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BEYOND THE WAR? THE LEBANESE POSTMEMORY EXPERIENCE

Abstract
This article seeks to address how Lebanese youth are dealing with the legacy of civil war (1975–90), given the national backdrop of official silence, persisting injustice, and competing memory discourses. Drawing on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, it explores the memory of a generation of Lebanese who have grown up dominated not by traumatic events but by narrative accounts of events that preceded their birth. This residual form of memory carries and connects with the pain of others, suffusing temporal frames and liminal positions. The article examines how postmemory is mediated and transformed through the mnemonic lenses of visual landscapes and oral narratives. Consideration is given to the dynamic production of "memoryscapes"—memories of violence localized in particular sites—and to narrative constructions of the past implicated in the ongoing search for meaning, historical truth, and identity. This article seeks to challenge pervasive notions of Lebanese postwar amnesia and of a generational detachment from the residual effects and future implications of war recollections.

> Memory of the war: I don't know if I can even talk about it. I mean, if there is something in society that helps you to think about it—but everything encourages us to escape. Nothing encourages you to deal with it, to face it, nothing! They don't even talk about it anymore and even if they do it's from different perspectives: a theory and idea—not specific facts. I mean, it's very dangerous to awaken something that is not yet ready to be awakened . . . It's not easy to remember, and it's such a blessing to forget sometimes. But if you want to remember and you want to deal with it—and I hope each one of us will want to face something, and when he is ready, then it will help.
>
> —Rola, 22, Lebanese University Student[1]

Despite the recent cracks to emerge in Lebanon's wall of public silence concerning the civil war (1975–90)—whether due to activist calls for disclosure and healing, politicians championing the search for historic truth,[2] or scholars concerned with nostalgia and historic imaginings[3]—little attention has yet been given to how Lebanese youth are negotiating both the historic silences and private anguish of their nation's bloody past. Academic research on Lebanese war memory has tended to privilege elite production and cultural agency, focusing on war-related literature, films, artistic installations, heritage disputes, rebuilding projects, and memory entrepreneurs rather than engaging critically with everyday processes of social transmission and internalization.[4] This article, drawing

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on Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," seeks to explore the memory of a generation of Lebanese who have grown up dominated not by traumatic events but by narrative accounts of events that preceded their birth.[5] This is an inherited form of memory, which carries and connects with the "pain of others,"[6] suffusing temporal frames and liminal positions. The complex and ambivalent position of Lebanese youth, caught between the contradictory forces of collective remembrance and social forgetting, is demonstrated in Rola's entreaty to face the past and her fear of rousing "something that is not yet ready to be awakened."

The article examines how members of the Lebanese postmemory generation reproduce, reimagine, or erase memory traces in order to identify and position themselves within contemporary Lebanese society. It does so by exploring how student memories, shaped by social settings and political circumstances, are mediated and negotiated through the agency of visual landscape and oral narrative. Emphasis is therefore placed first on the dynamic production of "memoryscapes"[7]—memories of violence localized in particular sites—and then on narrative constructions of the past implicated in the ongoing search for meaning, historical truth, and identity. The article challenges the notions of Lebanese postwar amnesia and of a youth detached from the residual effects and future implications of war recollections. Traumatic stories and haunted sites of past violence are not merely the pedagogical concern of Lebanese peace activists. These stories and sites continue to inform everyday perceptions, conversations, and spatial practice. In the words of seventeen-year-old ʿAli from Aley, a mountain village overlooking Beirut: "You can't really forget what happened. It's always there hiding in unexpected places. It's like a minefield no one ever cleared. One day someone might set it off."[8]

In order to examine these themes, I draw on extensive research and qualitative interviews among 100 Lebanese high school and university students from ten different educational institutes during a one-year period, the summer of 2005 to the summer of 2006.[9] Given the sensitive nature of representation and proportionality in Lebanon, a country of eighteen politically recognized religious sects with its last demographic census in 1932, my sample attempted to reflect Lebanon's diverse religious composition, its continuing socioeconomic divisions, and its geographic spread. Thus, 26 percent of students interviewed are from a Shiʿi confessional background, 24 percent are Sunni, 13 percent are Druze, and 33 percent are Christian; the schools and universities chosen are a mix of public/private, secular/religious, and rural/urban; and the interviewees were from Beirut, Tripoli, the South, the Bekaa, the Shouf, and the Metn Mountains. Students were deliberately chosen to reflect the full spectrum of Lebanese society; family names, residency, political affiliations, economic background, and religious confession therefore informed the selection process. Access to schools and students was obtained through contact with teachers and headmasters and with the help of conflict-resolution centers and local civil activists.[10]

Student interviews were semistructured and open ended, allowing themes and stories to emerge naturally. Arabic and English were used interchangeably depending on the context and fluency of the student.[11] High school students were interviewed on school grounds, while university students were given freedom to choose a place where they felt most comfortable. The individually selected interview locations provided interesting social and political backdrops to frame family memories, historical events, and political positions.

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The timing of the research, conducted in the aftermath of the Syrian military withdrawal and the 8 March and 14 March (2005) popular mobilizations, offered intriguing insights into how Lebanese students are negotiating newly emerging memory discourses.[12] Producers of such critical public discourses have their own latent agendas and audiences and include civil campaigns seeking historical disclosure as a form of social catharsis and political movements intent on projecting memory recovery as a national issue connected with the pursuit of Lebanese "freedom, truth and independence."[13] This period of social rupture and political realignment, coinciding with the demise of Pax-Syriana, generated diverse readings of the unfolding events.[14] While some students celebrated a so-called "Cedar Revolution" and newfound Lebanese unity, others cursed reemerging sectarian divisions and sporadic violence in the form of car bombs and political assassinations. War memories crystallized around lessons learned, injustices still to be resolved, and the recurring threat of political violence. Before exploring in detail the visual and oral frames through which postmemory is mediated, it is crucial to provide some historical context to Lebanon's violent past.

NEGOTIATING THE LEBANESE PAST

The Lebanese civil war of 1975 to 1990 is commonly referred to as *al-ahdās*, or "the events," and it is indeed more accurate to observe it as a series of battles "localized in region, in time and in warring factions" than as a single war.[15] Militia clashes, communal violence, and multiple foreign interventions resist simple reduction, yet some linear phases can be outlined: the Two Year War (1975–76), triggered by violent clashes between Palestinians and the Christian Maronite Phalange; the Syrian intervention, Israeli invasion, and international deployment of a multinational force (1976–84); the War of the Mountain (1983) between Druze and Christian militias; the War of the Camps (1985–86) involving Shiʿi–Palestinian conflict; and the War of Liberation (1988–89) and War of Annihilation (1990), which witnessed Christian–Syrian clashes and finally descended into Christian militia infighting.[16] These devastating battles claimed an estimated 170,000 lives, with twice as many inhabitants wounded and two-thirds of the population displaced or uprooted from their homes.[17]

Although these consequences of the prolonged war are indisputable, there is still little consensus over the exact nature and underlying causes of the conflict. Samir Khalaf views the war as part of a cyclical pattern of communal strife and atavistic fear, another episode in Lebanon's "history of intermittent violence."[18] Ahmad Beydoun locates the causes of continual conflict not within "previous wars but rather within the peace settlements" and their inadequate and rigid sectarian distribution of power.[19] Other writers emphasize the weakness of the Lebanese state, colonial influence and regional interference, competing nationalisms and ideological battles, class struggles and economic disparity, or tribal and kinship loyalties.[20]

Contested critiques of the war are unsurprisingly matched by divergent approaches as to how the conflict should be remembered and commemorated. In many ways, Lebanon's post-Taʾif recovery has been forged around a "state-sponsored amnesia" that has influenced both public and private censure of the past.[21] Structural forgetting was encouraged through the culmination of a general war amnesty in 1991, media-censorship

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laws (the 1994 broadcasting law), and the complete absence of criminal tribunals, compensation schemes, or truth and reconciliation committees. A War of Others[22] discourse was also popularized, shifting the blame to external forces and providing a blurred and superficial historiography that removed the need for critical examination, justice, or remorse.

