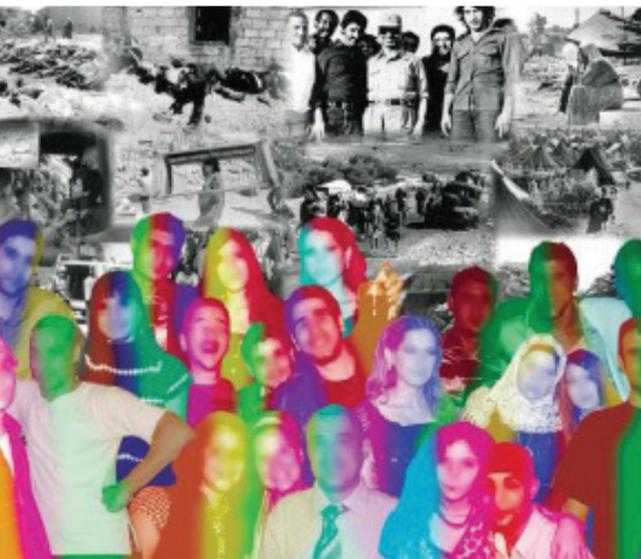


# Non-Cock Fights:

## *On Doing 'Sex' and Undoing 'Gender' in Shatila, Lebanon*



Cover: conceived by the author inspired by Gérard Fromanger's *En Chine, à HuXian* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris) executed by Antoine Badaoui with photos by the author and BBC.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

11:30 – 1:00 pm | Anthropology & Sociology  
Building | Room 134  
6303 NW Marine Drive

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Using a workshop on 'gender' held at a local NGO and pigeon-raising as cues, the paper exposes the difficulties entailed by framing the experiences of the young men (*shabāb*) from the Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon as 'gender-performance.' Indeed, 'gender' as a concept does not work at all settings and at all times. While it serves to illuminate the biographies of the *shabāb*'s fathers, the *fidā'iyyīn* (fighters), whose coming-of-age was very much informed by the fight to return to their homeland, it fails to capture the experience of those, like today's *shabāb* from Shatila, with very limited access to power. Rather than framing the *shabāb* as 'emasculated,' for not being able to properly 'perform' a 'gender,' due to the political-economic constraints placed upon them, I rather take issue with 'gender' itself. Effectively, by observing how the *shabāb* do their 'gender,' it is not only the full historicity and changeability in time and space of masculinity that come to the fore, but also the scholarly concept of 'gender' that can be transformed and undone. The paper suggests therefore that the tendency in studies of the Middle East and beyond to define 'gender' strictly in terms of power and relations of domination is restrictive. Conceived in such a way, 'gender' has a specific grounding in political-academic struggles conducted by the feminist and queer movements in Euro-America and its hasty transposition to other ethnographic contexts may be analytically unwelcome.

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