CHAPTER 11

STREET VIOLENCE: REGENDERING AN OLD URBAN SPACE

In 1934 Damascus, police reported routine bumping and grasping of women on the streets by "villainous elements," which reached the point that, according to a journalist, one "cannot walk with a woman without meeting incidents of this type."[1] By the early 1930s, the daily frictions of changing gender patterns on urban streets multiplied as rising class and religious resentments came to focus on elite women (see Part Three). Into these very same streets were inserted new political tensions, as the primary locus of confrontation between the French and nationalists moved after 1927 from the countryside to the cities. The militarization of civilian streets inscribed existing gender frictions with new political meanings. And conversely, nationalists' street politics would necessarily be shaped by the gender frictions that prevailed there. This dual development was evident in the staging of nationalist demonstrations, culminating in the mass protests of 1936 and in the rise of proto-fascist, paramilitary youth groups. Both phenomena effected a progressive remasculinization of the streets and mass politics, with profound implications for the women's movement. While women too, made claims to the streets as a political forum, they would be hampered in their efforts to recruit a mass base to their movement by their male competitors.

WOMEN CONFRONT PATERNALISTIC STREET POLITICS

France's siege mentality since the Syrian Revolt appears to have promoted the violent climate in city streets. Civil protests against corrupt elections and suspended parliaments were routinely met by battalions of soldiers and surprise arrests of leaders. In October 1931, just before Syria's first parliamentary elections, the American consul remarked that normal political life was impossible in an atmosphere of military occupation:

> For there saunter along the streets of Beirut (and, I presume, of Damascus, Aleppo and other towns of this country) the doughty soldiers of Morocco, the Spahis of Algeria, beautiful specimens from Senegal and even the short, high cheek-boned, slant-eyed fellows from Indo China, always carrying their side arms. What wonderful allies for Mr. Alfred Capone the gentlemen from Morocco would make![2]

The racial overtones of the consul's report may have been peculiarly American, but they echoed the alienation and humiliation of Syrians and Lebanese who daily encountered the French state in the form of thuggish colonial troops, not as enlightened administrators guiding them toward the mandate's promised political maturity. This impression was deepened when the French suspended Lebanon's constitution in May 1932, in reaction to the budget crisis and the possibility that a Muslim, Muhammad al-Jisr, might run for president. Syria's first elected parliament assembled the next month, in June 1932, but sat for only 17 months. In November 1933 it too was suspended after nationalists blocked a proposed independence treaty perpetuating French influence and Syrian disunity. As nationalist agitation increased from 1934 onward, so did France's intransigence. With another world war on the horizon, French generals pressured Paris to secure its hold on the Levant's vital ports and airfields.[3] When Syrians finally mounted the 1936 general strike, Subhi Barakat, president of the suspended parliament, wrote the high commissioner: "You did not enter this country as a conqueror in order to consider it your lawful property; and to kill its women, men and children, not for any crimes committed, but because they demand their rights."[4]

Veterans of the 1920s rural revolts carried over their gendered rhetoric to the new urban battleground. During the Syrian election campaign in October 1931, nationalists and police battled in the streets of Aleppo because the nationalists had not acquired the necessary permit for their meeting. The French routinely withheld permits for nationalist assemblies and then sent troops to break them up when they were held anyway. At the Aleppo meeting, the popular veteran of the earlier revolts, Ibrahim Hananu, declared: "France has led us to the last degree of degradation, sucking our blood. In the event of the success of her colonization program, she will violate our domiciles and our women."[5] Echoing the language of the 1920s pamphlets discussed in chapter two, Hananu characterized the streets as a battleground for male soldiers and private homes as the final frontier of conquest. Women were the absent prize, the damsels in the castle, in the politics of public space. The marking of private space as female, we have seen, recalled longtime practice in the city. Its

enduring hold on Syrians' geographical imagination was expressed in article 12 of the 1930 constitution, which declared that "the domicile is inviolable," thus marking women as off-limits to the state.[6]

