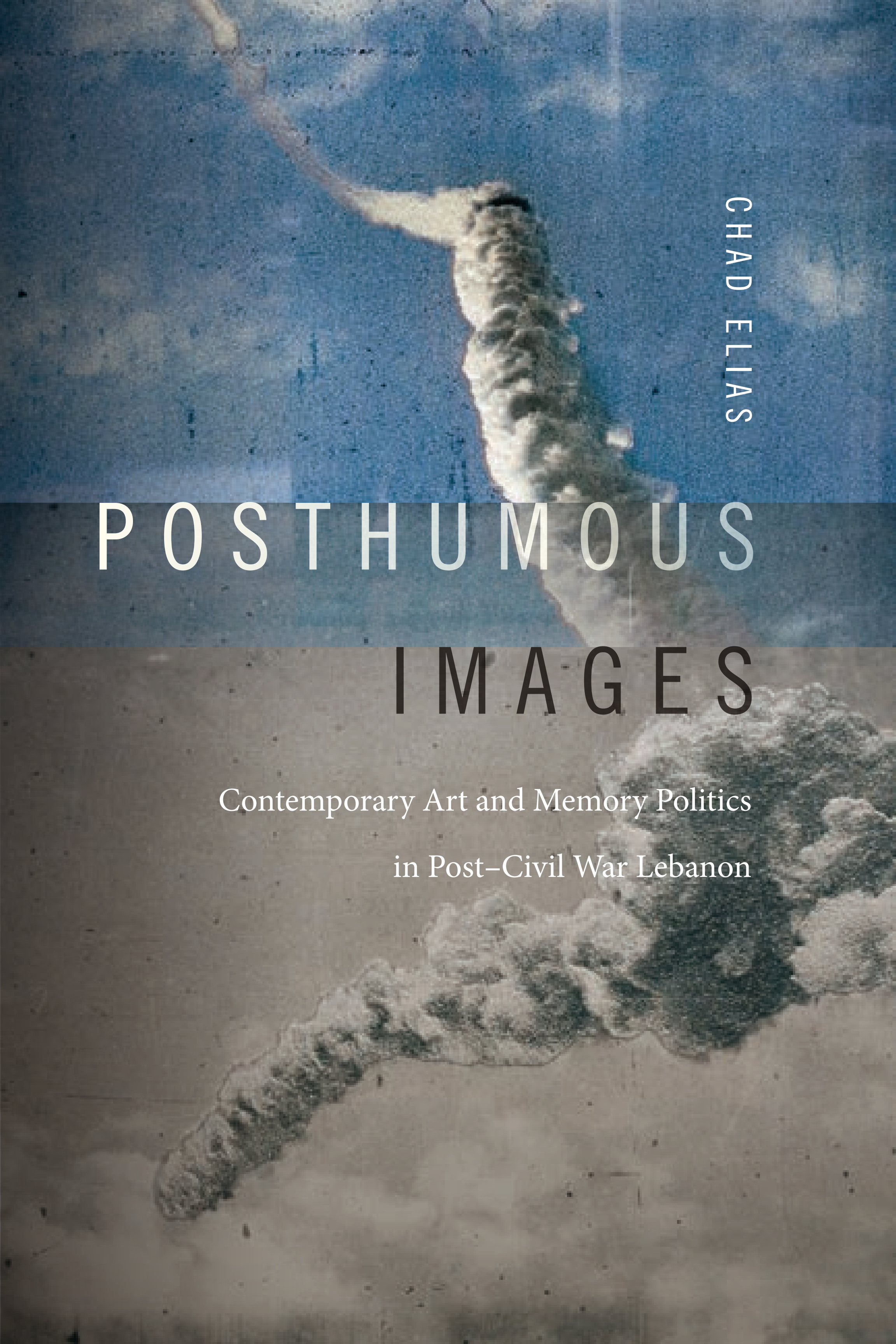

CHAD ELIAS

POSTHUMOUS IMAGES

Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post–Civil War Lebanon

POSTHUMOUS IMAGES

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Chad Elias

HUMOUS IMAGES

Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post–Civil War Lebanon

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COVER ART: Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Dust in the Wind*, 2013.
Cedar no. 4 and Cedar no. 8, Part VI of the Lebanese Rocket Society project.
C-prints with plexiglass sculpture, 100 × 72 × 6 cm. Courtesy of the artists.
FRONTISPIECE: Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, still from *A Perfect Day (Yawmon Akhar)*, 2005 (detail). 35 mm film, fiction, 88 minutes. (© Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, courtesy of the artists)

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TO CHRISTIE, FOR EVERYTHING
(and so much more)

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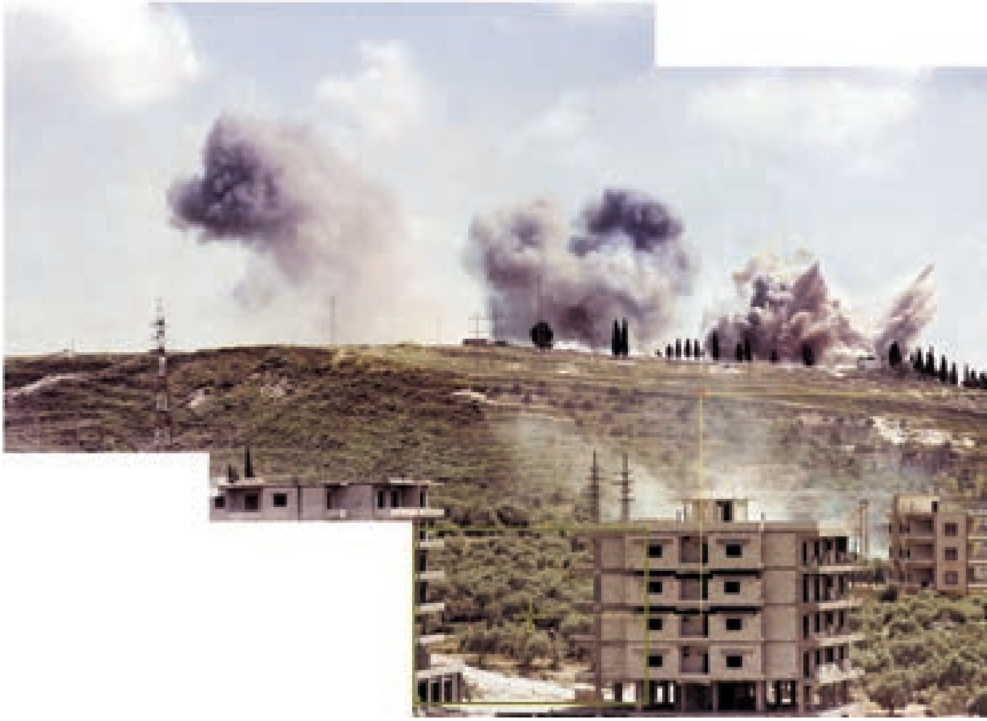
INTRODUCTION

Akram Zaatari's large-scale photographic panorama *June 6, 1982* (2006–9) is based on the artist's experience of watching and recording the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon (figure I.1). Confined to the family apartment, the teenage Zaatari photographed the explosions caused by the aerial bombardment of the surrounding hills. Playing on the pictorial conventions of landscape and war photography, Zaatari's image is as much an aestheticization of destruction as it is a critical deconstruction of the logic of spectacle. While *June 6, 1982* seems to capture a single event in time, the various blasts are in fact discrete events that have been digitally sutured together to create a seamless photomontage. In his video essay *This Day* (2003), Zaatari overlays these photographs—which he flicks through in an album—with audio he recorded on the day of the invasion, as well as popular radio broadcasts from that period (war anthems, syrupy dialogue from advertisements, and militarized ballads) (figure I.2). As the camera mechanically tracks across the images, zooming in on each cloud of smoke with methodical precision, one hears a person gasping, the low rumble of a fighter jet plane, and distant machine gun fire. These sounds give way to the ominous hiss of approaching missiles that gradually overwhelms the microphone on Zaatari's tape recorder, causing the audio to cut in and out. The sound of each explosion is counterposed with close-up shots of each photograph, suggesting a synchronicity between what is seen and what is heard. In point of fact, the audio track captures a series of durations whereas the photograph is an assemblage of discontinuous instants of time. Zaatari's overlaying of these different tem-



poralities is profoundly disjunctive. It serves to challenge both the fiction of filmic continuity and the decisive or singular moment privileged in photojournalism.

June 6, 1982 is in many regards emblematic of the works that I analyze in this book. It combines habits of recording and collecting—the impulse to collect one's own personal archive—with a lack of punctuality, a sense of delay or untimeliness between the taking of the image and its development. The individual images are true on a factual level, but their recombination produces a falsified event. It is the tension between photographic objectivity and filmic duration that upends the relationship between an event in the past and the present or future memory of that event. Like the other artists in this study, Zaatari troubles the idea that an event could be fully reconstituted. He questions photography's role in shaping history, individual memory, and the larger dynamics that govern the state of image making in situations of war.

