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Antigone Becomes Jocasta: Soha Bechara, *Résistante*, and *Incendies*

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For the secret of a human being is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex. It is the very limit of his freedom, his ability to resist torture and death.¹

Torture preoccupied her because she saw in it, or rather in the person who could resist it, the summit of human courage.²

Those who broke down, or became informers, were those who did not understand the reality of occupation and resistance, those who could not grasp the radicality of freedom.... For me, the fact that I was a girl, that I put my family in danger, that I was incarcerated — none of this mattered. To have stopped fighting would have been to turn my back on what it means, for all of us, to be human.³

Introduction: Resisters and Tragedians

In March 1978, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) invaded Lebanon in "Operation Litani," named after the southern Lebanese river coveted by Israelis and pre-state Zionists as far back as Chaim Weizmann in 1919.⁴ They withdrew later that year, leaving behind a proxy militia later called the South Lebanon Army. The SLA established a buffer state in the south. It expanded after the IDF's 1982 invasion, which culminated on September 15, when the Phalange (a Maronite militia), the SLA, and the IDF coordinated a massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila Camps, West Beirut. The next day, Leftist groups, including the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), founded the Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF), a small but effective force.⁵ The SLA fought Palestinians and their allies in the LNRF at first, then the Shia forces of Amal

and Hezbollah. In 2000, Hezbollah drove the IDF out of Lebanon. Some SLA veterans stayed. Others fled abroad.

In June 1967, Soha Bechara was born in Beirut to an Eastern Orthodox family. She joined the LCP. In 1988, posing as an exercise instructor, she shot SLA leader, General Antoine Lahad. Without charges or trial, the SLA interned her for ten years in Khiam Camp, near the Israeli border, supervised and funded by Israel. Released in September 1998, she moved to Paris, then to Geneva, where she married a Green politician, had two children, taught mathematics, and began work with *Collectif Urgence Palestine-Genève*. In 2000, with Gilles Paris, she published a memoir titled *Résistante*, with translations into Arabic (2000) and English (2003). Three film biographies appeared in 2000.⁶ In 2011, with former Khiam internee Cosette Ibrahim, she published a second memoir, translated as *La fenêtre: camp du Khiam* (2014).⁷

In 2001, the Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad learned about Khiam Camp, saw Sabbag's documentary, read Bechara's book, and met her in Paris. In 2003, he mounted productions of *Incendies*: a play that turns Bechara into "Nawal Marwan," a political prisoner raped by her unrecognized, long-lost son. 2009 saw a revised edition and an English translation.⁸ In 2010, Canadian director Denis Villeneuve premiered a film adaptation in Bechara's Geneva. In 2011, it won eight of Canada's Genie Awards and an Oscar nomination. DVD versions included a documentary on the film's making.⁹

This essay contrasts two groups. "The Resisters" include Bechara, her fellow militants, and the interviewers and documentarians focusing on them. Emphasizing Israel's invasion and proxy occupation, they trace the Lebanese Civil War to colonialism, capitalism, and the power and profits they combined to create. In response, from a position of anti-colonial solidarity, they produce a resistance narrative resembling a complex Realist novel grounded in the experience of everyday life and in a prison-based project of experimental, anti-sectarian collectivity. Bechara unifies this narrative as a self-conscious *type* of Lebanese resistance — not a bourgeois nationalist but a specifically communist fighter and writer who struggles to create a socialist alternative to Israeli occupation and Lebanese sectarianism.

"The Tragedians" include Mouawad, Villeneuve, and the reviewers, cultural agencies, and festivals subsidizing and publicizing their work. Minimizing the role of Zionism and capitalism, they present the Civil War as a non-ideological story of incest, rape, and murder, tracing it to the poverty of the atavistic sectarian village. They turn the Resisters' future-oriented resistance narrative into a backward-facing Symbolist drama of Sophoclean recognition. From a position of neocolonial humanism, they offer missionary sympathy, catharsis, and reconciliation as the means to forge a modernized nuclear family and neoliberal state. Their genuine innovation lies in turning not to Islamophobia but to development ideology — the capitalist universalism that promises to cure sectarian violence while quietly continuing to incubate it. Mouawad unifies this project as a histrionic Lebanese-Canadian *auteur*

whose emigrée heroine appropriates Bechara's experience, turning an eloquent, Red Antigone into a catatonic, ill-fated Jocasta.

Though Bechara and Mouawad were both born into Beirut's Christian bourgeoisie, their accounts of the Civil War clash strongly in form and content, illuminating the class struggle defining the culture wars of modern Lebanon, and their representation abroad. I'll begin with Bechara's memoirs, then turn to Mouawad's play and its film adaptation, concluding with responses by Bechara and Mouawad to Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon.

Soha Bechara and Anti-Colonial Realism

Jean Said Makdisi faults *Resistance*, Bechara's first memoir, for its confinement to "the real world of ordinary people with ordinary powers of expression," adding that only "high art or philosophical writing" can address prison and torture adequately. Indeed, the victims themselves "are often the last to be able to adequately articulate their own suffering."¹⁰ But Bechara has not set out to write a confession evoking the horrors of internment, the glories of resistance, and the profound depths of insight that result. Such works risk becoming a vicarious substitute for self-reflection and political action. Rather, she has written an intellectual and political memoir that emphasizes the social contexts for political action, the practical daily techniques for survival while interned, and the step-by-step emergence of a new, multi-sectarian solidarity. By family, genus, and species, *Resistance* is Realist narration, resistance literature, and prison writing. These vertical strata of classification also form Bechara's horizontal emphases, as she moves from a Realist narrative about her family, to resistance literature about the LCP and her political project, to a prison narrative about Khiam Camp and her eventual release.

At first, it might seem that a non-fiction memoir would automatically aspire to Realism, and fiction, drama, and film to Symbolism, but the categories blur, as we can see when we contrast the fiction of Tolstoy and Kafka, the drama of O'Casey and Yeats, the Auschwitz memoirs of Realist Ella Lingens-Reiner and Symbolist Elie Weisel.¹¹ In *Resistance*, Bechara presents herself as particular but also *typical*, an ordinary inhabitant of "the real world of ordinary people," thus leading her readers to inventory and reflect on their own lives. Here, she resembles the "typical" heroine of Realist fiction, as distinguished by Lukács from "the *average*" and "the *eccentric*.... A character is typical, in this technical sense, when his innermost being is determined by objective forces at work in society."¹² The Realist novel remains unsurpassed as a tool for examining the analogies and interactions between private or family life and public or political life. Similarly, *Resistance* shows us Bechara entering political life not *outside* her family but *through* it. Unlike the static, oppressive family of Arab-hating fantasy, Bechara's complex and dynamic family becomes the very medium through which she gains political consciousness. Born in June 1967, she lived a classic Lebanese girlhood in an extended family split between the city and the country, living in the

southeastern Beirut suburb of al-Shiyyah but spending her summers in the southern village of Deir Mimas, home to her parents and their Greek Orthodox relatives. It had a reputation for Left-wing politics, but with Phalangist residents, it also knew political conflicts. This divide ran through Bechara's family. Her mother's nephews joined the SLA.¹³ Her father's father, Hanna, a stern and violent patriarch, paid fealty to the French and the local landowner, Ahmed El-Assaad. But Hanna's wife, Salima, ridiculed the landowner publicly, called Soha her "comrade," taught her about the sufferings of the Palestinians, and pointed out their stolen Galilean lands just over the border.¹⁴

Salima's sons Dawud and Nayef followed her example, as did their wives Jamila and Nawal: "In the middle of the chaos of war, Nayef the activist and Nawal the feminist helped me discover political debate, ideals, and the concept of commitment."¹⁵ Bechara christened her attack on Lahad "Operation Loula Abboud," after her cousin.¹⁶ In April 1985, 19-year-old Abboud led an attack on Israeli soldiers in her hometown, then blew herself up, killing four of them, rather than being captured.¹⁷ But Bechara found her most important political model in her father, Fawaz, a printer: "He was a Communist and trade unionist, and had been so probably since his teens. I say 'probably' because he didn't drum his beliefs into our ears — quite the contrary. He was a silent man, though always ready to struggle for the cause."¹⁸ Sabbag's documentary violates an Orientalist taboo by showing an affectionate relation of solidarity between an Arab father and daughter: Fawaz shyly embraces Soha, just released from prison, while unpocketing and waving a red flag, spoiling the official nationalist photo op for Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Bechara inventories the "skewed and perverted logic" of the Lebanese Civil War, with all its multiform violence: Christian Lebanese against Palestinian Muslims, Christians against Christians, Lebanese Christians against Palestinians and Shia and Leftist Christian Lebanese, and "the kidnappings on all sides, the checkpoints springing up everywhere, the city split in two as we looked on, stupefied."¹⁹ The new Islamist movements begin kidnapping and killing Left intellectuals.²⁰ An acid attack by Islamists missed Bechara but slightly burned her mother.²¹ As a university student in Beirut, Bechara's communism and even her avid chess playing brought her into the public eye, attracting death threats from Amal. Nonetheless, with typical presence of mind, she didn't rule out joining Amal to pursue the work of resistance. One anecdote encapsulates the ingrown turmoil: Bechara thought Palestinians executed her relative Afif at a checkpoint, despite his mother's entreaties, simply because he was Christian. Then she learned he was actually murdered by a Lebanese Shia avenging his brother, supposedly murdered by Phalangists. Even later, she learned that this brother survived, joined the Phalangists, and commenced "doing dirty work on their behalf." But this is a tragic complexity, not an absurdist morass. She proceeds to describe a different sort of sectarian and national encounter at the funeral of her cousin Khalid, who died alongside Palestinians while fighting against the Israeli

invasion: “I was transfixed by the spectacle in front of me — the young Palestinians marching in rhythm bearing the photos of their martyrs, throwing flowers across streets bedecked with the four colors of Palestine: black, white, red and green.” Emulating her cousin, she “discovered a flag, a cause, a people.”²²

Divisions are asymmetrical: Beirut’s “Green Line” separates not two dueling sectarian mirror images, but sectarian East and anti-sectarian West:

When the civil war broke out between East Beirut and West Beirut, I had the choice, even though I was Christian, of joining one of the two parties of the city. In the West, you had seventeen communities. In the East, only Christians. I chose the party of West Beirut — and it was also the choice of my father. Why? I asked myself the question: who’s really the enemy? Is it the person in the East who thinks Muslims aren’t quite human? Is it the person in the West who struggles to serve the common interest?²³

Rather than despairing at the convoluted sectarian landscape, she surveys it and acts by joining the LCP and the Lebanese Resistance: the LCP “touched me deeply, waking parts of me long numbed by fratricidal slogans and rallying cries.”²⁴ This nationalist group struggled to end sectarianism from within, as opposed to foreign interventionists who lament from without the sectarian madness of squabbling sects and tribes while supplying arms and launching an invasion, an occupation, or a sortie of Vaclav Havel’s humanitarian bombing.²⁵

So far as the Civil War created two sides, says Fawwaz Traboulsi, each took shape in relation to Israel: “On the eve of 1983, Lebanon was as a country divided into two parts: one resisted the Israeli occupation with arms, and another negotiated a peace accord with Israel.”²⁶ Bechara agrees: “As the 1980s began, after five years of fighting, something had become clear to me. Lebanon had only one real enemy, one occupying power: the state of Israel. To my mind, the civil war was just a consequence of this situation.”²⁷ Complicating the structure without discarding the strategic analysis, she adds that Syria moved among various sides and that new parties like Amal and Hezbollah emerged. Only a carefully nurtured exterior view can see the Lebanese Civil War as the mad sectarian binary of Christians and Muslims, or the equally mad conflict of atomized parties. From within, it looks like a structured dynamic conflict that requires an ability to inventory, analyze, and act. As she organizes all her experience and all her praxis in a revolutionary struggle against occupation, Bechara’s narrative has the variegated coherence of the Sartrean *project*. On a theoretical level, Sartre calls this “totalization”; on a more individual, ethical, and practical level, “commitment.” The literary mode of totalization and commitment is resistance literature.

Under Israeli rule, South Lebanon took on that ulcerous combination of colonial occupation and neocolonial exploitation that still defines Palestine.²⁸ Israel’s economic policy combined antiterrorist rhetoric, duty-free Israeli agricultural imports, and a

free-wheeling Lebanese drug trade, with a full-fledged colonial occupation that went as far as hauling off truckloads of Lebanese topsoil, “a new interpretation of the land-for-peace principle.”²⁹ Substantial segments of occupied South Lebanon submitted and adapted, and the effects spread to all of Lebanon. From 1985-1990, Lebanon broke into sectarian statelets engaged in customs-farming, extortion, weapons sales, even coastal piracy: not as an atavistic reversion, but realizing “the supreme capitalist phantasm — the generation of revenues and profits without capital investment — through the militias’ parasitical politico-military levy on practically all economic activities.”³⁰ Bechara emphasizes the economic rather than the immediately military transformation: “Traditions and whole ways of life had been turned upside down,” and “money, even more than the presence of Israeli troops, helped to destabilize social relations.” Lebanese flowed through the porous border seeking work in Israel, while drugs and stolen cars flowed in, and “bottles of *arak* were replaced by bottles of Johnny Walker,” as money became “the lifeblood of the occupied zone.”³¹ She found most of her fellow Southerners not particularly friendly to Israel, but determined to profit as much as possible and incapable of imagining resistance: “Each looked after his own interests, not worrying about how much compromise or collaboration with the occupying powers this really meant.”³²

Effective resistance, then, would be anti-capitalist as well as anti-Zionist and anti-sectarian.³³ She joined the LCP because of “the idea of nationhood. The Party had never sought to slice Lebanese society up by religion.”³⁴ During the Civil War, LCP leader Karim Mroué warned against the “fragmentation of our country into hostile communal cantons,” including South Lebanon, a new Maronistan, and a Shiite Islamic Republic.³⁵ LCP General Secretary George Hawi feared Lebanon would thus imitate and aid Israel’s own sectarian ethnocracy.³⁶ Learning from the experience of her cousin Loula, who allowed a romantic breakup to push her into resistance, Bechara shunned actual romantic entanglements, while inventing an imaginary relationship to a lab technician in the South to justify her frequent visits there. She stayed with an aunt and a cousin, all the while reporting to her Beirut contacts on southern troop movements.³⁷ The LCP leadership suggested she bomb an Israeli office in East Beirut, but the prospect of a breakaway state of South Lebanon had been broached, and “targeting its supposed leader seemed like the best way to ruin Israel’s plans.”³⁸ Taking on the identity of an apolitical young woman, she distanced herself from her militant family. She even befriended the security forces in Hasbaya, who tried to recruit her as an agent.³⁹ Her cousin Issam helped her get a job in a sports center in Marjayoun. When Lahad’s wife Minerva came looking for an aerobics instructor, Bechara saw her chance. She began instruction in the Lahad home in Marjayoun.

