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Rewriting Beirut as a Feminine, Mediterranean, and Postcolonial Space in Jean Said Makdisi's Beirut Fragments (1990)

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Abstract

This paper explores how the city of Beirut operates as a historically hybrid space in Beirut Fragments by Jean Said Makdisi (1990). It argues that, through the female's representation in the narrative, Beirut, as a space, acquires a Feminist, Mediterranean, and Postcolonial consciousness that shapes its identity. Put differently, Beirut works conceptually by bringing together the form and meaning of the location of culture, following the postmodern tradition. Drawing on a mixed theoretical framework that conjoins feminist, postcolonial, and philosophical approaches, the study investigates the intersections of war, space, and gender in the making of Mediterranean cultures. My argument mainly rests on Edward Said's notion of the worldliness of the text and its aesthetic and semantic structures, which it undergoes in the context. Building on the contributions of scholars from the economic, political, anthropological, and artistic spheres, the paper offers an interdisciplinary reading of Beirut's fragmented archival memoir, which has been widely ignored in comparative studies and cultural encounters. The analysis highlights how the city's destruction and reconstruction mirror the geographical complexity of Beirut in a contested region of neighboring spaces, which positions the city as both a site of resilience and oppression from the perspective of a female author. The paper also aims to reveal how the Mediterranean is a historical site of intertwining cultures through physical spaces and the memory of lost archives. Beirut, as a text of femininity within its Mediterranean and Postcolonial condition, emblematizes survival and agency amid the remnants of violence and occupation.

Keywords*:* Mediterranean; Memory; Representation; Feminism; Space; Exile.

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Introduction:

By publishing the memoir in 1990, Jean Said Makdisi aimed to portray a shattered Lebanese scene following Beirut Fragments. The last fifteen years of the twentieth century witnessed political instability and stagnation due to the absence of a promising government and the breakout of fighting among militias from 1975 until 1990.[1] Makdisi takes on not only the role of a writer but also that of an important historian in understanding the modern history of Lebanon. The memoir depicts how identity and politics interplay within the dynamics of space, shaped by propaganda, and represents the way the human condition tries to survive amid the destruction of war.

A considerable number of papers discuss the nature of Beirut as a postcolonial space. In *A State without State*, Robin Truth Goodman (2010) investigates the political drawbacks of disengaging women from production within a fragmented space like Beirut. Graig Larkin in *Remaking Beirut: Contesting Memory, Space, and the Urban Imaginary of Lebanese Youth* (2010) explores how the next generation sees Beirut's reconstruction and how their consciousness reacts to the city's ruins from an anthropological perspective. Judith Naeff's *Absence in the Mirror: Beirut's Urban Identity in the Aftermath of Civil War* (2014) also treats the problem of Beirut's representation as a broken mirror of the region, together with the textual absence of the city in art following postwar annihilation.

From the Department of History in Texas, Elizabeth Bishop focuses on the problem of audience following the memoir in her article "The Piano in the Middle of the Room: Jean Said Makdisi's Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir". Bishop places the memoir within the domain of experimental fiction regarding the Lebanese civil war. Furthermore, she relates to the identity of the writer, which makes the account "An Anglophone work, written by an Arab woman" (Bishop, 2022, p. 68). It is, in fact, a contradictory cultural paradox, as Makdisi writes about Lebanese concerns while simultaneously targeting the North American and Anglophone audience. Bishop's reading is critically significant because it reveals the cultural complexity of Makdisi's narrative.

Fadwa Malti-Douglas (Beirut Personified, 1991) addresses the way Beirut personifies women from a feminist approach. These works are very contributive for analyzing the phenomenon of Beirut from economic, political, anthropological, artistic, and feminist perspectives. However, none of them approaches the complexity of the city as a poststructuralist space and a text imbued with meaning. They have technically focused on Beirut as a subject of the human presence, ignoring the opposite. People not only influence Beirut but are, in fact, shaped by it. This space is a self that idiosyncratically negotiates the aesthetics and politics of resistance through the voices of its female characters, resulting in the phenomenon of spatial femininity in the postcolonial space.

