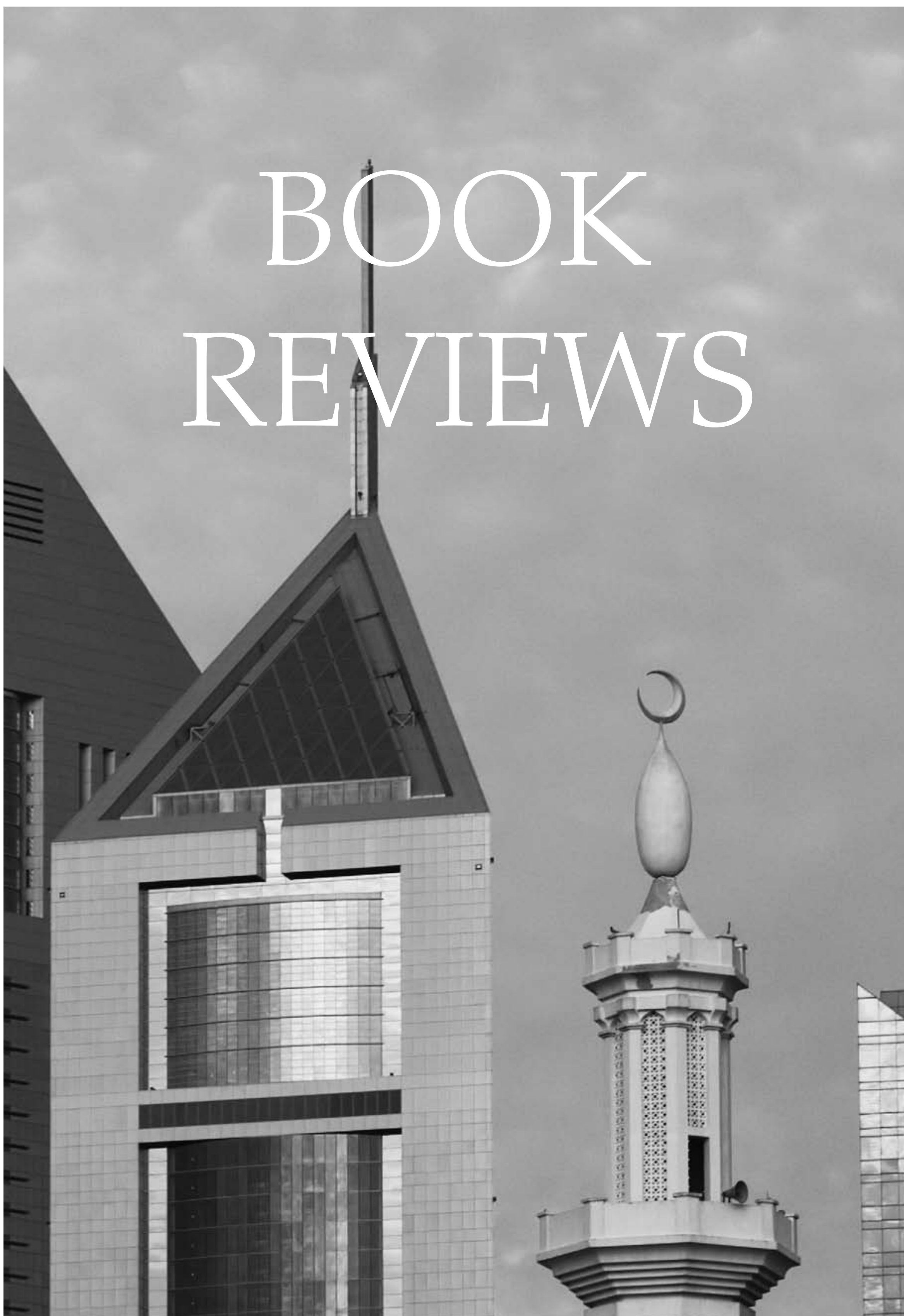
BOOK
REVIEWS

## BOOK REVIEWS

IJIA publishes reviews of books that treat or are relevant to Islamic architecture, design, planning, and urbanism. We seek to provide focus on contemporary production and issues, while also locating these areas of study in communication with other academic disciplines and the contemporary practice of architecture.

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***STREETS OF MEMORY: LANDSCAPE, TOLERANCE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ISTANBUL,* AMY MILLS, (2010)**

Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, xii + 288 pp.,
ISBN 9780820335735, $64.95 (cloth)/ISBN 9780820335742,
$24.95 (paper)

***ORIENTING İSTANBUL: CULTURAL CAPITAL OF EUROPE?,* DENİZ GÖKTÜRK, LEVENT SOYSAL AND İPEK TÜRELİ (EDS), (2010)**

London and New York: Routledge, xv + 336 pp., ISBN
9780415580106, $160 (cloth)/ISBN 9780415580113, $62.95 (paper)

*Reviewed by Esra Akcan, University of Illinois, Chicago*

*Streets of Memory* and *Orienting Istanbul* contribute to the recent fascination with contemporary Istanbul as a global and cosmopolitan city. *Orienting Istanbul*, edited by Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli, takes advantage of the year 2010, when Istanbul was selected as one of the three cultural capitals of Europe – a programme promoting European identity and meant to present each city to the world (see Carola Hein's and Oğuz Öner's articles). Yet, *Orienting Istanbul* is less about Turkey's long-standing and conflicted application to join the European Union and more about Istanbul's rise as a global city in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Questioning once again if Istanbul will become a player in global multinational capitalism after the neo-liberal policies adopted since 1983, Çağlar Keyder answers that the city is a 'success story' in this regard (23). The inhabitants witnessed quite a few changes since the 1980s and especially in the last decade, including a major boom in sectors of global finance, real estate, advertising, media and tourism, as well as the arts. *Orienting Istanbul* puts the weight on the last one and analyses the effects of Istanbul's rise as a 'culture city', and of the 'cultural turn in urban policy' (16–17), where investments in art, museums and social gathering places became charmingly lucrative.

*Orienting Istanbul* is a contribution to the interdisciplinary studies on Turkey, which have been growing since the mid-1990s, with an emphasis on film studies and art institutions. The section on film is strengthened by a historical perspective, particularly in Nezih Erdoğan's essay that illuminates the multi-lingual and multi-religious beginnings of cinema in Istanbul during

the late Ottoman and early Republican era. Sophisticated analyses of landmark movies follow, such as Halit Refiğ's *Birds of Exile* and Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Distant* (by Türeli), Yılmaz Erdoğan's *Magic Carpet Ride* (by Deniz Bayraktar and Elif Akçalı) and Fatih Akın's *Crossing the Bridge* (by Göktürk), through which the readers are introduced to Istanbul's major phenomena such as rural-to-urban migration, gentrification and polyphonic diversity. The book also offers a comprehensive look at the potentials and limits of recent art spectacles, particularly the Istanbul Biennial, by juxtaposing varied views of the curator Hou Hanru and artists/critics Jale Erzen and Banu Karaca.