Posthumous Images analyzes a constellation of contemporary visual artists

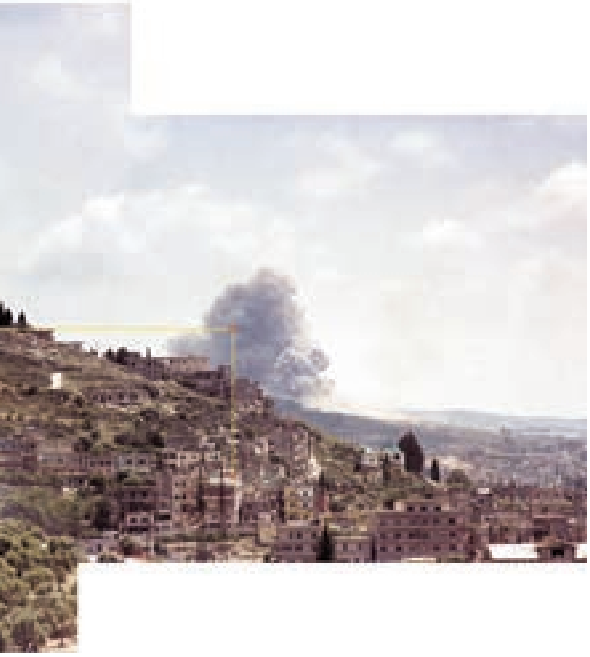


Figure I.1. Akram Zaatari, *Saida, June 6, 1982*, 2009. Blue print with camera movement and time code. Original photographs were taken on June 6, 1982. The first composite images were made 2006–9. (© Akram Zaatari, courtesy of the artist)

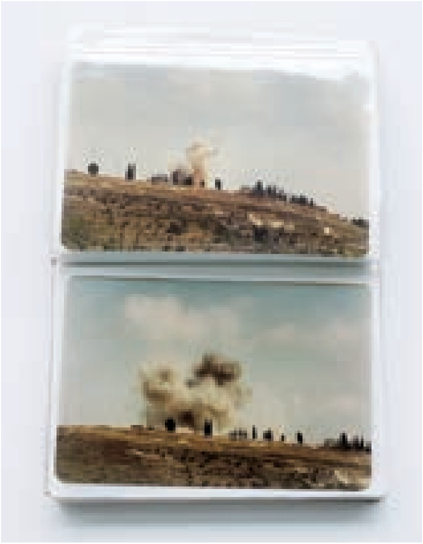


Figure I.2. Akram Zaatari, *Untitled*, 2007. Mini album, pp. 6–7. An explosion after an air raid targeted a Palestinian base in Mar Elias hill. Looking from the balcony to the south, June 6, 1982. (© Akram Zaatari, courtesy of the artist)

who have sought, in different ways, to enter into but also complicate Lebanese cultural discourses on memory and trauma. Working across the fields of architecture, photography, video, film, and live performance, Joana Hadjithomas, Ghassan Halwani, Khalil Joreige, Lamia Joreige, Bernard Khoury, Rabih Mroué, Walid Raad, Marwan Rechmaoui, and Akram Zaatari have produced a multidisciplinary body of work that interrogates the unresolved legacy of those decades of civil strife and sociopolitical upheaval.[1] My analysis is centered on two overlapping aspects of image making in these artistic practices: first, the reappropriation of existing images as a means to challenge the authority of divisive and violent political discourses propagated in the political system; and second, the production of new images that aim to provide representation for individuals and communities excluded from the dominant sectarian articulations of subjecthood.

Born between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, these artists belong to what is known in Lebanon as *jeel al-harb*, or the war generation. This generation has a particularly close and complicated relationship to the war, having experienced much of it unfolding as adolescents. By recirculating archival documents, unearthing ephemeral artifacts, and collecting eyewitness testimonies that refer us back to that formative period, these artists create an alternative paradigm of representation in which a range of pressing issues—the traumatic aftereffects of civil war violence, the curtailment of civil liberties, continuing sectarian divisions, border hostilities, the social cost of reconstruction—can be publicly articulated and worked through. Indeed, I contend that these artists' practices are critical to both the recollection of the past and to the reimagining of futures in a nation haunted by the specter of failed leftist political projects and the defeat of multicultural and secular forms of nationalism in the Arab world.

For almost two decades, a period most often identified as the Lebanese Civil War of 1975–90, sectarian fighting, foreign invasions, and political meddling besieged the country.[2] I argue throughout this book that these conflicts are resistant to summarization. Nevertheless, it is useful at the start to recall a few of the most salient facts—if only for the purposes of refocusing the lens through which we view the wars in question, the cycle of political crises and military conflicts that have marked the post–civil war period, and the artistic responses to both of these intersecting eras. Popular historical accounts often pass over the fact that the estimated 150,000 casualties in the civil wars resulted from intraconfessional hostilities as well as battles between religious sects.[3] Moreover, far from being a purely Lebanese problem, the breakdown of the confessional system and the resulting descent into armed conflict was the result of overlapping geopolitical struggles involving local, regional, and international actors. Indeed, these wars, with their mutating alliances, constantly shifting roster of combatants, lack of any clear victors, and competing accounts, are not amenable to conventional modes of historical analysis.

The outbreak of the civil wars is generally identified as the Ayn al-Rumana massacre on April 13, 1975, when the Kata'ib militia (the Christian Phalangist Party) killed twenty-seven Palestinian refugees. The principal issue precipitating the violence was the right of the Palestinian resistance to stage operations against Israel from Lebanese soil. While the reigning Christian-conservative government and its strategic allies firmly opposed any armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon, the left-wing and Pan-Arabist Lebanese National Movement (LNM), headed by Kamal Jumblatt, supported it. This disagreement over the Palestinian question was linked to and exacerbated by long-standing tensions regarding the equity of the confessional system—the structure of government that uses a formula to allocate political and administrative roles to members of Lebanon's various religious sects.[4] Far from being rooted in primordial or atavistic bonds as it is often depicted, confessionalism in Lebanon is "as modern and authentic as the nation-state."[5] As Ussama Makdisi has argued, the confessional system of government or, more precisely, the culture of sectarianism that subtends it dates "no further back than the beginnings of the modern era when European powers and local elites forged a politics of religion amid the emerging nation-state system."[6] The LNM called for a radical overhaul of the sectarian quota system, which since Independence had given the Christians control of the presidency, command of the armed forces, and a parliamentary majority. The movement argued that a political reorganization would more accurately reflect Lebanon's shifting demographics while also properly realigning it with other Arab regimes, including Syria, Libya, and Iraq. When open warfare broke out in 1975 between the LNM and the Christian Phalangists (Kata'ib), the balance of forces favored the former and their Palestinian allies. However, the entry of Syrian forces into the conflict in 1976—ostensibly to restore peace but also to curb the Palestinians, thousands of whom were killed in a siege of the Tel al-Zaatar camp by Syrian-allied Christian militias in Beirut—would serve to complicate greatly the internal dynamics of the conflict. By the early 1980s, when Israeli, French, and U.S. forces were also embroiled in the conflict, the wars in Lebanon came to function increasingly as a proxy battleground involving foreign powers.[7]