The memoir narrates the story of a female citizen following her diaries during the war. The anonymous narrator is the spokesperson for what happened through her memories and consciousness. She is then the voice of the city and its people, surrounded by the crisis. To study this process, this paper sheds light on the problem of representation in the memoir, arguing that Beirut is a feminine subaltern self that seeks existence amid the tyranny of war, which erases the urban beauty.

The research mainly argues for a thesis that Beirut, as a text, explores resistance through the voices of its female characters in the memoir and, accordingly, acquires a feminist consciousness as a space. The paper uses the metaphor of womanhood to describe the city, focusing on historical Mediterranean spaces that intersect with Beirut in the memoir, alongside spatial fragments of memory within the narrative. The project binds together Beirut as both a form and a meaning, rendering the city an urban text. In fact, to read an urban space as Beirut implies recalling its historical context as a Mediterranean source of encounters and bringing its fragmentation forth by rewriting its resisting femininity.

This research is mainly based on Edward Said's ideas about the worldliness of the text. Beirut, in this sense, is read as a text produced a its context. In other words, the goal is to peel Beirut as a construct of spaces within the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Following Said, the combination of form and content must refer to the factors that produce the text. The textual process then implies that "It is not only that any text, if it is not immediately destroyed, is a network of colliding forces,

[1] The Lebanese Tensions began in this period with the PLO and the Kataeb fighting in the suburbs of Beirut, igniting regional clashes with Iran, Syria, and The US, and ended with the defeat of General Michel Aoun and the election of the Hrawi Government in January 30, 1990.

but also that a text in its actually *being* a text is a being in the world; it therefore addresses anyone who reads" (The World, The Text, and The Critic, 1983, p. 33). In Makdisi's narrative, Beirut germinates as a text that attaches to the real world, history, and concerns of the author, audience, and characters within a fluctuating Mediterranean scene. Taking Beirut from a contextual stance, both as a form and content, situates it as a text that represents, challenges, and constructs its world from the narrative of Makdisi.

Methodology:

To deconstruct Beirut as both a Mediterranean pastiche of cultures and a spatial text of memory, the study follows a qualitative approach that employs a bottom-up reading of Makdisi's work. The project begins with the memoir's textual language as primary data to be scrutinized, then expands into theory, following the narrative's implications. A close reading ensures both a formalist and a semantic focus on the complexities of Beirut by selecting the most relevant excerpts from the text, which serve the paper's problematic. The research addresses the issue by dividing the scope into two parts: the first concerns the cultural hybridity of Beirut, shaped by its geographical location and historical archive, resulting in a fluctuating image of the city torn between Western and Eastern paradigms. The second part investigates how memory operates as a weapon of resistance and resilience within the city, the thing that gives Beirut an abstract representation emblematizing its identity.

Thus, what historical spaces shape Beirut's physical identity in the narrative within the Mediterranean context? How do Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Washington culturally intersect? How do these intersections blend the fragmented hybrid identity of Beirut following the dynamics of hegemony, resistance, and resilience? How does memory operate in the memoir as the nucleus that forges Beirut's identity and traces its post-colonial femininity? Moreover, how does memory as a text conjoin the self and the collective regarding the city? To answer these critical questions, the research's scope is split into two sections. The first part invites the integration of a set of theories regarding the material transfiguration of gender in Beirut, such as the Feminist perspective with De Beauvoir's articulation of the female self's subjugation.

In parallel, the dynamics of cultural hegemony and representation inherent in the text call for adopting the Postcolonial approach, drawing on Edward Said's articulation of Orientalism, Frantz Fanon's conception of resistance, and Homi Bhabha's notions of cultural hybridity. The Second part unfolds, eventually, through the ways memory influences the urban identity of Beirut through the female protagonist's reminiscing modus operandi, which sways between the self and collectivity. To examine this paradox, the paper also examines Henry Bergson's compromise between the physical and the nostalgic alongside Maurice Halbwachs' philosophical and sociological contribution to the notion of collective memory.