What seems most unique about *Orienting Istanbul*, perhaps unintentionally, is its gaze on the very recent decade after the AKP (Justice and Development Party), the conservative party with an Islamist past, came to power. The AKP's policies that enabled Istanbul's rise to global fame are underlined by a few authors more strikingly than before, as ironic or paradoxical as this may seem to some readers who see Islam and Western capitalism as incompatible. The 'conservative-Islamic party […] proved to be surprisingly pro-business', as Keyder phrases it (27). In an important contribution, Özlem Ünsal and Tuna Kuyucu list the legal and institutional reforms that the AKP passed after 2002, such as completing the transformation of the real estate and construction market into the neo-liberal system, generating urban renewal projects on former squatter and informal settlements and historical districts, and enabling TOKI (Mass Housing Administration) to construct its vertical housing blocks all around the city. Jeremy Walton exposes the increasing impact of Islamic civic institutions on urban space, which increased visibly in the last decade after the abandonment of early Republican restrictions on religious representation. Türeli shows that in Miniaturk (a park with models of architectural monuments), the number and placement of mosques and Ottoman monuments even outside of modern Turkey overshadows the monuments of early Republican Kemalism whose originals are in the capital Ankara.

By trying to avoid a patronizing attitude and to keep an unbiased observant distance, or by being genuinely celebratory, *Orienting Istanbul* usually constructs an affirmative depiction of Istanbul's success as a global city under the auspices of AKP and global investors, taking a soft antagonistic tone about its problems. This is not necessarily intentional in a book with several authors, but it seemed to be the overall effect. If it was not for a few critical authors and timid critical additions to each article, it could seem that the neo-Ottoman cosmopolitanism and civil Islamic institutions are recovering the wounds of authoritarian Kemalist nationalism; the incompletely commoditized land and real estate market that had resulted in illegal development is now under regulation for the betterment of society; Istanbul's music, art and biennial scene is inclusive of diverse national and world talent; and despite some obstacles the habitants at large participate in the making of their city's cultural artefacts. Recent elections that augmented the continuing landslide success of the AKP confirm that the overwhelming sentiment among the population is also contentment and affirmation. It would seem that there is enough reason for the replacement of the spirit of melancholy that had coloured the literary and artistic scene of Istanbul in the 1930s and 1970s with the spirit of *keyif* (enjoyment) – a category that quite frequently appears in the book (see especially Engin Işın). However, the architectural and urban development, for instance, is far from problem free, since this is also a city with immense infrastructural and transportation problems, with security-driven shopping malls that diminish the experience of the public sphere, with paranoid gated communities for different income groups,

and with vast areas where shady real estate and fraud built up the majority of the urban fabric. Most of the cherished cosmopolitanism, such as the polyphony and lesser-known musicians that Akın so admiringly discovers in his movie, are obscured beneath the dominant music industry. One also doubts the implication that the government and big businesses genuinely support free artistic expression. For instance, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan (former Mayor of Istanbul) recently ordered the destruction of a piece by a prominent modern Turkish sculptor and sued a leading journalist for criticizing his action. As someone whose architectural photographs have been erased from her camera by security guards of big private firms, including Nişantaşı's Milli Reassurans galleries, I can also testify that Istanbul is not a free place for photography.

In this context, the articles by Erzen and by Bayraktar and Akçalı bring a different tone to the book. Erzen argues that the Istanbul Municipality's and the AKP's promotion of artistic events and venues aims 'to maintain its liberal face in Europe and the US […] [and] the new face-lift for Istanbul' more than a genuine interest in art (227). She also criticizes the lack of interest on the part of international and local curators and artists to understand the history of modern art in Turkey and the predominant orientalist gaze that represents spaces of marginality and poverty by 'indulging in the pleasures of watching misery as an art experience' (226). To quote Bayraktar and Akçalı in their critique of one of the most representative and popular films about the city:

> Theft and fraud are preconditions for living in Istanbul, and its most beautiful locations are owned by underground figures […] The Istanbul that *Magic Carpet Ride* constructs is a beautiful city and its faults are concealed […] [it is] owned by power, wealth and fraud – a constellation which the film does not seem to criticize, but rather celebrates.
> (172, 175)

Finally, Soysal's and Michael Herzfeld's synthesizing essays conclude the book, situating Istanbul's present and future in the unfolding processes of Europeanization and/or globalization.

In trying to capture Istanbul in its convoluted entirety, *Orienting Istanbul* mimics the ad hoc, fast pace, ungraspable and labyrinthine character of the city in the last ten years, while *Streets of Memory,* a single-authored book by Amy Mills, is a much more focused and detailed study of only one of its neighbourhoods. Kuzguncuk, a neighbourhood devoid of rapidly constructed skyscrapers, chic shopping malls and offices, gated communities and TOKI housing blocks, business life and globally connected elite, is hardly representative of Istanbul's current global city characteristics, yet a concentrated look at it complements our conception of the city in significant ways, particularly by bringing to light the invisible, rather than the visible.

Mills demonstrates that Kuzguncuk's cosmopolitan Ottoman past, composed especially of Armenians, Greeks and Jews, has been erased through several events and legal measures of the Republican period including the wealth tax for minorities in 1942–43, the state-sponsored attacks on non-Muslim populations on September 6–7, 1955 and the deportation of Greek citizens in 1964. She also argues that the current residents who nostalgically long for Kuzguncuk's cosmopolitan neighbourly characters are in denial of this past violence themselves. This argument is powerfully illustrated when Mills exposes that the Neighbourhood Association, which was mobilized to protect a vegetable garden from new development, turned a blind eye to the original

Greek owners of the land whose property was confiscated by the Turkish state. Additionally, current residents believe that the attacks of September 6–7 did not take place in Kuzguncuk. The author reserves a chapter on Jewish residents in Istanbul, a community also the subject of Marcy Brink-Danan's essay in *Orienting Istanbul.* Mills concludes 'that in Istanbul, cosmopolitanism is imagined locally in ways that perpetuate the notions of social difference and inequality that cosmopolitanism, as an ideal, claims to transcend' (211).

