CHAPTER 1

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Overview

Although his hair was turning gray and his lungs were failing him, Emil was only twenty years old when we met. Physically he was aging too quickly, but socially he was unable to become a grown man. The criminal underworlds that dominated his hometown of Batumi during his childhood in the 1990s had been officially declared a part of the past, but they continued somehow to remain a presence in Emil's life. State-sponsored material reconstruction of his hometown was meant to be a reminder of the city's bright future as a tourist resort, but this was not a future Emil believed himself to be part of. Although the past was "no more" and the future was "not yet," both remained ghostly presences in Emil's life that acted on his possibilities in the present. Emil, it seemed, was haunted by time, and he was not the only young man in Batumi living with this experience.

This book explores the tension between subjective and societal time and the ways in which such tension creates experiences of marginality among under- or unemployed young men in Georgia. Through a focus on the interrelation between individual experience and the larger social matrix, theories of social suffering have examined how social processes and events become manifest as personal distress (e.g., Farmer 2005: 30; Csordas 1994). In what follows, I view this process from a temporal perspective by exploring how state processes of past and future making can interfere with individual experience.

Modernity, writes Tim Edensor, is haunted in a particularly urgent fashion by what it has consigned to irrelevance or sought to make past but nonetheless continues to be present (Edensor 2005 [see also de Certeau 1998; Gordon 2008; Stewart 1996]). Yet just as social and political processes render some things past, they also create images of particular futures

that reside in everyday life. I argue that this double process generates experiences of exclusion in terms of individual experiences of divisions between those who belong to these futures and those who are seemingly stuck in pasts that are no longer seen as relevant.

The term *social marginality* refers to situations where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life because they have been excluded—socially, economically, politically, or legally (Gurung and Kollmair 2005: 10). Marginality is often viewed within frameworks that either are societal, in terms of, for instance, religion, ethnicity, or gender, or are spatial, in terms of geographical peripheries (ibid. [see also Bourgois 2003; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Das and Poole 2004; Green 2005; Harvey 2000; Tsing 1993; Wacquant 2008]). Through an ethnographic description of the everyday lives of a group of young men in Georgia, and their subjective experiences of time, this book argues for a notion of marginalization that moves beyond its spatial and social connotations to include a temporal aspect.

To be sure, the past and the future are at all times part of the present. However, there are situations where "past" and "future" become distinct, even objectified, parts of the present, forcing some individuals to reflect on their own positions in society. This is exemplified by youth and sociopolitical change in Georgia.

The Georgian Context

The Republic of Georgia has a long and turbulent history. Located in the southern Caucasus, it has been entangled in numerous conflicts either directly with or as a battleground between its neighbors, such as the Ottoman and Russian empires, which either held or administered various parts of the country for several centuries (Mikaberidze 2007; Suny 1994).

After a brief period of independence, Georgia became part of the Soviet Union in 1921. Despite its small size, Georgia contains linguistically and culturally diverse regions and is the home of a range of nationalities (Funch Hansen and Krag 2002; Nasmyth 2006; Suny 2009). The administrative legacy of the Soviet Union, which had defined levels of administrative autonomy according to ethnicity, created immediate fault lines as Georgia gained independence, causing armed conflict between nationalist and separatist groups throughout much of the 1990s. During Soviet times, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia contained two autonomous republics, Ajara and Abkhazia, and one autonomous oblast, South Ossetia. As Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, local leaders in Abkhazia and South Ossetia sought to achieve independence from it (Wheatley 2005). The ensuing political and armed conflicts remain unresolved to this day.

Independence in Georgia did not entail just political changes, however, but social changes as well. Georgia was known for both a flourishing

second economy and exuberant displays of personal wealth; albeit on a modest level, most Georgians enjoyed a relatively secure lifestyle as part of the Soviet Union (Dudwick 2003: 214). This meant that the insecurity and sudden poverty that struck the nation after gaining independence challenged many traditional modes of life. One such tradition was the highly esteemed rituals of display, hospitality, and generosity that were critically important for maintaining self-respect and social standing for both individuals and families within a community (ibid.; Frederiksen 2006; Goldstein 1999; Pelkmans 2006: 76). As recounted by Nora Dudwick in her examination of social fragmentation in Georgia in the early 1990s, poverty became a deeply felt humiliation for large parts of society as they became unable to adhere to these well-established practices (Dudwick 2003: 218).

I first visited Georgia as a tourist in 2004 and 2005 and conducted fieldwork for my master's thesis in the capital, Tbilisi, in 2006 and 2007 in a local NGO. What struck me during this fieldwork was the fact that the planning conducted by the government in terms of numerous reforms and projects seemed to make it almost impossible for local organizations to make their own plans—the ideas of how the future would (and should) be promoted by the government, both in speeches and reforms, time and again curtailed these plans. As an example, the constant introduction of new reforms or legislation regarding institutionalization of street children made it difficult for NGOs to plan projects that would assist this group because it became uncertain whether the children should be institutionalized at all. As a consequence, many NGOs simply stopped planning ahead (see Frederiksen 2006). But how, if at all, did this play out on an individual level? And how did it affect the younger generation?