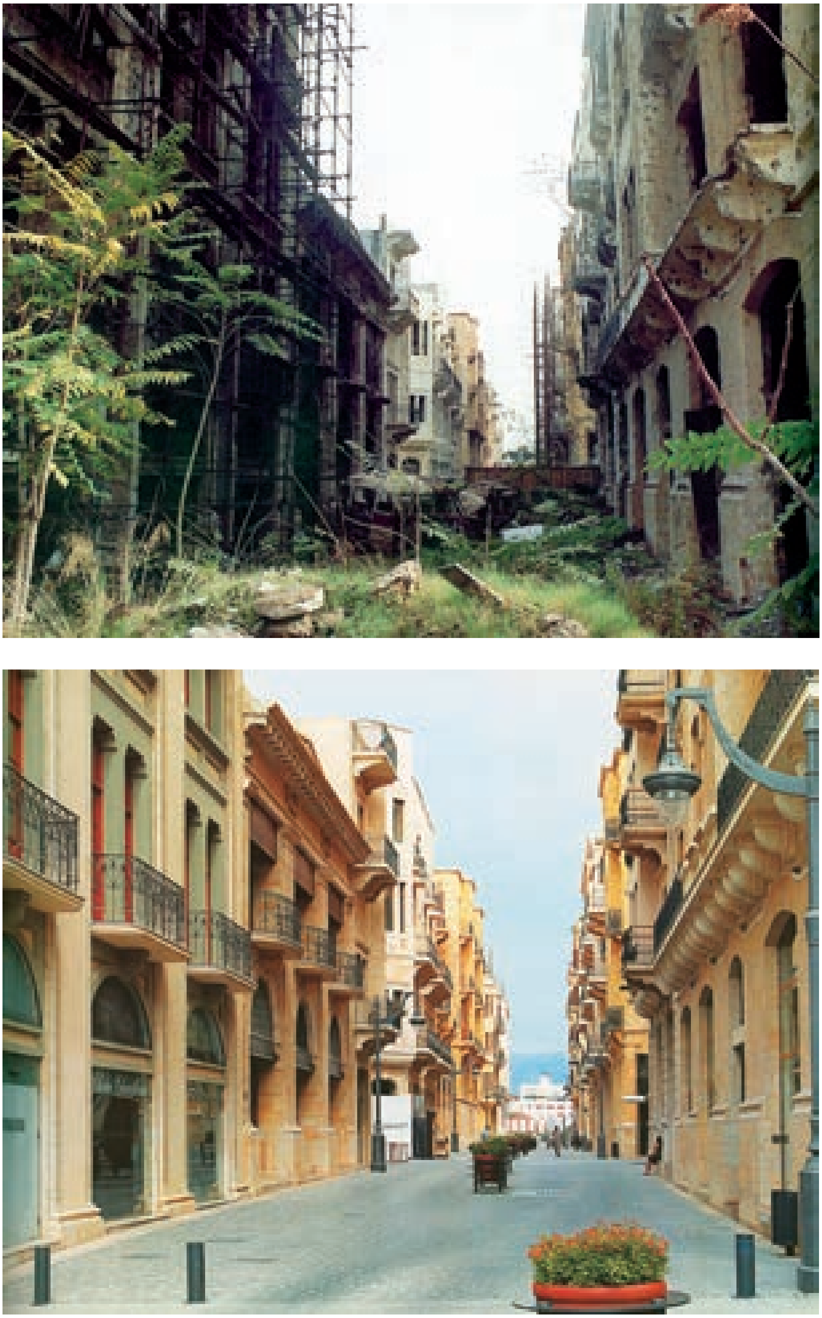
Just as the civil war was a product of internal and external pressures, its deeply compromised settlement came at a specific historical juncture when gestures toward internal reconciliation coincided with favorable regional and international developments. The Ta'if Accord, which was ratified by the Lebanese Parliament in 1989, called for all militias to surrender their weapons to the Lebanese Army and for Syria to help the Lebanese state impose its authority over all of the Lebanese territory within a period of two years. While the agreement succeeded in providing a formal cessation to hostilities, it avoided implementing any firm resolutions for addressing the underlying social and political problems that led to the war in the first place. These included the unequal sectarian division of power, the fate of the Palestinian camps, the ongoing Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and Syrian tutelage of the Lebanese state.

The signing of the Ta'if Accord was succeeded by a series of low-intensity wars engaged within and over Lebanon's contested territorial borders. These conflicts involved both two occupying forces (Israel and Syria) and Lebanese political parties and extant militias. The 1993 Operation Accountability, 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath, and 2006 July War, among others, were instigated by ongoing strikes between the Israeli Army and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. A second set of conflicts, marked by the car-bombing assassination of Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in February 2005 and the success of the Cedar Revolution in effecting the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005, is limned by the continued presence of Syria in Lebanese politics—a presence that has surfaced again due to the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and Hezbollah's support for Bashar al-Assad's government in the wake of Arab Spring uprisings. If these conflicts seem at first precipitated by competing foreign influences, closer analysis reveals that they are equally determined by and determinative of domestic political strife. The 2006 July War with Israel—and its destruction of significant civilian infrastructure in Beirut—signaled the failure of the neoliberal project of reconstruction initiated by former prime minister Hariri after the implementation of the

Ta'if Accords.[8] Indeed, the political standoff between Shi'a Muslim Hezbollah and the Sunni Muslim, pro-Western government of Hariri's political successor and son, Saad al-Hariri, that followed the July War served to highlight the persistence of many of the underlying social and political problems that had plagued Lebanon's dysfunctional confessional system of parliamentary representation. If the ongoing dispute regarding Hezbollah's right to bear weapons threatens Lebanon's continued existence as a viable nation—just as the Palestinian Liberation Organization's armed presence had done in 1975—it also forces us to critically revise the now-entrenched narratives heralding a post–civil war period and, more to the point, the emergence of a Beirut-based school of art simplistically miscast as postwar.[9]

I have foregrounded the multiple origins and inconclusive outcome of the Lebanese civil wars not because I want to suggest that they explain the artistic practices that I take up in this book. Rather, my interest lies in the unresolved nature of this history and the primary role that the cultural field has played in framing public debates over collective memory of recent wars in Lebanon. The struggle over collective memory has been emblematized in two highly contentious issues: the reconstruction of Beirut's devastated central district and the state's handling of crimes committed during the civil wars. Adopting the logic of *la ghalib la maghlub* (no victor, no vanquished), the Lebanese government passed an amnesty law in 1991 effectively granting any former members of militias exemption from criminal prosecution. The law applied to crimes committed before March 1991, including "crimes against humanity and those which seriously infringe human dignity."[10] Only crimes perpetrated against religious or political leaders were exempt from the amnesty provision. According to the official discourse of the newly reformed state, the legal measure was predicated on turning the page on the past and opening a new chapter in the name of national reconciliation. It was also prompted by the very real fear that any investigation of crimes perpetrated during the years of sectarian conflict would awaken grudges and undermine the peace process if they remained on the table for discussion and debate. Members of the political elite, most of whom had been involved in the militias during the war, no doubt had a vested interest in preventing any real reckoning with the past. However, many Lebanese also believed that to open a discussion about the civil wars would mean questioning the fragile ideological consensus upon which the whole program of reconstruction depended. Ultimately, the imposition of the amnesty law led to the total absence of serious governmental or civil initiatives to deal with the past, whether in the form of a national dialogue or of a public inquiry into the fate of the estimated eighteen thousand Lebanese who went missing during the fifteen-year period of war. As the novelist Elias Khoury would later observe in his trenchant assessment of the amnesty law: "The new post-war political class—warlords and war criminals in alliance with oil-enriched capital and military and security apparatuses—was able to impose an amnesia, a complete forgetting, in order to whitewash their innocence. Their victims were silenced."[11]

This climate of state-sanctioned amnesia was also naturalized in the reconstruction of the war-torn center of Beirut. In line with its neoliberal ideology of laissez-faire capitalism, Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri's government (1992–98 and 2000–2004) assigned the entire task of rebuilding the downtown area to a private shareholding conglomerate, the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut, more commonly known by its French acronym, Solidere.[12] In the space of a few weeks, the developers succeeded in erasing virtually all traces of the war as the buildings dating from the French colonial mandate period were systematically destroyed and then restored back to their prewar grandeur. This violent erasure of the traces of war, Saree Makdisi argues, was in fact part of an ongoing effort to purge the downtown area of its fraught symbolic weight as a former battleground: "From at least 1983, there has been a concerted effort to wipe the surface of central Beirut clean, to purify it of all historical associations in the form of its buildings, to render it pure space, pure commodity, pure real estate. The most obvious and striking potential war memorial (in a country that has all but forgotten its war), the shrapnel-scarred statue in Martyrs' Square, will be completely repaired—its bullet holes erased and covered over just as the historical referents in the city center (and history itself) are being erased in the reconstruction."[13] Severed from the historical and urban fabric of the city to which it had previously been linked, the reconstructed downtown now only references its past in the form of pastiche (figures 1.3 and 1.4). At the same time, popular memory of the civil wars was also recycled as a set of signifiers that could be nostalgically consumed. A popular nightspot called 1975, located on the former Green Line that was once the scene of intense battles, placed its clients in a retro-styled interior



Figures I.3–I.4. Ayman Trawi, photographs taken during the civil war and during the reconstruction. “Spreading until the sea and part of the Souks area, Allenby street was a dividing line between war factions.” *Beirut’s Memory*, 2004. (© Ayman Trawi, courtesy of the photographer) decorated with mortar shells, camouflage netting, and bullet hole–ridden walls. Within this space, middle-class and affluent Beirutis could be heard listening to songs by Fairuz, Ziyad Rahbani, and other popular artists of the war period while reminiscing about those years. Even the intellectually informed movement to preserve the city's war-torn historic center could not escape the ambiguity of nostalgia.[14] Proponents of the reconstruction plan were effective in portraying their opponents as melancholics who remained pathologically fixated on the traumas of the past. By contrast, in selectively drawing on Beirut's pre–civil war heritage, Solidere was able to project an image of the city that seemed to look backward and forward at the same time. Lebanese cultural debates over collective memory and reconstruction thus point to an important but still undertheorized problem: the difficulty of working through the past, not to recover some prewar ideal of the nation but precisely as a way of imagining a different future for it.