The significance of the paper lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which combines Feminist, Postcolonial, Philosophical, and Sociological dimensions to analyze the gendered space of Beirut in Jean Said Makdisi's memoir. The paper extends its scope to the domains of cultural encounters, comparative studies, and gender studies. As the topic compares between cities, it also grounds itself within the global contemporary issues of hybridity, collective memory, and archived narratives. Accordingly, recalling the Mediterranean world and cultures when reading the text positions the paper as a rewriting of the fluid, cultural crossroads that shape Mediterranean identity, complicating superficial readings of the Western/Eastern binaries about Beirut. Finally, the article contributes to scholarly debates about space, gender, and power by using Jean Said Makdisi's Beirut Fragments as a historical and documentary archive of subjugated voices that still resonates with today's dynamics of cultural dominance and resistance around the world.

Beirut's Physical City Palimpsest: Historical Fragments of a Text

Beirut Fragments centralizes around a multitude of physical spaces that set the stage for the narrative. Beirut finds itself engulfed and engulfs other spaces that have defined its identity and complexity. Spaces like Jerusalem, Cairo, and America shape Beirut through fragmentation, hybridity, and newness. For the narrator, Jerusalem is an oppressed, silenced space that shares the same burden as Beirut. Occupied by the Israeli invasion, Jerusalem resonates with the hearts of Beirut's people, who also live under the implications of war and division. Jerusalem for Beirut people

is not just a right of existence but also a lifestyle of perseverance: "The tears of Jerusalem have spilled over and flooded Beirut, and Jerusalem and Beirut are sister cities in agony. Jerusalem is the vertical line, Beirut the transverse: Together they form the cross that we carry today" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 129). The pronoun "we" reflects the collective consciousness of all elements of Beirut (Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Non-Arabs, etc.) about the sanctity of the Palestinian cause.

This spatial parallelism is not only challenged by external foreign spaces that function as hegemonic tyranny, but also by the emergence of internal conflicts stemming from the split in the political organization of the Palestinians, which automatically influences Beirut, both as a sister and as a similar site of resistance. This awareness and illnesses overlap with De Beauvoir's perception of feminine tragedy with which the cure comes only through females understanding and standing with each other as appears in spatial links because mainly "Women's mutual understanding comes from the fact that they identify themselves with each other, but for the same each against others" (The Second Sex, 1956, p. 520). Both spaces fit this analogy of the feminine spirit tormented by ambivalent orientations shaped by overlapping political events, and thus share the same feminine identity of resistance.

Cairo in this memoir remains a space of contradictions. From the beginning, the narrator depicts the Egyptian capital as a space of social distinctions caused by power variation: "In Cairo, we lived in the midst of vast poverty" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 102). Cairo represents a space of unjust social classification as a new postcolonial space. The narrator enrolled in an English school and learnt ballet during the time of Gamal Abdunnasir (John, 2025).[2] It was a time when such a cultural dimension contradicted the lifestyle of the poor majority as "There on the banks of the Nile, bound to it, and fixed by it, two visions blend, fade into each other, merge with the water, and then separate again into two distinct shapes" (p. 105). In this regard, Cairo, compared to Beirut, faces a status quo of silent, growing internal conflicts that separate the two spaces. The visions here depicted align with both the new Egyptian binary of class struggle and the detachment between the two postcolonial spaces.

It is true that Cairo, in this context, has just emancipated itself from colonization towards independence, but the internal reshaping of power distracts the city from its own burdens and narrows the horizons of freedom for a parallel space like Beirut. The latter then sinks silently in its fight for resistance. A physical space like Cairo, where big buildings, cathedrals, and shops juxtapose with poor men and women laboring in fields for the ruling class that tries to follow the colonizer's ruins, is ambivalent. The image of American cinema dominating the theaters of Cairo shows the great level of schizophrenic Westernization this postcolonial space has undergone. The internal and national nature of Cairo provokes a problem related to national consciousness and the way Egypt perceives progress as a whole nation.

Cairo is an incarnation of a woman split between her beauty and her flaws, following her past. On another level, such class distinctions pose a problem of violence and political upheaval that tries to reestablish order through disorder against the westernized ruling natives, as Fanon argues: "Such an occurrence normally goes unseen because, during decolonization, certain colonized intellectuals have established a dialogue with the bourgeoisie of the colonizing country. During this period, the indigenous population is seen as a blurred mass" (Fanon, 1963, p. 8).