Although several recent studies had explored social change in Georgia in relation to traditional practices (Dragadze 1988; Dudwick 2003; Müehlfried 2006) and ethnic or religious divides (Pelkmans 2006), or had examined the changes undertaken by the government after the revolution in health care, consumption, and city planning (Dunn 2008; Koch 2006, 2007; Manning 2009, 2012; Van Assche, Salukvadze, and Shavishvili 2009), there seemed to be a paucity of studies focusing on youth. The aim of my doctoral study, which formed the groundwork for this book, was to bridge this gap and examine how the future was perceived among the generation who had come of age during the turmoil of the 1990s. I found Batumi, the administrative center of the Ajara region, to be a potentially fruitful site to explore this.

The Two-Faced City

With its subtropical climate and its location by the Black Sea, the Ajara region had been well-known throughout the Soviet Union as a holiday paradise. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, tourism as a local industry faded dramatically. During the 1990s, Ajara was

ruled by Aslan Abashidze as an autonomous republic. By intensifying control through the police, the army, and customs offices, Abashidze managed to rule the region as a semi-fiefdom throughout the 1990s and, despite a strained political relationship with the government in Tbilisi, also managed to steer it clear of the civil wars that raged in other parts of the country during this time. However, a few months after the revolution in Georgia, in late 2003, Ajara again came under the control of the central government in Tbilisi and Abashidze was ousted.

Batumi began to undergo a series of changes. Large parts of the city center were being rebuilt as part of the government's aim to refashion it as a prominent tourist destination on the Black Sea coast. Seventy years of Soviet rule had dramatically changed the city and, in the process of reconstruction, signs of this Soviet past were being erased. The same held true for signs of the 1990s, widely known as "the transition," in which the former Soviet republics were led from planned economies, socialism, and authoritarianism to market economies, democracy, and globalization. After the revolution, the newly elected president, Mikheil Saakashvili, officially declared the "transition" to be over, the proof of which was to be seen in the reconstruction of Batumi.

This was the scenario as I initiated my fieldwork in the city in early August 2008. Then war broke out, soon followed by the international financial crisis. Both challenged the rebuilding taking place as well as the prospects of many Batumi residents. The young men I met described how the war had circumscribed many of their aspirations and how, as a result of the government's rebuilding, Batumi had become a "two-faced city." As I soon learned, despite the government's efforts to erase the Soviet and post-Soviet past in Batumi—both materially and symbolically in terms of iconoclasms and rebuilding and via reforms and legal measures condemning certain practices of the 1990s such as corruption, organized crime, and the drug trade—some objects, practices, and people somehow seemed to remain present although they were officially declared gone. Thus, while the rebuilding by the government represented one side (or face) of the city, for the young men there was another side as well.

During the course of about a year, I participated in the lives of a group of underemployed or unemployed young men, around thirty individuals in total, whom I came to know via Emil, a young waiter I had met in early August. This group centered most of its daily activities on so-called *dzmak'atsebi* (brotherhoods)—peer groups made up of friends who were roughly the same age, had known each other for many years, and considered one another family. They were between ages eighteen and twenty-five and had thus been born around the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and had grown up during the rule of Abashidze. Some had been or still were involved in crime, and several were dependent on narcotics or various nonprescription drugs. Few had any higher education or vocational training, and in the face of massive unemployment, they were all struggling

to situate themselves as adults and to create viable future trajectories that could change the seemingly hopeless situation they were in.

Despite the grand promises made by President Saakashvili, many of the young men described life in Batumi as imprisonment; they felt confined, with no possibility of going anywhere socially or geographically. On one occasion, in the spring of 2009, I was sitting with two of them. The streets were covered with rubble, and it had been raining for days on end. We talked for a long time about the lack of jobs in Batumi and the fact that the city seemed to consist only of ruins—dilapidated buildings, demolition sites, and unfinished construction. I asked them what I should call my thesis. "I think you should call it 'City with Two Sides' or 'with Two Sides of Life,'" one suggested. "I say this because when it is summer here, Batumi is burning with life. And in winter there is nothing; everything is dead. There is a light and a dark side. In autumn, winter, and spring, it is always raining, you have no money, you cannot go anywhere, only a few people do anything, people have no interest in life—for simple people it is a dark side. When summer comes, people come here and make some business. Because of that, people are in a good mood, because they have something to do. Most young people here, during the winter, they drink, they do drugs, because there is nothing to do, they have empty lives, everything disappears."

I came to understand from Emil that this "dark side" was more than a seasonal phenomenon. The young men's description made it clear that it was also a social condition in which segments of society with no steady income and no prospects of employment, such as these young men, did whatever they could not to fall into complete apathy, inertia, or what they called *dep'resia* (depression). The double-sided nature of Batumi these young men described reflected an interesting contradiction—namely, the sense of living in a situation where nothing was going on while in fact many things were happening: society was changing rapidly; political reforms were altering institutions and legal frameworks; war had hit and was threatening to continue; massive rebuilding was disrupting the urban landscape; demonstrations and political rallies were sweeping the country; and the international financial crisis was looking as if it might derail economic development. And yet the young men perceived their lives to be marked by boredom, by nothing positive happening, by the "dark side." What interested me was the experience of an apparent temporal tension between a social world that seemed to be moving rapidly toward officially constructed ideas of the future and individual experiences from which this future seemed far removed.