In taking up this problem, this study contributes to an emerging body of research that examines the issue of post–civil war memory in Lebanon through the lens of contemporary cultural production. Scholars such as Lara Deeb, Sune Haugbolle, Lina Khatib, and Lucia Volk have focused on the tension between the production and circulation of popular memory in specific social spaces and communities, and its critical appropriation in the overlapping fields of urbanism, film, and the visual arts.[15] My approach to unpacking the workings of memory cultures, or what I alternatively call communities of witnessing, shares the multidisciplinary approach of these studies, but it differs in at least three important respects from existing contributions to this topic.[16]

First, I counter historians and sociologists such as Haugbolle, who perceives culture in epiphenomenal terms, as a mere reflection of underlying social and political forces, even as he points to "the persistence of sectarian memory cultures in Lebanese society."[17] Opposing this view, I analyze the realm of contemporary artistic production in Lebanon as an essential site of political contestation in which communal memory is both constituted and potentially redefined. Second, I challenge the idea that the cultural resistance to Lebanon's state-sponsored amnesia is composed mostly of "middle-class, leftist artists and intellectuals [who have] privileged their own lived memories of prewar middle class and radical Beirut."[18] Such a reproach functions both to reinforce an all-too-rigid opposition between popular and elite forms of cultural production and to confuse, once again, the critical redeployment of popular memory with mere nostalgia.[19] Emphasizing instead the productive tension between these modalities, I highlight the important ways in which these artists articulate a memory politics outside the dominant institutions of the archive or the museum. Third, while I would agree that the artists in this book are collectively interrogating the idea that an empiricist history of the civil war period could exist, and that they are working to displace hegemonic voices through the recovering and reimagining of Lebanon's polyvocal landscape, they do not succumb to what Rosalind Morris has called the "secret valorization and hypostatization of subalternity as an identity—to be recalled, renarrated, reclaimed, and revalidated."[20] Like Morris, the artists in this book challenge a politics that claims to "give a voice" to what Eric Wolf has called "people without history."[21] They are equally skeptical of the possibility of writing an alternative history of the civil war period from the point of view of its victims.

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In his writings, the Lebanese artist and theorist Jalal Toufic formulates the concept of the "surpassing disaster" to refer to events whose effects are measured not only in the loss of lives and the manifest destruction of artworks, museums, libraries, and various other sorts of physical records, but also in what he terms the "immaterial withdrawal" of tradition.[22] In the wake of catastrophic events such as the Palestinian Nakba of 1948, the Arab Naksa of 1967, the Israeli invasion of West Beirut in 1982, the Hama massacre in the same year, and the aerial bombing of Iraq during the Gulf War, Arab artists find themselves "unable to access" certain paintings, films, and novels, even though these works may continue to be physically extant. This withdrawal can also occur in the realm of architecture. Toufic gives the example of the Lebanese people's general inability to perceive or record the ravaged buildings that they inhabited at the conclusion of the civil wars. This obliviousness, which is manifested in the artistic "indifference to documenting the carnage through photographs, films, and videos," cannot simply be explained by the fact that the war-weary population had "grown habituated to the destruction around them."[23] Rather, this endemic overlooking is due to the fact that the buildings belong to a history whose thread has been broken. Before the referent (this is also what Toufic means by "tradition") can be ac-

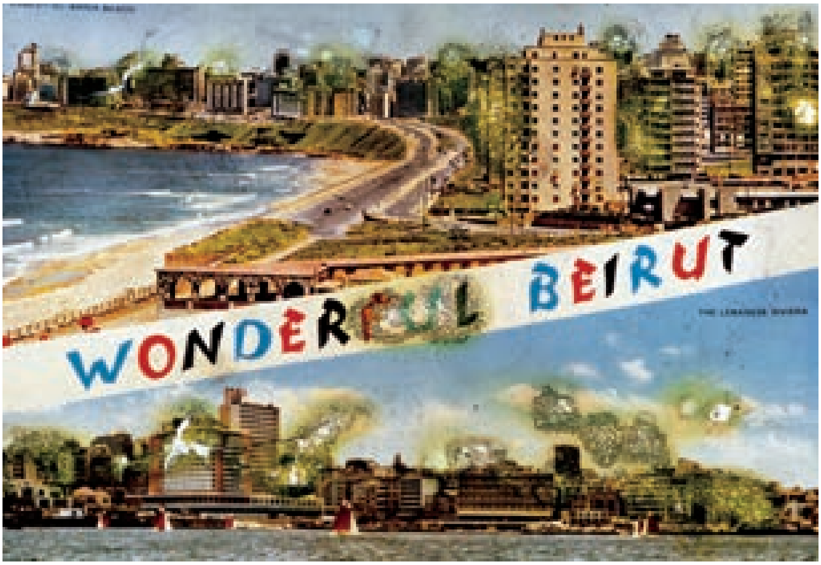

Figure I.5. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Wonder Beirut*, 1997–2006. Diasec, photographic print aluminum, 100 × 70 cm, number 1. (© Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, courtesy of the artists)

cessed again, artists first need to make visible its withdrawal. In this stage, Toufic writes, “art acts like the mirror in vampire films: it reveals the withdrawal of what we think is still there.”[24]

In their exhibition *Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer* (1998), Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige describe a scenario in which a photographer named Abdallah Farrah was commissioned by the Lebanese tourist bureau in 1969 to make postcard images of Beirut’s attractions. We are told that following the outbreak of the civil war, Farrah began taking down all the postcards in his studio since what they depicted—Martyrs’ Square, the souks, the Lebanese Riviera and its luxury hotels—no longer existed or was in the process of being destroyed. Four years into the conflict, Farrah began systematically to burn the postcard negatives in accordance with the damage caused to the pictured sites by shelling and street battles (figure I.5). By the time that all the images had been burned, the war was over. The story ends with the following revelation: “Today, this photographer no longer develops his photographs. It is enough for him to take them. At the end of the exhibition, hundreds of rolls of film, 6452 to be exact, were laid on the floor: rolls containing photos taken by the photographer but left undeveloped."[25]

It is significant that the protagonist is not trying to photograph the war-ravaged city. Rather, read in relation to Toufic's thesis, Farrah's pyromania can be seen as an attempt to render visible the damage that the war inflicts on representation itself. The physical destruction of the photograph parallels what is happening in reality, or, better still, the distinction between two orders of reality—photograph and referent—is here called into question. Additionally, Farrah's decision to leave the photographs taken after the war undeveloped points to "the withdrawal of what we still think is still there" following the surpassing disaster.[26]

Acknowledging Toufic's crucial influence on his own practice, Raad—whose work is the focus of chapter 1—suggests that the "blurred, never-on-time, always-to-the-side images" that he produced under the banner of the Atlas Group were also "indicative of this withdrawal" of tradition.[27] However, it is possible to see Raad's subsequent work as signaling a different stage in artistic production, a stage after the rupture effected by the surpassing disaster has been revealed and countered. As Toufic explains, the act of revealing the withdrawal of tradition paves the way for its future resurrection: "There is going to be a time of development of the chemically developed photographs taken during the latter stages of the war [in Lebanon]. The documentation is for the future not only in the sense that it preserves the present referent for future generations, but also in that it can function as a preservation of the referent only in the future, only when the work of resurrection has countered the withdrawal."[28] Raad's more recent photographs featuring the bodies of assassinated politicians situated in picturesque Lebanese landscapes might be seen to correspond to the delayed "time of development" that Toufic speaks of here. In contrast to the artist's prior preoccupation with figures and states of absence, this return of the referent might also serve to complicate the claim that the image in Beirut-based artistic practices serves to give form to a historical trauma that exceeds representation.

In a programmatic text titled "Missing Lebanese Wars," Raad asks what it means to document the destruction of historical memory brought about by successive wars in Lebanon: "How do we represent traumatic events of collective historical dimensions when the very notion of experience is itself in question? How do we approach the facts of war, not in their crude facticity, but 'through the complicated mediations by which facts acquire their immediacy?' How does one witness the passing of an extremely violent present?"[29] Drawing on psychoanalytic theorizations of trauma, Raad posits war as an event that remains, in some deep structural sense, unavailable to the subjects who experience it. Rather, it is only after the fact, in the unconscious symptom formations of the survivor, that this event is experienced at all.[30] Accordingly, the archival project that Raad undertakes in the name of the Atlas Group (1989–2004) seeks to bear witness not only to the physical violence of the civil war, but also to the mnemonic damage caused by it. Read in these terms, the documents gathered in the Atlas Group Archive are presented not as part of an alternative history of the events of the Lebanese wars, but as an "image of what can be imagined, what can be said, what can be taken for granted and what can appear as rational or not—as thinkable and sayable about the war and the possibilities and limits of writing its history."[31] The difficulty in representing the events of this history not only concerns the problem of determining what happened based on fragmentary and tendentious evidence. It has to do with the discrepancy between the immediate violence of war and the incapacity of subjects to narrate their experiences in larger collective terms.

