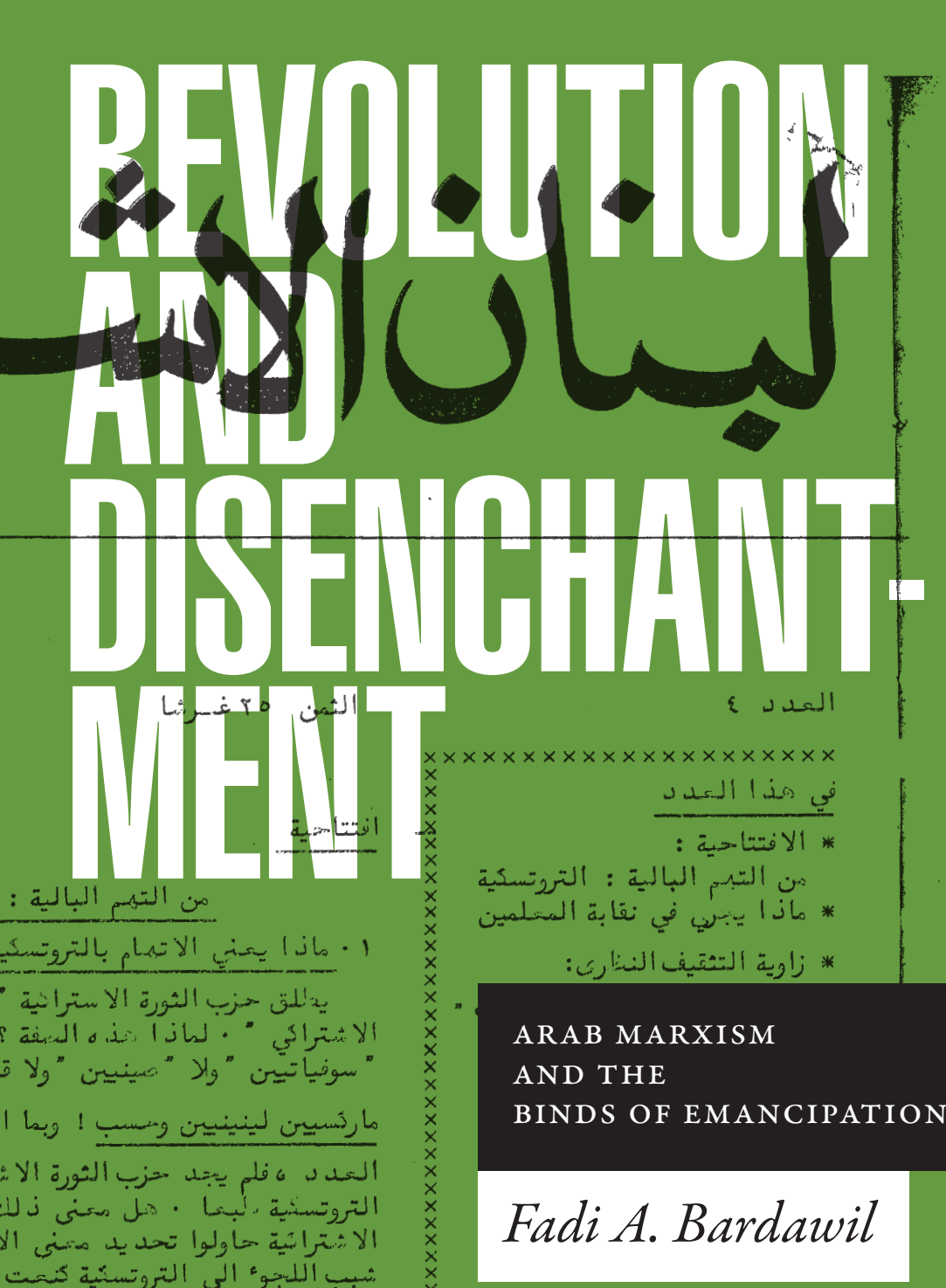
REVOLUTION AND DISENCHANTMENT



ARAB MARXISM AND THE BINDS OF EMANCIPATION

Fadi A. Bardawil

REVOLUTION AND DISENCHANT-MENT

Theory in Forms

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To Abdo and Gisèle Bardawil
and
Zouheir Aniss Rahhal

العدد ٤ الثمن ٢٥ غرشا

في هذا العدد

افتتاحية

من التهم البالية

١ . ماذا يعني الاتهام بالتروتس

يطلق حزب الثورة الاستراكية
الاشتراكي" . لماذا هذه الصفة
"سوفياتيين" ولا "صينيين" ولا

ماركسيين لينينيين وحسب ! وبما

العدد ، فلم يجد حزب الثورة الا
التروتسكية طبعا . هل معنى ذا
الاشتراكية حاولوا تحديد معنى
شبب اللجوء الى التروتسكية كنعت
التحديد . في الخلاف الصيني
تهمة التروتسكية دونما اى احراج

وهو بالنسبة لحزب الثورة الاشتراكية ، المارق الذى لا نقاش معه ولا عمل مع

الالتفاء بعملات متخفية عن طريق تبادل النشرات ! اذن ، لا مبرر لمحاولة
الاختلاف والاتفاق وتحديدها . وبذلك تتقوقع الحركة الماركسية العمالية
الحجاف التي ولدت الانعزال التنظيمي والهزال النظرى والتي ادت الى
يد الاحزاب الشيوعية .

ولكن اذا كان فريق من الرفاق الماركسيين يرفض التهم ، فهل يكفي
برفض مماثل ؟ حتما لا . اذ ان السكوت او الاحتجاج (بحجة المساير) "بكو
تبقي الموضوع في الاطار الذي يطرح فيه . وهذا الاطار هو الذي ولد برا
الماركسي يشكو منه حتى الان . لذلك سيكون جوابنا محاولة تحديد موقف لا

٢ . ما هي التروتسكية ؟

المقصود من طرح السؤال بهذا الشكل هو البرهان على ان التروت
الى القيام بعمل قادر على استيعاب الواقع اللبناني والعربي . بذلك يتضح
لتجربة هي من تجارب العمل الماركسي — بعيوبها ونقائصها — لاعن القاء

وهذا هو الموقف الوحيد الجدير بماركسيين يثقون بالتحليل العلمي . والجو

Contents

A Note on Transliteration and Translation

I use the common transliteration of Arabic names when used by authors in their non-Arabic works, most of which rely on a simplified French transliteration system. For example, I use Waddah Charara and Fawwaz Traboulsi instead of Waḍḍāḥ Sharāra and Fawwāz Ṭrābulsī. I adopt the same convention for cities—for example, Beirut instead of Bayrūt. I otherwise follow a simplified transliteration system based on the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*). All diacritical marks, except for the ʻayn (ʻ) and hamza (ʼ), are omitted. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

Prologue

Je voudrais sans la nommer vous parler d'elle.
—GEORGES MOUSTAKI

At a fundamental level, I am preoccupied in *Revolution and Disenchantment* with the question of theory and practice. More precisely, I explore the seductions, authority, and pragmatics of theory in revolutionary political organizations and academic settings. My modes of investigation are therefore historical and ethnographic, in contrast to a philosophical one that offers, say, an a priori account of how theory ought to relate, or not, to practice. I pursue these questions by tacking back and forth between the long overlooked archive of the 1960s Lebanese New Left and the critical theories produced in the Euro-American academy.[1] In particular I examine the beginnings, high tides, and vicissitudes of Lubnan Ishtiraki (Socialist Lebanon, 1964–70), a small Marxist organization, composed for the most part of militant intellectuals. In this work, I do not reconstruct a comprehensive history of the Lebanese Left, its political fortunes, and the multiple theoretical streams that nourished it, and the ones it produced. Rather, I revisit a minority Marxist tradition, which produced conceptually sophisticated diagnostic works, and a revolutionary movement that splintered. In taking the Marxist tradition as my major site of investigation, the question of theory and practice is thought concomitantly with the dialectic of revolutionary hope and political disenchantment.

I do not revisit the theoretical works and political trajectories of an older generation of militants because I think they provide answers to a present characterized by both a heightened state of communal and nationalist fragmentation and an increased interconnectedness fostered by the accelerated circulation of capital, people, and technologies. Having said that, more than a handful of the questions this generation of militant intellectuals confronted have regained intellectual and political relevance in the wake of the Arab revolutions and the global anticapitalist mobilizations: Who is the revolutionary

subject? What are the different forms a political organization can take, and when does an agency of emancipation turn into one of power that stifles the people's initiatives in their own name? What are the privileged sites of political practice, and its multiple scales? Do militant intellectuals translate *texts* to educate the masses? Or translate themselves to working-class neighborhoods and jobs to learn from the masses (*établissement*)? How does one mobilize across difference?[2] If power is primarily conceptualized as exploitation, how are other forms of power conceptually apprehended and politically articulated with a class-based politics? More specifically, what is the political status of forms of communal solidarity in a revolutionary project? What forms of class-based national politics are possible when the political is not autonomous from the social—sectarian, regional, and kinship divisions—and when these multiple communal constituencies share the state's sovereignty? These questions about theory and practice that seek to elucidate the subject and agent of revolution, as well as the modalities, scales, forms, and telos of political practice, are confronted by militants in their daily practice. In the Marxist tradition, which holds theoretical analysis in the highest regard, these questions are tethered to the generative labors of translation and interpretation that produce its universality in practice, through the global circulation of texts—think Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara. In *Revolution and Disenchantment*, I weave the story of revolutionary hope and disenchantment with the answers the Lebanese New Left articulated in practice to three fundamental issues that generations of Marxists worldwide confronted and were divided by: the question of intellectuals, as the vectors (or not) of revolutionary theory; the debate around the organization, as the mediator (or not) between theory and practice; and last but not least the anxiety generated by nonemancipatory—non-class-based solidarities—attachments, such as national and communal ones, as impediments (or not) to revolutionary practice.

The problem-space of beginnings is radically different from the one of completion. Much has happened in the world since I began feeling my way around some of the material that ended up in this book. This project initially took shape in the US in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks, characterized by the imperial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the polarization it effected among Arab intellectuals. This period witnessed the increasing public visibility of intellectuals critical of Arab culture and society grouped under the catch-all banner of "Arab liberals," a substantial number of whom previously belonged to leftist political parties. At the time, it did not seem that there was

any possibility to break free from the political deadlock that presented itself as the impossible choice between "national sovereignty" under tyrants hiding behind a thin veneer of anti-imperialist rhetoric and a potential "democracy" to come brought about by foreign sanctions and occupations epitomized by the invasion of Iraq. In this conjuncture *theoretical* anti-imperialism, as practiced in the US academy, resonated loudly, and affectively, as an ersatz political anti-imperialism. As the tanks rolled in, the least one could do is put on a postcolonial armor to debunk the claims of intellectuals deriding Arab culture for its atavisms or calling for the "liberation" of Muslims, particularly Muslim women, from the yoke of religious fundamentalists as rigged faulty knowledges in cahoots with imperial ideologies.