But, as we have also seen, times had changed and urban women were no longer secluded in their homes. Not only did many women now leave home without their husbands' permission to shop, visit friends, or conduct charity programs, but they also participated in urban street demonstrations. In the 1920s, women of prominent families had often led nationalist protests and organized their own marches, braving attack by French soldiers. In the 1930s, Syrian women demonstrated in greater numbers and with more frequency, as the women's movement committed itself to full alliance with nationalists in the hope that they would be rewarded as patriotic mothers with full citizenship. One contemporary observer estimated there were 1,000 women in Damascus alone disposed to participate in nationalist actions, sending petitions to the French and the League of Nations, and turning out for protest marches.[7]

In 1931, hundreds of Damascene women, especially students and schoolteachers, demonstrated against the rigged parliamentary elections by marching alongside men and riding unveiled in automobiles, braving gunfire exchanged between protesters and police.[8] Again in November 1933, elite women protested the suspension of parliament by driving around Damascus in cars, while women in popular quarters joined on foot. In the wealthy Salihiya quarter, demonstrators confronted a company of Senegalese soldiers in front of the parliament building. To defuse the crowd's anger, the French commander ordered soldiers to distribute the entire inventory of flowers from a nearby florist to the women leading the march. The incident was remembered as "Ladies' Day." In the more popular Darwishiya area of the city, however, Shafiqa al-Jabiri, aunt of an official in the education ministry, was killed by a soldier's bullet.[9]

Women's participation in demonstrations apparently confounded both French and Syrian nationalist men. The French, on the one hand, did not even officially recognize women's presence in the streets. Patrolling soldiers sought to control the streets by routinely asking males to show their national identity cards. However, they could not do the same with female pedestrians, as women were not generally issued identity cards. Women's nationalist allies, on the other hand, welcomed female demonstrators as symbolic auxiliaries to their protests, but were not prepared when women staged political actions of their own.

A 1934 incident in Damascus highlights how the battle to control the streets often came to focus on gender, and how nationalist men hijacked women's claims to presence in public—and political—space in their paternalistic rivalry with the French. November 17, 1934 was the day that the Syrian parliament

was to reconvene, until High Commissioner Damien de Martel extended its year-long suspension in light of the continuing impasse in treaty negotiations. The National Bloc organized a march to protest the suspension as unconstitutional. During the night of November 15–16 pamphlets signed "The Girls of Damascus" were distributed around the city inviting women to join the protest. The next morning, a group of women gathered near the Umayyad mosque, in the heart of the old city. The women led the march of nationalists who gathered from around the country.[10]

When French police tried to disperse the marchers, they found the women neither meek nor obedient. The women showered police with stones and resisted orders to stop. Police arrested 11 of the most combative women on charges of organizing an unauthorized demonstration and disturbing public order. Some were also charged, at the Mixed Correctional Court, with assaulting police officers under Article 113 of the penal code. Called up before the judge, however, the women refused to remove their veils, and so reveal their identities.[11] The women were playing neither to nationalists' nor the French legal system's script. In a remarkable moment of inversion, the women turned colonial paternalism on its head. Rendered invisible to French officialdom because they carried no identity cards, the women claimed their invisibility as an assertion of their political agency as citizens. The veil became a symbol not of their seclusion, but of their right to march in public. Harsh words were exchanged before the women were finally sentenced by the court: two of them to eight days in jail, six others to various fines. Three were set free.

Reaction to the arrests was strong, ultimately engaging officials in Paris and Geneva. It was the first time in recent memory that women had been brought before a court for demonstrating. Groups from Aleppo, Hama, and Homs as well as Damascus petitioned the government and the League of Nations for the women's release from jail. A telegram signed by about 100 women expressed the "discontent of Aleppine women with these regrettable acts" and protested the "oppression of women," by arresting, trying and imprisoning them, as an "attack on the liberty and dignity of the nation."[12]

While the women's petition made no particular distinction between the rights of male and female demonstrators, male petitioners used a gendered language that emphasized the exceptional circumstances of women's public presence. Eight men from Homs warned de Martel: "Your functionaries must understand that the Arab woman is not like those of other countries. The arrest of Damascene ladies has caused a great commotion."[13] Aleppine men called the arrest of women "an attack on the most sacred traditions of the Muslim Orient."[14] Writers were particularly outraged by the physical treatment of the

women, who were apparently handcuffed. The cobblers' union of Hama wrote: "The audacity of the current government and the General Security police with regard to persons of the weaker sex, and the aggression of these police agents against Muslim women . . . has insulted the Syrian Nation."[15] With their references to the "weaker sex" and to Muslims' honor invested in their women, these petitions implied that men and women did not act on an equal footing in political, public space, and that women's participation was a departure from religious custom and usual gender roles. This contrasts with women's claims to deep-seated Arab traditions of women's public and political participation, as described in chapter six.

