RE-IMAGINING COUNTER-DISCOURSE: SOCIO-SPATIAL TRANSGRESSIONS IN POSTWAR LEBANESE LITERARY PRODUCTIONS

By
Farah Z. Aridi

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English and Comparative Literature
Goldsmiths, University of London

March 2020

I, the undersigned, Farah Z. Aridi, hereby declare that this thesis, and the work presented in it, are entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signature   Date

Farah Z. Aridi   30 April 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

you justice. And Baba, we rarely see eye-to-eye, but our conversations are always eye-opening, and your wisdom inspiring. I would not have become the woman I am today if it weren't for the values you have instilled in me and the revolutionary ideas you have planted at an early age. Also, the eternal nerd in me, thanks you for naming me after a book.

To my uncle, Ghazi Aridi, you know I would never have set foot in London without you facilitating my way. My heart is brimming with gratitude. Thank you for setting an example for me, for trusting me, and for teaching me the meaning of writing routines and the power of words.

I would also like to thank the American University of Beirut, especially the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as the Institute of Palestine Studies in Beirut. I would also like to thank everyone at Goldsmiths, University of London, who have made this journey possible and navigable.

Last but not least, to Beirut and London, the two dearest cities to my heart. Thank you for giving my feet purpose, my poems rhythm, and my research inspiration. I wrote this for you, Beirut.

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the analysis of experiences of space, including the production of space and the making of place as represented in four postwar Lebanese novels. The aim is to read these processes, as undertaken by the protagonists in cities of violence and conflict, with a focus on their everyday, socio-spatial practices. These are read as transgressive as they are exercised in spite of an established power order by ordinary, marginalised individuals. These experiences are exercised within two specific contexts: The Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and the Palestinian *nakba* (1948), both of which are considered as continuous events. This ongoing status of both contexts confines the protagonists of the novels within the bounds of controlled socio-spatial experiences and unremitting marginalisation and oppression. While in Lebanon this was exacerbated through the amnesiac discourse adopted by the postwar state and perpetuated by its neoliberal practices, in Palestine, it was manifest in the continuous oppression and cultural, geographical, and historical erasure of a whole people. The result is an aborted memory and a non-existent reconciliation with a traumatic event. Both the *nakba* and the civil war necessitated a new form of writing. By focusing on analysing these practices, as attempted on the level of the everyday, this study aims to expose the potentiality of resisting monolithic representations of experiences of war. It argues that the four novels' experimental form and content contribute to engaging in alternative discourses about the war by highlighting multiplicities that the official historical narrative often leaves out. These novels are able to do so by relying on literary techniques, such as polyvocality, multiplicity of narratives, non-linearity, a focus on the everyday, the manipulation of the boundaries between history and fiction, and a resistance to closure.

CONTENTS

1948 — Marks the year the Palestinian *nakba*, also known as 'catastrophe' starts.

1948-1949 — The Israeli army, upon the occupation of the city of *al-Lidd*, in Palestine, and following a massacre which led to the death and the displacement of many, confined the 500 Palestinian remaining in the city inside a ghetto that was dismantled a year later in 1949.

1967 — Marks the Great Arab Defeat against Israel, which resulted in further displacement of Palestinians, as well as the loss of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

1970 — Marks the Black September events, which refer to the conflict between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), resulting in the expulsion of the freedom fighters or *Fedayeen* from Jordan. As a result, those who were expelled from Jordan were forced to relocate and to join other Palestinian forces and their supporters in Lebanon.

1975 — The 13th of April of this year marks the beginning of the Lebanese civil war.

1975-76 — The Battle of Hotels took place during the Two-Year War marking the first phase of the Lebanese civil war.

1976 — The Karantina Massacre and the Damour Massacre took place. The Karantina was a mostly Muslim slum area, located in the then Christian East Beirut. Christian militias took over the area, placing it under siege and massacring its inhabitants, which mostly included Palestinians. The area was formerly under the control of the PLO. In retaliation, the PLO, with the help of left-wing militants, attacked the Christian town of Damour located South of Beirut.

The Tel al-Zaatar massacre also occurred during this year. Tel al-Zaatar was a Palestinian refugee camp located in North-East of Beirut and controlled by the UNRWA. Christian militias of the Lebanese Front (LF) placed a siege on the camp, out of a desire to exterminate the commanders of the PLO and lessen its authority. The siege lasted 3 months and led to the death of thousands from dehydration and military assault.

1978 — The Hundred-Day War between Christian militias and the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). The latter had entered the country in 1976 as part of a peacekeeping plan.

1982 — The Sabra and Shatila massacre, during the civil war in Lebanon. The massacre was committed, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, by Christian right-wing Lebanese militias (the Phalangists) under an Israeli cover. In this year, the Israelis formed a siege on West Beirut.

1982-83 — The Mountain War. The conflict was spurred between the right-wing, Christian, Lebanese Forces militia (LF) and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and the opposition made up of Leftist, Muslim militias led by the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) with the support of both the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Syria.

1985 — The War of the Camps: The Shiite Amal militia and the PLO fought over the control of the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, and Burj al Barajina.

1983 and **1986** — During a period of relative calm in the country, reconstruction efforts were carried out.

1987-1993 — The first *Intifada*

1989 — The Liberation War in Lebanon: General Michel Aoun and the Syrian-affiliated Army factions went into armed conflict. As a result, the Syrian Army entered the Presidential Palace, which had been previously overtaken by Aoun. The latter was forced to flee the

country and take refuge in France, where he spent 16 years in exile.

The Ta'if Accord was signed during this year as well. It is an agreement reached by the warring factions in the city of Ta'if in Saudi Arabia, bringing an end to the fighting. The agreement maintains the confessional power-sharing system prevalent before and during the war.

1990 — The official termination of the Lebanese civil war

1991 — A General Amnesty was passed and granted to all Lebanese warlords facilitating the transfer of their titles from warlords to guardians of the new state. All warring militias delivered their heavy artillery to the Lebanese Army with the exception of Hizbullah.

The Lebanese parliament passed Law 117, legalising the transfer of private property in the downtown area in Beirut to the private holding company Solidere in exchange for shares. The Law facilitates the monopoly of one private construction company, the Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth, Solidere, over the reconstruction project.

1992 — Rafiq Hariri, an affluent businessman and owner of Solidere, became Prime Minister of the new Lebanese postwar state.

