

Chapter 3

“At the Gates of War”: Time, Space, and the Anticipation of Political Violence

“*Sami, ‘awlak raḥ yisīr fī ḥarb?*” (Sami, do you think there will be a war?) Ahmed, a married man in his thirties, with two kids at the time of this writing, would sometimes ask me this question as I walked in to have coffee or eat lunch at a café where he worked as a waiter in the Beirut neighborhood of Hamra. I would spend several hours a day in cafés such as this one, especially during the early days of fieldwork when I had no Internet at home, or during Beirut’s regular power outages when my apartment building did not have a backup electric generator. This particular café was small and often quiet, so it allowed me to meet Ahmed and develop friendly relations with him, as there were usually no more than two or three other customers.

On days when Ahmed would approach me with the above question, he would do this rhetorically after hearing the day’s news. The question came almost immediately after our greetings and he’d pass me a menu, and when he was this blunt, it would usually be followed with a smile or giggle, as though he were being playful rather than fearful. Sometimes I would try to answer. At other times I would dismiss the question for what it was: a signal to start a conversation and a way to bond between two people who did not know each other very well—almost like asking about the weather. The question would allow me to ask him about his day, or I would engage with him in a political analysis of the present. With Ahmed, the conversation would sometimes move from current events to discussions of his future and whether or not he should find work in Dubai before a war breaks out.¹ I could do little to comfort him as we both entertained the idea of the inevitable beginning of

a war, its contours variably defined, and that it was a matter of when, not if, it began. Yet, anticipating war, verbally through his question and implicitly in discussions of his future plans, and turning the political situation into grounds for developing a social bond, seemed to be devices at Ahmed's disposal to establish some level of certainty amid the possibility of future political violence, a possibility that in turn was the cause of his uncertainty.

The constant anticipation of war runs deep within society in Lebanon, causing people like Ahmed to nonchalantly ask me the question above.² In this chapter, I will analyze the anticipation of war specifically during a time of sporadic bombings over several months in 2007, to think of the mundane locations of political violence, and how we come to live this political violence in and through ordinary time. I will explore the temporal dimensions of anticipating war in a zone of conflict, suggesting that we understand these practices as moving elusively in duration rather than confine them to and interpret them in a specific moment in time. The ethnographic encounters where this anticipation manifests itself intersubjectively in people's everyday lives works to elaborate on the relation between certainty and uncertainty that I observed above with Ahmed. The event of political violence is visible and implicated in the seemingly ordinary in a way that blurs the distinction between the event and the ordinary, and suggests the everyday as eventful.³ I will address the ordinary not as an abstract notion, but as an experience I will explore ethnographically through a mother's advice to her child, a meeting among neighbors, and a traversal of the city.

Anticipation, in a general sense, is a deeply rooted phenomenon that guides our social behavior not just in regards to violence. It is a practice, as Jeganathan writes, that is not "confined to the verbal or the explicit domain of life," but encompasses "a range of ways of being, both subtle and sharp, muted and strong that are both spoken and unspoken, explicit and implicit" (1997: 185). The way we anticipate, and the meaning anticipation lends to social life, is constantly changing as people's feelings of anticipation connect dialectically with other people, situations, and objects around them. How we come to anticipate violence can then be described, but always only partially.

Tellingly, anticipation is a necessary condition of social interaction, and provides insight into how we imbue our history and our future with meaning (as in we live our lives constantly thinking of the future and what it might bring. We anticipate the developments in our work, in our relations with lovers, and the surprises each new day might produce). If we are always living in anticipation, it is specifically what is anticipated—in this case, forms of

political violence—and how it is anticipated that make its discussion significant. There are different scenarios that breed multiple ways of anticipating violence, and a range of possibilities among people faced with similar circumstances. I suggest that this range, to a large degree, is determined by varying recollections and perceptions of the past, and by the very political interests and outlooks of the people involved, and these complicate attempts to confine processes of anticipation.

Specifically, the anticipation of war can be seen as an intersubjective moment; it is a way for people in Lebanon to relate to themselves, to others in society, and to the institutions around them. Under the pressure of social divisions, whether sectarian, political, or economic, this intersubjective space may offer alternatives for new forms of connection and relationality, and for meaning making in a diverse and seemingly divided national arena. The anticipation of war, then, becomes a way to think through regular mundane contexts of everyday life, and, more ambitiously, to think about new possibilities for social relations, connections, and solidarities, both in Lebanon and, perhaps more broadly, in states with protracted violent conflict.

