
GUEST AND DAUGHTER

The Community

One takes the road that leads west, leaving behind the stately buildings and palm-lined boulevards of Alexandria, passing rows of identical sand-colored buildings with balconies crowded with children, men in undershirts, women shouting across to neighbors, and clotheslines covered with multi-colored garments that dry instantly in the bright Egyptian sun. One must then cross a tiny bridge, which can accommodate only one lane of traffic. Awaiting their turn alongside horse-drawn carts and passenger cars are long lines of trucks and group taxis (those ubiquitous white Peugeot station wagons nicknamed "flying coffins" by cynical foreigners who too often see their abandoned carcasses of mangled steel by the sides of major roads). Only the pedestrians cross in a steady stream.

Once across the bridge, malodorous fumes and tall reeds herald the marshy shores of Lake Mariut. Fishermen by the side of the road hold high their catches, hoping for a sale. One continues on, leaving the lake behind, and comes to the beginning of the desert. This is not the impressive stark sand desert found far inland, nor the white sandy beach along the Mediterranean coast, nor even the steppe dotted with shrubs of spurge flax that lies twenty kilometers south of the coast. Rather, it is a flat, dusty place of packed

earth, a limestone plateau dotted with factories and open-air storage areas for the new trucks and automobiles unloaded on the docks of Alexandria.

As one travels westward, these signs of the encroaching metropolis thin out, replaced by scattered one-story houses of stone or whitewashed cement. These crude structures, often painted yellow, light blue, or pink, embellished with simple hand-painted designs and surrounded by scrubby dwarf fig trees, are sure signs that one has entered the Western Desert, which stretches five hundred kilometers to the Libyan border and is the home of the Bedouin tribes known collectively as Awlad 'Ali.¹ These houses have, for the most part, taken the place of the Bedouins' traditional tents of woven wool. Even summer tents, sewn from old burlap sacks, are not always left pitched near the houses, especially in this eastern edge of the desert where sedentarization has proceeded the furthest. A glimpse of a woman working confirms that Bedouins live in these homes: one notes the distinctive glint of silver on her wrists, a vibrant full-length dress gathered at the waist by a red cummerbund, a head covered in black.

The first time I took this road, all this was pointed out to me. I strained to see it, to commit it to memory, and I wondered if it would ever seem familiar. Once I had settled down in a community of Awlad 'Ali, my reaction was different. Each time I traveled this way, my heart raced as we passed the marshes and factories and came across the open spaces with their pastel houses. I knew that at the government checkpoint not far from the major town, when we turned off the road stretching through the desert south to Cairo, we would begin to pass the tents and houses of some of "our" relatives—which was how I came to conceive of the kin of the family with whom I lived. I always looked to see if I could spot my favorite aunt, hoping to be able to report the sighting to those ahead. They loved news from the world beyond.

Each time, I noted the change of season in the fields we passed. In winter, thanks to peripatetic rains, green barley shoots thrived in

some patches and barely came up in others. The spring carpets of wildflowers disappeared during the summer months, leaving nothing but desiccated earth. An occasional camel grazed desultorily; small herds of sheep or goats foraged, nibbling on clumps of grasses in rock crevices. Crouching alongside the road might be a turbaned old man waiting patiently for a taxi to come by. An old woman might bounce along on her donkey. More rarely, a woman, her face swathed in the black headcloth that doubles as a veil, might walk briskly, a large bundle on her head, an infant on her back, and a couple of children straggling behind. I always turned to see if I could recognize them, again to report to those ahead.

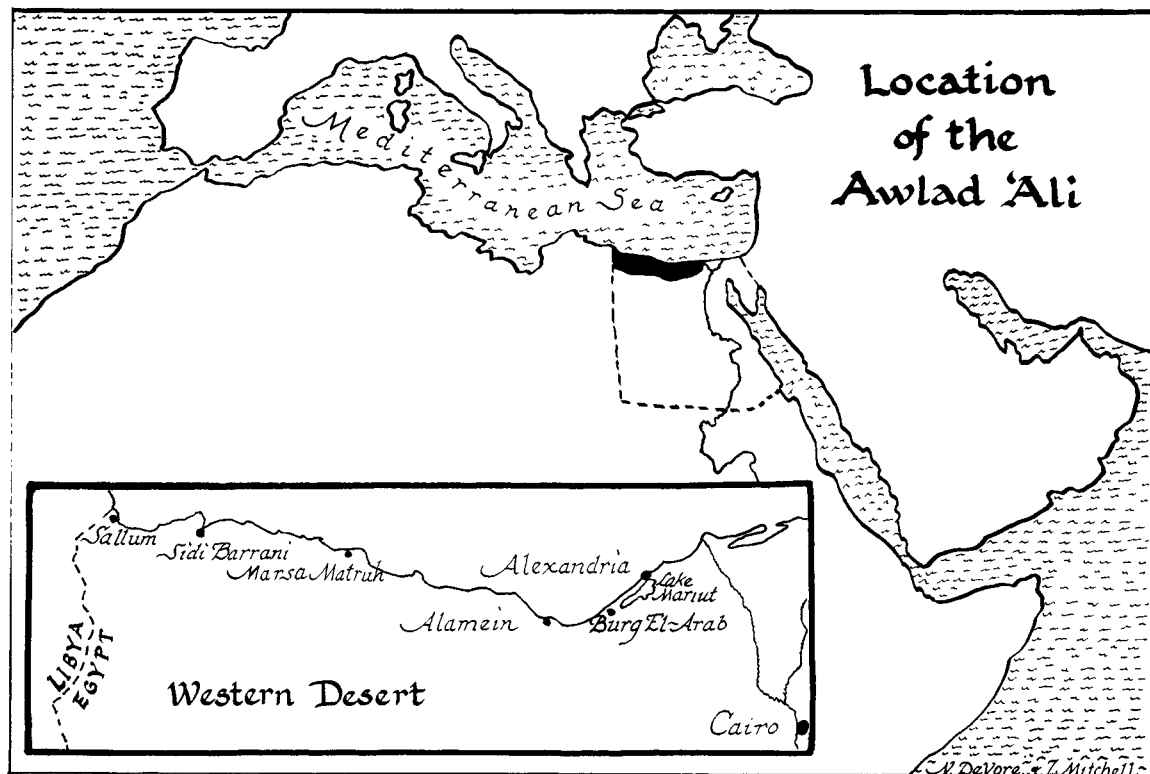
Returning from the crowded and noisy streets of Cairo or Alexandria, I often felt relieved to see the open spaces, to note the silence. The only sounds were shouts in the distance, a braying donkey, a barking dog. As we approached the area where I lived for the whole period of field research, there was a bit more vegetation: palm trees, olive orchards, rows of spindly evergreens planted by the government to retard soil erosion, a guava orchard (maintained with great difficulty). Then came a barren area. A few houses and tents, widely spaced, stood out on the rocky ground. Some were made of stone and mud, blending into the landscape; some were painted pastels. One modern compound was made of white blocks. This was where I lived.