Most critics have followed Raad's lead in pointing to the dynamics of traumatic memory at work within Beirut-based practices. In a 2006 review of the *Out of Beirut* exhibition, the largest survey of contemporary art from Lebanon held to date, art historian T. J. Demos draws on this concern and asserts that artistic engagements with the archive are concerned less with documenting the immediate reality of the civil wars than they are with registering its disturbing aftereffects. Indeed, Demos sees the examination of photographic and videographic documentation undertaken by Raad and his compatriots as challenging "any notion that language, whether visual or textual, might be used to convey the experience of war with uninterrupted continuity, rendering the idea of direct expression impossible while overtly manifesting injuries to representation."[32] In similar terms, Carrie Lambert-Beatty aligns the documents in the Atlas Group Archive with an underlying set of epistemological concerns that include "the problems of history-writing (the patchiness of documents, the 'unreliability' of even first-hand accounts, the work of interpretation that goes into making sense of them); traumatic experience and the ways it both compels and disallows speech; and the particular epistemic conditions of the Lebanese civil war, with its multiplicity of combatant groups, its unreliable sources of information."[33] This critical line rightly sees the problematization of representation in contemporary art as a necessary counter to the everyday reification of documentary practices, particularly when the latter serve as instruments of judicial evidence and journalistic truth. While Demos astutely calls attention to the limitations of the documentary image as an objective record of historical truth, there has been an increasing tendency on the part of critics and art historians to hypostasize the failures of representation. Indeed, the impulse to analyze these practices through the framework of trauma risks evacuating them of their potential as a site of political agency within communities of witnessing. For if, as Krauss suggests, trauma discourse assumes a kind of vacated subject, one that is "by definition not alert to the traumatic event," to think of photography primarily in these terms carries the danger of voluntarily consigning the medium to a position of absent witness or witness of absence.[34]

Sensitive to these dangers, Demos would subsequently argue, in a revised and expanded analysis of Raad's work, that far from signaling a "postmodern escapism or relativism" or a "disavowal of truth and referential meaning," the artist's coupling of invented personages and narratives with actual historical documents "temporarily confounds the relation between truth and fiction in order to foster critical doubt, one that ultimately presupposes the ability to separate the true and the false."[35] In an almost identical move, Lambert-Beatty contends that while "epistemologically destabilizing" work such as Raad's can often elicit a sense of confusion, disbelief, and suspicion, these attitudes can also potentially encourage a criticality "that does not give up on the idea of facts, but rethinks them as matters of investment, debate and desire."[36] While I agree with Lambert-Beatty that it is important to hold on to a critical "realism" that also allows for "the possibility of play," her interpretation of *Hostage*, like Demos's later discussion of that work, precludes a more concrete engagement with the archives in question. What is missing in both accounts is any analysis of the primary documents that form the basis of Raad's video. The focus on metahistorical questions ends up supplanting historical inquiry itself, which is to say, the task of "putting aside, gathering, thus transforming into 'documents' certain objects that have been distributed differently."[37]

Thus, for many viewers of Raad's art and that of his compatriots, the insistent references to trauma have actually contributed to the mystification of these conflicts instead of bringing us closer to confronting them. Granted, these histories are deeply contested and resist any search for conclusive truths, but they are not, for all that, outside of representation. Nor does this art's entanglement with the mythologies of the civil wars absolve us of the ethical task of asking what kind of documentary practice might serve as the basis for a politics of truth.

In my account, war is not a mark of interpretive foreclosure or an unrepresentable trauma but rather an expansive field of representation marked by heterogeneous and overlapping media practices. What role do different forms of media (video, television, photography, and architecture) and formats of image production and display (newspapers, magazines, broadcast news, amateur snapshots, and political posters) play in shaping the lived experience of war and its memory? What kind of affective states and subject positions does the fractured audiovisual landscape of the Lebanese wars give rise to? In posing such questions, this book considers how in those decades of conflict Lebanese subjects both internalized images that surrounded them and were themselves made to inhabit images posthumously.

This foregrounding of mediation serves as a reminder that the wars in Lebanon were not only strictly military affairs. They were also in a fundamental sense conflicts waged with and over images. The war fought on the streets was duplicated and intertwined with television footage, video testimonies broadcasting already-completed missions, and martyr posters commemorating actions that few people actually witnessed in person. Technologies such as photography, video, and television were tools that political parties and militias could use to mobilize and recruit their constituencies. In this war, images served less to persuade, as earlier forms of propaganda had done, than to cast doubt on competing constructions of reality. As art critic Rasha Salti explains, in the Lebanese civil war, "every warring faction had its narrative, its ideological discourse and system of interpretation. There were at least two versions to every incident, scuffle, exchange of fire. Nonfiction was palpably constructed, its 'fictional' nature unmasked to the naked eye. I remember how during the civil war we had to listen to several radio stations to synthesize real news, extract real facts."[38]

Although it could be argued that ambiguous and uneven media coverage is a common feature of warfare today, the Lebanese wars might be said to have prefigured the kind of representational instability that philosopher Thomas Keenan identified in the media coverage of the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian War in the early 1990s.[39] Taking up *New York Times* journalist Roger Cohen's pronouncement that the conflict was a "postmodern war," and distinguishing the conflicts in Bosnia from earlier televised wars like Vietnam, Keenan foregrounded "the apparent re- or dis-location of the field of knowledge and action to the screen of a monitor and the entry of those representations into the field of the things and events they ought simply to represent."[40] In other words, in a confusing and oversaturated media environment, the direct experience of war can no longer be easily distinguished from its televisual representations. The wars in Lebanon also changed the way images were perceived and, more specifically, contributed to a growing sense of their unreality. In foregrounding the mediating effects of the lens-based technologies they work with and against, the post–civil war generation of artists working in Beirut has sought to shift the focus away from an imagery that casts the Lebanese "as eternal victims of war."[41] Thus, rather than confine their gaze to images of war, these artists have produced works that examine "what the war did to the images."[42] Yet here these practices run up against a familiar postmodern bind: If the work is about representation, then what happens to the subjects of it?

Indeed, each of the works examined in this book centers on individuals or groups, living through periods of conflict, who have been historically denied political representation and so effectively silenced or rendered invisible. In Raad's *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes*, the occluded subject is the Arab hostage held with the Western captives in Beirut in the 1980s: a third term who has been left out of both the hostages' written accounts of captivity and Arab media reportage of the Western Hostage Crisis. In Zaatari's *All Is Well on the Border*, the subalterns are the South Lebanese civilians and resistance fighters who have been positioned as the mouthpieces of an ideology within the discourses and institutions of Islamic resistance. Lamia Joreige's *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* and Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *A Perfect Day* revolve around literal "missing" subjects—the thousands of people who were kidnapped along the Green Line during the civil war—as well as the communities that were implicated in their disappearances. Mroué's multimedia performances—*Three Posters* and *The Inhabitants of Images*—look at how people who are missing or dead take on a strange afterlife in the mechanically and electronically produced image.

Rather than focusing on the problematic of representation writ large, I ask how subjects such as these might speak back to the images that act in their place. In taking up this fraught question, I argue that Lebanese artists crucially avoid the trap of trying to speak for or give a voice to a silenced or disenfranchised subject.[43] The problem is, I argue, not so much about how to give a voice to mute witnesses and traumatized survivors. Instead, it is about how in respeaking testimonies and reenacting events, artists in Lebanon can provide the grounds for the radical remembering of the past and the reimagining of futures in a present haunted by the specter of failed leftist political projects and the defeat of multicultural and secular forms of nationalisms in the region.

Here, too, a further point of clarification is helpful, because this book does not set out to offer a survey of Lebanese art. Rather, it foregrounds the fundamental conflicts and contradictions within Lebanese society that continually undermine notions of citizenship, territorial sovereignty, and national culture. In this respect, Hezbollah's ascendency is not only linked to an endemically weak Lebanese government but is also paradigmatic of a more widespread withering of the nation-state amid the global return of religions: "The relation of [Hezbollah] to Lebanon—'a non-state within a non-state,' as its supporters are fond of saying—is to be generalised."[44] In the chapters that follow, I explore what it means to make images in a historically divided nation, where notions of collective memory are still bound to sectarian agendas. In unearthing the past, I consider the ways in which artists in Lebanon have opened up spaces for modalities of belonging and public remembrance that are otherwise foreclosed in the political sphere.

Furthermore, this book does not aim to provide a survey of post–civil war cultural production, writ large. Instead, it focuses primarily on the work of artists who exhibit videos and films in galleries. In *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image*, Laura Marks argues that the demand for these "moving-image artists" relies on a split between cinematic and artistic production that is as much commercial as it is discursive. This is manifested not only in the institutional division between film festivals and the gallery/biennale circuits, but also in the "respective terms and historical references for film and for visual art."[45] Marks's attention to the thematic, conceptual, and formal links between experimental video, postconceptual photography, and a specifically cinematic mode of image making in Lebanon troubles the boundaries that have been erected around these disciplines, even as it also calls attention to them. Indeed, many of the artists that I discuss here could be seen as making work that is in close conversation with filmic or cinematic practices (a term we can use capaciously, as Marks has done, to include "all time-based, recorded, audiovisual media" works).[46] Such an expansive framework certainly accords with the propensity of the artists to employ a variety of media and analytical strategies in their work. As Zaatari notes, the initial lack of dedicated art institutions in Beirut forced artists to develop multiple competencies and roles.[47] In this model, one can be "interested in histories without being a historian, collecting information without being a journalist."[48]

All of the artists that I discuss employ photography and video in different formats (documentary, installation, lecture-performance), but their work largely circulates in the art world. The one notable exception is the work of Khalil Joreige and Hadjithomas, which moves selectively between art and cinema without privileging one or the other. Although it remains beyond the scope of this book, one could certainly imagine a larger study that explores the overlap between these visual cultures. Yet I have chosen to focus on this particular set of artists because I want to foreground medium-specific questions of memory that are crystallized in a particular body of work. *A Perfect Day*, *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, *The Inhabitants of Images*, and *Three Posters* deal directly with photographic images relating to the missing and/or dead. Here my interest is in the way in which these artists put the snapshot image into tension with the durational qualities of video and film. Often this serves to unsettle the relation between past and present. Raad's *Hostage* and Zaatari's *All Is Well* open up a similarly self-reflexive dialogue between video and television, raising the question of how these media structure political subjectivity. In these works we are invited to consider how public testimony is produced in accordance with shifting categories of what is and is not permissible speech.