However, the idea of hegemonic postwar amnesia has increasingly been challenged both by social theorists and by Lebanese civil-society institutions. The instrumental exploitation of collective memory and selective forgetting to serve present needs, elite groups, and political agendas has been well documented.[23] Yet memory often proves elusive and evasive, resisting dominant discourses and selective erasure, or as Schudson explains, "the past seeps into the present whether or not its commemoration is institutionalized."[24] Social anthropologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka prefers to talk of displaced versions of the past rather than processes of forgetting or social amnesia, recognizing that "when we set out to listen to historical silences, we are forced to listen to a great deal of noise."[25] The notion of postmemory builds on these approaches by suggesting that traumatic historical events, whether distanced by time or obfuscated by political design, cannot be easily buried, erased, or forgotten but instead are reworked and renegotiated within present contexts, discursive spheres, and everyday encounters. Lebanon's official policy of postwar silence and denial should not be mistaken for "collective amnesia" or substantiate the idea of a national "culture of forgetfulness" but rather represents one discursive approach to the past among competing and conflicting historical narratives.[26] Indeed this initial postwar silence has given way to what Jens Hanssen and Daniel Genberg term *hypermesia*—the proliferation of seminars, conferences, workshops, films, books, and art work, "confronting and rethinking"[27] war memories, and creating an environment where "memory is constantly present, multiple and celebrated."[28] These memory discourses can be briefly delineated within three broad trends: healing, resistance, and revolution. The first trend is "revealing is healing"; this therapeutic approach championed by victims' groups and civil-rights activists seeks personal closure and national unity based on truth and reconciliation. The second trend is the growth of Lebanese nostalgia as a means of resisting postwar change and the globalizing and homogenizing forces of reconstruction. Samir Khalaf explains this trend as an impulsive reaction to the erosion of familiar landmarks and icons, resulting in a "heritage crusade" evidenced in the revival of folk arts, poetry, and storytelling, and the increase in films, novels, and autobiographies recalling past times, places, and experiences.[29] The third trend is memory recovery as a vehicle for political revolution, a popular approach of leftist intellectuals and of political opposition and civil-society groups seeking to challenge Lebanon's ruling elites and confront the inherent culture of sectarianism.[30] These mnemonic trajectories evoke different forms of agency and cultural production, and it remains to be seen how influential they will become in shaping the personal recollections and perspectives of Lebanon's postmemory generation.

LOCATING A POSTMEMORY GENERATION

Postmemory is perhaps best defined as a residual type of memory, a recollection of an event not personally experienced but socially felt, a traumatic rupture that indelibly scars

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a nation, religious group, community, or family. Marianne Hirsch posits the concept in relation to the overwhelming weight of Holocaust memory and its discursive power, particularly through photographs and visual images, to fix and shape Jewish historical consciousness and remembrance. For Hirsch, postmemory exists as "a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated, not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation."[31] Such memory often works simultaneously to connect subsequent generations to, and distance them from, their collective pasts. It helps provide mnemonic frames and schemata for affirming social identities, communal traditions, and temporal continuity while imprisoning people within historical discourses that have "silenced us verbally" and "can be neither understood nor re-created."[32]

This postmemory dialectic of simultaneous attachment and dislocation to the past, or "uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture,"[33] is clearly observed in the lives of many Lebanese youth. An interview with Rami, a twenty-year-old student at the American University of Beirut from Kaflik, a village in the Mount Lebanon, captures the essence of such transgenerational trauma.[34] He begins tentatively: "It's hard to hide the effects of war. I think the war greatly affected our family from the stories I heard, and every family has stories. So my family has difficult stories from the war—maybe no one died, but it still lives in you, somewhere, and haunts you." For Rami, the effects of civil war cannot be easily buried; like ghostly specters, family stories continue to haunt his private world, disturbing his perceptions and attitudes.

Rami's response typifies a new generation of Lebanese: those with no "lived experience" or personal memory of Lebanon's fifteen years of protracted civil conflict yet with a keen awareness of the lingering pain, suffering, and collective loss. The residual effects of war still mark Lebanese society, with a crippling national debt three times its gross national product, 28.5 percent of the populace continuing to live below the poverty line,[35] one in four having war-related mental disorders,[36] and the occurrence of high levels of adolescent violence and weapon carrying.[37] For such young people, war memory exists in paradox: forgotten and remembered, incomprehensible yet the source of constant discussion, finished yet very much alive. As Rami elucidates, lack of direct memory does not hinder debate. Instead it provokes curiosity and speculation among students:

> The war is talked about all the time—the war is always on people's tongues even though we have no memory of what happened . . . Taboo—yes, in class it is just known as the *al-ahdās* [the events]. After "the events," during "the events"—"the events" are a big void, a nebulous concept, what's inside you don't know, but you know it's black! You know it's there, it's ominous, but you don't know what's inside.

Discussion of the war may be constrained by educational authorities and sanitized through the abstract and vacuous use of the term *al-ahdās*, yet according to Rami this does not lessen its foreboding presence in the classroom nor does it deter "war-related disputes, arguments, and schoolyard fights." The war may have officially ended in 1990, he continues, but the Lebanese were left in "a timeless existence—they tried to make us forget what happened, when it happened and why it happened! We lost ourselves in this process." For Rami the overwhelming public discourse of forgetfulness and erasure

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has left his generation dangerously "out of time" and "out of place," bereft of a unifying national narrative and a cogent sense of self.

Despite Rami's sense of temporal disorientation he remains ambivalent in his attitude to the bloody conflict. At some stages in the interview he distances and disavows himself of collective guilt and responsibility, claiming, "It was not my war!" In other places, he acknowledges carrying the unwanted baggage of "fear, mistrust, and prejudice." The inherent tension is clearly captured in his ironic exclamation that "we are beyond the war—it's not very fashionable anymore! But do you have wrong perceptions of the other? The formal rhetoric is that we all lost together: no winners, no losers—but if you go to the individual communities they believe they lost more . . . "

Rami's cynical swipe at the "unfashionability" of war can be interpreted on many levels. First, it can be understood as social criticism of a hedonistic, self-absorbed, consumer generation more concerned with designer brands and the latest trends than with a reevaluation of the past. Such detached trivialization of the war is reflected in macabre Lebanese T-shirts, for sale in trendy shopping malls, that read, for example: "Lebanese war 1975–1990. Game over." Second, and perhaps more important, it may be read as a condemnation of the enforced public silence, which has created a gap between an imagined postwar recovery and the reality of simmering sectarian resentments and communal grievances. For Rami the "formal rhetoric" that underpins the official war discourse of *lā ghālib lā maghlūb* (no victor, no vanquished) stands in stark contrast to the private sectarian discourses of suffering and victimization.

For Rami, this failure to confront and reconcile competing memory discourses is most apparent within the setting of the Lebanese school, where, in his words, war memory "remains an untouchable topic." My fieldwork work carried out in various Lebanese high schools attests to such sentiments, with one teacher privately admitting that "history is difficult to teach if even the staff can't even agree on it." In two high schools in central Beirut and Luwayzeh, notice boards not only informed students of upcoming events but also warned them that *siyāsa mamnūaʿ*, or politics is forbidden on school grounds. Lebanese schools, in a sense, mirror the country's postwar stasis, with conflict managed through censoring public debate rather than being addressed through open dialogue. Contentious topics such as local politics, religious diversity, and the civil war are therefore excluded from teaching syllabi and classroom discussions.