One of the consequences of such an *unseen* and *gagged* political disequilibrium is the breakout of violence as a signifier of political rebirth and salvation. To consider violence in this case as an instinctive symptom of a quest is understandable, but following Fanon, it is rather a praxis by the masses to make themselves seen and heard. Makdisi dramatically voices the mass explosion: "Indeed, one January Saturday in 1952, the masses of Cairo rose in fury and burned whole parts of the city to the ground" (p. 107). To rise after being omitted from the political landscape can only operate through physical eruption and violence, by which masses structurally lack the intellectual intermediaries between them and the ruling elites.

[2] Gamal Abdunnasir sought to make revolutionary reforms on the Egyptian landscape with his socialist, anti-imperialist, and pan-Arabic unity dreams. However, his period was challenging with internal social controversies and external conflicts with the neighboring powers.

The memoir documents how such spatial imbalances can spark revolutions that torment a country for decades. Cairo here appears as a space caught in the colonial jargon of colonizer against colonized, even after independence and the beginning of a decaying Westernizing past with King Faruk I (Britannica, 2025).[3] However, the question of colonization remains present in the postcolonial Egyptian period, with rulers who did not erase English cultural influences and favored a Westernized capitalist hierarchy as a model for leading the country. Such a political orientation throws Cairo as an emancipated mirror of Beirut into another loop of a modern national hegemony that precedes new symptoms of civic revolution. Cairo as a space is caught in this vicious circle of political unrest and schizophrenia.

The echoes of Beirut towards other neighboring spaces move from the postcolonial to the colonial realm, with the narration focusing on Washington. The narrator finds herself in an American space colony and facing the symptoms of internal difference,[4] subject to colonization. Washington, in the first image, appears as a global imperial center that attracts immigration for better opportunities. The first time the protagonist moved to the US was during her childhood for a summer camp, and the second was to study in college after she graduated from high school.

Washington as a symbol of Western civilization, operates through spreading the essentialist discourse of progress: "land of opportunity, freedom, equality, and justice for all" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 117). The 'progress narrative' presupposes a center-periphery relationship that characterizes the essence of Western ontology. Thus, Cultural mobility towards the center is a tradition of deeply rooted constructions, instilled with the Master's utopian creation. Such a narrative of imperial roots finds followers within the colonized even after decolonization. For the protagonist's case, Occidentalism comes through the medium of her father as an Orientalist, as "Much of this idealization was transmitted by my father, who had gone to the United States as a very young man and spent years there before returning to the Middle East" (p. 117). Visiting a country like the US at a very young age and being influenced by an Orientalist symbol of power and masculinity are, in fact, some fleeting fragments of a cultural translation that has started from the early past.

In this sense, the individual as a bearer of a cultural construct is exposed to another foreign cultural presence through spatial transposition. The father, as a figure of dominance, protection, and masculinity, aligns well with Washington, whereas the protagonist, young, dependent, and feminine, is like the Oriental Beirut. In these double-intersecting binaries, Truth is implicitly constructed over time and through experience. Spaces voice this conflict through the mobility of their individuals who play the role of a discursive unit, creating a link that binds the father and the daughter, the masculine and the feminine, the colonizer and the colonized, or in sum, Washington and Beirut. Thus, individuals here, as marionettes, are located in the center of this dialogue following the same patterns of their conflicting Manichean spaces.

The mind is hereby colonized through media outlets like Hollywood that produce a hyperreal world of attraction like the US. The American dream travels the world to brainwash not only other cultures but also the Americans themselves, that "From Hollywood, I got the impression that Americans were all beautiful people, many of whom sang beautiful songs and lived in beautiful houses" (p. 117). The American space thus uses multiple means of cultural aestheticism to sell the ideal image, one that invites and attracts immigrants to serve the national economy. This process of essentialism overlaps with the necessity to stigmatize other cultures for the sake of a unified national awareness. Washington, as a physical symbolic space, circulates in peripheries by fabricating an American image for the world, including an idealist essentialism.