To her LCP higher-ups, she had to prove her ability to carry out a violent mission alone, while resisting the scripted romantic role of the female martyr. She wrote a farewell message declaring her solidarity with the Intifada, “which seemed to me to be a beautiful example of resistance and an ideal of revolution.” But she burned

some photos of herself she feared would be used for martyr posters and spurned the *nom de guerre* chosen for her: “Flower of the South.”⁴⁰ Inverting the usual humanist perspective of trauma studies, she found herself struggling not against violence, but for it, as her pacifist sensibility caused her to miss a good opportunity to shoot Lahad: “I realized that I was still just as resistant to brutality and force, still just as disturbed by violence, even the fictional violence shown on television. The car bombings, the wounded whom I had treated, the memories of the dead, none of it had hardened me.”⁴¹ She couldn’t work up any personal dislike for Lahad, an indulgent husband who helped pay for his wife’s aerobics lessons, and she strongly resisted the idea of booby-trapping his bed: “The end doesn’t justify the means.... This was a message aimed at the Israelis. If the bomb also got his wife, his children, it would be meaningless.”⁴² Bechara shot Lahad out of a concrete analysis of what might wake Lebanon from its neocolonial torpor, not out of bloodlust and a desire for revenge: “for all I care, he can die of a heart attack. There’s no sense of personal revenge between me and Antoine Lahad.... There was an invader, and we fought against this invader.”⁴³ The assassination, then, would be a multiple negation. She would overcome her own pacifist sensibility. As a Christian militant shooting a Christian SLA collaborator, she would negate and not just reverse Amal and Hezbollah’s recent sectarian attacks on the LCP. She would allay the patriarchal doubts of the LCP, explode her collaborationist persona, and politicize her passive blood relation to her radical family. Most important, by wounding the colonial statelet of South Lebanon, she would expand the borders of the thinkable for her near-sighted countrymen. But she would also negate herself: “While preparing the operation, I knew that there would be no way out, that I would be captured and killed. I had no vision of a future.”⁴⁴

George Hawi, Secretary of the LCP, gave her his pistol, a gift from Castro. On November 17, she stopped by Lahad’s house to drop off copies of Jane Fonda’s workout tapes, the perfect icon of eighties narcissism and Zionist solidarity.⁴⁵ Asked if being a young woman made her task more difficult, Bechara responded:

That helped me. I was able to infiltrate the IDF and the SLA more easily. To win them over and get what I wanted, I partied a lot, I danced, and I drank. When the guard frisked me at the entrance to General Lahad’s house, he was touching the body of a woman, not frisking a militant, even though I had a pistol hidden on my belly.⁴⁶

She found Lahad viewing a television report on the Intifada — a final, unanticipated inspiration. She shot him twice.⁴⁷ The shots were symbolic as well as instrumental: “The first bullet was a message for the Lebanese people to save their bullets in the Civil War and to use them against Israel’s occupation, not against each other. The second was a salute to the children of the Intifada.”⁴⁸ The SLA immediately took Lahad and Bechara to Israel: he for extended medical treatment, she for a beating, interrogation,

and rape threats. The LCP immediately released photographs of Bechara and her statement.⁴⁹ At first, Lahad announced he would head Bechara's tribunal.⁵⁰ Instead, he disappeared her into Khiam, with no charges, no trial, and no public access.

How should we view Bechara's time in prison? Suggesting a Modernist narrative of metaphysical abjection, Harker presents Jayce Salloum's bare-bones documentary about Bechara's imprisonment as a meditative encounter with a "living martyr" characterized by "non-representational excess," both "more-than-human" and, like Agamben's Auschwitz internees in *Homo Sacer*, a "sub-human" clinging to bare life.⁵¹ But Bechara never presents herself in this sort of florid higher register, which would produce a Symbolist effusion to be tremulously consumed, then forgotten. For all its horrors, Khiam offered her a site of counter-praxis as well as suffering: "It was not a one-sided struggle — the prison walls had their faults and weaknesses."⁵² Her Realist memoir incites reading, understanding, and commitment. Formally, it presents us with a prison narrative, a subgenre of Realist resistance literature. In *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach sees the serious representation of everyday life as the defining trait of literary Realism.⁵³ Reviewing a new edition of *Mimesis*, Terry Eagleton says:

Perhaps it is impossible for us now to re-create the alarming or exhilarating effect of a few pages of Daniel Defoe on an 18th-century reader reared on a literary diet of epic, pastoral and elegy. The idea that everyday life is dramatically enthralling, that it is fascinating simply in its boundless humdrum detail, is one of the great revolutionary conceptions in human history.⁵⁴

If Modernism aims at estrangement, defamiliarization, and making it new, then Realism, its traditional Other, also forms its first instance.⁵⁵ Eagleton mentions Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, but prison narratives connect better with *Robinson Crusoe*, which has drawn centuries of readers not just because of the loathsome castaway slave-trader's colonial project, but also because of his enthralling presentation of everyday activities such as making flour, drying grapes, tanning hides, keeping a diary, and teaching English as a second language. Three examples of the extraordinary-quotidian among the imprisoned Resisters: In 1995, they received reading materials, including copies of the Bible and the Qur'an, but also three Barbara Cartland novels, which she grudgingly read aloud for her illiterate co-detainees: "I thought that was awful — another form of torture!"⁵⁶ Second, in Sabbag's film, Bechara displays with bemused pride a perfectly-fashioned sanitary napkin, which she kept as a memento of prison handicrafts.⁵⁷ Third, while in Khiam, Bechara sang to drown out the screams of the tortured and became known as "the woman who sings."⁵⁸ After they met in Paris, Mouawad asked Bechara what she sang in prison: "Everything that came into my head... ABBA, for example."⁵⁹ So rather than *Levantine Homo Sacer*, perhaps *Cartland, Khiam-Kotex, and "Dancing Queen."*

Prison narratives fascinate precisely because they give us a version of everyday life under stress, focusing on bodily experience, communication, and experimental collectivity.⁶⁰ First, the body. South Lebanon offered a Guantanamo-like neither/nor status perfect for detentions: “Israel” with regard to control, “not-Israel” with regard to accountability. “Prisoners in Khiam were negated, buried, conveniently wiped from the world of the living.”⁶¹ From 1985 to 1994, at least nine Khiam inmates died in custody or shortly after release, some from torture and medical neglect. The SLA interrogated sixty persons close to Bechara, torturing many of them. They interrogated her in the presence of her mother, who urged her to speak. To end her first session of electric torture, she implicated her cousin Issam, only to retract her statement an hour later.⁶² Bechara developed techniques for handling violence and pain, such as counting the blows from a whip. Punished with solitary confinement for her non-cooperation, she adopted a restrained and disciplined method of consuming her one daily meal and a rigorous physical regimen, including miles of daily walking, in 2½ step increments.⁶³

Sexual degradation and threats of rape pervade Bechara’s account, but not explicit discussions of political rape. Nor do they appear in the Amnesty International pamphlets on Khiam. In Sabbag’s documentary, Bechara and Afifi laugh at the male torturers who demurely looked away from women detainees instructed to attach electrodes to their own nipples. But Bechara does say that “women were often subject to the most intimate kinds of pressure.”⁶⁴ Jean-Michel Leprince says camp commander Jean Homsy (“Abu Nabil,” in Bechara’s narrative) raped many women detainees in Khiam, while Serge Thibodeau, who tried to visit Khiam, says guards raped almost all.⁶⁵ In a book dedicated to Bechara, Lambert, and others, Thibodeau interviews a Lebanese-Canadian who had been imprisoned in Khiam and raped repeatedly, and speculates that others who shared her experience kept quiet, fearing the social stigma.⁶⁶ Cosette Ibrahim, one of four women detained in Khiam in 2000, after Bechara’s release, says guards repeatedly raped one or more women inmates.⁶⁷ One need not invoke any uniquely Arab conservatism to understand why a rape victim might decide to keep quiet, given the trans-cultural tendency to blame victims and to aggravate their trauma by fixating on rape’s sensational rather than its political aspects.⁶⁸

Second, communication. For Bechara, Khiam offered a site of counter-praxis as well as suffering. She passed notes to new prisoners and audible messages through the pipes connecting sinks, tried to “sow seeds of doubts among the women who had become collaborators,” and corrupted a guard alienated from her job and coworkers, sharing confidences and information with her.⁶⁹ In an interview, Bechara notes:

We communicated through windows, by songs, by coughing (they later prohibited coughing at length), and there were also the little messages left in the toilets.... We also had a scarf that, carried by the wind, connected

one cell with another.... Writing was prohibited, but eventually, you learned to hide things, you learned the habits of the guards.... And you taught them to the new detainees.⁷⁰

She frequently matched wits with camp commander Jean Homsi, refused to call the camp a prison, since the SLA never formally charged her with a crime, and declined to help Israel negotiate for the release of captured Israeli pilot Ron Arad.⁷¹

The transformation of the everyday into art occurs not just between *Resistance* and its readers, but within the camp itself. In an interview, Bechara says, “How can man work on himself to evolve within four walls? On the second day I said ‘Anything that comes into this cell must be put to use.’”⁷² Bechara devotes a chapter of *Resistance* to the detainees’ efforts to fashion art out of the detritus of everyday life in detention, which made them “thieves of everything and nothing, because even the tiniest piece of stolen paper was a treasure.” They smoothed olive pits, then carved, painted, and strung them into rosaries. For hers, Bechara carved the initials of the Lebanese National Resistance Front into each pit — a perfectly pious mnemonic aid for the lucky secular survivor of a communist martyrdom operation.⁷³ They unraveled clothing and blankets and reknit them into fabric sculptures, sweaters, baskets, small tapestries, and headscarves for Muslim comrades. They exchanged craft works with each other, sometimes as tokens of romantically-tinged solidarity when the internees could convince a sympathetic guard to smuggle them back and forth between the women’s and the men’s sides. They gave them as presents to representatives from international human rights organizations, who began visiting in 1995.

These artifacts have the extraordinary aesthetic presence of objects represented in Realist narrative, which Sartre associates not with transparent mimesis, but with praxis and *being handled*: “The more often the characters handle it, take it up, and put it down, in short, go beyond it towards their own ends, the more real will it appear.”⁷⁴ Bechara remarks,

I have many families, equal to the number of detainees who entered the detention centers. Each family, mother, father, brother, and sister, works to bring anything with them, the smallest items, they’re bringing them to the detainees, even if it’s a package of kleenex, they will bring it to the detainees. This package of kleenex will pass through the hands of all the detainees and I amongst them.⁷⁵

Where internment creates Modernist fractured time and subjective isolation, the Resisters’ artworks reveal a Realist preference for linear time and community. Where prison life aims to destroy “any clear sense of time,” making and displaying these artworks became a means of “marking time... in a context precisely designed to eradicate it.... Thus they become a means of keeping community alive. They also

embody the ideal of a future.”⁷⁶ Bechara also turned her attention to “the abstraction of poetry,” which “became a fundamental part of [her] life in Khiam,” as she composed and memorized over fifty poems.⁷⁷ A screaming neighbor internee inspired her first poem, a poetic denunciation of Israel, while her martyred cousin Loula inspired another. She left her written poems behind in Khiam, but she later received them as the stuffing in a small cushion sent to her in Paris by a former detainee — a striking materialized memory with which she opens her narrative.⁷⁸

Third, the strenuous intimacy of camp life gave Bechara the opportunity for experiments in fabricating anti-sectarian collectivity, replacing the vertical relationship of sovereign captor and abject isolated captive with unauthorized horizontal relationships of solidarity among diverse captives, corrupted guards, and the outside world.⁷⁹ Working to create an experimental version of the cross-sectarian and international unity she desired for Lebanon, she befriended Hanan Moussa, a Shia woman detained in 1996. Despite their differences in background and sensibility, “we shared the same vision: a resistance movement in which each could find his or her own place fighting against an occupying army.” As they became comrades, Hanan taught Soha some Hezbollah songs, while Soha taught her those of Marcel Khalifé.⁸⁰ In creating this friendship, Bechara acted out on a micro-level the political strategy of the LCP as a whole in the eighties and nineties, as it sought to reach out to and solidify relations with the religious resistance.⁸¹ Chapter 13 turns to another prisoner, Kifah Afifi, a Palestinian born in Shatila Camp, who lost two brothers to the 1982 massacre and another to the War of the Camps. In October 1988, at age 17, she led a squad of five Palestinians and two Lebanese hoping to cross the border and capture Israelis for a hostage exchange.⁸² Afifi and Bechara shared a cell, and after being separated, they established a passionate epistolary friendship, using the shower sponge as a letterbox. Making a plus of her claustrophobically narrow cell, Bechara shimmied up its high walls until she could see out a window and look into the courtyard below: “Under the right circumstances, I could even catch a glimpse of Kifah, and we would grin at each other.... Every time I looked out, I felt like I was playing tricks on Abu Nabil, ruining his strategy of trying to make me cooperate with him.”⁸³ In 2001, Bechara exclaimed, “Kifah deserves to have books and books written about her. All by herself, she represents the Palestinian cause. She has lived all the suffering of the Palestinian people: the war, the prohibition of return.”⁸⁴ After her release, Afifi married a fellow-detainee, Mohammed Ramadan, and named her first daughter Soha. Visiting Afifi in Lebanon, Bechara told her, “Until ‘82 I was very distant from the Palestinians. I thought all of Palestine was you. Now I’m flirting with you!”⁸⁵