As Rami comments, this absence of space for critical engagement is confounded by the continued national failure to produce a standardized history textbook[38]:

> People are still growing up with prejudice due to the absence of a common story . . . Let each side tell its story, and put that in the history book and keep it as unsentimental as possible. The story should be told without baggage and tell it as how people perceived it, not as how it should be perceived—don't indoctrinate people with the story.

The elusive search for a consensual history textbook in Lebanese schools dates back to 1946, the last date of a unified history curriculum.[39] Despite Taʾif promises and educational committee proposals, there remains no officially agreed-upon text but rather a diverse array of history books, which according to one Lebanese scholar, Antoine Messara, reach the "end of history in 1943" and tend to valorize Lebanese coexistence, claiming Lebanon as a "tolerant society whose members love one another and associate as brothers."[40]

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Rami's optimism in linking a more complex, multifaceted historical narrative to overcoming prejudice and indoctrination is perhaps ill founded. Yet it is fair to conclude that by denying students the opportunity to critically appraise their contemporary history and by neglecting to provide safe forums for cross-communal discussion, Lebanese high schools leave students ill equipped to process or engage with the past. In abdicating this educational responsibility to interpret or explain the war, schools have relegated memory almost exclusively to the private realms of the family, home, and local community. Rami remains somewhat cynical about these restrictive spheres: "Grudges die hard, traditional misconceptions die hard. It's difficult to move forward from this old petrified mentality and the perception of the 'other.' There is a difference between integration and interaction; there is not much merging going on." Rami's interview successfully sketches some of the recurring themes and tensions evident in Lebanon's postmemory generation. In the following sections, I show how the dynamic engagement and mediation of memory through visual and oral frames offers a more nuanced understanding of how the past is being negotiated.

MEMORYSCAPES: RUINS, ABSENCES, AND (RE)IMAGININGS

Despite the recent proliferation of Lebanese war imagery captured in TV documentaries and films, it is in the scarred urban landscape that most of my interviewees sought to situate and explain their nation's violent past. Only a few students referred to al-Jazeera's fifteen-part series *The War of Lebanon* or popular films such as Ziad Doueiry's *West Beirut* (1998) and Joseph Fares' *Zozo* (2005) in their narratives. The majority spoke of derelict houses, bullet-pocked walls, and posters and memorials to fallen fighters as the most enduring reminders of war. Everyday topography perhaps offers deeper emotional attachment and immediacy than that captured on film, providing intimate spaces in which memories can be inhabited and relived. For Alain, a sixteen-year-old student from Dekwaneh, these physical remnants of war are infused with mnemonic power and meaning, evoking images, narratives, and emotions that bring the past to life. He recalls: "I was born [in] 1990 when it all ended, but I hear all the stories . . . I have pictures of the war, and I have memories of the buildings and what happened there. Sometimes when we drive through an area, I am reminded of the past, the violence and destruction, it still shouts out to you."[41] Yet historic traces cannot be limited to what can be seen; for Alain they are also to be found in the silences, empty spaces, and voids that dominate Beirut's downtown and still punctuate the *khuṭūṭ al-tammās* (line of fire), or "Green Line" delineating east and west. These sites of displacement are just as salient as the visible traces of the war and indeed offer creative space for forms of emplacement through which Lebanese can redefine themselves and their relationships to others.[42] Both tangible sites and spaces of absence help establish a dynamic memoryscape of multilayered social histories and personal (re)imaginings. I briefly explore how students embed or emplace their stories in relation to war-damaged buildings, or what historian Robert Bevan terms the "unintentional monuments of war,"[43] and then consider how they also use visual landscapes to evoke wider interpretations of the conflict, displacing or distancing themselves from the traumatic past.

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If the Walls Could Talk (al-Hitan Btihki)

Although many students share a common heritage of war memory embedded in Lebanon's decaying edifices, they are selective about the buildings they recount, often fitting them within sectarian narratives of the war that emphasize personal suffering or communal victimization. Mona, from a middle-class Sunni background, focuses on her family's commercial property destroyed by militia fighting in central Beirut. The buildings she recalls are part of a lost past, a site of displacement demolished and rebuilt by the Lebanese redevelopment company Solidère[44] yet perpetually existing in her mind as ruined shells with fire-charred windows, graffiti-strewn walls, and collapsed floors. Alain, from a working-class Armenian/Catholic family, speaks of apartment blocks close to his home in Dekwaneh pockmarked by attacks by Palestinian fighters from the former camp of Tel al-Zaʿtar.[45] His selective remembrances of the battle surrounding Tel al-Zaʿtar are instructive. While he reflects on the legacy of conflict in the urban disfigurement of his own neighbourhood, he fails to mention the accompanying seven-month siege on the camp by Christian militias (the Tanzim and the Maron Khoury group) and the subsequent massacre of 2,000 to 3,000 Palestinians. This omission reflects an inherited sectarian historiography and reading of his city rather than a willful forgetfulness. Finally, Bashir, from an established Maronite elite family, recalls buildings in the Christian Beirut suburb of Ashrafieh devastated by Syrian shelling in 1978 and then subject to Christian infighting between General Aoun and Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces. It is interesting that these students select buildings not only to demarcate former battle lines and situate war stories but also to validate continuing emotive themes: dispossession, the Palestinian presence, Syrian military involvement, and the struggle for Christian political leadership.[46]

Other students recall destroyed homes as part of nostalgic narratives that seek to recover or make sense of rupture and exile. Indeed many of the students I interviewed talked of the pain and dislocation of leaving a village, a family home, or a beautiful landscape despite having no personal recollection of the traumatic events. Their postmemory remembrances balance stories of collective suffering and expulsion with tales of communal harmony and local belonging, both grounded and imagined through physical sites. Ghassan, a university student from Bhamdoun, recalls his own sense of estrangement and confusion as his family would return every summer to visit the ruins of their former home: "I remember picnics in an empty building . . . Why did we do that? I don't know . . . But when you are in Beirut, and your church is in the village, living in Beirut cuts you off from your community; you know nothing."[47] Although Ghassan struggles to understand the reason behind the picnic trips, evidently his attachment to his village church and local community has been formed through such physical returns to the land, accompanied by narratives of daily life and relationships. For other students, such as sixteen-year-old Jamela, a home and village in South Lebanon remain banished to the realm of imagination. She vividly recounts the desecration of her house by "violent forces" that destroyed "everything my family ever owned in this world."[48] Jamela remains vague on the militia group involved; as with many postmemory narratives, her concern is not with establishing historic facts or in pursuing justice but rather in connecting with collective pain. Dispossession for Jamela is keenly felt through her parents' loss, which causes her to forcefully vow never to return to the site of familial

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suffering. For both Ghassan and Jamela, images of destroyed homes, vividly captured in their imaginations, represent not only loss of a perceived community but also the shrinking of negotiable Lebanese space.

Youth living in areas of former confrontation (Beirut's Green Line, the occupied zone in South Lebanon) and horrific massacre (Sabra and Shatila, Damour, Chekka, Tel al-Zaʿtar) often draw on their visual built environment to justify memories of besiegement, abuse, and fear. This was very evident in personal interviews and keenly observed during a project carried out by Lebanese nongovernmental organization Umam Documentation and Research on 3–24 April 2005 to work on memory of war among Lebanese teenagers.[49] *Our Sunday Back Then*, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the outbreak of war, drew together twenty-six students from diverse social and religious backgrounds and gave them tape recorders and disposable cameras to capture the sounds, images, and testimonies of their parents, families, and communities concerning the past "events." One of the most controversial group activities involved the display and explanation of the students' photographs, which were dominated by images of damaged buildings and war-scarred homes. Students gravitated toward religious corners, seeking comfort in like-minded clusters. Maronite Christian youth from Ain al-Rummaneh offered pictures of churches, crosses, and religious statues, reminding the audience of the initial attack on Pierre Gemayel in a Maronite chapel that sparked the conflict in April 1975 while suggesting a continuation of localized religious intimidation and confrontation. In the words of sixteen-year-old Lisa:

> We still have these problems with the other side, just last month. Who are they and who are us, I'll explain. We are my community, the Christians of course, and they are the Muslims, the other community . . . Some youth guys from "them" come over into our territory to "us" and drank beer at the statue of the Virgin Mary and showed disrespect and caused problems.