Turning off the road onto a track etched by a succession of cars bringing visitors and residents to the house, I strained to see who might be around. One never could predict. Usually the first to spot the car were the children, always on the lookout for activity. Their initial timidity would vanish as soon as they recognized the passenger. Some would run back to announce my arrival; others would run toward the car. By the time I arrived at the doorway, the women would have come to meet me, unless male guests were sitting out front. If men were there, I would greet them politely and hurry into the house. Just inside, out of sight of the men, I might find the women and girls, arms around each other,

crowding the entrance. After putting away my things and distributing sweets I had brought, I would settle down to have a snack, drink tea, and catch up on what had happened in my absence.

I lived in this household between October 1978 and May 1980.² Its composition shifted numerous times over the course of this period, but the core members were the head of the household, a charismatic, wealthy, and somewhat unconventional tribal mediator close to fifty years old, whom people referred to as the Haj (an honorific recognizing his performance of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca); his senior wife, who was also his paternal first cousin, a warm, plump, and intelligent woman who seemed older than her thirty-seven years; and many of his eighteen (by the time I left) children. Sometimes his second wife, whom he had unofficially divorced a year before my arrival, and all her children lived there; she spent the rest of the time in the old house in which they had all lived with his mother and his brother's family until I joined them.³ Not all her children accompanied her on these moves. Her nineteen-year-old son, the eldest of the Haj's children, lived in our household most of the time. During the second year I was there, the Haj's third wife joined us, bringing her three children. She and the Haj had argued months before my arrival, and he had sent her back to her family, intending to divorce her. When he discovered that she had been pregnant and had given birth to twins, he was persuaded to take her back. Later in the year the Haj's younger brother took a second wife, whom he brought to live in our household. Although he sometimes spent nights at his old house (with his first wife and his six children), he spent more time at ours. In addition, overnight guests—nephews and nieces, cousins and aunts, and even a woman peddler who attended the nearby market regularly—came and went.

This household was one of about fifteen in what its residents considered their community. There were fifty-three adults in these households, and about twice as many children, including all unmarried adolescents. The smallest household comprised a couple and their infant; the largest had twenty-five people living in four



rooms in two houses, who, by virtue of sharing an economic base and food, were considered one household. The Bedouins describe households by the phrase "They eat from one bowl."

Bedouins view residential communities as social units defined by ties of agnation.⁴ The term *Awlad 'Ali* use for a residential community is *naji'*, the same term they originally applied to the tent camps in which they used to live. Most camps take their name from the lineage or cluster of agnates forming the core of the camp, even though most also include other families that have attached themselves to the group—some are distant kin, some affines, some maternal kin, others are unrelated clients. Everyone referred to the community in which I lived as the camp of the family (*'ēt*, spelled *'ait* by North Africanists) of the Haj's great-grandfather, which, strictly speaking, included only the five core households headed by the sons of two brothers. However, the *'ēt* was usually understood in its extended sense as including two numerically weak and poor collateral lineages related genealogically four generations back, as well as a number of client families. Bonds of agnation among the core families were reinforced by patrilineal parallel-cousin marriages in the adult generation and in the upcoming one. Because people in so many of the community's households were joined by kinship ties, they visited constantly and often spent nights at each other's households. This was particularly true of the children, who were free to sleep either with their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or (if boys) their cousins or uncles.

In the past, spatial arrangements within a camp accurately reflected social relations. Tents were pitched side by side in a straight line, all facing the same direction, with the tent ropes of adjacent households of kin crossing. At the center were the core households of the community, usually those of the senior kinsmen and their families, with more distant kin and clients occupying the periphery. Now permanent structures make the fit between social and spatial distribution less tight. Modern camps are a motley array of houses and tents. Nevertheless, houses of the core members of each

community cluster together, and those who come from outside either set up tents near the households to which they are most closely attached or move into or build new houses nearby.

It would be a mistake to assume from this description that the cluster of houses was isolated, as is often the case in the less populated desert areas farther west. This community, lying between a town and village in the more densely settled eastern district called Mariut, was surrounded by other houses. Despite spatial proximity and an almost haphazard arrangement of houses, the social barriers between the households of separate communities (defined by tribal affiliation) were unmistakable, and the invisible boundaries well known. Our community had amicable, neighborly relations with some other communities; with others, there was little contact except through the men who prayed together on Fridays at the mosque attached to a nearby saint's tomb.

The degree of contact individuals had with those outside the community varied tremendously. The Haj had traveled as far as Qatar, to visit a friend he had met while falcon hunting in the Western Desert. Some of the men had been to the cities of Alexandria and Cairo. Most had been to Marsa Matruh, the largest city in the Western Desert, and even to Libya in the days before the border was closed. Nearly all of the men at least occasionally attended the major sheep market to the west and did business in the non-Bedouin market town to the east. Many went daily to the nearby town or the village between which their hamlet lay. The women were more restricted in their movements. All but the oldest women traveled only to visit their families, to attend weddings and funerals, and to see the doctors at the clinics in the nearby town and village. Older women were more mobile, often attending local markets if their health permitted.

The particular group of people with whom I lived was more traditional than some in the area, especially those in town, but it was also more involved in the major transformations in Bedouin life of the last few decades than poorer and more isolated groups living farther west. The members of this community considered

town life corrupting and most of its inhabitants immoral, and they had no interest in moving there. The core families' long-standing wealth, which suffered a brief setback in the 1950s but was regained through the Haj's shrewd economic direction, had shielded them from government interference and freed them from having to cooperate in government settlement schemes. This economic viability allowed the core families to support clients and poor relations, thus keeping them within the group. It also enabled the community to set its own moral standards and maintain a separate identity.

All the trends in the shifting Bedouin economy (to be described in chapter 2) were represented in the diverse activities by which the members of this community supported themselves. The core families had large sheep herds, which they viewed as their main enterprise, and they had small camel herds for prestige. They had planted olive and almond trees and regularly pressed olive oil for their own consumption. They owned bits of agricultural land from which they hoped to make some profit. Every year they sowed barley. The first year of my stay, there was little rain and no harvest; the second year there was a small crop. The Haj, unlike his brothers, had contacts in Cairo and Alexandria for whom he acted as a middleman in real estate ventures on the coast, and in turn he was persuaded to invest with his partners in urban property. All of the brothers had engaged in smuggling in an earlier period. The various client families attached to these core families worked as shepherds and did odd jobs, including building, harvesting, painting, gardening, and so forth, for their patrons. They also raised rabbits, pigeons, and a few goats.

What changes in lifestyle they had made were voluntary adaptations to shifting conditions. Although they had taken advantage of government assistance in tree planting, they had built their own houses, and when the government claimed all Western Desert lands, they had arranged for the purchase of their traditional land. They had last migrated to desert pastures seven years before my arrival, but for a host of practical and emotional reasons they had

stopped going; each year, however, the idea was raised anew. They had no electricity, although the Haj had purchased a generator that sat broken most of the time I was there. One house had tapped into a pipeline that brought water nearby, but most of the households sent their adolescent girls with donkeys carrying jerry-cans to fetch water from the main taps. In the spring, after the rains, people got some of their water from a well shared by several neighboring communities. They had requested that a government school be built nearby, which many of their children attended.