Time and the Anticipation of War

It is a regular Saturday afternoon in mid-November 2007, a quiet day in my relative's home overlooking the city. I am in the TV room with Rola, whom we've met earlier, and her son Elie, who is a college student in engineering with no formal political affiliation. He is, however, strongly rooted in Christian identity politics.

As Elie and I are about to head out of the house in separate directions, a conversation begins between the three of us about the political situation and its ramifications, as the president's term is set to expire in a week and there is no replacement. That night I would write the following observations in my notes:

Rola warns us before we go out to be careful and that this week is supposed to be bad. Then she laughs and says, “This week is every week.” We giggle; a giggle that betrays uneasiness. Elie joins in and says, “We are always saying this, but who ever listens to the warnings? We end up doing what we want to do anyway. *Hek hayetnā* (This is our life!)” We all agree. Every week is the week the war is

supposed to begin or some conflict is supposed to explode. [(Field-notes, November 2007)]

But war does not begin, and conflict only rarely explodes.

Rola's grave warnings about the imminence of war seemed to be expressed verbally and affectively through a gendered lens of caution and care, embodying her role as a mother. The warnings, at that moment, were also guided by her reading of the present situation and its politics. She was not simply referencing some abstract phenomenon of political violence; she was being informed by a past war that she had lived through, and that her son and I, for the most part, had not experienced. The past, very clearly remembered, meant that Rola was, among other things, thinking of Green Lines (ceasefire lines that divide cities or areas) and of killings at checkpoints based on identity cards. It meant that she was thinking of religion inscribed in neighborhoods to map her zones of safety. In this way, it also meant that she was thinking of the East and West Beirut divisions of the 1970s and 1980s, and experiencing anxiety about crossing from one side to the other. It was this crossing over, as well as our staying late into the night—when battles are perceived to take place—that she was implicitly warning us about.

People have a repertoire of learned practices that they may rely on in different places and times, and here, one could observe in the slightest warning sentence to Elie and me, the way Rola was carrying her experiences from decades ago to our present, making them habitual and essentially timeless. In Lebanon, practices are transferred as society moves away from a period defined as war toward other moments defined in their relative opposition to this war period (let's call these moments "not-war" to signify opposition rather than absence, since opposition can signify both conflict and continuity).⁴ The two periods may be defined differently, but the lived experiences of people may point more to a difference in intensity of war rather than to its absence.

Thinking of intensity as separating these periods might help to see how the *ways of using* the space of "not-war" borrow from, and remain linked to, the learned practices from the period of war before it. This borrowing and transfer of past practices ensures that these periods of war and "not-war" (commonly referred to as peacetime or postwar) interlope and merge, forming a continuity, but they do not reduce into each other; rather they overlap and fuse in ways that often escape easy categorization, dichotomization, and definition.⁵ Thus, part of living in and interacting with the "not-war" period is to occupy time with moments of anticipation and thoughts of the future

that are reflective of very real past events, and of the retold narratives of these events. Past practices end up working ambiguously as people try to rely on and remember the past for purposes of survival in the present. These past practices assist people in determining a level of certainty by informing their anticipation. However, they don't banish uncertainty.

Time, especially as related to the future and its determination by past war, is particularly important to this discussion. I think of time, in the Bergsonian sense, as duration (Bergson 1946), understood not just as a matter of living in and perceiving the present moment, but also as involving recollection and anticipation—the past and future—and about the way these moments endure rather than succeed each other (Caton 2014). An anticipation of violence can be felt as part of a duration that is constantly excavating past violence, so that what is otherwise thought of as an event in the past is never really part of the past, nor is it an event with a clear end or beginning. We see the past and present converge in Rola's warning—a warning informed by a previous bombing, as if that past bombing was still sending shock waves into the present; as if it had a social life of its own, by towering over our daily lives like a shadow or foreboding character, making appearances in newspaper articles, political speeches, and countless other sites. We also see the past collide with the present in how an old war determines Rola's warnings to her son and me, as we were traversing in and between the old divisions of Beirut, between its supposedly Christian East and Muslim West; categories that are no longer fixed and delineated in the way that they may have been in the past.⁶

One of the determinations of people who anticipate violence is to seek meaning and fixity in the world by attempting to predict and know the future; they are not always successful. It is much like trying to imagine what you will accomplish tomorrow: you might imagine the motions, but, as Bergson tells us, what you will think and feel in this future time “you can know nothing of today, because your state tomorrow will include all the life you will have lived up until that moment” (Bergson 1946: 19). One might imagine the “external shape” of an event, but trying to capture it in full will only lead one through a “duration” to the actual event, at which point there would “no longer be any question of foreseeing it” (19). As Bergson claims, duration is a place where things are revealed.