Because of the war, winter in 2008 had gotten off to an early and bad start. Those who had worked in the tourism sector hoped to earn enough money to make it through, but because the war had put an end to the season before it had ever really started, many found themselves without the earnings they had expected. Particularly among the young men in the city, drinking, crime, and drug use became widespread. The problems of

crime and drugs were often associated with the Abashidze period. There had been an attempt to eradicate them from society, but they lingered. The young men in the brotherhoods would describe drugs and crime as "devils" (*kajebi*)—things of the past that continued to impinge on their present lives but that they turned to either because there was nothing else to do or because they could not be avoided. As this book illustrates, drugs and crime were not an attempted return to the period of Abashidze but rather a way of filling up "empty lives" in the present and seeking to create another future by regaining a sense of masculinity and being seen as "proper men" who sometimes did wrong but did it in the right way.

The sensation that there was nothing to do, that the city was one of "ruins" (materially in terms of dilapidated, abandoned, or unfinished buildings and socially in terms of broken opportunities), and that society was somehow haunted by the past led me to pose the questions that guide this book: What does it mean to grow up in the midst of social and material ruins? What role does the seemingly "not yet existent" (the future, for example) play in the unfolding of life? I approach this questioning as a temporal problem in exploring what it means to grow up between a past and a future that are both experienced as ghostly presences. How, I ask, are individuals conditioned by fragments of the past and the future, and how does this conditioning contribute to feelings of exclusion or marginalization?

In seeking answers, this book makes two general contributions. First, its focus on male youth offers new insights into the issue of emasculation in the post-Soviet region. In studies of post-Soviet changes, gender has often been treated in relation to women's changing roles (see Buckley 1997; Gal and Kligman 2000; Hemment 2007; Kuehnast and Nechemias 2004; Rai, Pilkington, and Phizacklea 1992); in recent years, however, a series of studies have emerged that focus more explicitly on the frailty of masculinity (see Kay 2006; Kiblitskaya 2000; Kideckel 2008; Oushakine 2002; Tereskinas 2009). These studies have tended to deal with what Alexei Yurchak (2006) terms "the last Soviet generation," meaning those who themselves experienced the breakdown of the Soviet Union. This book contributes to the ongoing debate about feelings of emasculation via an empirical description of the first post-Soviet generation based on an ethnographic account of the brotherhoods in Batumi that explores the legacies that the so-called transition created for those growing up during this time. Thus, it places the investigation of emasculation within general anthropological studies of male youth and increases understanding of the post-Soviet period.

Second, the book explores, on a broad theoretical level, what it means to live among and make use of material and social ruins. On this basis, it argues for a focus on what I term *temporal marginality* as an analytical tool to describe the condition of young people who live in situations where they lack access to the future. On a general level, the following thus adds to debates about the role of the future in everyday life, post-socialist transformation, and processes of marginalization.

The Broader Context

One of the grand narratives of the Soviet Union was based on the idea of a socialist path toward a communist future, a goal never accomplished despite continuous five-, ten-, or fifteen-year plans. This constant pursuit of a never-realized future imbued Soviet socialism with a particular kind of temporality where "now" and "soon" were mixed (Clark 1981; Fitzpatrick 1992). One consequence, as Katherine Verdery has argued, was that the fall of the Soviet Union circumvented a particular understanding of time in which expectations of life in the future were drastically altered as "the future" became an uncertain factor (Verdery 1999: 122). The notion of transition, applied by political observers of the post-Soviet context, was from the beginning heavily criticized by anthropologists because it overlooked this fact. The view of the often chaotic situation in the region as one that had a known vantage point and a known end failed to recognize the experiences of extreme uncertainty that surrounded life for ordinary citizens (e.g., Humphrey 2002; Nazpary 2001; Pedersen and Højer 2008; Reeves 2007).

In many of the newly independent nations, including Georgia, massive industrial complexes, public squares, monuments, and grand building projects that were never completed became, within a matter of years, vast ruins (Szmagalska-Follis 2008); new construction created anxiety about the direction in which society was moving (Buchli 2007); criminal networks gained prominence over state structures (Humphrey 2002; Ries 2002); and the fragmenting social fabric saw the emergence of new forms of connectedness based on the language of family and kinship, such as "soldier's mothers," "Slavs," and "brotherhoods" (Oushakine 2009: 11; see also Nazpary 2001).

According to Dominic Boyer, Eastern Europe (and, I would argue, the post-Soviet region in general) suffered a sense of displacement. Borders and horizons opened, but at the same time lifeworlds were shaken and shattered by sweeping new forces—neoliberalism, late capitalism, and globalization.

This was a modernity that state socialism had attempted to resist for decades. Observers found the post-Soviet region to be looking back in its search for a sense of balance, which resulted in studies of post-socialist nostalgia that described people fantasizing about life during socialist times as having greater safety and stability (Boyer 2010: 17; see also Berdahl 2010). The problem, writes Boyer, is that nostalgia has "no more to do with the past than with the future, no more to do with the desire to return to a remembered or idealized past than with the project of defying and claiming autonomy in the present" (Boyer 2010: 25). On a political level, expressions of nostalgia are, for Boyer, signs of estrangement from the fact that the post-socialist transformation was steered by social and political interests that lay outside the region, and on signs of claims to the right of future self-determination (ibid.: 25). Nostalgia, then, is a yearning for a different time (see Boym 2002: xv), but the time yearned for, as Daniel Rosenberg

and Susan Harding (2005) have noted, is not just a lost past but also a future at risk of not coming into being.