Mills unfolds her arguments through rigorous 'ethnographic research' by living among the residents, participating in their conversations, watching popular TV shows and reading novels about the neighbourhood, and following previous residents to various parts of Istanbul and even to Tel Aviv. Maintaining her method's premises, she assumes her audience's and her own role as carefully observing 'outsiders'. Readers who know Turkey will probably feel more familiar with the lengthy descriptions of popular TV shows and novels, ordinary events and common everyday practices such as coffee fortune readings and reciprocal visits among neighbours. Mills unfolds the history of the neighbourhood through residents' memories, rather than official accounts that would have obscured lived experience, especially of minorities. However, as all studies on memory confirm, human memory is selective, changing and untrustworthy; therefore the author could have engaged in more archival research to back up her oral history when possible. For instance, when a resident informs her that the Jewish community was poor, it would have been more convincing to confirm this through factual documents.

*Streets of Memory* is a mixture of progressive politics that defends minority rights and the voices of conservative longing that idealize the idea of a 'neighbourhood' (*mahalle*), despite the word's constantly changing content in the social imagination. In Mills's account, a *mahalle* is a space of cosmopolitanism, 'a space that signifies a more tolerant, inclusive way of life where people lived on a local scale and neighbors were like members of an extended family' (22). Mills critically exposes the obscured traumas of minorities in the nostalgia for *mahalle* life, but she often seems to maintain an affirmative view of the idea of a neighbourhood herself, not giving equal voice to common idioms about *mahalle baskısı* (oppression of the neighbourhood). For instance, as Mills also discovers by comparing the housewives who used to live in Kuzguncuk and the professional women who recently moved in, the 'neighbourhood' character used to depend significantly on reciprocal visits between non-working women. Mills exposes the elitist urban–rural divide of her interviewees who blame the economically unprivileged rural migrants for the erasure of Kuzguncuk's cosmopolitanism and assert that the neighbourhood was 'ruined' because of the 'less socially and politically tolerant and more homogeneously Muslim, Turkish, rural migrant culture' (204). In her attempt to keep scholarly distance and understand the feelings and anxieties of her subjects however, she does not take as much critical distance here as she did against the erasure of minority memories, finding even the gated communities understandable.

Both books contribute significantly not only to our understanding of Istanbul, but also to the methodological questions of urban analysis. Film studies, art, cultural geography, sociology and ethnography prove to be rewarding disciplines for understanding urban space. Ayşegül Baykan, Zerin Boynudelik, Belkıs Uluoğlu and Burak Sevingen's article in *Orienting Istanbul* illustrates the important benefits of a multidisciplinary approach by bringing together scholars of sociology, art, architecture and philosophy to analyse the renovation of one building. However, writing this review for an architectural journal, I feel obliged

to state that the readers will not find much information about the *disciplinary* questions of architecture or urban design in these books. Of course, architects and scholars will benefit tremendously from *Streets of Memory* in understanding how urban space and residents are interconnected, how the urban environment is constantly reproduced by the cultural practices of residents, and how urban space in return shapes the residents' memories. However, the book mentions architect Cengiz Bektaş only in passing, without discussing the design aspects of his renovation programme of Kuzguncuk houses. The only contemporary architects that appear in *Orienting Istanbul*'s index are the American and Dutch stars Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas (only the former once made a preliminary sketch for an Istanbul site). Apparently, the designers of the recent building boom in Istanbul are not worthy of analyses; they have no names; their agency is not expected. Both books also critically assess the early Republican project of Turkey's modernization and hence participate in the scholarship that has been growing since the mid-1990s. One of the major traps of journalistic (and perhaps also scholarly) accounts on Turkey today seems to be the polarization of Kemalist and post-Kemalist views, where the critique of one is perceived as the endorsement of the other. What is lost is a commitment to the search for another alternative, an intellectual dedication to the critique of both status quos. Reading these two successful and important books during one of the highest points of scholarly contributions since the mid-1990s, one wonders what the next step for studies on Turkey may be.

## Contributor Details

Esra Akcan is an assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She received her architecture degree from Middle East Technical University and her Ph.D. and postdoctoral degrees from Columbia University in New York. She has taught at Columbia University, Humboldt University, the New School, Pratt Institute and METU. Akcan has received awards and fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin, the Clark Institute, the Graham Foundation, the Getty Research Institute, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the Mellon Foundation, DAAD, Kinne, and KRESS/ARIT. She is the author of *(Land)Fill Istanbul, Çeviride Modern Olan, Architecture in Translation* (forthcoming) and *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (with Sibel Bozdoğan, forthcoming).

## *LESSONS IN POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION: CASE STUDIES FROM LEBANON IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2006 WAR*, HOWAYDA AL-HARITHY (ED.), (2010)

London and New York: Routledge, 218 pp., ISBN 9780415571050, $110 (cloth)

*Reviewed by Michael Stanton*

Reconstructing a 'Nation Divided into Fragments' (Khalil Gibran).[1]

> '… the word *revolution* […] in the opposite sense meaning *reconstruction.*'
> (Fernand Braudel)[2]

Itself a case study in regional political discourse, this book addresses several selected critical case studies by an affiliated group within the Departments of Architecture and Design, Landscape Design and the Facilities Planning and Development Unit from the American University of Beirut (AUB), one of many Lebanese institutions of higher education. As such it presents a few of hundreds of attempts to help in the reconstruction of the nation after the devastating war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006.[3] Good intentions are not in short supply in Lebanon. Plans, proposals and studies proliferate. Local philanthropic players, NGOs, nations adopting villages, Lebanese ex-pats and volunteers of all sorts provide endless remedies for ailments that the powers-that-be inflict and profit from. Given this scenario success is predictably rare and the few efforts that find some sort of result are compromised by the corruption, disorganization and autocracy that confront such endeavours in most countries, but that are endemic in Lebanon. Furthermore, intention is often seen as sufficient by its perpetrators. This book fires another warning shot across the bow of those who wish to more than propose 'doing good' in Lebanon.