Indeed, the women's agency was systematically downplayed as the affair became a contest of honor between French and Syrian men. In his closing statement at the women's trial, the prosecutor, M. Maugain, condemned the "lack of courage of those who send their women to disrupt the public order and to stone the police in their place."[16] Fakhri al-Barudi, an organizer of the demonstration, accused the French of impugning Syrian men's honor in a note hand-delivered to Maugain:

> The injurious words that you addressed to the men of the Syrian Nation in the audience of the Mixed Court . . . impose upon me the duty, in my quality as a deputy of Damascus, to have this letter presented to you. You have accused us of cowardice because women have demonstrated their disapproval of the adjournment of the opening of parliament. . . . You are certainly not ignorant that the participation of women in patriotic demonstrations is one of the great glories of Nations: On her part, the Arab woman has always marched side-by-side with the Arab man especially in difficult situations and struggle against enemies, as history attests! French women themselves have often contributed to the safety of their country. Let us note among them Joan of Arc, Jeanne Hachette and those who offered their most precious jewels to pay the war reparations required by Germany in 1870. In France, you regularly see women join men's demonstrations, even lead them. However no one has dared, in similar cases, to accuse French men of cowardice.[17]

Barudi called the French on their colonial hypocrisy. Intent on casting Syria, like their North African colonies, as backward for its repression of women, the French refused to acknowledge that these Syrian women acted in seeming gender parity. To recognize such parity would undermine France's justification for rule, as mentors of their civilizing mission. Indeed, only a month

before this incident de Martel himself had told a Paris radio audience that Syrian and Lebanese men were stonewalling France's enlightened efforts to open girls' schools because they "try to forbid women all liberties and to keep them uneducated so as to better dominate them."[18]

In making his point, Barudi supported the women's viewpoint by asserting that Damascene streets like Parisian streets were open as a political forum to both genders. But he did not allow his gesture to spin out of control, into a manifesto for women's equal rights. He closed his letter with an old-fashioned challenge to a duel in atonement for Maugain's insult to Syrian manhood. The letter skillfully enveloped women's citizenship within the paternalistic protection of men. Barudi portrayed the secular, modern nationalist as a man protecting his country's honor, as he would his family's hearth. The nation was a home, the streets its foyer, and parliamentary deputies like Barudi were its masters. The French were obstreperous guests.

The French responded with their own paternalist claims. The Inspector General of Justice, Regis Manset, defended the jail sentences to de Martel, arguing that women as well as men were obliged to respect public order. But Manset also added that the women knew "that it is not a woman's place to join in demonstrations against the public order and to assault police who try to maintain it." He explained that Maugain sought to protect women from Syrian men "who didn't hesitate to incite their wives and daughters to join this demonstration, hardly in keeping with their sex (peu en rapport avec leur sexe), and so expose them to serious troubles."[19] In other words, French men were better guardians of Syrian women than Syrian men were. Like Barudi, Manset regarded the women as minors not responsible for their own actions. This view was in keeping with French policy on national identity cards. The cards were used not only for street checks, but also in all citizen transactions with state officials. By issuing them only to adult men, the French constructed male heads of household as the mediating representatives of women and children in the civic order. Women were not supposed to seek direct contact with the state.

As the affair dragged on, de Martel himself was obliged to defend Maugain's actions to his superiors in Paris. He did so by repeating Manset's criticism of the women's unladylike behavior.[20] And as Barudi had done, de Martel denied the women's agency:

> The public prosecutor's office was accused in bad faith for stigmatizing the agitators who put women in the front lines of a demonstration and who invoked the principles of Islam to disarm the tribunal in the hearing of these women, who refused to remove their veils and reveal their

> identity. This shows that directors of the National Bloc try to use every chance that presents itself to rally their troops and advance their propaganda.[21]

Despite lack of evidence to support their claim that male nationalists ordered the women to retain their veils in court, French officials apparently ignored the possibility that it was the women themselves who were manipulating religious symbols for the nationalist cause.