In Sabbag’s film, Bechara also visits Khiam Camp and meets other Khiam veterans, including men whom she had known about but never met: a Druze communist survivor of a failed rescue attempt, male and female Hezbollah ex-detainees, and a communist named Soleiman Ramadan, physically and mentally injured during his fifteen years of captivity. Repeatedly asked to retell her story in print, on film, and

on video, Bechara conveys neither boredom nor exultation in the attention. Rather, she responds with dutiful clarity — presenting herself as an individual but also as a type: an embodiment of historical tendencies and contradictions. In a 2000 interview, she explains these disciplined performances as part of her mission, reverses the gaze directed towards her, analyzes the fascination of her audiences and interviewers, and asserts the complex unity of her project of resistance and publicity:

The French today have heard how their grandparents lived through an occupation during World War Two, but that seems far in the past, over fifty years ago. They cannot touch or feel this experience now. Likewise for most Americans and the West in general, they have not lived through similar situations. For them it is as though seeing something, meeting someone who has lived this... reminds them of stories they have heard or that their grandparents lived through, but they themselves had no way of feeling... no way of engaging with a witness to such events. This is why first-hand accounts, testimonies are important.... For me as long as there is someone raising questions, that automatically implies that he does not know. And as long as I have the capability to answer, it is my duty to answer. Because one has to acknowledge and share the conditions that one is living. Resistance for me is a mission and part of this mission is the talking about it.⁸⁶

The fascination with Bechara's narrative shows the failure of periodization — of the effort by *fin-de-siècle* proponents of postcolonial hybridity to present it as the regnant successor to sixties/seventies resistance literature. Reflecting on her time in Khiam, Bechara asks, "Where can one discover the true nature of man, where can man find the deep truth about himself? I never believed it could be the detention center."⁸⁷ The concluding paragraph of Bechara's memoir links the traumatic memories of camp life to a militant hope for the future:

Sometimes in the camp, a laugh, a little improvised scene was enough to overcome the horror. Today, some innocuous thing can take me back for a moment to my solitary cell with its floor of beaten earth. But only for a moment. It is not this memory which fills me now, but that of a whole people and its future — the spirit of resistance. Because what I did, I did for tomorrow's children, for that fragile time when they will play in the shade of trees, and the air will echo with their shouts of joy.⁸⁸

Like the factory, the army camp, the colonial school, and the slave or merchant ship, the neocolonial detention camp became a compact dialectical space with unintended consequences: designed to concentrate, individuate, and control, it also creates

conditions for breeding up tomorrow's children and a new resistant collective, across ethnic and sectarian divides.

Wajdi Mouawad and Neocolonial Symbolism

Wajdi Mouawad was born in 1968 to a Maronite family living in Deir el-Qamar, the ancestral home of historian George Antonius and of the Chamoun family, twenty-seven miles due north of Deir Mimas, in the mountainous Chouf area of south-central Lebanon.⁸⁹ His family moved to Paris in 1976 and to Montreal in 1983. Mouawad has become one of Canada's leading playwrights, with *Incendies* frequently called his greatest achievement.⁹⁰

Incendies interweaves events of two times: the life of Nawal Marwan, a woman living first in an unnamed country resembling Lebanon, from the 1950s to the 1980s, and then in Canada for the next twenty years, and the investigation of her life by her twin children, Janine and Simon, in 2002 or so. It begins with the third paragraph below ("Lebel reads") and interweaves the times of the mother and the twins. Here, I'll present a sequential version of events. Nawal Marwan, a fourteen-year-old girl living in a northern village, falls in love with Wahab, a refugee camp boy. He gives her a clown nose stolen from a traveling circus. After Nawal gets pregnant, the camp people send Wahab away, while Nawal's mother tells her she must either leave her family forever or give up her baby. She puts the clown nose into his baby clothes to mark his identity, bids him farewell, and vows to find him one day. Her midwife takes him south to an orphanage in Nabatiyé, which transfers him to another orphanage. During a civil war, the militia of a Southern resistance movement allied with the refugees and led by Chamseddine empties out this orphanage and gives Nawal's son to a couple named Harmanni, who name him Nihad. He begins working as a sniper for Chamseddine's militia, then leaves to look for his mother. An invading foreign army captures him and converts him to their side.

Meanwhile, Nawal's grandmother Nazira tells her to leave her impoverished and illiterate village, go to the city, and learn to think, read, and write. She does so. At age 19, she returns and engraves Nazira's name on her unmarked headstone. As she leaves, Sawda, a girl from Wahab's camp, joins her. Nawal teaches her to think, read, and write. Together, they look for Nawal's son, visiting two orphanages. A doctor tells them that refugees dispersed the orphans. Nawal and Sawda separate, and Nawal takes a bus belonging to a nearby refugee camp. A militia attacks the bus and Nawal alone survives. The play rejoins Nawal and Sawda, age forty. After working at a newspaper wrecked in the course of the civil war, they head out on the road together. When a militiaman threatens them, Sawda kills him. She tells Nawal of the militias' attack on her camp, their slaughter of sleeping civilians, and her own plan to retaliate against their families. Nawal proposes instead that she kill the militia leader named Chad. The two separate. Nawal shoots and kills Chad. The militia takes her to their prison in Kfar Rayat, where her son Nihad Harmanni, now known as Abou Tarek, has become

a guard and torturer, though neither knows of their relation. He rapes her, and at age forty-five, Nawal bears twins. Another guard turns them over to a peasant, who raises them as “Jaannaan” and “Sarwane” and returns them to Nawal when she is freed. The three emigrate to Montreal, where Nawal becomes a secretary to Alphonse Lebel, a notary. At age sixty, she tells a war crimes tribunal about her years in prison. Abou Tarek, also in Montreal, testifies about his time as a prison guard and mentions the clown nose. When Nawal sees and hears him, she recognizes him as her son and her rapist, and falls silent for the final five years of her life. After she has a stroke, a sympathetic nurse records her nightly silences. Nawal dies, leaving behind her twenty-two-year-old twins: Janine, a graduate student in mathematics, and Simon, a boxer.

Lebel reads them her cryptic will, which directs that she be buried face down without a headstone. He gives Janine a sealed letter for the father whom the twins thought had died, Simon one for the brother they never knew they had. Simon rebels and curses his mother, while Janine meets Nawal’s nurse, retrieves the silent tapes, then travels to Nawal’s home country to search for her father. In Nawal’s village, Janine learns of Nawal’s departure and trip to Kfar Rayat. At the prison museum there, a guide tells her of Nawal and of a guard who worked at the prison. This guard tells her that Nawal killed Chad, that she was raped and gave birth to twins in prison, and that he turned her children over to a peasant. The peasant tells Janine he raised the twins and returned them to Nawal on her release. With Lebel, Simon travels to his mother’s home country, where they meet Chamseddine. He tells Simon that his brother Nihad is also his father, Abou Tarek, who has found asylum in Canada. Simon reveals what he has learned to Janine. They return to Canada and deliver their letters to Abou Tarek. They read a final letter from Nawal. Nawal, the twins, Lebel, and the audience all recognize Nihad as the twins’ brother-father in scene thirty-five; Nihad recognizes the relation in scenes thirty-six and thirty-seven. In the first edition of the play only, a final scene presents Nawal’s voice on tape reading a love letter to Wahab.

Neither Mouawad’s preface to the play, the film, nor the documentary about it mentions Bechara or her memoir. Speaking of *Résistance* in an afterword to the 2009 French edition of *Incendies*, Charlotte Farcet says:

Wajdi Mouawad has not read this book, almost as a precaution, to let his imagination float free, to let himself be guided by intuition and not overwhelmed by the biographical. Reading the book is all the more unsettling, then, for there are astonishing coincidences between *Incendies* and the life of Soha Bechara.⁹¹

Our astonishment may fade when we remember that, while writing the play, Mouawad saw Sabbag’s documentary and, according to Bechara, read her memoir.⁹² But the formal differences predominate over the substantive echoes. And the Tragedians’

distance from the Resisters matters, whether it derives from an intentional rewriting or from the orientalist neoliberalism that springs forth when the imagination tries to float free of history.

I will not argue that the Tragedians should have followed the work of the Resisters more faithfully. Rather, I will juxtapose the two groups with the goal of reciprocal illumination of *Résistance* and *Incendies* and their genres (anti-sectarian resistance narrative, neoliberal-neoclassical tragedy). In shaping his play's plot and its reception, Mouawad employs three interconnected techniques. Where Bechara presents herself as a collective type, he oscillates between asserting the abstract imaginative universalism of his vision and insisting on his authentic depiction of Lebanese reality, incarnated by Mouawad himself. Where Bechara focuses on conflicting political ideologies and material interests, his plot reduces these conflicts to a psychic sectarianism born of misrecognition. And where Bechara focuses on the political construction of solidarity, he centers his plot on the familial recognition of mother rape and blood relation. These techniques define the formal and political project of the Tragedians.

The Tragedians repeatedly stress *Incendies's* lack of engagement with or even specific reference to one side or another in the Lebanese Civil War, an elision so profound that it comes to stand for the aesthetic as such. Mouawad comments, "Strictly speaking, *Incendies* isn't a piece about the war. It's about the promises one doesn't keep, about desperate attempts at consolation, about how to stay human in an inhuman context."⁹³ Campbell says that an English production of the play "does not attempt to provide answers and tie the human experience up in a happy, neat, little package, but instead, raises the questions that surpass specific races, cultures, and experiences."⁹⁴ To process fully the inadequacy of such statements, we need to remember just how universal the particular can be, how particular the universal. First, aesthetic practice and theory have long held that particular narratives representing historical or realistically-rendered persons can lay claim to universality.⁹⁵ A Symbolist author avoids the particular not to gain the universal as such, but to gain a certain sort of universal — one that explains historical particulars from above or without. Second, *Incendies* reminds us just how emaciated the universal can become: by excluding the political analysis of motives, it leaves us with no more than some banalities about the quest for identity, the self-destructive horror of revenge, and the human ache for consolation and togetherness. These commonplaces define Mouawad's atrophied stagecraft. If Symbolist drama in turn-of-the-century Paris, Moscow, and Dublin exercised some critical force against decayed Classicism and bourgeois Realism, then the Late Symbolist drama of twenty-first century Montreal and Paris offers little more than authorized and formulaic surprise, and an implicit ratification of capitalist development ideology.⁹⁶

At the same time, the Tragedians constantly remind us that Mouawad's Lebanese origin allows him to bear intimate witness to the war, invoking particularity not

as aesthetic and political reflection, but as *authenticity*.⁹⁷ Though it never mentions Lebanon, *Incendies* alludes to Bechara's attempt to assassinate Lahad, to the 'Ain el-Rammaneh Bus Massacre of 1975, to the Beirut massacres, to particular places, including "Nabatiyé" and "Kisserwan," and even to persons: Mouawad turns the Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdi Shamseddine, the South Lebanese Shia scholar associated with Amal, into "Chamseddine," a cross between a militia leader and Sophocles' Tiresias.⁹⁸ In writing, staging, and marketing *Incendies*, Mouawad repeatedly speaks as an emigré native informant worthy of interviews, reflective essays, scrupulously recorded junkets to Lebanon. True, he's an ill-informed informant, one who had not even heard about Khiam Camp until 2002. But this ignorance becomes a further mark of his questing tragic authenticity: his parents and his culture denied the Civil War, as Sawda's parents denied the Nakba, as the universe denied Nawal and Nihad knowledge of their relation. Mouawad's ignorance prepares a Sophoclean moment of tragic recognition: "strangers had to tell me my own story."⁹⁹

Stories by and about Mouawad and *Incendies* tend to improve with each retelling. Someone seems to have convinced Denis Villeneuve that Mouawad and Bechara were childhood friends in Beirut before the war separated them.¹⁰⁰ First in fiction, then as a factual claim, Mouawad placed a childhood version of himself at the very origin of the Civil War. In his 2002 novel, *Visage Retrouvé*, his seven-year-old protagonist, Wahab, witnesses an attack based on the 'Ain el-Rammaneh bus massacre of 13 April 1975 — the conventional marker for the war's outbreak.¹⁰¹ Mouawad later claimed that he himself witnessed the massacre in the street below his family's Beirut apartment, as "Christian militiamen" avenged "the assassination of their chief by Palestinian militiamen."¹⁰² Members of the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), not Palestinians, attacked a wedding party at the Maronite Church in 'Ain el-Rammaneh but did not kill Pierre Gemayel, head of the Phalange, who was present. Mouawad may be creatively melding Pierre with his son Bashir, assassinated in 1982. Mouawad also asks us to imagine his mother letting little Wajdi play on the balcony after two shooting incidents and five killings in the street below, earlier that morning.¹⁰³ Similarly, in *Visage Retrouvé*, little Wahab survives a bombing that destroys the family garden in the mountains, leaving him to collapse in his father's arms. In a 2008 essay, Mouawad says a bomb destroyed his family's edenic garden home in the Chouf, causing little Wajdi to suffer "the inconsolable grief of my life," as he collapsed into his father's arms, before beginning to hero-worship local Phalangists and handle their weapons. But the military history of the Chouf falls short of Mouawad's elegiac need for a paradise lost. Druze militias did attack some Christian towns there after Kamal Jumblatt's March 1977 assassination, but they didn't have an air force, and Mouawad's family was in Paris by then.

