). Ibn 'Arabī' provides a form of agency of *barzakh* that is less evident in al-Ghazālī's writings. For Ibn 'Arabī', *barzakh* is the "world of imagination" *('ālam al-khayāl*), a place where the spiritual world of the "unseen" is incorporated into the corporeality of the "seen" world. On an ontological level, in which spirits manifest in sensible conditions, and "abstract meanings take on their bodily forms" (Akkach 1997:101).

The distinction of *barzakh* can be examined through how Amir becomes creative in that intermediary world, the borderline between Absolute Being and absolute non-being. A few days

after Salām (the former semi-professional player) refereed the organized game, Amir came up with a unique idea based on a dream he had:

> The game we first played was so nice, it made everyone happy, so I wanted to do something more important. I thought about what could be important for our team. I could not think of anything for a really long time. Then one night I had a dream. Usually my dreams were scary and they were about my family a lot but this dream was different. In this one they were alive and watching me play soccer. Then, in the dream, I looked around as I was playing and saw all the kids had their parents watching us. They were all happy and smiling. I felt happy in my dream so I kept playing hard and running fast.
>
> The next day when I woke up, *baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty], I really did so bad. I walked around with Alī and told him about my dream. Usually, I wanted to take care of him and make sure he was okay but this time I wanted to tell him about how I felt. As we were walking around, I thought of something and I told Alī, why don't we put the names of the people who have died on our backs, like professional teams for ours next game. We can also ask the other team to do it too. This way we can remember our families who are not with us at the game. (Interview on October 2018)

Amir decided to consult with his teammates about his idea. All the children agreed to put two names on the back of their t-shirts. Amir said,

> I wanted to remember my family and for the other kids to remember their families but not to be sad about it this time. But to remember, as the Qur'ān says, they are in heaven watching over us all the time. I wanted my parents and my sister to be there this time with me and I wanted to see their faces watching me. When I wrote my mother, my father and my sister's—I wrote three names instead of two that we were supposed to—names with a black marker on my t-shirt I felt they were there. I imagined a different world. It was peaceful and quiet. I imagined them being happy to see me play and see me do so well. I think Alī felt the same way. He told me that he cried for a bit but he wanted to do it like I did.
>
> Something else too, I felt closer to Allāh. I imagined being a little easier with myself and feeling less sad about what had happened. I knew I was going to *bi al-dhanb* [feel guilty] again, that was a way for me to remember and know what happened, but the names of my family helped me imagine them with me. Or I imagined playing in Heaven where they could watch me play. (Interview on October 2018)

The world of imagination mediates between what is real and what is a dream, untouchable and unreachable. Amir's description is perceivable, meaningful yet without any physical presence.

Crapanzano states *barzakh* affords one the “occasion to intimate another reality—other realities—to which…..one has at least partial access” (2004:59). The qualities of the isthmian world of imagination derives from “the intermediary function between the pure and the gross, the spiritual and the physical, the meaningful and the sensible” (Akkach 2007:102). Ibn ‘Arabī’ would state that the world of imagination is achieved when the existence of the duality is resolved, where “the pure is embodied and the body is purified” (Akkach 2007:102). Amir’s experience of the world of imagination brings meaning (the presence of his family) and form (having their names marked on the back of his t-shirt) together, where it generates a new understanding that at once unites and separates the two worlds.

As stated, Ibn ‘Arabī’ discusses *barzakh* as “the world of imagination” (1989, op. cit., III: 42; see Chittick, op. cit. :15-16), but he provides a hierarchical order of Absolute Being (spiritual world) and Absolute non-being (the corporeal levels of existence). He distinguishes three ontological levels of imagination: a) “Absolute Imagination” (*khayāl mutlaq*), a transcendental and unrestricted; b) “detached imagination” (*khayāl munfasil*), an all-encompassing imagination; and c) “attached imagination” (*khayāl muttasil*), an encompassed imagination (1989, op. cit., II, pp 309-13; also see Corbin, op. cit., 219-20). In *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Chittick separates these categories into cosmos (Absolute Imagination), macrocosm (detached imagination) and microcosm (attached imagination). In the cosmos level, “existence is identical with imagination,” the macrocosm is the “intermediate world between the spiritual and the corporeal is imaginal” and the microcosm is “where the human soul considered as a reality distinct from spirit and body pertains to imagination” (Ibn ‘Arabī’ 1989, op. cit., pp. 116-17). The relationships between these categories are not oppositional, but rather one is contained within the other. The cosmos is the core, detached imagination the middle layer, and attached imagination its outer layer.

The attached imagination is the human power to conceive of things abstract from their sensible bodies. Part II and Part III. discuss the Absolute Imagination and detached imagination in more detail. For the remainder of this section, I will examine how attached imagination operates within a human psychological framework. For Ibn 'Arabī' imagination is presenting an activity "which is absent or nonexistent" (Crapanzano 2004:64). He states that this activity "rests on the nonbeing of its object—the image—that we uncover those gaps, those disjunctive moments of nonbeing, that punctuate our social and cultural life" (Crapanzano 2004:64). The work of the world of imagination is to bring these quantities together not to, in the words of Crapanzano, "conceal those gaps" (2004:64).

For Amir, the world of imagination is less about the paradox Crapanzano discusses since what is "real" is of secondary concern. Imagination is a way of being attuned to the other, where "an imagination is *conjoined* to the imagining subject and inseparable from him" (Corbin, op. cit., p. 219). If this statement is considered from the Islamic philosophical viewpoint, then the human heart is in unity with the spiritual world (cosmos). The corporeal world becomes the externalization of the human substance and the human "heart" becomes the internalization of the realm of nature. The heart is always in a journey towards Allāh. Sūfīs believe "human beings are the whole universe are intimately intertwined, facing each other like two mirrors" (Chittick 2007:109). In the statement below, Amir clearly draws upon a type of "anthroponomic vision" to discuss his dream and the way it actually materialized during the game. He told me,

> I had learned from my father that we are part of Allāh. Actually, everything is part of Him. My father would say that we are a small part of Allāh and when we die, we go back to Him. He said that Allāh made us as his best creation [a reference to the Qur'ān where humans are said to be *ashraf-ul-makhluqat*, the noblest of all creatures], and we are connected to Him all the time. So, when I think of Allāh and when I dream of Allāh it is the same thing. It is the same as when I think or dream about my parents and sister; it doesn't matter if it's in my dreams or if it's real; it's all the same because Allāh makes it the same. It was hard for me at first, because before my parents and sister died I thought

> about dreams as different but now I think it is a real way for me to see them and speak to them. Sometimes, when I think about it, I am not sure if I was thinking about them or dreaming about them, but it doesn't matter because it is the same thing for me. (Interview on October 2018)

In the Islamic tradition the human heart is a microcosm (*al-'ālam al-saghír*) and the cosmos is *al-'ālam al-kabìr*. It should be noted that *al-kabìr* means "grand" and *al-saghír* translates to "minor," yet *al-'ālam* ("the universe") remains the same and the connecting part in both concepts. According to the Qur'ān: "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves till it becomes clear to them that it is the truth" (*Fussilat* [Expounded]; XLI, 53; trans., Nasr 2015:1170). This basic Sūfī understanding for Amir derives from the two most essential aspects of Islam that he was beginning to learn from his father and the other Sūfīs around him: imitation (*taqlìd*) leading to a realization (*taėqìq*). This idea originates from the doctrine of Oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd* or Unity of Existence), where no distinction is drawn between human beings and Allāh.

For Amir, that imagination—in dream or reality—was a way of connecting to the other he felt responsible towards. This also provided some meaning to life for Amir in the midst of real challenges in the camp. He said about his connection to his family,

> That game gave me a chance to think that my family was there with me watching me play. But really I knew that they are always with me; I cannot see them because they are in spirit watching over me. That game was really good because that was the only time I ever felt my family being there for the whole time. When I thought about them other times in the camp, my thoughts were short, but the match that day they were with me for the whole game. I talked to Alī after, and he had a similar feeling about his family. Also, some adults came and shook our hands and prayed for our families. The same night, the *Imam* at the mosque asked us to stand and everyone prayed for us. I felt like everyone was praying for my family. I felt so close to them.
>
> That night, when I was going to our tent with my uncle. I told him that I didn't want to use my soccer ball anymore. I want to save it so it stays with me forever, because it reminds me of my family and my good times with them. And then I told my uncle, *baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty]. It was the first time I told him, or anyone else. It was a little

> scary but he said he felt the same way and it was really hard for him to have lost all our family too. (Interview on October 2018)

The vividness of Amir's imagination clearly speaks about a reflexive and pre-reflexive consciousness. In the immediate it was the t-shirt and the soccer game, but more lasting is his consciousness towards the soccer ball, both opening room for creativity and deliberation for Amir on his past. Ibn 'Arabī' makes clear there is unity in the world of the imagination, what remains to be answered is how does Amir relate the t-shit or the soccer ball (or Nabilā's relation to the bullet holes in her front door as she was saying goodbye to her grandmother) to the other.

Amir's relation to the t-shirt and soccer ball is a way for his imagination to describe the world in terms of other. Imagining is "a necessary condition of acting from a moral point of view" (Reddiford 1981:75). A child like Amir is conventionally believed—since it is the early stage of his moral development—to live according to the moral dictates of others. To a large measure, the discussion on al-Ghazālī's happiness in Part I illustrates the moral dictates that Amir has been socialized to practice. *Barzakh* is a space that made Amir and Nabilā adhere to their moral principles but also diverge and reorient themselves according to the unique situations they encountered. Throughout their journeys, one thing remained the same, their attunement to the other. Amir's imagination allows this space for empathy towards the other. Certainly, any child imagines countless events, subjects and objects. Yet, imagining the other has a moral implication central to Amir's feeling of guilt. The ethical practice of happiness governs his conduct in his everyday life. A child is required to make "two imaginative moves, to consider the effects upon the lives of others of his so acting, and the consequences for all conceivable parties of others so acting" (Reddiford 1981:79). Imagination makes possible moral thought and action.

Since the concept of imagination recurs in later chapters of this dissertation, it is vital to highlight how it relates to the everyday life of Amir. A central question in Amir's imagination—directly relating to Levinas—is How *ought* I live? In other words, how does Amir make sense of his experiences in moral terms and how does it relate to the other? In this way moral imagination is helpful in better understanding the nuances of an individual's lifeworld. One possible explanation as to why moral imagination has been somewhat neglected is that many see it as a psychological undertaking rather than a deliberation of practical intelligence. John Dewey believes that thinking is imaginative, stating that "the imagination is as much a normal and integral part of human activity as is muscular movement" (1993:245). He stresses that imagination is an intimate way of seeing "the full scope of a situation" (1993:244). Thus, imagination is the extension of the world that Amir responds to and feels responsible for the other. Imagining the soccer ball allows Amir to put his present circumstances in relation to past events, where he finds meaning and ideal possibilities in the game, his friends (particularly Alī) and his family in Kobanī. Imagination, therefore, is "seeing, in terms of possibilities, …old things in new relations" (Dewey 1993:34).

Amir's relationship with the soccer ball is a way to give meaning to an atrocious incident that he is not otherwise capable of articulating or reconciling. His narratives can be divided into two categories: the creative side that life has meaning, regardless of the connection to Amir's parents, and the Arabic statements of guilt that is frozen in time (see Chapter Four). Imagination opens the door to new possibilities, but rather than moving one away from the past experiences it reorients one's view towards them. Dewey explains:

> [A]ll conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. ...Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings [derived from prior experiences] can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen,

> the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. (AE, LW 10:276; emphasis in the original)

Imagination is a way of seeing the other; Amir's attunement to Ali in finding means to foster empathy. Moral imagination leads to action, as it connects the past with the future. That is the reason for the shift in Amir's narratives from feelings of guilt to feelings of sadness for his family. Sadness, in his narratives allows for imagination and action (including the act of grieving), but feelings of guilt uttered in Arabic speaks to a static and unchangeable circumstance, where imagination and possibilities do not exist. Moreover, Dewey states that imagination is kindled in the search for a way to control or mitigate conditions. He states that "any imagination is a sign that impulse is impeded and is groping for utterance" (HNC, MW 14:113). Amir's imagination of the t-shirt concept for the soccer game soccer is a way for him to cope with the difficulties of a tragic event by seeking out alternatives and picturing himself (and other members of the soccer team) in the presence of his family. The work of moral imagination is an ongoing observation and question that takes place in the in-between space of *barzakh*. In *Moral Imagination*, Mark Johnson makes a similar argument saying that "the locus of our imaginative [is the space for] exploration of possibilities for action" (1993:35).

What is the distinction between real and imaginary? The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre helps clear the distinction between real and imaginary, where he states that consciousness is consciousness of something regardless of it being a dream or a perception of something (a phenomenological notion for Husserl borrowed from Brentano). In other words, an act of consciousness is an act towards something, otherwise the act would not materialize. Amir's perception of the soccer ball is based on his awareness to the actual and possible mental acts he directs towards it. Sartre's "perspectivism" is useful to think about as how Amir imagines the

soccer ball from a particular point of view and always foregrounded through that point of view. In *The Psychology of Imagination*, Sartre states that "the object appears only in a series of profiles, or projections" (2013 [1940]:9). For Amir, this profile is part of the history of his soccer ball and how certain events and memories (re)appear in his lifeworld in due time.

Sartre, however, would state that Amir's soccer ball exists independently, however, it is only seen "as presenting an aspect that both implies and excludes an infinite number of other points of view" (2013:91). Amir sees something that exists even when unseen; an object being the synthesis of all its appearances. Sartre is stating that objects constitute consciousness as opposed to Husserl who stresses that acts of consciousness constitutes intentional objects. This relates to Amir's imagination through the transcendent nature of his thought that is constitutive of the patterns of consciousness and therefore brings the physical and mental duality closer. Imagination is internal rather than physical or tangible. Imagination is a relation, not an object, a relationship between a subject to an object. This relation to the object for Amir is tied to the wellbeing of the other.

Significant in Amir's imagination is the asymmetrical tension between being and other. One late afternoon in November, when I visited with him and Atā, Amir spoke about his soccer ball in what Levinas would call "the sense of the unfinished, of intimation, which is intrinsic to the sense of moral bond" (1991:xxxiii). Amir said:

> When I decided not to use my soccer ball again in the camp, I wanted to protect it because it helped me to be connected to my family after that match so much. But sometimes I think when I was using the ball it helped me more than when I wasn't using it. When we were playing with my ball it helped me feel good, because *baḥis bi al-dhanb* [I felt guilty] so often. I would wonder if Allāh would ever forgive me. I thought about what if my parents thought I wasn't a good child? That is why I liked what we did for the soccer game; I think I saw my friends feeling *al-dhanb* [guilt] also. It was not just me, I think we all felt bad about our families. After that day, when I imagined my family or dreamt about them it was often scary images that bothered me. I would tell myself that I did something wrong; they are in pain because of me. (Interview on November 2018)

The asymmetrical tension lays between this uneasiness of fulfillment and discontent of the burden of responsibility towards the other. Moral imagination opens a space for Amir to answer to the other, to find satisfaction in being responsible and seeing himself in the other. Levinas states that "one is answerable before the other, for the other. One is thrown back upon itself in being called upon to answer in the place of another. These two movements, being thrown back upon oneself, being backed up against oneself, and being put in the place of another, are inseparable" (1991:xxxi). Imagining the soccer ball is a way for Amir to be answerable to his family through his actions for Alī and his other teammates.

The following chapter discusses how Nabilā and Amir's answerability for the other—outside the realm of the world of the imagination—becomes frozen in time. Why do they see the need to express their experiences of guilt in Arabic, and continually foreground this statement in their narratives? The concluding chapter in Part I examines Nabilā and Amir's statement *baḥis bi al-dhanb* ("I felt guilty") through psychologistic analysis. Chapter Four also relates to Chapter Seven as the statement of "I felt guilty" takes on a more pressing and vivid form of shame and wrongdoing, as the sedimentation of guilt changes the narratives of the children to "I have committed a sin."

Chapter 4. Language, Guilt and the Other

This chapter is based on a psycholinguistic examination of Nabilā and Amir's Arabic statement *baḥis bi al-dhanb* ("I felt guilty") evident in Chapters Two and Three. While this chapter provides additional ethnographic vignettes of Nabilā and Amir, it does not follow a chronological order as in previous chapters. From the outset it must be noted that English is the dominant language for Nabilā and Amir. However, from my early conversations with them I noticed that they expressed their feelings of "guilt" in Arabic: *baḥis bi al-dhanb*. Both have been educated entirely in English speaking schools (first, the United Nations run schools in the camps, and then New York City public schools). My initial thought about Nabilā and Amir speaking English—other than English being the dominant language—was that the use of a second language helped them to emotionally separate from the traumatic events of their past. Speaking English was a coping mechanism. In addition, my presence as a researcher was what Nabilā would call "doing social sciences." She said "doing social sciences" encouraged her to speak English since it was more "accurate." Nabilā continued, "English is less complicated and it is easier to talk scientifically about what happened." This statement made me wonder if "scientific" language lessens the pain of the past for Nabilā by separating emotion from language since she always had the option of speaking Arabic with me. One thing was certain, English shielded them emotionally from the gravity of certain Arabic words and phrases that could open up the wounds of their past lives. Once I asked Amir how he felt when speaking Arabic, he replied, "I've forgotten some words but if I want to talk in Arabic about my family, it would make me feel too sad." This emotional remoteness of bilinguals, known as the phenomenon "detachment effect" (Marcos 1976), is rooted in "a split between the intellectual process of speaking in a second language and the emotions" (Rozensky and Gomez 1983:153). An assumption can be made that

the underlaying intentions or meanings of Nabilā and Amir's accounts are the result of a complex set of self-discovery in relation to their lifeworlds and particularly the other. The use of Arabic to discuss guilt by Nabilā and Amir involved a two-step process; the utterance in Arabic was a representation and preservation of the experiences of guilt to shape their moral orientation, and through this understanding of guilt they questioned their responsibility to the other (see Bandler and Grinder 1975).

In Arabic, one would say, "I feel guilty" (*baḥis bi al-dhanb*) or less frequently "the guilt is one me" (*bashʿur bi al-dhanb*). In colloquial Arabic, one would use the word *dhanb* ("guilt") to describe a wrongdoing that he/she has committed with prior knowledge of it being wrong. *Dhanb* is not often used for "minor" incidents and events. The common understanding of "guilt" in Arabic centers on a major event or wrongdoing by one or many individuals. *Dhanb* is prominent in Arabic literature and poetry. *Dhanb* is frequently used in the Qur'ān to referred to heinous sins committed against Allāh. For example, the Qur'ān says: "'Our Lord, truly we believe, so forgive us our sins, and shield us from the punishment of the Fire,' the patient, the truthful, the devoutly obedient, those who spend, those who seek forgiveness ere dawn" (*Āl ʿImrān* [The House of Imrān]; *III, 16-17; trans., Nasr 2015:134). The Qur'ān makes clear that dhanb is punishable in the afterlife. In fact, dhanb is mentioned thirty-seven times in the Qur'ān (*Siddiqui 2008*).*

The intent by Nabilā and Amir to use an Arabic phrase is to define oneself and one's place in the world. Through the use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb*, three questions become imperative in Nabilā and Amir's narratives: a) What kind of person am I? b) What kind of person do I intend to become? and c) How could I reach out to the other? Drawing on Levinas helps the understanding of why their use of an Arabic phrase freezes the linear understanding of

temporality as something that is unyielding to new possibilities. The past tense of *baḥis* ("felt") is a way of remembering how the other always remains unattainable; it declares that the bond to the other is forever broken. Levinas states that "responsibility is a bond between my present and what came to pass before it. In it is effected a passive synthesis of time that precedes the time put together by retentions and pretentions" (1991:xiv). Levinas's temporal treatment requires a form of synthesis of actions and the resulting consequences that Nabilā and Amir's use of the Arabic phrase lacks. Their utterance of guilt is a form of answerability to the self and the other that is fixed and even mystified in a past history. Levinas alternates the notion of guilt, answerability and responsibility while preserving "its basic expression of asymmetry and nonreciprocity" (Toumayan 2004:56).

Recalling Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that an utterance or phrase is characterized by its "addressivity" and "answerability" (1981:284) can aid in thinking about Nabilā and Amir's utterance of guilt. A remark is always addressed to an audience, as it anticipates some form(s) of response from its recipient(s). It would also mean the utterance requests a conscious and subconscious response from the speaker. *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* stimulates a kind of "addressivity" that demands a particular emotional and unquestioning "answerability" from its audience and a reaction from the speaker. The relationship between the "addressivity" and "answerability" of a phrase is based on historical contingencies inseparable from the Syrian's political past, social institutions, cultural understandings and economic circumstances. It is also dependent on the ethics of happiness. The utterance of guilt serves to remind the speaker and audience of what "pious" deeds or "devotional" conduct ought to be; the question that has been so central reappears: how do I *ought* to live? What makes Arabic discursivity differ from other forms of English utterances in Nabilā and Amir's narratives, however, is the manner in

which they anticipate and require to respond; "answerability" conforms to an expected form of practice following preconceived and consistent ways of reacting. In this way, the static-ness of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* describes the unattainability to reach out and create a bond with the other. Levinas speaks about "an infinity that opens in responsibility, not as a given immensity of its horizons, but as the process by which its bonds do not cease to extend—an infinition of infinity" (1991:xiv). *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* provides a window into an unsuccessful attempt of prolonging a bond that, for Nabilā and Amir, should have never ceased.

This form of "addressivity," is a mode of discourse that demands acceptance, as it is perceived to be hierarchically elevated and historically and ethically validated since it derives its mandate from Islam and Sūfīsm. In other words, *baḥis bi al-dhanb* has an effect on the self and the audiences due to its authority. Bakhtin states that,

> The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a prior discourse. (1981:342; emphasis added)

The utilization of the Arabic phrase, for Nabilā and Amir, as the ultimate "truth" is not based on provisional agreement by the listener. Rather, such utterances require complete obedience from the self and the listener. It leaves no room for contemplation or reason. The acceptance of such narratives is an act of "devotion" and accepting the cultural, religious and historical specificity engrained in Nabilā and Amir's social consciousness. Bakhtin states that in these instances "words become anonymous and are assimilated (in reworked form, of course); consciousness is *monologized*. Primary dialogic relations to others' words are also obliterated…" (1986:163; emphasis in the original).

While *baḥis bi al-dhanb* is interwoven with political and social mandates, the use of this remark allows individuals to remain in a position of control over their accounts and the emotions. Control of emotion does not have to result in contentment, it can aim to sustain other feelings, such as guilt, distress and remorse. Bakhtin explains that,

> Authoritative discourse may organize around itself great masses of other types of discourse (which interpret it, praise it, apply it in various ways), but the authoritative discourse itself does not merge with these.... it remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert; it demands, so to speak, not only quotation marks but a demarcation even more magisterial, a special script, for instance… (1981:343)

The linear causal narrative of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* gives legitimacy to Nabilā and Amir's experiences of guilt as they gain a higher degree of "validity" as genuine actors who have done something wrong, projecting ultimate "truth" in what is being recounted by them. *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* also speaks to certain acts and delineates certain moral stances. Bakhtin explains that this use of language represents "not a free appropriation and assimilation of the word itself that authoritative discourse seeks to elicit from us; rather, it demands our unconditional allegiance" (1981:343).

Nabilā and Amir's use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* can be viewed as a "social cement," (Turner 1991), as it provides the means for them to see themselves within the larger horizon of meaning, the "ontic logos" (Taylor 1989) that prescribes what the "just" and "pious" way to live *ought* to be. This mode of thinking, grounded in the Islamic ethics of happiness, separates itself from the in-between space that opens up imagination and spontaneity. Moral codes have the means to "provide people with the 'whys' of their lives (in Nietzschean fashion: 'if we possess a *why* of life, we can put up with almost any *how*')" (Brinkmann 2014:9). The incorporation of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* favors linear causal narrative structure, a temporal order oriented toward unitability of the other. As such, it

encompasses a moral stance. In Part II, these imaginary spaces become less evident in the Syrian children's accounts, prompting them to speak about their "broken" bond to the other as a sin (*ghallatit*). The experience of guilt still leaves room to question and imagine ways of reaching out to the other (Amir's idea of organizing a soccer team), but committing sin closes any form of relationship to the other.

NARRATING GUILT

Psychologist Jerome Bruner states that "narrative is a recounting of human plans gone off the track, expectations gone awry" (2002:31). Nabilā and Amir's accounts are an example of what Elinor Ochs explains as "the activity of narrating unforeseen, problematic life events raises awareness of expectations and provides a social modality for coping with such experiences" (2004:271). *Barzakh* allows them to construct a specific and consistent logic of sequence (for example, Nabilā's friendship with Nūr). Ochs refers to this form of narrative as demonstrating "competence to present a certain, consistent logic of events" (2004:271). According to Ochs, this type of account "involves the ability to articulate a temporal sequence of events; situate the events; compose a coherent plot line with a beginning, middle, and end; and maintain a moral perspective" (2004:280). Nabilā and Amir's narratives also present a "consistent logic of experience," and other instances where their accounts "dispute the meaning or accuracy of a recounted logic of experience" (2004:276).

It is evident that Nabilā and Amir's narratives are constructed in relation to one another; they are an attempt to reach out to and find meaning in the vulnerable other. Linda Garro and Cheryl Mattingly discuss narratives as the "mediated emergent construction of reality," where they are "open to alternative readings" (2000:3). The "co-constructed" narrative arises "through

the push and pull between a telling of a story world and the world where the story is told" (Garro and Mattingly 2000:2). If the stories are told in a world of flux, where suffering and agency are the two sides of the existential dialectic, the accounts are based on empathy for the other and also being haunted by the other. Nabilā said that

> Nūr made me realize what I had and also what I missed the most. She made me happy and made me sad at the same time…it is hard to explain, I thought about it so much. I felt I needed to help her and be her friend because she needed someone in her life; she really needed me to be there for her. But after when I left and the more and more I waited for her letters to come I found out I needed her as my friend also. (Interview on October 2018)

Revisiting Arendt's "existential dialectic" in the introduction to Part I, and as Garro and Mattingly state above, Nabilā's narrative speaks both to the suffering and agency of the self. The relation to the other is asymmetrical and distorted. Yet, *barzakh* creates moments of clarity in a symmetrical relation to the other. Nabilā continued:

> One of the games Nūr and I played in the mosque courtyard was hopscotch. I love that game and we had so much fun. We decided to change it a little and make it more difficult. We asked the other girls to come out so we could play longer. We used a flat stone to kick to the next square as we hopped. That makes a lot more difficult. Even if some of the girls' foot landed on the lines, we were ok and no one lost a turn. When we were finished, we held hands and sang the famous *Leh Jani* by Omar Souleyman [Syrain singer]. (Interview on October 2018)

These moments of symmetrical relationship to the other, are uttered more in a forward motion, as if linear time is flowing with ease. However, *baḥis bi al-dhanb* has the opposite effect, it pauses the flow of time through its asymmetrical relation with the other. The stoppage in time makes the other unattainable; the self is never able to reach out to the other.

The existential dialectic of Nabilā and Amir's accounts are emblematic of an uncertain outside world woven together with the question of what it means to live a good life, where their stories are based on a moral conviction but presented through lively accounts of the present, and

intended for an uncertain future. Narratives are stories that connect participants (for example, Nabilā and Nūr) through commonality and lived experiences. In this manner, narratives develop "on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects" (Capps and Ochs 2001:3), connecting individuals into a collective understanding. Collectivity in storytelling involves situations in which interlocutors are not isolated actors; the stories take a turn for the "real" when there is concrete and factual interaction between the "co-authors" (Capps and Ochs 2001). In other words, all those around Nabilā (Nūr, Salāh and her grandmother) become co-authors in her narratives. Meanwhile, Nabilā's narrative is only a fragment of her experience, as "narratives are apprehended by *partial selves*" (Capps and Ochs 1996:22; emphasis in the original).

The use of Arabic by Nabilā and Amir also makes a declaration about their personhood. Their utterance of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* makes them the sole actors. It is a way of feeling guilty and directing the burden of responsibility towards themselves. Capps and Ochs state that, "the notion of a narrative of personal experience implies that a person has his or her own experience, that selves are ultimately discrete entities" (1996:29). The existential dialectic of suffering and agency used by Nabilā and Amir highlights how guilt is an inseparable part of their existence. Physiologist Svend Brinkmann asserts that "an existential language of suffering sees various human problems as an inescapable part of our existence" (2014:9). Taking the Islamic account of this struggle of guilt it becomes evident that the self has no or limited agency to act. During a late winter afternoon Amir explained,

> When I was in the camp the *al-dhanb* [guilt] was really hard for me. But, I knew that my feelings and my future are in the hands of Allāh. All I can do and I need to do is to pray and become closer to Him and be kind to people around me. I knew that my *al-dhanb*, cannot be eased unless Allāh decides to help me along this difficult road. What can I do, it was the same as the war, we had to pray that Allāh would one day want it to go away. That was our *taghdir* [fate] and our life. My uncle always says it…it was our destiny to go through so much and be here now (Interview on December 2018)

Words such as "fate" (*taghdir*) speak about a present and also a future shrouded in uncontrollability, which can only be determined by the will of Allah. *Taghdir* has a religious connotation; according to Islamic values, fate is not in the hands of humans but what is in an individual's control are "righteous" deeds (Wansbrough 1977). To a large extent, "*taghdir*" is used in the everyday speeches in the wider Middle East in coming to terms with death or severe illnesses. In *Sickness unto Death* (1849), the Danish philosopher Søren *Kierkegaard* writes about illness not in medical terms but rather as an "existential" language. He is concerned with "an aspect of human existence, which is related to finitude, and to our confrontation with our own mortality" (Brinkmann 2014:10). *Taghdir* carries similar understanding for Amir, where guilt is viewed as part of the finitude and mortality of humans.

In Syria, verses from the Quran are often used to remind children about mortality and the transient nature of this world. Nabilā was familiar with the word "*fanie*" ("emptiness" or "nothingness"), used to describe worldly aspirations. In the context of guilt, words such as "*fanie*" or "*taghdir*" imply that mundane and earthly suffering is first and foremost decided by anyone but Allah. It also indicates that human beings have little agency to work through their suffering or guilt. These words also indicate that a "pious" Muslim's suffering is always rewarded in the Eternal and is something that must be endured (discussed earlier in relation to the ethics of happiness). In a way, "*taghdir*" is the struggle with one's own heart (inner tendencies toward self-centeredness). "Heart" is the locus of desire that must be carefully held in check (see introduction to Part I). *Taghdir* confronts the heart; the work of suffering is to sustain human fallacy by enduring the pain for greater deeds. Al-Ghazzālī writes:

> The first meaning of heart is the broad one: the human being's ability to become angry or lustful, according to that which will be explained. This usage of the word heart is the most common among the Sūfīs, because by the heart, they mean the broadest characterization of evil human characteristics. They say: 'there is no escaping the *jihad*

> *al-nafs*… and this is the explanation of the Prophet's statement (peace be upon him): "wage war against the enemy of your heart, which resides within you" –*Ihya 'ulum al-din* 3:59 (Renard 1988:12)

Jihad is the struggle to oppose desire and self-indulgence. A common concept that highlights the commitment to enduring hardship for the sake of others is "*al-mujahid*" (the one who struggles for the sake of Allah). While "*al-mujahid*" has taken a geopolitical meaning in the contemporary world, its original meaning is based on the dawn of Islam (Renard 1988). The term "*al-mujahid*" dates back to the beginning of Islam, when each believer was required to be attuned to and attend to the needs of the *umma* (community) (ibid.). *Jihad al-nafs*, then, becomes the struggle to take the "right" path to constantly do good deeds for the community, rather than indulging in the self-satisfaction of earthly temptations.

SOCIALIZATION INTO GUILT

Language socialization is founded on the premise that "language is a fundamental medium in children's development of social and cultural knowledge and sensibilities" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011:1). In this manner, expressing "guilt" must encompass a use of language and linguistic structure that are culturally informed. Linguistic resources are employed in a given communicative setting, and the grammatical structures are the outcome of particular uses of those resources. Acquiring competence in a language requires socialization into the categories and norms of the culture, a culture that simultaneously provides the norms of language use.

Nabilā's understanding of guilt is rooted in an event that took place early in her childhood. She spoke about the time her father Salāh was arrested:

> When my father was in jail *Aziz-jon* [her grandmother] told me we should pray because his fate is only in the hands of Allāh. *Aziz-jon* also kept saying she felt *al-dhanb* for what has happened to my father. For a while, I just knew *al-dhanb* to be a bad thing but didn't

really know much about it. Then one day I asked *Aziz-jon* what she meant when she said *al-dhanb*. She said when you can't help your son and he is taken away, a mother feels helpless and sad. I can only hope that Allāh has mercy on us so we can have him back. I hope that we could have him back, *Aziz-jon* said, so we can all be happy (Interview on October 2018)

Language embodies certain cultural norms and meanings that inform specific socialization practices that impact the acquisition of particular grammatical usages by a child (Ochs and Schieffelin 1995). Children acquire not only the semantic content of linguistic form, but are also socialized into sensitivity to indexical meaning, stance, feeling, knowledge and social identity (Silverstein 1976; Ochs 1990; 1996). The emotional elements in Nabilā's narrative certainly have been carried over from her grandmother's burden of responsibility to her son, Nabilā's father. The emotional components of guilt were first constructed for Nabilā by her grandmother. Over time, Nabilā revisited and reshaped these narratives until her father was released from jail. After having to leave her grandmother, this rupture forced her to revisit her grandmother's understanding of guilt. At that point she perceives the bond to her grandmother to be irreparable, which eventually leads to her speaking about her feelings of guilt using Arabic words with a certain gravity and intensity. In other words, she is now maintaining the indexical meaning and stance that she was socialized into through her grandmother. *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* is a way of resisting other possibilities and referring back to the original understanding of guilt.