Living in a situation of loss has been the daily fare for numerous groups in the post-Soviet region. Caroline Humphrey refers to these groups as dispossessed—"people who have been deprived of property, work, and entitlements" (Humphrey 2002: 21). This dispossession has a distinctly temporal aspect in that one of the things lost was the idea of how the future might turn out and what one's own role in it would be. This book is not about nostalgia per se, but it is about a longing for the future. It is about living in a situation in which both past and future are no longer viable or have been made problematic and about how engagement with fragments of the past can be seen more as a yearning for a different future than as a return to an earlier time.

Post-Soviet Generations

The situation outlined above gains particularity with the generations born around 1989–1990: a generation who have no personal memories of the Soviet Union but who have grown up among its remains. For young people living in the former Soviet republics, particularly those such as Georgia, in which the "transition" was anything but seamless, coming of age has meant inhabiting a world on its way to disappearing as well as living in a situation in which the future has become highly uncertain.

In her study of post-Soviet youth in Russia, Fran Markowitz (2000) argues that young people seem to manage "the transition" and the chaos of the post-Soviet period better than their parents do. This, she holds, is because, coming of age in a society of changes, they have learned to plan their future in a more pragmatic way, as instability has become a stability in itself. Although I agree with Markowitz that there is certainly a difference in the way different generations have reacted to the post-Soviet crisis, this does not necessarily mean that the crisis and its aftermath do not present themselves as a challenge for young people that often seems to them to be impossible to overcome.

For the young men I came to know in Batumi, the social changes of the 1990s did not signify a rupture of an already established life but formed a backdrop against which to begin a life. Because these young men had little to build this life on, it became crucial for them to create something different in order to face the difficulties presented by the current situation. This was not merely a matter of wanting to be different from one's parents, as is often the case for young people around the world, but rather one of needing to be different from the men belonging to older generations who were numbed and paralyzed by the fall of the Soviet Union. Of course, such attempts were greatly challenged by the sense of "nothingness" that signified the "dark side" or the winter period in Batumi, with the young men themselves in danger of paralysis.

Markowitz argues that culture is never stable but consists of actions: in every generation there are individuals who test the limits and limitations, creating experiments and innovations that at times are incorporated into the rest of society (Markowitz 2000: 219; see also Mannheim 1972). Her study of youth in Russia, she writes, suggests that it is no longer fruitful, if it ever was, to look at social stability as a prerequisite for coming of age in a consistent manner and for creating such experiments and innovations (Markowitz 2000: 220).

I agree that stability is not necessarily a prerequisite, but I do not believe that coming of age amid instability was as easy a venture for my group of informants as it was for those of their peers in Batumi who had relevant educations or families that were financially secure. Markowitz calls her study a tale of two transitions—that of Russia as a changing society and that of her young informants' coming of age. Both of these processes were fraught with changes and insecurities as to what lay ahead (see Pilkington 1994; Nazpary 2001). My fieldwork results differ in two important ways in terms of such "transitions." First, Markowitz's informants were teenagers going to school, which served, she writes, as a "protective cocoon" (2000: 225), a base from which decisions about one's future could be made. Having no such structural backdrop of support, the future for my informants was much more opaque because many of them did not have any skills based on education that could be put to use. Second, Markowitz' study was carried out in the late 1990s, when the transition was still seen, at least by her informants, as something that would probably come to an end. Things would eventually change, they believed, and they were not overwhelmed by fear or doubt despite knowing that their world was one of unpredictability (ibid.: 204).

Unpredictability was an everyday feature in the lives of my informants in Georgia as well, but a major difference between them and the young Russians Markowitz describes is that my informants were not sure whether things would ever change—at least for the better. The transition in Georgia had been officially ended by the president after the revolution, but just as the end of the Cold War did not obliterate practices common in the Soviet Union (e.g., Lemon 1998), "the end of transition" in Georgia did not see the end of practices that were common during the 1990s when my informants were growing up. This does not mean, however, that life remained the same and that they were stuck in the past, reproducing known patterns. For one thing, the 1990s had been marked by a widespread *lack* of patterns or stabilities, a situation that continued after the revolution.

Such lack of stability calls for particular conceptualizations of the unfolding of everyday life among youth. Classical analytical frameworks, such as the notion of social reproduction as developed especially by Pierre Bourdieu, are challenged when applied to these contexts. For instance, in his emphasis on social reproduction, Bourdieu highlights the importance of understanding the mechanisms through which class attributes are stored

in people's bodily comportment and transferred across generations (Jeffrey 2010: 21; Jeffrey, Jeffrey, and Jeffrey 2008). This can help explain how (young) people are socialized into both behaving in the present and viewing the future as their parents do, thus reproducing patterns and class distinctions. This holds true in situations (or fields) in which such class distinctions already exist and play a predominant role, as shown for instance in Simon Charlesworth's work on male youth in the United Kingdom (Charlesworth 2000) and Craig Jeffrey's studies of masculinity, class, and education in India (Jeffrey 2010). In situations of crisis, however, the framework offered by Bourdieu becomes less applicable. As Henrik Vigh has argued, making sense of youth who live in sociopolitical environments that are in themselves in motion requires us to go further than we can with the concepts of "field" or "habitus"—and consequently social reproduction (Vigh 2006: 12). Although social fields in a Bourdieuvian sense are not static entities, they do convey "a constitution through slow processes of sedimentation and habituation" (ibid.: 165). This underlying stability, Vigh notes, privileges "reproduction rather than production, order rather than chaos, settled fields rather than shifting terrains" (ibid.: 172).

