In this chapter, I also examine how artists reflected the pictures of the dead of the blast and explore how *Nancy* and other artworks discussed in previous chapters can be linked to artworks made after the explosion.

Chapter 6 consists of a summary of this book and also offers an outlook for further research by providing an introduction to images of martyrs in Northern Ireland and artistic reactions to them. The martyr, as we will see, is not only an Islamic or 'Eastern' phenomenon but can also be encountered in a solely European and Christian context.

1.3   Research in a Context One Has Not Been Socialised in and the Author's Background

It is necessary to reflect on what has influenced the choice of my research topic, methodologies, and findings, because, as Renske C. Visser claims, the cultural background and the personal experience of the author impact and shape the research project.[13] Thus, as Mike Broussine, Linda Watts, and Caroline Clarke argue:

> researchers who are reflexively and critically self-aware about their feelings, motives, values, biographies, ethics, prejudices, passions and ways of seeing are better equipped to conduct more insightful, deeper and richer research. Part of this insight comes from realising that we are always a part of what we are researching, no matter what kind of research we are engaged in.[14]

Precisely because we are a part of what we are researching, we are always subjective. As Philip Ursprung has convincingly shown, no researcher or text is neutral or objective. Subjectivity starts with the choice of topics that are studied and includes the theoretical approaches with which the artworks are interpreted and the contexts in which the discussion is placed. The author is therefore to be understood not as a passive observer but as an active participant who not only describes but, through her interpretation, influences an artwork. Her text thus adds something to the artwork. The writing and the arguments are based on the experiences and worldviews of the author and are therefore not the final truth but can be contested or agreed with by other researchers, critics, or artists. This leaves the artwork open

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13   Renske C. Visser, ''Doing Death': Reflecting on the Researcher's Subjectivity and Emotions', *Death Studies* 41, no. 1 (2017): 8–9.

14   Mike Broussine, Linda Watts, and Caroline Clarke, 'Why Should Researchers Be Interested in Their Feelings?', in *Research with Feelings: The Emotional Aspects of Social and Organizational Research*, eds. Mike Broussine, Linda Watts, and Caroline Clarke (London: Routledge, 2015), 4.

and does not give it a fixed meaning.[15] I am discussing, commenting on, and interpreting artworks, but I am not claiming that no other readings are possible. This is why the 'I' is very present in the text: not because of a certain ego-centrality, but because I aim to constantly remind the readers that this book consists of my readings and interpretations, which are based on my background and my experiences but are not the final objective truth.[16]

I am also aware that I am speaking about images that emerge from an environment in which I was not socialised, as I am not Lebanese. Furthermore, I work in a post-colonial context in which I am privileged because of my European passport, which allows me to travel to many parts of the world without a visa, because of my grants, which provided me with a certain financial carefreeness while I was working on this book, and because of my perspectives after having obtained a doctoral degree from a European university. As Leah Decter and Carla Tauton wrote, it takes much longer to unlearn a privilege than to identify it. Unlearning works best when engaging with numerous viewpoints and experiences related to the topic of research, which is why I spent a substantial amount of the time working on this book in Beirut.[17] I observed the city's sadness and the country's cancellation of the future, but, despite my being there, I could not fully feel all this because it did not entirely confront me the way it would if I were Lebanese.

Of course, I conducted typical fieldwork activities, such as library and archival research, visits to exhibitions, and other art events, and I was looking into scholarship, cultural knowledge, and artistic production on site. At the same time, my research has always been dynamic, and I tried to include images that were created by events that happened in the country during that time. Because I was convinced that by living in a place one has not been socialised in, one learns more about it than when one is in Europe and reads books and watches movies about a faraway land, my aim was not to be an 'academic tourist',[18] who does fieldwork for a few months or weeks. This also meant that I lived through the country's turmoil between 2020 and 2023, which shaped my perspective on Beirut and the visuals

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15   Philip Ursprung, 'performative kunstgeschichte', in *Kunstgeschichte und Gegenwartskunst. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Zeitgenossenschaft*, ed. Verena Krieger (Cologne/Vienna: Boehlau, 2008), 213–26.