Lisa's recollection of war memory effectively integrates past conflict between the Maronite Kataʾib and Palestinians into present-day disputes between Christian and Muslim youth. The historic scene of violence and provocation at the Ain al-Rummaneh church finds contemporary resonance in social disturbances carried out at the Virgin Mary statue, a local landmark and iconic symbol that has been religiously defiled and publicly shamed. Territorial and spatial boundaries have been infringed and disregarded, inevitably leading to intensified hostilities and disputes. This temporal fusion is certainly understandable given the recurring episodes of violence along this troubled Muslim–Christian intersection, most recently evidenced in October 2009 with a pitched street battle involving around 150 local residents.[50]

A Palestinian group of students at the memory workshop mostly presented images of Sabra and Shatila: haunting snapshots of graves, families huddled in small rooms, ragged and scarred camp walls, and shacks disfigured by gunfire. For Muhammad, the massacre of September 1982 that resulted in an estimated 1,300 deaths remains the landmark event that subsumes all else; it is the starting point for any discussion or explanation of the war.[51] In his words, these photographs represent an unforgettable and ingrained past: "It's part of our history, from family, friends, neighbours, and the camp. You learn it from [when] you are very young." Although this informal group contained students from Ain al-Helwe Palestinian camp in Saida, the images and narratives of Sabra and Shatila became the collective symbol to project Palestinian suffering and abandonment

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while linking it to contemporary fears, as one student expressed it, "of being victims of renewed ethnic cleansing—sanctioned by the international community."

This commemorative project again underscores the existence and salience of splintered and fractured understandings of the past, grounded in specific sites and locales of personal or communal suffering and drawn upon to accentuate postwar concerns. Yet not all students, within the project or indeed among my interview cohort, used their physical surroundings to historicize and territorialize collective trauma; some instead sought to subvert, challenge, and evade traditional war narratives with appeal to alternative spaces. A number of university students chose to convene their interviews in places of symbolic importance, allowing for a reframing of the past and a repositioning of their involvement.

Framing and Taming the Past

Some students chose the interview setting to celebrate specific historic events or significant political themes. For Rafik, a final-year economics student at Lebanese American University, coffee at one of Lebanon's most famous hotels, Le Bristol in Verdun, was not merely a tribute to the birth of the Lebanese opposition movement in December 2004 with the Bristol Declaration.[52] It was also a celebration of the hotel's rich legacy of harboring exiles, rebels, and war correspondents: "This is the best place to discuss Lebanon's past—history has been observed, reported, and made in this hotel."[53] Rafik's analysis of the war was similarly measured, reasoned, and detached. He attributed this trait to his active involvement with humanitarian groups that provide, in his words, "an important bridging role between Lebanon's communities." Despite disappointment with corrupt politicians and a disenfranchised youth, Rafik believes the lessons of the past have been learned: "We tried it, we lost, and we are not going to do it again."

For Zeina, a veiled third-year literature student from the Beirut suburbs of Jinah, the infamous sandwich bar Wimpy on Hamra Street—badly lit, uncomfortable, and sporting Formica tables—remains a site of legendary resistance.[54] She recalls a popular tale:

> One afternoon in 1982, so the story goes, Khalid Alwan, a SSNP [Syrian Social Nationalist Party] militiaman, was disturbed by the arrogance of an occupying Israeli officer who was insisting on paying his bill in Shekels. Nonchalantly, Khalid strolled across the road, shot the officer and his two accompanying soldiers, and then calmly walked home. This began the national response against the Israeli occupation.

The mythical power of this act, which is commemorated by a small plaque and sign on the pavement outside the Wimpy café, lives more intimately in Zeina's imagination. The story functions as both a metaphoric lens for her broader analysis of the war, courage and defiance offsetting shame and oppression, and a contemporary symbol of hope in Lebanon's struggle against foreign intervention and the ever-present threat of Israel. Zeina's memory of the war, in which she lost family members to intra-Lebanese conflict, is subsumed by the more pressing narrative of Israeli aggression and violence. She reflects: "Look, war memories are fading. But what can't be forgotten is the Israeli massacres at Sabra and Shatila, the bombing of refugees at a U.N. compound in Qana, eighteen years of brutal occupation of the South."[55]

Finally, Pierre, a medical undergraduate, prefers the familiarity of his native town in Lebanon's northern hills to add authenticity to our discussion. His memory is intrinsically

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tied to his local identity and the soil of Zgharta: "Togetherness flows from a common history; my family name—it dates from one of the oldest families in Ehden. It was before Christ, in this part of the north of Lebanon, my family dates [back] 5,000 or 6,000 years . . . I'm very rooted here."[56] Zgharta derives from the Aramaic word *zaghar* (fortress), and the place is well named, perched high amidst the precipitous ranges of Mount Lebanon. During the war it was a strategic stronghold for the Christian frontline, particularly former President Suleiman Franjieh's "Marada" forces against Muslim and PLO militias in Tripoli. Despite an infamous and bloody past involving Christian infighting and assassinations,[57] Pierre remarkably claims that his town remained distant from the war, a safe haven and refuge from the storm. Zgharta exists in Pierre's mind romanticized and idyllic, "a city that could not let go of its village characteristics, [where] everybody knows everybody." The Lebanon with which he is most at ease is similarly hazy, forgetful, and selective.

These three accounts demonstrate common postmemory approaches to coping with past violence, drawing on tropes of detachment, displacement, revisionism, and denial. They seek to provide alternative war narratives based on spaces of exception—the liberal refuge of an international hotel, the celebrated site of resistance against Israeli occupation, the peaceful village secluded from the ravages of war. Although such spaces invariably exist (or can be imagined), the majority of students interviewed still feel trapped by a war-scarred urban topography that evokes rage, loss, and dislocation as well as the daily reality of continuing division and fracture. As Steven Seidman ponders in his anthropological examination of the streets of Beirut: "Indeed, how is forgetting possible under the conditions in which the very culture of social polarization and sectarian enmity, which fuelled the collective madness of the war years, has been reproduced by a postwar history of spectacular assassinations, heightened class and sectarian division, and political paralysis?"[58] Lebanon's legacy of communal violence remains difficult to consign to the historic past or indeed erase from its cultural and visual landscape. The material and immaterial remnants of war remain entwined in the complex production of postmemory identity, spatial practice, and social engagement. I turn now from the dynamic process of emplacement within the physical landscape to the equally significant process of emplotment within postwar narrative constructs.