Given constraints, the *Lessons* noted in this book did have effect and several of the assembled group are quite candid about the limits they faced and the tangible outcomes thus achieved. The frustration with the opaque decision-making process in Dahiye is palpable in the chapter authored by Monas Harb and Fawaz. That these exemplary scholars, who have worked for at least a decade in that zone of Beirut, should be met by opacity from Hezbollah and by bureaucratic impediments from public officials was surprising. The chapter authored by the book's editor Howayda al-Harithy reviews the work of the Reconstruction Unit at AUB in Bint Jbeil, with the intriguing suggestion that the reinvention of heritage may have a salubrious, even remedial effect on a community. Beginning with the chapter in which Habib Debs also discusses work in Bint Jbeil, there is a distinct recognition of the degree of disappointment that was implicit in the attempt to work with agencies and entities that were authoritarian, corrupt and in direct conflict with each other. The final salvaging of only a fraction of the older stone houses in the town centre is correctly seen as a loss somewhat mitigated. Debs's use of structuralist semiotics presents a more critical and operative methodology than previous discussions of tradition and identity, terms that have become both infinitely flexible due to overuse and the tools of conservatism.

The last two chapters, written by younger members of the group who were recently students at AUB bring a welcome élan. The first by Abir Saksouk Sasso, Nadine Bekdache and Ismael Sheikh Hassan veers toward the self-congratulatory but outlines the road blocks confronting efforts where opaque politics and corruption rule. It is good that the book concludes with the work of Rabih Shibli. His bottom-up efforts in the creation of the Beit bil-Jnoub project are exemplary in their focus on achieving local results, countering the worst of corrupt and shoddy building practices, accepting and then critically adjusting municipal construction formats and approaching the citizens involved without naivety, condescension or subterfuge. Putting practical desire first and treating this 'lesson' as one of reconstruction ecology and potential therapy seems to have produced tangible value in small villages in the south. Meanwhile he and his team are self-critical about working 'to change the system, without becoming the system' (211). The notion of therapy is an essential and unaddressed one in a country as traumatized

by war as Lebanon. Not only the 33 days of intense assault in 2006, but the nearly 6000 days of the recent civil war have produced many of the dilemmas and militia-based institutions that plague the nation. How to address such a trauma on a regional level remains a question without answer, particularly because television, controlled as it is exclusively by political factions, is another problem when it could offer a form of national therapy. As such, the identification with dwelling, reconstruction as a cultural process and the remaking of community seem to be optimistic approaches that can return some sense of healthy stability to this shattered place, short of the creation of an actual civil society.

Perhaps it is that which is not discussed here that is most telling. The book is a study in selective confrontation with problems that continually render this potential utopia its opposite. *Lessons* thus mirrors the critical climate in the region, struggling not to offend and perpetually finding external culprits. The noun *corruption* never appears in the main text and only once in a footnote! On page 172 its adjective is used. How is it that this impediment, the first after sectarianism itself, was not more directly addressed? On the other hand the word *resistance* is used enthusiastically and promiscuously without definition of its role after 2000. Is it permanent, thus great for the privileged of the region while debilitating for its disenfranchised populations? Is it resistance to the political economy that is draining this society – real estate for instance? If so, then the re-establishment of existence-minimum housing in the southern suburbs, the international sign of real-estate exploitation, seems quite cynical. In Lebanon reconstruction appears to take on a paradoxical task: to rebuild lives and to continue to 'resist'.

The political woes of this multi-sectarian warlord-run oligarchy are here simplified into a confrontation between 'government' and 'opposition', a relation that actually reversed its polarities during publication. And those polarities look more like reciprocities upon a more critical appraisal – ways to mutually exploit and simultaneously to rally respective constituencies. The 2008 week-long war between opposition and loyalists is described only as a raid on Saad Hariri's offices in Beirut – invoking the eternal conflict between Shi'a and Sunni. The larger, much more bloody and technologically advanced fighting with the Druze in the Shouf is not mentioned, thus maintaining an attempt to simplify or cleanse that which appears to be irretrievably complex and sullied. Why such omissions of issues that are central to the reconstruction and the health of Lebanon? Perhaps, as Jacques Rancière writes, 'Politics is the art of suppressing the political'.[4] In Lebanon, deletions and clichés abound, usual suspects are found according to different political interests and fingers point everywhere except back at the pointer.

Perhaps to further simplify the Ottoman tale that is contemporary Lebanon, several fascinating narratives relating to destruction and construction are not mentioned in this book along with the obvious relations to feudal/religious politics and uncivil social structures. For example, the much-discussed Haret Hreik bombing site and the similar Solidere *tabula rasa* that was the ancient city centre offer strong critical material. These two voids were created by war and real-estate (phenomena more closely linked than generally acknowledged: in fact the same economic process at different volumes), each at the scale of more than a thousand buildings lost, with similar reciprocities, class issues, authoritarian practices and peculiar reinventions of history determining strategies of reconstruction.[5] Likewise uninvestigated is the link between these two voids, the rest of reconstruction and the rhetoric of martyrdom that

permeates Lebanese culture and sublimates the suffering and exploitation of quotidian society in wars generated by elites and international players.[6] By default this book asks: is renewal possible if it calls for more than stone and benevolence, and demands new civil understandings?

## Contributor Details

Michael Stanton was educated at Antioch College, Harvard and Princeton. His design work has been awarded by the ACSA, the Architectural League of New York, the Biennial Steedman Prize and *Progressive Architecture*. He was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome and the first Aga Khan travelling fellow. His publications include chapters in books, numerous articles in journals and a forthcoming book on the American city in the context of paradox. Stanton has taught at several American universities and directed study-abroad programmes for many schools and independently. He was Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut and the Hawkins Distinguished Professor at the University of Texas Arlington. He is currently teaching at the University of Maryland and the Metropolis Graduate Programme in Barcelona.

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## Endnotes

1. Khalil Gibran, 'Pity the Nation', in *The Garden of the Prophet* (New York & London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923).

2. Fernand Braudel, 'The Industrial Revolution and Growth', in *The Perspective of the World; Civilization and Capitalism, 15th to 18th Century*, vol. III, trans. Siân Reynolds (London: William Collins, 1984), 537.

3. Other unmentioned projects associated with this department at AUB include 'Studio' and 'Workshop Beirut' from Studio Beirut summer workshop 2007; Partizan Publik, Volume/Archis and Pearl Foundation, Beirut, in *VOLUME #14 'Unsolicited Architecture'*: A Project by Archis + AMO + C-Lab + NAI; Amsterdam: the work of other faculty at AUB (such as Bernard Mallat, Robert Saliba and Joy Kanaan); and Project R (The Rubble House) from former AUB faculty at IDEA Architects.

4. Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995), 106.

5. See Michael Stanton, 'Heavy Manners: Beirut, War and Real Estate', in *Log 9,* Anyone Corporation, (Winter/Spring 2007), New York; Stanton, 'Letter from Beirut', in *The Architect's Newspaper 14*, September 11, 2006, New York.