1993 — The Oslo Agreement was signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel to bring an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It was based on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and resulted in the formation of the Palestinian Authority, after the PLO and Israel recognised each other's presence, as parties undertaking negotiations. The jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority was limited to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israel retained control over the remaining territories and was meant to recognise the autonomy of Palestinians and their right to return.

1994 — The Broadcast Censorship in Lebanon and the beginning of more serious reconstruction initiatives, solely by Solidere.

1996 — Grapes of Wrath: The Qana Massacre, committed by Israel, took the lives of 106 Lebanese, most of whom were women and children, taking refuge in a UN compound in South Lebanon.

2000-2005 — The second *Intifada*, also known as the *Al-Aqsa Intifada.*

2001 — The liberation of South Lebanon from Israeli occupation.

2005 — The assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and the initiation of a series of assassinations of opposing figures to the Syrian regime. During this year, the Syrian army retreats to Syria after a sponsorship that lasted since the civil war.

2006 — The July War with Israel in Lebanon.

2007 — Nahr al-Bared camp battle between Islamist terrorist groups and the Lebanese Army.

2008 — The May events (armed conflict) between Syria supporters and anti-Syria parties in Lebanon.

2015 — Civil movements started appearing in Lebanon, such as the YouStink Movement, which protested the then garbage crisis and practices of the state.

2019 — Nation-wide protests and riots marked the beginning of the 17th October Uprising, which is still ongoing in Lebanon till this very day. Protestors are calling for an end of corruption, state accountability, and the containment of the economic crisis.

LF – Lebanese Front
LNM – Lebanese National Movement
PLO – Palestine Liberation Organisation
PSP – Progressive Socialist Party
SSNP – Syrian Social National Party
Fatah – formerly known as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, and a Palestinian national, socialist party
Al-Murabitun – also known as the Independent Nasserite Movement, a political party in Lebanon

1. Contextualising the Works in History

The study undertaken in this thesis is concerned with processes of socio-spatial production in

Lebanese fiction. It seeks to understand these processes as attempts at forging counter-narratives

in a city of conflict and systemic violence. This understanding allows for an alternative reading

of the chosen novels, within their respective contexts. Forms of systematic violence appear to

dominate the everyday lives of the protagonists in the four postwar Lebanese novels under study:

Elias Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto: Ismi Adam* (2016), or *The Children of the Ghetto: My Name is*

Adam (2018), Rabi' Jaber's *Tuyur al Holiday Inn* (2011), or The Birds of the Holiday Inn, and

Hilal Chouman's *Limbo Beirut* (2016), and *Kana Ghadan* (2017), or Once Upon a Time

Tomorrow. Even though all novels have been written by Lebanese authors, the contexts, though

interdependent and implicated in one another, are different. Khoury writes about the Palestinian

nakba (1948), while Jaber and Chouman focus on the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and its

aftermaths. Both the *nakba* and the civil war are treated in this study as ongoing, the *nakba*

through the continued ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, and the civil war through the different

forms of violence that have taken the shape of neoliberal mechanisms of socio-spatial control.

Narratives of the *nakba* and the civil war struggle against different forms of erasure, amnesia,

and silencing. The study forms a link between the two narratives, not so much out of an intended

comparison, but rather out of the interrelation of both and their implications in each other's

history, be it culturally, socially, or politically, as shall be explored under a later section in this

chapter. This study is concerned with drawing a similarity in approaching a silenced narrative,

without resorting to weigh one over the other. While the Palestinian (*nakba*) narrative still

undergoes a systematic academic, literary, and cultural silencing, in addition to the attempts to erase both Palestinian history and geography, the Lebanese (civil war) narrative still struggles against a state-sponsored amnesia, on the one hand, and the neoliberalisation of the city, itself a process responsible for perpetuating the said amnesiac discourse, on the other. In both instances, the everyday life and practices of the protagonists, as they are represented in these novels, can be read as constant contestations and negotiations of social space, and are therefore seen as transgressive. This thesis seeks to highlight the re-imagining of a counter-discourse and the creation or production of alternative narratives, through everyday socio-spatial practices, specifically those of walking and writing, as represented in the novels under study. The analysis also focuses on the significance of the quotidian and the multiplicity of experiences and narratives. These are read against technologies and mechanisms of social control and monolithic representations of history that exclude the marginalised and the subaltern.

Why Space? Why Now? Why These Novels?

Over the past few years, and more so within the fields of Urban Studies as well as Sociology and Anthropology, the investigation of social space within the context of the Lebanese postwar period has been gaining ground. Such studies focus on Beirut and the consequences that the war had wrought on its public and private spaces, its infrastructure, and its collective, spatial memory. The change in the politico-geographical milieu of the inhabitants of the city was the result of not only the destruction of the built environment that the war had brought but also the reconstruction process and the neoliberal, biopolitical practices of the state. Scholars working on Lebanon during and after the war period tackled these issues from a political, economic, and urban perspectives. Among those critics and scholars whose works will support this study's

analysis of social space and its relation to power and transgression within the context of contemporary, postwar Lebanese literature are Samira Aghacy, Aseel Sawalha, Ghenwa Hayek, Mona Fawaz, Samir Khalaf, Najib Hourani, Saree Makdisi, Sune Haugbolle, Ken Seigneurie, and Sara Fregonese. However, in contrast to their approach, mine maintains a geocritical literary analysis of social space, informed by Robert Tally Jr.'s conceptualisation of literature as a form of map-making, which offers a different analytical perspective, grounded in spatial theory. This study is not concerned with the national space, or with questions of national belonging, or the urban/rural dichotomy, exhausted over the years in studies of urban space. Rather, this study confines itself to a socio-spatial analysis of literature produced in the years following the official termination of the Lebanese civil conflict in 1990. It focuses on three disparate spaces, specific to the chosen novels: the ghetto in Elias Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto: Ismi Adam*, the building in Rabi' Jaber's *Tuyur al Holiday Inn*, and the city in Hilal Chouman's *Kana Ghadan* and *Limbo Beirut*. These novels, in both form and content, are an example of how the Lebanese postwar novel, and as a result of the conflict and its aftermath, saw the birth of a textuality that reflects and resists the new and unfamiliar socio-spatial reality. The aim behind a literary spatial analysis is a concentrated focus and exploration of the spatiality (and spatialisation) of daily life and the transgressive potentiality of such experiences, both of which contribute to a re-imagining of a counter-discourse. In all novels under study, the authors employ variants of intertextuality (alongside other literary techniques including metafiction) that manipulate the boundaries of fiction and history, and represent a multiplicity of voices and narratives. These techniques, on the level of the form, are complemented by others that operate on the level of content. The protagonists of all these novels, as this study shows, undertake socio-spatial practices that

challenge and defy the imposed rules and regulations that define and dominate their everyday lives.