The women, for their part, continued to refuse to pay their fines, and were finally amnestied by de Martel in March 1935. Judging from the names of those amnestied, they were mostly young, unmarried women from respectable families, but not from among the leadership of the women's movement.[22] This is evidence that women's mobilization in 1934 was broadening.

Indeed, women participated prominently in the massive 1936 protests in both Syria and Lebanon.[23] The street battles in Syria were so brutal that observers called them a revival of the 1925–27 revolt. In January, the French closed down the National Bloc office in Damascus and arrested Fakhri al-Barudi, amidst continued tensions over the suspension of parliament and stalled treaty negotiations. Tens of thousands marched in protest in Damascus and Aleppo, while youths threw bombs at buildings and attacked police with knives. In response, the French declared martial law, and sent soldiers into the streets. Six people were killed and hundreds more were wounded and arrested. Nonetheless, Syrian women braved the streets, and dared once again to stone police after more nationalist leaders were arrested in February.[24] Violence died down in Syria soon thereafter with the forced resignation of Shaykh Taj as prime minister. In Lebanon, sympathy strikes flared during the Syrian protests and through spring and summer. Muslim demonstrations for independence and union with Syria broke out in Tripoli, Sidon, and other cities. Full-scale riots erupted in October and November 1936 in Beirut between Sunni Muslims and Christians, both armed with guns and knives, evoking comparisons to the "1860 bloodbath." At issue was the independence treaty being negotiated on the coattails of the Syrian nationalists' victory. The Muslims opposed the treaty's reinforcement of boundaries with Syria while the Christians supported it. The French again rolled tanks through the streets, and shot at least four protesters dead, wounding scores more.[25] Even rural Lebanese women joined the 1936 protests, most notably a woman dubbed "The Virgin," who led crowds in songs for Syrian unity in the southern village of Bint-Jubayl.[26]

While most of these women's demonstrations were mounted in conjunction with those led by male nationalists, toward the end of the decade women

reasserted their claim to an independent political presence in the streets. In 1938 and 1939, for example, Damascene women organized four protests on their own. In January, 100 female schoolteachers gathered at the Sultan Selim mosque to protest delays in their paychecks. Before they started their march, however, government officials rushed to the scene. The next month, about 200 women protested against French rule, veiled for anonymity. They too confronted police, some of them suffering injuries that caused renewed embarrassment to the French. And in June 1938, fifty well-dressed, elite women representing their Committee for the Defense of Palestine and Alexandretta marched into Syrian government offices and presented a petition to the prime minister against plans to transfer the district of Alexandretta to Turkey (fig. 10).[27] In the summer of 1939, the women's union mobilized a wide network of women in Damascus's popular quarters to protest the arrest of nationalist leaders, as the mandatory government moved toward martial law on the eve of World War II.[28] The courage of women like these can be appreciated fully only when it is recalled how violent street politics had become in the 1930s.

By 1939, the women's movement had managed to assert a greater collective and political presence in the streets through mobilization of schoolteachers, students, and women from popular quarters. But the movement remained small and elitist in comparison to the mostly male movements of nationalists, workers, and Islamic populists that mushroomed in the late 1930s. Expansion of the women's movement was clearly hindered by gendered fears of the siege-minded French state. Indeed, when Syrian protests erupted in early 1939 against the nonratification of the independence treaty and personal status reform, the French perpetrated the very violations forecast by Ibrahim Hananu: They sent arresting soldiers into private homes, provoking a flurry of male protest to the League of Nations.[29] The message, sent by nationalist men after the November 1934 demonstration, that the streets were too dangerous a place for women appears to have rung loud and clear. That message was soon reinforced by the emergence of proto-fascist, paramilitary groups who augmented the violent, and male, nature of street politics.