When Homi Bhabha (The Location of Culture, 1994) criticizes multiculturalism, he pertains to the idea that it is necessary to question the cultures that consider themselves unique within other cultures. In relation to Washington in the book, the idealization of this space does not emerge from its identity but rather from its *rhizomatic* layers and *cultural differences*. The process requires the bricolage of American discourse with other cultures, resulting in Orientalism. Hence, Washington,

[3] King Faruk I of Egypt (1936-1952) reigned during his time as a constitutional monarch who shared the scene with other powers. However, his luxurious and bourgeois Westernized tendencies ignited a nationalistic revolution that sought socialist reforms, paving the way to the rise of Gamal Abdunnasir.

[4] Difference here means marginalized voices within The US challenge the established social order.

here, is not the product of itself but one of multiple cultural elements that relate to each other following the thread of signification. Deconstructing this American narrative comes through the realization of the alien self under the cultural translation of internal struggles of the American dream, as the narrator states, "Reexamined everything and found myself simultaneously familiar with and alien to both cultures" (Makdisi, 1990, p. 120). The protagonist finds herself in this whirlpool of spaces, where the quest for identity is hard to reach, mirroring the location of Beirut in the region.

In parallel, the image of Washington is deconstructed, with third spaces demanding a voice and marginalized classes unveiling the colonial background of American reality. The protagonist in her visit to the US coincides with the rise of the civil rights movement in the 1950s. The second facet of Washington in this regard is one of a space in the process of deconstruction following the first essentialist facet as "America was in the process of demythologizing itself, spurred on this task by the civil rights movement, which was then beginning to flower" (p. 120). America, here, is metaphorically a being that witnesses a transitional shift in its components. The essentialist narrative of American idealization faces a discursive counter-narrative through peripheral elements within the American structure. These marginalized classes diverge in their threads of signification about what it really means to be American, and hence, the space of 'freedom' is redefined.

Beirut is the mother space that contains all the aforementioned spaces: Jerusalem's suffering, Cairo's schizophrenia, and Washington's hegemonic dynamics. Beirut resides in the heart of a region strategically influential and simultaneously tormented by wars. The picture of the city here represents an *Oriental*/*Occidental* space whose structure arises from the combination of different elements, making it purely an *in-between* phenomenon. Beirut, according to Makdisis (1990) is a female who faces oppression, oblivion, and silence, but still obtains hope from its feminine power:

> Freedom of thought and speech would be given a new impetus, and Beirut, chastened by its experience, cleaned, rebuilt, and with a new beauty would become an important regional center again. (p. 245)

The protagonist aspires to realize a dream in which Beirut serves as the catalyst for justice and progress. This statement comes as a counter-narrative to the dominant harsh reality where discrimination is rampant, being the main center of the city. The objective here is to restore Beirut's femininity (beauty) as the mirror of Palestine through rewriting (representation).

Internal political discrimination also torments Beirut. The city splits into two distinct spheres: Western and Eastern. Such distinctions characterize different lifestyles segregated by economic, cultural, and political profiles. Western Beirut is the side of the city inhabited by aristocratic citizens who embrace a Western lifestyle, with European and American institutions within. In contrast, Eastern Beirut sinks into unrest alongside social discrimination based on identity issues. The city's image fractures by a cultural border that makes the unity of this space hardly possible, similar to Berlin before the 90s. However, the people of the city succeed in crossing such a class boundary resiliently.

Beirut is the ideal place for the germination of cultural translation. The city is the opposite realization of multiculturalism as an essentialist phenomenon. Nevertheless, Beirut, similar to Washington, faces the emergence of other narratives within to challenge its Arab-Islamic facet:

> We would often cross over from "Muslim West Beirut" to "Christian East Beirut." Grudgingly, I have to admit that the east was cleaner, more orderly, pleasanter in a middle-class sort of way, than the west side. Yes, but at what cost? The "Christian" area was created by the forcible eviction of those who were not considered acceptable. (p. 139)

The question then arises: what is the hegemonic nature of the culture that reigns in Beirut? Islamic thinking is the center, and Christian thinking is the periphery. Thus, these distinctions create an essentialist discourse that gives rise to the dichotomy of us/them. As the passage reads, the protagonist promotes this dichotomy by defending her people's area in Beirut as a representative of the Eastern side, primarily due to cultural rejection. That is to say, she deconstructs the Islamic Western side's narrative to voice the Eastern Christian narrative. Thus, Beirut does not only experience external ontological equations but also internal divisions of discursive dominance and cultural axioms.