   This study engages with spatio-centric questions that probe into processes of segregation/confinement, openings/closures, the experience of space, the making of place, and the right to the city. Each of these concepts will be expanded in relevant chapters and with reference to the novels through which they are analysed. This study draws from Marxist and postmodern spatial theorists, and focuses on the production of space and its experience (in Khoury and Chouman) and the making of place (in Jaber) as processes and tools for transgression in spaces of compromise and conflict within the city. It relies on the theories developed by two main critics and theorists, though it is not exclusive to them alone. Henri Lefebvre's seminal work on social space and the (re)production of space offers insight on the importance of social relations in the formation and propagation of, as well as resistance to, the established political order. Michel Foucault's explorations of power, its mechanisms, techniques, and dynamics, inform the use of Lefebvre, in the investigations of the socio-spatial orderings and organisations, as well as practices and tactics, as understood by Michel de Certeau, as featured in the novels under study. Edward Soja also contributes to the idea of socio-spatial justice that underlines the transgressive (and counter-hegemonic, as shall be argued) practices of the protagonists of these novels. In *Awlad al Ghetto*, for example, Adam, the main protagonist, resorts to writing down the story of his ghettoisation and imprisonment, out of the political need to remain alive and challenge erasure and forgetfulness. The *al-Lidd* captives, in the same novel, manipulate the ghetto's boundaries to provide food and drink, or steal back confiscated possessions, or smuggle people in for their protection from the Israeli soldiers. In *Tuyur*, the protagonists learn how to forge a place for themselves amidst the changing socio-spatial

organisation of both their building and its neighbourhood, not only on account of the raging war, but also as a result of the arrival of migrants from a lower socio-economic background. In *Limbo Beirut* and *Kana Ghadan*, the protagonists negotiate their everyday spaces, by insisting on walking through them, in spite of the restrictions by militias, the security forces, or privatisation of public property.

Inspired by Michel de Certeau, on the one hand, and Yi-Fu Tuan, Tim Cresswell, and Doreen Massey, on the other, this study treats space in these novels as an embodied experience. It therefore focuses on studying the everyday socio-spatial experiences of ordinary city inhabitants, and their negotiations of the power relations they are subjected to within them, as represented in the novels. These negotiations and contestations, expressed through embodied socio-spatial practices, specifically walking (in Chouman), writing (in Khoury), and narrating/documenting (in Jaber), facilitate a re-imagination of the dominant discourse and a rereading of the monolithic historical narrative, in manner specific to each novel and its context. Such re-imaginings adopt a socio-political awareness that recognises space as both a product and a producer of socio-political relations and practices. I argue that the politicised, transgressive actions and practices of the inhabitants of the spaces represented in these novels generate an agency that allows them to engage in a counter-discourse as well as in the possibility of an alternative socio-political and spatial (re)ordering of their inhabited space. Subsequently, these inhabitants are able to challenge and unsettle the dominant system of power, transforming their spaces into counter-hegemonic sites, in the Gramscian sense.

Since the official termination of the civil war (1990) and until the 17th of October, 2019, Beirut has not been a city for all its people. On the eve of 17th of October, 2019, after the state enforced additional taxes on its people, the latter took to the streets in a nation-wide revolt

against all the forms of corruption impoverishing the country. The demands were simple: an end to corruption, the complete change of the current political regime, early elections, and amendments to the electoral law towards a more representative system. The uprising comes after years of lack of services as well as decent infrastructure and basic living needs, corruption, an unjust banking system, a clientelist political economy, and a confessional system of power sharing. The uprising is still ongoing as this thesis is being written. Therefore, the study undertaken here is concerned with the timeframe between the beginning of the civil war on 13 April, 1975 and until the beginning of the uprising on 17 October, 2019.

All four novels were published relatively recently, between 2011 and 2018. With the exception of Khoury's novel which deals with the Palestinian *nakba*, the other novels focus on Beirut during and after the civil war. These novels expose power systems that oppress and suppress the aforementioned collective war narratives. They feature protagonists who, through their everyday socio-spatial practices, challenge these powers, and propose a re-imagining and a re-reading of history and fiction. By doing so they also challenge the monolithic representation of historical events, as singular occurrences. This challenge occurs on two dimensions, the first being the style of the authors and the literary techniques they employ, such as polyvocality, intertexuality, fragmentation, and non-linearity. The second dimension includes the very articulation or narration of a silenced experience. All four novels are authored by male Lebanese writers. This is intentional for the purpose of a future project concerned with female postwar Lebanese writers. The main aim behind this distinction is an interest in later investigating spaces of conflict from a feminist perspective, with specific attention given to the female and/or queer body.

Understanding the Concepts of Space and Place

The 1960s marked an interest in the concept of space and the spatial; critics, scholars, and

theorists turned their attention to matters pertaining to social space, in what has come to be

known as the spatial turn. During those years, 'insistent voices of postmodern critical human

geography' were first heard.[1] Prior to this period, however, little concern was given the spatial,

as temporality and history were the main focus of thinkers, scholars, and philosophers. In the

words of Michel Foucault, 'space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the

immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic'.[2] Edward Soja explains

that Western thought has neglected a third perspective that critically investigates geography, and

'recognizes spatiality as simultaneously […] *a social product* (an outcome) and *a shaping force*

(a medium) in social life: the crucial insight for both the socio-spatial dialectic and a historico-

geographical materialism'.[3] The obsession of the nineteenth century with history and temporality

was detrimental to social theory since it 'occluded' a critical sensibility, focused on spatiality of

social life.[4] And as a result, it masked

> a practical theoretical consciousness that sees the lifeworld of being creatively located not only in the
> making of history but also in the construction of human geographies, the social production of space and the
> restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes: social being actively emplaced in space *and*
> time in an explicitly historical *and* geographical contextualisation.[5]

Foucault himself realises the significance of geographical investigations. Even though his earlier

works focus on temporality and continuity, Foucault's later works call for a rebalancing in the

prioritisation of time over space. Towards the end of an interview that was conducted with

---

[1] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 12.
[2] Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-77*, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Merpham, and Kate Sopper (New York: Pantheon, Books, 1980), p. 70.
[3] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 7.
[4] ibid, p. 11.
[5] ibid, p. 11.