Responding to Guilt

Nabilā and Amir's use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* asserts a level of "intentional continuum" (Duranti 2015:238). Their choice to express their feelings of guilt in Arabic was rooted in their intention to highlight the relevance of their emotion. It was a "turning towards" (Husserl 1970:55) a relationship between consciousness and the world, where according to Alessandro

Duranti this “intentionality corresponds to the awakening of an interest in something, may become colored by positive or negative affect or be further subjected to aesthetic or ethical evaluations” (2015:238). The evaluation and sensation of feelings—guilt in this example—has a certain intent in Arabic. This form of “modification” (Duranti 2015) prolongs the initial feelings of guilt Nabilā and Amir experienced as they began their journeys; as they would say, when they abandoned their families. The use of the Arabic phrase *baḥis bi al-dhanb* is an intentional way for Nabilā and Amir to resist the transformation of the self into something else. In this way, their feelings of guilt are maintained with ethical deliberation that is unwavering and unchangeable. For Nabilā and Amir, speaking English is a way of distancing from their past, code switching to Arabic is the reminder of the other left in the past. It is a way of foregrounding the broken bond with the other.

Based on this notion, concepts like *baḥis bi al-dhanb* are not an object of representation but a stance or a worldview. Heidegger would assert that to “name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action possibilities” (Deetz 1992:46). Guilt then becomes an action to achieve a stance, where it is understood as a disregard of the other. Words do not “elicit images and emotions at the very root, though they may also do this; rather, language is an ongoing aspect of becoming aware in a particular way” (ibid.). In short, “language is not an invented tool of man nor is man a symbol-using animal, but rather man and language co-act” (Deetz 1992:47).

In *Linguistic Semantics*, the linguist John Lynos categorizes “linguistic meaning” based on “descriptive meaning” (e.g., propositional or denotative), “social meaning” (e.g., gender, class, or ethnicity), and “expressive meaning” (the affective power of

words) (1995:294). There are various models that map out the referential, social and affective meanings in language (i.e., Sapir, Ullman, or Firth). However, the relationship between emotion and linguistic signs is not a unidirectional mapping (Grillo et al. 1987; Irvine 1989). The question is, how does the use of *baḥis bi al-dhanb* evokes feelings of guilt in relation to what is considered as the "language of emotion." What is the relationship between language socialization and the socialization of emotion? Emotions correspond to and evoke a person's feelings, based on cultural and interpretative symbolism and other collective perspectives. For instance, Clifford Geertz speaks of emotions as "cultural artefacts in man" (1973:81). Emotions arise through a mutual cultural production of knowledge based on complex and integrated modes of practice, symbols and conventions. Michelle Rosaldo speaks of emotions as "culturally patterned and infused with feelings, which themselves reflect a culturally ordered past" (1984:137).

Language socialization is the process where novices (including, but not limited to, children) are "socialized to and through the use of language" (Ochs and Schieffelin 1986:163; see also Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Ochs and Taylor 2001). Ochs and Schieffelin have discussed "language and affect" (1989). They state that, "from the child's point of view, expressive and referential functions of language are acquired in an integrated fashion, of a piece" (Ochs and Schieffelin 1989:11). For example, when Nabilā or Amir learned to utter *baḥis bi al-dhanb*, they also learned the full meaning and significance of guilt while acquiring the emotional aspects and feelings that are involved when the word "guilt" is uttered. Amir elaborated on this topic when I asked him what guilt meant to him:

> *al-dhanb* is something you can't change. My father used to say it is a feeling someone has when they didn't do what they were supposed to. It is hard to explain

> it, but I felt it when I heard my father say it. Sometimes some feelings mean different things somewhere else. My friends here use the same word sometimes but when Alī and I talked about it [in the refugee camp] it broke our hearts. You can't use *al-dhanb* for small things, it is for something big and something you can't change no more. (Interview on December 2018)

For Amir, "guilt" is not only a reference to a single act of remorse or blame, but a socio-cultural and ethical understanding of wrongdoing that arises from the melancholia and sorrow of others like his friend Alī. Moreover, "social referencing" (Campos and Sternberg 1981), the "seek[ing] out [of] affective information from one another's language" (Ochs 1989:9) illustrates that children have the "ability to use others' affective cues for guiding their own exploratory behaviors toward novel objects or events" (Flom and Bahrick 2007:250). Wilce states that the focus is "the kind of affect that a type of text or utterance evokes, and the extent to which such sign arrays are meta-pragmatically recognized and regimented" (2009:57). Thinking along Wilce one could say that guilt is a meta-pragmatic recognition for Amir that evokes a unique emotional understanding of wrongdoing for him.

How does a meta-pragmatic understanding of guilt come to Nabilā and Amir's attention? Heidegger explains that the "world" is not simply the environment that surrounds one, but rather a function of the subjects' interactions within it. For Heidegger, "Being-with" refers to how the self is defined through its relation to the social world and other subjects within it. *"Dasein"* is distinguished from an object; *Dasein's* "essence is grounded in its existence" (Heidegger 1962:152). An object's essence is given prior to its existence. Heidegger states that, "*Dasein* is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine" (1962:150). In this manner, my "Being" is distinguished from the objective presence of things conceived of as "present-at-hand," and without the

concern that humans have about their own existence. If the essence of *Dasein* is founded on its very existence, and it continuously lives out possibilities through Being-with others, then on one level *Dasein* is temporal and indicative of the future possibilities.

Meanwhile, if Being-with, for *Dasein*, is essentially "for-the-sake-of" Others (Heidegger 1962:160), *Dasein* also speaks to the limitation of possibilities. It carries with it the phenomenon of the past, so Being finds itself limited by social practices, historical conditions, or the material world. Heidegger explains that if "Being-with" is an existential constituent of "Being-in-the-world," then there must be a sense of "now" (an element of the present) that Being experiences. He states, "so far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being" (1962:163). *Dasein* is grounded in its existence. Moreover, *Dasein* in the "world" is attentive to those "entities" highlighted by "concern" with the environment (Heidegger 1962:95). *Dasein* is a continuum of the past into the future of possibilities. It carries itself as a historical Being tangled in a web with its historical specificity. The limitation of possibilities creates for Nabilā and Amir a certain model of the lifeworld based on the history and socio-cultural implications of the camp, and their current lives in Brooklyn.

FINDING MEANINGS IN GUILT

In the final section, I explore how the understanding of *al-dhanb* has a different intensity and weight for Nabilā and Amir, compared to the everyday usage of "guilt" for their non-Arabic speaking friends in Brooklyn. Amir elaborated on this point,

> Sometimes my American friends say they felt guilty because of something so small. Like, I know this boy who says he felt guilty he wasn't able to go to his friend's birthday party. I think to myself that is not the same thing at all with what happens in Syria. I just don't use *al-dhanb* to talk about a birthday party. It is

> about something bigger than myself, greater than something I can change. (Interview on December 2018)

It is clear that Amir is fully aware of the word "guilt" and its usage in English. However, he intentionally decides to use *al-dhanb* to capture its proper meaning for him. Amir's distinguishing between *al-dhanb* and "guilt" centers on the development of an active and passive vocabulary, one in his native language and the other in English. Linguists have discussed the difference between vocabulary size (breadth) rather than the depth of the words. This makes a distinction between receptive (passive) knowledge and the core meaning of a word. While English is the dominant language for Amir, *al-dhanb* has a specific learned meaning for him that is woven into a socio-cultural and religious context. *Al-dhanb* has multiple representations for Nabilā and Amir that guilt cannot convey. The depth of a word requires one to have a solid understanding of the phonology, morphology, the range of syntactic construction, semantic representation, etymology, *and* the pragmatics of how it is used.

Amir noticed the pragmatics of "guilt" by his friend in Brooklyn differs from his idea of this moral experience. Words are given meanings and significance by the socio-linguistic components that are based on the priorities and the needs of a society. It is expected that the normative understanding of guilt differs from a region devastated by a civil war as opposed to a quiet neighborhood in Bay Ridge. The geopolitical factor cannot be neglected in what an individual's utterances prioritize and deem important.

The gravity and meaning of an *al-dhanb* cannot be neglected for Nabilā and Amir. There are a considerable number of writings on how the first language is the bilingual speakers' choice of expressing emotion (Javier, Barros and Muñoz 1993). An evident

example of that is praying, where proficiency in emotional expression is more important than the acquisition in the dominant language (Anooshian and Hertel 1994). In other words, "the first language is the language of emotional expressiveness, the second language may be the language of emotional distance" (Ayçiçegi and Harris 2010:978). This statement would imply that bilingual speakers find it easier to discuss emotional issues in their second language. Studies of code-switching address how the use of a second language can serve as "a distancing function" (Javier and Marcos 1989). Anooshian and Hertel articulate that "emotional words" in a second language lack the gravity and expressive connotation which enhance recall (1994). A conclusion can be drawn that if words enhance the "effect of emotion" in a specific language, then those words may represent different meanings and moral stances (Kolers and Roediger 1984).

Nabilā and Amir's differentiation between *al-dhanb* and "guilt" is an intentional separation between "emotional words" and "natural words." For them guilt draws on an American understanding that according to Nabilā is

> About the everyday life…like when someone says go to your room, or do your homework, and it is not about someone who is dear but not with you. I think when you say guilt, it does not have a real memory with it and it's about that moment and doing something, like when my teacher or parents tell me. (Interview on November 2018)

Nabilā is stating that emotional words like *al-dhanb* have certain cultural and moral implications, she is also addressing the fact that they are related to the individual's memory and unique relation to other. While, *al-dhanb* has a certain overarching and universal understanding and emotional effect in Arabic, it is nevertheless exposed to individual subjectivity and past life. It is vital is to point out how certain emotional words take hold of the lifeworld of Syrian refugee children and take on significance. Nabilā and

Amir share a specific meaning of emotional words like *al-dhanb*, and through its meanings their lifeworlds are formed a particular way.

The use of *al-dhanb* is a prolonging what is now, in the view of Nabilā and Amir, the broken bond to the other. It is also a persistence in an answerability to the other through asymmetrical relation. By uttering *al-dhanb*, Nabilā is attempting to put herself in her grandmother's situation when her father was arrested; it is a form of responsibility to the other. For Levinas, substitution *is* the ethical itself; "responsibility is putting oneself in the place of another" (1991:xxiii). The use of Arabic words creates an interchangeability that English words are incapable of doing. This form of "substituting oneself for another" is a sensational component of Levinas discussion on guilt (1991). He states

> Through becoming interchangeable with anyone, I take on the weight and consistent of one that bears the burden of being, of alien being and of the world. I become substantial and a subject, subjected to the world and to the others. And because in this putting myself in the place of another I am imperiously summoned, single out, through it I accede to singularity. (1991:xxiii).

Baḥis bi al-dhanb is a way of expressing what Levinas writes about Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, that "each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the other" (1991:146). This Arabic statement becomes a way internalizing guilt, a way for the self to be haunted by its immanent relation to the other. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1991), Levinas uses the term "*intériorité*" (mostly translated as "inwardness") to explain responsibility as an "*immanent* relationality" rather than "'my' response to the face, understood as exteriority" (Bettina: 2019, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). *Baḥis bi al-dhanb* is to maintain and prolong the responsibility to the face that has physically disappeared in Nabilā and Amir's lifeworld.

Final Remark on the Past

Part I began with Arendt's "existential dialectic," where she turns to the implications of disunity of being for humans as moral and political actors. This push and pull between social forces and human agency is what, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt calls the "doer of deeds and a speaker of words" (1958:176). The previous chapters illustrate how Nabilā and Amir's lifeworlds—preconditioned by Islamic ethics—are subjected to a set of determined and (perhaps untenable) practices in midst of carnage while being responsible to the other. Yet, as Arendt reminds the reader, individuals are creatures of freedom and imagination, as they determine their actions in relation to their views, subjects and objects they encounter. Through the push and pulls, Nabilā and Amir moved among and in relation to other actors, not merely as "doer" but also at once as "sufferer." The paradoxical world of *barzakh* urges them to yield to moral obligations and the emotional burden of the other. At the same time, it allowed them the possibility to imagine a world where the burden of responsibility for the other is attainable.

The primary objective of Part I is to illustrate the burden of responsibility and the moral experience of guilt that Nabilā and Amir faced. Part III is an in-depth discussion of how these moral feelings transformed their worldview and perception of the future. The secondary objective is to articulate the significance of recalling the past life that illustrates even in the "state of exception," where life is relegated to being "bare," a refugee child is not only able to endure the distress of devastation, but finds ways to explore the *epoché* that can help the self to turn towards the consciousness of the other. This attunement to the other creates a bond and responsibility to the other. Taking Husserl's notion of the phenomenological standpoint, Jackson states that the *epoché* is "a suspension not only of one's own taken-for-granted *ideas* about the world *but of one's own customary sense of self*" (2013:199; emphasis in the original). The in-

between space, what Islamic philosophers call *barzakh*, allows for the habitual sense of the self to pause by propelling one to imagine new horizons.

PART II. THE VULNERABILITY AND DELIGHT IN THE EVERYDAY

The future diminishes as the past grows, until the future has completely gone and everything is past. –Saint Augustine, *Confessions*

Part II of the dissertation centers on the present life stories of two Syrian refugee children, Jamilā and Lylā, who now live in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. I draw on Jamilā's story-writing and dream as well as Lylā's musical experiences to examine their capacity—both imaginative and actual—for "strategic shape-shifting" (Jackson 2013:202) that forms their mode of being-in-the-world vis-à-vis the vulnerable other. As they escape and invent new forces and combine with other fluxes in the in-between space of *barzakh* (isthmus; see Part I) they find ways to negotiate "*the ethical spaces* between external constraints and personal imperatives" (Jackson 2013:202, emphasis in the original). What remains constant in these ethical spaces is how the "self" is unseated and replaced by the presence of the other, where the subjects incessantly impact one another. This ethical practice entails a capacity for exposure, an openness to imagining the presence of the other. Emmanuel Levinas developed the idea that the relation between one and the other should not be totalized and reduced to an intellectual understanding, since the other is always more than one thing and continually exceeds the individual's cognition. The ethical relationship to the other is based on asymmetry and inequality of many decentralizing points of flux, where these qualities make the other irreducible to finitude.

In the words of Levinas, the mode of expressing the relation to the other—the question: *who am I*?—finds its way in the imaginative world, such as in Jamilā's dream and Lylā's music. The imaginative world of *barzakh* becomes a place where the subject is at risk of being torn apart. Yet, Levinas believes, being torn apart enables the individual to live with potential

transformation and reconfiguration. This proneness to fracture (also illustrated in Part I) gives rise to the in-betweenness of *barzakh*, a space in which an individual is "subject to infinite interruption," where the self "is continuously open to excess" (Craig 2010:3-4). For Jamilā and Lylā, the priority of the other—as a self that is never statically fixed in one place—is evoked through the imaginative world that is dualistic in nature. The face of the other creates two contradictory imaginative worlds that are pleasant and haunting. This dualistic nature of the face yields vulnerability or woundedness, but in the words of Levinas, it also allows for a responsive and humane openness.

Chapter Five, "A Story and Dream of the Other," examines the ways Jamilā imagines Safiyya (an elderly neighbor in Aleppo) through her story-writing and dream. In 2017, after two years in a Turkish refugee camp, Jamilā resettled in the Bay Ridge area when she was 13 years old. Jamilā was eight years old when Safiyya, a family friend, died during an air assault on Aleppo in 2015. In one of her stories (an assignment for English class), Jamilā describes Safiyya as a young girl who is learning to ride horses in the Syrian countryside. However, her dreams of Safiyya consist of images of an old women in a white burial cloth prominent in Islamic ritual. Jamilā's recurring dream became a "selfscape" (Hollan 2004) of her moral experiences and emotions towards Safiyya. Storytelling and dreaming become a media for Jamilā to yet find another way to fulfill her responsibility to the other. This mode of relationality highlights the idea that ethics entails infinite responsibility to the other.

Chapter Six, "Music, Imagination and the Other," discusses how Lylā's music yields moments for her to speak about how she imagines her mother. Lylā was seven years old when along with her family she fled Aleppo in the summer of 2015 to a Turkish refugee camp. On the way to the camp her mother's car came under attack by the Syrian government, killing her

mother instantly. Lylā, now 12 years old, lives with her father and two younger brothers in the Bay Ridge area. Playing music with her father lifted the burden of the past allowing Lylā to speak about what she described as the "happy" and "sad" face of her mother. Music becomes a site of moral tension and a space for the evocation of moments in which the vulnerability of Lylā's mother is manifested to her. In this chapter, the "face" takes stage as Ibn 'Arabī's assertion about "His Face" is used to draw a distinction between Lylā's two imaginative worlds of her mother.

The Openness of the Present

If the past can be considered as the time of memory then the present is the time of conscious (and unconscious, like Jamilā's dream) awareness. In the following chapters, the fleeting immediacy of the present centers on the indomitable paradox of what anthropologist David Scott calls "the being and nonbeing of time" (2014:1). In *Omens of Adversity*, Scott is concerned with "the temporality of the aftermaths of political catastrophe, the temporal disjuncture involved in loving *on* in the wake of past political time, and the ruins" (2014:2, emphasis in the original). Part II follows a similar references to Scott's "*attunement* to the uneven *topos* of temporality" (2014:2, emphasis in the original) by highlighting how Jamilā and Lylā create meaningful experiential reference in light of their past memories. As illustrated in Chapters Five and Six, Jamilā's story-writing and dreaming and Lylā's music playing create a notion of the present in which "the past has loosed itself from the future and acquired a certain quasi-autonomy" (Scott 2014:13). This sense of time in *barzakh* functions on its own terms and as its own source of actuality and purpose. Then the present makes the past return in spontaneous and unexpected moments of inspiration (story-writing), imagination (dream) and creativity (music).

The present grants the past as a pathological fact. The other is part of the past that continues to haunt; the wound of the other's loss is a burden on the present. What makes the understanding of present different from Scott's discussion in the following chapters is that the past is not a continued state of trauma and disorder. The present is a fluctuation between a state of vulnerability and the experience of delight. For Jamilā and Lylā, the present has a dynamic nature that is geared towards a horizon of possibility, yet the residues of the past are sedimented in the now and everyday. Moments arise for Jamilā and Lylā where the present "is not the future that stands in need of liberation from the present, but the past" (Scott 2014:13). In these instants, "personal time" (Durkheim 1953) accords with what Bergson calls *durée* or James's labels "stream of consciousness." These moments highlight how individuals actively create intersubjectivity and form a sense of synchronized timeline in the "vivid present" (Schutz 1976) of their lifeworlds. The present illuminates how certain aspects of life persistently slide out from under as one tries to maintain some fixed notion of temporality.

In Part II, the present is thought of as how the phenomena (the face of the other for Jamilā and Lylā) disclose themselves to one, *as* one opens herself to the other. This mode of temporality resists fixity and objective analysis since there is always a lack of closure and another opening. The following chapters discuss these openings where time, in the words of Levinas, consists of moments of "ordeal" (*épreuve*) (1998). He asserts that ordeal "retains a sense of continuance or a lack of closure, expressing an undergoing that mirrors the open-in-the-midst quality of the 'saying' as opposed to the finality of the 'said'" (Craig 2010:48). The non-reciprocity or irreversibility of the "said" merges with Levinas describes as the philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's analogy of things floating on water as a "contact with being" (1998:42), where these encounters are intense and create immediate "poignancy of feeling (1998:42). The

notion of "saying" makes the present into an openness, a continuation or a work in progress, a forward motion like logs floating together downstream. At certain moments, the logs come into contact with each other, even attaching to one another, and at other moments, they float adrift. The present constantly shifts, much like the logs in the water, never fixed to a specific place, as the residue of the past is carried along the stream.

The present is what Levinas emphasized as the "open potential, the plurality in oneself and others" (Craig 2010:48). It is rooted in an ethical view of a pragmatic pluralism, where a set of principles is experienced in its fleeting and asymmetrical course of multiple possibilities. This implies that Jamilā and Lylā's subjectivity to the other is not reducible to one single mode or decisive feature. The present creates imaginative lifeworlds that cannot be reasoned or rationalized since it hinges on "the ambiguity of subjectivity" (1991:165). The openness and the vagueness of subjectivity pushes one forward to encounter the other. Levinas explains that "the identity of the subject" is manifested not on its own terms, but rather "by a restlessness that drives me outside of the nucleus of my substantiality" (1991:142). This means that the present never allows the subject to be whole; subjects will always resist becoming "self-identical, nameable, recognizable, or knowable" (Craig 2010:3). The present does not grant the creation of an *authentic* self, but takes on what Deleuze defines as "an infinitely porous, spongy, or cavernous texture without emptiness, caverns endlessly contained in other caverns, no matter how small" (1993:5). This understanding of the present centers on Levinas's ethics: *what ought I to do*?

For Jamilā and Lylā, it is within this state of in-betweenness, *barzakh* that the present takes shape. The nonlinear space-time of *barzakh* centers on the boundaries; as Deleuze reminds the reader, this in-betweenness is always "between" or "among" (2007:126) instead of oriented

towards a fixed center. The following chapters recount moments that arise where the present becomes unintelligible and even unrecognizable for Jamilā and Lylā. Before beginning the chapters, it is beneficial to provide a brief overview of what it means for Jamilā and Lylā to live as "refugees" in the Bay Ridge area. The immigration and refugee policy issues are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a brief mention of these concerns is vital since they highlight the high level of anxiety and apprehension experienced by the Syrian families I worked with.

LEARNING TO LIVE AGAIN

Families like Jamilā's and Lylā's who have resettled in the United States after 2017, have largely been affected by President Trump's policies and views on immigration and refugees. Shortly after his presidency began, Trump issued a series of executive orders promising major changes to the United States immigration system, including "sharp cuts to legal immigration, 'the wall' across the entire U.S.-Mexico border, and 'extreme' vetting of all applications for admission" (Pierce 2019:1). His administration has been able to implement broad changes that have affected the refugee intake in the United States. These measures include: a) enhanced immigration enforcement, particularly the authorization for the state and local law enforcement to assist with investigation, apprehension or detention; b) fewer refugee admissions; and c) enhanced vetting and obstacles for legal immigration. There is evidence that the inhospitable rhetoric used by the president and his aides on immigration and refugees has had created enormous anxiety amongst the newcomers in the United States (Pierce 2019).

After Trump took office, "immigrant communities [have tried] to stay 'under the radar,' there have been reports of a dip in crime reporting, including on domestic violence; fewer applications for the public benefits for which immigrants or their U.S.-born children are entitled;

and rising no-shows at health-care appointments" (Pierce 2019:3).[18] Lylā's father, Faizal, expressed similar worries about the current political situation:

> To me it is very surprising, and even stunning to see what is going on politically in America. We escaped a Syrian government that was killing our people and waited in a refugee camp—with so many health, economic and safety problems—then our application was finally approved, which was really nice, but at the same time sad for us because my brother and his family's application were approved by the Australian government. We come to America and our neighborhood is very nice. People are very welcoming here. Lylā's school is great and we have health insurance, which makes us breathe a little easier. But every day we are scared and worried about what the president might do or say. We always pay attention to his Twitter account and listen carefully to the news. In the refugee camp we just listened to the news about Syria but now we need to listen to both the U.S. politics and also Syria. I have to be honest, I feel like this government is making it harder and harder for us to survive. (Interview in January 2019)

No administration in modern United States history has placed such a high priority on immigration policies by restricting flows of immigrants and refugees and maximizing enforcement inside the country. The president's rhetoric does not escape the Syrian refugee children. During an evening visiting with Jamilā, she said:

> Why does President want to build walls so much? If he could he would build one around the ocean so we could not come to America. I think one day he is going to even build a wall around his wife! I am not hopeful that my uncle and my cousins in Germany could ever come to visit us. He does not like giving visas to our people. I know that is because of our religion; it is because we are Muslims. I know my friends and my teachers do not like him. Some people like him but I never meet them. I don't know where they live but I see them on the news. Everywhere I go everyone is nice to me. I know my father always watches the news and I hear things that worry me a lot but I guess these people that like the president don't live in our neighborhood…they live in other places in the U.S. (Interview in October 2017)

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[18]Some reported cases of the anxiety experienced by newcomers in the United States after the start of the Trump presidency:

Jennifer Medina. (April 30, 2017). "Too Scared to Report Sexual Abuse. The Fear: Deportation." *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2017/04/30/us/immigrants-deportation-sexual-abuse. html

Molly Redden. (May 9, 2017). "Undocumented Immigrants Avoid Vital Nutrition Services for Fear of Deportation." *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/09/undocumented- immigrants-wic-nutrition-services-deportation

Jan Hoffman. (June 26, 2017). "Sick and Afraid, Some Immigrants Forgo Medical Care." *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/health/undocu- mented-immigrants-health-care.html.

According to National Public Radio, the United States government admitted 3,024 Syrian refugees in 2017. This number represents a sharp decline from 2016, when near the end of Obama's presidency, the United States resettled 15,479 Syrian refugees (Amos 2018). The families' current uncertainties about the resettlement are grounded in fears that arise even before they come to the United States. The uncertainties begin from the time the families start a two-year-process for their visa application in the refugee camps. During this time, the United Nations decides if individuals fit the definition of "refugee," and whether to refer those people/families to the United States. Only the most "vulnerable" are referred, which accounts for less than eight percent of Syrian refugee populations in the Jordanian and Turkish camps (Pierce 2019). Abdil, Jamilā's father, stated that

> There is a good chance that the UN decides to refer members of an extended family to different countries depending on the filing process…families end up all over the world, but that is better than waiting and waiting and nothing ever happening. There were some families in the camp with teenage or adult sons and they had to do extra security checks. Other families had issues with their documentations or the documents were lost during the war and they could not find replacement…lots of problems and sometimes little solution for them. It's a long and tiring process with so much uncertainty. The issue is when it is finished and you come to a modern country like the U.S. you expect to have less worries because the government would take care of people like us. But that does not happen and in fact the opposite comes from the president and his administration. (Interview in November 2017)

The second stage of the vetting process involves the State Department contractors hired by the United States government.[19] If an application is successful then the third stage vetting is processed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I) and Homeland Security. The refugee's fingerprints are screened against F.B.I. and Homeland Security databases, which contains watch list information and past immigration encounters, including if the refugee previously applied for a visa at a United States embassy. The final vetting process is the case-by-case review at United

[19] The second background check was introduced in 2008 for Iraqis between the ages of 14 to 65 (Pierce 2019).

States immigration headquarters (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services refugee specialist and the Homeland Security Department's fraud detection unit).

Basing his stance on national security concerns, after his inauguration President Trump immediately took action to reduce resettlement, suspending the refugee admission program for 120 days, and reducing the intake from the 2016 celling of 110,000 places to a 2018 ceiling of 45,000.[20] The Trump administration's level of refugee intake is the most restrictive limit the United States has set in the 70-year history of resettlement. Prior to boarding a plane, a refugee family needs to sign a promissory note agreeing to repay the cost of the airfare to the United States government if they are not able to personally pay for the cost of their ticket. Thus, the economic anxiety begins even before coming to the United States. Lylā's father, Faizal, explained that

> Everyone is short on money in the camp. It is impossible to pay the airfare for a family of four or five. That would mean something like seven thousand dollars American. We all have to sign the form to pay the U.S. government when we arrive. The problem is when we arrive…we are lost and don't know what to do. The agencies help us with English classes and employment, but it is very hard for the first year. The government pays us about two thousand and five hundred dollars, for me and my children. That is not nearly enough for us, the rent alone takes most of that money. That is why many refugees and newcomers need to work for cash. Go around New York and you'll see many refugees doing cash work. It is hard work and the owner—usually you work in a restaurants or some other low-paying job—pays little but what choice do we have? It is a very expensive city and I have three children. Financially, it is a very tough situating for us. All I hope for is that my children take good advantage and appreciate this opportunity, and do well with their education. This is for them; my life is for them. That is really my only goal now. I am not here because of myself, I am here because of them. The future is for them and that makes me happy. (Interview in January 2019)

The children typically have an easier time finding friends and learning English (Pierce 2019). Both Jamilā and Lylā began to learn English in their United Nations-run school when they lived in Turkish refugee camps, and preferred to speak English most times. They were eager to

[20] See, White House, "Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017."

learn more about their community and spend time with their friends. Lylā was aware of the difficulties her father faced; she would say that her father "is sacrificing so much of his life to make me and my brothers safe and happy." What is important about Lylā's statement is that she acknowledged that her father's sacrifices are not over. Coming to the United States does not end the hardship. This means that as a refugee in the United States the children are aware of how their parents (or elders) face a new set of challenges and issues. While the obstacles differ (they are not dire like a civil war) from Syria, they shape the day-to-day understanding of the children's lifeworld. Noticing these challenges, Lylā stated that she wanted "to do the best and do everything to be a good daughter." Often immigrant and refugee children feel the burden of wanting to become an exemplary child in order to lift some pressure off their parents' shoulders and live according to the convictions of their parents. It is like an unsaid agreement where the children do their best due to the obligation they feel towards their parents' sacrifices.

CHAPTER FIVE. A STORY AND DREAM OF THE OTHER

"Now two young men entered the prison with him. One of them said, 'Truly I see myself [in a dream] pressing wine.' The other said, 'Truly I see myself [in a dream] carrying bread atop my head, from which the birds eat.' 'Inform us of its interpretation. Truly we see you as being among the virtuous.'" –The Qur'ān (*Yūsuf* [Joseph]; XII, 36; trans., Nasr 2015:600-1)

This chapter examines Jamilā's recurring dream about her elderly neighbor, Safiyya in Aleppo, Syria. Jamilā had just turned eight years old when she and her family fled Aleppo to a Turkish refugee camp, and then, after a two year wait, resettled in Brooklyn in 2017. Her first memory of New York City was looking out a car window and seeing "the tall buildings, yellow taxis and busy streets." Jamilā is now thirteen years old and lives with her father, mother, grandmother and younger brother in a modest condominium apartment in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. This chapter begins by highlighting Jamilā's lifeworld, illustrating some of her day-to-day routines in one of the most inclusive neighborhoods in New York state. It focuses on Jamilā's desire to write stories and how this creative genre allows her the imaginative capability to connect to a family friend, Safiyya, who died during an air bombardment of Aleppo. In one sotry, Jamilā imagines Safiyya as a young, joyful girl learning to ride horses in the Syrian countryside. After highlighting Jamilā's interest in short stories, the chapter shifts to examine her recurring dream—what Freud calls the road to understanding the unconscious activities of the mind—about Safiyya. Her dream consists of vivid images of Safiyya in a traditional Muslim white burial cloth with blood stains surrounded by guards dressed in black armors. Jamilā's parents are behind her so she is unable to see them but only hear them and her legs tied together with a rope. Her peaceful world of storytelling about Safiyya was upended in her dream. This shift from what is

joyful and beautiful to the painful and wretched opens up space to investigate how Jamilā mediates and perceives her two lifeworlds in relation to the other.

As my relationship with Jamilā and her family developed, she began to describe her dream in more detail. She never spoke about her dream outside her home and never without the presence of her family. Over the span of a year (beginning in early 2018) Jamilā gradually revealed more details of her dream ultimately using drawings to illustrate the characters and events, particularly concentrating on the face of Safiyya. Jamilā's dreams often occurred the night after she was "missing someone," or were triggered, according to her, "when during the day before I did not act properly or I did something wrong." It should be noted, that during my visits with her she seemed energetic, dedicated, and had a loving personality that others praised. There were only two circumstances when Jamilā spoke about Syria and Safiyya: her story of the young girl in the Syrian countryside and her recurring dreams.

Jamilā's dreams became, in the words of anthropologist Doug Hollan, a "selfscape" of her emotional and perpetual experiences that connected the unconscious activity of her mind to herself, others and the world around her (2004). Jamilā's dream was a means to reconnect to her neighbor Safiyya, a mother-like figure, with whom she had an intimate relationship. Jamilā's dream was the only mode of expression of hers to discuss her moral experiences, vis-à-vis her relationship to Safiyya. The world of dream, the unconscious activity of the mind, becomes a place where Jamilā described herself as someone who has "committed a sin" by "abandoning Safiyya." After one detailed accounting of her dream, Jamilā said: "She was like my mother…Her being dead and me being alive is like *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* [I have committed a great sin]." There is a shift in one's moral experience from seeing oneself as guilty (see Part I) to, in the case of Jamilā (and Lylā; see Chapter Six), committing a sin.

Taking Levinas's claim that ethics entail infinite responsibility, then Jamilā's storytelling and dream are a reminder of the need to fulfill one's responsibility to the other. In *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas predominantly contends that it is impossible to exhaust or fulfill one's responsibility in a world inhabited by faces of others, where there is always yet another face, one more opening or interruption (1991). Jamilā's recurring dream and her storytelling are an opening for her to imagine the face of the other, Safiyya. Levinas's infinite opening is "a rejection of closure, a never-ending story" (Craig 2010:7). My initial question was whether Jamilā consciously avoids speaking about her past and how her dream brings the past into the present. This question developed into the main focus of this chapter: the significance of how Jamilā's storytelling and dream are the "openings" and the "never-ending story" of the other. Since closures do not occur, what transforms over time, consciously or unconsciously, is the way Jamilā imagines coming face to face with Safiyya. The significance of Jamilā's dream was that it provided a "map or update of the self's contours and affective resonances relative to its own body, as well as to other objects and people in the world" (Hollan 2004:170). Her dream is a statement that the story with and the connection to the other, although uneven and off-center, never concludes or expires. This is precisely what Levinas means when he speaks about how "the other haunts me."

In the following sections, I examine Jamilā's dream as "self processes" that emerge in the "imaginal space between body and world" (Hollan 2004:170-1). The imaginal space brings the discussion back to Ibn 'Arabī's articulation of *barzakh* (the in-between space, see Part I). This chapter conveys how the transformation of being and becoming in *barzakh* shifts to the imaginative world of the dreaming process, its narration (see Tedlock 1987; Crapanzano 2003) and also illustration (Jamilā's drawings of her dream). Ibn 'Arabī considered dreams as *khayāl*

(imagination or a mental image), an occurrence that represents something "between the real and the phenomenal worlds, as do our imaginings" (Landau 1957:60). *Khayāl* provides both a symbol for reality and also for hidden meanings. Ibn 'Arabī believed that during dreams imagination is at its most active stage, where *khayāl* "gets hold of the experiences of daily life, and presents them to the 'inward eye' (of the heart)" (Landau 1957:60) (see Chapter Three).

Below I highlight Jamilā's day-to-day interactions and particularly her engagement in school. Her interest in English and storytelling becomes a conduit for Jamilā to discuss her relationship to Safiyya. The creativity of storytelling is a process of repairing the broken bond or rethinking the relationship to the other (see Part III).