This sketch must serve as an introduction to a community that the reader will come to know in depth. The problem this book explores became apparent to me in the course of living with this group of people, and in part as a function of the interactions I had with them. Therefore, the reader will need some sense of the fieldwork experience before the theoretical issues are presented.

Fieldwork

An honest account of the circumstances of fieldwork, not merely a perfunctory note stating the dates the anthropologist was in the host country, is, as Maybury-Lewis points out in his introduction (1967), both essential for the evaluation of the facts and interpretations presented in an ethnographic report and sometimes embarrassing. Especially for young anthropologists, perhaps insecure about their professional competence, the cloak of secrecy shrouding the fieldwork experiences of successful predecessors inspires fantasies. It is easy to imagine, for example, that these great figures were not plagued by doubts about their abilities, the adequacy of the material they collected, or their hosts' feelings toward them. Rather, they must have begun with the ideas set forth in their final products, polished, crisp, and profound. But on a day when people are busy and you are alone in a desolate land-

scape, suffering from fever and being eaten alive by fleas or annoyed by a child poking fun at you, the question of whether *this* is the experience that carries such dignified labels as “research” or the more scientific “data collection” nags. And yet, the nature and quality of what anthropologists learn is profoundly affected by the unique shape of their fieldwork; this should be spelled out.

I do not believe that the encounter between anthropologists and their hosts should be the sole object of inquiry. Only a rare sensitivity and perceptiveness can redeem the solipsism of this project.⁵ However, to ignore the encounter not only denies the power of such factors as personality, social location in the community, intimacy of contact, and luck (not to mention theoretical orientation and self-conscious methodology) to shape fieldwork and its product but also perpetuates the conventional fictions of objectivity and omniscience that mark the ethnographic genre.⁶

Taking an intermediate position, I will present only a few of the elements in my fieldwork situation that were most salient in setting the parameters of what I could do and discover. Out of this experience, shaped by how others in the community perceived me and what I felt comfortable with in my relations with them, arose the issues treated in this book. Thus the exercise is necessary to introduce the proper subject of study, which is the relationship between Awlad ‘Ali sentiments and experiences and the two contradictory discourses that express and inform them: a genre of oral lyric poetry of love and vulnerability on the one hand, and the ideology of honor in ordinary conversation and everyday behavior on the other.

I arrived in Cairo at the beginning of October 1978 and ensconced myself at an unpretentious pension frequented by generations of Arabists, Egyptologists, and scholars of modest means. The hotel boasted a view of the Nile, such illustrious neighbors as the great old hotels—the Semiramis, Shepheard’s, and the Hilton—and easy walking distance to the American University. In the many years since I had last stayed there as a young girl traveling with my family, nothing much had changed—the lumpy beds, the plumb-

ing, and the gentle hotel personnel bore the inevitable marks of old age. Outside, however, the city seemed to be in the throes of change. The progressive dilapidation of old buildings had in some cases led to their collapse, and in other parts of the city construction of massive new luxury hotels was underway.

I familiarized myself with the city, more crowded and noisy than ever, and awaited my father's arrival. Here the reader might pause. I suspect that few, if any, fathers of anthropologists accompany them to the field to make their initial contacts. But my father had insisted that he had something to do in Egypt and might just as well plan his trip to coincide with mine. I had accepted his offer only reluctantly, glad to have the company but also a bit embarrassed by the idea. Only after living with the Bedouins for a long time did I begin to comprehend some of what had underlain my father's quiet but firm insistence. As an Arab, although by no means a Bedouin, he knew his own culture and society well enough to know that a young, unmarried woman traveling alone on uncertain business was an anomaly. She would be suspect and would have a hard time persuading people of her respectability. I of course knew of the negative image of Western women, an image fed by rumor, films, and, to be sure, the frequent insensitivity of Western women to local standards of morality and social communication patterns.⁷ But I had assumed I would be able to overcome people's suspicions, first by playing up the Arab half of my identity and not identifying with Westerners, and second by behaving properly. I was confident of my sensitivity to cultural expectations because of my background. Not only had I lived in Egypt for four years as a child, but, more significant, I had also spent many summers with relatives in Jordan. As part of that household I had had to conform to some extent to the codes of conduct appropriate to Arab girls, my many cousins providing models for this behavior. I felt I had internalized much that would help me find my way with the Bedouins and not offend them.

What I had not considered was that respectability was reckoned

not just in terms of behavior in interpersonal interactions but also in the relationship to the larger social world. I had failed to anticipate that people as conservative as the Bedouins, for whom belonging to tribe and family are paramount and the education of girls novel, would assume that a woman alone must have so alienated her family, especially her male kin, that they no longer cared about her. Worse yet, perhaps she had done something so immoral that they had ostracized her. Any girl valued by her family, especially an unmarried girl whose virginity and reputation were critical to a good match, would not be left unprotected to travel alone at the mercy of anyone who wished to take advantage of her. By accompanying me, my father hoped to lay any such suspicions to rest.

After making contacts in Cairo, we set off for Alexandria. There we spoke with social researchers conducting a study of the Mariut Extension, the site of a land reclamation and resettlement scheme in the Western Desert. The director of field research generously offered us accommodation, transport to the Bedouin town closest to their research, and a promise to introduce us to his Bedouin contact. I still remember driving out to the sun-baked town, which, at midday, was quiet and nearly deserted. We drove around in search of this informant, finally tracking him to his small house. My father and the research director had a long conversation with him while I sat quietly in the back of the vehicle, shy, barely understanding what was being said, and feeling distinctly unlike an anthropologist.

My father had explained that his daughter, who had been raised in the United States, wished to improve her Arabic and to learn about their society and would need to find a good family with whom to live. After some deliberation, the man guided us to a hamlet consisting of a number of houses and tents. As we approached we could see people scurrying to shake out straw mats from the tents. We were greeted by several men. My father went with the men into one of the houses, and I, along with a couple of the female researchers from the Mariut project, was invited into a

nearby tent. We sat surrounded by a large group of curious women and children. We asked them questions and they asked questions of us. Again, I felt peripheral. I understood little of what the Bedouin women were saying and had to rely on the Egyptian university students to translate from the fast-paced dialect. They too had some difficulty understanding. We did not stay long but soon piled into the van over the protests of our hosts, who wished us to stay for a meal. The project director explained that they wanted to slaughter a sheep for us, as they would for any honored guest. The Haj, head of the community, had not been there; my father had spoken instead with his brothers and had left him a letter explaining the situation and placing me under his protection. When I returned the next day, the Haj welcomed me and said that he would be happy to have me live with them.

This introduction to the community profoundly affected my position and the nature of the work I could do. First, it identified me, despite my poor linguistic skills and my apparent foreignness, as a Muslim and an Arab. My Muslim credentials were shaky, as I did not pray and my mother was known to be an American. But most assumed that I shared with them a fundamental identity as a Muslim, and my father's speech was no doubt so sprinkled with religious phrases that they believed in his piety, which in turn rubbed off on me. Many times during my stay I was confronted with the critical importance of the shared Muslim identity in the community's acceptance of me. As always, the old women and the young children bluntly stated what most adults were too polite to say. The hostility they felt toward Europeans (*naṣāra*, or Christians) came out in the children's violent objections to my listening to English radio broadcasts, an old woman's horror at the thought of drinking out of a teacup a European woman visitor had just used, and comments made about an American friend who came out to visit me (whom they liked very much) that she was good "for someone of her religion" (*'ala dīnhā*).