Foucault, the latter confirms that he should dedicate his current work to investigating the question of geography. He realises that '[t]he spatializing description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power'.[6] He views space and power as inseparable concepts; power translates itself spatially and relationally. Being concerned with such relations, Foucault focuses on heterotopia and the lived experience of power within a dynamic, reminiscent of Lefebvre's lived space, which he explores in *The Production of Space*, and Soja's 'thirdspace'.[7] The world in which we live, according to Foucault, is heterogeneous; we live neither in a 'kind of void', nor in a mere physical, empty container.[8] Rather, we live inside an intricate web of social and power relations that delineate 'sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another'.[9] Social space, therefore, is made up of complex relations, interconnected, and implicated within one another.

For Henri Lefebvre, social space is the space of the lived, the habitus of social practices, the realm of the everyday. In fact, Lefebvre was among the first who lent their attention to the concept of space, considering it a social product and a producer of social relations, at the same time. Soja describes him as the 'most persistent, insistent, and consistent of [the] spatializing voices'.[10] His works inspired many, from Sartre, to Althusser, Foucault, Pulantsaz, Giddens, Harvey and Jameson. Today, he remains 'the original and foremost historical and geographical materialist'.[11] The attention given to space and spatiality by those theorists and thinkers in no way undermines time, temporality, and history, or calls for their subordination to space and

---

[6] Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', pp. 70-1.
[7] See Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).
[8] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. by Miskowiec, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, 1984, p. 23.
[9] ibid, p. 23.
[10] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 16.
[11] ibid, pp. 41-2.

geography. It is rather a call 'for an appropriate interpretive balance between space, time, and social being, of what may now more explicitly be termed the creation of human geographies, the making of history, and the constitution of society'.[12]

Lefebvre's call for spatialisation is an invitation to re-imagine a different way of reading and interpretation, and a reassertion of space and spatiality in critical social theory. His interest in spatial concepts, as well as with the everyday and its rhythms, was probed by his frequent visits to his hometown in rural France and the witnessing of the changes that were taking place on the level of urban planning. The significance of Lefebvre's theorisation of social space lies in the timeframe during which he devised it. According to Soja, Lefebvre, among other theorists including Foucault, 'crystallised' his assertions

> of the significance of spatiality at a crucial historical moment, when the most severe global economic crisis since the Great Depression had signalled to the world the end of the post-war boom and the onset of a profound restructuring that would reach into every sphere of social life and shatter the conventional wisdoms built upon simplistic projections from the immediate past.[13]

In such a manner, Lefebvre's realisation of the significance of space vis-à-vis power relations and dynamics led him to assert that the investigation of social space provides social, political, theoretical as well as practical perspectives that would allow us to make sense of the modern times in which we live.

Lefebvre studies space as a socially produced construct that also shapes society, social and power relations, as well as cultural and political modes of production. He refuses to regard space as a mere physical object, or an empty container. Social and political space are inseparable and interdependent. He therefore rejects the removal of space from 'ideology and politics', for he believes that it has 'always been political and strategic'.[14] Space retains an abstract feature since

---

[12] ibid, p. 23.
[13] ibid, p. 61.
[14] Henri Lefebvre, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', trans. by Michael Enders, *Antipode*, 8 (1976): 30-7, p. 31.

it has been 'occupied and used'; it has been the 'focus of past processes and moulded from historical and natural elements', themselves political processes.[15] Thus, space can be said to be a product and a producer at the same time, political and ideological.[16] In the words of Soja, 'social and spatial relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent (at least insofar as we maintain, to begin with, a view of organised space as socially constructed)'.[17]

 In drawing on these theorisations of social and literary space, this study is concerned with social space and its production through everyday socio-spatial practices, as a means towards the unsettling of the established political order. This resistance to the enforced power structure and its consequent socio-spatial organisation aims to expose the order's heterogeneity, contradictions, and difference, which in turn allows muffled or marginalised voices to be heard and made visible. These voices, as represented in the novels, are victims of a violent system that excludes, oppresses, and silences them. The treatment of space as an embodied practice embedded within a dynamic flow of socio-political relations, is relevant to all the novels under study. The processes of remembering, writing, and walking, are in this context treated as embodied practices and experiences, as relevant chapters show. The analysis endeavoured here follows the everyday practices of the protagonists living in a city of conflict, in a state of abandonment and exclusion, either due to the war (Khoury, Jaber, and Chouman) or to the neoliberal strategies of the postwar period (Chouman). This study presents their everyday negotiations and contestations of spaces of conflict, violence, or oppression, as transgressive, justifying such claims by leaning on Lefebvre's and Foucault's conceptualisations of social space and power, respectively.

---

[15] ibid, p. 31.
[16] ibid, p. 31.
[17] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 81.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre distinguishes between three different kinds of space, interconnected in a dialectical fashion, and formative of his triadic concept of the process of the production of social space: spatial practice (the perceived), representations of space (the conceived/ the dominant space), and representational space (the lived and experienced/ the dominated space). It is the latter space, according to Lefebvre, that constitutes a potential site for change and social transformation. The dominated space or the representational space is the space of the lived experience, the space of the users (and producers) and inhabitants of space. It is the space 'which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate'.[18] For Lefebvre, producers of space act with a utopic ideal in mind and according to a certain representation, while users passively experience whatever is forced upon them.[19] They can therefore be considered as consumers, a point that will be returned to. People's actions and practices, therefore, appear, through this conceptualisation, to be determined by spaces, inasmuch as these spaces are shaped by people's experiences of them. As such, Lefebvre's ideation of space rejects socio-economic and spatial determinism; his conceptualisation aims to transcend ideology and the state. He therefore views the production of space as a process and not as 'the work of a moment'.[20] He maintains that 'space – natural and social, practical and symbolic – should come into being inhabited by a (signifying and signified) higher "reality"; in other words, it should be coupled with a utopic ideal and the rejection of the role of one sole centre or hegemony'.[21] For a new space to be forged out of the old, or to be produced, that space should accentuate difference, which in most cases is excluded, denied, suppressed, and homogenised by the political power.[22]

---

[18] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), p. 39.
[19] ibid, pp. 33-4.
[20] ibid, p. 34.
[21] ibid, p. 34.
[22] ibid, p. 52.