A Story About the Countryside

When I first met Jamilā, she was about to complete fourth grade in a New York City public school. She had just moved to the United Sates and was eager to learn, in her words, "the American culture." It was a late spring afternoon in 2017 when I was first introduced to Jamilā and her family at the Arab American Association of New York. From the outset, Jamilā was very keen to tell me about the subjects she enjoyed most in school. For the first few months Jamilā's education was the focal point of our conversations. An important aspects of these early dialogues was how much Jamilā enjoyed writing stories. She said:

> My favorite subject is English…I mean I enjoy reading and writing stories more than anything. I like my music classes too, but not as much as reading or writing stories…I really like short stories. I want to become a novelist when I grow up. That's why I like my English class. This year, I am much better at spelling, so it makes it easier for me to write my stories. It's harder learning music notes [referring to her after school guitar classes], but reading and writing are much easier. I like my science class a little bit too, especially when we do fun stuff in the lab, but not so much my math class. For math, I have to think differently which I am not that good at. (Interview in May 2017)

During the school year, Jamilā's daily routines were hectic and full of activity. Most mornings she woke up around 6:30 and would have breakfast with her father after which she would quietly watch her grandmother recite the Qur'ān and pray. Around 7:30, she and her father would walk together to school fifteen minutes away. Jamilā's father worked in a local machine shop for an Egyptian mechanic, while her mother attended an English as a second language school twice a week. After school, Jamilā often walked home with her friends, then, she would spend time with her grandmother, mother and younger brother, and almost always helped prepare dinner. She would do most of her homework before dinner, since she wanted to spend time with her father who came home late in the evening. After dinner she would practice music, read books, enjoy family time or even play games or surf the Internet on her iPad before going to bed around 10 P.M.

During the summers of 2017 and 2018, Jamilā's lifeworld mainly consisted of helping her mother with tasks around the house, taking care of her younger brother, weekly guitar lessons, playing with her friends in a nearby playground and going to the Arab American Association of New York. I frequently met her and her mother before her music class and at the playground during the summer. I was also invited to their home occasionally on the weekends when her father would be home from work. Jamilā was determined to learn more about her Bay Ridge neighborhood so some evenings when I visited, her father and I would take walks with her so she could experience the city a bit more.

Jamilā's mother and grandmother are devoted Muslims. During the summer of 2017, I observed Jamilā keep the fast on a number of a days during the month of Ramadān (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed as a month of fasting, praying and reflection). Throughout the holy month, Jamilā and her family attended the local mosque for nightly prayers,

and sometimes stayed for *'iftār* ("break of a fest") dinner. The evening meal of *'iftār* has both religious and cultural significance for most Muslims. In addition to the Islamic importance of this ritual, it was also an occasion for families like Jamilā's to interact with other newly settled families in the Bay Ridge community, discussing their aspirations and anxieties covering a range of topics from politics, economic challenges, to organizing a picnic celebrating the end of Ramadān. For the children, gathering in the local mosque meant playing games and being active, particularly after the *'iftār* dinner. After one of these nights, Jamilā said:

> I've loved Ramadān since I was a little. Seeing everyone fast during the day and then at night time having *'iftār* together is really nice. I feel like I am with friends and family here. I love to play with my friends after *'iftār* and see everyone and have a good time together. I know that this month is really important; it is one of the *arkān al-Islām* [Five Pillars of Islam]. Ramadān is a beautiful name, it is one of the names of Allāh. It is also a beautiful month because our Prophet (peace be upon Him and His followers) received the first verses of the Qur'ān. That is why we call that night he received Allāh's words: *Laylat al-Qadr* [Night of Destiny or Night of Power]. I love coming to the mosque this month and seeing my friends. I love *'iftār.* And, all the kids are just waiting until it's *Eid* [reference to *'īd al-fitr*; the "Festival of Breaking the Fast" that marks the end of Ramadān]. (Interview in June 2017)

It was clear that Ramadān had both a religious and cultural importance for Jamilā. She said, "I hardly ever pray at home, but like to pray when I go to the mosque especially during Ramadān. I know one thing, that Allāh is with me, in my heart all the time, as long as I do right and believe in His grace and mercy." She followed this statement by specifying that "true happiness" is only found in "a human's love for Allāh and nothing else." As Jamilā was stating her views about happiness and the month of Ramadān, her mother, Zaynab, sitting next to her, elaborated on this topic by reciting the Qur'ān:

> The month of Ramadan is the month in which Allāh revealed His words, His beauty to us in the Qur'ān; a guide for us all to learn about the criteria of right and wrong. The Qur'ān states [Zaynab reading from the Qur'ān]: "The month of Ramadan is that wherein the Quran was sent down as guidance to mankind, as clear proofs of guidance, and as the Criterion. Let him among you who is present fast during that [month]. And whosever is

> ill or on a journey, it is a number of other days. God desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you. [It is] so that you may complete the number and magnify God for having guided you, that haply you may give thanks. (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow] II, 185; trans., Nasr 2015:80-1)

Jamilā even invited two of her non-Muslim friends to the mosque for an *'iftār* to show them "the love and compassion of Allāh and the kindness of the Muslim community to all and not just Muslims."

Islamic rituals and norms were important in Jamilā's upbringing, but her main commitment centered on her studies. She was thrilled to be attending school, noting that "many children in the world cannot go to school." What was perplexing in Jamilā's statements was that she never spoke about Syria or the Syrian children who were unable to attend school because of the civil war. She knew that perfectly well, but instead she chose to discuss these issues more broadly (e.g., "in the world"). It felt like she was consciously avoiding any conversation about Syria. She once complained about the overcrowded and inadequate United Nations' schools she had attended while being in a Turkish refugee camp. Meanwhile, I was able to observe her in her school as she completed fourth grade and while attending fifth grade. She sat at the front of her class, asking timely and important questions, and had befriend two girl from her class. Jamilā told me that

> my friends and I always help each other with our homework and talk about the television shows and music we like. We eat our lunch together in the cafeteria. Sometimes they come to my house so they can try Syrian food. We talk on the phone and message each other on Facebook Messenger over the weekends, especially when we don't understand some of our homework. We go to the library together, but we have to be quiet there so we can't really talk to each other. I wish they would come with me to learn music but they aren't that interested. I am glad we have each other, they help me with some of the things I still don't know about in America. I am very happy to have them as my friends. (Interview in May 2017)

In school, Jamilā was happy to talk about her interest in storytelling, her enthusiasm for writing was also conveyed by her English teacher. Jamilā described her love of storytelling as something she learned from her family:

> I love stories a lot because my grandmother and my mother always tell me really interesting stories about old tales…when they tell me stories I sometimes close my eyes and imagine what it was like to live as a queen, a school teacher or a farmer…even when I was little, they told me stories so I would fall asleep. Other than my mother and my grandmother, Safiyya [the elderly friend in her dream] was really good at telling me beautiful stories. I will never forget her stories. Safiyya was so kind and told me many stories when I was little. I loved going over to her house, or when she came to our house, I always asked her to tell me a story. Sometimes when she was talking to the adults, she would tell me a short story I would go away and add more to it and then come back to tell her the rest of the story. She lived across the street from us so it was really easy to go to her house all the time. We were like a family and always saw each other.
>
> I asked Miss Goldstein [Jamilā's English teacher] if I could write a story for one of my assignments and she said yes. I was very shy and did not want to ask at first, but she really liked my idea. That made me happy! I wrote about a young girl who wanted to learn how to ride a horse in the countryside. It was because Safiyya told me a story about when she was a little girl and learned to ride a horse on her uncle's farm. Every time she told me that story, I imagined what it was like when she was young and how she had learned to ride. She once showed me a picture of herself when she was my age. So in my story, I wrote about a beautiful young girl who learns from her uncle, who is a farmer, how to ride a horse and becomes a really good rider. Eventually she begins to take care of the horses when her uncle got old. (Interview in July 2017)

When Jamilā first mentioned Safiyya, I was not aware that she was having recurring dreams about her. Jamilā did not mention her dreams to me until about six months after our initial meeting in January of 2018. My initial thought was to focus on Jamilā's creative side, and how through her writing she was opening up the conscious possibility to reimagine a bond to Safiyya. Her writing depicted a more symmetrical and equal relationship in which Jamilā's connection to Safiyya is based on an imaginative world of joy and tranquility in a serene countryside, rather than an individual subjected to war and carnage. As illustrated later in the chapter, Jamilā's dreams destabilize the symmetrical relationship depicted in her writing, reinforcing what Levinas

viewed as the infinite centers of gravity that pulls one off the center, as something that is not fixed in any place. Jamilā's writing and dream opened up an imaginary world that situated her as a distinctively human subject in the presence of the other. Her writing is a way to repair her relationship to Safiyya, while her dream is a means to reach out to the vulnerable other.

I noticed a kind of uneasiness in Jamilā each time I asked her about Safiyya. Jamilā only talked about her as "someone who was as close as family." It was puzzling why Jamilā never wanted to elaborate on her relationship to Safiyya since she was so significant in her life. Later on, after Jamilā described her dream, I came to the understand it is precisely the presence of the other that disables, limits or changes Jamilā's moral experiences. The importance of Safiyya for Jamilā was made clearer one summer evening when Abdil, Jamilā's father, spoke about the Syrian government's assault on Aleppo in the spring of 2015. My conversation with Abdil took place in the local community center while Jamilā was playing with the other children. Abdil stated:

> One evening we were all sitting and watching television. We heard from the news—BBC [BBC Arabic]—that the al-Assad's government had announced there were more troops deployed to defeat *al-Jaysh as-Sūrī al-Hurr* [The Free Syrian Army] in Aleppo. Nobody in Aleppo would be safe, we all knew that. I told my wife that this was going to be really bad. Just a few hours after the news broke, airplanes began bombing. There were explosions after explosions. Everything was shaking as it got dark that night. The next evening the airplanes began to fly overhead and bomb different neighborhoods. All we could do was to shelter in our living room and sometimes go under the staircase, as it was the safest place we had to shelter. Everyone did their best to find some kind of shelter. There was no choice, especially when there were escalations in the violence.
>
> Al-Assad wanted to end us, wanted to finish and flatten Aleppo. He wanted to do that so there would never be an opposition again; I think he would have been happy if Aleppo would have been wiped off the earth. As we were sitting and trying to be keep some calmness, a huge explosion shook everything. It was so powerful that our front windows broke and two of the doors just slammed shut. The sound was unbelievable, for a second, I thought it was our house. After a few minutes of being shocked and confused, I heard people shouting in the street. There was so much debris and confusion that I asked everyone to stay behind so I could go see what happened. I knew it was very close to us, I knew it was on our street. I went outside to see where the destruction was and noticed

that our front yard was covered in dust and debris. There was so much smoke that I had to cover my face with a cloth. Then I noticed that the bomb had hit Safiyya's house. I was really worried about her and her husband. I hoped that somehow they were safe. I was hoping that they had not been home. It was really difficult to even get past the destruction and all the rubble. It took some time to clear the rubble with the neighbor's help so we could get inside. There was not much left, the walls had collapsed and no one could have survived. We [the neighbors and Abdil] dug out Safiyya's body and her husband's body. They were both dead. It was tragic, we had known them for so many years. Jamilā thought of her as an aunt. I couldn't believe it.

It was devastating for all of us. Especially since we had insisted that they come and shelter with us. Our house was newer and safer, but such a big bomb would have made no difference. I know I feel *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* [I have committed a great sin]. I know my family feels the burden of our *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin] by not making them come stay with us. Then…*Allāh Akbār* [God is Great]…we would have died together or have been safe together. Especially since Safiyya had visited us just a few hours before the planes began to bomb. Jamilā still doesn't want to talk about what happened to Safiyya. We made sure she didn't come out to see Safiyya after we pulled her out of the wreckage and we could not take her to the funeral because it was much too dangerous. But she saw the destruction later…she saw Safiyya's house in ruins. She never says anything about that night, not even to us, every time she talks about Safiyya, as you know, it is through her story and the dream…the story is something pleasant. I guess that is a good way of remembering someone. But her dream worries me. I am worried that she feels like she is at fault. I feel that way, but I don't want her to feel like that. I am sure she has heard us talk about how much we regret not forcing Safiyya and her husband to stay with us that night (Interview in August 2017).

Jamilā's storytelling is a recognition of Safiyya through the joyful and exuberant story of a young girl. Her writing is also a way to repair a broken bond with the other (see Part III). Storytelling becomes a way to repair something that is beyond comprehension and the human ability to endure the full gravity of the tragedy. Jamilā's dream, on the other hand, provides access into an unconscious world that allows for the vulnerability of the other to take hold in Jamilā's imagination. This paradoxical relationship to the other, where Jamilā story attempts to repair the relation to the other, counters the unconscious and the imaginative faculty of her dream.

Repair is a way to cope and make sense of the world vis-à-vis the traumatic past and the loss of a loved one. It allows for the possibility of a more optimistic and positive view on life as one looks to the future. Moreover, repair sanctions a reevaluation of moral experiences, to (re)consider Levinas's ethical question: *what ought I to do*? Meanwhile, the vulnerability of the other speaks to the infinite interruptions by being open and never fixed in one place. This ethical understanding makes humans irrevocably tied together, where this Levinasian concept articulates "humanity as fundamentally intersubjective and ethics as the repetitive, never-compete actualization of an inherent potential of interaction" (Graig 2010:4). Acknowledging that priority needs to be given to the other was even accepted by Sartre, where in *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, he states that

> I was looking for ethics in a consciousness that had no…other. Today I think everything that takes place for a consciousness at any given moment is necessarily linked to, and often is even engendered by, the presence of another—or even momentarily by the absence of the other—but, in all events, by the existence of another. (1996:71)

Sartre's statement leads one to believe that human beings are structured for openness to the other as a prefabricated ethical experience.

Jamilā's storytelling was also about hope and the perseverance of overcoming. In this manner, repair is not just about the other, but also towards humanity, life itself and the self (see Chapter Eight on repair). Jamilā never stated her reasons for writing about Safiyya other than being drawn to storytelling. I contemplated whether writing this story served as a coping mechanism and to what extent did it reorient the self to imagine new possibilities and horizons? Was writing a way for Jamilā to exhibit her empathy for Safiyya without becoming vulnerable? When I asked Jamilā's English teacher about her story, she said:

> Jamilā has a very unique sensitivity to issues that are filled with grace and love. I am sure a lot of it is because of what she has endured. You can feel the love in the story she wrote

> for this class; the story about a young girl learning to ride in the countryside. It is an expression of love. She shows so much empathy towards me, towards her friends and other things in the school, we all feel her love. Her emotions are reflected in her writing; she has a very unique and creative side. It is like she is here to tell us that there are things that bring us together even in the hardest conditions…things that makes us all human instead of villains. Her messages is needed now more than ever. Writing is a wonderful gift she has. Her life story is what this country is all about. Without her knowing—maybe knowingly, I am not sure—she radiates joy and love to others. I am sure her joy has a lot to do with what she has experienced. She is dedicated to learning and being an excellent student, but that is not really why she is unique. Many immigrant and refugee children are exemplary and dedicated, which is so wonderful. What makes Jamilā unique is how she expresses her love to others. Her writing shows that…her story imagines a world that is different than the one she knew, or different than the one we all live in. (Interview in June 2017)

It was clear that those close to Jamilā had been touched by her love and empathy. Jamilā's encounters and experiences in school correlated to what Jackson calls the "ethics of small things," stating that "every migrant experiences in some measure…are between the circumstances that shape our lives and the lives we project and hope to create for ourselves" (2013:213). Jamilā's inclination to write stories was to show a fondness for the world, an alternative and imaginary world to the one she had experienced—to the other she was vulnerable and responsible towards.

In *Existenz Philosophy*, Arendt articulates this phenomenological experience as giving precedent to "the little things" in the world where "the secret of reality lies hidden" (1946:36). Jamilā's storytelling, in Arendt's terms, is a mode of "awakening," a "fondness for the world" (1946:36). Her desire to write can be summed up in Levinas's position that views ethics as an experience of being otherwise and elsewhere, constrained and unreserved ties one has to the other, the bonds of the other that refuses to leave. The issue is not whether or not the bond disappears, but rather how it finds complex and interrelated ways to manifest itself. Jamilā's writing and her dream become a way to unseat the "self," by replacing it with the "other."

Levinas goes about this by replacing "freedom" and the subject-object relation with "responsibility" based on *the* intersubjective relation. This notion asserts that ethics grounded on relation (ethics of relationality), is according to Levinas, the foremost philosophical field of investigation. The Levinasian subject has his/her "center of gravity outside of oneself. Orbiting against [his/her] will, [he/she] is caught, like a planet, in the gravitational pull of a distant star" (Craig 2010:2). Jamilā's imaginative world (her writing and dream) distances from Hegel's dialectic and Husserl's transcendental ego, and becomes closer to Levinas, who articulates that the autonomous self is bound by the responsibility to the other.

Jamilā's story exhibits what Levinas would refer to as "susceptiveness" (*susception pré-originaire*) (see *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, 1981:122), in which ethics become a spontaneous inquiry of "the self by the presence of the Other" (1969:43). The examination of ethics in this way is less about the codes or maxims (the Islamic ethics as the precursor to the pursuit of the good life; see Part I) that are internalized and practiced. Happiness becomes a cultural practice and social norm that individuals respond to with different degrees of favorability or opposition. Ethics is the enactment of "the visceral exposure to the vulnerability of another person, a vulnerability begetting vulnerability" (Craig 2010:3). Jamilā's story exhibits a similar bond with Safiyya. Jamilā said:

> When she [Safiyya] first told me her story of riding a horse, I imagined a nice place that was beautiful on a hilltop. It is peaceful and I could hear the birds sing. I imagined a beautiful young girl learning to ride from her uncle and liking a quiet and peaceful farm. Safiyya's story made me happy.
>
> I can read you a bit of my story: "Every morning, Amal [the character in the story] would get up very early in the morning so she could help feed the horses. She walked to the stable with her uncle even before breakfast. It made her happy to feed the horses even if she was a little hungry. Amal's uncle would say: 'Remember, the horses like small meals rather than one large one!' Amal knew that each horse had a different need, and she also knew that each horse could not be fed and then immediately sent outside to be ridden on.

> But after a little while the horses did go out and run around on their own." (Interview in June 2017)

Jamilā's story, although not explicitly, deals with Safiyya as the vulnerable other. Her message of beauty, love and freedom in contrast to the carnage of the Syrian civil war, is a way of speaking about the desire to repair the future and instability that the other brings. Speaking about freedom where there is little freedom is a desire for new possibilities. Meanwhile, the story of young Safiyya (named Amal in the story) is a way for Jamilā to exhaust or fulfill her responsibility to the other. It is a yearning for a world where Safiyya is content and safe.

Homework Woes

Jamilā first decided to talk about her dream on a cold winter night when she was struggling with her science homework. I had gone over to her house to visit with her family. She seemed frustrated that she was not able to complete her assignment. Jamilā insisted on working on her homework while I was there and even asked me to help her. She said:

> My teacher has given us [the class] extra time to work on our assignment because nobody did a good job. I am not sure why I'm not able to finish it; it is hard and I can't find the answer in my module. Every time I don't do my stuff well, I end up having a dream. I had it last week too, when my homework was not complete. My dream always, always tells me I've done something wrong. Like, I already know I've done something bad and I know I am going to be punished for it. Like, when I don't listen to my mom, same thing happens or when I can't do my homework. I've learned to live with it but I try to avoid it by doing a good job so I don't have my dreams. (Interview in January 2018)

Jamilā did not elaborate more on her dream during that evening; she simply focused on completing her science homework. Throughout the following year (January 2017-January 2018), she would occasionally discuss her dream with me. It always seemed to be triggered by what was in her words "a failure to compete a task," or that she was "behaving inappropriately."

Below, I describe the most detailed account of her dream, which she shared with me. I had been invited to Jamilā's house on a Saturday evening and when I arrived she was playing with her brother and two other Syrian children who lived nearby. They were using a whiteboard and colored markers to play games and draw pictures. When the excitement of the games waned, Jamilā said: "Would you like me to tell you about my dream?" This surprised me since as far as I knew she had never spoken about her dream in the presence of her friends. She eagerly began to explain each event and draw the images on the whiteboard. Jamilā portrayed them in the following order:

The Guards

So, behind me are these two guards…they are with my parents and they are holding my parents…So, there are these two guards. And, then their faces are like red here, its covered…This one [the face of one of the two guards] is supposed to be red.

I don't know. But there was a red sign on their face. They are like this, covered in red. This guy was on this side [the left side]. Right...and, their eyes were looking that way [to the left side, towards where Jamilā was sitting].

Figure 4. The red eyes of the two guards.

And, their mouths, they didn't have a mouth, there was nothing. And their hair, they were wearing helmets. So, I wasn't able to really see anything. Like about the texture or anything like that…I am just going to draw a stick figure, but they are wearing armor.

They are wearing black armor. So, black [Jamilā writes on the board]. So that is what behind me.

Figure 5. The guards in black armor.

Jamilā's Parents
And, then my parents are over here, they are on the left behind the guards. My mom…she is not really smiling but she is like…its mean…And my dad. So, he is just like that. Just like…. like smirking, but not a good smirk. So that is what is behind me.

Figure 6. Jamilā's parents "smirking" behind the guards.

First, I am going to draw her [Safiyya] on the chair far away. I am going to draw me on my knees and her far away. Then I'll draw her closer.

Jamilā
So, I am on my knees. I really didn't know how to do anything. I am on my knees. There are ropes attached like zig-zag to my feet. I didn't tell you about it before because they were not that tight. And, I didn't really notice them because they are not so tight.

Figure 7. Jamilā on her knees.

Safiyya
She is far away is this open wide area. It is all like beige and little bit black. So that is the chair. It's a black chair. It's a black chair.

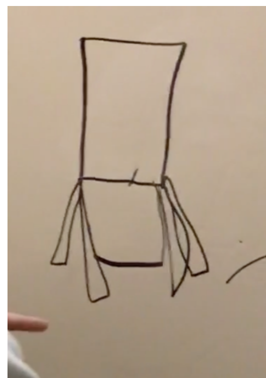
Figure 8. Safiyya's black chair.

Jamilā: And she is turned around this way [facing Jamilā] when we first come in. So, this is how she looks like…this is how she looks like, I need black and red and some green. This is how she looks like [Jamilā takes sometime drawing]. So, her hair, as I told you, has split ends. And really a good cut, as I told you she has split ends. And her face…

Jamilā: so, there are highlights of black and white in her eye. While, black, white…black, white, black. So just like that. She really doesn't have eyelashes, I never noticed. Her eyebrows are like that [Jamilā takes sometime drawing]. This eye doesn't have…like they are all white [left eye]. Her face is like all smudged and it needs to be really black. Smudge that smudge this [Jamilā takes sometime drawing]. Then her nose and whatever. Just like, she doesn't really have a mouth. Or you know, maybe I can't really notice it. And her hair. Like she had dots on her face. Not really dots but like blood. There is like blood in her eyes. But the smudges are more smudges. And her dress [Jamilā draws on the dress to the right of Safiyya's face] is white with blood stains.

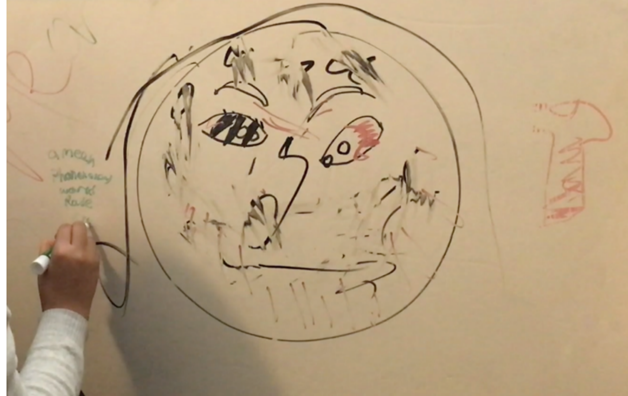

Figure 9. Safiyya’s face and white garment.

From that moment forward, Jamilā mainly elaborated on Safiyya’s face and the importance of the colors she had used (discussed later on in this chapter).

Jamilā’s dream is similar to those in a subset described by Hollan as “perceptually vivid, easy to recall, and the memory of which may trigger powerful emotional responses even years after they are originally experienced” (2004:172). Hollan’s concept of “selfscape” is an attempt “to bridge the gap between what is universal and what is culturally and individually specific about dreams” (2004:172), and centers on the “dreamer’s organization of self and his or her social, emotional and physical environment” (2004:172). Based on this understanding, the issues considered in the following section are a) what are the Islamic and spiritual significance of dreams? b) how do the local practices from Aleppo of remembering and interpreting dreams factor in to this discussion? and c) how do Jamilā and her family view dreams? In order to answer these questions, an examination of dream theories in Islam is vital. The anthropologist, Amira Mittermaier divides dreams into three different categories: a) dreams that express some form of desire or worry (*hadīth nafsī*; “inner saying”); b) dreams that are induced by spirits or the devil (*hulm*); and c) dreams that are divinely inspired (*ru’yā*) (2012:249).[21] She states that

[21] Mittermaier uses “dream-vision” to translate the Arabic *ru’yā*, which according to her refers “to waking visions or divinely-inspired dreams (2011).

dreams encompassing the divine or the devil "complicate a straight-forward cause-and-effect relationship" from those that express a form of personal worry or desire (2012:249). In the Islamic tradition, Sūfīs are known to express their "visitational dreams" within a wide range of social contexts. Mittermaier adds that visitational dreams are told by "men and women, young and old, people who attend Sūfī gatherings, others who regularly visit mosques associated with the Salafi movement, and again others who go to no mosque at all" (2012:249).

Dreams in Islam

The practice of dream interpretation in the Levant region dates back to the beginning of the Mesopotamian civilization, particularly through the religious beliefs of the Jewish tradition (Green 2003). For example, the biblical story of Joseph is part of a tradition that is also important in Islam and related to the Qur'ān.[22] A similar fascination with dreams was also part of the Greek culture, which directly influenced the early Islamic writings on dream theory (Dodds 1951). In the pre-Islamic Levant region and the Arabian Peninsula, *kāhin* ("clergyman" or "priests") are known to have acted as divine dream interpreters for the kings, tribal leaders and the nobility. The historian Nile Green explains the role of *kāhin* as the "ecstatic soothsayers who were seen to be able to recite inspired oracles" (2003:289). Moreover, there is historical evidence that dream interpreters were actively sought after by the pre-Islamic tribes, particularly religious man who said special prayers at the *Ka'bah* ("Cube;" the break house at the center of Islam's most important mosque in Mecca). Green also explains that poets used a popular style of poetry—ode (*qasīdah*)—to express how they were haunted at night by "the image (*khayāl tayf*) of [the] beloved" while intoxicated or asleep (2003:289).

[22] In Qur'ān this account is based on *Yūsuf* (Joseph) (XII, 1-100).

The primary relevance of dreams in Islam is exhibited by the Prophet Muhammad's visionary encounter with archangel Jabrā'il (Gabriel or Gavri'el in Hebrew) when the first verse of the Qur'ān was revealed to him. At the time of this appearance, Muhammad is said to have been dreaming or even hallucinating. Later on in this section, a clear distinction by Islamic philosophers is made between "vision" and a lesser form of dreams. Vision is the illumination of the divine, a manifestation of Allāh or His angels only revealed to the Prophet and saints; whereas dream refers to the concrete phenomenon of reality. Both visions and dreams take place in the intermediary world situated between reality and the realm of pure intellectual abstraction known as a world of likenesses (*'ālam al-mithāl*). Ibn 'Arabī states that the "world of likeness" is an intermediate world between the spiritual and the physical realm, calling *barzakh* "the nature of imagination" (Rahman 1964:175). The Prophet's other famous visions are known as *isrā'* (the Night Journey) to Jerusalem and *mi'rāj* (the Second Journey) to heaven, offering a model of a physical and an esoteric journey of his ascendency into the heaven.[23] In addition, the most famous story of a vision in the Qur'ān is the Prophet foretelling his eventual triumphant return to Mecca after years of residing in Medina (see fn. Qur'ān; *al-Fath* [Victory or Triumph]; XLVIII, 27).[24]

The canonical prototypes of dream and vision are "at times prognosticating and at other times revelatory were to recur in myriad form throughout the subsequent history of Islam" (Green 2003:289-90). The Islamic philosopher Ibn Sīnā (980-1037) is one of the first thinkers to

[23] The Qur'ān states "Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We have blessed, that We might show him of Our sings. Truly He is the Hearer the Seer" (*al- Isrā'* [The Night Journey] XVII, 1; trans., Nasr 2015:694).

[24] The Qur'ān states: "Surely, God has fulfilled for Him Messenger the vision in truth: you shall enter the Sacred Mosque in security, if God wills, with the hair of your heads shaven or cut, not fearing. For He knows what you know not, and He has given you therewithal a victory high." (*al-Fath* [Victory or Triumph] XLVIII, 27; trans., Nasr 2015:1255).

express that the prophetic dream is an act of providence (*'ināyah*), a vison from the divine (Fahd 1966). This thinking becomes the basis of later Sūfī views on dreams, where according to Ibn Sīnā such providence is granted to all humans but not to the extent of those allotted to the prophets (Fahd 1966). Thus, the Prophet's *mi'rāj* (the Second Journey) becomes the focal point of reference for many Islamic philosophers, Sūfī thinkers and to a large extent in many Muslim communities. Islamic tradition asserts that the Prophet ascended through each of the seven heavenly spheres until he came within a distance of "the length of two bows" from the presence of Allāh (El-Azma 1973). Over the centuries, the nature of the Prophet's celestial journey has acquired an intellectual importance "as a genuine revelation from God, as a true epistemic rupture (or *fath*, literally an 'opening') of everyday reality" (Green 2003:293). For a believer, the "opening" (*fath* also means to attain or conquer) is an important medium to imagine one's proximity to Allāh. This philosophical inquiry led to Sūfī writings that included a considerable number of narratives on saints' vision, depicting their encounters with the divine (El-Azma 1973). Some of these narratives are well known in contemporary Sūfī practices. The crucial point about dreams is the focus on the Prophet and his vision that breaches into "the world of the unseen" (*'ālam al-ghayb*) (Kugle 2003). Prophetic vision is the ability to shed light on the unknown; a famous Sūfī saying is often highlighted by the believers: "a few with pure heart can see what hides behind the curtain and can reveal this divine vision to us."

Abdil, Jamilā's father, is a devoted Sūfī. He explained how "a saintly sūfī vision" plays an important role in guiding him and many from his Aleppo community:

> For a Sūfī, it is common to dream about how the *pīr* [the religious guide, the spiritual father] helps a believer to walk the path of *tarīqa* [esoteric path]. It is common for me to dream about this journey; it makes me feel connected and closer on my journey to Allāh. I have many dreams like that, frankly most believers that I know have had such dreams. We think of them with pleasure and contentment and always look to find its message and signs. For example, one of the important signs that my Sūfī order in Aleppo talked about

> is when you are waking with the *pīr* are holding hands? What hands are we holding? If it is the left hand then the pīr is closer to you, therefore to Allāh, because the left side is where the heart is. It is customary for us to think that dreams like that are a sign that we have taken a step towards Allāh. It makes me feel lighter….It is so different that having ordinary dreams; this kind of dream is not ordinary but a way to connect to Allāh. It is not like the Prophet; he come face-to-face with the angels…with Allāh. As a Sūfī, a dream is to imagine being part of the universe that is moving one closer to Allāh. This way of dreaming is seeing what is in the heart…and finding a way to see what is, as Sūfīs say, the unseen. (Interview in November 2018)

The interpretation of dreams, a style of "spiritualized Islamic psychoanalysis" (Ewing 1990 & 1997) is, to this day, a vital service expected from a *pīr* (a Sūfī master). Mittermaier asserts that these dreams and visions in the Sūfī communities are the "paradigm of self-cultivation" (2012:247). Abdil's understanding of dream concurs with Mittermaier's explanation of how "the narratives of visitational and divinely inspired dream" highlights the "unpredictability of divine interventions and the contingency of life itself" (2012:247). Mittermaier asserts that the Sūfī experiential and imaginary encounters with the divine, the Prophet, and his saintly descendants are important rituals within many Islamic communities (2007). This "ability to see beyond the visible" (Mittermaier 2012:247) is more concerned with the Prophetic realm (*al-hadra al-muhammadiyya*), where a dream "*comes to* the dreamer as opposed to being *produced* by her or him (Mittermaier 2012:248; emphasis in the original). The visitational and divine quality of dreams, even if an expression of the unpredictability of divine intervention, is a self-cultivation and this-worldly-oriented form of religiosity (see the anthropology of Christianity's engagement with dream and divine intervention; Engelke 2007; Luhrmann 2005; O'Neill 2010).

According to Zaynab, Jamilā's mother, these dream stories come from the metaphysical and elsewhere. This view separates the Sūfī understanding of vision from Jamilā's dream about Safiyya. Zaynab stated:

> When one has dreams of the angels and the saints, they are inspired by the divine. We call them *ru'yā* ("dreams or waking visions"). They are beautiful and outside of human control. They are, how should I say, a much lesser version of a Prophetic epiphany, a vision or a revelation of Allāh's message. That was our Prophet's miracle, and the ability to be able to see this vision. But in the old days, ordinary dreams, especially bad dreams like nightmares were said to be the work of sprits and devil…we now know that is not true, science teaches us that ordinary dreams can be caused due to many different issues. (Interview in November 2018)

Zaynab distinguishes a prophetic vision from an "ordinary dream," thus making a Sūfī's experience of a dream not "a straight-forward-cause-and-effect relationship" (Mittermaier 2012:249) of the inner state and projection. Based on Zaynab's statement, Mittermaier's paradigm of self-cultivation is less effective, but in line with the practices of anthropologist Saba Mahmood's study of Egyptian women in the mosque (2004), veiling practices in Istanbul (Goekariksel 2009), the cultivation of forbearance of a terminally diagnosed kidney patient (Hamdy 2009), the self-reform in Islamic institution and media technology in Germany (Jouili 2008), and even Mittermaier's earlier work of dream and vision (2011). Mittermaier's claim that dreams, as a form of self-cultivation, "erase…not only various *non-religious sensibilities*, but also *other modes of religiosity*" (Mittermaier 2012:250 emphasis in the original). However, Zaynab's description of dream addresses the non-religious sensibilities, or at the very least its existence and role in an individual's life. In the religious realm, dreams can be viewed as Islamic eschatological beliefs that in the words of historians Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad is concerned with the "immediateness of human ethical responsibility" (2002:106). Moreover, the concept of self-cultivation and the ethical implications of dreams takes one "beyond the confines of the binary model of enacting and subverting norms" (Mahmood 2004:29). Based on this assertion, dream or vision cannot exclusively be considered an ethical practice only about alterity and not self-cultivation.