The project was first articulated as an attempt to understand the shifts in political ideologies from Marxism to liberalism in the Arab world. At the time, the opposition to the Iraq War and the US plans in and for the region in its aftermath came hand in hand with a critical attitude toward universals, such as liberal democracy and human rights, as vectors of imperial violence cloaked in ideologies of liberation. In brief, the polarized present justified the interest in, and the will to critique of, liberalism. The first part of the question—Marxism—however, was a different story altogether. It was nourished by older subterranean political-affective veins, which were carved out in the early 1990s, as I was coming of age, in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil and regional civil wars (1975–90), the cradle of my generation's political consciousness. The 1960s and 1970s Left, with its militants, thinkers, novelists, playwrights, poets, and musicians, became then a site of deep political-affective investment. For one, that tradition was generative of theoretical-aesthetic-political explorations far more seductive and engrossing than the intellectually tenuous, politically provincial, and aesthetically kitschy productions of the nationalist and sectarian (Christian/Muslim) forces. For those of us escaping the provinces of families, regions, and sectarian communities and meeting in Beirut, for the most part in university halls, a few years after the fighting stopped, the Left was also a name for a project that held the promise of a political community much wider, and more inclusive, than the stifling compounds of, predominantly but not exclusively, sectarian communities. The Left, it is needless to assert, also held the promise of a more socially just world. The conceptual resources of the tradition also enabled the beginnings of a critical apprehension of the postwar economic policies and privatized reconstruction projects in the mid-1990s that were opposed by a number of former leftist militants. Last but not least, the 1960s Left was on the right side of history. It supported, and allied itself, with the Palestinian revolution, against the predominantly Christian Lebanese

nationalist forces, who during the wars (1975–90) were backed by Israel. For all these reasons and more, it seemed like the 1960s generation was the last great revolutionary, and intellectual, generation. The fact that this generation failed to achieve its revolutionary goals did not dampen the melancholic tones of this attachment. Melancholy, though, should not to be confused with assent. The attachment did not preclude an intergenerational, critical at times, dialogue. This was a melancholy for a time that precedes my birth in the first years of the civil wars and my generation's formative experiences. At least then there was a possibility of emancipatory political practice that escapes the times of repetition of inter- and intracommunal fighting. History, at that point in time, could have been made. It was a youth that was traversed, in part, in the future anterior tense, sustained by endless streams of revolutionary song, some texts, and a dearth of political experience.

So when I began the project theoretical anti-imperialism and political anti-imperialism came hand in hand. The first, particularly in the form of the theoretical epistemology critique of the universalist or essentializing discursive assumptions of Arab intellectuals and militants, or both, was in tension with the political-affective attachment to the Left tradition as a project of total emancipation. I did not release the tension in one direction or another. Bit by bit, and after meeting some of these disenchanted Marxists and talking with them at length about their political lives and conceptual works, I grew increasingly skeptical about the suitability of epistemology critique to capture the stakes that animated their projects, and the multiple articulations of theory and practice I was unearthing as I lingered over and reconstructed aspects of this generation's spaces of experience and horizons of expectation.[3] In part this was a well-known story of ethnographic humility, which consisted of testing the limits in practice of certified theoretical contraptions to immediately capture an entire world upon landing there. That said, the narrative of ethnographic humility was entangled in a more personal (dare I say postcolonial?) two-step move. The first step consists of confusing the latest metropolitan theoretical moves with the most sophisticated ones that are assumed to have a universal validity. In practice, this reproduction of the colonial divide takes the form of assuming that "abstract theory" is produced in the metropoles and "concrete facts" are found in the Global South. It also takes the form of pinpointing the lack of conceptual sophistication, or the old-fashioned nature, of theorists in the peripheries. To say this is to underscore both that the West was taken to be the land of theoretical opportunities and that a certain idea of what constitutes "theory" was assumed to be the most prized form of thinking. The seductions of academic metropolitan theory are also compounded by a spotty knowledge

of the works of previous generations and a dearth of critical engagement with it in the present (step two). This is too large an issue to be broached here, but suffice it to say that generational transmission, which is in part related to postcolonial state and educational institutions, is a very difficult and fraught question that leaves its marks on works and lives: Where do you begin from and how?

While I grew increasingly skeptical of theoretical anti-imperialism as the primary conceptual lens to approach the archive of modernist and contemporary Arab thought, I was still attached to political anti-imperialism as the prime contradiction that ought to dictate political alignments. Then the Arab revolutions happened (2011–). The event broke the political paralysis resulting from the deadlock of having to choose between authoritarian nationalists and imperial democrats. The long eclipsed subject and agent of emancipation—the people—occupied center stage again. The revolutions were a seismic pan-Arab event. They displaced the West from the heart of modern Arab mass politics in rearticulating popular sovereignty outside the orbit of imperial decolonization. Unlike the twentieth-century mass movements, the revolutions that mobilized millions of citizens against their own regimes were not propelled by anti-imperialist engines. This does not mean that anti-imperialist concerns were completely absent but that they were not the main drive of the revolutions. Earlier mass political movements in the region carried successively the banner of decolonization from political domination (independence movements), political and economic dependence (radical national liberation movements and the Left), and Western cultural alienation (Islamists). The Arab Left thought the questions of external economic independence and internal class contradictions together, but for the most part these twentieth-century movements articulated multiple visions of political, economic, and cultural sovereignty from imperial orbits. The first wave of revolutions (2011–) ushered in a new structure of feeling, which, in my case at least, put to rest the melancholic attachment to the 1960s generation as the marker of the last great leap into emancipation.

Looked at from the perspective of the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, we seem to be entering into "post-postcolonial" times that are beginning the process of decentering the West in practice after it has been subjected to multiple iterations of theoretical decenterings in the past.[4] This is not only because of the practice of the revolutionaries but also because of the recent geopolitical conjuncture, which dislodged the post–Cold War arrangement during which the West, and particularly the US, was the supreme intervening military power. Arab, regional, and non-Western international powers are increasingly and unabashedly involved in the region. Two caveats. First, unlike its decenter-

ing in theory, which is staged as a liberatory act of decolonization, its decentering in practice certainly did not usher in an era of progressive politics. A quick glance at the Russian, Iranian, Turkish, and Israeli involvements in Syria, in addition to Western ones, and the destruction they brought on are enough to put an end to the automatic association of the decentering of the West with a horizon of justice. Having said that, this is certainly not a cause for imperial nostalgia and to begin lamenting "the decline of Western civilization." The legacies of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the never-ending "War on Terror" are still unfolding in our political present, not to mention the continuing US support of the Israeli colonization of Palestinian lands. Moreover, the multipolar interventions today are in part the consequences of the recent US interventions in the region. This decentering is a crucial fact to be reckoned with, without celebration or lamentation, and it's not an easy thing to do since clear-cut binary antagonisms and the logic of the "main contradiction" are hard to dislodge from political alignments.

The limits on anti-imperialism, as the main contradiction, animating both theory and politics is clearly revealed in the growing chasm separating oppositional, diasporic or not, intellectuals in the metropoles and critical thinkers, artists, and revolutionaries at home and those of them who recently found sanctuary in the metropoles. The political alliance between metropolitan oppositional culture and revolutionary forces at home that Edward Said wrote so eloquently about, and that he embodied in his own practice, today seems like a relic from a bygone age.[5] Critical strategies that rely exclusively on speaking back to the West through marshaling a set of binaries—West/non-West; homogenization/difference; universal/particular; secular/nonsecular; westernized elite/nonwesternized masses; liberal Muslim/nonliberal Muslim—that retain the West at the heart of their deepest attachments have become increasingly problematic in the wake of the Arab revolutions. They cannot account for political practice outside of its relation, and opposition, to imperial orbits, obliterating the revolutionaries' attempts to make their own history, and reinscribing in the process the West as the main subject and agent of history.[6] These critical theories also fail to critically account for the multiple societal divisions that result from the entanglement of the political in the webs of the social fabric and for the interventions of non-Western powers. In other words, forms of revolutionary practice, the logics of communal solidarities (sectarian, ethnic, regional, kin), and interventions by non-Western powers whose coordinates cannot be plotted on the axis of the West remain invisible in theory. At most, these critical strategies point out, and rightly so, that communal solidarities are the offspring of modernity—imperialism, capitalism, the nation-state. Non-Western interventions in the region can be condemned

politically and morally, but these critical theories do not have the resources to apprehend them conceptually.

Lest you think that there is an "Arab exceptionalism" lurking in the situation I am describing, I will bring this preface to a close by undertaking a historical and regional translation. More than a decade ago, Rey Chow interrogated the self-referentiality of the knowledge produced by area studies that, by focusing on "targeting or getting the other," ends up consolidating "the omnipotence and omnipresence of the sovereign 'self'/'eye'—the 'I'—that is the United States."[7] Chow, who herself grew up among survivors of Japan's invasion of China between 1937 and 1945, remembers how, as a child, she was used to hearing more about the wartime atrocities committed by the Japanese against the Chinese than she did about the US violence against Japan. The arrival of the Americans, she recalls, was considered "a moment of 'liberation'" (Chow, *Age of the World Target*, hereafter *AWT*, 25–26). These childhood oral narratives will persist in her mind as a "kind of emotional dissonance, a sense of something out-of-joint" (*AWT*, 26). "It is as if the sheer magnitude of destruction unleashed by the bombs," Chow writes, "demolished not only entire populations but also the memories and histories of tragedies that had led up to the apocalyptic moment, the memories and histories of those who had been brutalized, kidnapped, raped, and slaughtered in the same war by other forces" (*AWT*, 26). The erasure and silencing of these multiple, non-US-centric experiences results, she notes by drawing on Harry Harootunian's work, in the haunting of area studies by the "problem of the vanishing object." In brief, the events, "whose historicity does not fall into the epistemically closed orbit of the atomic bomber—such as the Chinese reactions to the war from a primarily anti-Japanese point of view," Chow asserts, "will never receive the attention that is due to them" (*AWT*, 41). Chow's reminiscences, particularly the out-of-jointness between one's violent experiences, and emotions, and what metropolitan disciplines and critical theories take as their object of study and critique, resonates deeply with the generation of disenchanted revolutionaries whose story this book recounts. Self-referentiality may render these metropolitan works provincial, but that does not subtract from their authority, which is not necessarily an epistemological effect—say, of their theoretical superiority—but a consequence of their institutional location. Metropolitan scholars, diasporic or not, have the luxury to, and selectively do, ignore works by Arab thinkers and militants at home in a way that the latter cannot afford to do.

You may, at this point, detect a tension in my argument between the case I am making for the necessity of taking stock of the decentering West in practice—by revolutionaries and non-Western interventions—and my reinscription of the

hegemony of its knowledges and educational institutions. I don't think there is a tension here. Again, we are living in times when English is still the strongest global language, in a time when the educational institutions of the West, particularly those of the US, are still hegemonic and opening offshore outlets in different parts of the world; *and yet* the multiple political, economic, and military developments, particularly in the Arab world today, steer us toward not collapsing critique exclusively with opposition to the West. In this conjuncture, what are the analytical, political, and ethical costs of insisting that critical theory equals a critique of the West and its discourses? If "Europe is no longer the center of gravity of the world," then how does this "fundamental experience of our era" impact the modalities of operation of critical practices and the political compass that guides metropolitan oppositional alignments?[8]

INTRODUCTION

Yet the shadows that cling to Marxism
cannot be dispelled solely by desk lamps.
—RUSSELL JACOBY

We know, of course, that anthropologists, like other academics,
learn not merely to use a scholarly language, but to fear it,
to admire it, to be captivated by it.
—TALAL ASAD

Revolution and Disenchantment is preoccupied with an earlier episode of Arab political hope and despair. It takes a step back to the 1960s to excavate for our present the lost archive of the Lebanese New Left. It is at once a history of the rise of the New Left and its subsequent ebbing away, as well as an anthropological inquiry into the production, circulation, and uses of revolutionary and critical theory. In doing so, I am less motivated by an encyclopedic drive of inquiry that seeks to fill a gap in the literature by examining an archive that has not yet been explored—although that is also important in itself. Rather, I ask, how does the reconstruction of revolutionary lives and the excavation of an overlooked theoretical tradition shed light on the *metropolitan unconscious* of our critical—anthropology, critical theory, and Middle East studies—traditions?