Consequently, whoever fails to actively produce space, is liable to be *othered*, alienated, and dominated. Difference is here understood as whatever endures or arises 'on the margins of the homogenised real, either in the form of resistance or in the form of externalities (lateral, heterotopical, heterological)'.[23] What is different is more often than not always 'excluded'.[24] Such is the case of the protagonists of the novels under study. They all live at the margins of the socio-political order in their respective cities. Each of them tries his/her best to survive. However, coupled with other variables, the most prominent of which is a socio-political and spatial awareness of their surroundings, these protagonists tailor their everyday practices in a manner that transcends mere survival, transgressing in the process the boundaries that oppress them. To break free, Adam in Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto* writes. Khaled in Chouman's *Kana Ghadan* sketches out his own map of the city, defying the role of the mere flâneur or voyeur that the system has given its population under its postwar governance. And the protagonists in Jaber's *Tuyur* turn their war-torn spaces into their own places, despite the war and the challenges they face. All these characters are examples of how transgressions are possible against the dominant forms of space (representation of space), 'that of the centres of wealth and power' which seek to 'mould the space it dominates' as well as eliminate (often forcefully or violently) the difference or obstacles and resistance it faces.[25] Transgression is also vital for the survival and maintenance of conscious, agentive subjects, a case in point which will be returned to in the following chapters.

In *Kana Ghadan*, specifically, this transgressive potential of an agent or subject is clearly illustrated through Khaled. He is someone whose life was brought back to him, as if he was

---

[23] ibid, p. 373.
[24] ibid, p. 373.
[25] ibid, p. 396, original emphasis.

granted a second chance, through the decision to be impactful, to take charge of his life, and to create his own space himself. Moving houses, reclaiming public spaces, walking down forbidden or restricted streets and areas, and so on are a few examples in this regard. Like Khaled, Lefebvre's spatial bodies are unable to live without generating, 'without producing, without creating *difference*. To deny them this is to kill them'.[26] However, the process of production of space is not — and cannot be — undertaken by everyone. Khaled is a case in point; he possesses both knowledge and awareness of the transgressive nature of his actions. He neither submits to the order, nor facilitates its reproduction. However, those who succumb to the order, might not necessarily intentionally or knowingly do so. Space then can be treacherous, a trap, escaping immediate awareness, which is how Lefebvre, justifies describing such subservient users (as opposed to producers) of space as being passive or consumers. Only politicised, agentive subjects are therefore able to identify the trap and overcome it. Consequently, 'the social control of space weighs heavy indeed upon all those consumers who fail to reject the familiarity of everyday life'.[27]

Relations of exclusion and inclusion form the basis of all power dynamics through which socio-spatial practices take place. According to Lefebvre, people 'act and situate themselves in space as active participants'; therefore, they are conscious of the fact that they do not exist in a void.[28] It is this specific realisation, in addition to being aware of the spatiality of their own bodies (the distinction between body-as-space and body-in-space will be elaborated on in further details), that empowers such subjects to initiate a transformation. The system that these subjects inhabit maintains itself through the reproduction of its social formations and relations; it is

---

[26] ibid, p. 396, original emphasis.
[27] ibid, p. 233.
[28] ibid, p. 294.

therefore incapable of producing change. Being violent in nature, power 'divides, then keeps what it has divided in a state of separation; inversely, it reunites – yet keeps whatever it wants in a state of confusion'.[29]

Lefebvre's conceptualisations of socio-spatial formations and organisation are reminiscent of Foucault's notion of heterotopia, or *othered* spaces, or spaces of otherness. Foucault is renowned for his explorations of the relations between power and knowledge, and his preoccupation with biopolitical power apparatuses, as well as disciplinary spaces, and their effect on people's bodies, freedoms, and everyday lives. Foucault's interest in studying power and power structures cannot be separated therefore from the study of space. Like Lefebvre's representational spaces, Foucault's heterotopias provide the potentiality for social change, transformation, and subversion by virtue of their function as a heterogeneous space of otherness, alterity, and difference.

Foucault's heterotopia and Lefebvre's representational spaces facilitate the process of creating an alternative social ordering; each order, as this thesis argues, contains within it the possibility of its own negation. What makes this possibility a potential lies in the politicisation of the inhabitants' relationship to these spaces, as well as of the spaces themselves and their experience. The protagonists of the four novels act out of a need for self-affirmation and self-determination that is initiated out of an awareness of their oppression, the means and mechanisms through which the system operates, and their own position within it. Additionally, the protagonists' awareness of space as an embodied experience, and their realisation of the spatiality of their own bodies, intertwines the personal and the political, and amplifies their action in a politicised manner.

---

[29] ibid, p. 358.

In 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault proclaims the world we live in is comprised of an ensemble of social relations, whose sites cannot be reduced to, or superimposed on one another.[30] In this study, a heterotopia is not employed to signify a defining feature of a space's entity; it is rather used to refer to its function, as a space of *otherness*. Being sites of difference, alterity, and heterogeneity, sites of the possible and potentialities, heterotopias can be considered as spaces in transition, or in states of becoming, or what Kevin Hetherington would describe as 'imagining[s] or enactment[s]' of an 'alternate social ordering'.[31] In other words, it is a space of in-betweenness that can be appropriated, changed, and transformed, continuously.

Being a process, and defying fixity, a heterotopic space can become the site of challenge and contestation of the dominant order and its consequent socio-spatial organisations. As a space removed from the 'order' or internal law of things, heterotopias manipulate the boundaries between centre and margin.[32] They resemble 'something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real site that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously *represented, contested, and inverted*'.[33] Most importantly, such spaces, and at all times, engage a system of opening and closing, of segregation and encounter, unique to them, 'whose function is to both isolate and make "penetrable"'.[34] They therefore function either as ripe sites for the creation of an imagined space of illusion, or constitute a space that is 'other', an alternative real space, both of which allude to a transgressive potential. While Foucault focuses on space's emancipatory potential through his conceptualisation of heterotopic spaces, he is known for his works on disciplinary and regulatory space, specifically the prison and the

---

[30] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 23.
[31] Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 37.
[32] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge: 1989), p. xix.
[33] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp. 24-5, my emphasis.
[34] ibid, p. 27.

asylum.[35] Lefebvre, on the other hand, shares Foucault's envisioning of space as both emancipatory and disciplinary, thus validating the point he makes against spatial determinism.