16   My approach of reflecting on how my personal experience related to my topic of research has parallels with approaches taken by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay. Particularly in her book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019), Azoulay considered her own biography in her academic thinking.

17   Leah Decter and Carla Taunton, 'Embodying Decolonial Methodology: Building and Sustaining Critical Relationality in the Cultural Sector', in *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, ed. Erin Morton (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 99–102.

18   Last Moyo, *The Decolonial Turn in Media Studies in Africa and the Global South* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 188.

created in and about it. It was important to me to disenchant my relation to the place, so that the city would become so ordinary to me that I would not construct it as fascinating or exotic, and I hope this prevents me from creating eurocentric or orientalist readings of the images about which I am writing.

The corpus of post-colonial theory raises awareness of problems but does not offer a methodology on how to undertake research as a European in a context in which one was not socialised.[19] Overhoff Ferreira claims that in the broader framework of post-colonial thinking, art from outside Europe and North America has concerned art historians since the 1980s but has been researched using Western epistemologies, while contributions from scholars from the countries where the artworks emerged have been widely ignored. Decolonial art history, however, aims not only to reveal but also to overcome and unlearn coloniality in the discipline, to understand existing colonial frames of thought, and to show that non-Western discourses and Western discourses are equal.[20] However, Overhoff Ferreira also concludes that there is still no method for dealing with artworks that emerged outside of Europe and North America, as epistemologies are not known well enough.[21]

I am aware that many of my methods and many of the theories to which I am referring were invented in Europe and North America and therefore inherit a certain coloniality. But I do not believe that contemporary art from 'elsewhere' should be treated as the 'exotic other', which per se requires different approaches and methodologies. Also, artists usually do not want to be seen as ghettoised others but would rather be part of an international art discourse.[22]

Overhoff Ferreira further mentions that people from the region in which the visuals are situated have knowledge about the field of study and that it is crucial to consider this.[23] Therefore, I am also including theories that stem from Lebanon and I refer to numerous sources by Lebanese authors. My research for this book also encompassed many conversations as well as artist interviews—both those conducted by others and those conducted by myself—, which I use in combination with other sources to contextualise the artworks. A point to bear in mind, as Carsten Junker has stressed, is that although interviews are usually perceived as providing a platform for the interviewees to express themselves, it is the interviewer—in this case I—who frames the voice of the interviewee for the purposes of the interviewer's

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19   For an overview, see Alexandra Karentzos and Julia Reuter (eds.), *Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2012).

20   Overhoff Ferreira, *Dekoloniale Kunstgeschichte*, 10.

21   Ibid., 22–23.

22   Sussan Babaie, 'Voices of Authority: Locating the 'Modern' in 'Islamic' Arts', *Getty Research Journal* 3 (2011): 136–39.

23   Overhoff Ferreira, *Dekoloniale Kunstgeschichte*, 53.

interest.[24] I chose excerpts from the conversations for the frameworks of the chapters of the book. By mostly using direct quotations and not decontextualising the things said, I aim to let the interviewees speak for themselves as much as possible.

Although I tried to be as differentiated, participatory, and collaborative as possible, I cannot offer a solution on how Western-influenced art research can deal with artworks that were not created in Europe or North America. Also, such a methodology cannot be developed in one publication. This needs to happen in a broader discourse; it will need to be a collective and collaborative effort of different actors from the Global South and Global North that I hope will continue in the next years and possibly decades. I also hope that this book can be a piece of the puzzle that one day will constitute a decolonial methodological framework for analysing images that were produced outside of Europe/North America for non-European/North American eyes.

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24   Carsten Junker, 'Interrogating the Interview as Genre: Five Cases over Two Hundred Years', in *Postcoloniality—Decoloniality—Black Critique: Joints and Fissures*, eds. Sabine Broeck and Carsten Junker (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014), 312.