Given the context at hand, I do not frame my study of young men in Georgia in relation to social reproduction; rather, I approach the question of what it means to grow up in a social and material ruin by exploring the existence of temporal fragments as a two-fold process: being affected by what is no more while being affected by imaginings and ideas of what has not yet come into being.

Theoretical Vantage Points

Ruins and Social Afterlives

I take my theoretical point of departure in the notion of ruination as formulated by Walter Benjamin and further developed by Ann Stoler. In his observations on history, Benjamin famously held that "culture is ruin," in the sense that construction presupposes destruction (Benjamin and Osborne 2000: xii; Navaro-Yashin 2008: 6). Much of Benjamin's later writings, most notably the unfinished *Passagen-Werk*, describes the traces that mark the fragility of power and the force of destruction, a process he termed "ruination." He referred, among other things, to the short-lived technologies and commodities surrounding the arcades in Paris around the turn of the nineteenth century, a period in which bourgeois consumerism made commodities replace each other and turn into relics at an increasingly rapid pace.

Benjamin understood ruination as a kind of petrified life (Buck-Morse 1991: 159), images, relics, materials, and traces of a vanishing world. However, although it is a process of decay, ruination is also a process of understanding in which "that which was" becomes intelligible in new

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ways. As Benjamin noted about storytelling, the full meaning of a story becomes clear only in its disappearance, a feature shared by history, as the past can be understood only in the present and then only as this past disappears (Benjamin 1999a, 1999b). Ruination was a hallmark of modernity and capitalism for Benjamin, epitomized in his much used allegory of the "Angel of History" being hurled into the future by the proliferating debris created by progress.

The Parisian arcades were not actual ruins, but Benjamin used them as an allegory for exploring the relationship of materiality and time. Ann Stoler, in her work on imperial debris, elaborates on Benjamin's allegories in looking at ruins not merely as large-scale monumental leftovers or relics created by modernity. As she notes, "Modernity and capitalism can account for the left aside, but not where people are left, what they are left with, and what means they have to deal with what remains" (Stoler 2008: 204). She thus argues for a focus that allows us to see the everyday experiences of ruination—to properly understand life among ruins, we need to "turn to what remains, to the after shocks of empire, to the *material and social afterlife* or structures, sensibilities, and things" (ibid.: 194; emphasis added).

I find the notion of a "social afterlife" particularly helpful in approaching my data because it allows analysis of the effect on life of what exists only as fragments. To inhabit a ruin is to live in a world of lingering remains and residues that are both material and social (e.g., Benjamin 1978; Edensor 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2008: 5, 2012), often seeming or actual ghostly presences (Gordon 2008; Ivy 1995; Kwon 2008: 2; Stewart 1996). Justin Armstrong aptly terms this perspective the practice of everyday afterlives (Armstrong 2010: 245). The ghostly in this sense is closely related to Benjamin's notion of aura, the appearance of nearness in the presence of distance—that is, something that is present but only as a fragment.

Stoler argues for a focus on ruination that expands Benjamin's insights to include a perspective of everyday practices that tracks the composition and decomposition of people's lives, their movement between decay, melancholy, and engagement (Stoler 2008: 205; see also Stewart 1996). This is a perspective I apply as a way to understand my informants' daily lives in Batumi. It is particularly fruitful in the Georgian context because it highlights the fact that, although what is made comes from something past, it never is—and never can be—quite the same.

But ruins are not just related to the past. Like nostalgia, ruins and unfinished buildings can create a sense of irretrievability or of futures lost, and they can reside as unfinished structures that continue to create ideas about the future (Pelkmans 2006), for good and bad. In examining the consequences of ruination, then, I am not interested only in social afterlives and the sense of being affected by the past; I am also interested in the sense of being affected by the yet unknown future. To put it differently, I am not just interested in what people are left *with* but also what they are left *to*.

Marginality and the Experience of Time

In exploring the everyday experience of ruination, I rely primarily on the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz and his writings on subjective time. Time, for Schütz, was a constitutive part of meaning, "part of the material of which subjectivity and the social world are woven" (Muzetto 2006: 5). Schütz held that the construction of a common time is the construction of the social; thus, the experience of sharing the form of the experience—that is, time—becomes one of the basic elements of the social world (ibid.: 26).

Phenomenology is an approach to social life that begins "not with external social patterns but with personal and affective life and how it is actualized in and orders the shapes of social action over time" (Jackson 1989: 5). The affective is related to the emotional, which in anthropology has been seen as a synthesis of the social and psychological order that turns collective norms and values into a personal matter (Lyon and Barbalet 1994: 63; see also Dalsgaard 2004). Affect, however, is not simply emotion and cannot be traced merely to the experience of the individual subject. It can also reside in the world of objects and spaces such as ruins (Navaro-Yashin 2008: 12; see also Thrift 2004).

A phenomenological observation of the experience of the individual is not without fault lines, as we are never completely disconnected from the world; however personal our experience, the world inevitably seeps in. We relate to others, to people we engage with in our everyday lives, but we also engage with the wider social world, the power structures that surround us. Schütz, for instance, has been criticized for dealing only briefly with the processes by which the social influences the subject (Muzetto 2006: 26). In examining the ways in which ideas of the future as envisioned by the state continuously impinge on individual experience, I want to "give flesh" to the social aspect in Schütz's theory of subjective time to show how tensions between individual experiences of time and societal ideas about it create feelings of marginality—that is, of not sharing the same time.