The transformative power of spaces of transition or becoming, such as the ones discussed in this thesis, lies, in effect, in the process of the production of space itself. Informed by Lefebvre and Foucault, this analysis focuses on the everyday, lived experience of space, through which and in which these transgressions occur. The everyday in these novels becomes a politicised site of resistance. However, a site that holds an emancipatory potential does not necessarily guarantee change and transformation. Change rather occurs in dependence on firstly, the qualities and attributes of the conceived, perceived, and lived space; secondly, on society, or the 'mode of production in question'; and finally, on the 'historical period' or context.[36]

From this point of view, reading space necessitates a close scrutiny of its structure, of what it allows and denies, who it includes and excludes, and what kind of social formations it facilitates or inhibits. Reading space in a relational manner allows for a more accurate understanding of space and the power relations it harbours. Both Kevin Hetherington and Margret Kohn expound on Foucault's conceptualisation of heterotopias, each taking it a step further. While Hetherington discusses the alternative spatial ordering facilitated in a heterotopic space, Kohn elaborates on the heterotopias functioning as sites of resistance. This study aims to illustrate how both, the unsettling of the power order and the creation of an alternative, discursively and practically, are made possible by the protagonists. It does not expose a mere dichotomy between order and resistance, or a contrast between the two. Rather, it is concerned

---

[35] See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London and New York: Routledge: 1989); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991).
[36] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 46.

with 'different modes of ordering', and subsequently, the different means through which alternatives are imagined, spoken about, and produced.[37]

In the novels under study, these alternatives are portrayed differently; the 'spaces of an alternate ordering', as Hetherington refers to them, are imagined, produced, and experienced according to each protagonist and his/her circumstances.[38] This is illustrated, for example, through the appropriation of space in the case of the captives of the *al-Lidd* ghetto in *Ismi Adam*; the production of space, in the form of the manuscript, as in the case of Adam, in the same novel; the making of place in Jaber's *Tuyur* by the inhabitants of the Ayyub Building who are forced to engage in a reconfiguration of their socio-spatial organisation; and, finally, the re-imagining and enactment of a socio-spatial alternative, carried out by Khaled in *Kana Ghadan*, and the protagonists of *Limbo Beirut*.

In *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (2003), Margaret Kohn argues that all spaces, whether emancipatory or disciplinary, are formed to serve a human need. In all four novels, the spaces the protagonists inhabit are disciplinary, serving the needs of the Israeli state in Khoury's novel; the warlords, the militias, and the sectarian power order in Jaber, and the neoliberal postwar state in Chouman, as shall be explored in depth in relevant chapters. It is enough to identify 'whose needs are foregrounded and how priorities are determined', in order to expose the power structure intrinsic to the analysis of these protagonists' socio-spatial practices, in their respective spaces.[39]

While Kohn highlights the elasticity of space in times of conflict, Hetherington believes that heterotopic spaces act as facilitators of 'resistance and transgression'; they possess the

---

[37] Hetherington, p. 8.
[38] ibid, p. 9, original emphasis.
[39] Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 89.

ability to 'rupture' the established order of things.[40] By bringing together various heterogeneous entities and allowing them to coexist within the same space, such spaces, like the ones portrayed in the novels, denaturalise and unsettle the established order. The reading of the chosen novels relies on exposing the socio-spatial transgressions that are undertaken by the protagonists. In this context, to resist or transgress is 'to do more than that, it is also to be engaged in a mode of ordering'.[41] Both space and place (the distinction of which will be more thoroughly elaborated in the following section), according to Hetherington, are implicated in the process of producing social relations or formations, and are 'themselves, in turn, socially produced', instead of merely being treated as a set of relations 'outside of society'.[42] They are therefore 'situated within relations of power and in some cases within relations of power-knowledge'.[43] More importantly, spatial relations and places associated with them are 'multiple and contested'.[44] Consequently, the meaning attributed to a place differs from one group of social agents to another.[45] In such a manner, a space's functions and objectives are malleable and prone to change in accordance to the behaviour and socio-spatial, and political, everyday practices of its inhabitants, in addition to the socio-political context and conditions. Hetherington believes that '[i]n some cases, something like a dominant ideology or hegemonic discourse of place is perceived […] with the possibility for resistance left open within interstitial or marginal spaces and the opportunities that leave open for counter-hegemonic representation of space'.[46]

As mentioned earlier, change is only possible through the politicisation of space. Therefore, transgressions cannot be instigated otherwise. Political space, as per Kohn's definition

---

[40] ibid, p. 46.
[41] Hetherington, p.38.
[42] ibid, p.20.
[43] ibid, p.20.
[44] ibid, p.20.
[45] ibid, p.20.
[46] ibid, p.20.

of the term, is a 'place where people speak and act together rather than [a] static physical location'.[47] Khon argues that political space is a space of encounter and is 'implicated in the process of creation, reappropriation, and change'.[48] Kohn is specifically interested in heterotopias as sites of resistance. She defines heterotopic space as a 'real countersite that inverts and contests existing economic and social hierarchies. Its function is social transformation rather than escapism, containment, or denial'.[49] As the protagonists of all four novels demonstrate, therefore, subjects are unable to create or even appropriate a certain space without first assuming a position of agency, which in turn necessitates a certain level of political awareness and engagement. The protagonists of these novels, following specific turning points unique to each novel and its context, actively renounce their participation in the reproduction of a socio-spatial dynamic, in which they are made subservient. As such, they attempt to unsettle this overpowering dynamic, usually following a loss, a break, a remembrance, or a certain displacement. At this point, they instigate or appropriate a rupture that would enable, if not the realisation of their resistance, then at least its potential articulation and re-imagination.

The protagonists of these novels do not necessarily aim to reach a different order or subvert the current one. What they seek however is its transformation; their resistance to the existing order that disenfranchises them is a process towards the imagining of an alternative socio-spatial reality. In Khoury, Adam turns to writing against the silencing of the Palestinian *nakba* narrative and the ghettoisation of the Palestinian, metaphorically or otherwise, within Palestine or in exile. In Jaber, the journal-like narration of events, in addition to the destruction of the city's topography, the new social formations imposed on the buildings and their

---

[47] Kohn, p. 14.
[48] ibid, p. 16.
[49] ibid, p. 91.

32

neighbourhoods, and people's conceptualisation and experience of space, bring attention to the quotidian and the everyday, highlighting the direct effect of violence and a changing spatial reality on ordinary people. Finally, Chouman takes this as a step further by darkly and ironically exposing past events of war and destruction, sometimes in an exaggerated manner, presenting the war as an ongoing manifestation of violence that did not end with the official termination of civil strife in 1990. These expositions are powerful, transgressive narratives that denaturalise and politicise space in order to write against the established order.