Ibn ʻArabī wrote prominently about the role of *khayāl* (imaginative faculty) as an active element in human understanding (see Chapter Three). Ibn ʻArabī's Sūfi beliefs prompted him to consider *khayāl* "to be the essential part of the journey to God, as the supreme human faculty capable of bridging the existential gap between human and divine knowledge" (Green 2003:296). Thus, dreams are imaginative impulses that are an essential aspect of Allāh's eternal self-manifestation (what he called, *tajallī*; "illumination" or "brilliancy"). Ibn ʻArabī viewed dreams to be both descending from Allāh to humans "as a private revelation" and ascending from an individual to Allāh "as a creative visual encounter with the divine" (Green 2003:296). This view corresponds with Ibn ʻArabī's broader view of the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Zaynab's discussion of dreams also addresses a similar view:

> A *ru'yā* is inspired by the divine and comes from the divine. It can be no other way. It is not something that someone normally or ordinary experiences. These dreams are already written by the angels in heaven. A few years ago, my mother had a dream where she saw a man, dressed in a splendid green garment who approached her. She was a little shocked and confused and asked the man: "who are you?" The face of the man was radiant so she was not able to see. She heard the man say: "I come to tell you that your mother is smiling in heaven." For days, she talked about her dream and read the Qur'ān for her mother. She knew that her mother was blessed. (Interview in November 2018)

Zaynab's statement that dreams "are already written in heaven" is a reminder of Mittermaier's work in Egypt, where "many Sufis…explained…[to her]…that divinely inspired dreams ae always already written on the Eternal Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfūz*), a tablet in heaven on which all fate is inscribed" (2015:138).

Khayāl consists of an imaginary component, much like a dream, which for Ibn ʻArabī holds a degree of realness. He states that "the only reason Allāh placed sleep in the animate world was so that everyone might witness the presence of imagination and know that there is another world similar to the [everyday] sensory world" (Chittick 1998:xx). This perspective by

Ibn ʻArabī separates his views from pantheism, which is a clear distinction by most Islamic philosophers who believed in the all-encompassing and immanent presence of Allāh. Islamic philosopher, William Chittick states that for Ibn ʻArabī *khayāl* is an important mode of knowing when an individual is receiving the self-revelation of Allāh. Chittick states that

> Unveiling…is knowledge that God gives directly to the servants when He lifts the veil separating Himself from them and 'opens the door' to perception of invisible realities…. Generally speaking, unveiling is associated with imagination because it typically occurs through the imaginalization of various entities or realities. In other words, things that are normally inaccessible to sense perception or to reason are given form by God and then perceived within imagination by those to whom the door to unseen things has been opened. Unveiling is an every- day occurrence for prophets. For the friends of God, it is an inheritance from the prophets. The Folk of Unveiling are the highest ranking friends of God. (Chittick 1998:xxii)

Thus, *khayāl* is the human faculty of "imagination for self-revelation, entering human consciousness through the 'door' of imaginative processes" (Halligan 2001:277). In Ibn ʻArabī's understanding the "more that rational thinkers reflect upon God, the farther away they push Him" (Chittick 1998: xi, xxxxvi). In contrast to *ʻaql* (intellect), *khayāl* "embodies" and creates a closeness" that is "inherently rooted in *tashbīh* (immanence), which sees the cosmos as a locus of God's continual self-discourse, a realm of kindness" (Mittermaier 2015:135).

Ibn ʻArabī believed that *khayāl* encompasses all human experiences, both the physical reality and the metaphysical archetype. He claimed that if someone writes a poem, the poet is already familiar with the process of imagination, a process that gives tangible forms to intangible ideas. Ibn ʻArabī states that *khayāl* enables any "pure idea" to have a sensible form (Chittick 1998:xi). Ibn ʻArabī's use of *khayāl* is most importantly an intuitive mode of knowing, what he called the "Active Imagination" (Corbin 1969:221). For Sūfīs—whom Ibn ʻArabī was a leading figure and known as "the great master"—the divine was an imaginary experience and all-

encompassing manifestation. The locus of this imagination is the knowledge that enlightens the "heart" (*qalb*) (see Chapter Two; al-Ghazālī's metaphor of the "heart").

The discussion of dreams thus far has mainly focused on the prophetic visions, but Islamic philosophers have also addressed dreams as a human and mundane experience. This implies that dreams are not strictly conferred from on high but deal with the everyday experiences of humans. Arabic and Persian historians have discussed how dream interpretation (*ta'bīr*) became a popular subject in the sophisticated circles of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate (750-1258) in Baghdād (Green 2003, Von Grunebaum & Caillois 1966).[25] Zaynab (Jamilā's mother) explained that dream interpretations are still prevalent in Aleppo:

> There are different ways that we interpret dreams, good or a bad dream, it does not matter. For example, water brings delight and prosperity. If someone dreams about washing hands or face in the water it signifies happiness because it brings purity. But one bad dream is seeing a snake, especially if the snake has its mouth open…that means it is ready to attack. It is customary for the ladies to sit together and interpret their dreams, particularly if it is a bad dream. It is easy to tell, people who have bad dreams are uneasy and want to find a way to find out what the issue is. There are, of course, other forms of dreams…like mothers who have lost a son in the war and see a white dove. That is very common for us. (Interview in November 2018)

Zaynab's explanation is a reminder of the anthropologist Michael Lambek's interlocutors in Madagascar whose dream-stories, in the practice of spirit possession, are never pragmatically neutral (1996). He states the symbolism of water or the white dove is expected to move the audience and draw the listeners to an otherwise invisible domain. Lambek situates the captivating power of dream-stories in two conceptualizations of memory: "representational" and "evocative" (1996). Representational, as a category, is the best possible (the most accurate) way of recalling the past. Evocative is a form of dream which includes a set of ideals, claims and functions of social relations that have ethical implications. Therefore, the recalling of dream-

[25] *Ta'bīr* literally means to "carry across to the other side of a river" (Rahman 1966).

stories is never morally or pragmatically neutral: "[T]o remember is never solely to report on the past so much as to establish one's relationship toward it" (Lambek 1996: 240). As Mittermaier points out dreams are based on an individual's insights that are invitational, stating that dream-stories "invite us to see what is obscured by a representational logic and to think beyond concerns with representativeness" (2015:137). Dreams are a medium to cultivate relationships that go beyond the seen world; they are recalled through a language that exhibits religious, spiritual and cultural symbolism closely tied to the individual's social world. Importantly, as illustrated with Jamilā, dream is a mode of relationality to the other. Dreams, as a way to relate to the other, enable one to draw individuals into the world of the hidden (*al-bātin*) and invisible (*al-ghayb*).

The following section examines how Jamilā's own dream-world includes Islamic and Sūfī symbolism and also relevant cultural representations as the result of the Syrian Civil War. Jamilā's discussions of Safiyya presented below took place a few weeks after she illustrated her dream on the whiteboard, after which time she only elaborated on, in her words, "the old lady's face." The next part, focuses on how Safiyya's face and the significance of color in the Islamic tradition.

Imagining the Face of the Other

Hollan explains how anthropologists have taken notice of dream as something that is a "real" experience to "communicate with the souls or spirits of other humans, animals, gods, or supernatural and ancestral beings" (2004:171).[26] He reminds us—even though some scholars

[26] Hollan also points to how some anthropologists have argued that the bases of religious principles and spiritual beliefs originate in dreams (see Tylor 1871).

have pointed out the difficulties of the experience of dreams and its narration—that dreams are a "report" that is correlates with the issues an individual is encountering in a particular moment of life (2004:171; also see Hollan 2003). Dreams are also built on the intersubjective relationship between the dream teller and the researcher. Jamilā knew that I was aware of what the colors of white, red and green symbolize in Islam. She never felt the need to explain the importance of the colors—only how they relate to her dream. Hollan points out that dreams with intense and powerful emotional residues "provide the mind with an updated map of the self's contours and affective resonances: its relative vitality or decrepitude, its relative wholeness or division, its relative closeness or estrangement from others, its perturbation by conscious and unconscious streams of emotion" (2004:172). Jamilā's recurring dream is vivid and easy to recall, but it remains to be seen whether over time they will lose their "realness" or remain intense. While each community differs in how (and if) they are encouraged to remember dreams (Hollan 2004), it becomes a vital mode of communication for a refugee child to express his/her closeness to the other, and to (re)orient certain moral experiences that are otherwise difficult to convey.

Jamilā's conscious and unconscious stream of emotion are less rooted in the repressed aspirations, or fantasies or appeals, but rather a visceral exposure to the vulnerability of Safiyya manifested through the dream. The presence of other in a dream is a way to unsettle the "self" and replace it with the "other." If dream is a way to relate to the other, then Safiyya's vulnerability puts Jamilā at risk of being haunted by her dream. However, it allows her to become increasingly open, responsive and, in the words of Levinas, "humane," since there is always another face, one more opening or interruption (1985). In the same vain, Jamilā's account of Safiyya's face is similar to Hollan's explanation of how dreams "provide a current map or

update of the self's contours and affective resonances relative to its own body, as well as to other objects and people in the world" (2004:174).

Two weeks after the whiteboard drawings, Jamilā began to discuss how Safiyya's face is the most vivid and consistent part of her dreams. She said:

> Almost always I see her face but never all the details I told you about. Sometimes the details of what I see are really short and only a small, like I see my parents behind me but they are quickly gone. But her face is always there. One of the things I see on her face are the dots, they are always there. Then I notice that they are not dots but blood. There are the same spots on her dress…on her white dress the red spots. In my dream I sometimes ask myself why does she have red spots? I ask myself if she is really alive? When I wake up the red dots and the white garment she is wearing reminds me of how a *shāhid* ["witness," also denote a martyr in Islam; "one who dies for his faith"] was carried in Aleppo. I ask myself why is she wearing the same white garment? Then, when I see the red spots, I know what happened. (Interview in November 2018)

Red, white and green are among five colors given significance in the Qur'ān. White symbolizes purity and cleanliness, and for the Prophet it represented brotherhood in the community of the believers (Sirriyeh 2011a). It is common for Muslims to wear white clothing during the Friday prayers and is required during the sacred rites of pilgrimage. For the majority of Muslims, the most visceral connection to the color white is the ritual of wrapping the washed, dead body in white garments (three pieces for man and two for women), which is to symbolize the person's purity (Arief 2013). For Sūfī believers, the white color also symbolizes humility, and as Abdil (Jamilā's father) says: "a Sūfī comes to the world pure and should leave the world pure…that means not to be mixed up in the material desire and selfish wants."

The merits of dreaming about a white garment mirror those of prophets and saints, where "their dead bodies remain uncorrupted and give off a fragrant smell, frequently said to be a smell of musk, a scent described as pervading paradise" (Sirriyeh 2011b:170; also see Cook 2007). Moreover, the appearance of a martyred-like image of a dead person in a dream represents

"truthful" and "literal message" that are "guidance delivered from the world of the dead…[which are]…considered sound and reliable" (Katz 1996:19). Jamilā explained the significance of the white color in her dream:

> Usually, we think of a *shāhid* as someone who was fighting the al-Assad army, but they are not the only *shāhid.* I learned from my grandmother anyone who was innocent and died is a *shāhid*. She told me *shāhid* is someone who is close to Allāh and dies because of believing in the right thing. I think that is why I see Safiyya in white, but it is strange because she is not dead! She is talking to me, but then I see the blood and I think to myself, is she dead? What makes me sad is that I get scared in my dream and look away from her face. That makes me think, I am leaving her and I feel like, with the red dots on her white garment, *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* [I have committed a great sin]."
>
> Abdil: Think about this...she is wearing white, like the Prophet and the saints. I am sure she is in heaven and smiling at you. You do know that a *shāhid* has a special place with Allāh.
>
> Jamilā: I know that…but her face is not happy when I dream about her…I wish she would be smiling because isn't heaven a place where everyone is happy and smiling? I like it that she is wearing white but I also don't like it so much because it means she is not alive. I wish her mouth was not closed so I could hear her talk (Interview in November 2018).

It is of note that while Jamilā speaks about Safiyya's mouth being closed, she also relays a level of communication that has taken place either prior to seeing the spots of blood or during her encounter with the face. She was not able to explain how the communication transpired. It is conceivable to think that as the dream begins Safiyya is talking to Jamilā but after Jamilā notices the blood spots Safiyya's mouth is closed and Jamilā can no longer hear her talk.

In most Muslim communities, martyrdom has a geopolitical significance that is emotionally charged with the theme of "corrupt and oppressive tyranny repeatedly overcoming (in this world) the steadfast dedication to pure truth" (Fischer 1980:13). Based on Islamic beliefs, martyrdom is the decisive and ultimate personal deed of "redemption and freedom" (Swenson 1985:139). Jamilā's dream depicts two worlds for her: a) Safiyya as a pious Muslim, an

individual who represents what is good yet lost to the civil war's carnage; and b) an unwavering belief that she committed an unforgivable sin by abandoning Safiyya.

To summarize, there are two modes of interpretation for Islamic dreams: a) inspirational interpretation by a religious person or a Sūfī *pīr* (elder or guide with appropriate knowledge); and b) deductive interpretations that require knowledge of dream symbolism (Sirriyeh 2011a:216). The face, and particularly Safiyya's closed mouth, is important in Jamilā's understanding of her dream. The word "face" (*wajh*) carries a particular mystical and theological

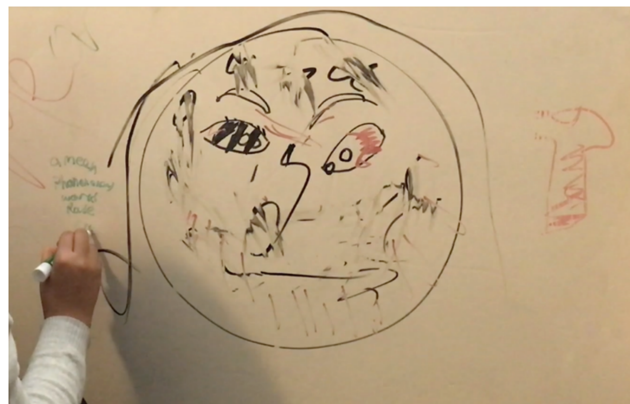

Figure 10. Jamilā drawing the face of Safiyya.

connotation that are prevalently used as metaphors in the Qur'ān (Neuwirth 1998). Islam discusses the "mutual relations between the Face of God and Face of Man" (Neuwirth 1998:298). The word face appears seventy-two times in the Qur'ān and in only ten does it refer to the face of Allāh; the ideal believer becomes the one who is "seeking, or desiring, the face of God" (Neuwirth 1998:3). The symbolism of the face was given great significance when the Prophet instructed the community of believers to direct their praters towards *qibla* (the Cube in Macca), which represented the "face" of Allāh, In addition, the Qur'ān states: "To God belong the East and the West. Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God. God is All-Encompassing, Knowing" (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow]; II, 115; trans., Nasr 2015:53-4). The face

also signifies charity, the Qur'ān notes: "We feed you only for the Face of God. We desire from you no recompense or thanks" (*al-Insān* [Man]; LXXVI, 9; trans., Nasr 2015:1454-5). Most importantly, the Qur'ān asserts that the face represents patience and endurance: "and who are patient, seeking the Face of their Lord" (*al-Ra'd* [The Thunder] XIII, 22; trans., Nasr 2015:621).[27]

One of the most sticking eschatological images employed in the Qur'ān is the black faces of sinners in hell scorched by hellfire: "their garments made of pitch, and the Fire covering their faces" (*Ibrāhīm* [Abraham] XIV, 50; trans., Nasr 2015:639). Nasr states that the phrase "made of pitch" is a to signify "the extreme degree to which they [the sinners] will be scorched in the Fire" (2015:639). Jamilā is fully aware of the symbolism of the colors white and black in Muslim religious imagination:

> Every time I look at her face it is really black…it almost feels like I can't see anything. I can't figure out where her face starts and ends. I sometimes think it is not black but it's just so dark like the people who do bad stuff and go to hell because their faces are burning…but it is really scary to look at. And also, I know that my grandmother says that in the Qur'ān it says that if you have done bad things your face with be in dirt and it will be in a very dark place. (Interview in November 2018)

Jamilā is referring to three passages in the Qur'ān, where the face will be covered with soil (*qatar*) (X, 26), dust (*ghabra*) (LXXX, 40) as if the face of the sinners has "been veiled (*ughshiyat*) with a cloak of darkest night" (X, 27). The analogy of dust or earth on the face makes relation to the other less apparent. The symbolism of the face is that it represents the self

[27] British orientalist and historian of Islamic art, Sir Thomas Arnold states that "although numerous examples exist, pictures of Muhammad in which his features are visible are comparatively rare and most frequently occur in the earlier period. From the sixteenth century onwards a convention became established of hanging a short veil from the fore-head to the chin, over the face of the Prophet, so that his features were hidden. Such a concession to orthodox sentiment also occurs in representations of other Prophets, such as Abraham, and the early saints of Islam." (1965:98)

to others and that it signifies something that lies beyond; "it is both mask and window of the soul" (Taussig 1999:224). This paradoxical representation correlates with psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan who states that the face is "the most elusive of objects" (1992). In short, face is a synecdoche of Allāh; a part of Him which stands for the whole: "All that is upon it passes away. And there remains the Face of thy Lord, Possessed of Majesty and Bounty" (*al-Rahmān* [The Compassionate] LV, 26-27; trans., Nasr 1313).

The conventional thought in Islam is while the body perishes, the "face" remains (the "face" is the essence of a human being). On the Day of Judgment the "mask" is removed and the true essence of a person is exposed. According to al-Ghazālī the "secret things are revealed" and at which point "what was hidden is made plain and veils are lifted" (1990:4; *Ihyā'* 517. cf.) Jamilā continued her description of Safiyya's face:

> part of the reason her face looks so dark and hard to see with all the black stuff on it is that I think she is trying to say something but she can't talk because her mouth is closed. Sometimes I think, when I remember later, she is trying to say she is not happy with me. I think that is why her face is so dark and unhappy. That is why I see it in black and I painted it in black the other time. I think the black is worth more than the red dots, because the red dots are *shāhid* [a martyr in Islam], but the darkness means she is very unhappy. Because I know in front of Allāh you can't hide anything and He knows who is has done good and who has done bad. That's why, maybe that is why…she looks so unhappy. I can't change her dark face because she died and that's why when I wake up, I feel like *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* [I have committed a sin]. I try hard to see her in light and sometimes in my dream I force myself but it never works. I know the face of the Prophet is full of light like the sun, and I know no one can be like him but I want to see Safiyya's face in a place that is not dark anymore. (Interview in November 2018)

This representation is based on the Islamic philosophy that while face provides religious identity and conviction in the Truth (*haqīqat*) for the believers, it also symbolizes the "fragility and powerlessness of humankind vis-à-via its Creator" (Lange 2007:432).[28] The face is both a

[28] A *hadīth* states that "he who fasts one day in the way of God, He will 'distance his face' (*bā'ada wajhahu*) from hell for seventy reasons" (al-Bukhārī 1998:4.147).

reflection of one's conviction within the Islamic community and also a representation of the self, which in al-Ghazālī's ethics is concerned with the "heart" (see Part I). The proximity to the "face" represents closeness to Allāh. In the darkness of the dream, Jamilā feels distant from the close and imitate relationship with Safiyya—from the image of the face. The distance from the other's face is a reminder of an unrepairable bond to the other, a separation from the spiritual world.

The classical Arabic expression is useful to think about: "May you have the fortune to see Allāh's Face" (*ab'ada Allāh wajhahu*). In Arabic, the expression "water of the face (*mā' al-wajh*)," according to Islamic jurists speaks "most conspicuously of what lies behind the face. It is as if by washing the face, believers purify their souls" (Lange 2007:434). The "water of the face" is referred to regularly with the Allāh's attributes of beauty (*bahja*) and grace (*talāwa*). In *Risāla*, the philosopher Abū Bakr Muhammad Rāzī (854-925) elaborates that "the face is the seat of beauty and ugliness, on which depends the perfection of the body or its deficiency; what is visible in the face is a strong indicator of innate characteristic (*al-khlāq al-bātina* ["the inner ethics"]), such as bashfulness, fear, anger, joy and sadness" (Lange 2007:449). Purity is symbolized in the cleanliness and a refined face. Jamilā explains the importance of purity or wholesomeness of the face:

> What makes me the saddest about Safiyya's face is that it is not shining; she always smiled but I don't even want her to smile…all I want is that I see her face as it was before. This way she looks blurry and hazy. When I look at the drawings of the Prophet and the saints, their faces are all shining. It makes me unhappy to see that Safiyya does not have that face. Beyond anything else that makes me feel *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* [I have committed a sin]. I want to hear her tell me something but the darkness means she is unhappy with me. (Interview in November 2018)

The Image of the Dream

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud states that dreams are representational, constituted of symbols connected to latent unconscious thoughts (1996 [1900]). Vital to Jamilā's dream is what anthropologist Lisa Stevenson calls "all stories, like dreams, are alive in the sense that narrative makes a life for the author" (2014:139). Freud believed that dreams "think in picture," where this imaginative ability "stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words" (1961 [1932]:21). The Freudian understanding of dream as "visual residues of perceptions" (Stevenson 2014:44), was criticized by Foucault who pointed to the limits of desire in the image, which in return sidelines the importance of linguistic utterance. Foucault articulated this notion by stating that "because the image is a language which expresses without formulating, an utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself" (1993:36). Nonetheless, Jamilā's description of her story and dream about Safiyya can be a way of bringing image and language together.

Moral experiences and feelings can be seen as "imagistic" (Stevenson 2014:45), where dreams are actually a "mode of attunement" (Binswanger 1993:88) to the other and the world. This notion, contrary to Freud, indicates that the image presents the individual mode of existence rather than the psychanalytical deciphering of the dream. The psychiatrist, Ludwig Binswanger makes clear "the primal and strict interdependence of feeling and image, of being-attuned and pictorial realization" (1993:88). For Jamilā, the imagery has significant religious and spiritual value and connotations. The bond to the other can be constructed based on image and imaginative world (see Stevenson's idea of psyche life being captured "imagistically" and the "realm of thought-images"; 2014:45). Moreover, Binswanger argued that once an image is analyzed it becomes a more "complete" form of consciousness (deciphered into meanings and facts). Jamilā's dream, the image of the face and symbolism of the colors, has the ability to

connect to the other without her desires being reduced to facts. Image in the dream becomes the "grammar of a life" (Stevenson 2014:140).

The professor of philosophy Jonathan Lear states that a vision in a dream can "provide access to the order of the world beyond anything available to ordinary conscious understanding" for the Chief Plenty Coups of the Crow Nation (2006:66). Dreams and the images become, in the words of Lear, "resources for thought—for practical reasoning" where they are "a transformation of the virtue of courage" (2006:66). Lear makes clear that the Crow's understanding of dream differs from Freud in that they are not only a human response to human desires which would provide "disguised gratification" (2006:68). Jamilā's dream is more comparable to Lear's description of the Crow in that "humans have a meaningful place in a meaningful world" (2006:68). In short, the Crow "used dreams to find out whether they would obtain real-life gratifications" (Lear 2006:68). Similarly, Jamilā's dream is a way of recalibrating her moral experiences, where Safiyya's vulnerability is depicted in various colors and images. Dreams are ethical practices, a mode of existence and being-in-the-world through images.

Jamilā's dream is a mode of existence; through the image of Safiyya, she comes into the presence of the other. The "realm of thought-images" presents Jamilā with a unique and dynamic understanding of her moral experiences towards the other. Her dream needs to be examined in conjunction with her storytelling, after all, both the dream and the story are about Safiyya. The juxtaposition between the brightness of the young Safiyya in the countryside and the darkness of the old woman illustrates how images exhibit the immediacy of the present (Jamilā's feeling of sinfulness). In *Knot of the Soul*, Pandolfo discusses a trance state (*sar'*) and individual disposition (*hāla*) in relation to dream and healing (2018:275-77). The work of repair presented in Jamilā's writing differs in that it is not instantly transformative, but a gradual work of coming

to terms with the past. Jamilā's story about Safiyya creates a version of the past that reconcile with the vulnerable other. Her storytelling and dream draw upon the images of Safiyya to (re)orient her beliefs based on certain moral experiences.

Chapter Six: Music, Imagination and the Other

"If you knew what love does
You would never be away
An antelope with kohl in her eyes and a beautiful allure*
From which a tree branch would be shy
You, whose love exhausted my heart
You're like a full moon, but more beautiful
If you love demands my killing
I leave it to Allāh, do it!"

--Muwashshahāt (Arabic poetic form and a music genre)
by Syrian tenor singer Sabah Fakhrī
**Kohl in Arabic means eyeliner to darken the eyelids.*

About two months after I first met Lylā at the Arab American Association of New York, her father, Faizal, invited me to their two-bedroom apartment in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. I was eager to hear Lylā play the *'ūd*, a lute-type, pear-shaped stringed instrument often with eleven strings grouped in six courses. Lylā began learning the *'ūd* from her father when she was seven years old. Her first musical instructions took place during her stay in a Turkish refugee camp. During our meetings, my discussions with Lylā and Faizal often gravitated towards music, and my first visit to their apartment was no exception. Shortly, after being introduced to Lylā's two younger brothers, Faizal brought out his *'ūd* and asked Lylā to get her instrument. They had a remarkably close relationship which was evident even more during their musical interactions. Faizal began to tune his *'ūd* and Lylā—listening intently—followed, so the two instruments were in tune. Faizal began playing a short improvisation (known as *taqsīm* "division"; a melodic musical improvisation in Arabic music), and after a few minutes Lylā joined her father. They performed a *muwashshahāt* (Arabic poetic form and a music genre) that Faizal had arranged for

two *‘ūds* and vocal (Faizal singing the tenor part). Lylā played her *‘ūd* beautifully, displaying her ability and passion for the musical instrument. Lylā, now twelve-years-old, elaborated on her interest about the *‘ūd*:

> When I was little in Aleppo, I listen to my dad play the *‘ūd* while my mother sang old Syrian songs. We always had people who came to our house to listen to my parents play music. My grandfather also played the ‘*ūd*, that’s how my dad learned the *‘ūd*. I was too young to learn when we lived in Aleppo, and it was really a hard time for us because everyone was worried about the war. I started to play in the camp [the Turkish refugee camp they resided in for about two years]. Playing *‘ūd* helped me with my sadness since my mom was not with us anymore. My dad is really a good teacher and helps me a lot to learn Syrian music. I really liked it because it reminded me of all the good times and things about my mother and sometimes my grandfather. The best thing about the *‘ūd* is…I sometimes close my eyes when I am playing and imagine my mother singing…that makes me happy and sometimes really sad. I even imagine doing what my dad used to do with her; he played, and my mom sang.
>
> Faizal: The song Lylā is taking about, the one we just played for you, is a *muwashshahāt* [Arabic poetic form and a music genre] from Sabah Fakhrī [iconic Syrian singer] which my wife used to sing. (Interview in January 2019)

Lylā and her family fled Aleppo in the summer of 2015 to a Turkish refugee camp. The decision to leave was made after an episode of heavy attacks by the Syrian government and other Shia militias against the Free Syrian Army in Aleppo. The large-scale devastation during the civil war was marked by widespread violence against civilians that even targeted hospitals and schools. Faizal and his family chose to flee when the situation in Aleppo, in his words, “became unforgiving.” Lylā and her family drove north towards the Turkish border in two cars. One car with Faizal, his children and his brother, and the second car with Sabā (Lylā’s mother) driving her parents and brother. According to Faizal, having “two cars lessened the risk of both cars being singled out and interrogated by the al-Assad forces on the road.” As they were driving towards the Turkish border, Sabā’s car came under attack killing them instantly. At a later meeting, Faizal somberly shared this heartbreaking incident:

> We were driving and things seemed a little tense in the distance, we could hear gun shots but they were far, these things were normal there, and we had no choice but to continue to drive. My wife was driving in front of us. We were relieved that we were finally able to leave Aleppo. There was a bit more to drive to get to the border…there were cars in front and behind us so that made me just a little more comfortable. It seemed like other people were also heading to the border but hard to exactly know. Everything changed in less than a minute, it was very quick. I am still shocked and can't even remember all the details. It is so hard because I constantly relive what happened and feel confused…somehow my memory can't recall everything. The road came to a stop, no one was moving. All of a sudden I heard shoots, it takes a second but I realized that there were snipers in the hills off the road. People later told me that the Syrian government forces were looking for a commander of a Free Syrian Army who was escaping Aleppo. It makes no difference to me why they shot at my wife; they took my wife's life. The car in front of them was totally destroyed; it looked like everyone had died in it. It was so shocking and sad. It happened so quickly that all I was thinking about was to protect my children…as much as I could I tried to protect my children from seeing their mother dead. I asked my brother to keep driving, I got out to go to my wife's car. (Interview in February 2019)

Faizal was able to drive his wife's car to a local mosque, where he met his brother and children. The following morning, they performed the Islamic burial for Sabā at the local mosque (according to Faizal, Sabā was the fifth of the twelve burials that morning). Then, shortly after the ceremony they had no choice but to drive to Turkey due to security concerns.

From our first meeting in November of 2019, Lylā mainly discussed her mother when she played her *ʻūd*. It was clear that she did not like talking about Sabā during the daily routine of her life. However, after some of her music rehearsals, and after her school performance, she unreservedly spoke about how she imagined the "happy" and "sad" face of her mother. It was as if music lifted the burden of the past for Lylā and enabled her to speak about her mother. This chapter examines how Lylā, through music, envisioned the duality of her mother singing blissfully in one world and inhabiting the sad darkness of another. Lylā's *ʻūd* playing becomes a site of moral tension and a medium for her to navigate the paradoxical images of her mother's face. I begin by probing how music becomes a "lived experience" undertaken by Lylā and her

father, and how the sense of "inner time" enables her to connect to her mother. The temporal aspect of Lylā's musical experiences shed light on the duality of her imaginative worlds.

The phenomenological discussion continues by analyzing how Lylā's *'ūd* playing creates "a shared reality" (Throop 2009) where she shifts between different "attitudes" (Husserl 1962; Throop 2015). Lylā's orientation to the world is achieved through phenomenological modification based on the poem in the *muwashshahāt*. The imaginative world of her mother's face is the manifestation of how the other reveals the limits and possibilities of Lylā's world. Music evokes the emotional moments in which the vulnerability of Sabā is manifested to Lylā. After discussing how the two faces appear to Lylā, the chapter examines Ibn 'Arabī's assertion of "His Face," a discussion about the Islamic perspective of the attunement to Allāh. This interpretation of "His Face" by Ibn 'Arabī, based on the Qur'ān, assists in understanding how the face evokes emotions of sinfulness in Lylā and at the same time presents images of her mother as angel-like in heaven. In this way, music creates both an imaginative world for Lylā that is self-reflective about her "wrongdoings" and also has a healing power to reach out to the other.

The following section highlights some of the important aspects of the day-to-day lifeworld of Lylā. A snapshot of her life allows for an understanding of her convictions and beliefs as she settles in to her new life in the United States. It is fascinating how music changed Lylā's day-to-day activities into an imaginary world of/with the other.

SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND AND MUSIC

Lylā attends a public school and completed sixth grade in June 2020. I was able to visit her school during her fifth grade year. A typical school day for her consisted of getting up around 6:00 in the morning—before her brothers woke up—to have breakfast with her father. In the

morning, Faizal prayed as Lylā quietly organized her school materials in the same room. After breakfast, Lylā waited by the door for her friend who lived on the same street so they could walk to school together. Faizal left home a little later and took his sons to a different public school. Lylā had made many friends at school, particularly two girls in her mathematics class. She provided details about her school and friends:

> I love my school because I feel like I have a larger family there. It makes me happy to walk to school with my friend each morning…she is like my sister; we talk about everything and share so much with each other. My teachers are really nice and make me feel comfortable in school. When I first went to school, I was worried about how my teachers would react…I would ask myself: what if I don't know some words in English, or I was not able to do my homework. I am glad my teachers are really nice and make me feel I am a part of the school. I love my art classes more than anything! Maybe it's because I play music, so I like it when I am learning more about art. I am not exactly sure yet, but I think I want to be a musician when I grow up. I am just happy to be in a school where I can study and also learn music from my teachers. (Interview in March 2019)

When Lylā came home from school, she spent time with her two younger brothers as her father cooked dinner and attended to other household matters. Lylā often checked on her brothers' homework, and at the same time, tried to finish most of her school assignments before dinner. After helping wash the dishes, she usually returned to doing her homework, while her brothers played video games or engaged in other activities. During her free time, she enjoyed playing video games, chatting with friends on the Internet and watching her favorite television shows on Netflix.