Drawing on the works of Heidegger and Deleuze, Chris Grove has argued that the future is never merely a "not yet"; it continuously casts both light and shadow on the present. This does not mean that the future can be objectively known or predicted. Rather, it means that the future is always embedded in the present in one way or another (Grove 2010; see also Mische 2009). In this way, both what was and what might come inform the way people act in the world (Emirbayer and Mische 1995) and are part of the structures that limit acts.

Debates about the relationship of agency and structure have a long history in anthropology (Ortner 2006), particularly in studies of youth. In many such studies, it seems to have become the norm to claim that lives unfold somewhere midway in a continuum between these two poles (e.g., Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Bucholtz 2002; Cole and Durham 2008; Hansen et al. 2008; Vigh 2006). I take this as a vantage point to be further

developed from a perspective of ruination and temporality. What I want to highlight is the way life is conditioned by multiple temporalities, particularly in situations where "times" such as past and future are challenged or appear as fragmented or ghostly—as they were for the young men in Batumi. By multiple temporalities, I mean the coexistence of several times (Kracauer 1969), a perspective I describe in detail in Chapter 7.

My interest thus lies less in whether something can be seen as agentive than in how people engage with and are affected by what is only partly there—such as fragments of the past and the future residing in the social and material surroundings—as these relate to the question of temporal marginality. Following Anna Tsing, I view marginality as "a process in which people are marginalized as their perspectives are cast to the side or excluded" (Tsing 1993: 5), for instance by the state. But how does such marginality appear in a temporal perspective? What happens when particular ways of proving oneself a man are officially declared as morally wrong because of their connection with practices that have been deemed over, "past"? And how do officially constructed futures—as they appear, say, in government building projects—affect peoples' sense of belonging to this future? I suggest in this book that temporal marginality is not a matter of being confined to the present (see Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1999)—although this surely plays a part—but a matter of belonging to or living toward a future that differs from the one envisioned by societal discourse.

In this regard I argue that individuals are conditioned as much by fragments of the future as by lingering pasts (see Arendt 1977). That is, the future "haunts" the present and resides in it as fragments just as the past does. Engagement with fragments should not be viewed merely as a wished-for return or a standstill but rather, as Dominic Boyer (2010) argues in relation to nostalgia, as a future-oriented enterprise. Thus, I look at not only the pasts lingering in Soviet and post-Soviet ruins but also shadows of the future residing in the material and social world. As Hannah Arendt wrote, the possibility of the new arises continually in life both because of and in spite of the plans, desires, and intentions of the individual (Arendt 1958: 8, 9). That there is always the possibility of "the new" is thus a matter not just of individual agency, the ability to change one's own life, but also of social forces that act on individuals. Fragments from, or images or ideas about, both past and future situate and condition people. For those who do not believe themselves to be part of the ideas of past and future created by prevalent social forces, this contributes to experiences of marginalization.

Such a theoretical position is not without seeming fault lines, because it is situated between two apparent oppositions: a focus on individual experience and a focus on external processes of ruination. I find it fruitful, however, in terms of the benefits it allows. What is at stake when I speak of temporal marginality is not, as a social constructivist or reductionist approach might imply, a case of societal changes translating directly into

personal distress. In other words, the recent history of discontinuity and rupture in Georgia cannot alone account for the experience of dissatisfaction among the young men that is conveyed in the pages that follow. Rather, I point to the fact that the two are related—that recent history is one aspect, among others, to be taken into account and that at times our ethnography requires us do to this. This is particularly important when the link between "what I want and can do" is connected by our informants to the question of what others, such as the state, are doing—that is, when individuals themselves link their experience to external patternings. I take it seriously when people say that society has two sides—only one of which they are part of.

Exploring this link allows studying more closely a range of subjects and situations such as why government building projects with a positive aim were met with aggravation and skepticism and why young men living in a city where much was going on perceived their life as boring.

Structure of the Book

The chapters that follow are divided into four sections. Sections I through III each contain two chapters and a section conclusion. I have chosen this structure in order to view three broad themes: how the past makes itself present, how the future is acted toward in the present, and how the future makes itself present. Section IV contains a chapter that discusses the general findings of the book, followed by an epilogue.

Although my vantage point is primarily the brotherhoods, I have in several chapters chosen to focus on a handful of individuals. I do this both because these were the people with whom I had established the closest relations and because I am interested in the way individuals' lives unfold within groups. Situating my informants within broad parameters that are common for the brotherhoods and for Georgian society at large, I have nevertheless sought to write about them as persons in their own right who, paraphrasing Abu-Lughod (1991: 158), dream, agonize, make mistakes, endure tragedy, and seek moments of happiness, as we all do. My methodological approach thus varies from section to section. As explicated next, I move from more general contextualization, making use of both ethnographic field data and historical sources in Section I, to individual portraits in Section II, to a mix of data, sources, and portraits in Section III, and to general analysis in Section IV.

Section I, "'In a Quiet Swamp, There Are Devils Wandering,'" provides a general background description of the context. Through this, I explore ruins and ghosts in Batumi by looking at the social changes and processes of fragmentation that had set their mark on the city up to the time of my fieldwork in terms of ruins that were both material and social. I describe the perceived "devils" lurking within the shadows of these ruins. The section focuses on what it means when it is claimed that something (or someone)

no longer exists, and what happens when entrenched parts of social life are "made past."