Anticipation, in general, can be a means to predetermining, or revealing, the outcome of an occurrence at some future time—in this way duration presupposes anticipation. Bergson suggests that with perception and

witnessing, one can come to gain absolute knowledge by using one's factor of intuition, stretched over a specific period. Phenomenologists would argue that absolute knowledge is inconceivable and that at best, it is relative perception that one can hope to gain of a subject. Whether we agree with Bergson or not, we can safely say that through perception, and through what one has witnessed, we at least come to gain some knowledge. Since the whole point of the future is that it is unknowable in the present, people cannot comprehensively know the exact contours of the unknown. Yet, through anticipation people can act as though they know, for we might want to think of anticipation as bridging the anxious gap between perception and truthful or certain knowledge, between what people perceive in any given present and the certain knowledge of the future revealed in duration and the flow of time.

In general, people know beforehand that life is never fully predictable, yet they continue to attempt to gain complete knowledge of the future through processes of anticipation (that can manifest emotionally, mentally, bodily, or even materially in artifacts that might guarantee a future outcome).⁷ These processes of anticipation are meant to deliver people to certain knowledge, and to what is then revealed in duration. However, the processes, despite their effort at certainty, are never in fact certain; therefore, they ensure knowledge remains relative rather than absolute. People in Lebanon, and perhaps more generally, are not located in the duration where things are revealed so much as they linger in processual states of anticipation that attempt to form continuity in what would otherwise feel like disruptions of the before and after; these disruptions, however, persist and do not magically disappear. This process of anticipation—the way people practice it in the present in order to alleviate anxieties about the future—and specifically, the knowledge produced by the anticipation of violence, can be thought of as a form of memory that generates meaning for people in the present, especially a political, social, collective, or communal meaning. Importantly, the anticipation of political violence can provide a useful technique to inject certainty into the uncertainty infused in daily life in Lebanon. The future moment of violence, partly excavated from the past, can then serve as an experience of certainty bounded with uncertainty, the two fused together and knit in time.

Yet the uncertainty that accompanies most anticipation ensures that no matter how prepared people try to be based on a past repertoire of learned practices, they will be presented with surprises that will reveal themselves, not necessarily as rupture (Taussig 1992), but as a continuation and extension of everyday life. For example, in Rola's imagination, the checkpoint is

associated with certain practices, and fixes identities in specific ways. However, the notion of the checkpoint and its associations can also reveal themselves differently and multifariously. For example, an armed fighter at a checkpoint at the present moment may be searching for a mix of different identities in which the tactics Rola learned, based on past wartime experiences at checkpoints, may not be useful anymore. If she were to encounter this checkpoint, the newness may not present itself necessarily as rupture, but rather would be incorporated into the present that she would be forced to deal with.

This concept is further illustrated by events that took place on January 25, 2007, when fighting erupted between students at the Arab University of Beirut. We heard on TV that snipers entrenched themselves on rooftops, and that checkpoints were erected asking people for their identity cards and discriminating against them based on sectarian allegiances. But identity cards no longer have a person's religion marked on them, and the crisis was clearly based not on religion but on political grievances, revealing a disconnect between the purpose of the checkpoint and what the armed men were searching for. I learned in conversations later that people were supposedly wrongfully harmed, but I found that those around me saw the surprising episode folded into everyday life rather than as its rupture, partly because some version of it had been anticipated and some of it felt familiar from the past.