It was also clear that I came from a good family and good stock, so the Haj's family could accept me as a member of their household

without compromising their social standing. My father's beautiful Arabic and the fact that he was not an Egyptian but a "Jordanian" (as he had been introduced) were topics of much discussion. The Bedouins believe that all non-Egyptian Arabs are Bedouins, speaking a decent dialect and living a lifestyle similar to their own. So they considered my father a fellow tribesman and a person with noble roots (*aşl*), the importance of which will be explored in the next two chapters. I often heard them defend their acceptance of me on these grounds.

Most of all, by accompanying me my father had shown those with whom I would be living and on whose good opinion and generosity my life and work would depend that I was a daughter of a good family whose male kin were concerned about her and wanted to protect her, even when pursuit of education forced her into potentially compromising positions. The Haj and his relatives took seriously their obligation to my father, who had given them the sacred trust of protecting me. Although the Haj understood that I was there to find out about their customs and traditions (*'ādāt wtaqālīd*) and in our initial chat assured me that I must feel free to go anywhere that my study required as long as I informed him of my whereabouts, I soon discovered that my freedom was in fact restricted. Through the subtle cues of tactful but stubborn adults, I came to understand that I was to feel free to go anywhere within the camp but that to step beyond the bounds of the community, particularly alone, was not appropriate.

The restrictions on my movements had several motives. As the Haj explained to me in one exasperated moment, they feared for my safety. They would be responsible if anything happened to me, and they did not relish the idea of becoming embroiled in vengeance matters. Also, by living with them I was automatically identified as a member of their family. Perceived by all as one of the women in the Haj's kin group, my actions reflected on them and affected their reputations. They had to make sure I did nothing that could compromise them by insuring that, as far as possible, I conformed to the same standards of propriety their women

did, meaning that I was restricted in where I could go, by whom I could be seen, and with whom I could speak. But I also realized later that another reason they discouraged me from visiting those outside the community was that I would thus involve them in social obligations they had not chosen. If I visited another tribal group, I would be greeted as a member of the Haj's group. People usually offer a feast for first-time guests, and I would thus incur a social debt for them.

The other consequence of my introduction to the community as my father's daughter was that I was assigned and took on the role of an adoptive daughter. My protection/restriction was an entailment of this relationship, but so was my participation in the household, my identification with the kin group, and the process by which I learned about the culture, a sort of socialization to the role. Although I never completely lost my status as a guest in their household, my role as daughter gradually superseded it. The choice pieces of meat they initially set aside for me were later offered to other guests instead. I became part of the backstage when we had company, found myself contributing more to household work than I wished, and had my own chores. Men occasionally shouted commands at me and felt free to get me up late at night along with the women and girls to help serve tea to visitors.

I should not give the impression that this role was forced on me. I was a willing collaborator. In a society where kinship defines most relationships, it was important to have a role as a fictive kinsperson in order to participate. I knew what was expected of an obedient daughter and found it hard to resist meeting those expectations. Not everything I did to help in the household was because of my status as daughter. I was grateful to the people in my household for graciously including me in their lives and counting me as a member of the family. Although I was not that much of an extra burden, I felt uncomfortable being idle when the women and girls worked so hard. With time I developed close relationships with the Haj's first wife, Gaṭīfa, and his daughters. It was to assist them that I worked, especially during difficult periods such as when Gaṭīfa

was ill and was trying, before her co-wife joined her, to run the household with only the help of one adolescent daughter. During her difficult pregnancy, I spent much of my time with her, massaging her and worrying about her health, trying to take over what little of her work I was competent to do. During these periods, as I filled water containers, collected straw for the oven, carried trays of bread, or peeled endless zucchinis for dinner, I would worry that I was not filling my notebook with information and that time was passing. If I was occasionally resentful, mostly I felt that the personal responsibilities I had toward the individuals who cared for me and treated me not as a researcher but as a member of a household came first.

Two other aspects of my identity affected the nature of my social relationships with the Bedouins, and thus the type of research I was able to carry out. First, I could not have been a daughter without being female. As a woman I often found myself confronted with difficulties not faced by male researchers, but I also enjoyed advantages of access and unexpected pleasures of intimacy in the women's world. In my first few weeks I tried to move back and forth between the men's and women's worlds. Gradually I realized that I would have to declare my loyalties firmly in order to be accepted in either. With the exception of the Haj, whom I got to know very well through almost daily conversations and occasional long car rides to Cairo, I found visits with the men boring because of the limited range of topics we could politely cover. So I opted for the women's world, refusing more and more to leave their company when the men called. This choice met with silent approbation from the women and girls, and so I was incorporated into their world, involved in their activities, and made privy to their secrets. Because relations in the women's world are more informal than in the men's, I was able to get beyond polite conversation more quickly.

The other factor was my unmarried status, the problems of which have been noted by two Arab women trained as anthropologists in the West who returned to do fieldwork in their societies of origin (Altorki 1973; Abu-Zahra 1978). Being unmarried

not only cast me in the role of daughter, but since I was far older than the unmarried Bedouin girls, it also placed me in an ambiguous position. I wished to be part of the women's world, but I did not have one of the most important defining characteristics of women: children. The gap between the two categories is symbolized by clothing, and when I decided to convert to wearing clothing like theirs I was in a quandary. Married women wear black veils and red belts (see chapter 4), whereas unmarried girls wear kerchiefs on their heads and around their waists. I compromised, wearing some women's clothing and some girls' and then tying my kerchief in a non-Bedouin way. In the end, they put me in an intermediate category. The only real problem this status caused was that it prevented me from asking certain questions about sexuality—I was assumed to be ignorant, and I had no intention of disabusing people of this view, as I wanted to protect my reputation. But women seemed to talk openly, joking bawdily even in front of children, and so I did not feel that the topic was completely closed.

In the first months, even as I appreciated the warm acceptance I received, I chafed at the restrictions of my role and position in the community. It was difficult being so dependent. Also, although I enjoyed living in the Haj's household and felt infinitely more comfortable around the people I knew best, I was worried by the idea of what anthropologists were supposed to do. I thought I should be going door to door, meeting everyone in the vicinity, and conducting surveys. I did not think it appropriate to confine my contacts to one kin group or community. And yet to defy my hosts would have been insulting and would have seriously jeopardized my relations with them. They, after all, had undertaken to protect and care for me. My obligation as a dependent was to respect their wishes, and my role as a daughter, like that of Jean Briggs among the Eskimos (Briggs 1970), made defiance especially inappropriate.

My relations with people in the community changed over time, at certain junctures shifting radically, as when a new woman

moved into our household, catapulting me into the inner circle of those who already belonged; but for the most part change was gradual. Where I had at first strained to understand what was being said, felt awkward, and done more observing than interacting, as I came to know more people and as my language abilities improved I began to participate more. In the first few months I went to Cairo as frequently as every two or three weeks to shower, eat, buy medicine, get mail, and speak English. By the end I felt enough at home that I went for a period of nearly three months with only a day in Cairo to attend to some urgent business.