6. See Michael Stanton, 'Terrain Vague', in *BEYROUTES: A Guide to Beirut* (Amsterdam: Archis, 2009); Stanton, 'Solidere and the perpetual reinvention of downtown Beirut', in *VOLUME #11 'Cities Unbuilt'*, (Amsterdam, 2007); Stanton, 'Missed Opportunities...and Missed Values', in *An Nahar*, Beirut, February 17, 2006; Stanton, 'Real (e)State: on the continuing reinvention of downtown Beirut', in *Proceedings of the UIA World* Congress *XXII* (Istanbul, 2005).

## *VIOLENCE TAKING PLACE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE KOSOVO CONFLICT*, ANDREW HERSCHER, (2010)

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 198 pp., 39 b/w illus.,
ISBN 9780804769358, $21.95 (paper)

*Reviewed by Dijana Alić, University of New South Wales*

Since the beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s numerous publications have emerged on the topic of war. However, surprisingly few have addressed the most visible aspects of war – architecture and violence. It is thus timely that the book *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* by Andrew Herscher presents the two as forces that underpin the act of war. Architecture provides the physical context for the expression of violence and the infliction of violence on buildings 'render[s] it [architecture] significant and signifying' (18).

Herscher's specific interest in the location of the study, Kosovo, emerged from his involvement in the survey of the state of architectural heritage following the conflict in former Yugoslavia undertaken on behalf of the International Criminal Tribunal. This direct and personal encounter with the impact of violence on the architecture of Kosovo frames Herscher's theoretical approach and methods used in the book. It allows the author to simultaneously assume a position of 'historian' and 'witness' and tell 'the story of architecture's participation in a series of particularly vivid and consequential mimetic acts' (18). According to Herscher, violence, through a range of transformative acts, 'intensifies architecture's historical significance and cultural meaning in the very process of destroying it' (18).

The discussion presents architecture and violence in relation to the complex issues of identity, political agency and history. This compelling analysis of the transformative nature of violence and the processes by which violence comes to represent 'imagined and imaginary communities, ideological positions, or political agencies' (16) is presented in three parts titled 'Modernization', 'Emergencies' and 'Afterwar' respectively. The discussion of 'Modernization' considers the period of the socialist government of former Yugoslavia. During that time, Herscher argues that the destruction and construction of built fabric was an integral part of modernization. As a result, numerous examples of architecture built during the five centuries of Ottoman government were deemed of no significance to the new era and demolished. As the history 'resided in architecture', Herscher argues, the destruction of buildings in many ways was also the destruction of history (43).

Part II, 'Emergencies', covers the period of post-socialist Kosovo. It focuses on the growing importance of ethnicity within the political narratives of the perception of architecture in the 1980s. The section brings together the complex debates of political ideology, identity and the changing and challenging times that ultimately led to the disintegration of the socialist state of Yugoslavia. Herscher effectively uses seemingly small incidents to illustrate larger issues. This technique allows him to uncover the complex and shifting grounds upon which political and national discourses appropriated architecture. Tracing the events of 'vandalism' that caused the destruction of the guesthouse in the grounds of the patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Peć, Herscher shows the transformations

of the very meanings associated with 'vandalism' and its perpetrators. This incident took place in 1981 and was originally perceived as an act of violence against church property. Gradually, however, mediated through the various political discourses, 'this violence became ethnic, with both its authors and their victims cast as representatives of ethnic communities' (51). The Church argued that the attack on its property 'exposed the truth of ethnic antagonism, conflict, and violence: their authors were Albanian and their targets were Serbian' (51). In this process, the original vandalism 'exceeded itself' and became 'a supplement of national ideology and agency' (61). According to Herscher, 'This supplementation was not only semiotic – yielding a sign that could be read – but instrumental – yielding a threatening form of violence' (61).

The sub-section of Part II, titled 'Warchitecture', follows up this causal relationship between violence and architecture in the context of the post-war years of the 1990s. This time the target of destruction is Kosovo's Islamic heritage. Again, violence is expressed in various forms from relatively minor incidents, such as nationalist slogans graffitied on the walls of mosques, to the outright destruction of mosques and other places of significance to the Islamic community of Kosovo. Supporting Herscher's claims that 'architecture – the very medium of war – is made, or remade, both semantically and materially, in the very course of destroying it' are numerous examples of violence and destruction of the architecture of Kosovo (83). The eighteen months of the Serbian 'counterinsurgency campaign' resulted in approximately 225 of Kosovo's 600 mosques being vandalized, damaged or destroyed (87). Herscher cites numerous cases of targeted destruction taking place after the population had been decimated. In the village called Landovica, for example, the 'dramaturgy of destruction' reached its extreme when the toppling of the local mosque occurred 'in conjunction with the removal of corpses killed during the assault on the village' (86). The closing chapter of the book titled 'Afterwar' considers yet another 'mimetic' transformation of architecture by violence, this time imposed by the newly arrived NATO troops.

It is difficult for the reader not to feel overwhelmed by what appears to be the human desire for retribution and revenge. The war is over, but buildings are still burning. 'Only violence can put an end to violence, and that is why violence is self-propagating […] Vengeance, then, is an interminable, infinitely repetitive process', writes Herscher in the concluding remarks (125–26). The notion that acts of assault actually render architecture significant is the very core of Herscher's argument. However, the focus on violence 'taking place' inadvertently implies a disjunction between the aggression and its perpetrators. By presenting both architecture and violence as abstract categories imbued with meanings through their mimetic capacities, Herscher shifts our focus away from the role of individuals in executing atrocious deeds. All writings on war, even when their focus is elsewhere, ought to recognize the important role of the individual in any conflict.

Overall the book *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* is a thoughtful and detailed study of the complex relationships between architecture and violence. It provides an insightful view of the specifics of the Kosovo conflict and the broader context needed in our attempts to understand the war in former Yugoslavia. As such, the book would be of interest to those exploring issues of conflict. With its focus on architecture, the discussion also is of relevance to those concerned with urban renewal of war-affected cities.

## Contributor Details

Dijana Alić holds a degree in Architecture from the University of Sarajevo and a Ph.D. from the University of New South Wales (UNSW). She is currently a senior lecturer in Design, History and Theory in the Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW, Sydney, Australia. Her research interest focuses on the relationship between modernity and national expression in architecture, particularly in the context of post-World War II 'Eastern' Europe. Alić's work has been published in international journals such as the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Centropa*, *Journal of Central European Architecture and Related Arts* and *Open House International.* Alić has participated in numerous national and international conferences.