The January 2007 episode also highlights how the experiences of past wars, the way they are narrated, and the stories that enter our consciousness provide the basis for some of the techniques of war. In general, recollections of past wars, such as Rola's recollection of checkpoint practices, can enable techniques of future wars. If forgetting were so common and possible, then the technologies of war would not be so immediately remembered and executed. By technologies I do not mean the weapons themselves, but the way war is fought and lived everyday—the tactics, strategies, and maneuvers, such as those employed by fighters who are thinking in terms of past inter-city divisions or by civilians who know to hide in their bathrooms when a battle begins. Bodily and spatial techniques that are learned in the past are often transmitted and reused—as are discourses, which makes it easy in the case of Lebanon to revert to sectarian thinking. In this way, social traditions, as Mauss (2006) says, are carried forward through techniques. The anticipation of war, thus, becomes part of the social tradition due to ongoing and sustained political conflicts.⁸

Everyday Encounters of the Anticipation of War

The anticipation of war manifests in various encounters of everyday life as everywhere the talk of war seeps into daily conversations and decisions. One night, days before my encounter with Rola in early November 2007, I met with my neighbors who discussed whether to sell the building's electric generator or not, and whether to buy a new one. This conversation took significant importance because, as of yet, state-supplied electricity in the country does not reach people twenty-four hours a day, and while the area of Ras Beirut receives more electricity than most, it still sees three-hour daily cuts. Most residents are thus forced to purchase generator memberships with neighborhood electricity dealers, or to buy their own building generators. My neighbors were of various backgrounds, between Lebanese and Palestinian, Greek Orthodox, Sunni and Druze, and supporters of various parties across the political spectrum. Among their professions were those who were university professors, doctors, and UN staff, and they could be said to be middle- to upper-middle-class families.

In the midst of the conversation about generators, one neighbor said that there is no point in buying a new generator because a war is coming and there will in any case be no *mazūt* (diesel)—Israel's siege tactics of *ḥarb tam-mūz* (the July 2006 war) that made gas scarce informed this position. Another neighbor countered this, saying, "We need a generator because if there is a war then they might cut the electricity even more than the current three hours a day." She said that the *mazūt* prices would go up, but there would still be *mazūt*, and I agreed, speculating that in the coming war most likely there will not be a siege on the country like that in the summer of 2006, so we should still be able to get gas. The discussion ensued on the timeframe and possibilities for war, and was consumed by bursts of laughter as each gave an opinion. The conversation eventually transitioned to neighbors raising the issue that some were not paying their quarterly maintenance bills and there was no use buying a new generator if bills continued to go unpaid—neighbors who were not regularly paying were not present at this meeting. Such poor relations between neighbors when it concerns building maintenance and management are commonplace in many residences around the country. Those who were paying lived on lower floors and suggested that they could survive during the power outages. Mostly, this meant no access to the elevator, air-conditioning, or heater, as three hours without electricity were not enough to

ruin refrigerated food. The meeting concluded with a decision to continue to research generator prices, but no action was taken until a year later when a new one was bought, following a full twelve months without backup electricity.

Just as the mundane afternoon with Rola and her son leads to talk of war, so does a nonpolitical meeting between neighbors to deal with residential matters. Such conversations often occur between bursts of giggles and laughter because people, whether the neighbors, Rola, or others I encountered, find their thoughts absurd. While the possibility of war is very real, and its anticipation is a recognized social fact, it still feels like an absurdity for the people concerned when talk of war and taking precautions against it seeps out of an unconscious and implicit realm into the consciousness of daily life; this absurdity often generates laughter. It is one thing to anticipate war, but as soon as it is discussed and becomes conscious, the anticipation turns into reality, a matter of fact, and one could explain this laughter as one way people react to the absurd notion of their anticipation being realized—it is the laughter of anxiety.⁹ Thus, while anticipation of war denotes the possibility and potentiality for violence, speaking about violence can give the future an aura of being real, certain, and inevitable. Compared to this inevitability, one might think that the state of anticipation, where certainty meets uncertainty, can actually be a place of hope; hope against the expectation of violence, hope that the eventuality of what we anticipate will not be realized (Das 2007: 101).

Imbricated Formations of Political Violence and the Ordinary

In the summer of 2007, the war in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared seemed distant to people in Beirut, and one could easily forget about the tragic developments in the camp. However, life at the Baddawi refugee camp, where most Palestinians went who fled the warzone of Nahr al-Bared, also gave way to mundane times when the war took a backseat.¹⁰ One always forgets that the world lingers on even during the most brutal practices of humanity. An expression I heard from one refugee that, “We are bored, there is nothing to do,” was a way to connect our lives despite the vast differences between boredom in the sanctuary of Beirut and that of the camp. In Baddawi, I saw people smoking *arguileh* (water pipe) and having conversations that were not all about the political processes around them—this should not

be surprising, but people who have not lived war, or other situations of protracted violence, are often somewhat astonished by the mundane in proximity to violence. In some moments, we drifted and spoke about our work, or what we did for a living, while other moments were spent in silence. I saw an old man taking an afternoon walk amid the crowd, boys just lingering around, playing, bored (Kelly 2008).