POSTMEMORY NARRATIVES: TELLING STORIES, SITUATING SELVES

The postwar tension surrounding the impulse to recover or reassemble the past and the individual's incapacity to recreate it is embodied in Lebanese author Elias Khoury's character of the Storyteller in his novel *Mamlakat al-Ghuraba'* (The Kingdom of Strangers). The Storyteller weaves and reworks the lives of others through disjointed narratives that "transform the past into the present" in an attempt "to impose order on a land in which all order has been smashed to pieces." Yet he also must acknowledge that through the act of narration he has become complicit in the process: "You are the storyteller, she said. No. I am the Story."[59]

The challenge of distinguishing teller from tale, truth (*al-ḥaqīqa*) from story (*al-ḥikāya*), distorted memory from actual experience, is a recurring theme of contemporary Lebanese literature. It is also reflective of Lebanon's postmemory condition. Like

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Khoury's Storyteller, Lebanese youth are similarly entwined in the narrative process—imbibing and transforming family stories and local histories to affirm social identities, political discourses, and temporal continuities. This act of narrative emplotment, a grasping together of discordant events, actors, and interactions into an ordered coherent story, perhaps can be understood as a way of providing historical meaning and purpose for the lived present. According to Hayden White, emplotment is not merely concerned with ordering a disordered universe but also with establishing the chronological progression and "followability" of a story, directing it toward a conclusive ending. Paul Ricoeur refers to this as an inversion of the natural order of time: "In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequence."[60] Invariably, such teleological strategies also reflect broader social traditions of remembering as well as dominant political and religious discourses. For David Carr, emplotment or "narrative consciousness" remains intrinsic to everyday life, because "narrative structure pervades our very experience of time and social existence, independently of our contemplating the past as historians."[61] Certainly Lebanese youth draw on a variety of dominant themes to emplot their postmemory narratives, partly shaped by cultural sensibilities, sociopolitical contexts, and personal experiences. Two such major plotlines are recurrence and redemption.

Recurrence: The Visible Invisible War

Mark Twain once claimed that history does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme. In Lebanon, rhythmic patterns and irresistible temporal cycles seem to throw together all too familiar protagonists (family clans, *zuʿamāʾ*, religious leaders, politicians, foreign interests) into all too familiar struggles (land reforms, economics, political power, and regional balance) with all too predictable outcomes (the civil conflicts of 1820, 1860, 1958, 1975–90). The consequence is both the evocation of a feeling of déjà vu and a fatalistic acceptance among Lebanese youth that the past is never truly past. The narrative of Pamela, a seventeen-year-old student originally from Zahle, typifies this nonlinear approach to time, as it splices past and present realms, fusing them in a "recurrence" theme.[62] Her particular remembrance focuses on a contemporary image, which is then explained retrospectively. The impression created is one of stagnancy, moral intransigence, and the ever corrupting influence of the war. In her own words,

> Nothing has changed. Those leaders during the war are now politicians. I had seen recently after Geagea's release young kids queuing up to see him in the mountains, standing with flags and political t-shirts. What do they know? It is being passed on from their parents, the hatred, the prejudices, and the sectarian feeling. Even small kids in this school, they chant the names of political leaders and wear symbols, but they don't know what they are talking about. Look! Before the war we had the same parties. During the war we had the same parties. After the war we still have the same parties. What has changed? People who are with Geagea during the war remain with him now. They stick to the same person.

For Pamela, the continued presence, popularity, and rule of war-time militia leaders, now posing as national politicians, undermine the very idea of a break with the Lebanese past. She wonders how the "same old gangsters" could ever usher in a new era of reconciliation.

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Her ire is particularly kindled by the adulation and support afforded former leader of the Lebanese Forces Samir Geagea upon his release from prison after serving only eleven years of his life sentence for war crimes and political assassinations.[63] Among Lebanon's Christian communities, Geagea remains a highly controversial figure even by Lebanese standards, radically polarizing loyalties and opinions. His notoriety—gained through his violent struggle for power within the Lebanese Forces, his fierce militia rule, and his bloody confrontation with former army general Michel Aoun in the War of Elimination in 1990—was further consolidated through years of solitary confinement as Lebanon's only tried war combatant. His release from Yarze prison on 26 July 2005 triggered both fireworks and curses; for Pamela, it was like petrol on a smoldering flame. Past bitterness, tension, and hatred were once again reawakened and invoked through stories, flags, and rallies.

Recalling the passion and fervor of young kids waiting in the Christian mountains in anticipation of their returning hero, Pamela transposes this to her personal world and Luwayzeh's junior playground, where children chant political slogans affirming their allegiance to "Nasrallah, Aoun, Geagea, Berri, Jumblatt, and Hariri." Despite their ignorance, these sectarian cries and prejudices represent echoes of the war, reverberating around contemporary school walls. Similarly, Pamela imagines Samir Geagea's gaunt and haggard face as the physical embodiment of a past long imprisoned but sadly not forgotten.

The same recurrence theme features in the narratives of students across religious, political, and class divides. Fuʿad, a twenty-one-year-old student from the Shiʿi suburbs of Dahiyya, connects current political tensions with previous antagonisms and struggles.[64] His narrative begins with a militia battle in 1985 and returns to the increasing violence occurring in the Beirut suburbs of Chiyah and Ain al-Rummaneh.

> In 1985 Jumblatt tried to change the color of the Lebanese flag. They tried to combine the al-Ishtirakiyya [Progressive Socialist Party or PSP] flag with the Lebanese flag and they tried to take over Lebanon and change the whole presidency to Druze. Now they want it back. The Druze are playing a game, Geagea is playing a game, Aoun is playing a game, Hizbullah wants to rule, Berri wants to rule. Everyone wants to sit on this chair, to rule and make money, not to unite Lebanon, [but] to help their pocket.

Fuʿad's cynical reading of Lebanese history reduces all to a political "game": a no holds barred competition, spanning decades and contested by the same rapacious autocrats, for the exclusive right to rule and plunder Lebanon. His stinging criticism of Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader and head of the PSP, perhaps derives from his deep-seated mistrust of this guarded community, which he labels "untrustworthy" and "always scheming." Yet his reference to Jumblatt's drive in 1985 to assimilate the Lebanese tricolor and the PSP flag, as part of greater designs for a Druze realignment of constitutional power, reveals the interpretative power and fluidity of oral tradition.

Fuʿad's recollection most likely alludes to the so-called Flag War of November 1985, during which PSP militiamen and Shiʿi Amal forces battled for control of West Beirut. The climax of six months of hostilities witnessed PSP militiamen replacing Cedar flags flown for Lebanese National Day with PSP flags on all public buildings. This act of rebellion remains embedded in local memory, as does the ferocity of the ensuing violence, which claimed sixty-five lives in one day, with 400 abducted, shocking both

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sides into a temporary cease-fire.[65] In Fuʿad's opinion, the story of the Lebanese flag—and the attempts to change, transform, or replace it—is a perfect lens for observing the contemporary power struggles within Lebanese society. He continues: "You know they are still fighting over who gets to raise Lebanon's flag today." By this Fuʿad alludes to the 8 March and 14 March demonstrations and the very visible public battle over which political coalition represents the true face of Lebanese nationalism—with each side employing Lebanese flags and nationalist slogans. For Fuʿad this emerging polarization is not just about different regional visions or about which side is pro-Syrian and which is pro-American but is also about "sectarian leaders once again pulling Lebanon apart."

Fuʿad's narrative then becomes more personal as he shares his own fears for "another bad war," his reluctance to visit certain districts of Beirut like Dora, where "they will beat you up" for saying you're a Muslim, and finally his disgust at annual street confrontations when "Lebanese Forces fight Shiʿi and Palestinians" to commemorate the beginning of the civil war in April 1976. He continues: "There is a lot of fighting these days between young people; many people are carrying weapons, sixteen-year-olds are carrying knives. If you are a Muslim going into a Christian area, you should be careful and the same vice versa . . . This whole issue is going to affect civilians in Lebanon. I think people want war, those who follow Geagea want war." Fuʿad's present concerns that another war may be imminent help shape his remembrances of the past, causing him to emplot recurrence scenarios and to predict aggressive intent: "I think people want war." Such pessimism derives not solely from a growing fear of conflict but also from a frustration and rejection of his life in Dahiyya and a consuming desire to escape to the West. Like many disenchanted Lebanese youth, Fuʿad feels imprisoned and confined by the lack of job opportunities, religious freedom, and social progress in post-Taʾif Lebanon: "I'm always looking for a way out of this ghetto. Forget talk of Lebanon moving forward—we are just going backward." Fuʿad's nihilistic vision of future bloodshed is thus as much a judgment or condemnation of Lebanon as it is a realistic expectation.