In Lebanon, the country has been in limbo, in a state of transition since the 1990s. The postwar reconstruction process and the state's policies that the current uprising is protesting, have made sure that it remains so. The population was therefore forced into a new socio-spatial reality. They were forced to constantly negotiate their spaces and their right to their city, within an ambience that engenders a fragmented sense of place. While this is not unique to the Lebanese context, these novels portray their protagonists as active agents, aware of the intricacies of the political order they belong to and able, through their socio-spatial practices, to transgress it. They therefore demonstrate what Rob Shields calls social spatialisation, or the possibility of imagining an alternative socio-spatial reality.[50]

This study makes the distinction, mentioned earlier, between the concepts of space and place. Even though their study and consequent comprehension are inseparable, these two terms cannot and should not be used interchangeably. The understanding of the differences and the overlaps between these two concepts is significant to the reading of processes of making place as well as of transgression, itself understood as an embodied practice within a space or in a place. Yi-Fu Tuan, in his seminal work, *Space and Place: The Perspective Experience* (1977),

---

[50] See Rob Shields, *Spatial Questions: Cultural Topologies and Social Spatialisation* (London: Sage, 2013).

considers space and place to denote common experiences; they are 'basic components of the

lived world.[51] Place, for him, signifies security, while space signifies freedom; 'we are attached

to the one and long for the other', he writes.[52] Tuan acknowledges the abstract feature of space;

put in simpler terms, he considers space as a movement and place as a pause.[53] He adds that

'each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place'.[54] In other

words, Tuan believes that undifferentiated space becomes place as people experience it, giving it

value and meaning. People therefore construct their places through their socio-political practices,

how they move, own, interact, appropriate, and perform their spaces.

Geographer Tim Cresswell takes this viewpoint a little bit further. According to him,

people 'read places' by acting 'in them', and in turn place 'determines our experience'.[55] Like

space, considered both a product and a producer, Cresswell views practices to be simultaneously

'a form of consumption' as well as a 'form of production'.[56] More importantly, and echoing

Foucault, Cresswell draws on space's relation and implication in power. He states that at the

most basic level, place is 'space invested with meaning in the context of power'.[57] In the novels

under study, places are uprooted and defamiliarised, and spaces are constantly being negotiated

on a daily basis, due to the war's aftermath, which includes, but is not exclusive to, the

reconstruction process and the neoliberal practices of the State apparatus. In this vein, Cresswell

writes,

> Places are never finished but always the result of processes and practices. As such, places need to be
> studied in terms of the 'dominant institutional projects', the individual biographies of people negotiating a

---

[51] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective Experience* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 3.
[52] ibid, p. 3.
[53] ibid, p. 6.
[54] ibid, p. 6.
[55] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 16.
[56] ibid, p. 17.
[57] Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 19.

place, and the way in which a sense of place is developed through the interaction of structure and agency.[58] Places, like spaces, are not fixed or finished work. Due to their social dimension and the set of social formations that circulate within them, both space and place are elastic, prone to constant contestations and challenges, and therefore transformations. Following this logic, it is the socio-spatial practices of the inhabitants of certain spaces or places that either reproduce the same socio-spatial formations and power relations, or re-arrange them into new orderings. Cresswell suggests that 'places are constructed by people doing things'; consequently, they should be considered neither static nor finished or complete, for they are constantly being negotiated and 'performed'.[59]

Marxist and feminist geographer, Doreen Massey, believes that what makes place specific is the gathering of stories.[60] Her conceptualisation of place as such accentuates the importance of storytelling as a form of producing meaning, value, and significance, to its inhabitants. She writes, 'if space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometrics of space'.[61] Consequently, places for her are processes, 'not motionless things, frozen in time'.[62] Massey's conceptualisation of making meaning and place informs this study's analysis of the socio-spatial practice of writing, specifically that against the violent and systemic silencing of the Palestinian narrative, and against the amnesiac discourse (regarding the civil war) endorsed by the postwar neoliberal state and its non-state agents in the new clientelist political economy.

Reminiscent of Lefebvre's rejection of reducing space to a mere physical container and his acknowledgment of its social dimension, as well as its implication within a power structure,

---

[58] ibid, p. 68.
[59] ibid, p. 69.
[60] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005, rprt. 2008), p. 104.
[61] ibid, p. 130.
[62] ibid, p. 155.

Cresswell confirms the inseparability of 'social power' and 'social resistance'. He writes, 'When an expression such as "out of place" is used, it is impossible to clearly demarcate whether social or geographical place is denoted — place always means both'.[63] Power and resistance demand the presence of one another in order to exist. One's awareness of being 'in place', for example, 'is structured within an awareness of being "out of place"'.[64] Since place is created through the meaning people construct and attribute to a specific location or space, and since both space and place are invested within a power structure, then each place contains within it the possibility for resistance. Cresswell reasons that meaning is not an organic or natural attribute of a certain place; it is rather created by those who possess more power than others and who set about defining what is right from what is wrong and what is appropriate from what is not.[65] For Cresswell, place-making is hegemonic in the Gramscian sense.

Furthermore, since place is constructed by the powerful, resistance is possible by those who use place to establish an alternative meaning or 'meanings in subversive ways'.[66] In the novels under study, the protagonists' socio-spatial practices are transgressive. Spatiality, for them, is understood as a tool for the 'creation, maintenance, and transformation of relations of domination, oppression, and exploitation' to which they are subjected.[67] The term 'transgression' signifies a crossing of boundaries and is often defined 'in geographical terms'.[68] While boundaries refer to 'moments of crisis in the flow of things,' they also serve as examples 'of possible tactics for resistance to established norms'.[69] Transgressive actions and practices are significant because they break down normality; they are deviations from the norm and the

---

[63] Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*, p. 11.
[64] ibid, p. 15.
[65] Cresswell, *Place*, p. 42.
[66] ibid, p. 42.
[67] ibid, p. 46.
[68] Cresswell, In *Place/Out of Place*, p. 21.
[69] ibid, p. 21.

hegemonic, and their objective is 'to confuse and disorientate'.[70]

Within the context of postwar Lebanon, sentiments of being in place or out of place are problematised against the population's attempt to make sense of, and allocate new meaning to, their new spaces. This study focuses on the city itself and will not be exploring concepts of nationhood within the context of Lebanon. With the exception of Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto*, which takes place in the city of *al-Lidd*, in Palestine, and in New York, my analysis is confined to Beirut, the Lebanese capital, in the other three novels under study. The inhabitants of the city in all the novels struggle with understanding their new socio-spatial reality. They seem to be confined to constant, and daily, negotiations of their right to be in their cities, and their right to the spaces of their city, to put it in Lefebvre's words.