What bothered me most after the first few months was that my relationship with the people I lived with did not seem symmetrical. I do not mean this in the usual sense of a power or wealth differential in the anthropologist's favor; I was, after all, a dependent and daughter with nothing to offer but my company. Rather, I was asking them to be honest, so that I could learn what their lives were like, but at the same time I was unwilling to reveal much about myself. I was presenting them with a persona: I felt compelled to lie to them about many aspects of my life in the United States simply because they could not have helped judging it and me in their own terms, by which my reputation would have suffered. So I doctored my descriptions and changed the subject when they asked about me, but I felt uncomfortable doing so. How ethical was it to present myself falsely, to pretend that I shared their values and lived as they did even when I was not with them? They knew nothing of my former life, my friends, family, university, apartment—in short, much of what I considered my identity. Unlike other anthropologists, who not only can present themselves as different but can use the difference as a way of stimulating discussion, I had to dissociate myself as much as possible from Americans. With my Arab identity, I dared not say, "Where I come from, they do . . ." What bits they heard were sufficient to make them doubt my father's wisdom in choosing to live and bring up his children among non-Muslims.

Eventually, this sense of inauthenticity subsided. As I participated more fully in the community and loosened my ties to my other life, and as we came to share a common history and set of experiences on which we could build relationships, I *became* the person that I was with them. That was sufficient for honest interchanges. Although there always remained an element of asymmetry in that I was writing about them and was observing perhaps a bit more closely than they were, for the most part I felt that we came together as individuals responding to situations in which we participated equally. This experience may correspond to what some other analysts of the fieldwork experience call the development of intersubjectivity (Rabinow 1977, 155).

There were moments when I became aware of a transition in my relations with people, even though the process of change went unnoticed. The intensity of my feeling of belonging and the extent to which this life had become natural struck me one day about fifteen months into fieldwork. I was awakened in the morning by one of the Haj's daughters, who ran into my room with the exciting news that our neighbor had returned from the pilgrimage. We had feared him dead or imprisoned because he had been caught without a passport during the seizure of Mecca's Haram Mosque and had not been heard from. She urged me to hurry and ready myself to attend the feast welcoming him home. I dressed in my best clothes.

As we set off, I realized how proud I was that I finally had the proper items: a new dress my hosts had given me at the last wedding, made of a colorful synthetic, the latest in Bedouin fashion; a red belt; and a black shawl to wear on my head. I knew that my new sweater (worn *under* my dress), brightly colored and interwoven with metallic threads, would be much admired, as would my gaudy new bead necklace, a gift from my friend the seamstress. I was able to see myself as I would be seen by others, and I took pleasure in knowing that I was finally acceptably attired for a festive occasion. I was also prepared to cover my face with my shawl

as we passed in sight of the men's tent en route to the women's section. By this time I would have felt uncomfortable had I not been able to veil.

On entering the tent crowded with women, I knew exactly which cluster to join—the group of “our” relatives. They welcomed me naturally and proceeded to gossip conspiratorially with me about the others present. This sense of “us versus them,” so central to their social interactions, had become central to me, too, and I felt pleased that I belonged to an “us.” Later, when there was a shortage of help in preparing the tea for the guests, I assisted, assuming the proper role of a close neighbor.

I left the festivities with a few of the women from our community and spent the rest of the day going from household to household, visiting, catching up, listening to different sides of the story of the latest camp crisis, an argument between an aunt and niece. In the late afternoon a few of the adolescent girls came to find me, urging me to come with them while they collected firewood from a nearby olive orchard that was being pruned. It was a beautiful day, and I welcomed the chance to be outside, so I hurried off with them. They showed me where their cousins had just killed a large snake and explained more about the family argument I had just been hearing about. We hauled branches and twigs and loaded them onto donkey carts for a while, and then, as the sun sank, we started for home. A donkey cart driven by two young men from our camp passed us. My companions—two women, three girls, and a toddler, all from my household—flagged them down, begging for a ride. But the young men were in a hurry and tried to wave us aside, no longer treating me as an honored guest to be pampered. We gave chase, though, and jumped onto the moving cart, laughing wildly and exchanging joking insults with the young men.

That evening as we sat around the kerosene lantern, talking about the celebration we had attended, swapping bits of information we had gathered, and feeling happy because we had eaten meat, I became aware of how comfortable I felt, knowing everyone being discussed, offering my own tidbits and interpretations,

and bearing easily the weight of the child who had fallen asleep on my lap as I sat cross-legged on the ground. It was only that night, when I dated the page in my journal, that I realized it was only a few days until Christmas. My American life seemed very far away.

Even though my feelings toward them had changed, I do not think it was until a certain funeral that I became fully human (because social) to many in the camp. People's fears that I did not care about them in the same way they cared about me came out in their half-joking accusations that I would forget them as soon as I left and that I would never return to visit. The Haj's mother was not domineering, but she was a key figure in the camp, the ultimate moral authority. I knew that although she liked me, she wondered what I was really doing there, and she was always a bit reserved. Her brother's funeral finally changed her attitude toward me. When we got word that he had died, I insisted on going with the women in our household to pay condolences. I found the whole scene very moving, with the wailing and "crying."⁸ When I squatted before the old woman to embrace her and give her my sympathies, I found myself crying. Her grief pained me, and because she had been ill for a while, I feared for her health. With each new arrival the ritualized mourning laments would begin again, and I could not hold back my tears. This funeral had awakened my own grief over the death of my grandmother and a cousin, neither of whom I had mourned properly.

I later heard from others how touched the old woman had been that I had come immediately, like her kinswomen and daughters-in-law, to mourn with her. Others told me that it had meant a great deal to her to know that I genuinely cared and could feel with her the grief over the loss of her only blood brother. From that time on, she treated me differently, even weeping as she sang me a few poignant songs about separation just before I left the field.

The sorts of constraints and advantages my particular position in the community created for my ethnographic project should be

apparent from what I have described. However, if my hosts' assumption that I was part of their moral community, not a foreigner with immunity, placed restrictions on me, it also allowed me to participate in a unique way. By being a daughter, I was forced to learn the standards for women's behavior from the inside, as it were—it was a process of socialization as much as observation. The only drawback was that, like Altorki (1973), I found that people expected me to know things that I did not in fact know, and my hesitation to betray my ignorance, especially in matters of religion, did prevent me from pursuing some topics that I otherwise might have. Nevertheless, living in a social world defined by the same boundaries as those experienced by members of the community allowed me to grasp more immediately just how the social world worked and how its members understood it.

It suited my temperament and my interests to be confined to a small group whose members I could come to know intimately. As I became more familiar with the people I lived with, I felt less and less interested in meeting strangers. I found the superficial conversations possible with them tedious, and I quickly tired of answering questions about what they grow in *amṛīka*. I had become interested in the complexities of interpersonal relations in Bedouin society and was seeking the concepts by which Awlad 'Ali understood their social world and acted within it. This kind of knowledge could only come from knowing people intimately, and over time.