The Rise of Proto-Fascist Street Violence

One day in April 1935, the hubbub of a Damascene market was pierced several times with the cry "Heil Hitler!" as a German businessman saluted his clients. The incident caught the ear of the press, which reported that Hitler's name had also surfaced a few days earlier in speeches at a nationalist economic confer-

ence.[30] At about the same time, the first Lebanese proto-fascist group emerged in public. The Syrian National Party (Hizb al-qawmi al-suri) was founded in secret in 1932 by a Lebanese emigrant returned from Brazil, Antun Saʿada, who first recruited his followers at the American University of Beirut. Saʿada used the title führer and a swastika-style cross as an emblem, and adopted a party anthem entitled "Syria, Syria Above All," set to the tune of "Deutchland Über Alles." He formulated a uniquely precise ideology aimed at the pillars of colonial paternalism, emphasizing Syrian unity, secularism, and anti-feudalism. By late 1935 the SNP had recruited at least 1,000 members, mainly in cities of Lebanon, but also in Syria, Palestine and Transjordan.[31]

Fascist influence would remodel nationalists' approach to street politics. Since 1929, Fakhri al-Barudi and other nationalists had been organizing boy scouts into a male youth wing of the Syrian National Bloc called Patriotic Youth. However, members of the youth wing soon rebelled against their elders and formed their own groups. One of these was the League of National Action (ʿUsbat al-ʿamal al-qawmi), a militant party joined by thousands of students and young professionals, some of whom sported Iraqi-style military caps and staged military-style parades.[32] In early 1936, another youth group, more popular in character, adopted the name Iron Shirts (Qumsan al-hadidiya) in imitation of the Bronze Front of the Third Reich and the Iron Guards of Bucharest.[33]

Fueled by the mass protests of 1935 and 1936, the size and number of proto-fascist paramilitary groups soon mushroomed in both countries. Abd al-Rahman Kayyali, a National Bloc leader in Aleppo, discreetly sponsored the formation of a branch of the Iron Shirts (known as the National Guards) there. In September 1936, the Iron Shirts hosted a national rally celebrating the independence treaty at Damascus's race track. More than 15,000 spectators—including the entire National Bloc leadership—watched 700 Iron Shirts march in military formation and distribute flags. More than 4,000 Iron Shirts paraded the next month through the city's main Hamidiya market with flags, horses and motorcycles. By 1937, they counted 14,000 members in all of Syria. Simultaneously the Christian-dominated White Badge emerged in Aleppo, promoting separation from Damascus, French loyalty, and opposition to the independence treaty. Pledged to defend Christian interests, it posted guards in front of churches. By October 1936 the White Badge counted 3,600 members in Homs, Hama, Antioch and Dayr al-Zur. The smaller White Shirts, a Catholic group in Tripoli and other cities, and the Young Arabs of Homs together counted at least 2,000 members.[34]

Most prominent in Beirut by 1937 were the Phalanges libanaises (Lebanese Battalions), started by Pierre Jumayyil (Gemayel), a pharmacist who had

admired the youth groups and physical discipline at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and their Muslim counterparts, the Najjada (Helpers), promoted by Muhi al-Din Nasuli, a leader of the Muslim scouting movement and newspaper publisher. Jumayyil founded the Phalanges in November 1936, following the bloody street clashes in Beirut between Christians and Sunni Muslims. The group recruited 8,000 members within a year. Although the Phalanges (which did not adopt its Arabic name, al-Kata'ib, until the 1940s) called for members of all religions, it recruited mainly Maronite men and proclaimed a specifically Lebanese nationalism, in overt conflict with the pan-Syrianism of Sa'ada's SNP and the pan-Arabism of the Najjada.[35] The Najjada remained the smallest of the three major Lebanese groups.