Redemption: From Suffering Victim to Resilient Hero

Faced by the horrors and shame of an incomprehensible past, some members of Lebanon's postmemory generation seek refuge and redemption in the status of the helpless victim. Stories tend to focus on the losses, killings, and atrocities committed by the adversary while romanticizing one's own tragic struggle for freedom, independence, or just the right to exist. The permeations are endless: students recall their victimhood at the hands of Western connivance, Israeli aggression, Palestinian terrorism, Arab backwardness, Maronite expansionism, Sunni greed, Shiʿi fanaticism, the rule of warlords, economic injustice, and political corruption.[66] Although it is not my intention to undermine the validity of these claims or to negate their historical reality and the varying degrees of violence and culpability involved, I believe it is important to consider how these narratives are used to inform the present. Perhaps they are a means of escaping blame, guilt, or the collective heritage of parents and grandparents still unwilling and ill prepared to deal with the ambiguities of history. Yet this self-assigned status of victim is not always an indication of weakness; rather, it is often an occasion for narratives of defiance, resistance, and heroism.

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Yasir's sense of belonging is inextricably tied to a sense of struggle.[67] In a dimly lit student bar, over beer and carrot sticks, he unpacks his past. Born to a Lebanese mother and a Palestinian father, his very birth ushered him into a life that was "complex" and full of "ambiguities." His Marxist upbringing, attendance at both Muslim and Christian schools, and experience of "living all over Lebanon" furthered his feeling of social detachment and disillusionment with what he terms "a racist country." Although vague on specific memories of the war, Yasir is more definite in his conclusions: "the war needed to happen to some degree . . . This war is like many of the Lebanese civil wars, an uprising of the poor and then the revolution was shifted into civil conflict." His socialist critique of Lebanon's class struggle extends further to a need for a new form of nationalism—"put the Lebanese flag in every classroom"—and a judicial system equipped to pass "judgment against all the war criminals in power—anyone who did massacres cannot be considered in ten or fifteen years as a war hero." As Yasir turns his attention to narrating his personal experience of the violence, he begins with his internal battles of identity and belonging:

> First I identify myself as Yasir—identity is an ever-changing concept, I don't have a conflict of belonging. I feel like I belong, but my identity is much to do with my rights . . . in some way it is reactionary. If I was born in a place that didn't have conflict, I don't know if I would have the same sense of belonging. I belong to all Palestinian communities . . . I discovered I have a kind of nostalgia for Palestine because of all the songs and stories I listened to as a kid, I have this feeling . . . I do believe that Palestine is my homeland . . . also I do believe that Lebanon is my homeland . . . particularly since my rights are raped here, this is my defensive status. I want to defend it these days, therefore in Palestine and Lebanon I feel a sense of belonging to the land.

Perhaps what is most striking about this narrative is that it is both abstract and self-absorbed. War and conflict remain faceless, generic forces that have caused Yasir to carve out an identity and an attachment to the land. The analytical and self-reflective style of his response is matched by a coolness of tone, which accentuates his distance from the subject matter. Although Yasir admits a nostalgic longing for a Palestinian homeland, birthed from parent's stories, folktales, and songs, it is the denial and violation of his present rights that connect him firmly to the Lebanese soil. His sense of injustice as a dispossessed Palestinian and as a second-class Lebanese citizen fuel in him a desire to assert his hybrid identity and to fight for both national causes. This tension of belonging is reconciled through a resistance discourse that becomes for him a "revolutionary" way of life. Like many third-generation Palestinian exiles, Yasir's sense of belonging "to all Palestinian communities" is simultaneously consuming and vague, everything and nothing. The Palestinian cause reverberates throughout the interview, as postmemory provides Yasir an emotive bridge to his father's land, estranged relatives, and memories of life before 1948. For Yasir, Palestine exists as a rallying cry, an inspirational goal to motivate and encourage resistance, an idea as well as a physical place.

For Khalid, some war memories are so intense that they almost feel as if they have been personally lived.[68] Sitting in an aging Hamra flat, this first-year economics student from Tripoli recounts tales from 1975, the Palestinian cause, the battles for Tripoli, and the interventions of Syria and Israel. Despite the obligatory political precursor—"I'm not into parties, but I have my own political views"—Khalid soon feels at ease to share his "contempt for the Lebanese Forces," his "admiration for Hassan Nasrallah's integrity,"

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and his belief in the need for "Chinese-style population restrictions for Palestinians." The cynicism and disaffection, hinted at by his Che Guevara t-shirt, is further revealed in an ironic dismissal of Lebanese honesty: "Off the record you must be aware that you can't really trust what people tell you. They will always give you different answers depending on their environments." The tension between what is said and what is known is a Lebanese trait almost exclusively observed in others. Khalid's detached, informed, and balanced understanding of the war is accredited to his reading of foreign correspondents and researchers: "I learnt about the war mostly from Robert Fisk, this is the irony about it. That's why I feel I got an objective view."[69]

Khalid's most vivid postmemory recollection draws on a resistance theme, which turns the tragedy and brutality of war into an occasion for heroism and defiance:

> Personal memories, I have none—I was born in 1988—but I have my parents' memory. I have heard lots of tales, like they were always running from bombs, but I have this one memory that I can really feel that I lived it, for it's pretty intense and my dad told it to me. He wasn't linked to any parties or anything, but he was getting blood for people, and he was in a car with a microphone, shouting, "We need blood, just donate!" And he sees a car coming and there is a guy tied to that car and he [is] being dragged alive through the streets. And the party was the Syrian party called Tishrin, an important party. And he lost it and just started screaming, "Don't drag people. No for dragging people, no for doing this!" He was really in danger but he couldn't hold himself—and most of my uncles and aunts worked in hospitals to help people.

This story, like many postwar narratives, is a family tale, handed down from a father to his son, infused with intensity and emotional attachment. The image is powerful and symbolic; Khalid's father seeking to save lives through finding blood donors while Tishrin militiamen attempt to destroy lives through brutal forms of torture. The juxtaposition of mindless barbarism and compassionate humanity is stark and graphic. Khalid's father emerges as both a shining hero and a defiant voice amidst the prevailing darkness and depravity of the Lebanese war period. For Khalid the story functions on many levels. First, it confirms his family's virtue and selfless desire "to help people," even at risk to their own lives. In this sense it inverts the normal war themes of death, suffering, and victimization by focusing instead on redeeming qualities such as communality, empathy, and sacrificial service. Second, it is a story that inspires and celebrates resistance in the face of overwhelming social violence and oppression. The unwillingness of Khalid's father to passively acquiesce to the horrors of torture on the war-torn streets of Tripoli provides a contemporary symbol of hope and courage in the midst of troubled times. For Khalid, this postmemory image is easily transposed on to Lebanon's current political impasse, in which "extremism and random violence, such as car bombs and the Ashrafieh riots" confront ordinary citizens and in which "Syria has now become our enemy." Khalid connects not merely with the intensity of this memory but also with the values it embodies and the daring it represents. His feeling of having really "lived it" suggests a longing to replicate his father's courage and to carry on the legacy of resisting coercive power.