The lacunae that result from a close study of daily life are not minor. I sometimes despaired that I was not compiling histories of the relations between tribal groups or tracing patterns of territorial control. But what I sacrificed in breadth was, I believe, amply compensated for by a depth of knowledge of individuals, on which the analysis to follow draws. And counting out-married kinswomen, affines, and people about whom I heard a great deal but never met, I am convinced that my knowledge of the society is based on a "sample" larger than the fifteen households that formed the core community.

Whether this community could be considered representative of Awlad 'Ali is perhaps a meaningless question. Insofar as other Bedouins were considered within the same social and moral universe (unlike Egyptians)—and those I met on visits to other communities seemed to differ little except in the quality and quantity of traditional and modern goods they possessed—I would say that this community was representative. However, unique “cultures” develop in any close community, including individual families, and in this sense my community probably differed from all others. I do not think this makes my observations less valid.

My concentration on the women's world might also be considered a limitation. In many ways, however, my access to both worlds was more balanced than a man's would have been. Except in rare instances, male researchers in sex-segregated societies have far less access to women than I had to men. Not only was my host an extremely articulate and generous informant about himself and his culture, but his younger brother, sons and nephews, and the client-status men were all frequent visitors in the women's world with whom I could speak relatively freely. Furthermore, the structure of information flow between the men's and women's worlds was not symmetrical. Because of the pattern of hierarchy, men spoke to one another in the presence of women, but the reverse was not true.⁹ In addition, young and low-status men informed mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and (for the latter) wives about men's affairs, whereas no one brought news to the adult men. A conspiracy of silence excluded men from the women's world.¹⁰

My research was perhaps most profoundly affected by the non-directive approach I took. The result of the confluence of principle, personal predilection, and circumstance, my unwillingness to pursue questions aggressively or conduct structured interviews limited the extent to which I could study some matters systematically. It also enabled me to form my inquiry around matters that the Bedouins themselves found most interesting and central. My position of powerlessness in the community prevented me from coercing people into discussions in which they had no interest. Nor had I

any desire to do so. I appreciated their perception of me as different from those researchers they had previously encountered. I heard stories of the “exams” these researchers had given them (questionnaires) and the hilariously wild tales the Bedouins had fed them. But because I had wished to live with them they assumed it must be on ordinary social terms. I was reluctant to violate these terms, and thus I rarely took notes or tape-recorded when they spoke (except later when I began collecting poetry) but rather wrote notes from memory at night or at odd moments during the day, and I tried to ask questions when people were already discussing a particular subject or event instead of out of the blue. In this manner I was able to elicit freely the Bedouins’ conceptions of their social world, and I was led to the discovery of poetry’s importance in social life. Had I rigidly structured my research in advance, I would have been blind to both.

Poetry and Sentiment

A fog of despair shrouds
the eye, just when it starts to clear . . .

yiksīhā dhibāb il-yās
il-‘ēn wēn mā rāg jūhā . . .

This poem was recited to me by the robust, middle-aged wife of a powerful tribal leader. We were sitting together at a ceremony of reconciliation (*ṣuluḥ*) involving two extremely close tribal segments that had split after a death resulting from a squabble between cousins. The atmosphere was tense. The women, sitting in a tent overlooking the plain where several large white ceremonial tents had been pitched for the men, anxiously watched the men’s comings and goings. At one point several of the women disappeared into the nearby house and began a haunting chant. When I looked puzzled, the woman who had taken me as her responsibil-

ity in this group of strangers explained that they were reminded of and crying over their deceased relative. As the hours passed and it became clear that the meeting had gone smoothly, the women relaxed a bit. Some of those not closely related to the reconciling segments tried to entertain me by reciting poems, including the one above.

When I returned home after that long day, the women of my camp quizzed me on every detail of whom and what I'd seen, speculating and arguing as I gave my account. When I read this poem and described the woman who had recited it, they figured out who she was and explained the meaning of the poem. They did so not by telling me what the words meant but by recounting to me how she had lost her only son two and a half years earlier. He had been shot through the mouth in an altercation between some Bedouin men and a group of Egyptian soldiers riding on a train through a Bedouin area. It was not until much later that I was able to translate the poem and to grasp its significance as an expression of the sadness she had felt at losing him, an expression triggered by the painful remembrance of the murdered young man on the occasion of his relatives' reconciliation and perhaps recited in empathy with the mourning women.

Listening and observing everyday life and social interactions both in public and in the intimacy of the domestic world, I had noticed that people often sang or punctuated their conversations with short poems. Everyone showed great interest in these poems and often seemed moved when they heard them. At first I ignored them, since I had no interest in poetry. I had come to study the patterning and meaning of interpersonal relations, in particular between men and women, so I merely jotted in my fieldnotes that people seemed to love reciting some sad-sounding short poems. After a few incidents, however, I began to wonder what these poems meant and why they were so valued by the Bedouins. I began to pay attention to them.

The first poem I recorded was by an old woman in another camp I visited. She and some of the other women there knew women in

my own community. She told me to write something in my notebook, slowly reciting and repeating her poem to make sure I had it right. She then told me to recite it to a certain woman in my camp. Before I left, I asked for the old woman's name, and she gave me one. When I returned home, I dutifully repeated what to me were then nonsense syllables. The women were puzzled when I gave the name of the woman in the other camp. They all agreed on another name, and I later realized she had given me a false name. For a week, in every household I went to in my community, women asked me to recite the poem this woman had sent. They were fascinated, and I was mystified about why she had disguised her identity.

My first realization of the sensitive nature of the poems came a bit later. A shepherd's wife was helping out in our busy household by baking bread at our makeshift oven. After a minor disappointment, she broke into one of these poems. I insisted that she repeat it so I could write it down. That evening as I talked with the Haj about what I had seen and heard that day, asking him questions and getting explanations, I read him the poem. His kindly and pedagogical manner suddenly changed. Agitated, he demanded to know who had recited it. I hesitated, suspecting that I had unwittingly betrayed something important, but when I finally confessed that it was the wife of one of his shepherds he was palpably relieved. He explained that the poem had to do with despair in love; she sang it because she had lost one husband and her present husband was old and about to die. I then understood that he had feared that one of his wives had recited the poem. When I reported my confession to Gaṭīfa, the Haj's senior wife, she scolded me for my indiscretion and told me never to reveal any women's poems to men.

People's reactions to these poems were my first clues to the importance of poetry as a vehicle for personal expression and confidential communication. I began to write or tape-record poems whenever individuals recited them spontaneously in conversation or sang them. It turned out that the plaintive songs I heard women,

and sometimes men, sing were the same genre as the short poems they recited. The Bedouins' keen interest in the poems and their approval of my recognition of their importance assured me that I had chanced on something critical. Yet most women were not able to explain poems to me. When I asked what a poem meant, they either simply repeated the words or described the type of situation that might elicit that poem. I rarely had a chance to discuss the poems with men, for reasons that will become clear in later chapters. For quite a while I recorded them phonetically, understanding little because the vocabulary was obscure, the images condensed, and the referents ambiguous. Eventually, with the help of both a few individuals in the community and a patient and highly articulate, educated young Libyan in Cairo, I began to interpret them.