The title of this book—*Posthumous Images*—refers to the ways in which certain images appear only after the presumed death of their referent. In resituating the performance of the martyr delivering his final address to the camera, Mroué's *Three Posters* asks what it means to inhabit an image posthumously. Jamal al-Sati's death occurs after the video is made, but in the tape he makes before the operation, he addresses the living from the position of someone who is already dead. Taped before his suicide mission but viewed after the fact, this video looks both backward and forward at the same time, throwing into question its status as a documentary record of the past. Similarly, in my discussion of the photographs of the missing, what interests me is the ways in which these images trouble the distinction between states of presence and absence, past and present. Like the martyr, the photographs of the missing inhabit a space that unsettles the ontological boundary between life and death. In both cases, the viewer is confronted with images that activate a dormant and unprocessed period in Lebanese history.

While my focus is on photography and video, I recognize that some of the broader concerns that I foreground—questions around the uncertain place of the civil wars in Lebanese collective memory—are also present in several films that are not addressed in this study. Here it is instructive to briefly single out two films that were released in the same year: Ziad Doueiri's *West Beirut* (1998) and Ghassan Salhab's *Phantom Beirut* (1998).[49] Both of these films ask what it means to represent the dead, albeit in ways that are less extensive than in the works taken up in the subsequent chapters.

The narrative of Salhab's film centers on the unsettling return of Khalil to Beirut: white haired and blank faced, he is portrayed as a spectral figure in a landscape of ruins (the war is barely over, and a palpable sense of danger still pervades the city). After Fouad spots Khalil at the airport by chance, he enlists a group to track him down. Still convinced that their friend had been killed in a battle ten years earlier, they think that the man they are following is not really Khalil but a phantom. When one member of the party says that he wished he had brought his camera with him, he is reminded by another that "ghosts don't appear in photographs." When Khalil is eventually confronted by the group, he confesses that he had used the confusion of the war as an opportunity to stage his disappearance. His friends feel betrayed by this deception, but what perhaps troubles them more is the confusion caused by his unexpected and untimely reappearance. At the beginning of the film, a camera winds through downtown Beirut. The ruined shells of buildings overlap with signs of reconstruction. These images elicit a voice-over commentary on the rebirth of the city and the suspended life of its inhabitants: "Perhaps this will deliver this damaged city to a true death, a genuine death.

This is after all our problem: we didn't want to turn a new page because we weren't really dead." Salhab implies that the survivors of the civil war are as much undead as Khalil, but that they are ghosts who do not know yet their condition.

In *West Beirut*, the first film about the civil war to gain a worldwide release, Doueiri looks back at the inception of violence in the mid-1970s. Much of the story is told through the eyes of three adolescents who are coming of age at the same time as the city is plunged into war. Indeed, the central protagonists of the film belong to the same generation as the artists analyzed in this book. Tarek and his school friend, Omar, have fun making movies on a Super 8 camera, but the only store that develops this format is located on the other side of the newly imposed dividing line. While this adventure lands them in some dangerous situations, they treat the war-torn city as an elaborate playground. By contrast, the scenes involving Tarek's parents, Riad and Hala, encapsulate the tragic dimensions of the war. His mother wants to leave Beirut, but his father is determined to stay. The film finishes in an elliptical fashion. As Riad plays the oud, with his wife by his side, Salhab introduces archival footage from the civil war: politicians giving speeches, tanks going through the streets of Beirut, women mourning their dead. In the next scene, Tarek cries while his father sits alone in the background. The implication here is that Hala has been killed in the war. In the final scene, Tarek is on the beach, filming his mother on his Super 8 camera. The home movie shifts from color to black and white as it marks his mother's passing. Like many of the other works examined in this book, *West Beirut* reflects on what it means to register a death that takes place at the level of the image.

Chapter 1 examines Walid Raad's *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes* (2001), a sixteen-minute experimental documentary that retells the Western Hostage Crisis from the perspective of a fictional Arab captive held hostage with Western men in Beirut in 1985.[50] Raad's video probes the unresolved homosocial relations between Arab and Western men, particularly as they hinge on the simultaneous fear of and desire for sexual contact with the Lebanese detainee. Bachar's account, although told in first person, is mediated by a female voice in English that mistranslates his words precisely at the point when he is talking about his alleged sexual relations with the other hostage. I argue that in response to the privileging of white male subjectivity in contemporary hostage narratives, *Hostage* offers more than a revision of prevailing cultural scripts from a position of self-defined alterity. Rather, by foregrounding moments of constitutive mistranslation, it questions the aim of giving a voice to muted subjects. While desirable, the task of recovering the speech of the subjugated subject cannot bypass the aporias posed by the mutual untranslatability of languages and discourses. Extending this notion of translation to the domain of media geopolitics, I examine the crucial role that video and television played in the hostage crisis. I show that with the availability of VHS cameras in the 1980s, the hostage video became a tool of political ventriloquism wherein Arabs used the immobilized and visibly subjugated bodies of Americans to speak back to the West. Within this framework, Bachar's fictional video testimony, while appearing to grant agency to subjects denied representation in the official narratives of the hostage crisis, is in fact complicated by the ambiguities of translation, across both languages and media technologies. Indeed, if the television images of the Beirut hostages would seem to confirm the power of a system in which images as well as arms and people are all rendered exchangeable, *Hostage*'s incessant reference to the breakdowns in transmission and communication materializes a point of untranslatability, that is to say, a limit in Western control over images and the subjects they presume to represent.

Like *Hostage*, Zaatari's *All Is Well on the Border* (1997) and Mroué's *Three Posters* (2000) problematize the representation of subjects whose stories have been written out of the official narratives of Lebanese history. Rather than claiming to speak for or give voice to the resistance fighters of the Lebanese left, both works challenge the possibility of representation in both the artistic and the political sense. In *Three Posters*, Mroué revisits a 1985 video testimony by a Lebanese communist resistance fighter delivered shortly before he carried out a suicide attack on the Israeli Army during its occupation of South Lebanon. On stage, the man's testimony is preceded by another video, in which Mroué appears in the guise of a martyr, Khaled Rahhal, delivering his own posthumous message. When a door is opened on stage to reveal the artist seated in front of a camera, the audience realizes that what they witnessed on video was not a moment in the past but a live performance. In chapter 2, I argue that this uncanny doubling of the past not only casts doubt on the ontological weight accorded to the martyr video as an indubitable document of death, but also opens onto a more immediately pressing set of concerns regarding the use of media by militant forms of Islamic resistance, specifically Hezbollah's, and its cultivation of a theocratic politics of death by means of a sophisticated technics of digital representation. Here the main question is this: how does Hezbollah's deployment of digital technology serve to alter the mediatic forms of martyrdom that they have coopted from the Lebanese left? Zaatari's video also takes up the fraught documentation of the leftist fighters who first made up the resistance to Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. Against the dominant myths of Islamic resistance, Zaatari's work documents the strategies of everyday resistance that a cognate generation of men developed in the notorious prisons of the occupied border zone. Thus, chapter 2 further looks at how the unofficial archive of letters, home videos, and popular music that *All Is Well* juxtaposes with the uprooted testimonies of imprisoned fighters obstructs reified structures of identification. At the same time, I argue, this archive also gives form to affective dimensions of lived experience that counter the instrumentalized speech of party politics and the media propaganda of the Islamic resistance. Here I focus on the numerous ways in which *All Is Well* foregrounds the mediated condition of the prisoners' stories and the communities that they claim to represent, producing a critical distancing or alienated empathy structured across and through personal and communal histories, the media propaganda of resistance movements, and the conventions of militant filmmaking. Yet the work also resists the impulse to heroicize the defeat of the leftist resistance in Lebanon. In this respect, Zaatari's autocritical documentary can be distinguished from a left melancholy that remains attached to the failure of an ideal and ignores its still unrealized possibilities for the future.