The mundane—and boredom—is not exclusive to the Palestinians in Lebanon. A similar phenomenon could be observed during the July 2006 war and other moments of violence in the country. In January 2007, during a riot that shut down the city and involved tire burning and rock throwing between different political factions, one could catch people in the streets in the midst of impending danger taking a proverbial time out. Waiting for something to happen, teenagers socialized and set up tables to play cards at makeshift checkpoints, much like their predecessors who were fighters during Lebanon's war (see Figure 4). All the while, the city and country were shut down and many feared for their lives. The acting out of the mundane and demon-



Figure 4. Street blockade during a riot in Beirut, January 23, 2007.

Photo Credit: Author.

stration of boredom (or even pleasure) could be seen as a type of political enactment or participation that displayed the teenagers' confidence. Through a relaxed posture, and by playing cards, the teenagers were showing their control and indicating that their opponent was defeated. Their posture seemed to serve a purpose of ridiculing, mocking, and even shaming their opponent, as if to say “the streets are our playground, what will you do about it?” From my position, this particular moment of a mundane activity (playing cards) circumscribed within extraordinary times, brought to the surface a feeling that our everyday lives had been hijacked by a political game between two rivals rather than by the existential battle each opponent made the conflict out to be.

Kelly tells us it is a common condition that situations of violence are never divorced from the mundane. He writes of the second Intifada in Palestine, where he explores “the meaning and implications of the ordinary and mundane in the midst of armed conflict” (2008: 353). He speaks of how “more time is spent watching TV, waiting for buses or preparing food, than it is shooting guns, hiding in basements or burning houses” (353). For Kelly, the “ordinary does not exist in opposition to violence, but is deeply implicated within it” (353; see also Das 2007). This is, indeed, what I have just shown in the previous example. However, I wish to take Kelly's argument farther, to claim that if the ordinary makes itself known within violence, then forms of violence also unfold within the ordinary. Seen in duration, the two states are always enduring, melding into each other, mutually imbricated and infused. One can be present in a violent conflict, acting out the ordinary, as Kelly rightly describes, and, within this ordinary moment, experience violence through the anticipation of hostility.

The mutual coexistence of forms of violence and the ordinary can be described through an ethnographic encounter.¹¹ In mid-June 2007, when the war in Nahr al-Bared was raging on, I was working with Dima, the architect and grassroots activist we've encountered in a previous chapter, to provide aid to refugees in the nearby Baddawi Palestinian refugee camp. I caught her in her apartment one day, distraught and expressing frustration in the midst of this war and the continual bombings of that summer. As we waited for friends, she communicated to me her fears in people's determination to continue their everyday lives. While Kelly tells us that ordinary life in Palestine is “an aspiration, a desire for a different kind of life” (365), for Dima—in Lebanon—it was part of the structures that perpetuated the descent into war:

When the civil war began in 1975 I was not around, I did not see how it happened. But today, I feel I am watching how a war happens, how a society goes to war. I am seeing how this happens by making a society more complacent and making it accept things. First, we accept political assassinations as a way to deal with our problems. So they kill 10 people (civilians) to get to one politician, and we say “Haram the 10 people; *Allāh yirḥamun* (God have Mercy on their souls), but the politician was smuggling weapons, or deserved to go.” And we make excuses for the death of civilians. And slowly we are made to accept more deaths and killings to deal with our problems . . . we lose a little of ourselves when we do this. Soon a war will break out and retaliations will begin. I don’t want to be a part of this, I don’t want to accept political assassinations as a tool; I don’t even want to become jaded to the point where I dismiss it and just go on as if it is normal, as if it comes with the title of being a politician in this country. Some people say justice is being served when these people are being assassinated. But since when was justice ever served by an anonymous entity (*kif jiha majhūle bit-ḥa’e’ el-‘adāle?*). (Fieldnotes, June 2007)

Dima was struggling against becoming jaded and dismissing the assassinations as normal. Yet this was simply part of our long ongoing debates about the moral implications, the meaning, and the role of our mundane actions in such times. The debates remained largely unresolved, and Dima, like myself, continued about her days teaching, working, and frequenting local coffee shops, as the war of Nahr al-Bared was ultimately far enough from both our daily lives. The caveat remains, however, that forms of political violence would surreptitiously return in the way we experienced the ordinary and what it made us think about, remember, and discuss.¹² In this process, the ordinary in violence became suffused and imbricated with violence in the ordinary so that violence would not appear as a rupture.