I found that these poems, called *ghinnāwas*¹¹ (literally, little songs), were lyric poems, like Japanese haiku in form¹² but more like the American blues in content and emotional tone. They usually described a sentiment and were perceived by others as personal statements about interpersonal situations. The ethnographic literature on Awlad 'Ali had not prepared me for the vital part oral literature played in their daily lives. Of the anthropologists who had worked with Awlad 'Ali and their Cyrenaican cousins, only Peters (1965) made any mention of songs or poetry, and he did not elaborate on their importance. What published material I was later able to locate on Awlad 'Ali poetry offered no information about the social contexts in which poetry was recited.¹³

Yet the cultural centrality of poetry and song, which are fully integrated into everyday life in other Arab societies, is apparent from some of the best early ethnographic studies. Unmatched in the modern literature are the records of such thorough ethnographers as Granqvist (1931, 1935) and Musil (1928) who, over fifty years ago, studied Palestinian villagers and Rwala Bedouins, respectively. Granqvist's texts are replete with poems and songs associated with every major and minor life event of the villagers she so vividly portrays. Musil also collected rich poetic material

from the Rwala Bedouins. For the most part, however, despite the frequency with which scholars of Arab culture comment on the high value Arabs place on poetry, few have tried to situate this poetry in its living social context. Those who do deal with literary matters are rarely ethnographers; they neither record poems as they occur in the course of daily life, nor do they analyze them with reference to their social uses, devoting most of their attention instead to classical literary poetry. Some, such as Zwettler (1976, 1978), are beginning to consider classical forms in the light of what we know about oral literature, without, however, being able to consider one of the major issues of oral tradition—namely, the social context of *performed* poetry.¹⁴

Because most of the poetry I collected was spontaneously recited in specific social contexts, I could not but recognize it as a form of discourse well integrated into Bedouin social life rather than an obscure art form set apart from daily life and of concern only to specialists.¹⁵ The question, however, for all those who study discourses, from poetry to prayer, proverb to myth, is how they relate to social life. Two recent anthropological studies of Arab tribal poetry (Meeker 1979; Caton 1984)¹⁶ define the relationship between poetry and society in ways that go beyond both the old notion of folklore as a receptacle and source of cultural wisdom and values and the Western aesthetic notion of the arts as the expression of individual genius. Michael Meeker, in a brilliant and complex analysis of Rwala Bedouin poetry and society based on ethnographies from the early part of this century, defines the link thus:

Bedouin words, far more than Bedouin actions, were the center of an effort to work out the various possibilities and impossibilities of uncertain political relationships. These words reveal systematic strategies for putting together a kind of political order in spite of uncertain political relationships. From the forms of a Bedouin voice, one can begin to understand with some precision the shape of Bedouin experience. (1979, 27)

Two points should be noted here. First, Meeker ties literature to what, in his view, are the central concerns of Rwala life, namely, uncertain political relations and the struggle among mounted men with weapons. Second, like Lévi-Strauss, who at least sometimes, as in "The Story of Asdiwal" (1967), argues that myth is a means for resolving philosophical/social dilemmas at the heart of a society, Meeker sees poetry as a primarily intellectual means of dealing with these central concerns.

Steven Caton, although sharing Meeker's intuition that poetry is tied to political conflict, argues persuasively for a more pragmatic relationship between Yemeni tribal poetry and Yemeni social life. Drawing on the insights of Kenneth Burke and focusing on the use of poetic exchanges in dispute mediations, he argues that "poetry is an act embedded in socio-historical reality, an aggressive instrument like swords or rifles but brandished in a *verbal* war of political rhetoric" (1984, 8).

These understandings of the function of poetry differ markedly, but they share an interesting set of assumptions that bear scrutiny precisely because they reflect widespread biases, biases my work calls into question. Both Meeker and Caton treat the problem of conflict and social order as the central concern of the Yemeni and Rwala tribesmen, and both examine only certain genres of poetry: men's formal rhyming verse. Although there is ample evidence that these tribesmen are obsessed with conflict and political alliances, I suggest that the primacy these authors attribute to this aspect of social life derives equally from their own immersion in the anthropological literature on the Middle East, a great deal of which is devoted to debates about the segmentary lineage model. That anthropologists, including Evans-Pritchard, the man most responsible for this debate about segmentary lineage organization, should have been interested in political organization in the era of colonial rule is hardly surprising.¹⁷ I would rather raise a more general issue: the relationship between men and politics.

Although the existence of universal associations of men with politics and of women with the domestic sphere—explored in

feminist scholarship (de Beauvoir 1953; Elshtain 1981; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974)—can certainly be challenged, this configuration does describe a fact of social life in modern Western society. While I would not accuse Meeker, Caton, Evans-Pritchard, Peters, or any others of inappropriately projecting their own interests onto a situation, it strikes me that a felicitous correspondence between the views of Arab tribesmen and those of European men has led each to reinforce particular interests of the other and to slight other aspects of experience and concern. These aspects, such as the personal and interpersonal as opposed to the abstract and group-oriented, the domestic, private, and informal as opposed to the public, ceremonial, and formal, and the affiliative as opposed to the agonistic, are by no means the concern only of women (Western or Bedouin). But they are more difficult to ignore if one includes women's experiences in the study of a society. In fact, women in Bedouin society are deeply concerned with strictly political matters concerning the tribe and group conflict, affairs such as the tribal reconciliation described above in which their husbands, fathers, and sons are directly involved. They share the martial ethos of Bedouin society. But just as Bedouin women are fiercely loyal to the tribe and dedicated to autonomy, so Bedouin men are more than merely political actors. They too have families, desires, and aspirations and suffer personal tragedies in love and friendship. I argue that we should broaden our vision of Middle Eastern tribal societies to encompass these dimensions of experience in the analysis of social life. It will quickly become clear how inseparable these aspects of life are.

In all these societies there are numerous poetic genres: some, elaborately structured and heroic in subject matter, are recited or chanted only on ceremonial occasions or in specific public contexts;¹⁸ others, simpler in structure and concerning personal matters and feelings, are more appropriate to informal social situations. The former are generally the exclusive domain of men, and the latter tend to be officially devalued by male elders as the unimportant productions of women and youths.¹⁹ Perhaps as a consequence, the love poems and songs of tribal societies of the

Middle East, despite widespread reference to their prevalence, are virtually unstudied.²⁰

Meeker and Caton follow this pattern, dealing exclusively with the former type, perhaps because of their interest in the political.²¹ For Meeker, the choice was deliberate. Of the rich corpus of poems available in Musil's collection, he chose to analyze only the poems and narratives of war found in one chapter, ignoring the many love poems and ditties included in another chapter. This choice is indirectly rationalized by Meeker's argument (1979, 26, 94–97) that the Rwala were little concerned with the domestic life of the camp, in contrast to sedentary or semisedentary Middle Eastern peoples. In discussing the domestic life of the camp, Meeker, following Charles Doughty, notes only the *mejlis*, or men's gathering in the chief's tent. Caton, who spent a considerable period doing field research in Yemen, had less choice. He moved almost exclusively in the world of men in this sex-segregated society, tape-recording poems recited by men at formal public occasions, where he was welcomed as a guest among other guests, and interviewing tribal poets. His access to the domestic world of home and intimate gatherings of close friends and relatives was limited.