Unlike the much older Arab communist parties—the Lebanese CP was founded in 1924—that revolved in the Soviet orbit, the New Left emerged out of the ideological and militant constellations of Arab nationalisms. The New Left militants were the generation of the Palestinian revolution that came to embody revolutionary hopes in a future of sovereignty and social justice after the swift military defeat of the Arab regimes against Israel in June 1967. I focus primarily on the trajectory and theoretical writings of Waddah Charara (1942–), a prominent Lebanese transdisciplinary thinker whose major works bridge the social sciences and history, in addition to multiple forays into the Arab-Islamic *turath* (traditions) and translations of theory and poetry. Charara

cofounded Socialist Lebanon (1964–70) with a handful of comrades.[1] I also close in on segments of the political and critical paths of Fawwaz Traboulsi (1941–) and Ahmad Beydoun (1942–). Traboulsi was cofounder of the organization and alongside Charara was one of its main dynamos before becoming a prolific historian, sociologist, and translator, and a major public face of the political and intellectual Left in Lebanon. Beydoun, who joined the group about a year and half later, would go on to become a distinguished historiographer and cultural critic, who also wrote poetry and the script of *Beirut, the Encounter* (1981), one of the cult movies of the Lebanese civil and regional wars (1975–90). In brief, the underground Marxist organization was a hub of militant intellectuals who much later, in the wake of successive waves of political disenchantment, became prominent intellectuals.

In 1970 Socialist Lebanon merged with the Organization of Lebanese Socialists, the radicalized Lebanese branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which severed its ties with President Gamal Abdel Nasser after the 1967 defeat, to found the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL). Charara, who was instrumental in the fusion between both organizations, subsequently led a substantial internal opposition movement along Maoist lines that was expelled from OCAL in 1973. At the beginning of the Lebanese civil and regional wars Charara's shock in the face of the sectarian—Christian/Muslim—forms that wartime practices of fighting, killing, pillaging, and destroying took led him very early on to put an end to nearly two decades of political militancy and exit from the Marxist tradition of thought. The sectarian divisions of the masses during the war revealed the difficulty of practicing a class-based politics of emancipation. Political practice could not be extricated from the webs of the social fabric. Communal solidarity eclipsed class interest. In the wake of disenchantment, Charara turned to a minute sociological investigation of the modalities of operation of communal—sectarian, regional, kin—power. Charara was probably the first of his cohort of militant intellectuals to take his distance from, and become critical of, leftist politics and ideologies, which, even if they did not themselves arise on sectarian grounds, did not manage to break free from the dominant communal polarizations dividing Lebanese society.

In excavating first Socialist Lebanon's forgotten archive from the 1960s and then focusing on Charara's theoretical texts in the wake of disenchantment, I unearth a minoritarian tradition of immanent critical Arab thought that diagnosed the logics and practices of power and examine the vicissitudes of a revolutionary project that sought to articulate an autonomous leftist practice. This diagnostic tradition, as I will develop throughout the book, steers away

from the dominant topoi of contemporary Arab thought. Its diagnostic immanent edge, which focused first on the practices of anticolonial regimes and Left political parties before examining communal logics of subjugation, did not get caught up on the ideological battleground of authenticity. It moved away from the comparison of "Arab" and "Islamic" values with "Western" ones, ushering a critique of the latter from the standpoint of the former, or translating one set into the other. When the promise of revolutionary emancipation was eclipsed, the critique of communal solidarities did not revert either to a Marxist historicism or a liberal critique of the social fabric and culture from the standpoint of a detached, context-less abstract reason. These political communal solidarities were not "traditional," "pre-capitalist remainders," Charara argued very early on in the mid-1970s, but modern products. They are partially the result of the logics of formal subsumption at work in Lebanese capitalism and the divisions of the Lebanese nation-state. Charara and Beydoun retained from their Marxist past a reflexive stance, which thinks the conditions of possibility of a critical work's own conceptual building blocks, and the critic's positionality, as it is thinking its object. It is this attachment to reflexive critique, in the wake of their realization that class is no longer the universal engine propelling political practice, that led them to formulate an immanent sociological and historical critique of community that is not grounded in universal reason. This critique worked by detecting the cracks in the communities' own mythologizing discourses about themselves, highlighting in the process contingencies, heterogeneities, and divisions and the gaps separating discourses from practices. This patient diagnostic tracking of the layers of sedimented narratives and the vagaries of actual political practices can't be more different than blanket culturalist statements that critique Arab societies from "the mythical space" of Western normative liberal theory.[2] But why reopen today the archive of a generation that was formed during the high tides of Arab nationalism, founded the New Left, and adhered to the Palestinian revolution before ending up as detached, disenchanted critics of communal logics dwelling in the ruins of futures past? What is the purchase in and for the present of revisiting this story of a generation that moved from nation to class to community?

History, First. This generation, born for the most part on the eve of independence in Lebanon (1943) and Syria (1945), lived through, acted in, and thought about major political turning points. It was marked very early on by the Palestinian Nakba, or Catastrophe (1948), before being swept by the high tides of the Ba'th and Nasser's anticolonial nationalism in the 1950s. By the 1960s, they became Marxist critics of both anticolonial Arab nationalisms and pro-Western Arab governments. This generation of New Left militants

revolving outside the Soviet communist orbit and within a wider Third Worldist network of internationalist solidarity—the Chinese, Algerian, Cuban, and Vietnamese Revolutions—produced very early prescient Marxist critiques of imperialism, the national liberation regimes, and the Arab bourgeoisie. The Marxist ground that dialectically held these external (imperialism) and internal (regimes in power and the bourgeoisie) critiques together was premised on the presence of "the people," the revolutionary subject capable of embodying this program in its revolutionary practice. The ground began to crumble with the beginning of the Lebanese civil and regional wars (1975–90). A few years later, the Iranian Revolution (1979) constituted a seismic event, whose aftermath began to radically alter the Lebanese political landscape by adding a militant Islamist component to the sectarian divisions already at work. Meanwhile, the 1980s witnessed the ebbing away of the Lebanese Left and the Palestinian resistance a few years after the Israeli invasion (1982); increased violence of the neighboring authoritarian regimes, such as the Syrian Ba'th's Massacre in Hama (1982); devastating regional conflicts, such as the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88); and increased Islamist militancy (Hizbullah, 1985 to the present, and Hamas, 1987 to the present). After 1982, Israel, the postcolonial regimes, Islamist militancy, and sectarian confrontations all contributed to dashing the revolutionary hopes of those militants and thinkers who would come to be known as the 1960s Left generation.

This string of events resulted in the fragmentation of the members of this generation who were bound by their anti-imperialism, support of the Palestinian revolution, and a commitment to a horizon of social justice, in different political and ideological directions. Charara and Beydoun retreated from militancy into a life of writing, and some of the comrades converted into, or became fellow travelers of, Islamist anti-imperialism.[3] Others retreated to the fold of their own sectarian communities—Christian, Sunni, Shi'i, Druze—that they had initially broken away from when they joined Marxist political parties in the 1960s. Looked at from the perspective of their "Palestinian years"—from their early childhood memories of the Nakba (1948) to the invasion of Beirut (1982)—this generation lived through successive seismic transformations. Their story, one of a generation captivated by the dialectic of revolutionary exhilaration and political despair in an ideologically saturated world and in compressed political times, deserves to be told.

Theory, Second. These militant intellectuals inaugurated a sophisticated minoritarian tradition of revolutionary and critical Arab theory, characterized by "a transversality of knowledges," which defied the logics of professionalization, expertise, and disciplinarity.[4] They weaved their works by engaging authors

such as Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Mao Tse-Tung, Leon Trotsky, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Vo Nguyen Giap, Ibn Khaldun, Che Guevara, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Bourdieu, Cornelius Castoriadis, Michel Foucault, and Abdal-Rahman al-Jabarti, among others. Excavating this archive provides multiple "ex-centric" vantage points, located outside of hegemonic centers, their institutions, disciplines, and languages, which bypass the colonial divide assigning the Global South as locus of "concrete facts" and the North the manufacturer of "abstract theory."[5] In doing so, there is a gain in reflexivity generated by highlighting how the questions, stakes, modes of criticism, and practices of engagement of disenchanted Marxist intellectuals speak back to the ones practiced in critical anthropology, area studies, and postcolonial studies—what I earlier called the critical disciplines' metropolitan unconscious.

In fact, it is this metropolitan unconscious that is in part responsible for the neglect of the archive of Arab Marxism and the examination of the production and circulation of critical theory from what is now referred to in shorthand as the Global South. Except for the brief Third Worldist interlude of the 1960s, when militant intellectuals like Mao, Giap, and Guevara were read and commented on, Western Marxists did not, for the most part, seek out, translate, and converse with the tradition's non-Western theorists.[6] Moreover, Arab Marxists were either criticized or neglected by critics whose reading practices condemned them for what they dubbed their Orientalist, historicist, and modernist discursive assumptions. Their "epistemological complicity" with Empire turned them from revolutionaries to discursive compradors.[7] You know you're really out of luck when both Eurocentric Marxists and their postcolonial critics agree to ignore you. Moreover, the imbrication of scholarship on the Middle East in Western political agendas sidelined militants who were neither bound by the frontiers of the nation-state nor the boundaries of religious tradition and were therefore on the margins of nationalism and Islamism.[8] Last but not least, these militant intellectuals, who shared many of the same texts that later came to constitute the body of academic theory that social scientists drew on, appeared, at first sight, to be much closer to these disciplines' theoretical skin than, say, Salafi Muslims. Their low coefficient of "Otherness" pushes to the limit the question of who occupies the slot of anthropological understanding and is a subject of charitable interpretation and who is the object of critical condemnation.

This is why, in recovering this history, my aim is to bypass the treatment of modern and contemporary Arab intellectuals as falling into one of two camps: either imitators of the West, call them self-Orientalizing and westernized natives

if you want, or autochthonous—religious thinkers engaging in an immanent critique of their societies.[9] I hope I have managed to convey that what I am engaged in is far from a study of the unilinear reception by Arab thinkers of Western revolutionary and critical theorists, which at times announces itself with sensationalist titles à la *Reading Althusser in Ras Beirut,* anticipating the metropolitan dazzlement at the wonderful conjunction of reading a "universal" text in a "particular" location. Reception presumes a priori an origin and a destination, an authentic and a copy, while I am making a case for the primacy of multidirectional streams of translation.[10]

Having said that, Arab thought and literature have, in the past hundred years, also been produced from the Global North, a fact exacerbated by the massive displacements of people in the wake of the Arab revolutions. Successive waves of migration resulting from economic hardship, colonialism, relentless imperial interventions, authoritarian regimes, and civil wars resulted in the dispersion of Arab thinkers; just think of the Palestinians, who became a stateless diaspora after the first wave of eviction from their homeland that took place with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Arab thinkers and militants could be at home, in the diaspora, in exile, refugees, or shuttling back forth between their homes and a more secure location depending on political circumstances.