The fascist nature of the groups is debated by scholars.[36] While the Iron Shirts used the Nazi salute of an extended arm, its secretary general, Munir al-'Ajlani, swore at the September 1936 rally that they were neither Nazis nor fascists, but simply nationalists seeking Syrian unity and independence.[37] And while racist ideologies characteristic of European fascism were not prominent in the Levantine movement (although anti-Zionism was), the groups emerged in a general atmosphere favorable to other fascist ideals. Since at least 1933 newspapers had been printing Hitler's speeches and excerpts from *Mein Kampf*. Hitler and Mussolini were viewed in both Syria and Lebanon as models of strong statebuilders who had lifted their people from poverty.[38]

Like European fascist groups, those in the Levant represented youthful and lower middle-class rebels against bourgeois rulers like Jamil Mardam Bey in Syria and Emile Eddé in Lebanon, whom they viewed as too ready to accept the status quo. In a limited sense the groups were subaltern movements, for they opposed the power of mediating elites, seeking to substitute the direct loyalty of citizens to the nation for old patron-client ties. Frustrated by economic decline, corrupt French liberalism, and the social upheaval of the decade, the proto-fascist groups adopted the rhetoric of a supra-state nationalism, social discipline, and rapid, state-led economic development. The Najjada's Nasuli, for example, criticized "moral chaos" in public life and adopted the motto "Arabism Above All" on his newspaper's masthead, which also printed glowing accounts of German youth's support of Hitler and the German state's social discipline.[39] In Lebanon, the SNP and Phalanges overtly campaigned on behalf of the poor. In Syria, old notables vigorously opposed the various groups' recruitment of urban youth because it threatened their own clientele networks. Even National Bloc leaders began to worry about the groups' growing autonomy.[40] Sa'ada's SNP especially drew the ire of Arab nationalists in the National Bloc, who called his anti-feudal platform for land reform a lie intended to hoodwink a gullible

public and his emphasis on Syria's multi-ethnic heritage an ignorant denial of Arab history.[41]

Most important for our purposes here, the groups adopted the violent methods and the fetishisms of male physical strength that were associated with fascism. From 1936 onward, they dominated street politics with paramilitary parades that sometimes ended in rowdy brawls and always posed the threat of violence with their military-style uniforms and weapons. The Iron Shirts wore the insignia of a torch-bearing hand and regularly stood guard outside of National Bloc meetings at the Orient Palace Hotel. They employed retired soldiers to train their members in weekly exercises, said to be preparation for revolt if the independence treaty negotiations failed. French police reported the purchase of hundreds of revolvers and 2,000 swords made by Damascene artisans to arm the Iron Shirts, paid for in part by the National Bloc.[42] The Phalanges likewise held weekly military exercises and marched in the streets wearing khaki, military-style shirts. In November 1937, about 100 Phalanges members battled Senegalese troops when they staged their first-anniversary parade in violation of the Lebanese parliament's recent vote to outlaw all paramilitary organizations. Two Phalanges were killed, and Jumayyil himself was wounded. Despite its illegality the Phalanges continued to grow, with populist campaigns on behalf of the poor, to reach 21,000 members by 1938.[43] The SNP also thrived, despite Sa'ada's imprisonment for endangering state security and a general suppression of the group in early 1937 after a clash with French troops. The SNP viewed itself as a people's army committed to realizing a Greater Syria, and employed terrorism and sabotage to further its ends.[44]

In particular, the SNP regularly brawled with its ideological rivals, the Phalanges and Najjada; indeed, all of the groups engaged in street battles with one another. In September 1936, Iron Shirts battled the League of National Action in Damascus. The following month, a fight between thousands of nationalist Iron Shirts and separatist White Badges in Aleppo's main market left three dead and 200 wounded. In January 1937, Iron Shirts again brawled with the League of National Action, this time in a Hama cafe. By 1938, the Iron Shirts were splitting into factions coopted by rival urban notables, provoking further violence.[45] The groups also engaged in turf wars with Islamic populists and Communists, whose propaganda began to highlight anti-fascism. Communities began to complain to local police about the danger of gunfire between rival paramilitary groups, and the "pressure" the groups imposed on their neighborhoods.[46] By 1939, the National Bloc reasserted control over the Syrian groups, while the Lebanese state succeeded in repressing the outlawed groups.