The field and my access to it are described in more detail in Chapter 2, which recounts the recent history of Batumi and looks at material ruins in the urban sphere by blending my informants' descriptions with historical accounts. I use these to explain the processes of ruination that have shaped the city into its present form.

Chapter 3 looks at "social ruins" and the ways in which past practices, having been officially condemned, haunt Batumi. The chapter introduces the "brotherhoods" and describes how these groups, among my informants, were informed by Soviet criminal underworlds. I show how brotherhoods at times came to serve as arenas in which endeavors that were in one sense morally wrong could be explained as being morally correct—that is, as right kinds of wrong. Drawing on the insights of Gordon Avery, Tim Edensor, and Michel de Certeau, I argue in Section I that life is haunted in particularly urgent ways in contexts of change and that my informants' lives were severely marked by this.

Section II, "Daily into the Blue?" examines how my informants imagined their futures and engaged, in various ways, with the "devils" described in Section I in trying to pursue their dreams. Boredom, waiting, and nothingness are central to this section as it explores what people do when there is nothing to do. Also essential here is the span between longing and engagement.

Chapter 4 recounts the story of the young man Gosha and his band and brotherhood, "Mad Family." Gosha's dream was to become a famous musician. All the songs and albums of his career were ready, just not recorded and distributed yet. Among my informants, Gosha had the clearest idea of what he wanted in the future. But he was also the one who faced the most severe depression during the time of my fieldwork, becoming increasingly dependent on nonprescription pharmaceuticals. Through Gosha's story, I explore how longing for a particular future can become a mode of waiting that is both constructive, in that it provides something to live toward, and destructive, in the increasing bodily and mental decay it can cause.

Chapter 5 features the stories of Magu and Armen, who, like Gosha, were artists: Armen a rapper and Magu a tattooist. Both used themes from the criminal underworld and street life in their art as a productive mode of realizing their dreams. I contrast the way they worked toward the future with the path taken by Gosha because Armen and Magu did things in a distinctly different manner. I discuss the empirical data in these two chapters in relation to Alfred Schütz's writing on subjective time.

In Section III, "The Future Haunting the Present," I return to the notion of haunting, not only as it relates to the past but as it relates to the future. I do so in two ways.

Chapter 6 looks at how everyday life for my informants was at times guided by ideas of what the future might turn into as a consequence of

intersubjective experiences, bodily experiences, and events such as the sudden death of one of the young men.

Chapter 7 returns to the materiality of urban space in Batumi, this time looking not at ruins and fragments of the past but at partially finished buildings and their indexing of the future as what I term *subjunctive materialities*. Drawing on Siegfried Kracauer's notion of "cataracts of time," I argue that President Saakashvili's ending of the transition in Georgia altered ideas of what the future would (or could) be and as a consequence created an unintended image of those who were and were not part of it.

Section IV, "Apparitions," sums up the findings of Sections I through III. In Chapter 8, I discuss them on a broader theoretical level in relation to the main questions of the book. In doing so, I present the notion of temporal marginality as a way of understanding my informants' social position. Further, I argue for a focus on social afterlives as a way to understand not only temporal margins but also the condition of youth in the post-Soviet world. Finally, I draw out a series of more general conclusions in terms of how the ethnography presented might move us into new spaces of insight and analysis regarding youth and marginality on a global scale. The Epilogue concludes the book.

Methods, Ethics, and Knowledge Production

I spent a total of nine months on fieldwork in Batumi between the summers of 2008 and 2009, conducted in two periods. During the first period, I lived alone in a small apartment located in a backyard in the old part of town; in the second, my wife and son joined me, and we moved into an apartment in a residential block closer to the suburbs. I also made a short visit to the city in the spring of 2010. The empirical data used in the book consists of daily field note entries and sixty-nine recorded conversations and semistructured interviews. The interviews were conducted interchangeably in Georgian, English, and Russian. In the pages that follow I present transcribed excerpts exclusively in English and refer to the original language of the interview only in situations where this serves a particular purpose. Besides interviewing my informants, I interviewed employees of NGOs and public institutions such as unemployment offices, tourist associations, rehabilitation centers, schools, and universities.

I also make use of data collected on previous visits and during fieldwork in Tbilisi during nine months between 2004 and 2007. These data concern mainly the processes of change that had taken place in Georgia since the Rose Revolution in 2003 and the subjects of street youth and drugs discussed in interviews with psychologists and social workers. In sum, I draw on a conglomeration of data collected during long and short annual periods in the field over six years, with a main focus on the material specifically collected for my dissertation during my time in Batumi.

It is worth noting that the cityscape of Batumi plays a vital role in my study. On a general level, my fieldwork was often characterized by "hanging out" and walking the streets, and because my informants lived in different neighborhoods, this was not restricted to a particular place. As a consequence, when discussing the materiality of urban space in relation to the young men, I refer to the city at large rather than to a specific neighborhood.

A Position and Its Limits

My own gender and age were significant in terms of the kinds of data I had access to. Meeting Emil, who was to become my main informant, was a chance but extremely important encounter, as he became a gatekeeper to his own brotherhoods. The young men I came to know in Batumi were often part of several brotherhoods, so becoming acquainted with one group soon put me in contact with others whom individuals in the first group knew. I focused my attention on members of two brotherhoods with whom I spent most of my time. I describe this process in Section I.