On the weekends, Lylā and her brothers went to the Arab American Association of New York. The Association was a place where they went to play games with other refugee children and it also had volunteers who organized activities and helped them with their homework. One of the volunteers spoke about Lylā:

> She joins us on the weekend when we mainly do artistic and creative work with the children. Almost all the children are from an Arabic speaking country. Lylā is our

> musician! She is part of a small play we are putting together, and she is responsible for the music. I find her to be fascinating, she has very good knowledge about some old Arabic songs that I don't even really know about. She tells me that other than Syrian singers her favorite singer is Umm Kulthum [an iconic Egyptian singer, songwriter and actress]…Lylā says she likes Umm Kulthum because she was a woman, who had a beautiful voice and also recited the Qur'ān exquisitely. It is really fascinating for me that she knows all of this. (Interview in June 2019)

Occasionally, Faizal took his children to the local mosque. Lylā enjoyed playing in the courtyard with the other children but was less enthusiastic about listening to the religious ceremonies. One of her favorite things was to walk in the park by the river in Brooklyn Heights and see the Statue of Liberty from afar. Lylā said:

> I love seeing the statue from the park…it looks so beautiful when you are walking in the park and looking at it from this side of the water. I love coming to the park with my father…I always like taking the subway, I feel like I am traveling somewhere else to a different town. And the park is always busy with so many people. They have a really great pizza place that we go to each time, and there is always such a huge line, but we really like it so it's worth the wait. (Interview in June 2019)

I noticed Lylā preferred the park and playground to indoor interactions. For her eleventh birthday, she invited some of her friends and their families to a local park in Bay Ridge. It was a pleasant early September afternoon and Lylā was clearly happy about having her friends there. She was even more excited about her father's gift of a brand new bicycle. In her words, she received "one of the most special gifts anyone could ever ask for." Lylā explained after the party that:

> I always wanted a bike. When I was really young, I remember my friend had one in Aleppo but I was so afraid to ride her bike…I was worried that I might fall and hurt myself. She would tell me, "try it, it's fun!" But I would just hold it and not do much more. I always dreamed about having my bike one day and now that I have it my father can really teach me how to ride it before the winter comes. (Interview in September 2019)

MUSIC AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lylā had a remarkably close relationship with her father which was displayed in their music making. Lylā and her father were invited to perform Arabic music during an assembly at her school. I observed most of their rehearsals which provided me with insights into Lylā's relationship with her father, but more importantly how she imagined and spoke about her mother. It was, to a large measure, surprising to me the first time Lylā talked about her mother in detail. Over time, the pattern of playing music and Lylā discussing her mother became more frequent. Something in the music, and playing alongside her father, evoked two distinctly different images of her mother for Lylā. Over time she came to share more details of the two faces.

For the school's music performance, Lylā rehearsed with her father for half an hour to an hour three times during the week leading up to the performance, which took place on a Saturday. Lylā said:

> Now that I am getting ready to play for my school. I am a little nervous but excited about playing for my friends. It's going to be really cool for other kids to see my music…they have already been asking me: What instrument do you play? What is an *'ūd*? (Interview in March 2019)

The rehearsals began with Faizal playing a short improvisation and then Lylā joining for the arranged composition, the *muwashshahāt* (see the beginning of the chapter for the complete translation of the poem). In rehearsals, Faizal was very detailed and demanding, requiring Lylā to play each part of the *muwashshahāt* several times, so that in his words, "she develops the right technique and delivery, and can also memorize the music and the poem that goes with it." Lylā observed:

> My father is super serious and hard on me sometimes when he teaches me music. He was always like this…he takes our music classes very seriously and makes me practice a lot…that is why my brothers would never do music. To be honest, sometimes it gets a little boring and difficult. But I like how he is teaching me…each time we play together it is so different than the last time, and what I learn each time is always different. What I

> like about it is that sometimes he tells me stories about when he was young with my grandfather. Or other stories he tells me, makes me think and imagine what it would be like to live in a different world. Even the things we tell each other are different each time. It is never the same…he says, music is like—because he is a Sūfī—a journey that helps us get closer to Allāh…I don't really know what he means by that or how that really makes him feel. I think about it differently because I imagine things. It is really nice that we can do this together and I could learn from my father. I mostly do it for my mother; I am sure she would have loved to see me play, she would have been so surprised, if she were here. When I play music, her face comes to my head…not all the time but a lot of times…and if it's a happy time then things go so quick, and some other times it is just sad and everything is so slow and tiring. (Interview in March 2019)

The philosopher Alfred Schutz's view on music (both in performance and its reception) as a *lived experience* (1976), is useful concerning Lylā's experience of *'ūd* playing. Unlike analytic philosophers, Schutz asserts that music should not be approached based on theories that consider it as an object of knowledge. Musical characteristics and their values cannot be evaluated or characterized detached from the musical experience. Schutz's understanding yields a view of the corporeality and spatiality in the experience of music that Lylā also speaks about:

> One of the nicest things about practicing with my father—although the performances make me a little nervous—is that sometimes when things are going good I forget how long I have been playing with my father. But sometimes I want to just stop. I especially like those times that things really go fast…before I know it we are finished. When things go good, I am always imagining nice things and people are happy, but when things go bad, I am always worried about playing badly, I also imagine bad things. For me, when things go bad, it is not about the music being hard but more about thinking of a sad thing about my mother or something like that. When I tell my friends, they think when I say my music practice with my father went bad, I am taking about like not being able to play something correctly. That is sometimes difficult, but I like it when I am able to imagine something really nice. (Interview in March 2019)

Lylā's comments about her understanding of temporality are rooted in Schutz's differentiation between "inner time" and "outer time," where he gives importance to the former. Before discussing how Lylā's music creates two imaginative worlds about her mother, an exploration of the temporal experience of her music allows an understanding of how she is able to imagine a

connection to her mother. For Schutz, music is a lived experience of the "inner time" rather than "a mere 'thing' to be divided up into separate units of 'outer time' (e.g., seconds, minutes, hours, etc.,)" (Claire Siu 2016:535). According to Lylā, her music experience consists of two categories: "when things go good" and "when things go bad." These two descriptivist cues can be explained based on Schutz's "inner time" that transpires in the mind-consciousness. The outer time (linear time) centers on the division of the body and the spatial world. On the other hand, the inner time is an imaginative sense of experiencing the world unlike the "spatial world with its fixed entities," such as "physical objects" (Schutz 1964:175; 1970:60).

Lylā's experience of time is similar to Schutz who argues that "inner time" is a form of temporality that represents the "most primitive and original experience of man" (1982:192f). For Lylā, performing this *muwashshahāt* evokes memories of her mother. After all, her childhood memories are of Sabā singing this *muwashshahāt.* While it could be accepted that the music piece triggers past memory, it does not explain why Lylā imagines two contradictory representations of her mother. It also does not address why music was the only medium in which Lylā was comfortable talking about her mother, particularly her face. Lylā's musical experience of "when things go good" alludes to a way of imagining the world that creates a sense of healing (or repair) towards the other. When Lylā is imagining her mother happy, she is envisioning a state where the bond to the vulnerable other is being repaired; imagining becomes a form of healing. This mode of coping is a way to reach out to the other under symmetrical and unvarying conditions. In this imaginative world, time takes on the tranquil and undisturbed sense of flow in the consciousness. This sense of "flow" of temporality, for example, is similar to how a jazz musician's creativity during an improvisation captures the musician(s) and their audience.

On the other hand, "when things go bad," Lylā finds herself open to the wounds of her mother; the other finds a way to haunt her. In doing so, she becomes aware of time and the uneasiness of the encounter with the other. Time still cannot be systematically compartmentalized, but the fluid nature of temporality gives way to a sense of disruption and fixity. This disruption in time allows Lylā to become attuned to herself, a self-reflective stage where she questions her role with her mother in an asymmetrical relationship. This is similar to Levinas, when he discusses how the other and the "I" are in a nonreciprocal and discontinuous relationship. This form of self-critique, in which the self is open to the other, is a rejection of the cognitive act of the ego that reduces all otherness to itself.

The determination of whether time has a sense of flow or an element of fixity is rooted in the consciousness. Schutz developed the philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson's concept of *durée*—defined as the "inner time of our stream of consciousness" that transpires in one's "mental life" (Schutz 1976:31)—as the condition for gaining access to the outer time of the spatial world of physical objects (Schutz 1982:192f). Lylā's lived experience of the *muwashshahāt* elucidates Schutz's claim that one experiences his/her "world [as] a world of open anticipations" instead of a world where the horizons are fixed (1962:216). Lylā explains her understanding of the *muwashshahāt*:

> It is beautiful and sad for me at the same time. The first line makes me think of my mother all the time: "If you knew what love does; You would never be away." I don't think about the words when I play and sometimes I am not even thinking about the music but many times they [the words] come to my head and make me imagine my mother. The word "away" makes me think of my mother not being with me. It makes me sad because I miss her, and she is not here. The word "love" is a little different, it is both sad and happy at the same time. It is sad because I can't show her my love anymore but I know, as my father says, I love her and will always love her. Often when I play this line, I think about that…I love my mother, but she is not with me for me to love her. The sadness of it, my mother not being with us, makes me think I committed a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin]. (Interview in March 2019)

Lylā's explanation about the *muwashshahāt*—particularly the words "away" and "love"—is based on an experience similar to Schutz's statement "I may take the world into myself, without cognitively objectifying it, simply as stuff of my being-here and as material of my existence: accepting, processing, and transforming it" (1982:31). Lylā's understanding of the *muwashshahāt*—her temporal experience—is a mind-consciousness occurrence, instead of concerns with the day-to-day and pragmatic aspects of human existence in outer time. Schutz continues by stating that the "ongoing flux of music" of the inner time necessitates the reduction of the "tension" in one's consciousness of the mundane life, in this manner shifting to "another plane of consciousness" (1964:170 and 1976:42f). Lylā's perception of the outer time of the *muwashshahāt* (playing the notes and other musical elements) are the same each time, but her lived experiences of this poetic piece change significantly from one rehearsal to the next. Lylā elaborated on this point:

> When I think of the good or bad things they are sometimes connected to the music and the poem but sometimes they are not. Because each time I play it is the same music and same notes, they don't change…so it surprises me I guess because sometimes the same word makes me happy and sometimes the same word makes me sad. (Interview in March 2019)

What does Lylā's lived experience through her music underline and how does it change from one performance to the next? To explore these two questions, it is necessary to comprehend what Edmund Husserl means by turning towards "those processes of subjective and intersubjective constitution that underline them" (Throop 2015:75). A lived experience is "a shared reality" (Throop 2009) where individuals always shift between differing "attitudes" (Husserl 1962; Throop 2015).[29] Husserl asserts that an individual's orientation towards the world

[29] Anthropologist Clifford Geertz refers to this as one's "preceptive" (1973) in relation to the world (see also Throop 2015:76).

or an object is achieved through phenomenological modification. Expanding on Husserl's example of typewritten and handwritten script in *Logical Investigations* (2001), anthropologist Alessandro Duranti explains that "before the object 'print mark' or any other object of the same kind can be a unit of meaning—an 'expression' in Husserl's terms, it typically 'undergoes an essential phenomenological modification'" (2009:207).

The *muwashshahāt* repeatedly practiced and performed has had a transformative effect on Lylā's lifeworld, where certain encounters, events and objects have shaped her experiences of this piece vis-à-vis her relationship to her mother. Before discussing the duality of the two imaginative worlds that this *muwashshahāt* evokes in Lylā, I draw on the act of phenomenological modification and the concept of Ludwig Wittgenstein's "aspect-seeing" (Duranti 2009; also see "the rabbit-duck illusion," Wittgenstein 2009). Wittgenstein articulates this view by stating that "the expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a new perception and at the same time of the perception remaining unchanged" (2009). Below, I draw on two different instances of Lylā playing the *muwashshahāt* (three hours apart on the same day) to illustrate how phenomenological modification transforms her lived experiences. The two musical performances by Lylā were similar to the way Wittgenstein scrutinizes the concept of "aspect" and how one's experience towards it changes or shifts—what he called "aspect drawing" (2009). He claimed that the failure to see "a new perception," where "the inability to see different aspects [is] aspect *blindness*" (Throop 2015:78; emphasis in the original).[30]

Discussing the sacredness of human suffering, anthropologist Jason Throop affirms that new aspect can be "quite subtle" and include "the everyday and ongoing fluctuation in our attention by means of which different properties of an object come into focus" (2015:79). This

[30] Throop references "aspect blindness" based on Steven Parish. N.d. "*Between Persons: How Concepts of the Person Make Moral Experience Possible*." Unpublished manuscript.

"process of turning towards the world" (Throop 2015:78) is part of the shifts in orientation to an object of experience that Husserl calls "intentional modification" (Duranti 2009; Husserl 1962; also see Chapter Four). This "aboutness of consciousness as directed toward particular object of experience" (Throop 2015:79) was evident in Lylā's rehearsal and her performance at school during the same day. In these two instances, there was a dynamic shift from the experience of distress and melancholy during her rehearsal to delight at her school performance a few hours later.

On the morning of her school performance, Lylā rehearsed the *muwashshahāt* with her father for one last time. After about forty minutes of practicing, she sat next to me and spoke about the music:

> Since the first time I remember hearing this poem, this line makes me cry about my mom…so every time I play it I try not to pay attention to it and just try to play the music, like play the notes only. Because if I think about the poem…you know the line: "You, whose love exhausted my heart; You're like a full moon, but more beautiful," my eyes get watery. I even remember my mother singing it really beautifully. I often want to avoid playing this poem, it is really beautiful but so sad, especially this line. When I hear the line about the full moon, I think of my mother's face and her smile. You know how pretty a full moon is, you want to look it. But her face is unhappy and red, like in blood. I feel like she is in pain and she needs attention. I want to help her, but I can't because she seems like she is not speaking to me. I began to see these images ever since I played this song first in the camp [The Turkish refugee camp], even then it was scary and so sad. It makes me so sad to see her face like that, to know that she is in pain. (Interview in March 2019)

It took Lylā sometime after the rehearsal to come to terms with the way the poem and music had oriented her lived experience. By late morning, Lylā shared pizza for lunch with her brothers before heading to the school. Lylā may have been experiencing some stage anxiety before her performance triggering the sad images of her mother. Although it is hard to know to what degree Lylā was apprehensive about a public performance, she had been looking forward to the performance for some time. Even if the assumption is made that stage anxiety was the main (or

sole) trigger, it is still through her music that such emotions are evoked. Moreover, the lunch and communication of sharing a pizza with her family made me contemplate how healing and coping mechanisms take shape for Lylā in moments when horrific images of the past have come to the foreground. It was profoundly rewarding to witness how quickly Lylā began to revel in what was at-hand by acknowledging, during lunch, her love and indebtedness to her father and brothers.

Shortly after lunch, we walked to her school. Along the way two of Lylā's friends joined us. It was the first time they would be hearing her play the *'ūd*. On our walk to her school, Lylā explained to her friends more about her music:

> What my father and I will be playing for you is called a *muwashshahāt…muwashshahāt* is like an old poem that has really beautiful and old music to it. Like, many in Aleppo would know this song and have good memories about it. I know my father really likes it and it begins with a really nice tune, sometimes I hum the tune because it is really catchy. Wait till you hear my father sing it as we play. (Interview in March 2019)

During our walk, I began to sense a difference in Lylā's attitude and language towards the same *muwashshahāt* that had disturbed her earlier. The performance was in the school gymnasium, a small stage with two chairs had been set up for the performance. There were about a hundred seats (both chairs and bleachers), which appeared full as the event was about to start. After a brief introduction by the school principal, Faizal and Lylā were invited to the makeshift stage. Once the *'ūds* were tuned, Lylā spoke: "My father and myself are very happy to be playing the *'ūd*…an Arabic music instrument and my father will sing a beautiful Arabic poem because what we are going to play for you is called a *muwashshahāt*." I was seated in the front row next to Lylā's brothers. I noticed that most of the audience were fascinated by the shape and the sound of the '*ūds*. The performance was beautiful and when Faizal and Lylā were finished the audience applauded enthusiastically. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Faizal and Lylā were approached by many audience members to learn more about the instruments and music.

Just before leaving the school gymnasium, Lylā sat alone with me in a corner and spoke about her experience:

> I was so happy to be able to play for my friends and teachers today. So many people asked me many questions about my *'ūd*. That's why I love my music. When I was beginning to play, I wasn't sure how I would really feel. You remember that line this morning that made me so sad: "You, whose love exhausted my heart; You're like a full moon, but more beautiful." This time I imagined something different, I imagined my mom, like a full beautiful moon looking at me and smiling. I felt like she was with me and her face was smiling. She was not sad, so I wasn't sad. Her face was with me when I played the whole time and made it go by fast…actually it made me enjoy the music and the poem rather than being worried and sad about her. This morning, I felt like I had committed a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin], every time I see her face like this morning I feel like that. But during the performance, she had changed. She was happy to hear me play. (Interview in March 2019)

Lylā's imaginative world about her mother takes on a visceral and vivid nature, discussing these encounters as real-life experiences rather than a fading fantasy. Moreover, the attunement to the face (both during the sad and happy times) speaks to the closeness to her mother. Later, Faizal speculated at why Lylā might be recalling Sabā's face:

> I am not sure about this, but I think…perhaps it could be because after her mother's death and during the burial ceremony Lylā saw her mother's face. Maybe that is why she keeps talking about her face. I also think that music provides her with the images of Sabā singing music or singing to Lylā when she was a little girl. (Interview in April 2019)

Lylā's experience of the *muwashshahāt* allows her to imagine her mother's face in two contrasting manners that transform her understandings of the situation or the circumstances, where, in the words of Throop, these encounters would enable her to see "a new aspect or reveal a new possibility for being" (2015:80).

For Lylā, the two manifestations of the face reveal the limits and possibilities of her world, moments in which the vulnerability and finitude of her relationship to Sabā were

disclosed and exposed.[31] This "orientation to experience" (Throop 2015:85) is what Schutz calls a form of lived experience (*Erlebnisse*) and encounters (*Erfahrungen*). The following section examines how Lylā's orientation to her mother's face reveals two opposing worlds of imagination.

THE DUALITY OF IMAGINATION

Lylā's two worlds of imagination of Sabā's face can be distinguished based on her description:

> When I see my mother's face happy and singing, I think of her in a garden where things are peaceful…I kind of think of it like heaven. Everything in the distance looks sunny and there are lots of trees. It even sometimes feels like she is flying or floating like an angel. For sure, she is looking at me and smiling…she never says anything to me, but I know she is smiling.
>
> I don't like my mother's sad face at all. First, she is not smiling or even looking at me. She seems to be mad at something or someone. As if I did something bad and she is trying to tell me. That makes me feel like I committed a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin]. It is blurry and hard to understand what she is trying to do. (Interview in April 2019)

The significance of Lylā's imagination of her mother's face (similar to how Jamilā recalls the face of Safiyya; see Chapter Five) can be described based on Ibn 'Arabī's interpretations of this verse in the Qur'ān: "All things perish, save His Face" (*al-Qasas* [The Story]; LXXXVIII,88; trans., Nasr 2015:966).[32] This view draws on the importance of the face in Islam. In this verse, Ibn 'Arabī asserts that "His Face" is an interpretation of the Arabic word *wajhihi* ("image," "face" or "appearance"), in which "the last syllable *hi* is the pronominal suffix *hā'* that may also

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[31] The concept of imagination has come to prominence through Husserl's discussion of it as a "vital element" in phenomenology (1983:160), followed by Heidegger's understanding of imagination as the dynamic essence of *Dasein*, and Sartre's perspective on it as "an essential and transcendental condition of consciousness" (2004:188).

[32] Ibn 'Arabī distinguishes between three ontological levels of imagination: a) absolute imagination (*khayāl mutlaq*) as the all-encompassing imagination; b) detached imagination (*khayāl munfasil*) that is the encompassing imagination; and c) attached imagination (*khayāl muttasil*), which is the human level of imagination (see Chapter Three).

be taken to refer to the 'thing' in 'Everything'" (Akkach 1997:112). According to Ibn 'Arabī, then, the same verse in the Qur'ān ("All things perish, save His Face") can be translated as "Everything perishes but the Face of the thing" (Akkach 1997). This understanding made Ibn 'Arabī conclude that the "Face" is the imperishable aspect of reality. Ibn 'Arabī is setting the groundwork for a fundamental Sūfī belief that the "face" of human beings is part of Allāh's essence afforded to individuals during their lifetime. The face needs to remain pure (through hard work or struggle, known as *jahād*) since the face is the reflection, the essence of Allāh's goodness.

The contrast between what Lylā considers a "happy" and "sad" face is symbolic of the duality of the "good" and "evil" in al-Ghazālī's ethics. The good and evil are not representations for Lylā that her mother is in heaven or hell; they are rather Lylā's inferences about the actions she has taken (or not taken) towards her mother. She explains this phenomenon by discussing what she viewed to be her responsibility towards her mother's death:

> I know that my mother is in heaven. She was a kind and caring person…she always wanted to help others. I know she is with the angels and I know Allāh is smiling at her. The faces I keep telling you about are messages for me! I feel like the faces are messages for me…when she is happy is when I am doing my—I mean not just the music—but I am doing what I can to appreciate the sacrifices my mother and my father have made for me. When she is sad, she is trying to tell me that I have done wrong. Also, it means if I do good and my mother is happy that means I am closer to Allāh and when I am not doing good it means I have done wrong. (Interview in April 2019)

Lylā's discussion points to a form of duality that the Qur'ān depicts as innate within the human person. This duality "invests an individual with a simultaneous capacity for good and evil" (al-Ghazālī 1990:71). The notion of good and evil does not only include acts on the extreme ends of the spectrum; for example, when an individual undertakes an enormous act of charity or a person who has committed a horrible crime against humanity. For al-Ghazālī, to engage with the duality

of good and evil is to perceive individual actions in terms of serving the material and the spiritual worlds. This duality is at the root of Lylā's (and Jamilā's) belief for being a sinful actor. This is not to say that the imaginative world of *barzakh* does not exist for individuals, but rather the judgment of a deed is confined to what is considered to be good or evil.

This duality originates in the Qur'ān where it declares that "the divine act of creation in which God inaugurated human life in history…also speaks of God breathing into a human being the divine spirit together with the earthliness of humanity" (al-Ghazālī 1990:70). The dyad of good and evil is the basis of al-Ghazālī's concept of "happiness (*sa'āda*) (see Part I). The vital point of this duality is that "when a creature with both options pursues the path of good and shuns the avenues of evil by one's own choice, such a person surpasses all angelic levels of spirituality" (al-Ghazālī 1990:71). For al-Ghazālī, the entire potentiality of the human person is to discover and realize, first the essence of this duality, and then work towards attaining the spiritual world. Therefore, the Qur'ān does not "envisage any human existential condition free from all elements of evil" (al-Ghazālī 1990:72). This means that any realization of the good is contingent upon the possibility of its opposite, evil. The understanding of the "good involves positing the self-conscious human subject at the center of this bipolarity" (al-Ghazālī 1990:72).

Al-Ghazālī asserted that individuals must aspire towards constant improvement and refinement as they constantly confront good and evil. Performing a virtue fills one with happiness, while guilt, regret and repentance arise when evil is committed. The essential element is that "the criteria for distinguishing between good and evil deeds is not their outer objective manifestation but their inner subjective motivation which is fully known to God" (al-Ghazālī 1990:73). This means that Allāh judges individuals based on their intent and not the result of their efforts. What matters is a person's intentions; according to al-Ghazālī the capacity of

individuals is grounded in a lifelong project of constant reforming and purifying from malice, greed and all vicious desires. Essentially, al-Ghazālī claims that evil is an imbalance of the inner self that is the individual's responsibility to curb and control.

Similarly, for Lylā the dark imagination of her mother's face are more about how she feels about herself, vis-à-vis the sacrifices of her mother that ended in her death and at the same time a safe haven for the rest of the family. Lylā's moral experience is not about being the direct perpetrator in her mother's death, but instead about a failure to attain the same spiritual level her mother holds. In short, there has been a tradeoff between the material and the spiritual worlds, which highlights an individual desire instead of altruistic care for the other.

Some argue that the concept of "sin" is more a vocabulary of theology rather than an index in moral philosophy. Having said that, Islamic ethics broadly defines sin as an action that is unacceptable to Allāh and therefore violates morality. There is no doubt that the content and nature of morality can be disputed. Lylā constructed a perception—based on how her unconscious provides her with the ability to imagine her mother's face *and* how she allows her consciousness to form the face—that she has committed an act that is unacceptable to Allāh. Sin is a form of bondage that "goes beyond the comparatively narrow boundaries of what we as individuals are fully and consciously responsible for, extending both downwards and outwards; downwards to barely conscious levels of the personality; outwards to the society of which we are a part" (Mitchell 1984:166). Lylā's sense of disconnection from the spiritual world, or her feeling of distance from Allāh, is in turn is rooted in the duality of good and evil. Sin becomes the reprehensible acts for an individual, infused between the individual and the social world. Sin strains "upon our intuitive sense of an essential link between guilt and responsibility" (Mitchell 1984:166).

The notion of a sin is the belief that a particular human actions is so immoral that it disconcerts Allāh and His angels. Sin is an action "contrary to the will of God," where the Qur'ān renders it "as opposition to Allāh rooted in human pride" (Quinn 1998:3). Islamic and Sūfī philosophers widely believe that the reason for the soul's coming to the world in a human body is not for it to suffer punishment as long as the soul is cultivated and nurtured in the most ideal form. This would mean that acts of wrongdoing are punishable in accordance with the notion of the good life (*sa'āda* [happiness]; see Part I), which would indicate disobedience towards Allāh (Abu Quasem 1975). The concept of sin centers on Islamic teaching (and also Christianity) based on how Adam fell from the grace of Allāh because he had sinned; his fall from paradise was the retribution for his action. Al-Ghazālī states that individuals, including Adam, are sent by Allāh to earth to acquire the proper moral aptitude through guidance. Al-Ghazālī used this verse from the Qur'ān to elaborate on the importance of regulation for the soul: "If guidance should come to you from Me, then whosoever follow My Guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow]; II, 38; trans., Nasr 2015:24). For al-Ghazālī, this meant that "every individual soul descends against its nature to this world in order to acquire fitness for paradise, or provision (*zād*) for the hereafter" (Abu Quasem 1975:45).

The acquisition of provision for the hereafter and human perfection (the proximity to Allāh) is also emphasized by Sūfī followers. Faizal explains:

> I believe that each person has an *al-fitra* [essence or natural disposition] that needs guidance; like a child needs the parent's guidance and protection. A human needs this in each stage of life. The soul is trapped inside our body, and the more we learn to give to the power of Allāh the more the human heart is illuminated. Our heart is divine because our *al-fitra* is created by Allāh. How could we be any different? Our task in the world is to be guided so we don't give to acts of *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin]. *Ghaltah* [sin] leave a lasting stain on the human soul, on the innocence and purity of the human's *al-fitra*. The Qur'ān states [reading from a bookmarked page of a Qur'ān nearby]: "O mankind! Truly We created you from a male and a female, and We made you peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Surely the most noble of you before God are the most

> reverent of you. Truly God is knowing, Aware." (*al-Hujurāt* [The Private Apartments] XLIX, 13; trans., Nasr 2015:1262) (Interview in January 2019)

Faizal's understanding of sin is based on the Islamic view of human nature and its ultimate aim. Al-Ghazālī elaborates this view based on the theory of natural disposition (*asl al-fitra*) or basic nature (*tab'*) of the soul: "since the soul is divine in nature, inclination towards good and aversion from evil are innate in it" (Abu Quasem 1975:45). Lylā echoed a similar understanding to her father's:

> Our soul is like a white cloth that is clean and spotless. My dad explained to me that we are all born without any spots. Babies are always eager to learn and have never done anything wrong, so parents are responsible to teach them. But, for example, like the al-Assad's army that kills people, they have done a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin]. The Qur'ān says if someone does *ghaltah kbīrī* then their soul will always have a stain, which makes Allāh unhappy. My dad says: "People who do *ghaltah kbīrī* fall from Allāh's eyes." Do you know that expression? There are some things that we do that we can find an excuse to or fix it, but some things become much harder to fix even though Allāh forgives everyone because He has endless mercy…maybe not if its *ghaltah* kbīrī, like the army, because those people do really bad things. (Interview in May 2019)

Ghaltah kbīrī (a great sin) is based on the doctrine that the human soul is pure at birth, where the inclination towards evil—a product of human desire—is in opposition to the soul's natural disposition (*asl al-fitra*). Since the origin and the essence of a human are divine, we have a proclivity to move towards the beloved and angelic nature (see Part I; the concept of *sīr* ["journey"]). Faizal expands on this prevalent Sūfī belief: "We come to this earth, but our soul is eager to be reunited with Allāh. The body becomes the prison of the soul and death as we know it is the true freedom. But those who commit acts of sin have souls that are unwilling and unable to experience this true freedom." This narratological concept of sin deals with a kind of insubordination to Allāh or against the "right" practices laid down by Allāh (see Ramm 1985;

Vitz & Gartner 1984). Inherent in this view is how one replaces the authority of Allāh with that of the self.

Scholars have argued that religion does not make sense without sin. For instance, in the case of Christianity, the pedagogue William Kilpatrick stated that "if you have no consciousness of sin you simply won't be able to see the point of Christianity" (1983:74). The consideration of how religious authorities have utilized the concept of sin to affect the human psyche is an important issue to consider but does not relegate the fact that Lylā found herself reevaluating her moral experience by acknowledging a wrongdoing.

What makes sin different from guilt (as exhibited by Nabilā and Amir in Part I) is that guilt is "a condition for the possibility of finding something a 'moral matter'" (Pihlström 2011:12). Guilt results, in the words of Levinas, from the fact that "the *I* is the very crisis of the being of a being," the infinite responsibility to the moral and vulnerable other (Graig 2010). In guilt, the possibility and condition of finding the "moral matter" exists, which means individuals have some measure of agency and are able to reevaluate ethical issues based on their relationship to others. However, sin shifts this trajectory, where the "I" in the crisis of being of being becomes a subject that responds not to the other, *but* rather to a predefined religious distinction between what is deemed good and evil. For most Islamic philosophers, evil is "a power that may possess a human to commit sins" (Qamar 2013:44). The Qur'ān speaks of evil as shame, vice and wickedness and sin as disobedience and transgression from Allāh. Both guilt and sin are the bewildered realization of having done something wrong. The difference is that guilt leaves room for forgiveness and exoneration, yet sin (much like the case of Adam) is the final verdict and irreversible act, in the words of Lylā's father, a "fall from Allāh's eyes."

In short, guilt is more relational and based on the condition of possibility in relation to others. On the other hand, sin suggests a direct relationship between individuals and the divine, where the human ability (and phenomenon of intersubjectivity) to reexamine and reevaluate exoneration towards the other no longer exists. Sin is based on religious judgment and decree that is already known and agreed upon based on divine revelation. It leaves no room for the ethical subject to reevaluate the given act of divorce from the divine power. Clearly, there is room for redemption from disobedience and transgression of Allāh's command, but it does not erase the severity of breaking the divine command (see Part III, Chapter Seven).

In the Qur'ān, sin is described "as polytheism, unbelief, hypocrisy and arrogance" that results in disobedience to Allāh (Qamar 2013:45). According to the Qur'ān, the human self is inclined to evil; it says: "Surely the soul commands to evil" (*Yūsuf* [Joseph]; XII, 53; trans., Nasr 2015:604). Therefore, sin is the deviation from the true path (*tarīqa*). Guilt arises from the infinite responsibility to the moral and vulnerable other, whereas sin is a transgression in breaking or crossing the limits set out by Allāh. Chapter Seven, "A Language of Repentance and Forgiveness," draws on a psycholinguistic analysis of Jamilā and Lylā's utterances and the intentionality of their comment: *'amilit ghaltah kbīrī* (I have committed sin).

What does it mean for Lylā to be responsible for her actions? In short, it is to honor Allāh through particular Islamic worldviews. Al-Ghazālī believed that to commit sin is to turn away from Allāh towards a man-made desire.[33] Lylā elaborated on this point:

> The sad face really means that Allāh is not happy with me. It's his message to me…I know my mom's face doesn't talk but I think the message is that I did a very wrong thing. That is why my mom is sad, because she knows I did something wrong.

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[33] In *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas expresses a similar view about sin based on his discussion of idolatry. (see Staudt 2009).

> She should have been in our car so she wouldn't have died. She was being kind and protecting us from the soldiers but then she put herself in danger. (Interview in April 2019)

Lylā's statement highlights that honoring Allāh is not only through worship and obedience, but also being attuned and responsible for the other. In this manner, sin is dishonoring Allāh (theology) vis-à-vis the relationships of one to the other (ethics).

Part III of the dissertation begins by presenting a psycholinguistic analysis of sin and how this moral experience shapes the lifeworlds of Nabilā, Amir (Part I), Jamilā and Lylā. For the remainder of the chapter, the discussion switches to what prompts Lylā to imagine her mother's "happy" face. The description of Sabā in a garden as an angel-like figure is a mode of perception for Lylā to imagine a world in which she can repair her bond with her mother. Music becomes a healing process for her to reach out to the spiritual world and her mother.

LIKE A FACE OF AN ANGEL

The root of Islamic philosophical understanding of imagination and music is in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle emphasizes the *mimetic* nature of the arts. Aristotle states that poetry, music and dance imitate three kinds of objects: "things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be," where these categories can each imitate character actions and emotions (The *Poetics*, 7-8, 97).[34] Even though Aristotle's writings address prophecy, divination and dreams as activities that occur within the imagination, he never

[34] Aristotle states: "Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects – the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct. For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of color and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or 'harmony,' either singly or combined" (The *Poetics* 1925:7)

associates artistic *mimesis* with the imagination. Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (872-950) is the first Islamic philosopher to take Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* and asserts that imagination is the faculty where artistic imagination takes place. This understanding by al-Fārābī stimulated the discussion of art within the theory of the soul, or the heart for following Islamic philosophers (see Black 1990; Walzer 1962; also see Part I al-Ghazālī's concept of the "heart"). Al-Fārābī establishes the view that music-making is the mode for conveying the meanings that the imaginative faculty produces "melodic meanings heavily contingent upon poetical utterances" (Klein 2008:180).[35]

This short description of music and imagination, particularly the theory of the soul, is helpful in the understanding of how Sūfīs relates music to healing. Faizal comes from a tradition that stresses the spiritual power of music:

> The music I grew up with and learned is for enjoyment of course, but it is also as we say, "food for the soul." Music is supposed to nourish the soul and make the musicians and those who listen better people. This Sūfi philosophy was important to me and many of my friends in Aleppo. I also want to teach that to Lylā…I want her to understand this important Sūfī practice…the way music makes one think about the world and more importantly how it polishes the soul to become closer to Allāh. Music, I mean proper music, makes one see this connection to the spiritual. (Interview in May 2019)

The Sūfī concept of music and healing is based on a "psychospiritual self, of ridding one's self of physical and material problems, to change one's state of mind" (Mitha 2019:199). An important Sūfī discourse centers on the fact that separation from the "Divine predisposes one to emotional 'sickness'" (O'Riordan 1999; Wilcox 1995). The aim of Sūfīsm, through rituals such as music, is to "know one's self" (Wilcox 1995) through the cultivation of the heart and attunement towards Allāh. In short, Lylā's imaginings of her mother, to a large extent, are a projection of her responsibility towards her mother.