Beirut's Nucleus: Spatial Memory and Traces

The city of Beirut is stuck in the frame of a reminiscing past. The protagonist uses her memory as a way of refuge from the horrible reality. The present reality now represents a dichotomist nightmare of either victimization or oppression under the inhumane implications of the continuous war, and the act of surpassing such a binary becomes a profane assumption. Hence, the process of looking back to the past can be regarded as a sign of clinging to life and a motif to keep resisting the hideous present. The protagonist feels herself in a dead end, where progress is only backward within that chaos.

However, the images of the past are purely recollections of the self within the fragmented context, where memory is also a representative of the female collective. Beirut within does not only stand for home as a destroyed urban space, but rather a feminine space of production and collective devotion:

> I remember a constant bustle of women, including my mother and my aunt, around the entrance to the kitchen, always producing wonders from that inner sanctum, wiping their hands on towels tied to their waists as they cleared up afterwards. (p. 98)

That is to say, Beirut subjectively adapts to the needs of consciousness by playing the role of images that revive a lost past for the female protagonist.

Beirut, then, is not only that physical urban space, but also the women, the mother, the aunt, and the feminine spirit that ignites longing and belonging. On the other hand, such a past is not innocent and shows largely the structures of a Lebanese scene that grounds itself on gender domestication and performative womanhood, which benefits the patriarchal system. Memory then interplays between that nostalgic layer and that political token that explains the tormenting present, which renders it a complex phenomenon. In the ongoing nauseas that memory manufactures, there is a "certain effort *sui generis* that permits us to retain the image itself, for a limited time, within the field of our consciousness, and with this faculty, we do not need to await at the hands of chance the accidental repetition of the same situations" (Bergson, 1959, p. 77). Memory used by the protagonist is then a space of political documentation, a multidimensional tool of signification, a moment of quick emancipation, and a hyper-reality that operates as a coping mechanism for the self in her quest for life.

With the textuality of memory, the protagonist does not have to live another prosperous reality, as she has another one in the realm of her mind. Beirut is the defensive mechanism that resides in the heart of every nationalistic Lebanese imagination and consciousness. Thus, the protagonist's subjectivity creates the world of the past for the sake of survival. However, individual memory overlaps with the collective memory that contributes to the protection of Beirut's identity. As Beirut is a multidimensional spatial phenomenon, the sense of memory consequently unites all the different elements of the city under the objective of producing a national history.

Yet, such a collective consciousness facing scenic destruction is subject to the totality of the historical scheme. The understanding of Beirut is not limited solely to the present but also to the past versions of the city buried by oblivion:

> History, ancient and hoary, whose house is the museum, watches human folly in silence. Perhaps it, at least, understands our mysterious behavior and will pass the secret on to future generations just as it has passed on to us those equally mysterious treasures of a long-buried past. (p. 55)

The question of collective consciousness regarding chaos is not alien to History. Beirut, throughout its whole history, has been familiar with such historical disequilibrium. Maurice Halbwachs (On Collective Memory, 1992) discusses the notion of memory and the reconstruction of the past and claims that "we preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated, but precisely because these memories are repetitions" (p. 47). The collective identity of Beirut then resides in the tradition of recurring images of history, which has shaped the being of the city and is encompassed by the manacles of the past through hegemony and the dynamics of power within the Mediterranean.