Regardless of their literal truth, these stories share a dramatic consistency in rendering Mouawad both victimizer and victim, blending male and female trauma identities.¹⁰⁴ Riding the North America Islamophobic lecture circuit, women like

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Nonie Darwish, Souad, and the flabbergasting Kola Boof (womanist poet, soft-porn actress, and self-proclaimed mistress of Osama bin Laden) appear as the innocent victims of Arab or Islamic patriarchy, rescued by Jesus, the West, or capitalism, while men like Walid Shoebat, Kamal Saleem, and Zachariah Anani, appear as blood-stained ex-terrorists, publicly repentant but still seared by their own actions. Mouawad plugs into this material, but removes the sectarian polemic that might limit his work's appeal to a single Islamophobic faction. This leaves him free to wallow in the most rancid clichés about Levantine tribal violence, for he has inoculated himself by claiming to have verged on participating in it. In the novel, he's a little boy fantasizing about obliterating enemy planets with his laser canon, just before he witnesses the bus massacre. In the interview, he imagines himself the little boy on the balcony but also the Phalangist spraying the bus with gunfire. In the play he becomes Sawda the massacre survivor and plotter of revenge slayings, Nawal the rape victim and assassin, and Abou Tarek the foster child and sniper-rapist. Our focus of sympathy turns inexorably from the bus passengers to Wajdi and his avatars; like a histrionic postcolonial theorist, he is confessionally *complicit* in the violence he dramatizes.¹⁰⁵ Mouawad's intimate witness authenticates his later writing. The playwright-director breaks down the fourth wall from without and finds himself onstage. Like Oscar Wilde's Oscar, Wajdi Mouawad's Wajdi is his greatest creation.

The Tragedians' interviews, press kits, and programs oscillate between Mouawad's authentically-rendered horrors of the Civil War, and the tremulous freedom of his universal imagination, pleading authenticity to questions about the universality, universality to questions about the authenticity.¹⁰⁶ Thus they *set the binary*, claiming to cover everything while silently blocking a host of alternative binary contexts: the Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli Occupation, class domination and imperialism, Lebanese émigrés and indigenes. The Tragedians reveal no serious interest in the enormous body of Lebanese writing on the Civil War, casting Lebanon as a wordless ache awaiting an occidental raid on the inarticulate. In a web essay for an Avignon theater festival, Mouawad chronicles his May 2008 visit to Lebanon, where the Civil War appeared primarily as the force shaping him as an émigré author, and the Lebanese as lost "twins" revealing the Wajdis who might have been.¹⁰⁷ Asked if he has read Arab authors in translation, he responds, "No. I am more a reader of the soul than a reader of the social.... I feel more like a citizen of Hubert Aquin's universe than of Elias Khoury's."¹⁰⁸ Why is Quebec soulful, Lebanon merely social? Mouawad doesn't say. But sometimes writers read their predecessors on a certain topic to avoid the pratfalls of appropriation and false immediacy. For instance, if Mouawad should ever read *Gate of the Sun*, Khoury's 1998 epic of the Nakba and the Palestinian experience in Lebanon, he might encounter a more embarrassing touristic twin: a fictional Frenchman visiting 1990s Beirut to authenticate his planned stage adaptation of Jean Gênet's *Four Hours in Shatila* — that "stunningly beautiful text" about the massacre, as he calls it.¹⁰⁹

Where do tribalism and ethno-sectarian cleansing come from? Metropolitan capitalists emphasize pre-colonial and indigenous roots, with capitalist development as the cure. But sect and tribe always play a crucial role in the divide-and-conquer schemes of colonial capitalism — witness Britain in Ireland and Kenya and Malaya, France in Rwanda and Burundi, the US in Iraq and Afghanistan. And as yesterday's Euro-American civilizing mission created or aggravated indigenous conflicts of sect and tribe, so today's Euro-American humanitarian interventions aggravate those conflicts rather than quelling them. For neocolonial investors, invaders, and arms traders, a “failed state” constitutes a resounding success and an opportunity for the West to assume, in Žižek's words, “the role of the neutral judge elevated above local tribal conflicts.”¹¹⁰ The resulting “neoliberalism” does offer an innovative and redoubled phase of development and exploitation after an ostensible interruption — the welfare state in the West, the Civil War in Lebanon — but in both areas, the capitalist continuities are most striking. Marie-Joëlle Zahar notes the role of liberal intervention in maintaining Lebanese sectarian conflict after the Taif Agreement.¹¹¹ The Lebanese national bourgeoisie have also revealed the structural affinity of capitalism and sectarianism. Traboulsi says, “Sects... are a perfect example of the way pre-capitalist formations are recycled to play new roles in a peripheral capitalist economy” — notably, by providing “clientist networks” inside the state, and as instruments for enlisting the interference of outside military powers.¹¹² Responding to neoliberal prescriptions of rational developmental economics as the solution to power-driven partisan politics, Najib Hourani shows the intimate integration of finance capital with the Kata'ib (Phalangist) Party, and the continuing role of economic-political blocs in Lebanese politics. In another essay, he shows that Lebanese film and historical writing focus on the sectarian militiaman as the atavistic opponent of humane, liberal modernization, while discreetly overlooking the “beys” of Lebanon, “the ruling classes that have historically perpetuated and benefited from a system of institutionalized vertical cleavages.”¹¹³

Like Bechara, Mouawad criticizes Lebanese sectarianism, and he avoids crude Islamophobic commonplaces — but only because he extends them to Christians. The resulting Arabophobic vision detaches sectarianism from present-day social interests and traces it to an ancient psychological aberration. For Mouawad, the immemorial extended family of the Arab village forms the heart of Lebanon's sectarian darkness, whose salvation lies in capitalist development, emigration, and a reformed oedipal but nuclear family. Mouawad traces sectarian violence to the village by reiterating “Kfar,” a Syriac word for “house” frequently found in Levantine village names: we encounter the orphanage and prison in Kfar Ryat, village violence in Kfar Samira, and the massacres of Kfar Riad and Kfar Matra, which stand in for Beirut's eminently urban Sabra and Shatila.¹¹⁴ When the village horde chastises Nawal, her grandmother Nazira says “Poverty is to blame for all of this, Nawal. There's no beauty in our lives.”¹¹⁵

Poverty is to blame, but no one is to blame for poverty: it derives from the human condition, or from sheer Arab backwardness. Poverty remains the origin of violence, but never an instance of it; it is the passive absence of development, never the active creation of underdevelopment through exploitation. On her deathbed, with the mythic wisdom of one about to cross over, Nazira tells Nawal to leave the village: “learn to read, learn to write, learn to count, learn to speak. Learn. It’s your only hope if you don’t want to turn out like us.... Learn to think, Nawal. Learn.” Nawal promises to return and engrave a name on her headstone, after she learns to read.¹¹⁶ The Symbolist portentousness coexists with urbane developmental bigotry: stupid people in villages must seek wisdom elsewhere. The way out of sectarian poverty lies not in solidarity and struggle but in a banal bourgeois ethic of education and self-improvement, sealed by histrionic, neo-feudal face-to-face promises: of Nawal to Nazira and her children, of Janine and Simon to her. At age nineteen, Nawal keeps her promise, and the hateful village jeers at her literacy.¹¹⁷

As she leaves, she adopts Sawda from Wahab’s camp, and begins teaching her the alphabet. They proceed to spend twenty years together working at a press in Daresh.¹¹⁸ By changing the affectionate solidarity of Lebanese Christian Bechara and Palestinian Muslim Afifi into missionary condescension, Mouawad practices a traditional bourgeois Lebanese form of orientalism: like Syrians, Palestinians are further *east*, more Arab, ignorant, and impulsive. Nawal and Sawda travel to an orphanage in Nabatiyé, rumored destination of Nawal’s son, then to a second orphanage in Kfar Rayat. A doctor tells them the refugees emptied out the orphanage:

Two days ago, the militia hanged three young refugees who strayed outside the camps. Why did the militia hang the three teenagers? Because two refugees from the camp had raped and killed a girl from the village of Kfar Samira. Why did they rape the girl?... [T]he story can go on forever, one thing leading to another, from anger to anger, from sadness to grief, from rape to murder, back to the beginning of time.¹¹⁹

All sects are equally depraved and backward; all moments of political action are equally caught in a web of reciprocal violence. Mouawad says *Incendies* aims “to explore the question of origins,” which rise above merely historical *beginnings*, while mythopoeic phrases like “back to the beginning of time” screen out mere *days* like May 15, 1948; April 13, 1975; and September 16-18, 1982.¹²⁰

This pedagogical relationship of Nawal and Sawda continues through the play’s awkward twenty-year jump, which allows Nawal’s baby to grow into a rapist. In Scene Twenty-Four, a guide at the Kfar Rayat prison tells Janine of the massacre “in the refugee camps of Kfar Riad and Kfar Matra,” during which soldiers surrounded the camps and “sent in the militia.” They killed many civilians, including Sawda’s family, because “their leader had been assassinated.”¹²¹ Mouawad alludes to the September

1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacre. When a Maronite Lebanese SSNP militant blew up Maronite Phalange leader and Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon immediately and publicly blamed the PLO, then released Phalangists and probably also SLA units into the camps, where they massacred thousands of Palestinian civilians.¹²² In his version of the massacre, Mouawad pinches some pathos from *Sophie's Choice* by having Sawda describe a mother forced to choose which one of her sons would live. In response, Sawda proposes "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" by killing civilian relatives of the militia, but Nawal says they must stop trying "to take revenge, burn down houses, make people feel what you feel so they'll understand." Nawal too would have become a sectarian terrorist, but she promised Nazira that she "would learn to read, to write and to speak, so I could escape poverty and hatred."¹²³

The ongoing pressure of Lebanese events means that the Tragedians must continue working to replace political explanations with psychological ones, as we can see in a study guide drawn up for a 2006 production of the play in Toronto:

A disturbing characteristic of reprisals to perceived insults or injuries is that they always escalate. This summer when Israel struck back at Hezbollah forces in Lebanon for kidnapping two of its soldiers, the extent of retaliation was much greater than the original injury.... Since this phenomenon is universal, it is not tied to any religion or culture; it is part of human nature generally.¹²⁴

Neoliberal humanism indicts everyone and therefore no one, but Israel is particularly blameless, for, as always, it *retaliates* and *strikes back*. Similarly, Mouawad's many references to Israel in his rehearsal book disappear from the script:

Now not wanting to speak in a direct way, or not being able to do so, and most of all, not being interested in doing so, I later got the notion to approach the question in a sensory way. The political fact of the Israeli invasion will not be apparent. It is more than subterranean, it's inside me, like an abyss turning into a cry.... The countries will not be named.¹²⁵

Political bad faith spawns a narcissistic prose poem. Like neoliberal intervention, neoliberal theater blurs cause and effect, turning human suffering into a chewable fetish.

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In January 2001, Mouawad invited Canadian photographer and militant Josée Lambert to visit his Montreal theater company. She showed them her photographs of Khiam detainees and their families, including Bechara and her mother, and staged *Diane and*

Jean: her play about a Khiam detainee who, to prevent the torture of her grandmother, submitted to the sexual assaults of a guard named “Jean,” who later emigrated to Canada. Farcet tells us that, while Mouawad sat in the wings of the theater listening to the play, “one phrase struck him like lightning: ‘How can you do this? I could be your mother.’... [T]he story appeared to him of a woman tortured and raped by her own son.”¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly, there’s no such phrase in Lambert’s play as printed, where Jean is about sixty and Diane much younger.¹²⁷ Mouawad wrote Lebanese director Randa Chahal Sabbag about his plan for a play on Khiam’s women prisoners. Sabbag sent him her documentary on Bechara, and when he visited Paris, introduced him to her. Mouawad says he “was struck by her appearance, which revealed nothing of what she had lived through: her face appeared without pain, without scar, or shadow, or half-closed eyes: a stupefying simplicity [stupéfiante simplicité].” When he described his play about mother-rape, Bechara turned to Sabbag with something that sounds less like simplicity than gentle mockery: “That’s a nice story he’s got there!”¹²⁸

For Bechara, family life becomes one item among others to be totalized in a project of revolutionary liberation; for Mouawad, it forms the hidden truth of all existence. Mother-rape doesn’t figure prominently in the litany of horrors comprising the Lebanese Civil War, but in a 2008 interview, he presents it as a “very shameful war, where fathers killed sons... where sons raped their mothers.” Like Nawal Marwan, Mouawad’s parents never spoke of the war to their children, leaving him to learn of it from historians.¹²⁹ Like the Marwan family, the Mouawads repress the fact of incestuous rape. And Mouawad’s decision to have Nawal kill Chad clashes with her rejection of revenge in the rest of the play, suggesting that Mouawad is struggling to get Nawal into jail so she can be raped by her son. Mouawad’s oedipal plot begins sounding less like a bolt from the blue than an *idée fixe*. We share in Nawal’s ignorant ache. In a theatrical dossier for children attending the Nantes performance, Pascal Vey observes, “The story of Nawal is particular and eternally true at the same time. It’s the story of a woman who finds herself plunged into a war without knowing why.”¹³⁰ Bechara and her fellow Resisters found Khiam Camp to be a grim experimental site for resistance, solidarity, and self-reflection; Nawal Marwan and the Tragedians find Kfar Rayat prison to be a site of pure individual abjection. Whatever the realities of sexual violence in Khiam, Mouawad’s focus on unwitting incest mythically distances us from the lived experience of the Civil War and the Israeli occupation. Rape-torture drives out electrode-torture, incest drives out both, and the fact of political torture at Khiam dissolves into an oedipal fog.