[35] To a large part, this belief was to combat against the religious authorities who were opposed to music and considered music a futile pastime that distracts humans from serious activities and contemplation.

Below I draw on three factors in explaining how Lylā connects music to healing and the Sūfī tradition. Coincidentally, Lylā's understanding of music is rooted in the Qur'ān and the Sūfī beliefs as properties in healing and mercy that Allāh grants the believer. Lylā stated:

> When I imagine my mother happy…like a face of an angel, I imagine remembering the good things that made her so kind and caring. I know she was like that because her heart was always with Allāh, that made her sacrifice everything for her family. She was, as any good Muslim would do, was walking...you know the expression *as-sirāt al-mustaqīm* [the straight path as that which pleases Allāh]. I learned from my father that music helps people to find…like a calmness to see Allāh and the angels; he is a Sūfī, I know that his music means that to him. He always says music is "the medicine for the soul." It is hard to know what he really means but I guess it means when you can play something and imagine the heaven and the angels. He says that is why he plays music.

Lylā's discussion of music and healing bears a resemblance to the following verses of the Qur'ān: "So remember Me, and I shall remember you. Give thanks unto Me, and disbelieve not in Me" (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow]; II, 152; trans., Nasr 2015:67). *Dhikr* ("remembrance" or "utterance") is an important Islamic devotional act, where a verse from the Qur'ān or a prayer is repeated (individually or collectively). "Remembrance" is an important concept in Sūfīsm, *dhikr* is like a liturgy that is predominately conducted through music (both instrumental and vocal), dance, *murāqaba* (meditation) and ecstasy (see Qurashi 1993).

The second concepts Lylā spoke about centers on al-Ghazālī's theory of the soul, particularly the connection between remembrance and the "heart." The Qur'ān states: "Those who believe and whose hearts are at peace in the remembrance of God. Are not hearts at peace in the remembrance of God?" (*al-Ra'd* [The Thunder]; XIII, 28; trans., Nasr 2015:622-3). For al-Ghazālī, exemplary conduct is achieved through regulating the heart (or the inner self; *bātin*) to attain the ideal intellectual and physical traits. In *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, he states: "Know that the purest concealed core of the heart [*sarīra al-qulūb*] is the orchard of deeds and their wellsprings. (trans. Al-Zabīdī 2001:382). Attaining proximity to Allāh necessitates a heart that is always

practicing the proper conduct to attain purity and goodness. This constant practice can only be achieved if one is on "the right path." Lylā used the common Arabic phrase to address this: *as-sirāt al-mustaqīm* (the straight path as that which please Allāh). The Qur'ān states: "Save that God wills. And remember thy Lord when thou dost forget, and say, 'It may be that my Lord will guide me nearer than this to rectitude" (al-Kahf [The Cave]; XVIII, 24; trans., Nasr 2015:737).

Final Remarks on the Present

Al-Ghazālī discusses "the heart and its journey in life, sleep, and death into the realm of the unseen" (*'ālam al-ghayb* or *al-malakūt*) (Gianotti 2001:11). Lylā, through the medium of music, finds a way to connect to her mother. Her perception of Sabā consists of a duality (also evident in Jamilā's storytelling and dream), which draws the discussion back to Ibn 'Arabī's view that imagination is the world of *barzakh* (isthmus). Within this theoretical framework of imagination, it becomes clear that the duality in Lylā perceptions of her mother is based on mediation between the material and the spiritual worlds. This dichotomy, once more, brings us back to al-Ghazālī's discussion of *sa 'āda* (happiness) as an ethical practice where the heart is set on a journey towards Allāh through the cultivation of the soul. The proximity to Allāh, as a criterion, is never far from Lylā's worldview.

Another point of interest in both Lylā and Jamilā's imaginative world is the face. In Part II of the dissertation, I highlight the shift in the relationship with the other, to the imaginative world of story-writing, dream and music. This relationship to the other, as explained by Levinas, is asymmetrical and decentralized, through which there is a mystifying connection to the face that both Lylā and Jamilā conceive. Beyond the Islamic significance, Levinas asserts, the close-up of the face has a "dynamic" that "troubles and transfigures one's expectation of stillness and mobility, a tension that renders things suddenly, and strangely, alive" (Craig 2010:54). In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas makes clear that the dynamic nature of the face is based on the belief that the face crosses "the visible universe and the play of its normal proportions" (1978:49) into the unintelligible realm of *il y a*. The concept of *il y a* (*there is*) illustrates the vulnerability of the transition from being in an ethical relation, the relation to the other that is beyond being. This ethical relationship is an anticipation, an imagination in the anonymity of the *il y a*. In this way, the face is transcendent and beyond being; it is the formation of the

ambiguous and formidable "present absence" of "the field of impersonal existence" (Sealey 2013:431).

This close-up interpretation of the face constitutes a moving stream (Levinas uses a moving picture), the dynamism is contrary to the fixity that "stops the action in which a particular is bound up with a whole" (Levinas 1978:49). In short, the face "illustrates the dramatized experience," where "even when a literal human face appears still, asleep even, a close-up reveals the subtle, continual animation of living body, its breath and pulse" (Craig 2010:54). This view speaks to Lylā and Jamilā's ability to redraw and reimagine the face of the other. In the words of Levinas, the "manifestation" of the infinitely open faces only takes place by virtue of the face being endless and mysterious. The face expresses an openness that defies every attempt to be disclosed, deduced and revealed. Lylā's lived experience of the *muwashshahāt* allows her an open anticipation of the world, where her mother is manifested or imagined in the endless possibilities of the material and the spiritual worlds.

PART III. A FUTURE OF FORGIVENESS AND GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

"It is one thing to flee for your life from the war.
It is very different to learn how to live again."
--Atā, Amir's uncle

In Part III, the main interlocutors—Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā—are presented interchangeably to examine their aspirations and concerns about their future. Central to the exploration of their accounts is a recognition of how future-oriented studies tend to be absent from the anthropological literature. Anthropologists seem to be "more interested in the present and its genesis. They try to explain the present by reconstructing the past and stand with their backs to the future" (Persoon & van Est 2000:7). An examination about the future-oriented accounts of the children pivots on philosopher William James's discussion on "potential and actual selves." In *The Principles of Psychology*, James statement that, "Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me" (1981:322) essentially declares that individual identity shares its "unity" with diverging and disparate selves. His notion of empirically knowable "possible selves" creates a space for potential conflict and also harmony among the selves.

Chapter Seven, "A Language of Repentance and Forgiveness," is a psycholinguistic analysis of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's intentions in using the Arabic phrase *ghaltah kbīrī* (great sin) in their accounts about the dead other. *Ghaltah kbīrī*—sin as transgression against divine law—becomes part of a language for the children to perform repentance (*tawba*, "to return"; the Islamic doctrine of retreat from past sins) and receive Allāh's forgiveness (*afw*). This chapter highlights a shift from the language of guilt the children present in their accounts of the past (see Part I) to their utterance of committing a sin when discussing their future. It first

examines how Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā are socialized into an understanding of sin based on their parents' interpretations of the Qur'ān that frame moral lapse, repentance and forgiveness based on a set of Islamic ideals. The intention in using *ghaltah kbīrī* is an affirmation of *tawba* ("to return") and acceptance of the retreat from precited past sinful acts. Ultimately, for Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, the use of *ghaltah kbīrī* is a way of asking for Allāh's forgiveness. According to al-Ghazālī, forgiveness is a virtuous practice of following Allāh's character as the Most Merciful. Forgiveness is granted as the divine response to repentance, where Allāh is the ultimate source of authority that determines the acceptance of one's forgiveness.

Chapter Eight, "After Forgiveness: Moral Repair and Giving to Allāh," examines Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's responses to what they perceive to be their "wrongdoings." Their responses are a way of reconstructing a future that finds its deepest enticements in the Islamic act of charity, what the children called "giving back to Allāh." This chapter examines how the children imagine a future where happiness for them is achieved by giving back to the Syrian communities they left behind. Much like Chapter Seven, where Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā relied on their parents' interpretations of the Qur'ān on forgiveness, in this chapter they depend on the adults' reading of the holy book on charity and the virtue of patience for the Islamic community. Moral repair is a way of repairing the future through the Islamic act of charity and virtue of patience. For the children, the acts of charity and patience becomes a struggle between attaining Allāh's happiness and individual aspirations. This locus of being and becoming points to the in-betweenness space of *barzakh*, where the children are situated between the material and spiritual worlds. In light of this push-and-pull in *barzakh*, the chapter ends with examining what it means to be an "exemplary" child.

Before proceeding to Chapter Seven, I discuss how the possibilities of the future offers anxiety and hope, how the human history creates “crudeness” for humanity, and also opens up windows and arrays of hope and creativity. The possibility for humankind is hidden in the future of possibilities, where the sparks of humanity come to light in “flashes of hope” (Bloch 1986:4), that make the enduring hardship of atrocious acts transform into aspirations for change in the future.

VENTURING BEYOND THE DARKNESS

> There is no hope without anxiety and no anxiety without hope.
> —*The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch

As Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā present their desires and anxieties about their future, I draw on the philosopher Ernst Bloch’s tension between the darkness of human existence and humanity’s yearning for a better world to speak about forces that propel individuals to strive for aspiration, hope and human decency. Bloch asserts that “decency” of humanity is “missing” and “wandering” in what he describes as “the darkness of the lived moment” (2000:21). Bloch’s claim about human “darkness” is rooted in human history and actions, such as anti-Semitism, countless wars, refugee crises and economic exploitation. Meanwhile, he maintains that the human desire to “venture beyond” the “darkness” is what is transcendent about humanity (Bloch 1986:4). This view is oriented towards the future as it is grounded in the present. Bloch elaborates that it is “the darkness of the present moment” (1986:4) that drives individuals forward, “towards a future in which life might become something other than what it currently is” (Garcia 2017:114). This hope in the future is the reason the Syrian refugee families I worked with decided to take the excruciating and the dangerous journey out of Syria.

The prospect for humans to aspire to the potentiality of the future, in the horizon of possibilities that are contingent on "flashes of hope" and "preilluminations" (Bloch 1986:4), makes the present endurable, even for a Syrian family in the midst of an atrocious civil war. In *The Spirit of Utopia*, Bloch explores the paradoxical mechanism of the "flashes of hope" and "darkness" based on an opposition: "it is what limits and threatens our existence, as well as where our hope stirs and expands" (Garcia 2017:114). There is little question that darkness presents obstacles and hindrance for new vision and ideas. At the same time, darkness and limitations present a space for creativity and an openness to oneself, others and objects. This future-oriented notion of hope becomes "the precondition of becoming" (Garcia 2017:114). A central point of Part III is that the future possibilities, the anxieties and hopes that Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā speak about, become the conditions for them, to once again reorient their views and beliefs. The work of being and becoming never culminates, and the future for the children brings forth unique modes of orienting towards their Islamic and Sūfī ideals, vis-à-vis the other. Bloch explains this view of becoming by stating that, "the world is full of disposition to something that does not yet exist" (1986:76). The desire for becoming is rooted in repairing or creating "the missing (such as equality or freedom)" (Garcia 2017:114).

One of the issues Lylā was adamant about was how the future will provide her the chance to give back to a city she left behind. Moreover, the future is about repairing the broken connection to her mother through her good deeds in Aleppo. She said:

> When I grow up I want to go back to Aleppo…I am not sure if I'll stay there all the time because my family is here…but I want to build a school and work with teachers there so kids can go to school and be happy about their classes. I remember the first day I went to school here, it was so exciting. I want to make that happen because I know the kids in Aleppo have nothing. It is very difficult there for them. I think a school can bring lots of joy and happiness for them. Also, I think this is one way I can make my mother happy. As a good Muslim, I am supposed to give back to my community and my city. This way I can make the children happy and also make my mother happy with me. Because I will be

> doing two things that Allāh sees as really good. One is making people happy and also education for people. They are both really important. (Interview in April 2019)

There is a nostalgia and indebtedness that most newcomers have towards their homeland. It is not unusual for a newly settled immigrant or refugee child to dream of giving back to his/her place of birth. What is different in Lylā's case is that there is a moral obligation placed on the future. She sees the building of the school not just as a way of giving back to the Aleppo community, but a set of ideals and principles that she must carry forward. Bringing comfort and joy to the community (*ummah*) and promoting education are two upright principles in Islam. Lylā's aspirations about the school are also fundamentally tied to her responsibility for the dead other, her deceased mother. The Levinasian openness to the other is carried through in Lylā's perception about her future.

Thinking along with Bloch, Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's accounts, aspirations, dreams, visions, and their Islamic and Sūfī values are all preconditions of becoming. Bloch believes that dreams, desires and religious ideas are not "naive, but as concrete expressions of the potential" of becoming (Garcia 2017:115). Bloch writes that hope is "the most human of all mental feelings"; it is an "excessive" and "explosive" forces that is interchangeable between human ordeal and desire (1986:74). These excessive and explosive forces thrust individuals to "venture beyond" (Bloch 1986:76) the darkness of humanity, to long—have the audacity—for new possibilities and find the courage to repair old wounds. The forces are sources of anticipation and also the motivating means to imagine new possibilities. Thus, hope exists in the state of flux where the future is open to various possibilities; like the oceans where the current pulls an object into the deep water and the waves push it back to the shore. Hope takes on a similar experience as the analogy of the object in the water for the children. Hope can be

drowned in the deep water due to everyday anxiety and past ordeals (e.g., emotions of guilt for the sins the children feel they have committed). Hope, for the children, can find itself on the shore where novel experience about the future is contemplated (like Lylā's wish of building a school). It can also find itself in between the deep water and the shore, where anxiety and hope create a space of limitations and creativity.

Whatever direction hope takes theoretically, it is an instrumental part of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's accounts of the future. The philosopher Josef Pieper refers to the flux hope finds itself in as the state of "not-yet-being" (1991). This precondition to becoming propels one towards the future, it orients one away from despair through the "excessive" and "explosive" forces. For Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, hope becomes an anticipatory dialogue about the future that aims to remove the darkness from the past. This notion of hope, to some degree, differs for the children from "ordinary hope" (*esperance*), where humans constantly wish for mundane and material things during the course of their daily activities. Hope takes on an ethical significance. Clearly, the children's object of desire will change with time, since the self constantly reevaluates itself and its ethical beliefs—that is why Pieper calls hope the ontology of "not-yet-being" of a person. However, for the children the anticipation and hope in the future encompass what David Hume calls "the category of passion" (Potkay 2000). Classifying hope based on passion entails love and empathy, which in the case of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's their accounts of the future expresses this openness to the other. However, "passion" could also mean the love and admiration for the values they have been socialized to uphold. Passion can be considered as the children's reliance on the Qur'ān as the ultimate source of the truth, and a sense of al-Ghazālī's notion of "happiness," the proximity to Allāh.

The concept of hope in the Qur'ān is expressed through important concepts such as *raja* (aspiration, waiting for something that is cherished, or a sincere and "true" wish), *amal* (desire) and *tamanna* (request) (Shirvani 2018:2). Nabilā spoke about how hope and desire need to be grounded in divine love and also not bound by human greed. Sitting at the dinner table with her parents, she said:

> The thing I want to do is to get a good education and help Syrian families. I want to become a doctor. This way I can help Syrians free of charge. I am not sure if I like to go back to Syria, but maybe I can go to Jordan [to the refugee camps] and work there as a doctor. My parents always tell me if I am wishing for something, I should always wish for something that would make Allāh happy. Like, I shouldn't wish for a big house or lots of money, because they are not why we live…we live to help each other and make each other happy. That was what *aziz-jon* [Nabilā's grandmother] was really good at…she helped everyone in our neighborhood, so if I want to make her happy I should do the same. (Interview in February 2019)

Nabilā's father, Salāh, followed her comments by reading a verse from the Qur'ān and then explaining it to her:

> "Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world, but that which endures—righteous deeds—are better in reward with thy Lord, and better [as a source of] hope" [al-Kahf {The Cave}; XVIII, 46; trans., Nasr 2015:744]. I tell Nabilā that it is good to have things in this world and live a happy life, but we are all here to do our best for Allāh. Our wishes and things we ask should first be things that make others and Allāh happy. That is what Allāh means by "hope" when discussing our duties in this world. (Interview in February 2019)

One could conclude from Nabilā and Salāh's accounts that hope and aspirations are ultimately actions taken through the consideration of afterlife and satisfaction of Allāh. These two related deeds are at the heart of al-Ghazālī's view on *sa'āda* (happiness) (see Part I). This view of hope also allows for a future of Allāh's satisfaction and forgiveness. The Qur'ān states: "Say, 'If you love God, follow me,' and God will love you and forgive you your sins" (*Āl'Imrān* {The House of 'Imrān]; III, 31; trans., Nasr 2015:140). Hope in the future, needs to be about the "truth" "by

whose light (that brings abstention from sins that cause penitence) people can feel safe" (Shirvani 2018:2).

Finally, in Lylā and Nabilā's accounts the future (or hope in the future) has an element of remembering Allāh, what is known in Islamic and Sūfī practices as *dhikr* ("remembrance," "mention" or "utterance") (see Chapters Six and Seven). *Dhikr* is the ritual of remembering Allāh with "language or heart" (Shirvani 2018:2). The root of this belief centers on the conviction that the human soul originates from the divine and "has no rest until it reaches God" (Shirvani 2018:2). Al-Ghazālī bases this view on the Qur'ān: "'As for My servants, truly thou hast no authority over them.' And thy Lord suffices as a Guardian" (*al-Isrā'* [The Night Journey]; XVII, 65; trans., Nasr 2015:714). In order to attain happiness, one needs to constantly remember or be with Allāh. A clear illustration can be found in the Qur'ān about the human connection to the divine: "Those who believe and whose hearts are at peace in the remembrance of God. Are not hearts at peace in the remembrance of God?" (*al-ra'd* [The Thunder]; XII, 28; trans., Nasr 2015:622-3).

Before turning to Chapter Seven's psycholinguistic discussion of "sin," the following section briefly addresses Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's expectations of the responsibilities of their "host" community towards them. As they disuses their aspirations for the future, the children find themselves responsible for the other they feel they abandoned, and at the same time hold their neighbors (and even the larger American society) responsible for welcoming them to their new homes. This issue warrants a more in-depth study, but it is worth noting below since it was part of their accounts of their future.

THE ETHICS OF *HOSPITALITÉ*

Hospitality (*hospitalité*) is a central motif of Levinas's *oeuvre* that centers on the ethical realm of the self's moral obligation to welcome the other into the private space of the home. Levinas also discusses hospitality in the political realm in relation to welcoming the other (those who flee, refugees, etc.) into the public space of the homeland. For the purpose of this section, I will concentrate on Levinas's ethical explanation of "home" and "hospitality." He considered "home" to be a space where the self is able "to recollect itself because it welcomes it into its confines" (Gauthier 2007:161). Levinas states that the self's recollection and welcoming into its confines is a way "to dwell." In *Totality and Infinity*, he elaborates: that "to dwell is not the simple fact of the anonymous reality of a being cast into existence, as a stone one casts behind oneself; it is recollection, a coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge, which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome" (1961:156). Levinas concludes that once the self has been welcomed "into its confines" the self" (1961:162).

Home becomes a place where hospitality is given and also taken. Nabilā explained what she thinks of her community and how she sees herself in it in years to come:

> Being here is so different than in the camp; people are nice and I like to go out and learn more about my neighborhood. I know the situation in Syria is bad and we have a new home now, we live in America. My friends, my school…everyone is so nice to me and it makes me happy to know that people here like us. But the president [referring to President Trump] does not like Syrians and wants to stop us from coming here…he says we are bad people. I am happy that I am in Bay Ridge, and people here don't think that I am a bad person. They tell me that they are so happy I came to America. My teacher tells me if I keep working hard I can go to the university. It makes me happy to know that people, like my neighbors, are happy to have us here. And, I want to do my best to be a good person in my neighborhood. (Interview in June 2019)

For Levinas, hospitality takes place when "I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him" (1961:171).[36] Language also plays an important role in the coming together, where the host's identity is called into question. Levinas refers to this as "the calling into question of the I, coextensive with the manifestation of the Other in the face, we call language." (1961:171).

[36] Levinas also asserts that the other "implicitly demands that the self-take an active interest in its material well-being" (Gauthier 2007:163).

CHAPTER SEVEN: A LANGUAGE OF REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

"*Be content with the one whose absence escaped you, for that is the punishment built into the sin*" *–Book of Knowledge*, al-Ghazālī

This chapter examines Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's intent in using the Arabic phrase *ghaltah kbīrī* (great sin). It focuses on how the use of *ghaltah kbīrī*—sin as transgression against divine law—aims to be part of a language of repentance (*tawba*, "to return"; the Islamic doctrine of retreat from past sinful and evil activities) and to ask Allāh for forgiveness (*afw*). The chapter discusses the "affective-discursive practices" (Wetherell 2012) of sin and its relation to language and emotion as it pertains to the dynamic relationship between action and motivation for individuals who seek Allāh to grant them forgiveness. Throughout my field research, I noticed a shift from the language of guilt when Nabilā and Amir discussed their past (see Part I) to utterances about committing a "sin" when Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā discussed their present lives and future possibilities. Chapter Four explores the reasons the children used English to discuss their lifeworlds, yet used the Arabic phrase: *bahis bi al-dhanb* ("I felt guilty"). Similarly, Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā spoke to me in English during my visits with them, nevertheless each time they spoke about their "wrongdoings" they used the Arabic phrase: *ghaltah kbīrī.*

The chapter begins by discussing how Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā are socialized in the Islamic understanding of sin, where adults provide the children with examples and interpretations from the Qur'ān to frame particular views on moral lapse and forgiveness. The Islamic view on sin is recounted based on the children's moral experiences vis-á-vis the vulnerable other. Sin is a reprehensible act, as an intentional act against the commands or grace of Allāh. The Arabic phrase aims to acknowledge one's wrongful act(s) and provides motivation

to seek out a "pious" way of life and seek Allāh's forgiveness. The utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* is a declaration of *tawba* ("to return"), a retreat from past sinful and evil activities. Al-Ghazālī speaks of repentance based on three factors: knowledge, regret and action. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* entails similar goals, where they have the knowledge of their "wrongdoing," face intense emotions of regret and guilt, and act to return to Allāh by being granted His forgiveness.

I begin by analyzing how Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā have been socialized into Islamic and Sūfī understanding of what transgression against divine law encompasses and how individuals reconcile their moral deviance with Allāh. One of the central ways of teaching moral codes to the children is how the parents (or guardian in the case of Amir) depend on the Qur'ān. The adults' interpretations of the Qur'ān on issues of repentance (*tawba*) and forgiveness become instrumental in the children's perception of "committing a sin" and how Allāh's absolution is the only way to find happiness.

THE SOCIALIZATION OF SIN

This section explores how the utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* by Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā serves as a medium to attune them to a particular way of being in the world based on Islamic and Sūfī ideals (Merskey 1994). A central focus is on how the relation to the Qur'ān provides the moral codes to obey, where the adults' interpretations form certain moral responsibilities for the children. Building on critical studies of the use of "intentions" (Duranti 2015, 2006, 1988; Ochs 1982; Rosaldo 1982), the section explores how the Islamic and Sūfī connotation of *ghaltah kbīrī* directs the children's attunement (de León 2011; Duranti 2009; Takada 2011), shapes their moral accountability (Fader 2009; Goodwin 2006; Ochs and Izquierdo 2009) and produces

authoritative practices (Howard 2011; Moore 2011) about wrongdoings and forgiveness. In this manner, Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā acquire not only the semantic content of *ghaltah kbīrī*, but are socialized into Islamic sensitivity to indexical meanings, stances, feelings, knowledge and social identities (Ochs 1996, 1990; Ochs and Schieffelin 2011; Silverstein 1976).

For the anthropologist Veena Das, "descending into the ordinary" is to pay attention to the most mundane events and social relationships (2007). The children's narratives generate unique individual accounts of the everyday understandings of what constitutes *ghaltah kbīrī,* otherwise associated with the meta-narrative of collective "suffering" and the deontological moral codes associated with the Qur'ān. Language socialization is founded on the premise that "language is a fundamental medium in children's development of social and cultural knowledge and sensibilities" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011:1). Atā (Amir's uncle and guardian) discussed the importance of forgiveness during an afternoon walk in the park with Amir:

> For us [Syrians from Aleppo] the Qur'ān is very important. Anytime we are uncertain we search for answers in our holly book. The Qur'ān leaves no room for humans to be doubtful. After what happened to us in Syria, we should learn from the words of Allāh to become more peaceful and to learn from our mistakes, our *ghaltah kbīrī*. What is important is that Allāh forgives His people, as long as we believe in Him. The Qur'ān says: "Take to pardoning, and enjoin right, and turn away from the ignorant" [*al-A'rāf* {The Heights}; VII, 199; trans., Nasr 2015:478]. I tell Amir that our mistakes are forgiven because as the Qur'ān tells us, Allāh is merciful and compassionate to all of us. As long as we obey His rules and learn to follow what He asks from us. (Interview in May 2019)

Atā uses an "appropriateness-based discourse" (Flores & Rosa 2015) of Islamic ideals that can be considered as a form of emotion, where he is aware of when and how to communicate certain phrases and idioms with "emotion [that] may be experienced or expressed" (Pritzker 2020:247) by Amir with intense reactions and sentiments. While there are specific discourses that aim to set emotions aside (see Conley 2016), Atā's use of the Qur'ān is meant to evoke particular

sentiments from Amir. In addition, the reliance on the Qur'ān serves as the ultimate source of authority.

Salāh explained to Nabilā that wrongdoing is part of human nature, while forgiveness is inherent in Islamic values:

> Nabilā knows the story of Adam. Allāh has asked him not to eat the apple from the tree and he did not listen, because evil had tempted him to do wrong. Allāh eventually forgave Adam because he found out what he had done was wrong. There are many stories about how during the Prophet's life many tribes did bad things to him but he forgave them all. The Prophet's life is a model for us. His way, his *sonna* ["tradition"] is the model for us to learn from. (Interview in June 2019)

This mode of language socialization presents "sin" and "forgiveness" not specific to any individual, but rather as part of the human ordeal where any person can commit a wrongdoing. Meanwhile, the satisfaction of being granted Allāh's forgiveness and the Prophet's way of life are models for every Muslim to emulate.

It is clear that Islamic and Sūfī values are fundamental in the way Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā have been socialized to a particular understanding of sin, repentance and forgiveness. The next section provides a synopsis of the Islamic view on sin. It begins by discussing the terminologies used in the medieval Islamic texts, and then focuses on the semantic analysis of this term in the Qur'ān. The Islamic examination of sin corresponds to the intentions with which the children use the Arabic phrase *ghaltah kbīrī*; the acknowledgment of committing a sin becomes a way to seek repentance and forgiveness.

THE GRAVE SIN

If you shun the grave sins that you are forbidden, We shall absolve you of your evil deeds and cause you to enter at a noble gate. The Qur'ān—(*al-Nisā'* [Women]; IIII,31; trans., Nasr 2015:204)

Islamic ethics designates sin as an act and not a state of being, which means that each person's good deeds are measured against his/her wrongdoings on the Day of Judgment. Those who have committed sins are sentenced to an afterlife of unforgiving fire of hell (*Jahannam*).[37] It needs to be noted that the phrase *ghaltah kbīrī* (great sin) used by Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā is the colloquial Arabic. To understand the etymology of "sin" one must turn to classic Arabic, also known as *al-ʿarabiyyah al-fushā* ("the purest Arabic," also known as the Qurānic Arabic). The classic Arabic phrase for "sin" is *khatī'a* (sometimes translated as "moral lapse"). *khatī'a* originates from the root *kh-t-'* meaning "to fail," "stumble" or "make a mistake." The Qur'ān refers to *khatī'a* as "culpable lapse" (Wensinck & Gardet 2012). The "culpable lapse" is based on a *sayyi'a* (evil action) that results in an *ithm* (a grave sin) (Wensinck & Gardet 2012).

The Qur'ān explains that a sin is a twofold verdict. On the one hand, the Qur'ān discusses how a sin prompts divine anger and punishment. For example, in *al-Baqarah* ("The Cow"; II, 81), the Qur'ān says: "Nay, whosoever earns evil and is surrounded by his sins, it is they who are the inhabitants of the Fire therein to abide" (trans., Nasr 2015:39). Meanwhile, the Qur'ān also makes clear that committing a sin "remains within the operative sphere of the divine mercy" (Wensinck & Gardet 2012:8). The Qur'ān explicitly emphasizes the importance of forgiveness when it speaks about Abraham, saying: "and Who I hope will forgive me my sins [*khatī'ātī*] on

[37] The Qur'ān describes *Jahannam* as "the Fire," "blazing Fire" and "the Abyss." For example, Hell is depicted in the chapter *al-Baqarah* ("The Cow"; II, 24): "And if you do not, and you will not, then be mindful of the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers" (trans., Nasr 2015:19).

the Day of Judgment" (*al-Shu'arā'* ["The Poets"]; XXVI, 82; cf. VII, 161; trans., Nasr 2015:39). Islamic jurists and philosophers predominantly believed that Allāh—through His prophets and saints—summons mankind to Himself to exonerate individuals from their sins. Islamic philosophers, including al-Ghazālī, singled out this verse from the Qur'ān to point out Allāh's forgiveness: "He calls you that He might forgive some of your sins and grant you reprieve till a term appointed" (see *Ibrāhīm* [Abraham]; XIV, 10; trans., Nasr 2015:631).

However, the debate amongst jurists and philosophers has centered on what constitutes a *grave* sin. This understanding has encouraged al-Ghazālī (and other Islamic thinkers) to write about the necessary steps for repentance and forgiveness for a Muslim community. Al-Ghazālī asserted that Allāh always allows absolution for a person's sin, through the accepting of the individual's repentance where forgiveness is granted. Al-Ghazālī based his interpretation on this verse from the Qur'ān: "Forgiver of sins, Accepter of repentance, severe in retribution, Possessed of Bounty. There is no god but He; unto Him is the journey's end" (*Ghāfir* [The Forgiver]; XL, 3; trans., Nasr 2015:1138-39).

Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* also has a twofold intent, which is similar to the Qur'ān's delineation of moral lapse. The children speak about their "sin" as an act that has disappointed or angered Allāh, which warrants punishment. Meanwhile, the use of this Arabic phrase is also intended as a way towards repentance (*tawba*, "to return") and forgiveness. Amir's explanation below highlighted the twofold nature of acknowledging the committing of a sin. His statement first establishes the need for a punishment, and at the same time solicits Allāh's absolution and forgiveness. Amir spoke to me about his mother after celebrating his team's soccer victory in Brooklyn Bridge Park:

> I know my parents want me to succeed and see me happy. I am happy that I can play football [soccer]…I know winning [the game] makes them happy and when I do well

> they know that I did something good. We all make mistakes…I made a bad mistake today that the other team was able to score, but we recovered and I played harder knowing it was my fault…our team found a way to fix it and win the game. Sometimes I make mistakes, like make a bad pass, but I work hard to play better and try to make a better pass next time. My mother used to tell me that this is how I should think about all my problems. She wanted me to work hard and do better each time. My mother told me that Allāh loves every human being and he wants us to do good and he is so kind to forgive our mistakes. My mom would say that we all have to avoid doing bad things but He loves humans because He made us and he will forgive our mistakes…I know that is in the holy Qur'ān because He knows us better than we know ourselves. I talked about it with my uncle [Atā; Amir's guardian who lives with him in Bay Ridge] too…I tell him I know my feelings for my family is a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin] because maybe we should have been in a different room: how could it be that they are not with me? They should be here enjoying this with me. I know that if I have done something bad, Allāh would be upset and maybe it means punishment. But, if I work hard to be better, I really know that Allāh has mercy and compassion. It is how the Qur'ān starts every *surah* [chapter], He has so much mercy and forgives humans. (Interview in July 2019)

In fact, the Qur'ān affirms that one of the "most beautiful names" (*al-asmā' al-Husnā*) of Allāh is *al-Ghāfur* ("The Forgiver"; also a chapter in the Qur'ān). *Al-Ghāfur* derives from the root *gh-f-r* meaning "to shield" or "to protect" (Robinson 2012).[38]

Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* shows they anticipate punishment. In their discussions, it was unclear what exactly constitutes punishment, or how discipline originates from Allāh. What was evident in Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's views was that they felt they are situated between the material and the spiritual worlds. Al-Ghazālī would state that the punishment is the in-betweenness of *barzakh* in which the children find themselves, the space of ambivalence to ponder and reflect on wrongdoing. What *barzakh* also represents is how the utterance of "committing a sin" centers on a conviction of repentance and forgiveness from Allāh. The intention in using *ghaltah kbīrī* is an awareness of one's separation from the spiritual world. This perception among Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā distances them from the "ultimate"

[38] In Islam, Allāh has ninety-nine names, which are believed to be the ninety-nine attributes of Allah. The attributes are known as the "Beautiful names of Allāh" (*'asmā'u llāhi l-husnā*).

goal of a believer, one who attains *sa'ada* (happiness) and proximity to Allāh (see Part I; al-Ghazālī's understanding of happiness). Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's insights, from individuals who have distance from the spiritual world, highlight their acknowledgment of committing a sin. This acknowledgment prompts them to find the righteous way to compensate for past "wrongdoing."