This dispersion is also linguistic: in addition to Arabic, they mostly also write in English or French or in more than one of these languages. While *Revolution and Disenchantment* focuses primarily on the travels, trajectories, and works of militant intellectuals who founded Socialist Lebanon, it does so by engaging their labors in the same analytic frameworks as Arab thinkers in the metropoles. It aims to incorporate into the spaces of contemporary Arab thought those distinguished exilic contributors, such as Edward Said, who rubbed shoulders with these thinkers in the same pro-Palestinian political and intellectual spaces, but are not included in the pantheon of contemporary Arab thinkers.[11] Without folding these intellectuals into the same tradition, scholarship will fail to address the shifting conditions of production of Arab thought, and it will reproduce the colonial divide. Arab thinkers at home will continue to be objects of study, while those in the diaspora will be addressed as colleagues to be engaged or as theorists whose work is used to frame the works and lives of others. This act of folding acquires an added significance in the wake of the Arab revolutions (2011–), which led to an increase in the global dispersion of Arabs from São Paolo to Istanbul. Former revolutionaries and militant intellectuals are today visiting researchers, professors, scholars at risk, and graduate students around the world.

To put it briefly, the book makes an argument for considering Edward Said not only as a cosmopolitan and postcolonial theorist but also as an Arab intellectual among others intimately impacted by, and engaged with, the unfolding of political events in the region—and for understanding the disenchanted Marxists at home, not as "local, autochthonous" intellectuals but as theorists at the crossroads of transnational streams of discourses. Of course, the mere fact that Edward Said is absent from compendia of contemporary Arab thought, or that his work is marshaled as the theoretical paradigm that frames the work of others, is symptomatic of the metropolitan unconscious of area studies disciplines. Otherwise, I wouldn't have to make a case to include Edward Said in the same analytical frame as Fawwaz Traboulsi, Waddah Charara, Sadik al-Azm, Ahmad Beydoun, and Mahdi 'Amil. In other words, I seek in this work to hold the tension between the interconnectedness of our world and the structural imbalance of power that makes some intellectual theorists to be engaged and others autochthonous intellectuals to be studied, or native informants to be used. I seek to avoid both highlighting an interconnectedness, which does not take power into account, and an erasure of interconnectedness, which is itself a symptom of power.

Political Present, Third. Last but not least, unearthing this archive in, and for, our political present is a timely affair. I certainly do not intend to collapse the distance separating the past of the New Left militants from our present. The political conjuncture they inhabited and acted in, and the answers they articulated exclusively in a Marxian idiom before abandoning it, is not exactly ours today. I am also not attracted to retrospectively judging whether they were right or wrong in their analysis and political wagers. To recover the theoretical labors and visions of emancipation of a previous generation of militants and thinkers is not only an antidote to public amnesia but an exercise that clarifies the distinct contours of our present and an invitation to an intergenerational conversation around the possibilities and binds of emancipation.

In addition to revisiting the theoretical-political questions they were preoccupied with, and which have become salient today in the wake of the Arab popular uprisings (2011) and the recent global anticapitalist mobilizations that I mentioned in the prologue, I am also driven to revisit their dual legacy: revolutionary exhilaration and political despair. Hope and disenchantment; revolutions and murderous regimes, foreign interventions and civil wars; and citizens and communal subjects are all constitutive of our very recent past and our present. It is in this sense that we are inheritors of the dual legacy of hope and despair of the 1960s Left. To do so, I carve a path between a corrosive Left melancholy that disparages an uncertain and increasingly precarious present while

drinking to stories of the 1960s, the golden age of internationalist solidarity, on the one hand, and a liberal and Islamist triumphalism that banishes this past's relevance to our present by dismissing this Marxist generation's critical labors and practice because of the collapse and disintegration of socialist regimes or their cultural alienation from their society, on the other.[12]

Fieldwork in Theory

In examining the transnational travels and translations of critical theory in different spaces such as political party cells and academic settings, as well as its uses and appropriations in political projects, the book engages in what I call "fieldwork in theory." It looks into the different social lives of theory. I ask not only how theory helps us understand the world but also what kind of work it does in it: how it seduces intellectuals, contributes to the cultivation of their ethos and sensibilities, and authorizes political practices for militants. Anthropology has produced a rich reflexive tradition that, by turning the discipline's critical gaze inward, has interrogated the epistemological assumptions undergirding its concepts and its practices of representation.[13] The book shifts the focus away from the critique of the discursive assumptions of theoretical discourses to the ethnography of their production, circulation, and political effects in nonacademic settings.[14] As the frames of inquiry become the objects of ethnographic investigation, the anthropological frontiers between the worlds of slick, context-less, abstract, and frequent flying theories and the concrete stickiness of ethnographic empirical worlds become increasingly muddied.[15]

Fluency in theory was, and remains, a prized good in anthropology despite recent observations that the discipline has taken an empiricist turn.[16] For one, dabbling in abstractness makes for a more fluid circulation and a wider readership, as any editor would tell you. In anthropology, it also provides a common lingua franca that rises above the particularities of the discipline's geographic subdivisions, joining its practitioners together in a more encompassing disciplinary space of arguments. For instance, in the mid-1970s, Middle East anthropology was considered a marginal subfield that had by and large failed to both attract an audience beyond area specialists and contribute to disciplinary theoretical debates.[17] By the late 1980s Middle East anthropology managed to escape its parochialism. It was home to two influential theorists—Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu—as well as some key figures of "reflexive anthropology" (Vincent Crapanzano, Paul Rabinow, and Kevin Dwyer).[18]

At least since Geertz recast doing fieldwork as an act of interpretation, strict separation between observation and "data collection," on the one hand, and

interpretation and theoretical reflection, on the other, became harder to maintain.[19] This separation was roughly mapped on a temporal and spatial structure. First, the anthropologist travels somewhere to do fieldwork. This is the moment of participant observation, the ethnographer's gaze, and experiences, supposedly to be recorded in field notes and diaries—a moment of discovery and self-discovery. And then there is the second moment, a consequence of the anthropologist's privilege of departure, for metropolitan anthropologists, who for the most part do not permanently reside in the societies they study.[20] This is the time when the anthropologist comes back from the field and sifts through her notes, audio recordings, pictures, and archives to compose a text presenting the collected material.[21] This is when the "raw material" gets processed and made to *speak back* to theoretical concerns, when it gets fashioned into a recognizable text complying with the styles and academic conventions of the field. After years of mentorship, writing manuals and boot camps, procrastination and drafts of drafts, the initial ethnographic gaze is, at last, translated into a disciplinary trace.

Having said that, anthropological practice is still by and large structured around a distinction between the anthropologist's theory and the people's lives and intellectual traditions, which she studies during her fieldwork. This leads anthropologists to struggle with a few things, mainly the epistemological status of their accounts of people's lives, practices, and discourses, which are mediated by their own theoretical tools. Anthropologists are no longer authoritatively affirming, like Ernest Gellner did in his study of Muslim Moroccan Berbers, that "what appears to be *vox dei* is in reality *vox populi*."[22] The epistemic authority of the anthropologists' theoretical discourses remains, nonetheless, a vexed question. As Michael Jackson recently asked, "But why not place Sophocles' drama of Oedipus, Freud's model of the psyche, and Kalabari [Nigeria] and Tallensi [Ghana] myths on a par?," undoing therefore the distinction between art, theory, and myth.[23] Because thought, Jackson says, requires some distance from the empirical field while underscoring that distancing is not a "sign of superior intellectual skill," nor are the accounts produced as a result endowed "with a superior epistemological truth-value."[24] Philosophy, he adds, is a strategy to take our distance from the sensory and social worlds of experience, in contrast to ethnography, which is one for close and "intersubjective encounters."[25] In brief, we encounter again the distinction between the sticky materiality and intersubjectivity of the lived empirical world, and the slick, abstract, conceptual universe that hovers above it.

This distinction is also upheld by authors who do not argue for what is gained by the use of philosophy and theory but what is potentially lost. "People," João

Biehl and Peter Locke write, "are plural and ambiguous, irreducible to history and populations, norms and social forces."[26] In this case, theory, which is put to use to provide an account of a particular ethnographic encounter, risks, through its powers of subsumption, ironing out the complexities of the world. It also stifles "conceptual innovation" from the ethnographic ground up. Calls were also issued to return to ethnographic theory, as a response to a diagnosis of the discipline as descending into a parochialism as a result of its conceptual subservience to Continental philosophy coupled with a neglect of its own history, debates, and concepts, such as mana, taboo, and totemism.[27] In contrast to the discipline's past, when philosophers, social theorists, and psychoanalysts could not avoid wrestling with its ethnographic concepts, today anthropologists churn out studies that apply "the concept-of-the-month" in a game that no one outside the discipline cares about.[28]

These current debates about theory in anthropology are symptomatic of the discipline's anxiety regarding the political and epistemic authority of its discourses vis-à-vis the forms of life it inquires about (are its concepts superior to other traditions of intellectual inquiry?) and their intellectual authority vis-à-vis the big ideas produced by philosophy (are they subservient to Continental philosophy?). Anthropologists, and sociologists, have held philosophy in such awe that it has led them to oscillate between getting as close as possible to it and trying to dethrone it.[29] The French genealogy of the social sciences, which provides US academia with much of what it considers to be its theory, reveals—from Émile Durkheim to Pierre Bourdieu—different attempts to displace the authority of philosophy by arguing that the social sciences provide better, and more reflexive, answers to philosophical questions than the mother discipline herself.[30] These debates also bring out the question of anthropology's status today as a discipline that tries to be accountable to multiple constituencies, both internal and external to it, that are driven by different questions and attachments. It has to be wary of accusations of colonial violence, which can take the form of reifying difference, or of culturally appropriating a concept from its everyday uses in its form of life and "elevating it" to the status of theory, while simultaneously striving to be theoretically innovative and autonomous from the hegemony of ideas produced by philosophers. Can it manage to carve out a space for itself that does not fall back on the epistemological violence it was accused of in the past, when it generated its ethnographic concepts from below, without being epistemologically subservient to Continental theory?