Sensing the Unsensed

The problem with a discussion around the anticipation of war is that it is unseen and unsensed until it is identified—by being either voiced or consciously thought about. This led me to observe a contradiction that sur-

rounded the indiscriminate bombings in 2007. On one hand, people spoke about the bombings in a nonchalant manner. They would say things like “Not again!” or “Good, now we can go out because today’s bombing went off already,” or they would barely flinch and just go on about what they were doing in the moment. On the other hand, one would find far fewer people on the streets, like on the days after the assassination of former member of Parliament Walid Eido on June 13, 2007. People talked of how life goes on, but many tended to stay home, checking on a lonely family member or an aging grandmother, or going to the homes of friends and family to take comfort in sharing political and situational analysis. They acted as though they did not care and that life will go on, but for the few days after a bombing, this nonchalant attitude did not translate into people’s behaviors in moving around the city.

In these moments, deserted rather than inhabited space becomes a trope to think through. De Certeau (1984) thought of place as being the consumption of space to produce something that is determined by “its ways of use.” Thus, depending on how space is inhabited, we get a certain type of place. But what about deserted space? What kind of place is produced when the space is not being inhabited or used? Perhaps desertion itself, emptiness, the decision not to inhabit a space, is a type of consumption.

In the days during and after the indiscriminate and frequent bombings, mostly throughout 2007, Beirut residents determined the production of their city’s space by deserting the city streets. People projected fear and tension onto places, and these places became inhabited by memories instead of by city dwellers, and by nostalgia of the hustle and bustle of what once was. “*di’āna Beyrūt*” (Pity Beirut, it is lost), people would say. Places were emptied, and emptiness began to take on its own meaning—of loss, of potential, of a dark anticipation for the next bomb. Through this meaning, a newly inhabited place was arising out of spaces of emptiness, and it was this, I suggest, that the rare passerby sensed rather than the emptiness per se.

City streets are often a reflection of the social world and can tell us much about society. Traversing the city streets of Beirut in those days after the various bombings, specifically in 2007, I found emptiness to be a grotesque allegory for political violence. In this emptiness, I saw the way fear played out; I saw the deterioration of social interaction; but I also saw how laughter and a spirit of carefreeness and cynicism one witnessed in the private spaces of people’s homes could simultaneously exist alongside this emptiness. The hollowed streets, rather than exposing some profound sense of violence

otherwise masked by people's laughter and cynicism, should be seen as a lens that, along with these other expressions, can reveal the contradictions, ambiguities, and negotiations people feel in such precarious times.

As I stood in the empty streets of Hamra on June 14, the day after Eido's assassination, which killed several other pedestrians, I thought of how this, alongside the private conversations mixed with laughter, was telling of what society is feeling and thinking. Thinking amid the desertedness, I could sense the fear, tension, and confusion. I could sense the want to emigrate, the anticipation of worse to come, and the preparation for war. I could sense all these things that I often missed in conversations with people when in their homes, where they would highlight or deemphasize the violence in an attempt to subvert it. More specifically, I could sense these things in what I heard people tell me, in Dima's expressions of frustration, Ahmed's talk of war, Rola's anxiety over her kids, people's repetition about their feelings of tension, and their decisions to stay home or where to park their car.

Two days after the Eido assassination, I was at Rola's home engaged in a political conversation with some relatives, jokingly commenting on how it was easier to maneuver through the barren streets that were now wider because security concerns made it so cars could not park on either side. Relatives laughed and agreed, after which someone responded by dismissing the bombings with a quote from Saint Paul on how "all things together work for good." I suggest that such conversations and interactions, filled with jokes and laughter, in the aftermath of bombings allow for a negotiation and ambiguous space to exist alongside the fear, tension, silence, solitude, and despair. In between the streets and those private spaces, one is perhaps able to listen to society telling us what it collectively feels.