The Qur'ān remarks on three kinds of sins. Minor sins are wrongdoings that do not affect the individual's faith and are forgiven by Allāh's mercy. The Qur'ān elaborates on the minor sins by saying: "Those who shun grave sins and indecencies, save what is slight; truly your Lord is of vast forgiveness. He knows you best, from when He brought you forth from the earth and when you were hidden in your mother's bellies. So deem not yourself purified. He knows best the reverent" (*al-Najm* [The Star]; LIII, 32; trans., Nasr 2015:1295). The second kind are grave sins (*kabā'ir al-ithm*), which Allāh may forgive or may delay the pardon until the completion of a specific punishment according to His mysterious will. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* falls in this category, as their view of their sin presents an anticipation of punishment in the present (or the near future) and forgiveness that has not yet materialized. In fact, forgiveness will not materialize until some kind of punishment has come to pass. Jamilā explained:

> One day I'll have good dreams of Safiyya [the old woman in her dream], because she will forgive me. The Qur'ān says good people forgive each other and are happy to learn not to blame others for their mistakes. But, I also know that my dreams tell me I did a *ghaltah kbīrī*…she was so kind to me and it makes me very sad that she is not with me. I know I have to see her in my dream for a long time before I can finally only see her happy. What I want to do is to learn to be a better child…or like a better person…so I can become closer to Allāh and this way I can become closer to my family and Safiyya. Allāh forgives us after we learn to become closer to Him. (Interview in May 2019)

Her use of *ghaltah kbīrī* centers on the fact that actions demand punishment; she states that she needs "to learn to be a better child," which requires hard work and cultivation of right conduct in order to "become closer to Allāh." Hard work is a process, which Jamilā anticipates will take endurance and might last a long time.

Hard work ultimately cultivates an individual's soul, as al-Ghazālī states, the person's "heart." Al-Ghazālī's analogy of the "heart" (see Part I)—the mirror spoilt by rusting and in need of continuous polishing—is similar to the human essence (*nafs*) where the "proper" disposition brings one closer to Allāh. Nabilā said:

> The more I think about *aziz-jon* [Nabilā's grandmother, Nūr, who died about a year after Nabilā fled Darra] the more…more than ever…I feel a *ghaltah kbīrī* [great sin] for leaving her. The only way for me to make *aziz-jon* happy is to do my best to be a good person…like to listen to my parents and do well in school. I know that if I do all of the good things I am supposed to do, I can make *aziz-jon* happy. She is not completely happy with me now, but she will forgive me if I keep doing the good things I am supposed to do. My father always tells me that Allāh always forgives people who have done bad things…I'll do my best to make Allāh happy…Allāh sees that he is kind and forgives us. If Allāh is happy then everyone is happy with me. (Interview in July 2019)

The proximity to Allāh (*sa'ada*; "happiness") is a form of *tawba* ("to return"), a repentance and withdrawal from previous sinful acts. Repentance is, therefore, a way to ask for forgiveness. Repentance is the awareness with which Jamilā references the Qur'ān, where compassion and tolerance are part of Allāh's mercy. This statement by Jamilā also means that what she perceives to be her "wrongdoing" is forgivable. Thus, her intent in "committing sin" is unlike a grave sin, which has no flexibility in exoneration. The Qur'ān states that the gravest sin is when *kufr* ("infidels" or non-believers) attack "the Divine Oneness, which cannot be wiped out except through repentance (*tawba*) and which, failing this last, remains under the threat of eternal hellfire" (Wensinck & Gardet 2012:9). The Qur'ān explains this by stating that, "Truly those who disbelieve [*kufr*] spend their wealth to turn [others] from the way of God. They will spend

it; then it will be a source of regret for them, and then they will be overcome. And the disbelievers [*kufr*] will be gathered unto Hell" (*al-Anfāl* [The Spoils]; VIII, 36; trans., Nasr 2015:491).

For most Islamic philosophers, the definition of sin consists of a degree of variability; what is mainly agreed upon is that moral lapse is "one of disobedience (*ma'siya*) to the prescription of the divine law, to the point that *ma'siya* becomes a synonym for *khatī'a* [sin]" (Wensinck & Gardet 2012:12). As stated earlier, a sin—whether minor or grave—is an act of insubordination towards Allāh's will and commands. The submission to Allāh, or obedience, is done through the practice of self-control and awareness of one's spiritual condition (*murākaba*). Al-Ghazālī articulates this view by pointing out the importance of the examination of one's conscience (*muhāsaba*) actions and their purpose (*op*. *cit*., 336-61, esp. 346). He illustrates this by drawing on a duality, where in *Khuluq al-Muslim* he writes, "the purity of intention" as opposed to "the evilness of heart and bad intention" where it lowers "the status of his acts of worship and degrades him to the level of a sinner" (2004:56; trans., Usmani). In a way, al-Ghazālī's main argument is to keep the "heart" free from malice.

A Language of Knowledge, Regret and Action

According to al-Ghazālī, disobedience towards Allāh is the results of man's basic constitution of two hostile forces that are not equal nor are co-temporal: appetites and intellect (Stern 1979). In *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn*, he asserts that appetites developed first while intellect is gained gradually. The conclusion reached by al-Ghazālī is that since appetites are formulated prior to intellect, it is inevitable for individuals to commit sin, and therefore part of human nature (1990:12, 25f). This is the root of what he called "evilness of heart and bad intention" (1990:13, 45). Meanwhile, al-

Ghazālī believed that Allāh grants individuals a "sound heart" (1990:13, 45; also see Part I). He advocated adamantly for a process of knowledge, regret and action to, in his words, "polish the heart" from sin. Thus, in al-Ghazālī's writings the nature of repentance takes on great importance since it concerns all human beings, even the prophets. Repentance can be thought of as a process of repair of the past in order to be granted Allāh's forgiveness in the future. It is "a process of conversion whereby a man corrects his past errors, assures the discontinuance of like action, and strives for future abstention from negatively valued behavior" (Stern 1979:591). Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* has similar purpose; it intends to seek forgiveness knowing full well that all human beings and their actions warrant Allāh's absolution. Forgiveness is the work that will materialize in the future, which also leads to repairing a bond to the vulnerable other (see Chapter Eight).

When the children used the phrase *ghaltah kbīrī*, their accounts underlined al-Ghazālī's assertion of the three stages of repentance: knowledge, regret and action. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* specified a language of repentance that incorporates an awareness of "sinful" undertakings from the past, a regret towards what has transpired, and some form of future-orientated scheme to repair the past "wrongdoings." In each case, there is a level of comprehension about the magnitude of the "sin" committed. The acknowledgment of committing a "sin" is then followed by an emotional response. Finally, there is stage of pleading for absolution through "proper" conduct, a language of future commitments that yields Allah's forgiveness. This language of forgiveness is an attempt to bring Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā closer to Allāh, since their "sins" in the first place caused their alienation from Him. Nabilā spoke about this form of separation from divine and the spiritual world (what al-Ghazālī calls the "anguish of separation"):

> *Aziz-jon* [Nabilā's grandmother] meant everything to me. I feel like I did a *ghaltah kbīrī* by leaving her. The more I felt I was further from her, especially now in America, the more I feel like I *ghaltah kbīrī*. Also, the older I get I understand what I did was *ghaltah kbīrī*. Maybe we all could have left Daraa together so she would have been with us. I feel terrible about what happened to her. It makes me so sad…I used to cry so much about it. I know *aziz-jon* is watching me…my mother also told me the same thing…that the best thing I can do is to be a good student and be a good Muslim…this way, I hope to make Allāh happy and if He is happy with me then I know *aziz-jon* will be happy too. (Interview in July 2019)

Al-Ghazālī considers knowledge to be the "first stage of the penitential process, [where it] consists of the intellectual realization of the magnitude of sin's harm, it being a direct cause of alienation from God" (Stern 1979:591). Nabilā's "intellectual realization" in committing a "sin" is based on the fact that her grandmother could have been saved by her and her family. For Nabilā, the logistics of fleeing Daraa under attack and her grandmother's immobility do not amount to a sufficient and reasonable justification for abandoning her. The "magnitude of sin's harm" centers on how Nabilā sees herself as (at least partially) (co)collaborator in the circumstances that led to her grandmother's eventual death. This means that "interweaving human conditions, conduct, beliefs, intentions and emotions, it is the plot that turns a sequence of events into a story or a history" (Ochs & Capps 1996:26). This "mode of cognitive function" makes Nabilā prioritize and highlight events and her emotions in a particular order, since "narratives of personal experience characteristically revolve around an unexpected or troubling turn of events" (Ochs & Capps 1996:27).

For Amir, the phrase *ghaltah kbīrī* carried a strong emotional response to what al-Ghazālī called the "anguish of separation" from the divine:

> I miss my family a lot…I wish they were here to see me play soccer…sometimes I imagine telling them about what I have done and picture them sitting with me. But I miss them and I lost them forever. I feel like I have done a *ghaltah kbīrī*; how was it that they went to heaven and I am here? Maybe it is because Allāh is not happy with me. I think if

> He was happy he would keep all of us together. Maybe he is keeping me away from them to learn to be a better person. (Interview in January 2019)

The "affective orientation" (Ochs & Schieffelin 1989) in Amir's account constructs feelings of guilt around what has happened to his family. Al-Ghazālī considered the emotional effect of sin: the "anxiety induced from alienation and frustration, is guilt" (Stern 1979:603). For Amir, *ghaltah kbīrī* also conveys that being alienated is grounds for punishment by Allāh since his actions are based on "worldly" desires and his "impurity." Al-Ghazālī devoted a significant part of his writings to the function of the mundane world (*dunyā*) as it correlates to the development of a "pious" human being. He believed that individuals are constantly drawn to the material world and its pleasure, thus "therein lies sin and alienation" (1999:12). Since sins cause one's alienation from Allāh, they can only be renounced if an individual uses the material world "for the cultivation of the hereafter," where "any such indiscriminate renunciation …. would just as surely enslave man to the *dunyā* at the expense of his salvation" (Stern 1979:592).

A conclusion can be drawn that Amir's use of *ghaltah kbīrī* is intended to serve as a powerful mode of communication that allows him to declare his intent to return to Allāh. This Arabic phrase represents a motivation to seek refuge in Allāh; it reorients Amir to restore the lost bond tarnished due to his "separation" from the divine. Thus, sin is a violation of an individual's relationship with Allāh, and repentance the socio-religious rite of returning to Him through divine forgiveness. This implies that the utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* is the restitution and active pursuit of obedience toward Allāh. Restitution is the indication that a sin and alienation take one into the imaginative world of *barzakh*, situating a person in-between the material and spiritual worlds.

The potency in utilizing *ghaltah kbīrī* is that it means the language of repentance is efficacious and objectively validated through the cultural norms and Islamic ideals. One who successfully conducts the proper and predetermined steps of repentance is steered back towards the right path (*tariqa*). The reward is how Allāh's responds with mercy to the individuals who asks for forgiveness, by becoming aware of their sin(s) and enduring the appropriate punishment. The intention in using *ghaltah kbīrī* embodies this motivation. Al-Ghazālī stressed that motivation for repentance is achieved through "reflection and perception" (Stern 1979:592). An individual's motivation is grounded in the conviction that Allāh will "receive and value the sincere penitent" (Stern 1979:592). Jamilā's discussion about her dream of writing a novel exhibits her motivation for amending her "wrongdoing":

> When I go to university, I actually want to become a writer. And the first story I want to write about, in a very detailed and long novel, is my own story but someone else will be me then…like I will be an adult and will write about a young Syrian girl who lives in America. I kind of want to write about after the young girl has asked Allāh for forgiveness, she is really eager to do good things…like she wants to open up an art center for children to come and learn. Kind of like a park where you can go out to the playground but you can come inside to learn different arts. The main point of my story will be—as I have been thinking about it a lot—that the young girl is eager to help others after she made a mistake…like a big mistake, *ghaltah kbīrī* when she was younger but now she is really eager to do good things. I kind of like my story to end with Allāh being happy with her but I am not sure how to do that…I know that she hopes to do well and will do her best to do what she can to please Allah…because like I am not sure what the signs will be for her to see she has done really good…maybe it will be how kids get excited when they come to the art center. (Interview in August 2019)

Motivation is grounded in anticipation and hope, a future-oriented character who aims to see potentiality and possibility (Dufault & Martocchio 1985:12). On the one hand, the use of *ghaltah kbīrī* supposes some control over the outcome of what Jamilā is narrating, where she invokes the higher power of the divine. In a way, the use of *ghaltah kbīrī* (and the potentiality for motivation and hope) is both an acknowledgement of human limitations and an attempt to overcome them.

This Arabic phrase is an expression of belief in a correspondence between the will of Allāh and the wishes of mere mortals. Simply stated, this transaction is not amongst individuals nor is it between an individual and object(s); it takes place between a person and the divine. For Jamilā, the alignment towards Allāh becomes an unbreakable bond, where motivation turns into faith.

The French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel states that, "hope consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all inventories and all calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me" (1995:28). Motivation in relation to the future becomes a form of hope for a particular lifeworld. In hope, an individual "recognizes the limitations of what one can achieve by oneself and so makes an appeal to something beyond oneself" (Hooft 2011:37). Thus, hope exerts a humility that exposes an individual's limitations. Moreover, regardless of any individual belief in God, hope creates a circumstance in which one appeals to a supernatural power. Hope is a belief or a faith; it is "an implicit acknowledgement of one's need for assistance and an explicit address to those powers that can provide it" (Hooft 2011:38).

The use of *ghaltah kbīrī* is a motivational means to believe in the power of hope through a supernatural authority. This belief or faith in practice is an account that explores a positive but uncertain future. Jamilā's desire to write a novel expresses hope based on her anticipation of the unknown future; it is "a celebration of mystery, surprise and creativity" (Ezzy 2000:605). Hope can be defined as "the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways" (Cheavens & Rand 2009:42).

Drawing on sociologist Douglas Ezzy's study of people living with HIV/AIDS, hope serves as a notion that is "concrete" and "transcendent" (2000). Ezzy's concept of "concrete hope" and "transcendent hope" is based on Marcel's dialectical engagement of hope and despair.

For Marcel, hope only materializes when there is the possibility of guilt or anxiety (e.g., Jamilā's dream), and at the same time when there is the possibility of emotional responses like angst and uneasiness about the other one responds by hoping (1995). As Marcel explains, "despair is possible in any form, at any moment and to any degree, and this betrayal may seem to be counseled, if not forced upon us, by the very structure of the world we live in" (1995:26). Hope, then, becomes an affirmation, an individual response and struggle to deny despair.

For Ezzy, "concrete hope" seeks an outcome and is goal-oriented. For example, concrete hope is exhibited when Jamilā expects a future where other children could benefit from an art center. This form of hope is related to the standard explanation of hope given in the psychological literature as "the positive expectation of realizing desirable outcomes" (Barnard 1995:47). On the other hand, "transcendent hope" is "not oriented to achieving a goal," but is a "mode of experiencing…[that] embraces uncertainty and finitude, celebrating surprise, play, novelty and mystery" (Ezzy 2000:607). Marcel states that "transcendent hope" is a way of living through time and reality (1962). Accordingly, "the hopeful person, rather than being defined (or enslaved) by particular wishes, is continually open to the possibility that reality will disclose as yet unknown sources of meaning and value" (Barnard 1995:48). *Ghaltah kbīrī* is partly a form of "transcendent hope" in that it resists being characterized, demonstrating openness to novelty, transformation and shifting time horizons.

Motivation in Jamilā's story goes hand in hand with how her character violated moral standards. The "eager to do good things" elements reestablishes the bond between the character and Allāh. This would imply that the utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* is rooted in specific Islamic values, as it becomes a method of internalization of a certain moral code. The next section

discusses how *ghaltah kbīrī* is grounded on a perception of the psychological response to pleading for Allah's forgiveness.

The Language of Forgiveness

> "So remember Me, and I shall remember you. Give thanks unto Me, and disbelieve not in Me." –The Qur'ān (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow]; II, 152; trans., Nasr 2015:67)

Repentance by restitution is an essential aspect of Allāh's forgiveness. Generally, forgiveness encompasses three conditions: a) sin must be committed out of ignorance (the believer should never assume that Allāh forgives any wrongdoing); b) the sinner must have emotional experiences such as guilt, remorse and even shame; and c) when asking for forgiveness the sinner must pledge to stay on the "right" path, as the Qur'ān states: "that whosoever among you does evil in ignorance and thereafter repents and makes amends, He is truly Forgiving, Merciful" (*al-An'ām* [The Cattle]; VI, 54; trans., Nasr 2015:359). The Arabic word *ghafara* ("forgive") appears 128 times in the Qur'ān (see II, 175, III, 106 and XXXIX, 5). The references to *ghafara* can be broken down into "references to the character of Allāh as forgiving" and a second grouping that includes "exhortations for human beings to forgive, whether for the sake of righteousness or for the sake of reward" (Powell 2012:19). This view was echoed by Faizal during an evening picnic in a small Bay Ridge park with Lylā and her brothers. Discussing the situation in Syria, he said:

> Many things went wrong over the past few years…lots of people were unfortunately killed and badly injured. So many of us left home…and many committed *ghaltah kbīrī*. But my task, as a human being, is to be able to learn to forgive and teach my children the same thing. If Allāh forgives then it must be something I could learn to do as well. Learning to forgive and also being forgiven gives you peace and happiness. It helps to lift your spirit…it kind of makes your heart lighter or your soul pure. The Qur'ān says: "The recompense of an evil is an evil like unto it. Yet whosoever pardons and sets matters

> aright, his reward is with God. Truly He loves not the wrongdoers" [*al-Shūrā* {Counsel}; XLII, 40; trans., Nasr 2015:1184]. I want my children to learn the true meaning of this verse in the Qur'ān. I want these divine words to guide them so they can find peace and happiness. (Interview in July 2019)

Lylā followed her father by saying:

> My dad told me a story of how when the Prophet came back to Mecca, he forgave all those people who had done bad things to him and everyone else who had become Muslim. He always tells me and my brother that we should learn to forgive and ask Allāh for forgiveness. (Interview in July 2019)

Lylā is referring to the triumphant return of Muhammad from exile home to Mecca, where he is said to have declared to all the tribes that his enemies are forgiven. Even though the Prophet had the authority to take revenge on the Mecca tribes (whom planned his assassination when he accounted his prophecy and then faced off in three wars with him), the Qur'ān explains that: "He said, 'There is no reproach against you this day. God will forgive you" (Yūsuf [Joseph]; XII, 92; trans., Nasr 2105:611).[39] Essentially, forgiveness was an invitation to the faith of Islam, where this act "calmed political tensions and stimulated large-scale conversions to Islam" (Powell 2012:21).

The use of *ghaltah kbīrī* positions forgiveness as a virtuous imitation of the character of Allāh (some contemporary Islamic thinkers view this as the result of "true faith"). The intention to use *ghaltah kbīrī* can also be thought of as an communal reconciliation where forgiveness is granted as the response to repentance. Meanwhile, *ghaltah kbīrī* is an assertation that forgiveness is never taken for granted; "it is a decision for Allah only" (Abu-Nimer & Nasser 2013:478). The utterance of this phrase asserts that the speaker believes Allāh to be the ultimate source and the

[39] In Genesis (45:5-8) Joseph states that "there is no reproach against you this day," which is described by some sources "as a beautiful form of forgiveness…. These words of forgiveness and comfort uttered by Joseph were cited by the Prophet Muhammad when he too forgave members of his tribe who had been his oppressors" (Nasr 2015:611).

only source of authority, who determines acceptance or repentance and grants mercy for forgiveness. It also makes clear that there is a distinction between human forgiveness and Allāh's divine absolution.

Ghaltah kbīrī carries a senses of a higher state of being, where forgiveness is the awareness that committing a sin against another "is therefore a realization of a wrongdoing against one's self" (Davary 2004:129). In other words, the utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* is a testimony or a requisite of faith. Nabilā explains how forgiveness factors into her faith:

> When you know you have done something bad, it makes me want to become better and do more good. It is important to remember what the bad thing…like if we know what is bad then we can avoid it. So I want to remember the bad things so I can stay away from them. If I keep doing that then I know Allāh forgives us all because everyone tries to live the best they can, but no one could be as good as the Prophet or Allāh. My dad always tells me that Allāh gives us some of His good characters and it is up to us to keep them and make them grow into something good. It is, he says, like a flower…we need to water it and take care of it so it becomes a beautiful flower. So like, if we do something wrong we can work harder to become better. (Interview in June 2019)

Nabilā is speaking about the Sūfī belief that humanity is a microcosm, where all the attributes of Allāh subsist to some degree within each person. Ibn 'Arabī and al-Ghazālī believed that since Allāh grants some of His attributes to humans, it is "the challenge of humanity…to perfect these attributes" (Davary 2004:131). Thus, the utterance of *ghaltah kbīrī* is beyond just the admission of wrongdoing, but also recreates a bond to Allāh to seek out His attributes in a person. The declaration of committing a sin is the acknowledgment of Allāh's attributes. During a dinner at Salāh's apartment, he explained to Nabilā that forgiveness is an inherent quality in Islam:

> One thing Nabilā's grandmother—may Allāh have mercy on her soul—used to tell us all was that people do things that are wrong. I remember Nabilā, you used to ask her when you were a child, that "Why do soldiers have guns and sometimes shoot at people"? You were a kid and asked a very important question. She would say that what they are doing is wrong, because they are in the dark…and I remember she would quickly say after that Allāh forgives even those who have committed *ghaltah kbīrī*. The Qur'ān tells us that Allāh will forgive as long as people learn from their mistakes. Even for Adam [reference

to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil] who did not listen to Allāh's command and ate the apple…when Allāh had told him not to…he forgave him. Because he became aware of what he has done was wrong and asked Allāh for forgiveness. I have recited this verse from the Qur'ān to Nabilā many times. [Salāh walked over to the bookshelf and took the family Qur'ān to read]: "We said, 'O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat freely thereof, wheresoever you will. But approach not this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers" [*al-baqarah* {The Cow}; II, 35; trans., Nasr 2015:23-4].This is a very important story for us to learn from. We all make mistakes but we all need to know what are mistakes are and then ask for forgiveness, because as your grandmother said Allāh forgives us all. (Interview in June 2019)

Salāh's explanation is grounded in the idea about Adam's sin that repentance was sought by him and forgiveness was offered.[40] This view also means that not only are individuals forgiven by Allāh, but they can also attain proximity to Him (much like how Adam was first forgiven and then was appointed vicegerent of Allāh on Earth). *Ghaltah kbīrī* is a declaration that humans make mistakes, yet—through repentance—do not fall short of Allāh's grace. It is also an assertion that one makes to be reminded of Allāh's omnipresence, where forgetting His grace leads one to wrongdoing.

According to al-Ghazālī, "forgetfulness is what leads to sin" (forgetful is one of the ways in which the Qur'ān describes human beings) (Davary 2004:133). Jamilā discussed her understanding of forgetfulness and committing a sin:

When I say *ghaltah kbīrī*, part of it is because I know I did something really bad…but I also want to remember Allāh. Because when you are not thinking of Allāh is usually when you do something wrong. When I picture Him, I am sure He helps me. Like when I want to not have a bad thought I picture Allāh is telling me I will be strong. When you do something bad is when you are not thinking of Allāh...if not, how could somebody do something bad? The army in Syria if they think of Allāh, they would never do something bad, but they are not thinking of Him when they shoot at people. (Interview in June 2019)

[40] The Islamic view on Adam differs from the concept of Original Sin. Christianity believes that Adam's sin was so great that it necessitated God's incarnation in Christ to cure the sin and to resolve the divine message.

As al-Ghazālī informs his readers, happiness or proximity to Allāh is attained by being attuned to Him. The attunement only takes place through hard work and the remembrance of Allāh. *Dhikr* ("remembrance," "mention," or "utterance") is the Sūfī devotional act of repeating prayers in order to remember Allāh. The person who conducts this ritual is usually called a *dākir* (the person who remembers), uttering repetitive short prayers that glorify Allāh.

Thus far, the chapter has focused on the Islamic significance of repentance and forgiveness. To conclude, I draw on Levinas's understanding of forgiveness as a way of repairing the future. This segue sets the groundwork for the final chapter, which deals with what Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā perceive as their future. Their desirable future focuses on repairing the broken bond to the other.

Giving the Past a New Meaning

"By the grace of forgiveness, the things that had been done had not been done."
–Vladimir Jankélévitch

Levinas is concerned with the hermeneutics at work with memory; he ponders how one ought to recount the past in light of the future. Levinas is interested in what he refers to as the "salutary character of succession," that "in which the past is represented and repaired within limits, [while] time keeps on marching" (Levinas 1969:282). According to Levinas, then, forgiveness is what "repair[s] the past," through re-narrating events and situating the events in a new perspective (1969: 282). He asserts that a a future of new possibilities is imaginable by "giv[ing] the past a new meaning" (Levinas 1969:282). Therefore, thinking along with Levinas, without "recourse to

others—that is, without being forgiven—the past can be repaired, retold, and re-described, but not to the point of changing it" (Allers 2010:21).

Levinas explains further by stating that "time is essentially a new birth" (1987:81). In this way of thinking—as well as the Islamic doctrine—forgiveness is never only about the past, but also about repairing the future. As Islamic philosophers assert, forgiveness diminishes the thrust for revenge and allows for a future of reconciliation and peace. Time in this sense recounts the narratives of the past and allows a space where a different act could encompass the perceived or prior actions. The next chapter explores is how this space of transformation is created. The next chapter discusses how, in Levinas's perspective, forgiveness gains a new perspective, it transforms into how one acts upon the past by purifying it. In a Levinasian sense, forgiveness is a part of an ethics of care that is "Other-oriented," which means "that every actor involved in the process acts for the Others" (Faldetta 2018:63). This would mean that "the past is not re-presented in the present through memory, or nullified through forgetting, but repeated in the past. Furthermore, the past event is repeated, but repeated differently, as if it has not passed, as if it never happened, as if the doer had not 'committed' herself in action" (Allers 2011:175). In this way, forgiveness becomes a "gift of time, a gift of a new past" (Faldetta 2018:63).

CHAPTER EIGHT: AFTER FORGIVENESS: MORAL REPAIR AND GIVING TO ALLĀH

"To go astray is human nature; to forgive is divine."
--A popular Sūfī saying

One of the main goals in Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's accounts is an attempt by them to "repair" the broken bond to the vulnerable other. This chapter examines "repair" as a moral practice for individuals to respond to perceived "wrongdoings" as they envision their futures. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's response to their "sinful" deeds (moral wrongdoings of divine disobedience) is a way to (re)establish and sustain a form of morality. Repair is a means to restore a sense of value and responsibility the children feel has been lost due to their actions. Repair is *responding* to the wrongdoings, not merely reacting to them, and perceiving a future where the wrongs are not only addressed as wrongs but also, in the words of Amir, "to set things right." Moral repair is comprised "the restoration or reconstruction of confidence, trust, and hope in the reality of shared moral standards and of our reliability in meeting and enforcing them" (Walker 2001:120). This chapter highlights how the children's moral repair finds its richest reward in acts of charity, what Nabilā called "given to Allāh."

"Repair" is often discussed based on its social and political understanding in relation to justice as a movement that aims for "greater inclusion of groups…deemed to have been wrongfully treated and the reestablishment or creation of a historic link between all members of the polity" (Prager 2008:406-7). Social repair is regularly observed through "a psychologically inflected vocabulary of regret, apology, and forgiveness—the language of reconciliation" (Prager 2008:405). Repair in this chapter is more concerned with the individual's response to perceived wrong doings and not so much the collective will for change. The intention is to understand how

Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's accounts aim to heal the traumatic events of the past in relation to William James's concept of the "possible selves." The children's stories situates them between the material and spiritual worlds (to use al-Ghazālī's metaphor about happiness), in an in-between space of flux which becomes a site for hope and at times conflict with the self. James discusses four elements that comprise the self: a) the material self; b) the social self; c) the spiritual self; and d) the pure ego (1981). He asserts that the first three components constitute the "Empirical Self"; essentially what comes to be called a person, or the self that is known. James states that "in each kind of self, material, social, and spiritual, man distinguish between the immediate and actual, and the remote and potential" (1981:300). This "domain is occupied by selves that are both desired and feared, selves that reflect some current capabilities and attributes but that also reflect the potential for change over time" (Comello 2009:341).

This chapter concludes with Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's aspirations for the future, which revolve around ways of giving back to the Syrian communities they left behind. Their views are rooted in the Islamic discourse of charity for the Muslim community that centers on the selfless acts of giving to Allāh. Repeatedly the children try to emulate the readings of the Qur'ān on charity and the responsibility of a believer that they have heard from their parents. This act of "giving to Allāh" is complicated by individual's is requirement to practice patience (*sabr*), where patience becomes a virtue that cultivates the self and a path to achieve proximity to Allāh through this selfless act. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā find the virtuous practice of patience in regards to the selfless act of charity both a way to attain happiness but also a barrier in achieving individual aspirations. The push and pull of being and becoming, again points to the in-betweenness of *barzakh*, and how the children find themselves between the material and

spiritual worlds in their pursuit of good life. The final section, examines what it means to be an "exemplary" child and how the children imagine reaching this ideal.

Repair and the Possible Selves

James states that the material self is the "physical substance of who we are" (Comello 2009:338). He expands his view on the material self to be not just the individual but those close to him/her. James explains that "our father and mother, out wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone" (1981:280). It is not uncommon for someone dealing with the loss of a loved one to share the sentiment described by James. Lylā spoke about her mother in a comparable manner:

> When my mom passed away a part of me…was like…it was gone, like she was. I was so sad. I couldn't be happy for a long time; I couldn't smile for a long time. When my mom first passed away it was weird and I kind of did not really know what to do but then I became sadder and sadder the more I felt she was never going to be with me. I am not as sad as I was when I was in the camp…but each day I miss her and I am going to miss her for the rest of my life. It feels like a part of my heart has been taken away from me. I will always remember her face, her smile and the way she spoke; she was very beautiful and kind. I know a part of me will always, always miss her and a part of my heart will always be sad. I think of her often and I know I will always do that because she is in my heart. (Interview in June 2019)

Lylā's narrative about her mother consists of two components. For Lylā, the loss of her mother resembles a physical loss of her own self. Her analogy of "part of her heart" being "taken away" from her, speaks to James's idea that the material self is not only about oneself but it expands to the selves of others with whom one shares an intimate relationship. In addition, the loss of other for Lylā encompasses a language originating in the past but also continuing into the distant future. The loss of the other embodies both a visceral and physical reaction (the image of the face, smile and the voice of Lylā's mother), as well as the metaphorical correlation to the heart.

James's material self, as a physical body, will inevitably die, even though others will feel the emotional burden of such a loss. He even explains that material objects in our possessions can elicit a similar feeling of loss. He explains that "the parts of our wealth most intimately ours are those which are saturated with our labor. There are few men who would not feel personally annihilated if lifelong constructions of their own hands or brains—say an entomological collection or an extensive work in manuscript—were suddenly swept away" (1981:281). Lylā's continued discussion of her mother illustrates James's point but is also alike to al-Ghazālī's discussion of the "heart":

> One of the things I imagine I could do with my mom…it makes me sad every time I play music…I wish she could be here to sing with my music. I know my father did that a lot with her. I also wish I could have recorded her voice so I could keep it. My dad had some recordings of my mother in Aleppo, but we couldn't bring most of them because we had no room…but the few that my father brought were lost in the camp…I don't know why. If I heard her recording it would make me cry now but it would also make me happy to know that I could hear her voice. Well maybe not happy, I am not sure what to say…the right word…you know when you don't feel bad about something and happy but a different happy? My dad always tells me she is with us and will be with us forever. Allāh takes the body but not the soul…I think we say [the] *rūh* [soul] of a person when they pass away. I know that things on earth don't last forever on earth but the soul of people we lose and love, are with us and Allāh. This is how I know my mom is watching me and will be happy if I keep doing my best. (Interview in June 2019)

Lylā's discussion highlights a separation between the physical entities that James discusses, and an understanding of the nature of al-Ghazālī's "heart" (see Part I). Losing possession of the recordings feels, to some measure, like losing a part of the self. Lylā draws a distinction between the material and the divine essence, particularly the physical and the spiritual heart. This distinction is at the core of al-Ghazālī's writings on the "heart." He distinguishes the physical nature of the heart from its "second meaning [of "heart" that] is divine, spiritual subtlety (*latīfa*) that has a connection [or relation] to this bodily heart. That 'subtlety' is the reality of the human being, i.e., [the aspect] of the person that comprehends (*al-mudrik*) [intellectually] [and]

perceives (*al-ʿālim*)" (1990:131). For Lylā, the heart becomes both the locus of loss and sadness *and* the permanent dwelling place of the other. Since Lylā's account corresponds to al-Ghazālī's view of the "heart," then the material self is inherently dualistic. The "possible selves" (if the analogy of "heart" is taken into account) mourn a loss and at the same time, celebrate the omnipresence of the vulnerable other.

The mourning and celebration of the other is given meaning through one's relation to other. James's "social self" "comprises [of] the self-conceptions that one develops based on the recognition that one gets from others" (Comello 2009:339). James asserts that an individual can take on numerous social selves as long as they are recognizable to others, which in turn displays multiple views of the self for that individual. Therefore, the aspirations and desires to be a member of certain groups or affiliated with particular social institutions is at the base of the social self. Nabilā speaks about her desire to obey by Islamic rules and how these values will bring her closer to her grandmother:

> When I was in the mosque after we left [Daraa], I met really nice children that had no place to go. I met my really good friend Nūr there [Nabilā's friend during her short stay at the mosque]. Nūr was safe there, the mosque helped her to be safe. *Aziz-jon* [Nabilā's grandmother] never felt safe…because of the war. I want to build extra rooms and make the mosque bigger so the children will have more room to study, play and go to sleep. I can make *aziz-jon* happy this way. The mosque there and here in our neighborhood is a safe and fun place for the children to come together. If I can help in the mosque and if I can help the children that would make me really happy…well, I will make *aziz-jon* really happy so it will make me feel closer to her. The holy Qur'ān talks about how helping people and those who are poor is so important. That is why there were so many children living in the mosque. I imagine one day working in the mosque and helping others, helping to build more rooms to see more children be safe and enjoy playing with other children. (Interview in May 2019)

In Islam, the act of charity towards the community is a desirable deed and spoken of highly in the Qur'ān. James states that certain social groups are more sought after than others, where "all progress of the social self is the substitution of higher tribunals for lower" (1981:301). The social

self aspires to "judgments of higher tribunals" which James labels as the "potential social self, and it is powerful in that it causes humans to brave the condemnation of some in order to gain the approval of others" (Comello 2009:339).