The distinctions between the concreteness and messiness of the field and the abstractness and slickness of theory, as well as the one between the bottom-up

ethnographic theorizing and the top-down application of Continental theory, do not hold when one's "raw material" and "fieldwork experiences" include translations of, glosses on, and engagements with works and authors that form the canons of political and social theory. When one observes strands of one's own "theory" in the field—but not exclusively so, let me add—the presumed "innocence" of the supposed first moment of immersion, observation, and experience evaporates, since the frames through which one sees, classifies, and records are themselves, in this particular case, the objects of inquiry. The back and forth between the stickiness, concreteness, and senses-drenched materiality of the field and the slick world of abstract theory comes to a halt. In this case, the conceptual distance separating the tradition doing the inquiring and the one inquired about diminishes. For this is an internal traffic in theory. Yet the initial conservative pleasure of recognition, which overcomes the anthropologist as a result of her acquaintance with these theorists in the classroom (say, Marx, Gramsci, Bourdieu, Althusser), quickly recedes from view. It vanishes as the researcher encounters the multiple social and political lives of concepts, which are translated, transfigured, and embedded in emancipatory projects by members belonging to a different *generation* whose spaces of experiences and horizons of expectation were fashioned by different times and places. This is why doing fieldwork in theory, and tackling the question of theory from the South, cannot restrict itself to picking a few concepts, or authors away from their spaces of argument, to call into question some aspect of, or highlight an absence in, metropolitan critical theory.[31]

Fieldwork in theory moves away from the reification of discursive assumptions toward the labors of excavation of traditions of intellectual inquiry and the reconstitution of the theoretical, ideological, and political stakes at play in order to understand the numerous translations and modulations of critical theory.[32] Moreover, far too often revisiting the works of earlier critical thinkers focuses on assessing the purchase of their theories, either by making a case for the usefulness of their concepts for understanding the contemporary moment or by going in the opposite direction by seeking to denaturalize our present by underlining the difference separating their labors of conceptualization from ours. In both cases, their theories are what are mainly at stake in the excavation operation. In this work, I am also driven by a desire to recover something more than their concepts. I will pay attention to their critical ethos, their intellectual sensibilities, their sense of positionality, their ways of navigating the terrains of social accountability and intellectual autonomy and of theoretical production and political practice. In paying attention to these extra-epistemological issues, I avoid collapsing the inquiry into the social lives of theory, into a reified

conceptual analysis of Marxist, Islamic, or secular discourses. In doing so, we get a better sense of the political struggles and the stakes animating the spaces in which these theoretical works were produced, circulated, and appropriated. I am driven to do so by a desire not only to provide a more complex picture of the intellectual life and political struggles in the Arab world but also to curtail an instrumental appropriation of "Arab theory" and to forestall the reproduction in critical scholarly discourses—and disciplinary institutions—of ideological distinctions, such as between the secular and the religious.[33] In *Revolution and Disenchantment*, I intentionally *hold the tension* between narrative (historical and ethnographic) and theory without seeking to release it in one of the two directions.[34]

Time of History: Traveling Militants and Theories

This generation of intellectuals came into a world that had already been radically altered by capitalist modernity and forces of European hegemony.[35] They were the products of a modern schooling system in Lebanon, which at the time taught French, and English to a lesser extent, alongside Arabic.[36] Both Waddah Charara and Ahmad Beydoun moved between private and public Francophone schools in their youth. Fawwaz Traboulsi, on the other hand, attended a private Anglophone boarding high school. The choice of where to go for higher education was, as would be expected, determined by the second language one possessed. Beydoun and Charara received grants to study in France, while Traboulsi traveled to England and studied at the American University of Beirut.[37] Sadik Jalal al-Azm (1934–2016), the Syrian philosopher and fiery public intellectual, did his graduate work at Yale University after studying at the American University of Beirut. The Lebanese University, the only institution of public higher learning in Lebanon, was founded in 1951, a bit less than a decade after Lebanon's independence. After exiting from revolutionary political practice, Charara, Beydoun, and a handful of other comrades from Socialist Lebanon would teach at the public university, while Traboulsi would join the private Anglophone universities.[38]

This generation's travels to the metropoles to study their own societies, coming back to lead revolutionary lives before finding sanctuary in the university in the wake of political disenchantment, is a familiar postcolonial story. Yet Socialist Lebanon's militant intellectuals traveled in the opposite direction of some of the best known public intellectuals of their generation.[39] Sadik Jalal al-Azm and Edward Said were detached ivory tower academics who did their graduate work on Immanuel Kant and Joseph Conrad, respectively. Struck

by the 1967 blitzkrieg, they converted. They moved out of the university and into the world, inaugurating a life of public engagement that came to define their legacy. Socialist Lebanon's militants, on the other hand, had always found themselves swimming in political streams before an event—the Lebanese civil war, in the case of Charara and Beydoun—left them high and dry. They moved from the world and into the academy. The crisscrossing lives of these revolutionaries turned academics and academics turned public intellectuals intersected at the Palestinian juncture. The high tides of the Palestinian revolution during the late 1960s and early 1970s brought them together. They either joined the revolution or became its allies before going their separate political and theoretical ways at different points in the next decade.

It is difficult to conceive of the lives of this generation of leftist militant intellectuals without dwelling on their intimate relation to the practice of translation. During the days of militancy, one translated for purposes of political education, as a strategy to give Marxist political arguments a different gloss on a doctrinal point and to anchor a political line in a theoretical ground. Later on, one translated a text to make it available for students in a seminar, and, of course, translation is always one way to earn some income.[40] These translations, especially those associated with the Marxist tradition, were not translated from their original languages (Marx: German; Lenin and Trotsky: Russian; Gramsci: Italian; Guevara: Spanish), but mostly from their French or English translations. At times an Arabic text was produced by simultaneously translating from English and French translations. In the particular case of a translation from a translation, which I will explore further in chapter 2, the metropole's languages, publishing houses, and publications, such as Éditions Maspero, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Les Temps Modernes*, *Historical Materialism*, and *New Left Review*, were pivotal institutional bridges that made, via metropolitan languages, the ideas and experiences of different militants and theorists from the South and the North accessible to each other.[41] I say one, because this globally interconnected world, which was fashioned by the practice and travels of militants as well as the intense circulation and translation of texts, did not always transit through metropolitan universities, periodicals, and publishers. It was also fostered by the art festivals, publications, and intellectual, political, and military institutions of the nonaligned and socialist worlds.

Besides their labors of linguistic translation, these militant intellectuals effected an additional act of translation. The knowledges these militants produced, relying on the transnational discourses of Marxism, Leninism, and Third Worldist radical thought, were not merely representations of their societies but rather interventions in them that were part and parcel of their revolutionary political

practice. They underscored the centrality of adapting Marxist concepts for the formulation of a communist politics attentive to the particularities of their political present, which went under the heading of the "Arabization of Marxism." These were acts of transfiguration that "refunction a text . . . for different demanding-sites," moving away from translation's problematic of meaning and its attendant questions.[42] These acts of linguistic translations from translations and conceptual transfigurations were fueled more by the impediment of revolutionary practice than by a fidelity to an original text. They were not mediations between a self and an other, an attempt to bridge supposed incommensurabilities between cultures, or an initiation of a dialogue between different intellectual traditions. Theirs was not an attempt that sought, as many critical and anthropological works do, to render what seems unfamiliar at first glance familiar or, going in the opposite direction, to denaturalize what we take for granted. They did not aim toward a rediscovery of one's own commitments in a different theoretical language or to reveal the contingency of one's own norms when refracted through a different prism. Rather, the practice of theorizing, which includes translation and transfiguration, was part and parcel of the arsenal of revolutionary politics, which was rendered possible by a deeply held belief in a shared horizon of an emancipation to come.

These practices, discourses, and institutions assumed and produced a global interconnectedness, a political universality of sorts premised on internationalist solidarity, the urgency of political practice, and multidirectional translation—North-South; South-South—that dodged the usual trap of *recognition* and consecration of authors from the colonies by the strong institutions of the metropole. "The structures of power the colonized writer confronts," Talal Asad wrote a while ago, "are institutional, not textual." "When someone pleads with the colonizer to make a judgment in a particular writer's favor, to have him or her translated and read 'seriously,' what is sought," Asad added, is "the modern world culture's transcendent power to redefine that writer's value as 'universal.'"[43] In the case Asad is describing, the metropole's institutions are the gatekeepers that grant an author access to "the universal," enabling the global circulation and multiple translations of the work—even though it is often a universal that always falls short of attaining true universality. Literary criticism in the Anglo-American academy, Rosalind Morris notes, "tends to attribute to the third world literary text an irreducible particularity." "The resistance here," she writes, "is not of or by the third world writer and/or her writings, let alone by the subaltern; it is the resistance of dominance to its possible displacement from the exclusive claim to universality."[44]

These militant intellectuals were fashioned by and contributed to fashioning a globally interconnected world that cannot be captured adequately by an ahistorical deployment of East/West or North/South binaries. Nor was its commonality synonymous with a homogeneity and an epistemological naïveté. Their theories cannot be reduced to a wholesale operation of the importation of Left varieties of modernization theory, even if some of them dabbled in them, and to self-Orientalizing discourses. To do so is to mistake multipolar acts of translation and transfiguration for a one-way colonial imports business. The figure of the internationalist militant intellectual/translator, not that of the westernized discursive comprador, is at the heart of the first part of this book—chapters 1 to 3.

In highlighting these points, I aim to underscore three different pathways to attain universality. The first is the a posteriori outcome of *political articulation*. It is sustained by an ethos of internationalist solidarity that, through traveling theories and militants, and multiple acts of translation/transfiguration, fashions a common world. True, this pathway was premised on positing class as the universal grammar of inequality, but its universality is socially mediated and needed to be activated through the practices of transfiguration and militancy.[45] The second pathway privileges context-less, supposedly a priori universal concepts, say, rights, reason, and freedom, which subsume, and are in no need of, the double movement of transfiguration and militancy.[46] The third—metropolitan institutional consecration—is an outcome of power.

Times of the Sociocultural: Civil Wars, Communal Solidarities, and Metropolitan Epistemology Critique

Difference at the time of Marxist militancy was not yet articulated on the ground of communal—sectarian, regional, familial—solidarities. It was a function of the particularity of the political present that through a diagnosis of the political forces, and attention to possibilities for practice, also steered the militants of Socialist Lebanon away from grounding difference in historicist evolutionary terms, which in communist politics took the form of stagism.[47] Militant Arab Marxism and anthropology articulated mirror images of difference. The first articulated difference in historical terms (historicist stagism, or the anticipation of a revolutionary future), while the second articulated difference in sociocultural terms.

The compressed years of the 1970s revealed clearly the differences between the slow temporalities of academic disciplines and the fast pace of political events. Around the time when metropolitan disciplines were taking stock

of events such as decolonization, the Vietnam War, and the increased racialization of Arabs in the wake of 1967, by interrogating the entanglements of their knowledges with colonial power, particularly by diasporic scholars (e.g., Talal Asad and Edward Said), there was a swift unraveling of a political world, through the sectarian violence of a civil war, that dislodged Marxist concepts—"revolutionary masses," "organic intellectuals," "revolutionary theory"—from the world they were supposed to capture and transform. To put it briefly, by the time these disciplines were slowly beginning the process of their own decolonization from ahistorical assumptions in the mid-1970s, Marxist militant intellectuals were beginning to cast away their revolutionary conceptual arsenal to examine the wartime communal logics. As diasporic intellectuals began their critical forays into the politics of theory, the shocked revolutionaries called into question their own previously cherished theory of politics. At a time when metropolitan disciplines dealing with the non-Western world were emerging from their prehistory, breaking away from the authoritative repetitions of Orientalist structures, the disenchanted Marxists, betrayed by history's promise of emancipation, were entering into a posthistorical world that was characterized by the repetitions of communal wars.

Those years not only witnessed disenchanted Marxists at home and metropolitan critical scholarship going in opposite critical directions (History →←Society/Culture).[48] What these divergent critical directions shared was, as I will develop in chapters 4, 5, and 6, a sidelining of ideological distinctions—Left and Right, progressives and reactionaries—as fundamental criteria of theoretical and political discernment. The autonomy of the ideological was called into question from two radically different corners: the discursive and the sociological. Thinkers in the metropoles, such as Edward Said, who were influenced by Michel Foucault's work, sidelined *theoretically* the ideological distinctions between right-wing authors and Marxists by showing how both groups, despite their ideological differences, partake in the same Orientalist discursive assumptions (chapter 6). While Charara, who was closely observing the unfolding of the fighting during the Lebanese civil and regional wars, noted that despite the ideological divisions separating the fighters on opposite sides of the trenches (Left and Right), the more fundamental divide, which dictated common modalities of practice for both sides, was communal—primarily sectarian, but regional and kin solidarities also played a role (chapter 5).