The narratives of Yasir and Khalid both reflect this journey from victim to resilient hero. For Yasir, the war is inextricably linked to his struggle to reclaim his Palestinian heritage and identity; for Khalid, it is the social backdrop for his father's act of defiance and his inspiration for resisting social oppression and injustice. These personal stories

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are less concerned with assigning blame or guilt and more with redeeming broken images of loss, pain, and suffering and with constructing new narratives of hope from them.

CONCLUSION

I began this article by outlining the mnemonic dilemma facing Lebanon's postwar generation: what are they obliged to recall and redeem of a traumatic past, and what is best expunged or displaced to ensure future harmony? More specifically, how are such contradictory processes mediated through the agency of postwar landscapes and narrative traditions? My research reveals a complex dialectic: youth struggling to reconcile public censure and private anguish, to come to terms with a history that resists either explanation or annihilation, and to situate their life stories between an unredeemable past and an unimaginable future. This may be understood as the inherent tension within postmemory, that of historic attachment and temporal dislocation. However, it must also be recognized as a consequence of Lebanon's ongoing postwar failings: the continuance of a culture of sectarianism sustained, as Seidman puts it, by "the territorialization of sectarian identities and the hyperpoliticization of sectarian conflicts."[70] Lebanese psychiatrist Adnan Houballah explains this as the "visible war" merely being replaced by an "invisible war"—a war of "fantasies and representations run by 'passive fighters' who fail to understand the nature of national identity and their identities, which are not static or monolithic but shifting composites of different allegiances and attachments and who also fail to recognise the multiplicity and complexity of the Other."[71]

Against the backdrop of a stalled recovery, many Lebanese students speak of forgetfulness as an antidote to future conflict, yet few demonstrate an ability to free themselves from the haunting power of a scarred, fragmented landscape or the residual pain of oral traditions. War traces, in the forms of sites, absences, and narratives, have become normalized in everyday life, impacting spatial patterns, social encounters, and self/other perceptions. Amidst times of political instability and heightened tension, such spaces of imaginative connection and shared trauma are not only strengthened and reworked, sustaining prejudices and sectarian/political differentiation, but also offer protection, communal solidarity, and a sense of belonging. For those youth who do seek to distance and anathematize themselves from Lebanon's destructive past, this often comes at a cost: a disavowal of history and a dislocation from the present. Students confess to feeling bereft of meaningful narratives or historical answers to explain their personal experiences or Lebanon's postwar realities. Tony, a twenty-two-year-old student from a village in the Metn Mountains, suggests national reconciliation must begin with a desire to "reconcile our history. We don't just want a single version of history . . . it's irrational or unscientific. The problem is we didn't reconcile our past in order to live for our future."[72]

As contemporary Lebanon lurches from sporadic violence (the Israeli war of July 2006; Hizbullah's military incursion into Sunni West Beirut in May 2008) to fragile consensus (the Doha Accord of May 2008), civil war memories are increasingly implicated in sectarian diatribes exchanged between the 8 March and 14 March political coalitions and secular protest rallies calling for "civil marriage, not civil war."[73] These debates will undoubtedly inform future postmemory narratives—but, as my research has revealed, the Lebanese postmemory experience remains dynamic and multilayered, resistant to

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official silences, and selective and subversive in its appropriation and negotiation of war memory discourses.

NOTES

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[1]This quote is from a personal interview transcript, part of a series of interviews conducted with Lebanese youth from June 2005 to June 2006. The interview took place on 2 March 2006 in a Bliss Street cafe in the Hamra district of Beirut.

[2]Sune Haugbolle, "Memory as Representation and Memory as Idiom," in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon*, ed. Youssef Choueiri (London: Stacey International, 2007), 121–33.

[3]See, for example, Samir Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj* (London: Saqi, 2006); and Saree Makdisi, "Beirut, a City without History?" in *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Ussama Samir Makdisi and Paul A. Silverstein (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006), 201–14.

[4]For a selection of such work on Lebanese war memory, see Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Oren Barak, "Don't Mention the War? The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetfulness in Postwar Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* 61 (2007): 49–70; Caroline Nagel, "Reconstructing Space, Re-creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban Development in Postwar Beirut," *Political Geography* 21 (2002): 717–25; and Elizabeth Kassab, "The Paramount Reality of the Beirutis: War Literature and the Lebanese Conflict," *Beirut Review* 4 (1992): 63–84. See also Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

[5]For a detailed outline and exploration of the concept of postmemory, see Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29 (2008): 103–28; idem, "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile," in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 418–46; and idem, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[6]Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

[7]See Toby Butler, "Memoryscape: Integrating Oral History, Memory and Landscape on the River Thames," in *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed. Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 223–39.

[8]Personal interview, 30 November 2005, Luwayzeh.

[9]Although the interviews were carried out during a one-year period, many of the contacts, observations, and ethnographic insights come from having spent five years living in the region.

[10]These included activists involved with the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace-building based in Hamra and Umam Documentation and Research based in Haret Hrayek.

[11]Interviews were conducted in Lebanese-dialect Arabic, English, and a mixture of the two, a common trait among urban youth. Phrases such as "*Anā ktīr* tired" or "Sorry, would you like *musāʿada shwaī*?" are not unfamiliar hybrid terms used in Beiruti streets, shops, and campuses.

[12]Various titles have been given to the political period between February 2005 and May 2005 in which protest, euphoria, and popular mobilization followed the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. In Lebanon, among supporters of the emerging loyalist coalition—led by Saad Hariri (the Future Movement), Samir Geagea (the Lebanese Forces), and Walid Jumblatt (the Progressive Socialist Party)—it was commonly known as the Independence Intifada or Uprising (*intifāḍat al-istiqlāl)*; in the West it was dubbed the Cedar Revolution or the Beirut Spring.

[13]Ousama Safa, "Lebanon Springs Forward," *Journal of Democracy* 17 (2006): 22–37.

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[14]Hanna Ziadeh perceptively summarizes the geopolitical shifts: "Syria's control over Lebanon was abruptly ended by a Lebanese, regional and international alliance: a Druze–Christian–Sunni coalition backed by an anti-Syrian American policy of intervention in the Middle East in alliance with a Saudi–French understanding on ending Syrian monopoly over Lebanon." *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon* (London: Hirst, 2006), 175.

[15]Esther Charlesworth, *Architects without Frontiers: War, Reconstruction and Design Responsibility* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), 57.

[16]For more details on the phases of the war, see Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I. B. Tauris, 1993); and Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of the War in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

[17]These statistics vary according to different sources. I am relying on Samir Khalaf's analysis of the postwar consequences in his work *Civil and Uncivil Violence: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict in Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 3–4.

[18]Ibid., 1.

[19]Ahmad Beydoun, "Movements of the Past and Deadlocks of the Present," in Choueiri, *Breaking the Cycle*, 15.

[20]See Choueiri, *Breaking the Cycle*; Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); Farid El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000); Raghid El-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I. B. Tauris, 1996); Salim Nasr, "The New Social Map," in *Lebanon in Limbo*, ed. T. Hanf and N. Salam (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), 143–58; and Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).

[21]This phrase was first coined by Lebanese journalist and civil activist Samir Kassir in "Ahwal al-Dhakira fi Lubnan" (The Situation of Memory in Lebanon), in *Memory for the Future: Actes du colloque tenu a la maison des nations unies*, ed. Amal Makarem (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2002), 195–200.

[22]This narrative was popularized by Ghassan Tueni in his work *Une guerre pour les autres* (Paris: J. C. Lattes, 1985), which examines the role of non-Lebanese factions (Syria, Palestinians, Israel, the United States) and Cold War dynamics in the civil violence that consumed Lebanon from 1975 to 1990.

[23]The dominant text on the "politics of memory" perspective remains Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), in which they argue that traditions and rituals are deliberately created or invented to support changing political realities, legitimate state power, define nations, and "inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," 1.