Mouawad’s incest plot also distracts us from Israel’s distinctly exogamous border-crossings during Operation Litani (1978), Operation Peace for Galilee (1982), its twenty-two years of large-scale colonial occupation, and its continuing occupation of Lebanon’s Ghajar and Shebaa Farms. For Mouawad, it’s not just that literature isn’t or shouldn’t be political. Politics isn’t political either — it’s a sectarian bloodbath, a tribal struggle, a family saga, and ultimately, an agon of the self. In Mouawad’s

family allegory, two symmetrical antagonists locked in a self-misrecognizing struggle eventually discover a final reduction to unity. Mouawad's Nawal begins this deconstruction when she lectures Sawda on the "hundred years war":

Seen from above, it must be very instructive to see us struggling to name what is barbarous and what isn't. Yes. Very "interesting." A generation raised on shame. Really. At the crossroads. We think, this war will only end with the end of time. People don't realize, if we don't find a solution to these massacres immediately, we never will.... The war pitting brother against brother, sister against sister. The war of angry civilians.¹³¹

As young Oedipus the wanderer kills King Laius, his unrecognized father, at the crossroads, so young Nihad the sniper kills a version of his father Wahab: one nameless victim pleads "Don't kill me! I could be your father! I'm the same age as your mother," echoing the mysterious phrase that Mouawad claimed to hear in Lambert's play.¹³² Nihad resembles Lévi-Strauss's intemperate Oedipus, with his "underrating of blood relations" in slaying Laius and his "overrating of blood relations" in marrying Jocasta.¹³³

Referring to both play and film, Erin Hurley observes,

But this walking in circles also bodies forth a latent sense in the play that echoes Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, which Mouawad avows served as one point of inspiration for *Incendies*. That is, the sense of returning to a self and an origin which are always somehow already known yet when encountered still unbearably unexpected. In other words, we've seen this play before.... These doubles are all "twos" that are also "ones"; each character instantiates the binary calculus of this family and this region — where one plus one may look like two (two people, two sides) but actually equals one. These doubles-that-are-not telegraph too a truth about war: that it is always internecine.¹³⁴

Hurley's monist deconstruction of binary opposites nicely explicates Mouawad's classically bourgeois humanist play, since both positions struggle to avoid feminist, communist, or anti-colonial analysis, which can never quite do without the *two* necessary to describe exploitation, or the *three* that suggests mediation and movement — for instance, the mediating position enacted by an anti-sectarian Christian communist and anti-Zionist militant.

Mouawad traces sectarian violence to incest, and incest to aggressive misrecognition, followed by a healing moment of recognition. In an interview, he explains his habitual turn to Sophocles for this moment: "Electra recognizes Orestes, Oedipus recognizes his mother, Ajax recognizes his madness: each confronts his

blindness, which shows him who he is. For me, this experience of instantaneous revelation is the most profound experience there can be."¹³⁵ Mouawad prepares us for this deconstructive moment with the play's riddling equation, intoned by Simon as he tells Janine about their father: $1+1=1$.¹³⁶ This formula recalls the Sphinx's riddle: what creature walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three at night? Just as Oedipus knows that Man crawls on four legs when an infant, two when mature, and three when old, walking with a cane; so Janine and Simon learn that one father plus one brother can equal a single person. The undeniable dramatic power of the play's revelation — as simple and satisfying as an ABBA chorus — rests on a formally pleasing literary corollary: one *Oedipus Rex* plot plus one Nawal/Nihad plot becomes one *Incendies* plot, and the self-congratulatory audience recognizes the allusion to Sophocles just as Nawal, Janine, Simon, and Nihad recognize the incest.

This moment of neoclassical allusion cloaks the colonial or neocolonial "third" that nurtures the struggles of a sectarian or tribal "two." When his play premiered in Paris and Montreal, Mouawad's French audience could mourn Lebanon's ethno-sectarian madness while forgetting that France partitioned Christian-majority Lebanon from Muslim-majority Syria. His Canadian audience could forget that Canada, working with the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine, separated Jewish-majority Israel from Muslim-majority Palestine. And both could forget that, in 1947, France and Canada voted to partition Palestine, sending one hundred thousand refugees north to the camps of Lebanon.¹³⁷ This forgetting is not incidental: *Incendies* generates so much emotion not despite its hypocrisy, but precisely because of it, for its classic tragic scapegoating allows its audiences to deny their role in fomenting sectarianism, blame it on Levantine madmen or the universe, and top everything off with vicarious mourning for those they helped kill. This theatrically displaced guilt resonates with US war films from *The Deer Hunter* to *The Hurt Locker*; with the Liberal Zionist aesthetic of *yorim ve'bochim* ("shooting and crying") in *Beaufort* (2007), *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), and *Lebanon* (2009); and with the amnesiac ethic of neoliberal humanitarian intervention itself. Dramatic art plays its part in the neocolonial repetition compulsion: the goal isn't mourning and peace, but a pleasing melancholic hunger for perpetual "consolation," which will generate the next intervention, the next bombardment, and the next denial.

Still, Mouawad set out to write not a Realist historical novel, but a Symbolist neoclassical tragedy. We can understand the relation between the two better with the aid of Lukács's *Historical Novel*, which harkens back to Hegel's contrast between Greek epic and Attic tragedy. Like epic, the historical novel aspires to a "totality of objects," for "an artistic image of human society which produces and reproduces itself in the same way as the daily process of life" — not objects as a world in themselves, but humanized objects, mediating and mediated by human relations. Tragedy, on the other hand, though it necessarily simplifies and generalizes, aspires to a "totality of movement," giving an impression of a social whole through a "dramatic collision.

It is an artistic image of the system, so to speak, of those human aspirations which, in their mutual conflict, participate in this central collision.” In *Antigone*, Sophocles needs exactly two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, to embody the conflict between two historically distinct visions of authority. Without Ismene, there “would not be an artistic image of the social-historical totality,” but “a third sister would be dramatically a tautology.”¹³⁸

So while it’s a genre error to fault *Incendies* for failing as a Realist novel, we may note that its dramatic “totality of movement” derives ultimately from neocolonial development ideology. The impetus comes from Nawal’s grandmother Nazira, who rejects the barbarous culture of her impoverished village. She tells Nawal to “break the thread,” becoming an inverted version of the Fate Atropos, one whose broken thread preserves life rather than ending it. Nawal, a natural-born emigrée, flees the village for Daresh, then for the humane metropole of Montreal, presided over by the Canadian Truth and Justice Commission and the avuncular notary Lebel. There she contemplates eastern horrors while preaching a developmental sermon: learn to read, to write, to think. She sends her twins on a circular civilizing mission that reverses then repeats her own. When they return, her posthumous voice echoes Nazira by telling them to “break the thread.”¹³⁹ Where the dialectical crucible of Khiam Camp transformed Bechara’s old family relations and created new ones, Mouawad’s Kfar Rayat Prison restores the oedipal nuclear family in a perverse but profoundly conservative reunion of father-brother, sister-daughter, brother-son, and grandmother-mother-partner-corpse. The oedipal emigrée mother overwhelms but also binds together her family, and all become one, in the words of the play’s refrain: “Now that we’re together, everything feels better.”¹⁴⁰ Mouawad produces a fragmentary false totality of movement by rewriting the neocolonial capitalism that generates Lebanon’s sectarian conflict as a family romance. The oedipal denouement requires no effort, no new cognition, no lurch of strenuous complexity — only a smug pseudo-shock of recognition of and acquiescence in all-too-familiar Greek myth. Sophocles turned Antigone’s future-oriented act of resistance *sumud* and solidarity into Jocasta’s past-oriented recognition and acceptance. Mouawad turns Bechara the vocal Resister into Nawal the mute, autistic Tragedian.

But we can imagine other dramatic “totalities of movement” that would not have silenced the Antigone of Deir Mimas in her struggle with the Creons of Israel and the SLA. In 1977, Etel Adnan published *Sitt Marie Rose*. This experimental novella in the form of a Sophoclean play shows a Lebanese Christian death squad interrogating then martyring the Christian protagonist for her solidarity with the Palestinians of Sabra and Shatila. Adnan modeled her protagonist on Palestinian partisan Marie Rose Boulos, a Syrian Christian and Director of St. Luke’s School for Retarded Children in Beirut, abducted in 1976 and never seen again.¹⁴¹ Adnan’s Marie Rose uncannily resembles Soha Bechara, only nine years old when Boulos died. Though Lebanese culture continues to suffer from neocolonial sectarianism, it also offers a glorious

history of anti-sectarian popular struggle, carried on at mortal risk.

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Mouawad gave Quebec director Denis Villeneuve a free hand to adapt and direct the film version of *Incendies*. Villeneuve shortened the play, coarsened it, and straightened out some ineffective plot kinks, while remaining true to its neoliberal political and aesthetic vision.¹⁴² Villeneuve cast Belgian-Moroccan actress Lubna Azabal as Nawal and used a Palestinian refugee camp in Amman to represent a refugee camp in “Daresh.” He hired displaced Iraqis to play the film’s refugees, “because those people were available, they need money.... And they did help me a lot about finding the kind of authenticity I was looking for.”¹⁴³ Villeneuve made a pluralist neocolonial plus of the resulting *mélange* of spoken Arabics, which show “there is no such thing as ‘Arab culture’ but many cultures in the Arab world and many individuals.”¹⁴⁴ The film opens by zooming out from a bleak, iconic Middle Eastern landscape (actually, Israel-occupied Syria, seen from Jordan), panning to a shot of Chamseddine’s militia giving buzz-cuts to a group of orphan boys, Nihad Harmanni among them. Villeneuve moves from Mouawad’s stylization to something like film Realism, mitigated by certain Symbolist motifs: a chorus of droning cicadas, wide-angle shots of primeval desert and smoldering cityscapes, and recurrent set-pieces of multiple characters glaring off into space along non-parallel, non-intersecting axes. They combine to sketch out a human world alternating between the primal horde and the pathological monad.

Villeneuve says, “The play was politically neutral and I want the film to be politically neutral also, because it’s a movie about peace, about ending the cycle of violence, so I don’t want to be part of this conflict.”¹⁴⁵ But this kind of neutrality toward the squabbling natives requires a colonial asymmetry of places. Joseph Conrad’s London nabobs sit in the yawl *Nellie*, on the River Thames, imagining an inchoate, vaguely African heart of darkness; Denis Villeneuve’s Quebecers sit in a notary’s office on Montreal’s Rue Jean-Mance, imagining an anonymous, vaguely Levantine civil warscape — a place authentically “out there” (“là-bas”) which remains nevertheless an Oriental realm of pre-masticated mystery, a mythological site for an oedipal reunion, and a placeless metaphor for the mind alone.¹⁴⁶ Commenting on his film’s generality in an interview, Villeneuve alludes to the name of the film’s Beirut-like city:

Beirut or Daresh? This question haunted me throughout the process of adapting the script to the screen. I decided to follow the play’s lead and set my film in an imaginary space like Costa-Gavras’s *Z* so as to free it from any political bias. The film is about politics but is also apolitical. The play’s purpose was to delve into the subject of anger and not to fuel such anger. And the setting of *Incendies* is a historical minefield.¹⁴⁷

Villeneuve removes Nawal’s return to her village and the subplot of her silent tapes.

He folds the narrated camp massacres into a live action bus massacre, which becomes his visual touchstone for sectarian violence. Where Mouawad's Symbolist stagecraft brings young Nawal and Janine together onstage, Villeneuve's cuts create moments of vertigo as we struggle briefly to determine whether the jeans-clad young woman we see is Nawal or Janine. Mouawad's Nawal recognizes Abou Tarek as her son at the Canadian war crimes tribunal when he mentions his clown's nose. Villeneuve has Nawal's midwife tattoo a three-dot ID right on Baby Nihad's oedipal heel: $1+1=1$. His Nawal finds her long-lost son when she swims up to the side of a Montreal pool and sees the tattoo on a man's heel. She moves to the pool's conspicuously labeled "partie profonde" ("deep end"), climbs the ladder, and recognizes her son as Abou Tarek — who does not recognize her.

Like Mouawad, Villeneuve spurns crude Islamophobia and embraces crude Arabophobia. True, he turns Mouawad's religiously indeterminate "Nationalists" and "Refugees/Resistance" into "Christians" and "Muslims." But when the former take the bloody initiative, the latter respond with reciprocal violence: "Chamseddine and his men killed all the Christians to avenge the refugees."¹⁴⁸ By having Christian Nawal's brothers shoot Wahab and almost shoot her, Villeneuve rejects the obsessive contemporary identification of honor killings with Islam alone, in an endless stream of accounts — truthful, fictional, and fraudulent.¹⁴⁹ But for Villeneuve, the Arab tribal savagery remains: "I understood in the Arabic world such a thing will be condemned by death."¹⁵⁰ Thus his audiences can abhor barbarous "honor killings" by extended Eastern families of brothers, fathers, and uncles, while blocking any troubling comparisons to civilized "crimes of passion" by lonesome Western patriarchs — like Mouawad's friend and collaborator, musician Bertrand Cantat, who beat Marie Trintignant to death.¹⁵¹

Villeneuve flattens Mouawad's Symbolist prose poetry but retains his capitalist development narrative. What the film "sets out so powerfully is the biblical nature of sectarian violence."¹⁵² Nawal's grandmother tells her to go to the city: "There's nothing here for you now.... You'll go to school there. You'll learn to read, to think. To escape this poverty ["*misère*"].... Promise me that you'll go to school." Mouawad's Nawal returns to her village to inscribe her grandmother's blank headstone, drawing the villagers' jeers; Villeneuve's Janine seeks information in her mother's village, where she meets the same hostility from a female horde, one of them named "Souha." The Levantine heart of darkness festers inside the sectarian village, while cosmopolitan Montreal nurtures humane development and consolation, miraculously whitening Janine and Simon (Mélissa Désormeaux-Poulin and Maxim Gaudette), the offspring of dusky Wahab, Nawal, and Nihad (Hamed Najem, Lubna Azabal, and Abdelghafour Elaaziz).¹⁵³

In his greatest change, Villeneuve expunges vaguely Palestinian Sawda and smudges Mouawad's oblique references to Israel, turning his "army that invaded the south" into "an enemy invasion."¹⁵⁴ Thus he removes the perplexing contradiction in

Mouawad's Nawal, who piously reproaches Sawda for wanting "to take revenge, burn down houses, make people feel what you feel so they'll understand," then executes Chad.¹⁵⁵ Villeneuve's Nawal becomes her own traumatized Sawda, forming her vengeful decision to kill Chad after witnessing the bus massacre and the aftermath of his massacres in "Deressa." She tells one of Chamseddine's group "I have only hatred for the Nationalists.... [I want t]o teach the enemy what life has taught me." While Mouawad places vengeful camp girl Sawda under Nawal's tutelage so she can learn to think, speak, and write, Villeneuve turns vengeance-crazed young Nawal into older-but-wiser Nawal, who leaves politics behind for life as a Montreal clerical worker and yearns to bring her children together. Thus Villeneuve motivates Mouawad's stylized Symbolist plot, pushing it in a Realist direction. But resistance remains nothing more than atavistic reciprocal violence.