The Euro-American epistemological critique of Western knowledges of the non-West, which took off in the late 1970s and 1980s, inaugurated what would come to be known as postcolonial studies; it was also contemporaneous with a crisis of Marxism in Europe. Those same years witnessed the ebbing

of the vigorous debates that sought in different ways to think the question of the political—Mao, Gramsci, Althusser—away from economic reductionism. Critical works, sometimes undertaken by former Marxist militants such as Jean-François Lyotard, subjected master narratives, universals, and notions of totality to a corrosive theoretical skepticism.[49] While poststructuralist and postcolonial thinkers were theoretically calling into question the discursive assumptions shared by liberals and leftists for their violence and their exclusions, the disenchanted Lebanese Marxists were experiencing the political breakdown of the Lebanese state and of a common world of ideological distinctions. Theirs was a world fragmented into blocs governed by subfactions of fighting militias in Beirut or by the regimes that increasingly colonized every sphere of social life—political, educational, judicial—and subjugated them to the will of the sovereign. They did not necessarily have a theoretical longing for universals or the application of Western liberal models. Rather, they longed for a dignified life in *common* that escapes oscillating between a world fragmented by sectarian warlords and identitarian communal discourses, on the one hand, and one that is colonized by tyrants who subjugate their citizens for decades on end in the name of the coming battle against imperialism, on the other. The final chapter of the book traces the fork in critical and political agendas in the wake of the communal fragmentation of the militants' common world and the Iranian Revolution between those intellectuals who not so long ago worked side by side in support of the Palestinian revolution.

On Method

Edward Said critically addressed the intelligentsia in the postcolonies, noting that one of the indications of cultural domination resided in its auxiliary status to Western trends.[50] "Impressive evidence for this," he wrote, "is found in the social sciences and, surprisingly enough, among radical intellectuals whose Marxism is taken wholesale from Marx's own homogenizing view of the Third World."[51] Whether gravitating in the Soviet or US orbits, the rigged concepts, which were at the heart of Arab intellectuals' thought and guiding their political practice, risked turning them from emancipators into unknowing dupes partaking in their own domination. Over time this mode of epistemological criticism has gained more and more traction in the scholarship on the Middle East and keeps on adding new objects to its critical mill. The critique of discursive assumptions, whose focal point was the interrogation of modernist, liberal, feminist, and Marxist assumptions about nation, gender, religion, and culture, has more recently extended its terrain to focus on new objects of

investigation: secular and LGBTQ discursive assumptions. The insurrectional acts these modes of reading enabled at first withered away as they became increasingly doxic procedures of a researcher's domain.[52]

Despite the fact that it has become normalized, and hegemonic in anthropology and Middle East studies, this reading practice never ran out of steam. In geopolitical conjunctures, characterized by US imperial interventions and invasions that were buttressed by ideologies of liberation, this defensive and oppositional practice of criticism constituted a much-needed corrective to the enlisting of discourses—such as feminism and liberalism—in military imperial ventures.[53] This critique of the entanglement of discourses, say, Orientalist or universalist, with imperial power did not lose its impetus, precisely because of the sense of political urgency generated by the geopolitical conjuncture that propelled it and bestowed upon this theoretical critique its anti-imperialist *lettres de noblesse*.[54] Moreover, for those of us who teach in the US, and who witness in our everyday lives institutional and personal racist acts of violence against Arabs and Muslims, these critical reading practices, which seek to disrupt the reproduction of racist tropes, at the very least in the classroom, acquire an added importance. "The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology, holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed," Said wrote regarding life in the West, and particularly in the US, "and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny."[55]

These critical reading practices are still much needed as pedagogical tools and *strategic* modalities of public intervention in the Euro-American domestic battles of representation. Having said that, they have become increasingly problematic as a hegemonic theoretical apparatus in the academic fields of knowledge production and in public interventions *about* the Arab world. In the wake of the initial insurrectionary works by Talal Asad and Edward Said, this mode of criticism morphed from a practice that teases out the different layers of mediation between knowledge and power into one of ideological adjudication. The nonintended effect of the Saidian rewiring of the Foucauldian genealogies that marked the power/knowledge couplet (colonial power/imperial knowledge) and imbricated it within a political anticolonial antagonism with a dominant subject (the West) and a dominated one (the Orient) is that it produced a form of discursive-ideology critique that unmasks the rigged discursive assumptions undergirding thinkers' thought to reveal a class of "westernized natives" who are discursively, and at times economically, allied with Empire. The "Oriental" subjects who are fashioned by "Orientalist" knowledges (ontology) put them to use (epistemology), like the colonialists and imperialists,

to undermine from the inside their own societies (politics). Perhaps the most memorable sentence that encapsulates the workings of this modality of criticism that collapsed ontology and politics into epistemology is contained in Leila Ahmed's powerful revisionist critique of the nineteenth-century Egyptian thinker Qasim Amin, who was often hailed as a feminist pioneer in the Arab world. After noting that Amin's work is the rearticulation "of the colonial thesis of the inferiority of the native and Muslim and the superiority of the European" in a "native upper-middle class voice, the voice of a class economically allied with colonizers," Ahmed quips that "far from being the father of Arab feminism, then, Amin might more aptly be described as the son of Cromer [the British proconsul general in Egypt from 1877 to 1907] and colonialism."[56]

Three decades after the insurrectionary critical contraption came into being to criticize the authority, and claims to neutrality and objectivity, of Western knowledges of the non-West, it was repurposed as an ersatz anti-imperialist implement wielded to condemn Arab thinkers and militants from the nineteenth century to our present for internalizing "colonial taxonomies" and being discursive compradors of sorts.[57] What disappeared with this repurposing is the crucial initial concern with the question of the authority of discourses, which Talal Asad was particularly preoccupied with. The question of authority cannot be separated from the loci of enunciation of these discourses' authors, their institutional sites of production, and their spheres of circulation, in addition to their discursive backbone.[58] Evacuating the question of authority risks collapsing the two meanings of representation—re-presentation as portrait (art, philosophy) and representation as proxy (speaking for, politics)—into each other.[59] The irony of the matter lies in the fact that the epistemology critique of Arab thinkers took off at the point of their political and military defeat, and at times imprisonment and assassination, by Israel, the authoritarian regimes, and the rising sectarian and religious political forces. Their words came to be criticized as their worlds began falling apart.

This modality of criticism remains "parasitic" on a particular idea of the West.[60] In an older Maoist jargon the West constitutes the main contradiction for these critics, which is why these critiques cannot account for the complexities and internal divisions of Arab and Muslim societies. Its main move, vis-à-vis those Arab thinkers whose discursive assumptions are dubbed to be in alliance with Empire, is a strategy of inversion that never surrenders its attachment to the West. By only taking up an oppositional stance toward the attempts of the West and "westernized natives" to refashion these forms of life, without dialectically relating these attempts to the internal historical dynamics and contradictions of these societies, this modality of criticism falls very

close to reinscribing the argument that the engine of historical transformation is external to these societies, but instead of welcoming it like twentieth-century modernization theory did, it now has to be resisted.

In fact, the archive of contemporary Arab thought is primarily examined, like the older generation of scholars did, through the anxiety of influence of the West. In the introduction to his magisterial *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Albert Hourani wrote about the pitfalls of focusing on individual thinkers in contrast to schools of thought.[61] In doing so, there is a risk, Hourani wrote, "of giving the impression that they were more important and original than they really were; most of them (although not quite all) were derivative thinkers of the second or third rank of importance."[62] Highlighting this tradition's reproduction of Orientalist and colonial taxonomies, and doubting the originality of secular Muslim thought, underscores, like Hourani, the derivative nature of this tradition. Again, the difference lies in inverting the normative charges associated with this common diagnosis. While Hourani focuses on these thinkers because they are vectors of modernization, the oppositional metropolitan critics underscore the epistemological and ontological violence at the heart of these intellectuals' visions that seeks to bring about Western hegemony. What gets foreclosed in the process is an engagement with modern and contemporary Arab and Muslim thought that does not reinscribe the West as its sovereign subject. Moreover, critiques of Arab and Muslim intellectuals as self-Orientalizing, unoriginal, and plagued by colonial taxonomies reproduce the historicism and theories of lack that are criticized in these thinkers' works by unwittingly reinscribing once more the Arab world as lagging behind, this time around in the production of original thought.

Therefore, if one is interested, like I am in this project, in understanding the travails of this generation of thinkers, the questions they posed, the answers they proposed, and the different positions they were arguing against or aligning themselves with, a practice of criticism premised on unmasking "faulty," or not, epistemological assumptions will not be of any help. What it will do is erase the historicity of these fields of argument and obscure the *character* of these specific interventions. It also forecloses the investigation of how theories, which are embedded in language games and political projects, help fashion the ethos of militant intellectuals and later of disenchanted solitary critics. For instance, in just focusing on universal—say, secular or liberal—discursive assumptions, and aligning them a priori with the US empire and human rights imperialism and epistemological violence, these critical strategies risk reifying these universals by erasing the logics of political practice, the powers of institutions, and the transfiguring acts of translation that repurpose these discourses

and embed them in different projects. It does so through eliding central historical and ethnographic questions. How are they put to use? By whom? In what conjuncture and to what end? How do their international travels change them and their adherents? What projects do they enable and foreclose as they are put to practice? While the unmasking of Eurocentric knowledges parading as universals proved to be salutary against the effortlessly thrown historicist charges of the "backwardness" of non-Western cultures, it also risks naturalizing the conceptual universal/particular distinction on a geographical West/East one.[63] This will again participate in either hailing difference as a form of resistance to the homogenizing power of the West or claiming it to be a traditional, or "pre-capitalist," remainder that needs to be overcome to safely reach the much awaited and always deferred shores of modernity.[64]

In investigating these questions, I will mainly draw sustenance from the methodology developed by the Ludwig Wittgenstein and John L. Austin–inspired work of Quentin Skinner and David Scott's notion of a problem-space. The central tenet of Skinner's method is captured in "Wittgenstein's remark 'that words are also deeds.'"[65] Skinner posited that in order to understand the *historical meaning* of the text, one has to view it as an intervention in argument and ask about the *character* of the intervention[66] through asking questions such as "What is this text doing? What is the author doing in this text?"[67] "How is it positioned in relation to existing arguments? What kind of an intervention does it constitute? What does it accept, reject, repudiate, satirize, ignore in existing discussions?"[68] The import of R. G. Collingwood's "logic of question and answer," put to use in Skinner's work, was its insight that it is helpful to approach any intentional object of the human mind (a building, a piece of music, a philosophical work) as a solution to certain problems, and hence the historian's task is "to find out the questions to which the text was the answer."[69]

David Scott elaborates the concept of a problem-space, mainly out of his reading of Collingwood and Skinner, "though in the background of it," he tells the late Stuart Hall, one can "discern the trace of Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin and Foucault."[70] In *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (2004), Scott notes that

> a "problem-space," in my usage, is meant first of all to demarcate a discursive context, a context of language, but it is more than a cognitively intelligible arrangement of concepts, ideas, images, meanings, and so on—though it is certainly this. It is a context of argument, and therefore one of intervention. A problem-space, in other words, is an ensemble

of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs.[71]