Chapter 3, "Latent Images, Buried Bodies: Mourning Lebanon's Disappeared," foregrounds four works that address the Lebanese cultural phenomenon of the missing—men and women who, like the martyr in Mroué's *Three Posters*, are suspended between life and death. As I argue, all of the works in this chapter act as critiques of and alternatives to the state-imposed amnesia around the status of the Lebanese missing. Rather than insisting on a politics of truth, however, the practices in this chapter foreground the roles played by the families and communities left behind and make evident the rituals of hearsay, gossip, and memory that mediate between the missing and their loved ones. Both Halwani and Joreige and Hadjithomas, in *Lasting Images*, ask how photographs of the missing, whether displayed in public or held in private collections, might be developed in a way that counters both the widespread amnesia and the institutionalized display practices that use such photographs to perpetuate sectarian divisions. In analyses of Joreige and Hadjithomas's *A Perfect Day* and Lamia Joreige's *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, I turn from photographs of the dead to the families and communities left behind as testators. *A Perfect Day* narrates legal and ethical quandaries of when and how a mother and son might have their husband/father declared dead by the state. These questions become the grounds for a critical analysis of suspended states of existence, for the living as well as for those assumed to be dead. *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* documents a journey through the neighborhoods adjoining the Green Line, the demarcation line that once separated East and West Beirut during the civil war period. Carrying a set of archival newspaper photographs depicting the militia-controlled checkpoints where thousands of people went missing, Joreige traces these locations, approaches residents, and asks them the same question: "Do you know anyone who was kidnapped from here during the war?" While the photographs function more often than not to block memory, the intrusive presence of Joreige's camera in the street has the effect of stimulating unrehearsed stories, testimonies, and questions regarding the fate of individuals kidnapped during the war. The film thus asks us to consider how the memories of Green Line abductions are transmitted across genders and generational lines, and so provides a postsectarian framework for examining how social categories of gender and age, rather than confessional identity, might serve to mediate individual and communal acts of witnessing in Beirut today.

Chapter 4 further considers the location of postwar memory in the city and the layered histories that continue to haunt its seeming rise from the ashes. As noted earlier, in the 1990s the Lebanese government embarked on an ambitious reconstruction plan to both rehabilitate and physically rebuild the country. Much of this effort centered on the restoration of the heavily damaged historic center of Beirut: the scene of the first and most intense battles of the civil wars. Here the Lebanese state was confronted with a critical problem: how to give shape to a cohesive new national identity within a space overdetermined by a history of sectarian division and internecine conflict. As numerous architectural historians have noted, the rebuilding of the downtown area did not offer a redemption of conflicting urban narratives of collective memory or national identity in Lebanon. Rather, it attempted to elide the visible evidence of those divisions through an amnesiac urbanism.

Not surprisingly, much of what has been written on the reconstruction of the city center has foregrounded the state's failed attempt to neutralize this territory through a violent process of land expropriation and eviction. While this critical literature has rightly interrogated an urbanism that simultaneously refutes the possibility of a mnemonic reflection on the past and knowledge of the political present, it has mostly ignored the ways in which architects and artists have both made visible and countered the erasure of urban memory in the Lebanese capital. The first part of chapter 4 examines two architectural projects by Bernard Khoury that foreground the conflict between official reconstruction and popular memory in contemporary Beirut. The first of these, *Evolving Scars* (1991), consists of a design to place a temporary transparent skin around the outer periphery of war-damaged buildings in the central business district marked for demolition. Conceived as ephemeral architectural acts that end with the complete physical destruction of the ruin, these memory collectors do not project the city into a hypothetical future but rather self-reflexively foreground its accelerated ruination in the post–civil war present. In a second project called B018 (1998), Khoury designed a nightclub on the site of a former refugee camp, where it has been long rumored that thousands were massacred in 1976 by a Lebanese Christian militia. Conceived in the form of an underground bunker, B018 obliquely references the traumatic history of its location. Here I draw on Eyal Weizman's model of forensic aesthetics as a way of exploring how the suspected existence of mass graves in Lebanon implicates architecture, and those who inhabit it, as potential witnesses. I argue that in each case Khoury's practice offers an alternative both to the state's willful and hasty destruction of war-damaged sites and to the aggrandizing gestures of the traditional monument. Rather than seeking to resolve the contradictions of the reconstruction process, these counter-monuments heighten them and thus implicate viewers in mnemonic practices that relate to the urban realities of Beirut.

The practices of the artists examined in *Posthumous Images* reveal an engagement with history that has been deepened by a reflective-performative problematization of the archival image. Yet in recent years, some of the artists of this generation have returned to the utopian projects of the pre–civil war past as means to imagine an alternative vision of the future, one that is not dictated by the specters of the traumatic past. In their film *The Lebanese Rocket Society* (2012), the artist duo Hadjithomas and Joreige uncover the largely forgotten history of Lebanon's curtailed space program. From 1960 to 1966, several rockets, which became larger and more powerful with time, were launched from the hills surrounding Beirut by a group of scientists and university students led by mathematics professor Manoug Manougian. This project coincided not only with the Cold War space race, but also with the alternative modernity promised by the Pan-Arabism of Egyptian president Abdel Nasser, ending with the Arab defeat in the 1967 war. However, the Lebanese Rocket Society has been largely erased from the national imaginary. There are no monuments or museums dedicated to chronicling this unlikely and remarkable juncture in Lebanese history. Any mention of "Lebanese rocket" brings to mind images of war, specifically Hezbollah missiles targeting Israel and Israeli missiles targeting Lebanon. How can this story be retold in a persistently war-torn Middle East? What would it mean today to reconstitute the remnants of an aborted future in the postutopian present? In Chapter 5, I examine the multimedia installations that were circulated alongside *The Lebanese Rocket Society*, including the construction of a scaled reproduction of the CD4 rocket, which is photographed as it is transported through the streets of Beirut to Haigazian University. In giving a materiality to an absent imaginary, I argue that Hadjithomas and Joreige critically revise the withdrawal of the referent allegorized in their earlier projects (most notably the series *Wonder Beirut*, 1997–2006). If both *Wonder Beirut* and *The Lebanese Rocket Society* refuse the nostalgic image of pre–civil war Lebanon, the latter differs in its attempt to reconfigure the broken link with the past.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Commenting on the closely knit Beirut art scene, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige note, "Between 2000 and 2004, in Beirut we got together with a group of artists every Tuesday (such as Walid Sadek, Bilal Khbeiz, Tony Chakar, Marouan Rechmaoui [*sic*], Lina Saneh, Walid Raad, Fadi El Abdallah [*sic*], and others. Rabih was also closely involved. It was a place for exchanging, for sharing, for discussions, for study." Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, "I Am Salah el Dine," in *Rabih Mroué: A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Jill Winder (Utrecht: Post Editions, 2012), 85.

2. At various points in this book, I refer to the Lebanese wars, a term I borrow from Walid Raad to designate the series of intermittent and unresolved conflicts waged in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990.

3. This is the most commonly cited figure. See, for example, John Wood, "After 2 Decades, Scars of Lebanon's Civil War Block Path to Dialogue," *New York Times*, July 11, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/12/world/middleeast/after-2-decades-scars-of-lebanons-civil-war-block-path-to-dialogue.html.

4. The terms "confessionalism" and "sectarianism" are often used interchangeably and confused. I use "confessionalism" to refer to a system of government that involves distributing political and institutional power proportionally among religious communities or sects. This term should be distinguished from "sectarianism," which I use more broadly to designate an adherence or excessive attachment to a particular sect or religious denomination. Since the emergence of the post-1943 state in Lebanon, the distribution of political power in the country has been determined by the National Pact, an unwritten agreement that established a formula for allocating political and administrative functions to the major sects. Following Independence,

seats in Parliament had been divided on a six-to-five ratio of Christians to Muslims until 1990, when the ratio changed to half and half. Positions in the government bureaucracy are allocated on a similar basis. The pact also allocated public offices along religious lines, with the top three positions in the ruling troika distributed as follows: the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the Parliament a Shi'a Muslim. Efforts to alter or abolish the confessional system of allocating power have been at the center of Lebanese politics for decades. See M. Khalil, *Al-Ta'ifiah wal-Nizam al-Dustoury Fi Lubnan* [Confessionalism and the constitutional system in Lebanon] (Beirut: al-Dar al-jami'iyya, 1992); Farid el-Khazen, *The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Polities of the 1943 National Pact*, Papers on Lebanon 12 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1991).

5. Ussama Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," *Middle East Report*, no. 200 (July–September 1996): 23.

6. Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State," 26.

7. The interplay between internal hostilities and external pressures has long been noted as an important feature of the unfolding pattern of political violence and civil strife in Lebanon. Indeed, this line of explanation is popular among broad sectors in Lebanese society, having given rise to the idiomatic expression "al harb al-akhirin 'ala 'ardina" or "the war of others on our soil." Not surprisingly, this view has been questioned by scholars such as Haugbolle, who has argued that its widespread adoption allowed the war generation to effectively absolve themselves of responsibility for the war: "The idiom partly owes its popularity to a need to externalize a common sense of guilt or shame over the war. By stating that outsiders plotted the war, the catchphrase sums up an otherwise complicated, even incomprehensible, conflict with unresolved repercussions in a couple of words." Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14.