And by eliminating Sawda and Palestine, Villeneuve solves a pressing problem for any ambitious young filmmaker pondering the awards scene. As Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu-Assad, Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi, and Dror Moreh can testify, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences tends not to smile on films critical of Israeli colonialism.¹⁵⁶ Villeneuve spares his reviewers any awkwardness: no need to mention Israel and Palestine at all, except to underscore their irrelevance to the film's deeper human meaning. Thus even the *Jerusalem Post* published a favorable review, abhorring the madness of a country "in which seemingly ordinary people become torturers and murderers," lamenting the madness of "the Arab Winter" which preceded the "so-called Arab Spring."¹⁵⁷ Another review shows audiences they can feel all the insanity, all the pathos of the Middle East, while remaining agnostic on its actual conflicts:

Even the work's insistence not to specify actual countries serves the greater purpose of a broader theme: the utter senselessness and tragedy of the unending violence, suffering, atrocities and deaths that self-righteous warring religious and political factions impose upon the region (or anywhere, for that matter). Whether to blame Jews, Muslims, Arabs, Palestinians or power/money-hungry tyrants is beside the point. But *Incendies* is so much more than a "message" film; it is outstanding, high-quality entertainment that should ring up impressive art-house numbers.¹⁵⁸

The rapt contemplation of sectarian madness among generalized ethnic others requires no overt, market-narrowing blame of anyone in particular, while conjuring up a traditional developmental racism.

In her documentary on the film, Barbeau-Lavalette says Villeneuve "sets his story in an invented country representing all countries at war," opening her film by cutting from its central image of sectarian madness, the bus massacre, to a shot of two young Jordanian rams butting heads.¹⁵⁹ But alongside this stylized racism, the documentary

offers, wittingly or unwittingly, a peripheral Realist drama of lived experience. Around the film shoots, local people ride horses, crack jokes, harvest their crops, and compare the action of the film to their own experience of civil war. A Beirut passerby shows off his civil war wounds, but his curiosity about the film annoys a crew member. A refugee patriarch asserts that exiled Palestinians will never forget the Nakba, as he holds his infant daughter Gaza, born during Israel's 2008-9 assault, while another girl beside him mugs for the camera. When a refugee boy cast as a victim of Nihad's sniping asks that somebody else take his place, Villeneuve obliviously reassures him that he won't really be shot. Another boy grimaces at the bad memories stirred up. Parents worry about their war-scarred children who play at "Soldier and Terrorist." As Villeneuve's Nawal heads south against a tide of refugees fleeing north, two by two, through a checkpoint, he addresses the Jordanian, Palestinian, and Iraqi extras, "When they cross, they must not smile. They are just happy to go on to their side, but they must not smile." One woman extra says:

I lived through this scene in Iraq. The same thing exactly. It was in the South. The soldiers came into the houses, and they deported us on a bus just to the frontier. I was with my parents. We were all separated, my mother, my brother, my sister and me. I made a half-turn, but I don't know if my house was bombarded. It was in 2006, and it isn't over.

An assistant director interrupts her and repeats the directions: "Listen up, don't look at the camera! We have to get going here. Every action on time! No smiling at all! Nobody laughs!" In this film universe, laughter would verge indecorously on resistance, suggesting intact survival, reflective consciousness, and an escape from the sheer abjection defining *Incendies*, play and film.

Conclusion: Bechara, Mouawad, and the Second Lebanon War

Affi launched her cross-border mission seeking Israelis to exchange for Lebanese and Palestinian hostages. In June and July 2006, Hamas and Hezbollah followed suit, ultimately leading Israel to exchange 1027 Palestinians for one living Israeli, and over two hundred dead and five living Lebanese for two dead Israelis.¹⁶⁰ But these tactical successes provided an excuse for massive Israeli attacks that took thousands of lives and did billions of dollars in damage. During the attack on Lebanon, the media called on both Bechara and Mouawad for expert commentary. In the autumn of 2006, she traveled to Lebanon with a *Télévision Suisse Romande* film crew, providing the bona fides that made possible the documentary, *Soha, Retour au Pays du Hezbollah*.¹⁶¹

In documentaries and interviews, Bechara has maintained an independent Left position critical of the two dominant Lebanese blocs, Hariri/March 14 and Hezbollah/March 8.¹⁶² In an April 2009 talk to the Union of Democratic Youth, she laments the group's failure to fight for Palestinian civil rights and acknowledge the role of secular

fighters, including communists, in Lebanon's liberation: "You may wonder why the others didn't recognize us as a part of the resistance.... We don't need them to. Ask the soil in the South, and it will tell you."¹⁶³ In December 2009 interview, she praises Hezbollah's resistance effort but opposes its sectarian impulses and support for the neoliberal policies of the Lebanese government. She criticizes the Democratic Left Movement for forgetting its Leftist principles when it split from the LCP to join the March 14 bloc, thus short-circuiting the LCP's discussion of Syria's role. And she offers a comradely critique of the LCP's failure to work concretely for the rights of women and Palestinians.¹⁶⁴

After Israel's retreat in 2000, Hezbollah turned Khiam Camp into a museum of the resistance. On 25 July, 2006, Israel bombed it: "the Israelis themselves confirmed the importance of telling the terrible story of this torture center meant to break a society, when they bombed Khiam almost flat."¹⁶⁵ Bechara has commented, "But you can't erase the memory of a place.... It goes beyond Lebanon. It's the history of humanity."¹⁶⁶ This attack persuaded former internee Cosette Ibrahim to collaborate with Bechara on a more lyrical memoir titled, in its French translation, *La fenêtre: Camp de Khiam*. Disinterested in traditional prison memoirs, Ibrahim helped Bechara write, "not to boast about certain heroic moments or to renounce days of ordinary cowardice," but "to accompany Soha's words, her scattered memories, to leave traces like Post-it Notes... so as not to forget, to engrave certain lived details of Khiam Camp: details that we cannot engrave on the walls, as prisoners habitually do... the remnants of walls that no longer exist." With Ibrahim's help, Bechara records her lived experience of internment in short chapters: the complaint of her mother, temporarily interned, that Soha launched the operation during olive-harvesting season; the names of her fellow internees, and the dates of their arrival, departure, and death; menstruation, bruising, eczema, and body odor; emotional dialogues with Kifah about Sabra and Chatila; her poems "as mediocre as they were passionate"; and detailed recollection of resistance through crafting olive pit rosaries, knitting, and embroidery, including a chapter titled "In the Beginning Was the Needle."¹⁶⁷ In this memoir, even more than the first, we see a camp saturated not with the abject silence of the play and film, but with constant, cunning efforts at communication, commemoration, verbal and artifact-based solidarity.

In the middle of Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon, Montreal's *Le Devoir* published Mouawad's prose poem, "A Cry for Lebanon — The Ache" ("Un cri"), a masterpiece of disengaged empathy, with strong tonal similarities to *Incendies*.¹⁶⁸ Like his play's ideal audience, Mouawad assumes a position of overwhelmed, contemplative paralysis: "Bridges destroyed, arms pulled out, childhoods lost and roads broken, apartment buildings flattened, airplanes in the air and screams. Whistling and explosions and desperate prayers, hard breathing, hearts beating, great frights, incinerated sleep, irony and hatred and humiliation."¹⁶⁹ As his circumspect participles lay out a postmodernist buffet of uncaused effects, Mouawad remains narcissistically non-

partisan:

I don't have a position, I don't have a party — I'm simply overwhelmed, because I belong completely to this violence. I look at the land of my father and mother and I see myself — myself. I can kill and I can be on both sides, or on six sides, or on twenty. I can be an invader and I can be a terrorist. . . . This war is me; I am this war.¹⁷⁰

And he fears that sectarian Lebanon will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory: “The army which invaded my country will withdraw, one day or another, and that day will be a holiday,” but “other wars will come to take the place of those that concern us now: other attacks, other massacres, other disgraces, other sufferings, restoring everything we're struggling to forget today.”¹⁷¹

If we have any ache left, we should save some for Mouawad's timing. His article appeared the very day that Israel destroyed Khiam Camp and, two hundred yards to the south, a U.N. post. After hours of bombing and frantic protest from the U.N., Israel dropped a half-ton smart bomb that killed four U.N. peacekeepers, including Canadian Major Paeta Derek Hess-von Kruedener.¹⁷² The next day, seventeen miles to the southwest, Hezbollah ambushed Israelis invading Bint Jbeil, forcing their retreat — perhaps the turning point of the war, which ended twenty days later.¹⁷³ Like Bechara's attack, like her liberation and that of Khiam Camp, Hezbollah's victory produced a temporary unity in Lebanon and in the Arab world as a whole, despite neocolonial efforts to widen rifts among Sunni, Shia, Christian, and atheist Arabs, and the various Arab states. This unity — flawed, partial, and temporary — survives as a model for Lebanon's post-sectarian future.

The conflict between resistance culture and liberal humanism thus helps define the contemporary historical moment in Lebanon, and in its Western representations. Both sides may feel a little retro, for different reasons: confronting the fact of continued colonial occupation, the Resisters still find useful the formal strategies of resistance literature; desperate to deny that occupation and its sectarian consequences, the Tragedians revert to a humanist tautology: “Man Is Man, after all!” For Mouawad, militant resistance and imprisonment corrode the individual, producing either psychopathic violence or abject passivity. Still, he wants to capture and condescend to some of the authenticity radiating from Bechara. Basking in the success of Villeneuve's film, he says, “*Incendies* the film was inspired by *Incendies* the play, which was inspired by a woman, Soha Bechara, who was imprisoned for six years [sic] in Khiam, in southern Lebanon.... For me, the success of this play and the film is a way to give back some life to a woman whose life was taken away from her.”¹⁷⁴ Never was a shipment of development aid more ostentatious or more superfluous. Unblinking with regard to child soldiers and mother-rape, Mouawad finds the truly unnamable horror in militant eloquence and cross-sectarian solidarity against Israel and its

mercenaries. *Incendies* deserves an unauthorized guerrilla production featuring the arrival onstage of an articulate communist engineering student with an anti-occupation project founded in political analysis, not traumatized bloodlust. It would play like *Godot Shows Up*.

Notes

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Republic of Silence," *We Have Only This Life to Live: The Selected Essays of Jean-Paul Sartre, 1939-1975*, ed. Ronald Aronson and Adrian Van den Hoven, (New York: New York Review of Books, 2014) 83. Thanks for comments to Joanna Tinker, Bashir Abu-Manneh, Tony Bradley, Najib Hourani, Chris Kendrick, Laleh Khalili, Jen Phillis, Obada Shamaa, and an anonymous reader for *Mediations*. This is for my comrade Sami Hanna, who took time off to comment while living through a civil war.
2. Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose* (Sausalito: Post Apollo P, 1982) 102.
3. Souha Béchara [with Gilles Paris], *Résistante* (N.P.: J. C. Lattès, 2000); trans. as Soha Bechara, *Resistance: My Life for Lebanon* (Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull P, 2003) 141. I will generally refer to "Soha Bechara." Other transliterations of her names include "Suha," "Souha," "Beshara," "Béchara," "Bishara," and "Bisharah."
4. Hussein A. Amery, "The Litani River of Lebanon," *The Geographical Review* 83.3 (July 1993): 233.
5. Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto P, 2007) 221-22.
6. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, dir., *Khiam* (Abbout Productions, 2000); Randa Chahal Sabbag, dir., *Souha, survivre à l'enfer* (Cinétévé, 2000), English subtitled version, *Souha: Surviving Hell* (First Run/Icarus Films, 2001); Jayce Salloum, dir., *Untitled Part I: Everything and Nothing* (France/Canada, 2001) <http://vimeo.com/71401594>.
7. Souha Béchara and Cosette Ibrahim, *Ahlumu bi-zinzānah min karaz* ["I dream of a prison made of cherries"] (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2011), trans. *La fenêtre: camp du Khiam* (Tunis: Editions Elyzad, 2014).
8. Wajdi Mouawad, *Incendies*, nouvelle édition, *Le Sang des promesses 2* (Arles: Actes Sud-Papier, 2011).
9. Denis Villeneuve, dir., *Incendies* (micro_scope 2010); French language DVD (Les films Christal: 2011); English subtitled DVD and Blu-Ray (Sony: 2011).
10. Jean Said Makdisi, "Review of Soha Bechara, *Resistance: My Life for Lebanon*," *H-Gender-MidEast, H-Net Reviews* (March, 2005) 5, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=10358>.
11. Ella Lingens-Reiner, *Prisoners of Fear* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1948).
12. Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Merlin P, 1963) 122.
13. Jean-Pierre Perrin, "Soha Bechara, 31 ans, vient d'achever dix années de prison pour avoir voulu tuer un général passé à l'ennemi israélien. La prisonnière du Liban," *Libération* (September 24, 1998) http://www.liberation.fr/portrait/1998/09/24/soha-bechara-31-ans-vient-d-achever-dix-annees-de-prison-pour-avoir-voulu-tuer-un-general-passe-a-l-_246621.
14. Bechara, *Resistance* 4-5, 7, and Bechara and Ibrahim, *La fenêtre* 105-6.
15. *Resistance* 14.
16. *Resistance* 48.
17. *Resistance* 108. Aboud's father Elias co-founded *As-Safir*, the Leftist Lebanese daily. Her mother, born Antoinette Bechara, mentions other tortured or martyred relatives: her niece Soha, her brother's son, her cousin's son Marwan Bechara, her nephew Khalid. See Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance*,

and Despair in the Middle East (New York: Palgrave, 2003) 67-84.