## *BAGHDAD ARTS DECO: ARCHITECTURAL BRICKWORK, 1920–1950,* CAECILIA PIERI, (2010)

Cairo and New York: American University of Cairo Press, 166 pp., 219 illus., ISBN 9789774163562, $39.95 (cloth)

*Reviewed by Mona Damluji, University of California, Berkeley*

*Baghdad Arts Deco: Architectural Brickwork 1920–1950* celebrates the vernacular brickwork found among Baghdad's layered and bruised contemporary streetscapes. Pieri offers a fresh and nuanced perspective on the modern Iraqi capital, and what she sees may surprise those of us whose tired eyes remain transfixed on the images of endless concrete walls and everyday catastrophes in Iraqi cities that saturate our screens, newspapers and bookshelves.

Armed with her camera, Pieri traversed blockaded neighbourhoods throughout occupied Baghdad to capture a hidden view of the city. In *Baghdad Arts Deco,* she reassembles her findings in a collection of original photographs and texts that uncover the craftsmanship of Baghdad's *usta*s. As the author demonstrates, the legacy of these master builders, whose techniques and talents built up the urban fabric over generations, can still be traced in the dilapidating and often damaged brickwork details and domestic interiors that remain in the capital's oldest neighbourhoods. The book pays homage to the capricious and adaptive urban art-deco architectural style that emerged during the period of Iraq's transition from British mandate to nation state, when vernacular building practices mingled among various colonialist and international trends. Here, within the 'urban palimpsest' of the twenty-first-century city, we rediscover stories and practices from the last significant period of vernacular brick architecture in Baghdad, when 'the *usta*s of Baghdad wrote a new page of the city's history in brick, achieving a modern three-dimensional calligraphy' (116).

Although Pieri holds back from making prescriptive recommendations, her project echoes Iraq's dedicated champions of architectural preservation. Like Ihsan Fethi, John Warren and others, she takes seriously the 'duty to record' Baghdad's architectural heritage – the physical spaces that have inscribed collective memories of the lived city into the urban fabric – as an act of preservation. As a contributor to the introductory section, Fethi details the socio-economic roots and socio-cultural significance of the *usta*s. Also, Rifat Chadirji and Naim Kattan, who are among Baghdad's most notable cultural

figures in architecture and literature, contribute with brief personal reflections on the meaning of Pieri's project as it relates to Iraqis, and further to any person committed to better understanding modern Iraqi history.

Following introductions, the book is structured as two parts. The first, 'Aspects of a Modern Capital in Construction, 1920–1950', provides an urban history of Baghdad in six chronological chapters. Next, 'Viewpoints' presents Pieri's portfolio of photographs, shot in Baghdad between 2003 and 2006. Her original collection is a portrait of architectural brickwork found in public and domestic architecture from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. The photographs and short accompanying texts spotlight hybrid spaces and ornamental details that the author points to as characteristic examples of Baghdad's unique art-deco style. As a whole, the book elegantly chronicles early twentieth-century Baghdad as a site of tremendous transformation, where urban planning appeared in the former provincial capital as a modern practice tied to projects of colonialism and nation building.

'Aspects of a Modern Capital', provides a solid contribution to existing literature on Baghdad's urban development. The author draws from a variety of sources in Arabic, French, German and English, and assembles them as the foundation for her historical narrative. Unfortunately, her voice at times is lost in the prose, which is often choked by quotations. Nevertheless, the overall text is rich with information and insights into the hybrid urban practices that defined contemporary architecture in Baghdad during the British mandate and the early decades of Iraqi independence. Pieri lauds British authorities for creating 'a refined, attentive but practical bringing together of two great traditions: Iraqi decoration and classical European architecture' (35). British colonial architecture, she argues, constituted a distinctly hybrid and collaborative approach between British government architects and local *usta*s. The author identifies this as the essence of Baghdad Art Deco: 'interweaving codes and references from the history of both continents: each façade was an anthology of borrowings' (40). Moreover, she applauds the adaptability and creativity of Iraq's *usta*s who responded to dual challenges presented by newly legislated urban planning schemes and changing demands and desires of everyday urban life. Marking the end of Baghdad's Art Deco, the modernist movement swept into the city as more and more Iraqi architects returned from Europe and America in the 1940s. Building practices shifted away from traditional vernacular practices and ornamental aesthetics in favour of clean lines and concrete facades promulgated by the international style.

Accompanying the text, Pieri reproduces a notable assortment of archival photographs, maps, stamps, advertisements, paintings and postcards from early twentieth-century Baghdad. Sourced largely from private collections, these images comprise a visual narrative that complements the text rather than providing clear illustrations for her narrative. Readers may be left wanting of further critical examination of these impressive images, which capture remarkable aspects of Baghdad as a city in dramatic transformation, yet remain relatively unengaged here.

Conversely, in 'Viewpoints', the photographs take centre stage and comprise the primary narrative, supplemented by brief captions and short essays that focus on formal aspects of the architecture – e.g. facades, roof terraces and columns. Pieri's portfolio of sepia-toned pictures zero in on the built environment from every available angle, documenting Baghdad's unique art-deco style and the spectacular details buried in otherwise mundane

concrete streetscapes (64). In a particularly striking photo taken from the Dijla Gallery (104–05), Pieri captures a sweeping vista from a uniquely Baghdadi perspective: a private roof terrace in the foreground, enclosed by art-deco brick and metalwork, overlooking a view of the river and concrete skyscrapers out to the horizon.

People are notably absent from the vacant interiors and empty street scenes that Pieri captures with her camera. The spectral quality of her images eerily reflects occupied Baghdad as it was at the height of sectarian violence in 2006. Perhaps in future publications the author will share something of her experience in creating this exceptional photographic archive, and what it took to document lived spaces as a record of the city's past, while situated in the precarious realities of present-day Baghdad.

## Contributor Details

Mona Damluji is a doctoral candidate in Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation is a postcolonial study of representations of the city and nation-building in Iraq Petroleum Company films during the 1950s.