[24]Michael Schudson, "Lives, Laws and Language: Commemorative versus Non-commemorative Forms of Effective Public Memory," *The Communication Review* 2 (1997): 15.

[25]Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994), 118.

[26]Samir Khalaf, "Culture, Collective Memory, and the Restoration of Civility," in *Peace for Lebanon?,* ed. Deirdre Collings (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 273–85; and Michael Young, "The Sneer of Memory: Lebanon's Disappeared and Postwar Culture," *Middle East Report* 217 (2000): 42–45.

[27]The titles of two events run by the Umam and Documentation Unit and Research are "Confronting Memories" (9–11 October 2008) and "Rethinking Memory" (27–30 November 2007), which presented a series of film screenings challenging the psychological effects of disappearance in Lebanon and exploring how other postwar societies have initiated local processes of truth, justice, and reconciliation.

[28]Jens Hanssen and Daniel Genberg, "Beirut in Memoriam: A Kaleidoscopic Space out of Focus," in *Crisis and Memory: Dimensions of Their Relationship in Islam and Adjacent Cultures*, ed. Andreas Pflitsch and Angelika Neuwirth (Beirut: Orient Institut, 2002), 233.

[29]Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut*, 35.

[30]See Sune Haugbolle's discussion of war memory as an idiom for political change in "Memory as Representation," 121–33.

[31]Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 2.

[32]Ibid., 22, 24.

[33]Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 106.

[34]Personal interview, 2 November 2005, Hamra.

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[35]See "Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon," Country Study, International Poverty Centre, United Nations Development Programme, No. 13, January 2008, http://www.undppovertycentre.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf (accessed 1 July 2009). For deeper statistical analysis, see the Lebanese Republic's Central Administration for Statistics, http://www.cas.gov.lb (accessed 1 July 2009).

[36]E. G. Karam, Z. N. Mneimneh, H. Dimassi, J. A. Fayyad, A. N. Karam, et al., "Lifetime Prevalence of Mental Disorders in Lebanon: First Onset, Treatment, and Exposure to War," in *Public Library of Science Medicine* 5 (2008): 61.

[37]T. Sibai, R. A. Tohme, H. A. Beydoun, N. Kanaan, and A. M. Sibai, "Violent Behavior among Adolescents in Post-war Lebanon: The Role of Personal Factors and Correlation with Other Problem Behaviors," *Journal of Public Health Medicine* 31 (2009): 39–46.

[38]See Munir Bashshur's account of the process of finding a Lebanese history curriculum: "The Deepening of Social and Communal Cleavages in the Lebanese Educational System," in Hanf and Salam, *Lebanon in Limbo,* 159–79.

[39]Makdisi, "Beirut, a City without History," 201.

[40]Antoine Messara, "Madha Yataʿllam al-Talamidha fi Kutub Taʾrikh Lubnan al-Madrasiyya" (What Do the Students Learn in School Textbooks on Lebanese History?), *al-Difaʿ al-Watani al-Lubnani* 13 (1995): 78.

[41]Personal interview, 22 February 2006, Mansourieh.

[42]For a deeper analysis of the concept of emplacement, see Donna K. Flynn, "We Are the Border: Identity, Exchange, and the State along the Benin–Nigeria Border," *American Ethnologist* 24 (1997): 311–30.

[43]Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion, 2006).

[44]Solidère is a Lebanese development company founded by Rafik Hariri in 1994 in charge of planning and redeveloping Beirut's city center after the devastation of war. Its thirty-year master plan (1994–2024) focuses on reconstructing Beirut as a global tourist commercial center, replete with beautifully restored churches and mosques, gardens, and Roman ruins.

[45]For more details on Tel al-Zaʿtar, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 73; and William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 165.

[46]These themes, while the concern of the three interviewees, are primarily Christian anxieties.

[47]Personal interview, 12 September 2005, American University of Beirut.

[48]Personal interview, 19 September 2005, Moseitybe, West Beirut.

[49]Theses quotes are directly transcribed from recorded video footage of the project, which Umam Documentation and Research generously allowed me to view at their Beirut center.

[50]For more details, see Manal Sarrouf's journalist account, "Rage in Ain al-Remmaneh after Tuesday Night's Violence," *Now Lebanon*, 7 October 2009, http://nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=118492 (accessed 11 November 2009).

[51]The exact number of deaths remains somewhat disputed, with Israel Defense Forces sources suggesting 700 to 800 were killed, while the Palestinian Red Crescent gives figures closer to 2,000. I am opting for the figure of 1,300 based on Bayan Nuwayhed Al-Hout's detailed analysis of victim lists in her book *Sabra and Shatila, September 1982* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

[52]The political manifesto of the Lebanese opposition (*al-muʿāraḍa*) was first delivered at the Bristol hotel in December 2004 and later published as the "Beirut declaration." It proclaims: "We have a common responsibility, Christians and Moslems, for the war which devastated our country; we believe that recognizing this responsibility is the essential condition for learning the lessons of the war so we will not be condemned indefinitely to repeating our past errors . . ." For more details, see http://www.beirutletter.com (accessed 4 July 2006).

[53]Personal interview, 13 October 2005, Verdun.

[54]Subsequent to the interview, the Wimpy café has been refurnished and taken over by the Costa Coffee chain.

[55]The shelling of Qana, a village in southern Lebanon, took place on 18 April 1996 as part of Israel's Grapes of Wrath operation, targeting Hizbullah fighters. The air strike hit a United Nations compound sheltering local residents and killed 106 civilians. A subsequent United Nations report concluded that it was "unlikely that the shelling of the United Nations compound was the result of gross technical and/or procedural errors." United Nations Security Council Document S-1996-337.

[56]Personal interview, 1 November 2005, Zgharta.

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[57]The most notable incident was the violent confrontation between Bashir Gemayel's Kata'ib and Suleiman Franjieh's Marada militias, which resulted in the death of Franjieh's eldest son Tony and his family in the summer resort of Ehden, just above Zgharta, on 14 June 1978. As a consequence the Christians in the northern mountains broke permanently from the Lebanese Front, and a family feud developed between the Franjieh and Gemayel clans. For a more detailed account see Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon,* 235–37.

[58]Steven Seidman, "Streets of Beirut: Self and the Encounter with the 'Other,'" *Idafat: Arab Journal of Sociology* (2009): 7–8.

[59]Elias Khoury, *The Kingdom of Strangers* (*Mamlakat al-Ghuraba'*), trans. Paula Haydar (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 5–7.

[60]Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 67–68.

[61]David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991), 9.

[62]Personal interview, 10 December 2005, Luwayzeh.

[63]Geagea was arrested in April 1994 and subsequently convicted of instigating acts of violence and assassinating former Prime Minister Rashid Karami and National Liberal Party leader Danny Chamoun. He served eleven years in solitary confinement before his sudden release in July 2005.

[64]Personal interview, 19 December 2005, Dahiyya.

[65]Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, 305.

[66]All of these sources of victimization were mentioned by students during the course of my interviews.

[67]Personal interview, 11 December 2005, Hamra.

[68]Personal interview, 11 February 2006, Hamra.

[69]Robert Fisk is the ubiquitous war correspondent and Beirut-based journalist who has devoted much of his life to covering politics and violence in the region.

[70]Seidman, *Streets of Beirut*, 17.

[71]Pamela Chabrieh, "Breaking the Vicious Circle! Contributions of the 25–35 Lebanese Age Group," in Choueiri, *Breaking the Cycle*, 70.

[72]Personal interview, 13 October 2005, Beirut Downtown, Nijmeh Square.

[73]See Patrick Galey and Josie Ensor, "Thousands to Join Laique Pride March in Name of Secularism," *Daily Star,* 23 April 2010.

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