18. *Resistance* 11.
19. *Resistance* 29.
20. In 1984, Islamists captured, forcibly converted, and killed fifty-two Communists and, in 1987, assassinated LCP leader Hassan Hamdan amid a general assault on the Left. See Vijay Prashad, "The Arab Gramsci," *Frontline* (March 5, 2014), <http://www.frontline.in/world-affairs/the-arab-gramsci/article5739956>.
ece?css=print.
21. Perrin, "Soha Bechara."
22. *Resistance* 30-31.
23. Valérie Heuchamps, "Interview de Souha Béchara, symbole de la résistance libanaise," *Solidaire* (April 17, 2001).
24. *Resistance* 34.
25. "In NATO's Kosovo intervention, I think there's an element that no one can doubt: the raids, the bombs, aren't provoked by a material interest. Their character is exclusively humanitarian. What's at stake here are principles, the rights of man that take precedence even over state sovereignty. This is what makes it legitimate to attack the Yugoslav Federation, even without a United Nations Mandate." Vaclav Havel, "Moi aussi je me sens albanais," *Le Monde* (April 29, 1999).
26. Traboulsi, *History* 221.
27. *Resistance* 34.
28. David Hirst compares corruption in Arafat's post-Oslo Gaza to that in Lahad's South Lebanon in "South Lebanon: The War That Never Ends?" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28.3 (Spring, 1999): 5-18, see especially 15.
29. Israel Shahak, "The Real Israeli Interest in Lebanon," *Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs* (July 1996) (reprinted in *Bint Jbeil* [June 28, 2013]) <http://www.bintjbeil.com/E/occupation/shahak2.html>, and "The Great Terrain Robbery," *The Economist* (November 12, 1998) <http://www.economist.com/node/175951>.
30. *History of Modern Lebanon* 232.
31. *Resistance* 53.
32. *Resistance* 54.
33. For Bechara's chronically overlooked communism, see her 2001 interview with the Workers Party of Belgium (Heuchamps, "Interview de Souha Béchara").
34. *Resistance* 34.
35. Karim Mroué [Mroueh], "The Lessons of the Lebanese Patriotic Resistance," *World Marxist Review* 29 (February 1986) 91.
36. George Hawi, "The Lebanese Knot: Seeking a National Democratic Solution," *World Marxist Review* 30 (June 1987) 23-4.
37. *Resistance* 51-57.
38. *Resistance* 55.
39. *Resistance* 66.
40. *Resistance* 65-6.
41. *Resistance* 64.
42. *Resistance*, 60; Sabbag, *Souha, survivre à l'enfer*.
43. Bilal Khrais, dir., *Lebanon's Women Warriors: Lebanese Women from All Sides Talk about Participating*

- in *Their Country's Civil War*, *Al Jazeera* (April 21, 2010) <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2010/04/2010413115916795784.html>.
44. Gabriel Tejedor, "Soha Bechara militante libanaise et martyre vivante," *Le Courrier* (April 21, 2006) http://www.lecourrier.ch/soha_bechara_militante_libanaise_et_martyre_vivante.
 45. Perrin, "Soha Bechara," and David Rudge, "Lahad Releases Would-Be Assassin. Soha Bishara Served 10 Years for Shooting SLA Commander," *The Jerusalem Post* (Sept. 4, 1998). In 1982, Fonda and her husband Tom Hayden visited Lebanon to cheer up IDF troops shelling apartment buildings in West Beirut. See James M. Markham, "Israelis Keep Reminding Beirut that Siege Is on," *New York Times* (July 5, 1982) <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/05/world/israelis-keep-reminding-beirut-that-siege-is-on.html>.
 46. Perrin, "Soha Bechara," and Tejedor, "Soha Bechara."
 47. *Resistance* 69.
 48. Khrais, *Lebanon's Women Warriors*.
 49. David Rudge and Ya'acov Friedler, "Lebanese communists claim responsibility for Lahad murder bid," *Jerusalem Post* (Nov. 9, 1988).
 50. BBC, "Lebanon ASL commander discharged from hospital," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* (January 24, 1989).
 51. Christopher Harker, "'A Close and Unbridgeable Distance': Witnessing *Everything and Nothing*," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 6.1 (2001) 66, 67, <http://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/765/625>.
 52. *Resistance* 121. The strength of Salloum's video derives more from his rapport with Bechara, despite their linguistic awkwardness: he asks in shaky French, supplemented with English, while she answers in Arabic, which he does not understand. See Ilona Hongisto, "Moments of Affection: Jayce Salloum's *Everything and Nothing* and the Thresholds of Testimonial Video," *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' Through the Arts*, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: IB Tauris, 2013) 105-12.
 53. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953).
 54. Terry Eagleton, "Pork Chops and Pineapples. Rev. of Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*," *London Review of Books* 25.20 (Oct. 23, 2003) http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n20/print/eaglo1_.html.
 55. Death notices for Realism are premature. Western literary critics have tended to suggest that global or "postcolonial" fiction must be Symbolist, modernist, post-modernist, or magical realist, but some have begun to acknowledge the claims of global Realism. See Neil Lazarus, "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism," *The European Legacy* 7.6 (2002): 771-82, and Joe Cleary, Jed Esty, and Colleen Lye, eds., "Peripheral Realisms," a special issue of *Modern Language Quarterly* 73.3 (Sept. 2012).
 56. *Souha, survivre à l'enfer*.
 57. *Souha, survivre à l'enfer*. See also *La fenêtre* 131, 117.
 58. Olivia Snaije, "Seeing yourself re-made as fiction," *The Daily Star* (Feb. 2, 2011) <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Film/Feb/02/Seeing-yourself-re-made-as-fiction.ashx#axzz1PJ051RPC>.
 59. Charlotte Farcet, "Postface," *Incendies* 150.
 60. See Harlow's "Prison memoirs of political detainees," *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 117-154, and "Prison Writing," *Banipal* 50 (2014).
 61. *Resistance* 80. On Khiam, see Neve Gordon, "Outsourcing violations: the Israeli case," *Journal of Human*

Rights 1.3 (September 2002): 321-37, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Film/Feb/02/Seeing-yourself-re-made-as-fiction.ashx#axzz1PJ051RPC>; Yehezkel Lein, *Israeli Violations of the Human Rights of Lebanese Civilians* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem 2000) http://www.btselem.org/download/200001_lebanon_eng.rtf; Human Rights Watch, "Torture in Kham Prison: Responsibility and Accountability" (Oct. 27, 1999) <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/1999/10/27/torture-khiam-prison-responsibility-and-accountability?print>; Amnesty International, *Israel/South Lebanon: The Kham Detainees: Torture and Ill Treatment* (Amnesty International: 1992) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/008/1992/en/>; "A Prison without a State," *Haaretz* (September 30, 1999) <http://outofkhiam.tripod.com/prison.htm>; Robert Fisk, "Relatives let into Israelis' jail of death," *The Independent* (Feb. 2, 1995) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/relatives-let-into-israelis-jail-of-death-1571094.html>; Laleh Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgency* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012), 101-38.

62. *Resistance* 75.

63. *Resistance* 93

64. *Resistance* 83.

65. Jean-Michel Leprince, "La prison de Kham," *Zone Libre*, *Radio Canada* (December 21, 2001) <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/actualite/zonelibre/01-12/khiam.html>, and Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, "Immortalizing South Lebanon's anguish," *Daily Star* (Lebanon) (December 17, 2004) <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Arts/Dec/17/Immortalizing-South-Lebanons-anguish.ashx#axzz2OPIO44pH>.

66. Serge Patrice Thibodeau, *La Disgrâce de l'humanité: Essai sur la torture* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1999) 83-5.

67. Larry Kaplow, "Released, but Wounds from Notorious Prison Are Hard to Heal," *Bint Jbeil* (May 30, 2000) http://www.bintjbeil.com/E/liberation/000530_wcox.html, and Ranwa Yehia, "Memorial to Atrocity," *Al-Ahram Weekly* 484 (June 1-7, 2000).

68. In 2004, Amal leader Hajj Mustafa al-Dirani sued Israel, saying he had been raped and tortured in Israeli custody. See Mariam Karouny, "Tortured Lebanese National Sues Israel," *Al Jazeera* (Feb. 27, 2004) <http://www.arabnews.com/node/244930>.

69. *Resistance* 92, 123, 121.

70. "Interview de Souha Béchara."

71. Bechara, *Resistance* 89, 90-91, 94, 95-96. On the identity of Abu Nabil and Jean Homsî, see Fisk, "Betrayed"; and Leprince, "La prison de Kham." On Homsî, a former Army officer from Qleiaa, near Marjayoun, see Charles M. Sennott, *The Body and the Blood: The Holy Land's Christians At the Turn of a New Millennium: A Reporter's Journey* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 313-14. Shortly before Kham's liberation, Homsî fled to Israel, then to Montreal, where he became a Canadian citizen. See Caroline Montpetit, "Souvenirs du Liban-Sud," *Le Devoir* (May 8, 2004) <http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/livres/54047/souvenirs-du-liban-sud>. In 2002, Amnesty International Canada demanded an investigation of SLA veterans in Canada, including Kham torturers and "at least one former director." See *Real Security: A Human Rights Agenda for Canada* (Ottawa: Amnesty International, 2002) 11. Bechara says journalist Roger Auque interviewed her and falsely reported she begged to be exchanged for Arad (*La fenêtre* 89-91). Auque's posthumously-published memoir reveals he was an agent for Israel's Mossad at the time. See Blandine Le Cain, "Les confidences posthumes de l'ex-otage au Liban Roger Auque," *Le Figaro* (February 6, 2015) <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2015/02/06/01002-20150206ARTFIG00124-les-confidences-posthumes-de-l-ex-otage-au-liban-roger-auque.php>.

72. Hadjithomas and Joreige, *Khiam*.
73. *Resistance* 103-9.
74. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* (London: Routledge, 2001) 45. See also Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983) 93.
75. Salloum, *Untitled Part I: Everything and Nothing*.
76. Annie E. Coombes, "The Art of Memory," *Third Text* 14.52 (Summer 2000): 50-51, <http://www.galerienikkidianamarquardt.com/new/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Third-Text-Critical-perspectives-on-contemporary-art-culture-Autumn-2000.pdf>. Coombes's essay includes images of Bechara's embroidery and other detainee artworks. For more on crafts in *Khiam*, see also *Khiam*; Victoria Brittain, "From *Khiam* to Guantánamo and back: ex-prisoners and the transformation of perception," *Race & Class* 52.3 (2011): 54-60; Bechara's and Ibrahim's *La fenêtre*, which includes some photos — with many more in the original Arabic edition. Modernism is frequently attacked for its lack of historical sense; more to the point, as Sartre says of Faulkner, is its missing future: "On *The Sound and the Fury*: Temporality in Faulkner," *We Have Only This Life to Live* 17-25.
77. *Resistance* 108.
78. *Resistance* 2.
79. See also *La fenêtre* 120. Compare Nawal el Saadawi's prison experience with women members of the Muslim Brotherhood in *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1986), and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's with Kenyans of different classes, faiths, and tribes in *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (London: Heinemann, 1981).
80. *Resistance* 125, 126.
81. Tarek Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998), 133-4.
82. *Resistance* 97-102. On Afifi's capture, see AP, "Israeli Jets Hit Guerrilla Base: Raiding Party Halted in Southern Lebanon," *Los Angeles Times* (Oct. 25, 1988) http://articles.latimes.com/1988-10-25/news/mn-307_1_southern-lebanon.
83. *Resistance* 98-9, 99-100.
84. "Interview de Souha Béchara." Jean Khalil Chamoun focuses on Afifi in her documentary, *Ard al-nissa'a/Women Beyond Borders* (Arab Film Distribution, 2003).
85. *Souha, survivre à l'enfer*.
86. *Everything and Nothing*.
87. *Khiam*.
88. *Resistance* 142.
89. Camille Chamoun/Kamil Sham'un founded the National Liberal Party and its militia, the NLP Tigers (*History* 128-37).
90. F. Elizabeth Dahab, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Francophone Literature* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 135-72. I'll refer to the play as "*Incendies*," but will quote from Linda Gaboriau's English translation, *Scorched* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada P, 2009). The translation renames Hermile Lebel as "Alphonse" and Jeanne Marwan as "Janine."
91. "Postface," *Incendies* 145.
92. Snaije, "Seeing yourself."