It would be misleading to claim that I was an equal "member" of the brotherhoods, as I was a newcomer among members who had known each other for years. I was obviously different in other ways as well. I was between five and ten years older than my informants, and I had a very different background. Whereas initially I worried that this might affect the relationship I would be able to develop with the young men, they themselves downplayed its importance, stressing continuously that our relationship was that of friends.

In her study of the homeless in Saint Petersburg, Tova Höjdestrand writes that she believed it hypocritical to call her homeless informants her friends because she was "neither able nor prepared to do for them what [we] would expect from the kind of bond that we refer to as friendship" (2009: 18). This stemmed from the fact that her financial and social position was far removed from that of her informants and that their relations would, as a consequence, always be unequal. My informants lived lives marked by great uncertainty, but they were not as vulnerable as the homeless in Saint Petersburg described by Höjdestrand. While her informants were well aware of and even took advantage of the unequal relationship, it often seemed pertinent to my informants to stress that we were really not that different. When small change was gathered for alcohol, cigarettes, or gas, I was initially worried about coming to be seen as a "patron" who always had money, and so I made sure not to put more on the table than the others did. These thoughts were soon put to shame by my informants in the name of equality and their wish to see us as equals. Hence, I was never expected to pay more or asked to do so. On the contrary, I was scorned if I attempted to contribute more than my share, as I was either a guest or a friend but never a patron. I later realized that had I not been regarded as

a friend, I would not have been accepted by the brotherhoods in the first place.

This closeness gave me a privileged insight into the young men's lives. But it also created blind spots in the kinds of knowledge I had access to and the kinds of knowledge this access prevented me from obtaining. Conducting fieldwork in a tightly woven social group had much to offer, but it was also marked by certain limitations. One of these concerned my informants' parents. There were things that my informants did not want their parents to know about their lives, and although they were not averse to my speaking to their parents when we met, they found it awkward when I expressed an interest in interviewing them. Possibly they were nervous about what might be revealed. Although I had no intention of compromising my informants with their parents, I chose not to interview them. This decision has surely kept me from certain insights, but it also strengthened my relationship with the young men. Although my informants continually stressed that their brotherhoods were the main center of their lives, this did not mean that family did not matter. With one exception they all lived with one or both of their parents, and just as they would give their life to their "brother-men," I am sure they would go to their graves for their mothers. Still, my interest lay in the young men's own experiences of their lives and the world around them, and on this subject they were the experts.

Another limitation concerns gender, although this was not created by my research strategies. Conducting fieldwork in a society where gender divisions are often very strict, I found it difficult if not impossible to conduct interviews or spend time alone with young women. For the same reasons, my informants rarely mixed with young women on a daily basis, which limited the female aspect of the questions explored in this book. As my wife joined me on the second part of my fieldwork, this was made easier in that I could then also invite young women to our apartment when conducting group interviews with students from the local university. Although these girls did not know my informants, they provided valuable insights—for instance, what they believed a "proper man" should be. In general, however, when I speak of "youth" I refer mainly to males.

Ethical Considerations

The importance of not causing harm and being truthful to what one has seen and experienced during ethnographic fieldwork, both in the field and during the writing process, is universally acknowledged; this importance is further heightened in the study of groups among which crime and drug abuse are widespread, which requires a great deal of sensitivity in the presentation of the data. Thus, I had to be careful not to reveal what individuals wanted to keep secret, whether from family, friends, or authorities. I was generally surprised by how much my informants were willing to share, but to be sure that I did not overstep any boundaries, while writing I allowed

some of my informants to read particular parts of this book. As a result, some names have been altered, and some situations have not been included. In general, my informants declined pseudonyms to secure anonymity, but I of course obliged those who did not wish their identities to be revealed. In addition, because several of my informants had the same names, some names were changed simply to ease reading.

The work of anthropology is a slow process, and although this can in some instances be a nuisance, it also enabled me to tell these stories without disturbing particular social relations: what appears in the following is not a description of life as it is now in Batumi; it is a description of life as it was at the time of my fieldwork. I was reminded of this by an informant who assured me that there was a difference between revealing things while they were happening and writing about them later. There were, however, issues that I consciously avoided pursuing both during fieldwork and after, particularly in relation to the criminal underworld. Studying organized crime directly can be problematic both because those involved might not be willing to talk and because it might prove hazardous to the researcher. In her study of gender and tourism in Bulgaria—an area and a subject marked by criminal underworlds in many of the same ways as in Georgia—Kristen Ghodsee notes that, despite the fact that the Mafia was dangerous, every Bulgarian seemed to be an expert on it, and the names of mob bosses were as well known as the names of politicians and television stars (Ghodsee 2005: 137). This is strikingly similar to the situation in Batumi where everyone, not just my informants, knew or had an opinion about who was connected to the criminal scene. Several local acquaintances warned me to stay clear of both the subject and specific people.

This is not a study of organized crime but rather of its normative influences. However, sometimes I was involved in events without choosing to be and was presented with data on this subject. For the reasons given previously, a few such instances were omitted. The cases that I do present, as ethnographic examples, appear with the permission of those who were involved. Although on several occasions during fieldwork I experienced my situation as psychologically challenging and physically dangerous, it was not until I returned home and started working through my data that I fully realized how grim certain situations had been. But although grim, horrifying, and even tragic, everyday life was also mundane and at times extremely amusing. My hope is that this is conveyed in the pages that follow.