Moreover, what this concept allows Scott to do is to gauge the temporality of different spaces of arguments, how in a new conjuncture "old questions may lose their salience, their bite, and so lead the range of old answers that once attached to them to appear lifeless, quaint, not so much wrong as irrelevant."[72] In emphasizing the temporality of problem-spaces, Scott is after a rethinking of the relation of past to present, to avoid understanding the past in the terms of the present, to sidestep the "presentism that reads the past as a naive or mistaken version of the present"[73] by reconstructing the character of an intervention in its own space of arguments. Scott, however, is also interested in an additional question following the historical act of reconstruction, that of interrogating the saliency of the reconstructed move for the critic's present. Is the question still worth answering?, he asks. In that sense, Scott adds a normative edge, an engaged posture, to the labors of historical reconstruction, noting the insufficiency of the detached reconstructing of the past practiced by Skinner, "who bows and exits just at the point at which the question arises of determining and judging the stakes in the present of the rehistoricizing intervention."[74] The labors and responsibility of the historian are not to stop at the present's doorstep, by denaturalizing and revealing the constructedness of what we now take for granted.[75] It is not enough to show how things were different in the past, and therefore infer that our present could possibly have different contours; rather, Scott urges the critic to knock on this door and seek "to make the present yield more attractive possibilities for alternative futures."[76]

In this project I will build on Scott's insights, drawing attention to the problem-spaces, not only of different generations of critics but of differently located contemporary critics. While Scott's interest lies mostly in the temporality of problem-spaces, I will put this notion to work to also help us understand the dynamics of synchronous fields of argument in the Levant and in the North American academy.[77] Moreover, in times when oppositional culture in the metropoles is growing farther and farther away from the thinkers and movements of emancipation on the ground in the Arab world—unlike the earlier generation's solidarity and alliance with the Palestinian national liberation movements—these critics are answerable to a variant of Scott's critique of Skinner's detachment. So you've shown from afar how the discursive assumptions that Marxist and feminist militants and thinkers are using are all deeply entangled with power. This reveals that you have mastered the application of critical tool, but is that enough? Can't theory go beyond oppositional critique

toward "positing a new imaginary figure/model of intelligibility," as Cornelius Castoriadis suggested—one that can be tethered to a reimagining of political futures.[78]

Coda

This book is best approached like a musical fugue. Its major voice is the Lebanese New Left. Diasporic critical theorists, like Edward Said and Talal Asad, and the impact that their critical work had on metropolitan disciplines, are its minor voice. It has two more minor voices, which appear every now and then. The first is the work of scholars associated with the South Asian Subaltern Studies collective, who shared in their beginnings a common Maoist and Gramscian lineage with the theorists of Socialist Lebanon but put it to use differently. The second is the 1960s French Left. Socialist Lebanon's militant intellectuals were in touch with some of its factions and kept track of its theoretical productions and militant strategies. As the fugue unfolds, its main subject—emancipation, particularly from colonialism and imperialism—goes through a succession of inversions and counterpoints that are still unfolding in time.

The form of the book reflexively reenacts this generation's dialectic of revolutionary hope and political disenchantment. In part I—Time of History—I reconstruct the coming into being and high tides of the New Left by examining Socialist Lebanon's archive. In doing so, I underscore how the members of this generation were bound together by a collective project of emancipation, which inscribed itself within an internationalist constellation of revolutionary movements. In examining the multiple binds confronting the revolutionary project in part II—Times of the Sociocultural—I move from the reconstruction of a collective project of emancipation to an in-depth examination of Waddah Charara's own militant trajectory and critical work. The scale and focus of the chapters mirrors the transubstantiation of a collective of underground militant intellectuals writing anonymous clandestine texts in the service of the revolution into disenchanted, isolated critics in a wartorn polis.

Notes

NOTES TO PROLOGUE

1. For recent scholarship that similarly takes note of the overlooked status of the Arab Marxist archive, see Omnia el Shakry, "'History without Documents': The Vexed Archives of Decolonization in the Middle East," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (2015): 920–34; and Sune Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 4 (2017): 497–512.

2. For a contemporary concern with mobilization across difference, see Anna Tsing, "Is There a Progressive Politics after Progress?" *Cultural Anthropology* website, accessed June 26, 2018, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1133-is-there-a-progressive-politics-after-progress.

3. Reinhart Kosselleck, *Futures Past*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, [1979] 2004. See also David Scott's rearticulation of Kosselleck's pivotal concepts—"spaces of experience" and "horizon of expectation"—to think the temporalities of texts in *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

4. I borrow the notion of post-postcolonial from Charles Piot, *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 16.

5. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

6. I engage the failures of the metropolitan anti-imperialist Left in "Forsaking the Syrian Revolution: An Anti-Imperialist Handbook," *al-Jumhuriya*, December 22, 2016, https://www.aljumhuriya.net/en/content/forsaking-syrian-revolution-anti-imperialist-handbook.

7. Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 41. Hereafter cited in the body of the text.

8. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 1. See Ghassan Hage, *Alter-Politics: Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015) for an intellectually courageous and imaginative theoretical work that seeks to steer the radical critical imagination away from an exclusive investment in oppositional politics (antipolitics) and toward opening up new spaces for thought to reimagine our futures together (alter-politics).

1. Their occupations at the time: Fawwaz Traboulsi (student), Waddah Charara (school teacher), Wadad Chakhtoura (school teacher), Ahmad al-Zein (lawyer), Christian Ghazi (film director), Madonna Ghazi (school teacher), and Mahmoud Soueid (lawyer).

2. Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

3. Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, "De Pékin à Téhéran en regardant vers Jérusalem: La singulière conversion à L'Islamisme des 'Maos du Fatah'" [From Peking to Teheran while looking toward Jerusalem: The Singular Conversion to Islamism of "Fatah's Maoists"], *Cahiers de l'Institut Religioscope*, no. 2 (December 2008): 1–37.

4. I borrow the notion of "transversality of knowledges"—*la transversalité des savoirs*—from the French thinker Christine Buci-Glucksmann. https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/voix-nue/christine-buci-glucksmann-15.

5. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), and Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or How Euro-America Is Evolving towards Africa* (New York: Routledge, [2012] 2016).

6. See Kristin Ross's insightful *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) for a discussion of the Third Worldist parenthesis when theory was generated from the South, and Gavin Walker's *The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016) for a similar point regarding the invisibility of Japanese Marxist theorists.

7. See, for instance, Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left* (London: Verso, [2003] 2006). I offer an appreciative and critical engagement of Buck-Morss's work in chapter 2.

8. For a history of early generations of left-wing radicals in the region, which embeds it in global transformations, see Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

9. For a kindred critique of binaries, see Leyla Dakhli, "The Autumn of the Nahda in Light of the Arab Spring: Some Figures in the Carpet," in *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, edited by Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 353.

10. For a discussion on the practice of contemporary Arab intellectual history, see Max Weiss and Jens Hanssen, "Introduction: Arabic Intellectual History Between the Postwar and the Postcolonial," in *Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–35.

11. Volumes dealing with contemporary thinkers and trends in Arab thought do not include Edward Said among the authors they discuss. See, for example, Ibrahim Abu Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto, 2004); Suzanne Elizabeth Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

12. See Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy (On Erich Kästner's New Book of Poems)," *Screen* 15, no. 2 (1974): 28–32; and Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *boundary 2* 26, no. 3 (1999): 19–27. Enzo Traverso's *Left-Wing Melancholy: Marxism, Mem-*

ory, Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), offers a more appreciative reading of the potential of Left melancholy than Brown, who interprets it as "Benjamin's name for a mournful, conservative, backward-looking attachment to a feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike and frozen in the heart of the putative left," 22. I am deploying Left melancholy in Brown's sense to point to a structure of feeling among leftists in Lebanon of different generations, who mourn the good old days of the 1960s and 1970s. Having lived through these times is of course not necessary to be afflicted by Left melancholy. See Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, "Boire à Hamra: Une jeunesse nostalgique à Beyrouth?" [Drinking in Hamra: A Nostalgic Youth in Beirut?], in *Jeunesses Arabe—Du Maroc au Yémen: Loisirs, Cultures et Politiques* [Arab Youth—From Morocco to Yemen: Entertainments, Cultures and Politics], ed. Laurent Bonnefoy and Miriam Catusse (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 125–33.

13. Talal Asad's early work is exemplary in this respect, and so are the reflexive writings in the 1980s, such as James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

14. Middle East anthropology has been exploring research veins that transcend the earlier theoretical metonyms for the study of the region—tribalism, religion, gender—as well as the frontiers of nation-states and the boundaries of religious traditions. These works explore lives, ideas, practices, and institutions in the Arab world through situating them within transnational streams of capital, art, politics, and mass media. See Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession, NGOs, Economic Development, and the State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Jessica Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Lori Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Amahl Bishara, *Back Stories: US News Production and Palestinian Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

15. For a recent reflexive work that turns its ethnographic gaze inward to investigate the practice of Middle East anthropology in the US academy, see Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, *Anthropology's Politics: Disciplining the Middle East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

16. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff call attention to a recent "retreat from theory" in the social sciences at large and in anthropology, in "Theory from the South: A Rejoinder," "Theorizing the Contemporary," *Cultural Anthropology* website, February 25, 2012, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/273-theory-from-the-south-a-rejoinder.

17. Robert A. Fernea and James M. Malakey, "Anthropology of the Middle East: A Critical Assessment," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 4 (1975): 183–206.

18. Lila Abu-Lughod, "Zones of Theory of Theory in the Anthropology of the Arab World," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 267–306. For a more recent review of the literature on the region, see Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, "Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 537–58.

19. "What we call our data," as Clifford Geertz put it in his memorable phrase, "are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to." Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 9.

20. See Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) for an early methodological reflection on the consequences of the effacement of the anthropologist's mark in both of these two moments.

21. See Talal Asad's "Ethnographic Representation, Statistics and Modern Power," *Social Research* 61, no. 1 (1994): 55–88, for an incisive discussion of the empiricist distinction between "observation" and "theorization" in ethnography and his plea, also briefly discussed in the introduction to *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), not to collapse anthropology as a discipline of intellectual inquiry into its predominant method, fieldwork-based ethnography.

22. Cited, and critically engaged, in Talal Asad, "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology," *Man* 14, no. 4 (1979): 622.

23. Michael Jackson, "Ajàlá's Heads: Reflections on Anthropology and Philosophy in a West African Setting," in *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*, ed. Veena Das, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, and Bhrigupati Singh (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 41.

24. Jackson, "Ajàlá's Heads," 42.

25. Jackson, "Ajàlá's Heads," 28.

26. João Biehl and Peter Locke, "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming," *Current Anthropology* 51, no.3 (2010): 348.

27. Giovanni Da Col and David Graeber, "Foreword: The Return of Ethnographic Theory," HAU: *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1, no. 1 (2011): vi–xxxv.

28. Da Col and Graeber, "Foreword," xii.

29. Asad, "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology," 614.

30. Émile Durkheim opened his magisterial *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, [1912] 1995) by asserting the social origins of the categories of human thought, targeting both philosophical empiricists and a priorists. Pierre Bourdieu makes a homologous move that grounds aesthetic perception and consumption in social space in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1984). For an early critique of Bourdieu's sociology, see Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. John Drury, Corinne Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, [1983] 2004).

31. David Scott, *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 132.

32. See Bruno Perreau, *Queer Theory: The French Response* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016). "Thus, when the category 'queer' travels from one shore of the Atlantic to the other," Perreau writes, "it retains the same terms, but its meaning is literally distorted. . . . I bring to light the numerous modulations of queer theory, showing how sexuality, nation, and community are conceptually and politically interwoven," 9.