93. Les Trouvères, *Les Trouvères présentent Incendies, Une pièce de Wajdi Mouawad* (Montreal, 2013) 15 http://www.lestrouveres.be/Incendies_programme_rev.pdf.
94. Amanda Campbell, "Scorched Paints Poetry on the Ceiling of the Tarragon," *The Way I See It...* (September 19, 2008) <http://mt-champion.livejournal.com/4981.html>.
95. See, for instance, Auerbach on "figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1984), 11-78, and Georg Lukács on "typicality" in *Contemporary Realism* 122.
96. Compare the toothless "Late Modernism" analyzed by Fredric Jameson in *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002), 161-79.
97. For a fine study of Villeneuve's politically circumspect quest for authenticity that also illuminates Mouawad's play, see Stéphanie Croteau, "Incendies: Quand la Douleur Perd ses Repères," *Horschamp* (May 2, 2011) <http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/spip.php?article446>.
98. Mouawad, *Scorched* 51, 94, 90, 119-20. In early 1983, as Deputy Leader of the Shia Higher Council, Shamseddine issued a fatwa "declaring total civil resistance against Israel." See Chibli Mallat, "Aspects Of Shi'i Thought From The South Of Lebanon: Al-'Irfan; Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya; Muhammad Mahdi Shamseddin; Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah," *Papers on Lebanon* 7 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1988) http://www.bintjbeil.com/E/shii_mallat.html.
99. Martin Morrow, "Hot Topic: Wajdi Mouawad discusses *Scorched*, his searing play about the Lebanese war," *CBC News* (22 Sept. 2008) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/hot-topic-1.701170>. See also Wajdi Mouawad, Hortense Archambault, and Vincent Baudriller, *Voyage pour le Festival d'Avignon 2009* (N.p.: POL Festival d'Avignon, 2009) 18-19, http://www.festival-avignon.com/lib_php/download.php?fileID=78&type=File&round=198452645.
100. Edward Douglas, "Exclusive: *Incendies*' Denis Villeneuve," *Comingsoon.net* (April 19, 2011) <http://www.comingsoon.net/movies/features/76455-exclusive-incendies-denis-villeneuve>.
101. Wajdi Mouawad, *Visage Retrouvé: roman* (Montreal: Leméac Éditeur, 2002) 21-3. On the bus massacre, see Antoine J. Abraham, *The Lebanon War* (Greenwood, CT: Praeger, 1996) 1-2; Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) 1-2; Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Thunder Mouth P/Nation Books, 2002) 78; Dilip Hiro, *Lebanon, Fire and Embers. A History of the Lebanese Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1993) 19; *History of Modern Lebanon* 183. Most agree there were one or two shootings earlier in the day at the site outside the Church of Notre Dame de la Délivrance in East Beirut, and that Phalangists killed over twenty Palestinians on a bus that later happened by.
102. Jean-François Côté, *Architecture d'un marcheur: Entretiens avec Wajdi Mouawad* (Ottawa: Leméac, 2005) 78-80.
103. Mouawad, *Visage Retrouvé* 26-7; Mouawad, "Je t'embrasse pour finir," *L'Oiseau Tigre, Les Cahiers du théâtre français* 8.1 (Sept. 2008) 125; Hiro, *Lebanon* 101.
104. On the relation between Lebanese cultural representations of female-gendered pure victims of sectarian violence and ultra-masculine militiamen who are "feminized" by public repentance, see Sune Haugbolle, "The (Little) Militia Man: Memory and Militarized Masculinity in Lebanon," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8.1 (2012): 115-39.
105. Reflecting on *Incendies*, Mouawad lists Wahab, Nawal, Sarwan, and Sawda as having "W's like Wajdi": *Le sang des promesses: Puzzle, racines, et rhizomes* (Montreal: Leméac Éditeur, 2009) 10. On postcolonialist "complicity," see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

- UP, 1999) xii-xiii and throughout.
106. Compare *Zero Dark Thirty*, which celebrates the murder of Osama bin Laden. Asserting its authenticity, director Kathryn Bigelow calls it “almost a journalistic approach to film.” Defending its spurious suggestion that waterboarding led the US to bin Laden, screenwriter Mark Boal says, “It’s a movie, not a documentary.” See Dexter Filkins, “Bin Laden: The Movie,” *The New Yorker* (December 17, 2012) http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2012/12/17/121217ta_talk_filkins.
 107. Mouawad, Archambault, and Baudriller, *Voyage* 51, 64-7.
 108. Côté, *Architecture* 73.
 109. Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2005) 251.
 110. Speaking of U.N. actions in Bosnia, Žižek comments “these diversions were intended to create the perception of the Bosnian conflict as a kind of ‘tribal warfare,’ a civil war of everybody against everybody else in which ‘all sides are equally to blame.’ Instead of a clear condemnation of the Serb aggression, this perception was destined to prepare the terrain for an international effort of ‘pacification’ which would ‘reconcile the warring factions.’” See *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2015) 22.
 111. Marie-Joëlle Zahar, “Liberal Interventions, Illiberal Outcomes: The U.N., Western Powers, and Lebanon,” *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, eds. Edward Newman, Oliver Richmond, and Roland Paris (Tokyo: United Nations UP, 2009) 292-315. Zahar remains agnostic as to whether Western interventionists intended this superficially chaotic outcome, but her point in another essay about Lebanese militias, extended to liberal interventionists, is suggestive: “There can be little prospect for conflict resolution as long as economic benefits flow to combatants.” See “Is all the News Bad News for Peace? Economic Agendas in the Lebanese Civil War,” *International Journal* 56.1 (2000) 117.
 112. *History of Modern Lebanon* viii.
 113. Najib Hourani, “Transnational Pathways and Politico-Economic Power: Globalisation and the Lebanese Civil War,” *Geopolitics* 15.2 (2010): 290-311, and “The Militiaman Icon: Cinema, Memory, and the Lebanese Civil Wars.” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8.2 (2008): 287-307.
 114. *Scorched* 54, 56, 81. Thanks to Sami Hanna for this point.
 115. *Scorched* 29.
 116. *Scorched* 32, 33.
 117. *Scorched* 44. Speaking to her children from beyond the grave, Nawal recalls “the promise I kept for a woman who once made me understand the importance of rising above poverty” (102).
 118. *Scorched* 44-6, 51.
 119. *Scorched* 55-56.
 120. *Scorched* 51, 54, 55-6, iii.
 121. *Scorched* 81.
 122. On Sharon’s incitement, see Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 488-89, and AP, “Bomb Kills President Elect,” *The Toledo Blade* (September 15, 1982) <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1350&dat=19820915&id=Mz9PAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=rgIEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5962,4566538&hl=en>. On SLA participation, see Leila Shahid, “The Sabra and Shatila Massacres: Eye-Witness Reports,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32.1 (Autumn, 2002) 39.
 123. *Scorched* 83-4, 82, 85, 87.
 124. Jim McNabb, “*Scorched* by Wajdi Mouawad... Study Guide” (National Arts Centre: 2007) 10, <http://www>.

artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/scorched_guide.pdf.

125. "Postface," *Incendies* 151.
126. "Postface," *Incendies* 143.
127. Josée Lambert, *They Called Them Terrorists: During the South Lebanon Occupation* (Montréal: Les Éditions Sémaphore, 2004) 100. Lambert's superb trilingual book on Khiam and the occupation of South Lebanon includes her play, her photographs, and other materials. Her "Jean," based on Jean Homsî (Montpetit, "Souvenirs") resembles Bechara's Abu Nabil (*Resistance* 90-91) and a photograph of Homsî (Leprince, "La prison de Khiam").
128. "Elle est jolie cette histoire" ("Postface," *Incendies* 149-50).
129. Morrow, "Hot Topic."
130. Pascal Vey, "A propos de *Incendies*," *Incendies, Du lundi 5 au jeudi 15 octobre 2009, Au TU—Nantes. Dossier Jeune Public* 11 http://archives.legrandt.fr/saisons/archives/2009-10/Dossier_Incendies_light.pdf.
131. *Scorched* 74.
132. *Scorched* 112.
133. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68.270 (Oct.-Dec., 1955) 433.
134. Erin Hurley, "What Consolation? *Incendies* on Stage and Screen," *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage* 8.3 (March 2011) 25, 27.
135. *Voyage* 40.
136. *Scorched* 123-5. For Mouawad's use of the Collatz Conjecture in this formula, see Adam Mazmanian, "New generation caught in rekindled 'Incendies,'" *Washington Times* (May 19, 2011) <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/may/19/movie-review-incendies/>.
137. Similarly, Mouawad's righteous Canada brings Nihad Harmanni to the dock for war crimes; actual Canada granted asylum to SLA torturers. See Lambert, *They Called Them* 38; Levon Sevunts, "Canada haven for ex-SLA members? Some are war criminals: rights groups," *The Gazette* [Montreal] (June 7, 2000); Leprince, "La prison de Khiam"; Nicholas Blanford, "SLA interrogator living quietly in Canada—Issam Jarawan suspected of war crimes," *Daily Star* (Oct. 29, 2001) <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2001/Oct-29/33579-sla-interrogator-living-quietly-in-canada.ashx>.
138. Lukács, *The Historical Novel* 92-5.
139. *Scorched* 33, 134.
140. *Scorched* 15; reiterated on 25, 28 (5 times), 37, and 57-8 (3 times).
141. On Boulos, see Noel Alexandre, "Hundreds Take Part in Motorcade to Draw Attention to Kidnapping of Syrian Social Worker, Marie Rose Boulos," *Reuters* (April 29, 1976) <http://www.itnsource.com/shotlist/RTV/1976/04/30/BGY510030443/?s=motorcade>, and the 1976 poster, "Because She Was with Palestine" *The Palestine Poster Project Archives* (Lebanon: Committee of Friends of Marie Rose Boulos) <http://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/because-she-was-with-palestine>.
142. On Villeneuve's adaptation of Mouawad, see Bruno Dequen, "Entretien: Denis Villeneuve," *24 Images* 149 (Oct-Nov. 2010): 54-9, <http://www.erudit.org/culture/images1058019/images1510320/62892ac.pdf>.
143. Director's commentary, Villeneuve, *Incendies*. Casting Director Lara Attala, who appears in the film as "Angry Woman #1," also cast Iraqi refugees for *The Hurt Locker*. See Amanda Palmer, "The Fabulous Picture Show: *Incendies*," *Al Jazeera* (June 10, 2011) <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/>

fps/2011/06/20116872147841379.html.

144. Diane Lefer, "Incendies: A Perspective on War We Rarely See On-Screen," *Hollywood Progressive* (March 30, 2011) <http://dianelefer.weebly.com/2/post/2011/03/incendies-a-perspective-on-war-we-rarely-see-on-screen.html>.
145. Douglas, "Exclusive."
146. "I tried to represent the culture out there as faithfully as possible... how people out there move and talk and act" (Dequen, "Entretien" 57). See Croteau, "Incendies," on Villeneuve's "là-bas."
147. SONY Pictures, "A SONY Pictures Classic Release: *Incendies*, A Film by Denis Villeneuve" (July 5, 2011) <http://www.sonyclassics.com/incendies/presskit.pdf>. Compare the legal boilerplate of Villeneuve's credits with Costa-Gavras's opening provocation: "Any resemblance to real events, to persons living or dead, is not accidental. It is INTENTIONAL." Costa-Gavras, dir., *Z*. (France, 1969).
148. Bechara faults Villeneuve's film: "The war wasn't between Christians and Muslims. You can't just simplify things. Christians killed Christians and Muslims killed Muslims" ("Seeing yourself").
149. For Western credulity toward florid tales of oriental honor killing, see Norma Khouri's best-selling *Forbidden Love* (London: Doubleday, 2004), which centers on the author's ostensible Jordanian friend Dahlia, slain by her Muslim family when she fell in love with a Christian. Anna Broinowski reconstructs Khouri's impressive history as a Chicago con artist in her hilarious documentary, *Forbidden Lies* (Odin's Eye Entertainment, 2007) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VkxTRTJ-s4>.
150. Villeneuve, Director's Commentary, included on both DVDs for *Incendies*.
151. Mouawad called Cantat's murder of Trintignant a "crime of passion," hired him to write music for a production of Sophocles, and hoped to add him to the chorus to amplify the themes of justice and revenge. Canada denied Cantat a work permit. See Kate Taylor, "NAC show to go on without French killer," *The Toronto Globe and Mail* (April 18, 2011) <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/nac-show-to-go-on-without-french-killer/article576881/>.
152. Joe Morgenstern, "Incendies Burns With Mystery, Truth," *Wall Street Journal, Asia* (April 29, 2011) <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703983704576276653857492370.html>.
153. Development ideology also wanders into racism in the 2010 Dutch production of the play, whose sole black actor played a diabolical, dreadlocked, African-accented Nihad. For a clip, see "Branden (*Incendies/Scorched*) Wajdi Mouawad, Alize Zandwijk," Vimeo (2010) <http://vimeo.com/9571509>.
154. *Scorched* 116.
155. *Scorched* 85.
156. In 2012, Villeneuve was briefly associated, as director and co-writer, with a film project to adapt Joe Sacco's radical text-and-graphic documentary *Footnotes in Gaza*, but it seems to have been deferred or abandoned as he has moved on to more big studio productions. Melanie Goodfellow, "Denis Villeneuve to direct adaptation of Joe Sacco's Footnotes in Gaza," *Screendaily* (Feb. 1 2012) <http://www.screendaily.com/news/production/denis-villeneuve-to-direct-adaptation-of-joe-saccos-footnotes-in-gaza/5037226.article>.
157. Hannah Brown, "A Real Scorcher," *The Jerusalem Post* (May 27, 2011) <http://www.jpost.com/ArtsAndCulture/Entertainment/Article.aspx?id=222380>.
158. Doris Toumarkine, "Incendies," *Film Journal International* 114.4 (April 2011) 132-3, <http://www.filmjournal.com/node/5380>.

159. Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette, dir. *Se souvenir des cendres — regardes sur Incendies* (micro_scope, 2010). Included in both DVDs for Villeneuve, *Incendies*.
160. On Israel's Creon-like practice of posthumous vengeance, see Yehezkel Lein, *Captive Corpses* (Jerusalem: B'tselem, 1999) http://www.btselem.org/download/199903_captive_corpses_eng.pdf.
161. Anne-Frédérique Widmann and Jean-Bernard Menoud, dir, *Soha, Retour au Pays du Hezbollah* (Télévision Suisse Romande, 2006) <http://www.rts.ch/play/tv/temps-present/video/soha-retour-au-pays-du-hezbollah?id=465922>.
162. "Liban: Nouveau bras de fer. Entrevue avec Soha Bechara," *Alternatives International* (Jan. 18, 2007) <http://www.alterinter.org/article546.html>, and Ihsan Alkhatib, "Suha Bishara: on Palestine and Sunni-Shia Tensions," *Law, Politics, Arab- American Issues, Arab Politics, Islam* (July 16, 2008) <http://ihsanalkhatib.blogspot.com/2008/07/suha-bishara-on-palestine-and-sunni.html>.
163. Marc Abizeid, "Ex-resistance fighter pays tribute to secular 'martyrs,'" *The Daily Star* (April 10, 2009) <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Apr/10/Ex-resistance-fighter-pays-tribute-to-secular-martyrs.ashx#axzz2POIUbypv>.
164. "Discussion à bâton rompue avec Soha Béchara," *Café Thawra* (Dec. 12, 2009) <https://cafethawrarevolution.wordpress.com/2009/12/12/discussion-a-baton-rompue-avec-soha-bechara/>.
165. Brittain, "From Khiam" 56.
166. "Seeing yourself."
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170. *Voyage* 70.
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