Nabliā is referring to the Islamic act of charity known as *sadaqa* (there are two kinds of charity: *sadaqa*, voluntary form and the obligatory, *zakat*). *Sadaqa* is a term in the Qur'ān that covers various forms of benevolence. Salāh, followed Nabilā stating:

> Your idea sounds wonderful. I remember when you played with the kids there, I remember Nūr well. Your idea is important for every Muslim. The first thing you should do is really study hard and get good grades so you can go to a good university and get a good education. Then your mom and I will come and help rebuild that mosque. You know that Allāh loves those who give to their community. *Sadaqa* [charity] is one of the most beautiful and important acts in Islam. The Qur'ān says [opening the family Qur'ān from the shelf]: "They ask thee what they should spend. Say, 'Let whatever of your wealth you spend be for parents, kins-folk, orphans, the indigent, and the traveler. Whatever good you do, truly God knows it'" [al-Baqarah {The Cow}; II, 215; trans., Nasr 2015:93]. See Nabilā, Allāh makes it very clear that you should help kids who do not have parents, kids who have to leave their homes because of difficulties and others who need help. In fact, we should all do that…every Muslim should at some point in their lives help others…that is why we fast to think of the poor. I think it is very important and kind of you to want to help your country one day. We should all find a way to do that…that is our responsibly. I know you are a good daughter for me and your mom. You were a really good granddaughter for your grandmother. And you will continue to be a wonderful daughter for us. (Interview in May 2019)

When discussing their future, a constant theme for Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā was the Islamic act of voluntary charity (*sadaqa*). Their parents often referred to the Qur'ān to validate the children's aspirations, while underlining the importance of education and other Islamic values.

GIVING TO ALLĀH

Salāh's statement to Nabilā aims to address the ethics of reciprocity (popularly known as the "golden rule") as an essential moral dictum in Islam. The discussion of Islamic charity centers on al-Ghazālī's two-fold objective: a) attaining proximity to Allāh that leads to heavenly paradise in

the hereafter; and b) the proximity to Allāh is only achieved through rigorous inward character development coupled with outward acts of piety and social responsibility towards the community. For al-Ghazālī charity "involves imaginative role reversal, or putting yourself in another's shoes" (Parrott 2017:4). Jamilā's desire to help Syrian children learn to read is a testament to al-Ghazālī of ethics of reciprocity:

> When I become a writer, I want to go back to Aleppo and help children read in schools and maybe even in some libraries. What if I was not able to leave Aleppo and had no chance to go to school and learn to read and write? I want to help the children when I am done with my education. I want the children to read stories and enjoy them like I learned from my teachers here. I want the children to read my novel and learn how wonderful Safiyya was. If I can help children with reading it will be very important to them and also it will be important to Allāh, because education is very important in Islam and everyone who has learned something should help other people learn. Helping the children with their education is for *li-llāh* [for Allāh] and one day I want to do that for the children. (Interview in July 2019)

Jamilā's account is also similar to al-Ghazālī's notion of charity as it relates to one's relationship to Allāh. Al-Ghazālī states that: "whenever you interact with people, deal with them as you would wish yourself to be dealt with by them, for a worshiper's faith is incomplete until he wants for other people what he wants for himself" (*Letter to a Disciple*, 56). He uses an inclusive language of *sā'ir al-nās* ("the rest of people"), which means to show empathy and love towards others as one would towards him/herself. This act of giving is part of the inward disposition (*mahāsin al-akhlāq*) and the purification of the heart that al-Ghazālī addresses as the way to attain happiness. This view also goes to the heart of understanding the significance of community (*ummah*) in Islam. Al-Ghazālī believed in the "community as a single building or body…. [where] everyone in the community is like part of one's own self and should be treated as one's self" (Parrott 2017:4).

Jamilā's view that "helping the children" because education is an act of charity for *li-llāh* (for Allāh) is based on the perspective that giving to Allāh is principle that must be upheld. The proposition *li* means for the sake of Allāh. Mittermaier states that this expression also "impl[ies] that the human donor is channeling God's generosity since what you give is never yours to begin with; all things belong to God and are merely entrusted to humans" (2019:6). Jamilā's intent in using *li-llāh* is also rooted in the concept of *amāna*; all things belong to Allāh and is only in the possession of individuals for a short period of time. Mona Atia, a professor of geography with expertise in Islamic charity, asserts that *amāna* means "that humans are never the absolute owners; everything is merely entrusted to them by God" (2013:6; also see Mittermaier 2019). Jamilā believes it is her duty to one day give back to her community, who she sees is less privileged than she. The act of charity is a way for her to repair what she views as her neglect of Safiyya that led to her death. This repairing of the broken bond to the other also brings Jamilā closer to Allāh, as someone who, in the words of al-Ghazālī, is working to purify the heart in order to attain happiness. Mittermaier also points out that the phrase *li-llāh* "impl[ies] a trade-like relationship with God in which one's good deeds are an attempt to accrue points towards a place in paradise" (2019:6). This trade-like conception of charity could perhaps be a motivating factor for Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā—as an act that seeks the forgiveness of Allāh—but this was never mentioned. Jamilā's use of *li-llāh* serves more "than as a rhetorical gesture that helps enhance one's self-image and social reputation or as a means for dismissing ungrateful recipients" (Mittermaier 2019:6). For her, *li-llāh* is meant to orient one towards Allāh (and by extension towards the vulnerable other, Safiyya) and shape her moral character. *Li-llāh* also illustrates the importance of Allāh as one "not only rhetorically present…. [but] God interferes

in, and directs, believers' lives" Mittermaier 2019:7). Most Islamic thinkers believe that one way to keep Allāh close is by giving back to the community.

Jamilā's use of *li-llāh* in the comments below illustrates a hope for a better tomorrow while there is struggle and hardship in the present. She states:

> For me to learn and be educated so I can write my novel and help the children here and in Aleppo, I need to work hard and wait till I finish all my education and help my parents. I know that there is still a long time before I can really help and go back to Aleppo, but have patience and that is also very important in Islam. My father always tells me that I have to have *sabr* [patience], and Allāh…will then reward those who are patient and wait for their time. (Interview in July 2019)

Her account references future prosperity (and salvation) through an important Islamic virtue, the cultivation of patience (*sabr*). Mittermaier states that everything "to God and for God, is about the afterlife, but it takes the form of giving in the here and now. An eschatological temporality is seemingly about the future too, but it is not linear. Rather, each moment is connected to the afterlife" (2019:158). For Jamilā, her future depends on Allāh's will and grace and her hard work and sacrifice.

THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE

Following the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1985), anthropologist Joel Robbins speaks about cultural parameters as the basis in which an individual "ought to form ... as an ethical subject" in relation to moral codes in place in the community (2004:216). The question that arises for the "ethical subject" is how can the virtue of patience (*al-sabr*) be understood in relation to the future? How does Jamilā's ethical orientation change as the work of forgiveness is taking place? For, al-Ghazālī, patience has an extrinsic value, viewing it as a "mystical virtue" and an "attribute of God" (Abu Quasem 1975:155). Patience must be achieved through the

practices of devotion and cultivation of the self. Thus, it has an eschatological and nonlinear relation to the future. Pious acts, like giving to others, are a part of what Mahmood refers to as "the inculcation of the entire disposition through a simultaneous training of the body, emotions, and reason as sites of discipline until the religious virtues acquire the status of embodied habits" (2001:212). In similar fashion, Jamilā's utterance of *li-llāh* shows her intention to possess virtues of patience and devotion (*tawqa*). The cultivation of patience (*al-sabr*) arises from the individual's desire to become "exemplary." It is grounded in the merits of "forbearance," "steadfastness," and "perseverance" (Gil'adi 1989).

The origin of the word *sabr* derives from the Arabic root *ṣ-b-r*, meaning to "bind" or "restrain" (Carnay 1983). *Sabr* is also rooted in the concept of *habs al-nafs* (self-restraint or the persistence to endure great adversity) (ibid.). The medieval Islamic philosopher Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149 – 1209) divided *al-sabr* into four distinct categories: a) intellectual endurance, demonstrated by disputing dogma with rational reasoning; b) the endurance to comply with Islamic law (e.g., fasting); c) steadfastness in abstaining from forbidden acts; and d) the resignation to Allāh's will in times of calamity (Abul Quasem 1975). Al-Razi's last point, the resignation to Allāh during hardship, is the basis for *al-sabr* in Islamic ethics.

An attribute of patience "is when people, who are faced with calamity and adversity, hold steadfast in their *al-sabr* and place their trust in Allah" (Hamdy 2009:176; also see Hamdy 2012). It is also a way of becoming closer to Allāh, and for Jamilā a way of repairing her broken bond to Safiyya. The Qur'ān states: "By the declining day, truly mankind is in loss, save those who believe, perform righteous deeds, exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience" (*al-'Asr* [The Declining Day]; CIII, 1-3; trans., Nasr 2015:1558). "Patience" in this verse in the Qur'ān implies "an exhortation paralleling that between belief in God and

performing righteous deeds and by extension, between all that one must know (discerning truth from falsehood) and all that one must do (maintaining the practices and principles of religion no matter other obstacles)" (Nasr 2015:1558). For Jamilā, patience is a form of sacrifice and a struggle to fend off inner desire. This struggle is based on the notion of restraining the self *habs al-nafs*), which is grounded in the material world instead of the spiritual world. Patience requires combat against desire and self-indulgence, and means allowing the other's suffering to take precedence over one's own pain (Carney 1983).

Al-Ghazālī viewed "patience" not as a practice for its own sake, but for the sake of something else (e.g., the salvation and proximity to Allāh). The extrinsic value of patience is evident in *Kimiya-i- Sa'adat* (1936 [1105]), when al-Ghazālī states:

> Know that what we have called the qualities of salvation are of two divisions: one comprises those which come first in the path of religion and which are not the aims in themselves, e.g., repentance, patience, asceticism, self-examination and poverty; all these are means to what lies after them. The other kind consist of the qualities…sought for their own sake and not for serving as means to something else, e.g., love, yearning, satisfaction, unity and trust; gratitude is among them. (1936:675)

For al-Ghazālī, patience consists of "disposition, knowledge, and action" (1937:155). According to him, these three components are connected through his theory of the human soul (Abu Quasem 1975). In addition to reason, in *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* (1937) al-Ghazālī speaks of a human *quwwa* (faculty) produced to control desire and anger (ibid.). This controlling quality of the human soul is *ba'ith ad-din* (motives of religion) that stands opposite to *ba'ith al-hawa* (motives of passion) (ibid.). These two motives are the bases of al-Ghazālī's material and the spiritual worlds. These two motives are always in tension with one another. Based on this notion,

> the steadiness [*thabat*] of the motives of religion in such an opposition to the motive of passion is the disposition to which the virtue of patience precisely refers. This steadiness is a result of the knowledge of the fact that passions are incompatible with the means to

> happiness in this world as well as in the next, that they are man's enemies, inasmuch as they deter him from the path to God. (Abul Quasem 1975:156)

This form of patience that refrains from the motives of passion, according to al-Ghazālī, is called "the patience of the inner-self" (*as-sabr an-nafsi*). For him, this form of patience is more rewarding than bodily patience (*as-sabr al-badani*) (al-Ghazālī 1936; Abu Quasem 1975).

Jamilā's use of *li-llāh* is a way of cultivating patience, giving back to Allāh and her community based on: a) patience as a path to repentance and forgiveness (e.g., something that is taking place in the present and will continue into the future); and b) a patience of the inner self that requires the practice of becoming selfless (e.g., taking refuge in Allāh and considering the distress of the others in the community over individual desire). Al-Ghazālī believed that "the motive of religion gets strength from the practice of patience, and also from sure knowledge of the evil consequences that passions can have" (Abu Quasem 1975:158). For him, "the patience of the inner-self" (*as-sabr an-nafsi*) leads one to gratitude (*shukr*) (ibid.). Al-Ghazālī asserts that gratitude—for what Allāh provides for an individual in the material world—is one of the pillars of happiness

In spite of this absolute standard, for Jamilā patience as a practice of cultivating the self must be comprised of a multiplicity of perspectives that take shape through the trajectory of her lifeworld experiences. The moral value of patience, therefore, will "rest on whether or not having perspective in the relevant sense has moral value—which it does" (Bommarito 2014:278). Based on this notion, the moral value of patience is foregrounded based on individual assessments of what constitutes as morality just. Professor of philosophy, Joseph Kupfer states that

> patience and its vices are not most fundamental, but express deeper, underlying aspects of moral character. On this understanding, patience would be a second-order virtue, and the vices associated with it second-order moral deficiencies. Patience would then be the product of a more basic morally salutary orientation toward the world. (2007:279)

According to this understanding of patience, “perspective” is not solely based on knowledge about charity and giving back to the community, but is a way of seeing and being in the world as Jamilā experiences the process of repentance and asks Allāh’s forgiveness. Patience, therefore, is based on the perspective(s) experienced in the world of Jamilā.

In addition, perspective implies interdependence within the community and a communal belief system that plays an essential role in establishing and maintaining the self through proximity to Allāh. “Patience” is a way of being-in-the-world based on certain Islamic ethical codes delineated culturally. As individuals constantly renew their experiences of the world, the trajectories of their personal ordeal gives rise to a multiplicity of meanings that are fluid and often in flux (*barzakh*). The Quran states: “O you who believe! Seek help in patience and prayer. Truly God is with the patient” (*al-Baqarah* [The Cow]; II, 153; trans., Nasr 2015:67). This verse from the Qur’ān implies that patience is an uncontested practice based on “objective” history, religious claims and cultural understanding. Salāh often reminded Nabilā that patience is a practice for the pleasure of Allāh; this meant that patience is preached to her as the objective truth. However, Nabilā said

> In the future, I want to help children but now I have to work hard to learn and be educated. A part of me really wants to start helping now…I ask myself why do I have to wait for such a long time. What would that really do? And then I ask myself what if I have a family then or I can’t go to help Syrian children. I know that I need to learn to be patient and take care of my responsibility first…I wish there was another way that I could help now. I think that would make *aziz-jon* happy and don’t want to wait till I am an adult. (Interview in June 2019)

For Nabilā (and the other children) the practice of patience encompasses a dynamic understanding that invites alterations, adaptations and even the disappearance of previously accepted ideas over time.

Atā told Amir after an uneventful soccer game when his team had lost: "Allāh loves those who wait and do not panic when things don't go well. I know you like to be a very good player but that only comes with hard work and learning from your mistakes." Amir then asked Atā to remind him of the verse in the Qur'ān that speaks to "the importance of being patient." Atā responded:

> The Qur'ān says: "Yet none shall receive it, save those who are patient; and none shall receive it, save those who possess great fortune." [*fussilat* {Expounded}; XLI, 35; trans., Nasr 2015:1165]. This verse means that to replace the bad things with good, to repel evil…that means to reject evil for ever…you have to be patient and work hard to become a better person…and Amir, you know what Allāh means by "great fortune," that is paradise when Allāh is happy and satisfied with us. We all need to work hard and be patient to have Allāh mercy and satisfaction. (Interview in July 2019)

Atā used the Qur'ān to emphasize that: a) patience and working to become better person is above all the acceptance of Allāh's will; and b) the devoted person must strive to achieve patience in order to attain happiness in the afterlife. It is important for a Muslim to accept the omnipresence of Allāh, who has ultimate control over the universe. Much like *amāna*, humans are never the absolute owners, ultimately everything belong to Allāh. There is also an inherent understanding in patience that acknowledges human "suffering" cannot be seen as Allāh's "ill" intent toward the *umma* (the community) (see Carney 1983). For these Syrian families, this understanding helped them endure the pain and hardship of the Syrian Civil War. "Acceptance" is the understanding that ill will does not originate from Allāh; they believed that "suffering" during the civil war was an occurrence to remind them of the importance of patience and endurance of hardship. The first step in finding meaning in "suffering" is the *acceptance* of distress as a practice that cultivates patience as a virtue. This view has its root in the hardship that the Prophet endured during the three years siege before he declared to the public that he is the messenger for

Islam. Accepting "suffering" means placing trust in the prevailing control and mercy of Allāh. The vicissitudes of a suffering-life require acceptance (even embracement) by Muslims, since the balance will be restored in the eternal destination of Paradise (Gil'adi 1989). Accordingly, one must have the capacity to attain patience.

Atā is advocating that happiness entails patience and endurance, but it is also a stance of submission to Allāh as the protector of all. It is even common in the Islamic world to say that "the highest form of *al-sabr* [patience] is Allāh's fortitude towards those who deny Him." This form of submission to Allāh is commonly narrated based on the sayings of the Prophet: "An epileptic woman asked the Prophet for his *du'a* [prayer or worship to Allāh]. The Prophet replied: 'if one has *al-sabr* the doors of paradise will open to him/her.'" Patience implies resignation (acceptance). Moreover, the process of repentance and forgiveness are possible because happiness is something that each individual can attain. Al-Ghazālī draws on this verse from the Qur'ān to make this point: "No misfortune befalls the earth nor yourself, save that it is in a Book before We bring it forth—truly that is easy for God—" (*al-Hadīd* [Iron]; LVII, 22; trans., Nasr 2015:1337-8).

Another central theme in the children's account is the concept of hard work in order to attain happiness in the afterlife. According to al-Ghazālī, the "heart" is the locus of base desire that must be vigilantly held in check. He writes (note that "*nafs*" translates as "essence" and "heart," two terms al-Ghazālī used interchangeably):

> The first meaning of *nafs* is the broad one: the human being's ability to become angry or lust, according to that which will be explained. This usage of the word *nafs* is the most common among the Sufis, because by *nafs*, they mean the broadest characterization of evil human characteristics. They say: "there is no escaping the *jihad al-nafs* and its final destruction," and this is the explanation of the Prophet's statement (peace be upon him): "wage war against the enemy of your *nafs*, which resides within you." *–Ihya 'ulum al-din* (3:59; Renard 1988:12)

Jihad is the struggle to oppose desire and self-indulgence. The Islamic philosopher Al-Hujwiri (990 – 1077) explains three different levels of *jihad al-nafs*, stating:

> For penitents, the *jihad* of the soul is to be killed by the sword of desire, fallen on the threshold of humility; for ascetics, the *jihad* of the heart is to be killed by the sword of vigilance and regret, fallen on the threshold of reconciliation; for lovers, the *jihad* of the mind is to be killed by the sword of attraction, fallen on the threshold of coquetry and liberality. (Renard 1988:12)

Central in Al-Hujwiri's writing is the attainment of inner purification by *jihad al-nafs* and reflecting on the evils of this fleeting material world. *Jihad al-nafs* is the struggle to choose good over evil and achieve proximity to Allāh, which is the ultimate goal of happiness. The common view is that unbelievers do evil because they are separated from Him. The Quran uses this allegory to explain the rewards of attaining a privileged status in relation to Allāh: "Or like the darkness of a fathomless sea, covered by waves with waves above them and clouds above them—darkness, one above the other. When one puts out one's hand, one can hardly see it. He for whom God has not appointed any light has no light" (*al-Nūr* [Light]; XXIV, 40; trans., Nasr 2015:881).

The analogy of "light" is only possible through struggle and hard work oriented toward a future of possibilities; a transformation of the self that constructs a hopeful projection and a trajectory of an imagined way-of-being. This longed-for future of possibilities is evident in a *hadīth* ("sayings" or "discourses" of the Prophet) that Faizal told Lylā:

> Wondrous are the believer's affairs. For him there is good in all his affairs, and this is so only for the believer. When something pleasing happens to him, he is grateful, and that is good for him; and when something displeasing happens to him, he is enduring (*al-ṣabr*), and that is good for him. (*hadith* collected by Abu Yahya Suhaib Sinan).

In this *hadīth* the future can be imagined as pleasing and full of abundance, or difficult, in which case a devoted Muslim must practice patience. This imagined future is mediated and made possible by the presence of Allāh. As Faizal continued: the future is in Allāh's control. The Qur'ān says [uttering a short part of a very common and popular verse]: "The Hand of God is over their hands" (*al-Fath* [Victory]; XLVIII, 10; trans., Nasr 2015:1250). This verse has a double meaning. On the one hand, Allāh is the most powerful and the protector of the community. On the other hand, it is a way to seek Allāh as a refuge. This verse can be viewed as enabling "movement from an abstract concept to a concrete image; it triggers affect and/or experience; it bridges logical gaps; it relates parts to a larger whole; and it maps out nonverbal phenomena or behavior" (Kimmel 2004:276).

In Islam, patience offers a way of experiencing the world as one endures struggle and a strives towards happiness; it is a manner of acceptance, surrender and refugee for the sake of Allāh. For Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, patience can be an act for personal gain and satisfaction. Similar to Nicolas Bommarito's Buddhist studies, "patience," is "valuable in itself as a sense of perspective on suffering or setbacks, a way of relating to the world that does not add the suffering of unnecessary anger or hatred to the suffering that comes our way" (2014:278). In this way of seeing the world, the children strive to become "exemplary." In the final section, I analyze how Lylā's idea of patience changes as new horizons of possibilities take shape in her lifeworld. Meanwhile, the fluidity in the work of patience and attaining happiness reorients Lylā's moral understanding of pursing a good life.

The "Exemplary" Child

The previous parts aimed to show how the children evaluate and assign significance to events as they progress through their lifeworlds. The children's understanding of patience shifts away from its position as an objective moral codes (the Islamic ethics) to be shaped by personal desires and centered on circumstances of their lifeworlds. Lylā speaks about how she faces the dichotomy of her aspiration to be an "exemplary" child and her personal desires:

> I want to be the best daughter for my father, especially…I know my mom would have wanted that. I will do my best and want to show my father that playing music and doing really good at school is a way for me to become better. Sometimes, it is just too hard. I think adults should be expected to do all of this hard work but maybe less pressure on younger people. Also, sometimes I feel guilty if I am not practicing music or doing my homework. Other children have fun and I sometimes just want to do the same. (Interview in August 2019)

Based on her view of patience, Lylā's experience of becoming an exemplary child is more of an active engagement with her daily situation as opposed to finding remedy within the self. This form of "happiness" represents an outward steadfastness and perseverance, as much as it is the practice of cultivating the self. For Lylā, the virtue of patience is to surge forward, embracing a worldview that enables perceiving a future beyond only the spiritual world. This ability to embrace unique ideas in the future, places Lylā firmly in *barzakh*, in-between the material (induvial desire) and spiritual (being an exemplary child) worlds. Depending on the perspective a child takes, patience falls on a spectrum where one side represents a hindrance that delimits possibilities, and on the other side, an honourable practice that each Muslim ought to engage in. There is fluidity in the way patience is experienced and enacted, and thus a dynamic understanding of what it means to be happy.

Throop discusses the importance of "experience" in relation to suffering (2010), asserting that subjective understanding should not be based on universalist categorizations (Desjarlais

1994, 1997), but rather needs to be recognized as an attribute of being-in-the-world. Throop focuses on ways that moral and cultural frameworks serve "as the semantic, existential, and practical materials providing the background against which individual sufferers tend to interpret their dysphoric sensory experiences" (2008a:255). By foregrounding the individual sufferer's sensory experiences, pain is located in subjective understanding, given meaning through intersubjective relationships, and constructed by social action and moral practices (Throop 2008a, 2008b, 2010). The sentiments and emotions embedded in the trajectory of Lylā's life-world also give rise to the ongoing experiences that orient her to a future of possibilities. Anthropologist Arthur Kleinman addresses these nuances that shape individual experiences interwoven with social understanding, intersubjective encounters and subjectivity. He states:

> Experience (including its sociosomatic interconnections) is innately moral, because it is in local worlds that the relational elements of social existence in which people have the greatest stake are played out…. [T]he fact that some things really do matter, matter desperately, is what provides local worlds with their immense power to absorb attention, orient interest, and direct action. However, it is these local worlds that have the power to transform the transpersonal and subjective poles of experience. (Kleinman 1997:327)

Kleinman explains that "experience is *moral*, as I define it, because it is the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stake-holders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve" (1999:362). By discussing "experience" in this particular way, "happiness" can be what Zigon describes "in terms of moral and ethical assemblages rather than defined by a totalizing morality" (2011:5). Lylā's experiences of patience and happiness are rooted in an "ethical assemblage" of historicity, the stream of intersubjective meaning-making, and a collective understanding that gives rise to an imaginary future.

The question that sets the groundwork for the future is *how do I live a happy life*, rather than *what would I ought to do*? For Lylā, happiness is foregrounded in the aspiration to surge

toward new horizons of possibilities. Patience is both a burden and a way to inspire possibilities, in the pursuit of happiness. It is a burden in so far as it creates a rift between Islamic conventions and what is means to be an ethical subject. Meanwhile, the practice of patience, allows Lylā to imagine alternatives whereby the trajectory of her lifeworld offers an alternative meaning to happiness. For her, patience disengages from the Kantian "pure will" requiring that "for an action to have moral worth, it must be done 'from duty' (and often contrary to our natural inclination) …. [where] our duties are derived from a principle" (Lapsley 1996:199). Kantians view morality as "the values and norms that—in a given society at a given time—define, on the one hand, what is right or good and what is wrong or bad, and, on the other, what one should or should not do" (Fassin 2014:4). Meanwhile, patience offers a perspective that does not originate as an search inward but rather as an outward fight to strive forward. This perspective "endeavours to give subjects back their individual leeway and to reveal their ability to escape the ascendancy of the social, to debate moral dilemmas and to produce ethical subjectivities" (Fassin 2014:5). The "I" in *How do I live a happy life* exhibits a certain level of freedom and agency that the "ought" in *what would I ought to do* takes away. The use of "ought" gives the priority to historical, cultural and traditional ideals as opposed to the ethical subject. The ethical position of "I" and its future orientation emanates from the first person rather than tradition.

For Lylā, the practice of attaining happiness emphasizes how "sentiments" (Throop 2010) establish "paradox and contradiction as conscious aspects of human experience" (Sykes 2009:24); and "ordinary" everyday interactions "show the centrality of ethical practice in life" (Lambek 2010:1). The ethical view of happiness needs to be considered based on how Lylā's ability to infer the social perspective of other individuals. This is a phase in which a "child now sees that others have their own interests and desires, all of which are reasonable and justified. A

kind of moral relativity emerges that sees all interests as equally valid" (Lapsley 1996:69). For Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, the view on "happiness" emerges as a moral relativity as their lifeworlds proceed forward. For the children, by virtue of being-in-the-world, deliberation on the moral dilemmas of patience allows for an array of meanings of happiness that are unique to each child and alter as they encounter new experiences in their lifeworlds. The proposition *how do I live a happy life* fits better with the children's account of the future, rather than *what would I ought to do* which centers more on the Kantian deontology that morality of action is based on guidelines that determine the "right" and "wrong" of individual deeds.

The inquiry into *how do I live a happy life* situates Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā in the in-between space of *barzakh*, where the flux and access of this space allows them to experience "happiness" based on unique ideas and horizons of possibilities. As ethical subjects, the children hold themselves up against the moral codes provided by Islamic and Sūfī ideals. However, this dissertation project demonstrates that even with their strong conviction in Islamic ethics, individuals find the happiness that awaits them to have different meanings and will achieve it through different means. As more time elapses, some values and moral codes remain important and others will be reexamined by the children. Their journey from Syrian, to the refugee camps and then the United States highlights how happiness and one's relation to the other is in flux and in need of reexamination. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's attempt in pursuing happiness illustrates their place within the material and spiritual worlds remains open and in influx as their bond to the dead other remains open.

What is "Happiness"?

On the morning of January 28, 2017, I was forced to leave the West Bank as the Middle East woke up to news outlets broadcasting images of President Donald Trump signing an executive order banning foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States. The presidential order, and the strong likelihood of the relocation of the United States embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (carried out on May 14, 2018), caused substantial escalation of violence between the Israeli Defense Forces and some residents of the West Bank's Kalandia Refugee Camp. As I hastily said my farewells to the families in the Kalandia Refugee Camp, Ahmed, an eleven-year-old boy, recited a verse from the Qur'ān "as my goodbye gift:" "On the Day it comes, no soul shall speak save by His Leave. Among them shall be the wretched and the felicitous" (*Hūd* [Hūd]; XI, 105; trans., Nasr 2015:585). I left the camp with an understanding—reiterated by Ahmed quoting the Qur'ān—that day-to-day suffering finds meanings through attaining happiness (*sa'āda*), an ethical practice that transforms the self (*nafs*) by bringing people closer to Allāh. "Happiness" is a praxis that teaches one how to become virtuously compatible with Islamic values. Shortly after I started my ethnographic research with Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā, I came to know that a similar view is important to them.

I grappled with understanding the extent to which a "refugee's" ordeals can become a self-cultivating practice aimed at attaining happiness in the midst of carnage and trauma. Can the "failure" (or deviance) to gratify Allāh evoke moral emotions of wrongdoing (e.g., the guilt and sinfulness the children experienced)? In other words, how does a child perceive happiness when coping with a loss of a loved one? How does a child think about happiness, when according to Atā, life reorients a refugee to "learn to live again"? Why does the pursuit of the good life—to

find safe haven in another's land by fleeing from the violence—create moral sentiments that make the children open to the vulnerable other? What was noticeable in my research was the extent to which the children worked hard to adhere to the Islamic and Sūfi values they learned from their parents. By being an "exemplary" child, a tension surfaced that situated them in what Ibn 'Arabī called *barzakh*. This space between the material and spiritual worlds housed a paradox of what it means for them to be happy.

Islamic writings by and large describe "happiness" as the practice of attaining close proximity to the divine, while ordinary perspectives on happiness commonly refer to relations to objects of desire. For Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā the dead other found meaning through perceived links to metaphysical and divine power. They often reminded me that "true" happiness is only for, and is in the hands of, Allāh. Over the years, I have come to know that in most Islamic communities happiness means a cultivation of the self (*nafs*) and submission to Allāh; it is to live according to the reality of the human primordial nature (*fitrah*). The quest for happiness is undertaken through developing the disposition to reach a form of felicity to cause Allāh's gratification. Happiness has the predominant status of paradise and eschatological corporeality. Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā considered happiness an act of doing something good for its own sake—bliss is the good done for the sake of Allāh's exhilaration. The notion of the "good" is a combination of Islamic beliefs, Sūfī ideals and the cultural understanding that happiness is to attain proximity to Allāh. The permanency of happiness delineates a form of self-cultivation that demarcates suffering as a sacrifice, a duty towards Allāh. Al-Ghazālī writes that "happiness is the good which is pursued for its own sake, never at any time for gaining something else, and there is nothing greater beyond it for man to gain" (Fakhry 2014:206). The attainment of happiness is a way of taking refuge in the compassion of Allāh, a practice to survive hardship,

where salvation and deliverance (*najāh*) in Divine mercy provide a mode of perception to withstand the loss of other. Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā attempted to make sense of the loss of the other by attaining Allāh's salvation, where according to Islamic ethics and Sūfī beliefs one finds a purpose and the "true" meaning of happiness beyond its mundane experience.

In part, the use of Islamic ethics and Sūfī beliefs contribute to the ethical turn in anthropology. By working through the writings of al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī, I aim to disengage with the Durkheimian paradigm where ethnography was "the elucidation of a set of norms and values for a given group or society" (Fassin 2014:430). This dissertation brings into conversation the ethical subjects and their subjectivities based on Islamic and Sūfī values prevalent among the Syrian community. As Fassin explains, the ethical turn shifts the focus from "the collective to the individual" and from "the social to the experiential" (Fassin 2014:430).

This dissertation is an attempt to highlight the journeys of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā from their cities, to life in refugee camps, and then to the United States. What is important is that each of the children shares a common experience of loss; their moral experiences were (and are) shaped by the presence of the non-presence, the dead other. The importance of phenomenology in the dissertation is to unearth this asymmetrical relationship in relation to Islamic ethics and Sūfī beliefs relevant to the children. An important question that I tried to illuminate through the children's accounts is how does the work of mourning carry on and what are the "demands" of the dead other on the self? Derrida spoke about "memory" of the dead as something that opens up the possibility for subjectivity, that is much more than the inner traces of the other. This opening of the self towards the other, to "be-with" the dead, places an enormous burden of responsibility on Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā. For them, it is not just remembering the other that becomes important, but a *response* towards the dead other. This response finds its practice

through the Islamic and Sūfī ideals into which the children are socialized and to which they learn to adhere.

Nabilā Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's responses to their losses, in the words of Levinas, is the openness of the self for the other—the way the other "haunts me." The openness of the self towards the dead other pulls the children to be-in-the-world with the presence of the non-presence of the other. This being-in-the-world (re)orients the children's moral experiences. The reorientation of the moral self makes Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā responsible for the wellbeing of the other. Even though the other no longer exists, the burden of responsibility lives on. The children attempt to forge a relationship with the dead other, comparable to a Levinasian "living-after," a world that allows them to continue being with each other. Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā found themselves responsible for the non-response that exhibited how death is not the annihilation and the end of being-in-the-world with the other.

To some extent, this way of responding to the other is a coping mechanism. It is part of the process of mourning; a mourning for those who never had a closure. The rituals of Islamic burial and other forms of grieving take place in their imaginary world, rather than having the proper space and duration needed. The civil war made such practices impossible, and Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā found themselves in the complex and new worlds of refugee camps and then the United states. Another form of coping strategy is the adherence to Islamic and Sūfī values. While there is no question that Islamic ideas are part of the lived experiences of the children, hardship and the atrocities of the civil war makde these moral codes ever more important.

Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā's responses to the other took place in light of a view rooted in al-Ghazālī's concept of "happiness" (*sa'āda*). This way of seeing the world rejects the

“material” world and aspire to the ever-lasting afterlife of the “spiritual” world. “Happiness” is the cultivation of the self to find proximity to Allāh. The push and pull between individual desire and attaining happiness situated the children in *barzakh* (“obstacle” or “separation”). This tension draws on a question that will be important in my future research. The last part of Chapter Eight highlights how being an “exemplary” child creates ambivalence for Lylā between being a “good” Muslim and individual desire. A central question that I plan to develop based on this project is to examine the nuances of the tension Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā experience. Thus far, they are adamantly committed to upholding the values their parents have taught them. For many newcomers, certain values from one’s homeland become part of their identity as something to cherish and maintain. Others, to varying degrees, begin to develop new ways of seeing the world, thus reorienting their moral experiences. It remains to be seen to what extent Islamic ethics and Sūfī ideals will be a part of Nabilā, Amir, Jamilā and Lylā in the distant future. Regardless, their moral orientation to the presence of the non-presence of the dead other, in some form, will continue to define what it means for a “refugee” child to live a good life.

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