## ***THE COURTYARD HOUSE: FROM CULTURAL REFERENCE TO UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE,* NASSER O. RABBAT (ED.), (2010)**

Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 260 pp., 120 b/w illus., ISBN 9780754638438, $109 (cloth). Published in association with the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture

*Reviewed by Anthony D. King, Binghamton University (retired)*

The idea of a book of essays, focused on any particular building form, whether the skyscraper, tower or even the courtyard house, immediately raises the spectre of formalism in terms of interpretation and analysis, a suspicion only partly allayed in this case by the editor's reference in his useful introduction to the 'apparent paradox' of the courtyard house, being 'both a universal and culturally defined type' (xxiv). But as Anoma Pieris asks in one of the more perceptive chapters, 'What is the cultural significance of the courtyard house?' Arising from a conference on 'Courtyard Housing and Urban Fabric' held at MIT in 1997 and subsequent calls for papers by the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (MIT) in 2001 and 2006, the book, consisting of thirteen chapters by architect/academics, architectural historians and a sociologist, is arranged in three parts: Historical and Sociological Paradigms, Cultural Variations and Contemporary Adaptations, and Architects and Their Courtyard Projects. Surprisingly, given the sponsorship, relatively little attention – apart from obvious references to gender – is given to the distinctive influences of Islam as either a religious or cultural system (the words Islam, Islamic get a mere 13 indexed page references compared to 42 for Modern, -ism, -ist, -ity). The editor defines the courtyard house as 'an introverted form defined by an open court shielded from the outside by the built spaces that surround it' (xxi), to be distinguished from 'a house with a courtyard' which is more common

in villages, as opposed to the former, more prevalent in the city. In his view, professional architectural interest in the topic arose following the 1974 oil embargo and was taken up by 'idealistic modernists […] growing restless with the placelessness and formal austerity of some of modernism's canonical examples'; other modern architects working outside the European American discipline saw it as 'a defiant response to the homogenizing tendencies ascribed to Western modernism' (xxiii). Viewed as the embodiment of cultural identity, it coincided with the era of decolonization, a pre-colonial traditional architecture that could form the foundation for a postcolonial national form.

Against this interesting contextual background, the aim of the book is stated, very broadly, as a way of asking how the courtyard house's complex history, and its appropriation by architects and scholars, might be explored, both as a universal as well as a culturally defined architectural type. The wide-open nature of these two interpretive frameworks, together with the broad historical and geographical range of the case studies – from Korea to Hispanic America, as well as Central Asia and the Middle East – give the contributors plenty of scope. Given the limited space offered by this review and also my own particular interests, I shall focus primarily on those essays which address some of the social and cultural dimensions of the theme and leave the more practice-oriented issues to the architects.

In the first 'historical and sociological' part, Jateen Lad's sophisticated and linguistically informed essay on the harem courtyards of the Topkapi Palace shows just how flexible the interpretation of the topic can be. Exploring the socio-spatial qualities of the harem, Lad shows how that space is defined more by notions of unlawfulness and exclusivity than by gender alone, describing how the complex hierarchical family structure, defined by generation, blood relationships, ties of concubinage and levels of sexual maturity, are represented in space, demolishing the idea that the 'the harem' is a single monolithic space. This fascinating essay is followed by Asiya Chowdury's critique of Edward W. Lane's 1836 representation of the Cairene courtyard house, significant in establishing a frame of reference for all later writers on the topic. Marcus Schadl follows with a well-documented case study of the Western colonial influence, over time, on the architecture of Kabul's elite, tracing a process of hybridization between 1880 and 1930 (with the first truly European-styled house arriving around 1900), and the way in which the inward-looking urban courtyard house was not only transformed but eventually replaced by the outward-looking, free-standing bungalow compound in the suburbs. By the mid-twentieth century, the elite had abandoned the old city. The final essay in this part is by Manu P. Sobti on the migration of the Pathans from Afghanistan to Bhopal in India, as foreign mercenaries under the Mughal dynasty, and their impact on the urban form. Here, they maintained a distinct social structure represented by their courtyard houses in the *mohallas,* the unique morphology helping to maintain their minority identity (one of the few essays that address this issue).

What surprises in most of these historical essays is that the colonial context is more or less taken for granted (colonial, -ism doesn't figure in the index). This is especially so in sociologist Monique Eleb's chapter addressing the use of the courtyard house in the design of low-cost housing settlements in Casablanca, both by public and private companies, during the French protectorate in Morocco (1912–56). Only in conclusion does Eleb cite a French contemporary who, in 1954, suggested that the Moroccans would eventually complain for having been held (by their housing status) in a 'subsidiary condition', separate

from housing reserved for Europeans. The French colonial policy of producing neo-Moroccan domestic architecture was also one of segregation.

Overall, it is difficult to disagree with Anoma Pieris's observation that, in regard to courtyard houses, one is far more likely to hear conversations about form, climate or construction than on social and cultural habits, and overall, with the exceptions mentioned here, this is generally true about this edited collection. Visually, this is not an easy book to read, irrespective of the quality of the essays. The typeface is grey and lacking in contrast, especially with the light-reflective semi-gloss pages. Nonetheless, Pieris's own critical and reflexive 'post-colonial observations on the courtyard in Sri Lanka' I found particularly insightful. The remaining essays are largely devoted to the way architectural practice can adapt the courtyard to modern urban conditions, including Reinhard Goethert's interesting suggestions for its use in squatter settlements. Rafi Samizay's overview of the courtyard house in Herat and Kabul provides an interesting account of the modernizing changes from the 1920s, including social and economic shifts and new roles for women. But overall I was left wondering which of the authors had actually lived in one. With regard to readership, while students of vernacular architecture will find the earlier essays especially valuable the book will also appeal to those with interests in the particular regions and cities discussed.

## Contributor Details

Anthony D. King, Emeritus Professor of Art History and Sociology at Binghamton University, State University of New York, now lives in the United Kingdom. He has published on the impact of colonialism and globalization on building and urban form, including *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (2004) and, most recently, 'Imperialism and World Cities' in Ben Derudder, Michael Hoylake, Peter Taylor and Frank Wilcox (eds.), *International Handbook of Globalization and World Cities* (London: Edward Elgar, 2011). With Thomas A. Markus he is co-editor of the Routledge Archi*text* series on architecture and social/cultural theory.