Despite their short and embattled existence, the proto-fascist groups utterly

transformed the atmosphere of street politics, not only in their routinization of violence, but in their heightened masculinity. Unlike their Communist archrivals, the proto-fascists did not form female auxiliaries. While Sa'ada's party admitted a few female members, Jumayyil's Phalanges explicitly restricted membership to Lebanese males aged 18 to 35. And while women cheered parades of the Iron Shirts from sidewalks and balconies, the group's April 1936 manifesto welcomed only "sincere young men."[47] One reason women were excluded may have been ideological. The Phalanges' slogan—"God, Fatherland, Family"—bespoke its commitment to a paternalistic social and political order. Nasuli of the Najjada similarly referred to Beirut as a family, and to the mufti as its father.[48] This contrasted with Sa'ada's German-style secularism committed to fostering loyalty to a broader collectivity in preference to the family.

However, fascist ideology did not exclude women entirely. Nazis in Germany and Fascists in Italy recruited women to their cause, albeit on ambivalent terms.[49] They also reached out to girls in the Levant. In August 1933, 10 girls and 48 boys donned fascist uniforms and set sail from Tripoli to Rome; upon their return in October, the girls sang fascist songs as they disembarked.[50] Pro-fascist periodicals, such as *al-Amali* of Beirut and Nasuli's *Bayrut* featured articles on girls in the Hitler Youth, whose drills were "naturally" less demanding and whose main role was in social work.[51] Indeed, *Bayrut* was unique in its avid coverage of female soldiers around the world, applauding, for example, a 1936 Turkish law extending the military draft to women, who were quoted as saying "it is our right to help defend our country."[52] There was, in fact, within prevailing paternalistic attitudes, ideological space to permit women's participation in the movement.

A determining factor in the marginalization of women in the proto-fascist movement was the politics of public space: recruitment took place mainly in scouting troops, cafes, high schools, and universities. While there were some girl scout troops, there were, as we have seen, only about a thousand female high-school students in all of Syria and Lebanon. And while some of these were known to organize nationalist groups among themselves, they were nearly all segregated into their own all-female buildings. Although female college students did mix with men, their numbers were even smaller, perhaps a few dozen in all by the late 1930s. As a result, even though Sa'ada's party encouraged women to join, women were not normally found in the places where SNP members socialized. Likewise, the League of National Action in Syria moved in all-male social spaces, meeting frequently in cafes that remained beyond the limits of respectability for women. In contrast, the Communists

recruited in factories, where women of lower classes (most of them also Christian) worked in the same spaces as men. The gendering of public space thus shaped patterns of recruitment during this unprecedented period of mass political mobilization.

As damaging to women's political mobilization was the routinization of violence and the attendant paternalistic attitude toward women in public spaces. As long as French troops were the only soldiers on the street, Syrians and Lebanese could respond by asserting the civil character of the streets, open to all for peaceful political expression, as Fakhri al-Barudi had done in 1934. But the emergence of the proto-fascist youth groups militarized the urban turf on both sides, and women were by definition not soldiers. The streets were constructed as a wartime battlefield, where women might only exceptionally be permitted to join Arab men in their common struggle. But since the streets had become a primary political forum, women's exceptional status in street actions also marginalized them in politics.

While women's street presence had merely been the target of individual and personal attacks in the 1920s, it took on a broader political meaning in the 1930s. The French, nationalists, and their counterparts among proto-fascist youth positioned themselves collectively as paternalistic guardians of women in the political arena. In their rivalry, the male groups deliberately undercut women's autonomy, in a virtual betrayal of earlier promises of support to women's emancipation. In the context of other battles within the civic order, over women's suffrage, veiling, and the desperate efforts of working men to maintain a family wage, we might read the street nationalism and proto-fascism of the 1930s as a response to the crisis of paternity. After the guns of the Syrian Revolt were silenced, these male groups sought to rearticulate a political masculinity in face of their effeminization—even rape—by the French.

However, the nationalist/proto-fascist regendering of street space was an ambiguous arrangement. As we have seen, women found strategies to subvert paternalism and reassert their agency. And proto-fascists, while paternalistic, embraced a vision of a more "modern," rationalized society united by a common patriotism and freed of old social constraints. They would in fact support women's presence in public (under their guidance) against the more extreme aims of religious groups, who sought to exclude women entirely from the new urban public in the name of public morality. We now turn to a space that exemplified that new public, the cinema.