8. Analyzing the privatization of public space and services in Lebanon as enacted by the neoliberal economic policies of the Hariri government of the 1990s, Saree Makdisi writes, "Because of the situation that Lebanon found itself in after the war (the near-total deterioration of public order, of state apparatuses of civic organizations, of the national infrastructure) the process of privatization is already at a more advanced stage in Lebanon than it is elsewhere in the world, where the forces of privatization (such as Berlusconi in Italy) have had to face the opposition put up precisely by those forms of public and civic and national organization which in Lebanon had already been destroyed by the war. In this sense, Lebanon may be seen as a kind of laboratory for the most extreme form of laissez-faire economics that the world has ever known." Saree Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (spring 1997): 695.

9. This is not a radical claim by any means, but rather one that the artists in this

book have long been making. T. J. Demos also references continued Lebanese conflicts in *The Migrant Image*, as does Elias Khoury in his forceful critique of the "post–civil war" political landscape in "The Novel, the Novelist, and the Lebanese Civil War." T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Elias Khoury, "The Novel, the Novelist, and the Lebanese Civil War," Fourth Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization, University of Washington, Seattle, 2006, http://depts.washington.edu/nelc/pdf/event_files/ziadeh_series/2006lebanon-eliaskhoury.pdf.

10. Nizar Saghieh, "Dhakirat al-harb fil-nizam al-qanuni al-lubnani" [Memory of the war in the Lebanese legal system], in *Memoire pour l'avenir*, ed. Amal Makarem (Beirut: Éditions Dar An-Nahar, 2002), 255.

11. Khoury, "The Novel, the Novelist, and the Lebanese Civil War," 4.

12. Solidere stands for Société libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction de Beyrouth.

13. Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut," 692.

14. Spearheaded by architects Jad Tabet, Nabil Beyhum, and Assem Salam, this cultural campaign was aided by a loose coalition of writers, critics, and artists. See Nabil Byehum Tabet and Assem Salam, *Beyrouth: Construire l'avenir, reconstruire le passe?* (Beirut: Dossiers de l'Urban Research Institute, 1995).

15. See Lina Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008); Lara Deeb, "Exhibiting the 'Just-Lived Past': Hizbullah's Nationalist Narratives in Transnational Political Context," *Contemporary Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 2 (2008): 369–99; Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*; Lucia Volk, *Martyrs and Memorials in Modern Lebanon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

16. Haugbolle uses the term "memory cultures" to describe "the production of historical memory [which] denotes a plurality that fits the Lebanese context better than, for example, the more commonly used, and more monolithic-sounding, 'collective memory.'" My phrase "communities of witnessing" places more emphasis on the active role that denizens play in evidencing history. Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 8.

17. Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 79.

18. Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 129.

19. Here I am pointing to the consumer-driven nostalgia for the civil war that is symbolized by nightclubs such as 1975 (decorated with sandbags and bullet holes, playing popular music from the late 1970s and 1980s) and illustrated books such as Imed Kozam's *Pure Nostalgia* and Ayman Trawi's *Beirut Memory*. I am arguing that Haugbolle's focus on popular music and literature overlooks the ways in which visual artists have critically engaged with popular memory. Hadjithomas and Joreige's

appropriation of postcards of prewar Beirut and the Lebanese coastline is a good example of the latter impulse.

20. Rosalind C. Morris, "Introduction," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 8.

21. Eric Wolf notes that the phrase dates to the nineteenth century, when Marx and Engels used it to "signal their lack of sympathy with some national separatist movements in eastern Europe" (xx). Wolf states that his intent "was to challenge those who think that Europeans were the only ones who made history" (xx). Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

22. Jalal Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (Beirut: Forthcoming Books, 2009), 11, http://www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads/Jalal_Toufic,_The_Withdrawal_of_Tradition_Past_a_Surpassing_Disaster.pdf.

23. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition*, 58.

24. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition*, 57.

25. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, "Tayyib rah farjik shighli" [OK, I'll show you my work], *Al-Adab*, January–February 2001.

26. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition*, 57.

27. Alan Gilbert, "Walid Ra'ad," *BOMB—Artists in Conversation*, no. 81 (fall 2002), http://bombmagazine.org/article/2504/walid-ra-ad.

28. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition*, 58.

29. Ziad Abdallah and Farah Awada [Walid Raad], "Missing Lebanese Wars," *Public Culture* 11, no. 2 (1999): ii.

30. This is the definition of trauma most famously put forward by Sigmund Freud. Following Freud, Cathy Caruth, emphasizing the belatedness of trauma, has suggested that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on." See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

31. Abdallah and Awada, "Missing Lebanese Wars," 3.

32. T. J. Demos, "Living Contradictions," *Artforum* 45, no. 2 (October 2006): 227. A further developed account of this essay can be found in chapter 7 of Demos's *The Migrant Image*, discussed below.

33. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October*, no. 129 (summer 2009): 75.

34. Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 779.

35. Demos, *The Migrant Image*, 191.

36. Lambert-Beatty, "Make Believe," 82.

37. Michel de Certeau, quoted in Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 97.

38. Sandra Dagher, Catherine David, Rasha Salti, Christine Tohmé, and T. J. Demos, "Curating Beirut: A Conversation on the Politics of Representation," *Art Journal* 66, no. 2 (summer 2007): 116.

39. See Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

40. Thomas Keenan, "Publicity and Indifference (Sarajevo on Television)," *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (January 2002): 110.

41. Jacques Rancière, "Entretien avec Jacques Rancière," *Les Inrockuptibles*, no. 679 (December 2, 2008).

42. "Lebanese artists like Joana Hadjithomas and Joreige also displace the representation of the Lebanese as eternal victims of war. They are interested not in images of the war, but in what the war did to the images, not in victims or the missing but in disappearance." Rancière, "Entretien avec Jacques Rancière."

43. Taking up Foucault's remarks concerning "the indignity of speaking for others," the art historian Craig Owens defines postmodern art as a refusal of the mastery implicit in victim photography: "Despite his or her benevolence in representing those who have been denied access to the means of representation, the photographer inevitably functions as an agent of the system of power that silenced these people in the first place. Thus, they are twice victimized: first by society, and then by the photographer who presumes the right to speak on their behalf. In fact, in such photography it is the photographer rather than the 'subject' who poses as the subject's consciousness, indeed, as conscience itself." Owens's counterexample is Martha Rosler's artwork *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–75). Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 178.

44. T. J. Clark, "In a Pomegranate Chandelier," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 18 (2006): 5.

45. Laura Marks, *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 15.

46. Marks, *Hanan al-Cinema*, 14.

47. Noting the rise of a new generation of independent video production in Lebanon in the 1990s, Zaatari states, "Norms in those disciplines [photography and video] do not exist in this country. It's up to us to invent them. The idea that video was not just a substitute for film or television didn't exist in Lebanon before the cre-

ation of the Ayloul festival in 1997. There was no forum where you could show video work as such rather than as film." Mahmoud Hojeij, Mohamed Soueid, and Akram Zaatari, "Disciplined Spontaneity: A Conversation on Video Production in Beirut," *Parachute*, no. 108 (October 2002): 83.

48. Akram Zaatari, "Terms Falling: Between Artist, Curator, and Entrepreneur," *Bidoun*, no. 6 (winter 2006): 16.

49. Salhab and Doueiri's films might also be viewed in relation to wartime cinematic production in Lebanon. This includes films such as Borhan Alaoui's *Beyroyth la recontre* (1982), Maroun Baghdadi's *Little Wars* (1982), Jennifer Fox's *Beirut: The Last Home Movie* (1987), and Jocelyn Saab's *Letter from Beirut* (1979). For a useful analysis of civil war–era filmmaking in Lebanon, see Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema*.

50. Over a hundred people, mostly American and Western European, were taken hostage in Lebanon between 1982 and 1992. Most of the hostages were chosen not for their personal political activity but because of their nationality. Some of the best-known hostages, several of whom I discuss at further length in chapter 1, include David Dodge (president of the American University of Beirut), Benjamin Weir (Presbyterian minister), Terry Anderson (Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, and the longest-held hostage), and Terry Waite (Anglican church envoy).

ONE CAPTIVE SUBJECTS

1. See the Atlas Group website home page, http://www.theatlasgroup.org, and "About the Bachar File," http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeA.html.

2. Walid Raad, Souheil Bachar, and the Atlas Group, *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes (#17 and #31) English Version* (Chicago: The School, Art Institute of Chicago, Video Data Bank, 2001).

3. In Arabic, Bachar's exact words are بشدّ: عمّ و بطيظي أيرو حط.

4. Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -Abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 93, emphasis added.

5. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 324.

6. Raad left Lebanon in 1983 at the age of sixteen, first on a boat to Cyprus and then to join his brother in the United States. Upon completing high school, he gained a BFA at the Rochester Institute of Technology and an MA and PhD at the University of Rochester.

7. The Atlas Group Archive, http://www.theatlasgroup.org/aga.html.

8. Raad, a Lebanese-born U.S. citizen, currently divides his time between Beirut and New York, where he teaches film, video, and photography at Cooper Union.

9. The Atlas Group Archive is organized into three categories of files, each of which corresponds to a different model of authorship. Type A files are identified as