The fact that I moved within the intimate world of the Awlad 'Ali, having as a primary research interest neither poetry nor politics but social life, particularly the life of sentiment, certainly has some bearing on the genre of poetry I encountered and found central and on the relationship I ultimately draw between Bedouin poetry and society.²² The *ghinnāwa* can be considered the poetry of personal life: individuals recite such poetry in specific social contexts, for the most part private, articulating in it sentiments about their personal situations and closest relationships.

The most striking thing about the poems recited by Awlad 'Ali men and women I knew was the radical difference between the sentiments expressed in them and those expressed about the same situations in ordinary social interactions and conversations. The Bedouins' propensity to joke about or deny concern in personal matters and to express anger in difficult situations had struck me

as defensive. But the constellation of sentiments expressed in their poignant lyric poems, for the most part having to do with vulnerability and deep attachment to others, were ones I could readily appreciate and ones that they too seemed to find moving.

This discrepancy suggested the problems this study explores. How is the fact that individuals express such utterly different sentiments in poetic and in nonpoetic discourse to be understood? Is one discourse a more authentic expression of personal experience than the other? Robert LeVine, in his assessment of the anthropological study of the self, states that "interpersonal communication is the medium through which we discover how individuals experience their lives and how cultural beliefs shape that experience" (1982a, 293). He notes the difficulties posed by such communication taking place in multiple arenas and media and the possible inconsistency of the messages conveyed. The messages of poetry in Arab Bedouin society are deeply meaningful and culturally central; they are thus critical to an understanding of Awlad 'Ali experience.

The central question that emerges from a consideration of Awlad 'Ali *ghinnāwas*, then, concerns the relationship between the Bedouin poetic discourse and the discourse of ordinary social life.²³ To begin to explore this relationship, we must look beyond both the immediate context of the recitation situation and the broader context of the life events of the reciters and attempt to understand the basic cultural notions the Awlad 'Ali hold about society, social relations, and the individual—in short, the ideology of social life.²⁴ To this end, I outline in chapters 2, 3, and 4 the basic elements of this ideology, presenting the concepts the Bedouins use to make sense of their world and the dominant ideas that orient their actions and interactions.

Because the ideology of kinship, in particular the concept of "blood" in its two aspects of ancestry and agnation, structures the Awlad 'Ali vision of their social world, defines individual social identity and collective cultural identity, and shapes individual attitudes and sentiments toward others, I discuss it first. The organization of political life takes form around this ideology. But per-

haps more pressing as everyday concerns of social living for the Bedouins, who hold autonomy dear and pride themselves on their egalitarianism, at least in political life, are matters of hierarchy and of power and status. Here the key terms of honor and modesty come in. Most would agree that values associated with the notion of honor, however defined, are at the heart of the social ideologies of various circum-Mediterranean societies.²⁵ Most also recognize the link between honor and stratification.²⁶ But defining the terms of the honor code, determining the arena of its significance, explaining the link between honor and sexual modesty, and understanding why this code is so central have proven less tractable tasks. These must be undertaken in the ethnographic context of particular communities.

In chapters 3 and 4 I explore the logic of the ideology of honor and the relationship of modesty to honor in Awlad 'Ali society. I show how this ideology serves to rationalize social inequality and the control some have over the lives of others in a system that idealizes the equality of agnates and the autonomy of individuals. It does so primarily through reference to morality, which guarantees that individuals will be motivated to act in ways that perpetuate the political and social system. In Awlad 'Ali thought, greater moral worth is the basis of one's authority or social precedence, with moral worth measured by the extent to which an individual embodies the ideals of personhood, ideals suggested by the code of honor and revolving around the values of autonomy. But if honor derives from virtues associated with autonomy, then there are many, most notably women, who because of their physical, social, and economic dependency are handicapped in their efforts to realize these ideals. Although they share the general ethos and display some of the virtues of autonomy under certain conditions, their path to honor in this system is different. To have moral worth, these people must show modesty (*hasham*), which must be understood as voluntary deference to those in the system who more closely embody its ideals. Why sexual modesty, especially for women, is a critical aspect of this deference to social superiors, in

particular senior male agnates, is elucidated in chapter 4, where I explore Bedouin ideas about gender and the place of sexuality in a system based on the bonds of agnation. The soundness of this interpretation of sexual modesty is demonstrated by its capacity to make sense of honor killings and the pattern of women's veiling.

How this moral system associated with the ideology of honor affects individuals in what they say and do and even in the most intimate realm of what they say they feel is the subject of the second part of the book. But once we are talking about personal life we are back to poetry, because people express sentiments and responses to personal situations both through ordinary conversation and through poetry. So, after a brief introduction in chapter 5 to the poetic genre of *Awlad 'Ali* expression and to the contextual analysis of this poetry, I turn in chapters 6 and 7 to an exploration of Bedouin responses to various life situations, particularly crises of loss and love. Here the consistent disjunction of the sentiments individuals express in poetic statements, on the one hand, and nonpoetic statements, on the other, leads us to conclude that the sentiments they express have cultural meanings. In fact, I use the term *sentiment* rather than *emotion* or *affect* specifically to signal the literary or conventional nature of these responses. Although the embeddedness of all emotional responses in cultural contexts that differentially value certain sentiments has been the subject of much recent work by psychological and interpretive anthropologists (see Geertz 1973a; Lutz 1982; Riesman 1977, 1983; Rosaldo 1980, 1983, 1984), I want to push this further. I intend to show that sentiments can actually symbolize values and that expression of these sentiments by individuals contributes to representations of the self, representations that are tied to morality, which in turn is ultimately tied to politics in its broadest sense. The sentiments of ordinary discourse are congruent with the ideology of honor and modesty. The sentiments generally expressed in poetry suggest a self that is vulnerable and weak, a self moved by deep feelings of love and longing. These are not at first glance the sentiments of proud and autonomous individuals, nor are they the sentiments of chaste individuals.

What are individuals symbolizing about themselves through expression of these non-virtuous sentiments? What is it about poetry that allows it to be used to express sentiments contrary to those appropriate to the ideals of honor without jeopardizing the reputations of those who recite it? What are individuals communicating about themselves and the society they live in through poems that express sentiments suggesting defiance of the moral system? Recognizing that both sets of responses are conventional, what is the significance of having two cultural discourses for the articulation of individual sentiments? To the extent that what people say, either in ordinary discourse or in the conventional and stylized discourse of poetry, can serve as a window into their experience, what does the discrepancy between the two modes of discourse tell us about the power of the ideology of honor and modesty to shape experience? Finally, what does the extraordinary cultural valuation of the poetic discourse tell us about the relationship between the ideology of honor and not only individual experience but also the organization of Bedouin social and political life as a whole? We turn to these questions in the final chapter, where what began as a puzzle about the meaning of a single poetic genre becomes a reflection on the fundamental issues of the politics of the discourses of sentiment, the nature of ideology, and the relationship between ideology and human experience.