## ***MEMORIALS AND MARTYRS IN MODERN LEBANON,* LUCIA VOLK, (2010)**

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 272 pp., 23 b/w illus., 1 map, ISBN 9780253355232, $24.95 (paper)

*Reviewed by Chad Elias, University of York*

Lucia Volk's *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon* sheds much needed light on the fraught politics of commemoration in a nation haunted by a history of inter-confessional violence. In her book, Volk argues that cemeteries and public memorial sites in Lebanon provide a space in which deeply entrenched ethno-religious divisions can be transcended through state-sanctioned acts of inter-communal commemoration. This is an ambitious claim given the overwhelming counter-evidence. In the wake of the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, tensions between

Shi'a and Sunni Lebanese have risen dramatically creating a social and political rift that threatens to once again derail the state. This conflict has been most visibly apparent in mixed neighbourhoods such as Ras al-Nabaa. It has also been expressed in the discursive struggle for control over public space as evidenced in the massive opposing rallies organized by the Syrian-backed Hezbollah and the US-aligned Future Movement in Beirut's Martyrs Square. Although the conditions and methods of mass mobilization are very different today than they were in the civil-war period (1975–90) these latest developments would seem to suggest a reawakening of old feuds. Yet rather than falling back on deterministic arguments about Lebanon's primordial antagonisms, the author insists that critical attention should instead be given to examining the ways in which differences among sects 'can translate into symbols that confirm national solidarity' (22).

Volk's study begins with a detailed analysis of the public memorials, images and historical accounts devoted to the religiously diverse Lebanese nationalists who were executed by the Ottoman authorities in 1916 after having appealed to the French consul in Beirut to help them to gain independence from the Turks. Although these men are enshrined in Lebanese history books as national heroes, the author had significant trouble locating their graves. When she does finally track down the scantily documented Martyrs Cemetery it turns out to be on a neglected plot of land that resembles an abandoned construction site. All that Volk is able to ascertain is that the 1916 martyrs were buried on a site that belonged to the Druze community at the time. Yet she misses an opportunity by failing to position the site within the context of Beirut's shifting urban landscape, the social dynamics of the surrounding area in 1916, or the territorial identity of this location today. Moreover, how does the inaccessible and abandoned state of the graveyard of the nation's 'founding sons' reflect on the amnesia of contemporary Lebanese society?

Rather than take on these questions, Volk suggests instead that the Martyrs Cemetery was a space linked to a narrative of inter-confessional martyrdom wherein Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and Orthodox and Maronite Christians gave up their lives in the name of independence. The fact that these men were subsequently buried by members of the Druze community leads her to surmise that sympathy for the nationalist cause, against a foreign occupier, was a unifying force in Lebanon. While the graveyard of the martyrs remained largely out of public sight, their violent death was sublimated in the form of an allegorical memorial created by the sculptor Yussef Hoayek. Executed under the French mandate, Hoayek's memorial consisted of two women, one coded Christian and the other Muslim through their attire, joined in a stoic embrace 'of ethno-religious coexistence' (74). The Martyrs Memorial then disappeared from its original location in downtown Beirut and wound up in the gardens of the Nicolas Sursock Museum. The author discovers that Hoayek's sculpture was vandalized by a university professor called Salim Sleem, who reportedly objected to the 'sad stone faces' of the monument standing in Martyrs Square.

Yet here again Volk stops short of examining the full implications of the historical record that she uncovers. We are only left to wonder if the mournful appearance of Hoayek's sculpture was the real source of grievance or if it was the intersection of gender and sectarian identity that made this memorial so objectionable. In 1960 a new sculpture by the Italian artist Mazzacurati was erected in Martyrs Square to replace it. In her assessment, the Mazzacurati

monument is not only evidence of the Eurocentric taste of the Beiruti cultural elite, but an index of the Western geo-political orientation of the Maronite political establishment. This interesting claim could have been furthered by analysing the ideological roles assigned to public culture in the reform policies of the Chehab government, which attempted to forge a national identity that transcended confessional bonds, resting not just on the development of a public service sector but also on the construction of civic spaces that could cut across long-standing territorial divisions in the country. The failure of the Chehabist project would become tragically apparent in the ensuing two decades as Lebanon was plunged into a long and bitter civil war. During that time Martyrs Square became a no-go zone as the city was divided into East and West enclaves by Christian and Muslim militias.

Further on, Volk examines Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's efforts to restore and return the Mazzacurati sculpture back to the site after an eight-year absence. The decision was made to leave bullet holes and shrapnel damage untouched, effectively transforming it into a symbol of the civil war. The irony, which is not remarked on by the author, is that the politician who in 2004 was laying claim to this history was the very same person who was most responsible for eradicating its material traces. Under Hariri's tenure, many of the nearby buildings in downtown Beirut were restored back to their pre-war grandeur, leaving virtually no signs of the violent battles that had been fought in the city centre. As Saree Makdisi, Jad Tabet and others have argued, the neo-liberal reconstruction programme undertaken by Hariri did not offer a redemption of competing narratives of collective memory or national identity in Lebanon. Rather, it emptied out those claims of any meaning as the spaces of public life were given over to the commercial agendas of private entrepreneurs. Strangely, Volk glosses over the public outcry stemming from the 'rebuilding' of downtown Beirut, setting Hariri up as something of a defender of collective memory.

Volk's characterization of Hariri becomes even more problematic when she suggests that after his death the Sunni leader had 'managed to transcend ethno-religious boundaries to be remembered as a martyr for both Christian and Muslim communities' (187). This claim ignores the extent to which Hariri and the rhetoric of nation building used in his name remain a source of profound resentment among Maronite and Shi'a communities. Any argument concerning the unifying capacities of public memorials would have to better contend with the existing fractures within Lebanese society.

The most potentially interesting moments in *Martyrs and Memorials* come in its discussion of the body politics of martyrdom. Volk makes an important distinction between the classical ideal of bodily perfection that is customarily assumed by martyr monuments and the 'new aesthetic of the mutilated and injured' body brought about by photojournalism (28). The author finds evidence of the latter in the imagery accompanying the memorial of the devastating 1996 Israeli bombing of Qana, which resulted in the death of over 100 Lebanese civilians. Indeed, she goes as far as to suggest that it was paradoxically the breaking up of the body at the level of the image that brought communities together in collective acts of witnessing. As she puts it, 'the more mutilated the bodies became, the more unifying their effect' (28). Yet the photo collages of dismembered bodies produced by Hezbollah in the wake of the Qana massacre are neither interrogated by Volk nor examined in any detail. These images surely objectify the violence inflicted on the southern Lebanon population by the Israeli state. In doing so, they forestall the difficult

task of public mourning which might otherwise have formed the basis of a 'post-war' national identity.

## Contributor Details

Chad Elias is a lecturer in the History of Art at the University of York, UK. A recent graduate of Northwestern University's Ph.D. programme in Art History, Elias's research focuses on the politics of documentary and archival practices in contemporary art, particularly as they relate to the obstruction and movement of images in territories shaped by war.