



Notes from Beirut (3)

Matthias Lilienthal, 2 August 2013

X Apartments went well. Albeit with many discussions: is it possible to do such a thing? Is it not a display of misery? Does it not confirm Orientalist prejudices? Today I went back to Bouj Hammoud and was greeted with friendliness on every corner. The Syrian fish ladies, who are the insider tip as regards food, make the best chips in the world and the hot red walnut paste – which I've ordered as a gift to bring back home. This is something I still want to learn in my cooking class. Today, I at least successfully place my order in Arabic: Kams muhammara, mal maaruf. Teeleta a sea sitte.

What I love about this city are its wholly unexpected combinations. I had been introduced to them by the sentence: My name is Fatma and I work for Solidere. Which for us would be the equivalent of: My name is Matthias and I work as an investment banker for Deutsche Bank London. One half of the family supplies Lebanese Prime Ministers, the other half played an important part in the PLO. The minute she orders a hamburger or I make saltimbocca, she asks for ketchup while tugging her evening gown into place.

We spent the weekend at an old hotel in the Chouf Mountains. As Katrin and I walked through the restaurant, I was given very chauvinistic glances. I was looked up and down by each of the establishment's 20 guests: There is no way this twatty tramp can afford this. What has become of our values. The pleasant colonialist arrogance of the French-speaking bourgeoisie. May it be placed under wildlife protection – if such a thing existed here.

Now the Hezbollah fighters are fighting in Syria; there are 10 casualties every week in Tripoli; or fighters pass through the city centre. During the civil war, the country was paralysed. Now the civil war is simply happening in parallel. One notices as much of it in Beirut as one does in Berlin. Only on television, on the Hezbollah channel, we see burials of fallen fighters in an incessant loop; yet it seems unlikely that the Ashrafieh shiksas are watching the Hezbollah channel.

It is the same thing with the fruit: it looks like nothing, yet tastes great. They are fruits from before the EU reform. Sprayed, but all of them original species.

Spiegel online is yakking about Taksim Square, writing that Turkey cannot be accepted into the EU under these circumstances. They don't seem to notice that the point has long been the Sunni-Arabic union, and that goddamn fucking Europe has long fallen by the wayside.

--

Translated by Maude Capelle

© All texts
copyright by
the authors.
Texts were
originally
created for
"Textures –
Online
Platform for
Interweaving
Performance
Cultures" at
Freie
Universität
Berlin,
sponsored by
the Federal
Ministry of
Education and
Research.