But then, as time passes and the bombings become less frequent or appear to cease, space and time change, and revert to the way they were before the bombings. The streets are no longer empty. They become inhabited with people again, the highways are crowded at night, and through this habitation we see what is often thought to be social resilience. I try to think back to the steady, gradual shift to the way things were, but it is too gradual for even the anthropological lens. The barren and the inhabited merge into one, a continuous transition that appears as two states of affair only because we are unable to observe the continuous durational shift occurring within these states themselves (Bergson 1960: 3). The crowd incorporates the violent acts as part of daily life, and they become normalized. Certainty syncretizes with uncertainty, and people draw a sense of security from this and from forms of

anticipation they know and have internalized. People start to go out more, though the anxiety seems to stay, but they begin to fear less as time goes by; and life, as they say, moves on.

While I was sensing things by being attentive to people's conversations and their experiences around the city (and country), in all these times and spaces of anticipation, it continued to intrigue me to think how people were themselves clearly sensing what was physically unsensed, namely, future forms of political violence and war, and how opinions and decisions were based on such senses. Jana, whom I had made friends with immediately after the July 2006 war, captures the nuances of these senses in a conversation we have one afternoon at a café in the neighborhood of Hamra called De Prague. She is a woman in her thirties, an artist, and not affiliated with any political party. She is invested in interpreting and making meaning of the war through her art, not being a passive victim to violence but rather negotiating its presences (see List of Characters for a further description).

As we sit on a semi-comfortable blue couch, sipping cappuccino, while Jana complains about the smoke, and I about my legs uncomfortably hitting against the low tabletops, Jana talks to me about how she feels we sense the war through our memories of a past war. She tells me she has dreams of this—not necessarily nightmares, just war-related dreams. She is not alone in having these dreams. I have heard this before. I interrupt her and ask how is it that we sense something that is not there? How do we sense something abstract? What does it mean to be constantly sensing a future war? Since it is mid-June 2007, and the war in Nahr al-Bared is still in flames, I tell her about how I notice Palestinians sensing an impending massacre. I tell her how I notice them anticipating yet another mass migration. I gather this from discussions with them, and which they base on the civil war, and on memories of massacres like in 1982, when Palestinians were massacred by the Lebanese right-wing Christian Phalange Party in Sabra and Chatilla. I remark that they fear this even though the conditions today are different.

Jana questions this difference and pushes me to see sameness and continuity between our present and past. “The civil war did not end,” she says; “The story continues. When you watch documentaries of the war [like on Al-Jazeera TV], or think back to the war, the conclusion is that it is ‘To be continued’; that the story was not over but that we are continuing with another chapter.” Her point is that the players are the same, but just some years older, a function of the politics of “No Victor, No Vanquished” that has kept the wartime leaders in power and ensured that the causes of war remain.

If the faces and players are the same, Jana persists, that makes the Palestinians sense the future based on clear links to the past. She claims that the past is very much a present reality; it does not escape us and it is not merely a thread that connects us, but the very reality of the past that we are currently living. Even when there is no talk of war, she would sense it in what she read and watched on the news, or in seeing the same old faces of warlords in the media.

Not everyone thinks like Jana; the point is that people feel heightened anticipation and sense war because it speaks to an overall meaning making of the social world around them. This can lead one to consider the anticipation of war as an intersubjective moment. Through it, people in Lebanon form their relationships to their surrounding community—to the grocer or to representatives of political parties, for example. Through it, they also form a present that is based on entrenched past antagonisms—those that carry on from Lebanon's war—and that then guide them into a future that is stirred by uncertainty.

A Few More Reflections

People in Lebanon are constantly inundated by a discourse that claims a war is going to be waged soon, and like Ahmed at the beginning of this chapter, they often speculate and ask each other when the war might begin. They have certain imaginations of what this war will look like and who its actors will be, often that it is going to be an internal war or that Israel is going to attack, but rarely with defined contours for it. Whether they believe in the coming war or not, they cannot help thinking or wondering about it. The practices that are informed by this constant thinking of future war, by this anticipation of war, give another dimension to life in and around war that reveals the subtleties of this life, and its ability to take the war and its discourse and make it other than itself. In the midst of the physical perpetration of violence, practices of anticipation might be present in such mundane acts as playing cards in a shelter or listening to music or enjoying the company of friends, as these are circumscribed and inflected by ongoing armed conflict and assume meaning beyond the acts themselves. Between the physicality of war's violence and the period I have been concerned with, practices of anticipation might play out in a conversation with a waiter on moving to Dubai, a mother's warning to a child, or a neighbor's advice on housing matters. These

cases highlight a different picture of people’s lives in zones of conflict, despite war’s enormous, spectacular, and expansionist power to produce itself in its timeless image of destruction, victimization, and suffering.