Within the unstable circumstances, the body, being the metaphor of the shattered physical world, intersects with the sufferings of the mind, being the symbol of consciousness. The latter

represents the notion of *becoming* within a continuous chaos, and for the mind to keep living in a constrained world, it needs the creation of a free abstract space that is memory. Beirut is not only a physical state but also a feeling that is both positive and negative. That is to say, it is an abstract consequence of the mind following events:

> It is said that, as a person drowns, his whole life flashes through his mind just before body and mind together are engulfed. Memory is the last gasp of life, then. Here in this sea of despair and waste and sadness that is Beirut, events call up moments that flash out of my past and interpret the present. (p. 97)

Memory is a space that defies erasure in Beirut. The city suffers from the abstract and concrete challenge of oblivion by people and history. Beirut, in this sense, is under the process of negation following its sufferings by the citizens. The enemy of Beirut is not only the ongoing political conflicts, but also the oblivion of its own people. The narrator labels them as 'the others' to signify the peculiar self's attachment to the city.

Although this appears to be a sign of *us/them* discourse, this Manichean binary establishes the orientation of Beirut as a space of resistance. Edward Said, in his seminal book *Orientalism* (1979), confirms that "the Middle East is resistant, as any virgin would be, resisting the implications of spatial loss" (p. 86). The postcolonial resistance of space is always in an ongoing process. However, this process is hindered by the representation and misrepresentation by Beirut's people. In this regard, the act of cleansing the orientalist-colonial perception starts from the minds of the inhabitants who see their city as 'the other' and hereby establishing a colonial gaze through a discourse and signs that "do not correspond to the actual reality and nature of the national context" (Wa Thiongo, 1986, p. 15). What Beirut signifies then is a matter of discourse-remaking under the bullets of civil war. Through memory, the narrator represents the other and the nationalistic side of the city with Beirut being an emblem of resilience, and a *constructing*/*deconstructing* space that reinvestigates the structures of the past.

Conclusion:

Beirut Fragments is a memoir that depicts the femininity of Beirut as a Mediterranean and postcolonial space. In the book, Makdisi voices the cries of the city ruined by war. The femininity of this space arises in the notion of its ambivalence and its simultaneous resilience following destruction. Beirut not only personifies women as a dominated space but also characterizes them with post-structuralist features, which makes it a complex phenomenon within the Mediterranean context. Beirut can speak then through its physical elements and their scattering traces within the female memory as "the single element, whether it is a street, a parcel or a building, is always conceived as part of the city, and by consequence the city that gives raison d'être and meaning to individual architectures" (Maskineh, 2021, p. 56).

In this regard, Beirut places itself as a monocentric/ethnocentric space of cultures and trauma within the Middle East. The city, following the memoir, submits to the aesthetics and politics of representation for readers who "create not only the values by which art is judged and understood, but they embody in writing those processes and actual conditions in the present by means of which art and writing bear significance" (Said, 1983, p. 53). The process of reading and rewriting Beirut not only frames it within the responsible mechanisms of its production but also reconstructs it following the intersections between the material and the nostalgic. The memoir, in contrast to reality, brings Beirut forth as a powerful textual unit of representation.

Beirut, thus, is conceived as an event that emerges from the act of reading its multilayered facets in the wake of the past's ruins. Recreating Beirut, as a synonym of rewriting, requires the adoption of an interdisciplinary scrutiny of the city's interconnected layers, as Makdisi confirms in her interview, "I think you can't understand feminism if you don't understand class" (Partnership, 2018). The textual essence of Beirut necessitates the combination of Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Marxism to decode the intersections of history, archive, culture, and trauma in the memoir. It is a space that consciously and unconsciously knits the human condition through the world following gender, power, and space.

The political weakness of Beirut not only hinders its feminine production but also affects the female presence, as seen through the city's symbol as a feminine mirror of resistance in the memoir.

The act of rewriting is itself another facet of reconstruction in that "it is not a question of replacing text with text […] but of co-creating text, of producing a written version of a lived reality" (Jordan, 2002, p. 98). That is, future generations of Lebanon cannot remake and respond to Beirut without an understanding of its multilayered, deconstructive nature, following the traces of historical events. Beirut is a painting of human resilience; it is not absent, but it speaks through this memoir. The city of Beirut, as a text and a narrative, successfully positions itself as a token that challenges erasure in the Mediterranean world.

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