33. For works that share similar concerns on how to approach the archive of Arab contemporary thought, see Samer Frangie, "Theorizing from the Periphery: The Intellectual Project of Mahdi 'Amil," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 3 (2012): 465–82, and Omnia El Shakry, *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

34. For a divergent position that argues for forgoing critical theory for historical narrative in the study of contemporary Arab thought, see Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 20–23.

35. Among the key political events and structural economic, legal, and educational transformations that have destroyed certain ways of being in the world and brought forth new ones are Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798); the Ottoman Tanzimat (1839–76), which included the codification of parts of the Shari'a put forth in the Mecelle since 1869; the integration of Mount Lebanon's silk-centered production into the world economy; dense missionary activity and competition; the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon since 1918; the declaration of the Lebanese Republic by French colonial powers in 1926; and its independence in 1943.

36. The relationship to France is part of a long and complex history, whose multiple episodes include the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon (1920–43), missionary activity, and centuries-old privileged commercial, political, and religious ties with the Christian Maronites. See Iliya Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711–1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

37. Dense missionary activities and competition resulted in the founding of the Syrian Protestant College (1866) by American Protestants, which later became the American University of Beirut (1920), and the Université Saint-Joseph (1875) by Catholic Jesuits. These two elite private institutions of higher learning founded by missionaries in the nineteenth century are still active today. Currently, their predominant languages of instruction are English and French, respectively.

38. In their teaching career at the Lebanese University, Charara and Beydoun relied a lot on existing translations in Arabic or translated the material they wanted to teach from French into Arabic themselves. This was a labor that Traboulsi, teaching in English in the private elite universities, was spared.

39. For a recent exploration of the dislodging of the image of the public intellectual as a prophetic figure and a national icon from the 1990s onward, see Zeina G. Halabi, *The Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual: Prophecy, Exile and the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

40. They translated writings by authors from the revolutionary tradition such as Karl Marx, Isaac Deutscher, V. I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Antonio Gramsci, John Berger, Mao Tse-Tung, and Cornelius Castoriadis; anthropological authors such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Evans Pritchard; poets such as René Char, Pierre Tardieu, and Yannis Ritsos. In the past two decades, Fawwaz Traboulsi translated some of Edward Said's later works including his autobiography, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 1999). Waddah Charara, who was for a number of years the editor of *Sahafat al-'Alam* (the World Press supplement) of the Saudi-owned Arab daily *al-Hayat*, translated a number of newspaper, magazine, and journal articles that were published every Wednesday.

41. "The migration to the metropolis," Robert Malley wrote, "resulted in contact with Third World exiles," whose solidarity can be viewed as the "diaspora's offspring." Robert Malley, *The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Turn to Islam* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 22–23.

42. "Focusing on transfiguration," Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth Povinelli write, "rather than translation—the refunctioning of a text as such for different demanding-sites—orients our analysis toward the calibration of vectors of power rather than vectors of meaning-value. We will care more about the distribution of power than of meaning, more about institutions of intelligibility, livability, and viability than about translation." Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition," *Public Culture* 15, no. 3 (2003): 396.

43. Talal Asad, "A Comment on Translation, Critique, and Subversion," in *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-cultural Texts*, ed. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 330. Take, for instance, the Algerian journalist and writer Kamel Daoud, whose novel *The Meursault Investigation* (Meursault, contre-enquête), written in French, was crowned with three prestigious French literary prizes: the Prix François Mauriac and Prix des Cinq Continents de la Francophonie in 2014 and the Prix Goncourt in 2015. After consecration, the writer's culturalist statements—"Is the refugee a 'savage'?" he asked—about the sexual misery of the Arab world, its sick relationship to women, bodies, and desire that he professed in *Le Monde* (January 29, 2016) in the wake of New Year's Eve's sexual assaults on women in Cologne circulated globally (the article was also published in the *New York Times*), spawning discourses pointing out the author's racist and colonial account, while others came to his defense. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35653496.

44. Rosalind Morris, "Introduction," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 14.

45. For a critical reading of Marxism in India and a cogent discussion of the different grounds of persuasion in the history of ideas, see Sudipta Kaviraj, "Marxism in Translation: Critical Reflections on Indian Radical Thought," in *Political Judgement: Essays for John Dunn*, ed. Richard Bourke and Raymond Guess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 172–99.

46. For a series of dialogues on translation and the constitution of universality, see Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Universality, Hegemony: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 91–107.

47. Faleh A. Jabar, "The Arab Communist Parties in Search of an Identity," in *Post-Marxism and the Middle East*, ed. Faleh A. Jabar (London: Saqi Books, 1997).

48. For traditional anthropological work on Lebanon that was later criticized by Talal Asad in passing for its failure to account for structural transformations and political power that was contemporaneous with, and seems "belated" from the perspective of the Marxist theory and practice of Socialist Lebanon, see Emrys L. Peters, "Aspects of Rank and Status amongst Muslims in a Lebanese Village," in *Mediterranean Countrymen*, ed. Julian Pitt-Rivers (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), 159–200, and Emrys L. Peters, "Shifts in Power in a Lebanese Village," in *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Richard Antoun and Iliya Harik (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 165–97. For Asad's critique, see Talal Asad, "Anthropological Texts and Ideological Problems: An Analysis of Cohen on Arab Villages in Israel," *Economy and Society* 4, no. 3 (1975): 276.

49. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1979] 1984).

50. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, [1978] 1994), 325.

51. Said, *Orientalism*, 325.

52. David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

53. See Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2002): 107–22.

54. See Nadia Abu El-Haj, "Edward Said and the Political Present," *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 4 (2005): 538–55, for an insightful reading of the scholarly and political relevance of Said's oeuvre in the aftermaths of the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

55. Said, *Orientalism*, 27.

56. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 162–63.

57. See Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 17, for a reading practice that underscores "the continuing influence of Orientalist and colonial taxonomies on Arab intellectual production." See also Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 323–47, and the subsequent exchange between Mahmood and Stathis Gourgouris on the pages of *Public Culture*. Stathis Gourgouris, "Detranscendentalizing the Secular," *Public Culture* 20, no. 3 (2008): 437–45; Saba Mahmood, "Is Critique Secular? A Symposium at UC Berkeley," *Public Culture* 20, no. 3 (2008): 447–52; Stathis Gourgouris, "Antisecularist Failures: A Counterresponse to Saba Mahmood," *Public Culture* 20, no. 3 (2008): 453–59; and Saba Mahmood, "Secular Imperatives?," *Public Culture* 20, no. 3 (2008): 461–65.

58. For an insightful discussion of the authority of discourses in the societies anthropologists study and of anthropological—and theoretical—discourses, see Asad, "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology," and David Scott, "Criticism and Culture: Theory and Post-Colonial Claims on Anthropological Disciplinarity," *Critique of Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (1992): 371–94.

59. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of the two meanings of representation in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28–37.

60. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

61. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1962] 1983). See Rashid Khalidi, "The Legacies of *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*," in *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 375–86.

62. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, v.

63. Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Decolonization and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 11.

64. For two different critiques of how difference is configured as a site of resistance against universal homogenizing forces that engages Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), see Zahid R. Chaudhary, "Subjects in Difference: Walter Benjamin, Frantz

Fanon, and Postcolonial Theory," *Differences* 23, no. 1 (2012): 151–83, and Viren Murthy, "Looking for Resistance in All the Wrong Places? Chibber, Chakrabarty, and a Tale of Two Histories," *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 113–53.

65. See James Tully, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), for a collection of Skinner's methodological writings, a valuable introduction to his work by Tully and a series of engagements with it.

66. In addition to countering the anachronistic readings of texts, this method also bypasses causal explanation by attempting understanding through a redescription of the linguistic action in terms of its ideological point and not "in terms of an independently specifiable condition." Tully, *Meaning and Context*, 10.

67. Skinner's historical method, centering as it does on the figure of the author and the contrast-effect her intervention creates in a field of arguments, operates at a different level of analysis than Michel Foucault's archaeologies, which dilute the author in a deep episteme, and the Foucauldian-inspired critique of discursive assumptions. See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* [The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences] (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

68. Quentin Skinner, "An Interview with Quentin Skinner," *Cogito* 11, no. 2 (1997): 71.

69. Skinner, "Interview with Quentin Skinner," 73.

70. David Scott, "David Scott by Stuart Hall," *Bomb* 90 (Winter 2005), https://bombmagazine.org/articles/david-scott/.

71. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.

72. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.

73. Scott, "David Scott by Stuart Hall."

74. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 54.

75. Part of the differences between Scott and Skinner on the uses of historical inquiry can be understood in light of their different intellectual projects and objects of inquiry. Skinner, the historian of early modern political thought, seeks to unearth traditions of political argument that have faded from view in the past five centuries, and therefore destabilize the current liberal idioms through which political thinking proceeds in the present. While Scott's interest in *Conscripts of Modernity* is in a much more recent mid-twentieth century anticolonial history, and his project is not to rehabilitate lost treasures, as Skinner would put it, but to escape antiessentialist presentism that dismisses the older generation's work, through reconstituting their intervention in their context and to interrogate whether our present demands of us a different kind of intervention and different practices of criticism. While both thinkers engage in a historical reconstruction, their objects, periods of inquiry, and projects are different: Skinner's past has long ago faded from view, while Scott's past is still active in the present, and therefore the uses historical reconstruction are put to are of a different order.

76. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 55.

77. For an insightful reconstruction of the problem-space of French political anthropology, and its comparison with the US, which ends with a call for a critical French political anthropology, see Didier Fassin, "La politique des anthropologues: Une histoire

Française" [The Politics of Anthropologists: A French History], *L'Homme* 185–86 (2008): 165–86.

78. See Linda M. G. Zerilli, "Feminism, Critique, and the Realistic Spirit," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 50, no. 4 (2017): 589–611.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, vii.

2. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, viii.

3. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, vii–ix.

4. Albert Hourani, "Albert Hourani," in *Approaches to the History of the Middle East: Interviews with Leading Middle East Historians*, ed. Nancy Gallagher (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1994), 33.

5. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, ix.

6. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, ix.

7. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 348.

8. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 348.

9. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 349.

10. 'Partha Chatterjee, "Anderson's Utopia," *Diacritics* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 130.

11. For those of them who are of Shi'i descent, they are lodged between the "religion to modern secular ideologies" generation of Husayn Muruwwa (1910–87), who moved from being a Shi'i cleric to a central committee member of the Lebanese Communist Party, and the militant Islamic revival generation that came in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution—Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hizbullah, was born in 1960.

12. See Bruno Latour, "The Recall of Modernity: Anthropological Approaches," trans. Stephen Muecke, *Cultural Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (March 2007): 11–30.

13. Cited in Said, *Orientalism*, 318.

14. See Roschanak Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 24, and Waddah Charara, "al-Rifaq" [The Comrades], in *Isti'naf al-Badi': Muhawalat fi al-'Ilaqa Ma Bayn al-Tarikh wa-l-Falsafa* [The Resumption of Beginnings: Attempts at an Encounter between History and Philosophy] (Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha, 1981), 11–55.

15. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 5.

16. The Maronites, an indigenous Christian sect in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, are Lebanon's largest Christian community.

17. Samir Kassir, *La Guerre du Liban: De la dissension nationale au conflit régional 1975–82* [The Lebanon War: From National Strife to a Regional Conflict 1975–82] (Paris: Karthala, 1994), 33.

18. Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs Harvard University, 1979), 35.

19. Borrowed from the famous 1949 quip of George Naccache, the Lebanese Francophone journalist and editor, "Deux négations ne font pas une nation" [Two negations do not make a nation].