Time has been crucial to my argument, especially as an understanding of time as fluid, neither cyclical nor linear. Anticipation, I have claimed, works from a present to fold the past into the future. It is in this way, I maintain, that the anticipation of war acts as a form of memory, reminding people in Lebanon that the war is not over, and struggles for a better world continue.

The anticipation of war is a way to confront and use ordinary everyday life, fusing certainty with uncertainty, and informing the way we traverse the mundane, and the way we conceive intersubjective relationships within it. Thus, instead of walking along the Beirut corniche (seaside promenade), watching the sunset, and skipping on rocks; instead of going on a picnic, hanging out with friends at a café, or visiting the innocent lying sick in bed; instead of all these acts of everyday life being rather mundane, all it takes is a moment’s reflection to see how these incidents can often become politically reconstituted and reused as acts of resistance, indifference, despair, hope, or survival. It is not war that is total or ever-present here. However, forms of political violence fluctuate in intensity and surely seep, at certain points in time, into the various activities, spaces, and moments of everyday life. One can observe this even in the workforce, where many businesspeople in Lebanon try to spread their risk by engaging in business overseas, and where people seek work in other countries to avoid the insecurity and instability that a potential war might bring.

One interlocutor, Bilal, a successful CEO of a technology firm and graduate of the AUB, told me, in a long conversation, of how the war years and the anticipation of war in general, governed his behavior; this is not indicative of how people in the workplace think and behave, but a representation of some of the views of a class of people. At the time we spoke, Bilal’s company was engaged in a war disaster emergency plan akin to a natural disaster plan that might be in place in other countries. His view was that anticipation governs our life by forming our perceptions. “Once you anticipate the violence,” he said in English, “you begin to react based on this and the anticipation determines everything.” Even before any violence, we already foreclose the outcome. Many businesspeople, Bilal continued, have already factored the war into their behavior. War becomes built into work systems and business decisions both consciously (through disaster recovery) and subconsciously, thereby becoming a normal part of work.

Anticipation causes us to remember, and in the context of Lebanon it causes us to fold violence into aspects of daily life. Walking on the corniche one can see how the ordinary, always interacting with the surrounding context of the moment, becomes inflected with forms of violence through anticipation. It is this anticipation of political violence, however, that can act as a condition of possibility for change, or squandered, as it often is, into despair.

Often interlocutors are far more eloquent than researchers can ever be. I return to Jana, a friend with whom I have shared the most intimate and exciting of conversations and correspondences. Jana expressed an affinity with the everyday in an email to me after the Eido assassination. She was present at a beach club called Sporting at the same time as Eido when he was killed. She wrote to me two days later:

I walked in [to the beach club], put on [the bottoms of] my swimsuit, and realized that I forgot the top part at home. I thought, I'll go home and get it and return . . . then decided to stay and swim in my shirt.

I sat by fishermen who were carelessly throwing their fish on the ground next to me, and was watching two of the fish flipping and flopping like birds trying to fly, and I thought, what are they imagining as they die? And why don't I just get up and throw them back in the sea? I was thinking about death, about the last breath of the fish, and it took place, the explosion. (email communication, June 15, 2007)

Instances that are part of our everyday repertoire of practices—like sitting with fishermen—are in this way reused to make meaning out of acts of political violence and to put them in context. Observing fish in the process of dying is reproduced in connection with the death of a political figure and no longer just a simple day's act. The act of sitting with the fishermen, in this way, does not end there but continues to be reproduced to connect Jana to the bombing and its impact on her life. Her act is not merely an event but flexibly and fluidly exists in a Bergsonian *durée* that extends beyond sitting with fishermen and observing the death of marine life. The practices of anticipation deeply associated with war are informed by and exist in the passage of time. They are the ways Jana and others connect between a casual sitting with fishermen and a subsequent assassination. This connection is lost

without her constant anticipation and without an understanding of political violence through its intensities. When violence is conceived of as simply an event, it is stripped from temporality and becomes depoliticized. Thus, practices of anticipation ensure the temporal and therefore political nature of violence.