Understanding Memory-work, Memory, and Trauma

The novels in this study focus on two main contexts whose narratives are intertwined politically, socially, and culturally: The Palestinian *nakba* and the Lebanese civil war. Both experiences are traumatic par excellence, and their narratives are embedded in issues of memory and processes of memory-work. Cathy Caruth envisions history to be 'inherently traumatic', and 'trauma as an overwhelming experience that resists integration and expression'.[71] The two narratives in context illustrate this resistance, which is evident in the way the protagonists internalise the experience in a manner that impedes any creative and active process, in addition to its repercussions on their everyday. On another level, their traumatic experience is further complicated by the systematic silencing that it has to endure. The Palestinian narrative still faces attempts at erasure, geographically and historically, as well as culturally and socially. On the other hand, the

---

[70] ibid, p. 26.
[71] Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1.

Lebanese war narrative faces an enforced amnesia endorsed by the state. This amnesiac

discourse is evident through the state's practices and strategies which focus on the denial of the

experience of the war discursively through the lack of memory work and a public discourse. The

reconstruction process initiated after the official termination of war has also been controversial in

its production of exclusive spaces and rich enclaves and the absence of memorials. These

strategies and practices treat this specific period in Lebanese history as if it never happened.

The intertwined narratives of the Lebanese civil war and the Palestinian *nakba* reflect a

shared struggle against Israel, exhibited in the implication of these struggles in one another. It is

not the aim of this study to compare these two experiences; they are incomparable but

interconnected socially, politically, historically, and culturally. This interconnection is

manifested in the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, since the *nakba*, as militants, intellectuals,

and refugees, and the fact that the Palestinian armed struggle against Israel had Lebanon as its

main quarters and included many Lebanese factions. It is from this standpoint that this study

perceives history as precisely 'the way we are implicated in each other's traumas'.[72]

It is apparent, more so within the Palestinian context, how the most seminal works

produced on memory, memory work, and memory theory, and those within the field of Trauma

Studies, 'largely fail to live up to' the promise of intersectional experiences or 'cross-cultural

ethical engagement'.[73] Stef Craps opines that this failure occurs on at least four different fronts.

He states that,

> They marginalise or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for
> granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history
> of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and
> aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the
> connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas.[74]

---

[72] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 24.
[73] Craps, p. 2.
[74] ibid, p. 2.

As a result of this, rather 'than promoting cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintains injustices and inequalities'.[75] Additionally, and as is the case of the Palestinian narrative within this context, the question of whose story is being absented, denied, or silenced is politically significant, as certain victims are deemed more deserving, or more traumatised, and therefore more important than others. As such, their story is more valued and propagated, while the other's is dismissed and denied. The question then becomes one of victimhood, and which victim is even recognised as such. Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman believe that this recognition of trauma, 'and hence the differentiation between victims, is largely determined by two elements: the extent to which politicians, aid workers, and mental health specialists are able to identify with the victims, in counterpoint to the distance engendered by the otherness of the victims'. [76] According to them,

> Cultural, social, and perhaps even ontological proximity matter; as does the priori valuation of the validity of the cause, misfortune, or suffering, a valuation that obviously implies a political and often an ethical judgment. Thus trauma, often unbeknownst to those who promote it, reinvents 'good' and 'bad' victims, or at least a ranking of legitimacy among victims.[77]

Therefore, it is only those who are identified as victims by the Western world who are then legitimised in their victimhood, recognised, and represented. In the words of Judith Butler, 'those whose lives are not "regarded" as potentially grievable, and hence valuable, are made to bear the burden of starvation, underemployment, legal disenfranchisement, and differential exposure to violence and death'.[78] As shall be discussed in Chapter Two, the Palestinians in general, and their experiences of the *nakba* in specific, endure such a fate. Insofar as it negates 'the need for taking collective action towards systemic change, the hegemonic trauma discourse can be seen to serve

---

[75] ibid, p. 2.
[76] Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. by Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 282.
[77] ibid, p. 282.
[78] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso Books, 2016), p. 25.

as a political palliative to the socially disempowered'.[79] Within this context, a reconceptualisation of the Palestinian trauma narrative, developed in Chapter Two, offers alternative forms of writing the *nakba* in a manner that resists the narrative of victimhood.

In the novels under study, trauma is expressed in two ways: in the internalisation of the traumatic event, so that it impedes its expression and daily life, and in the political need to either write it down or narrate it. The latter displays a form of transgression and creates an imagining of an alternative narrative, as this thesis posits. These novels, therefore, account for diverse 'strategies of representation and resistance', each of which is a political necessity in its own context. The narration of a traumatic experience by its own subject is in itself an act of transgression and self-determination. From within this context, this thesis highlights the significance of protagonists narrating their own experiences themselves, specifically against their respective contexts and the oppression/suppression of their voices as voices 'from below'. It is here important to distinguish between the terms 'collective memory' and 'cultural memory'. The former term was developed by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s 'to denote collectively shared representations of the past'.[80] As for the latter term, it was coined by Jan Assmann in the 1980s to stress 'the role of institutionalised canons of culture in the formation and transmission of collective memories'.[81] All four novels comprise representations of collective memory around a shared historical event, and a determination to account for these experiences against institutionalised and systemic attempts at silencing and erasure which impede the formation of these collective memories. The historical event that informs the stories represented in these novels is comprised of two distinguished dimensions: trauma and memory. This thesis avoids the

---

[79] Craps, p. 28.
[80] ibid, p. 73.
[81] ibid, p. 73.

collapse of one concept at the expense of another. Doing so allows for a thorough understanding of the protagonists' ability to transgress by narrating their experiences in the first degree, and liberating their narrative from forgetfulness and silencing, in the second. Adam, in *Awlad al Ghetto*, does that through producing a manuscript of his *nakba* experience; Khaled and Reem, in *Kana Ghadan*, through producing their own road maps and listening and accounting for Durgham's story; the unnamed struggling writer in *Limbo Beirut* succeeds in finally writing at the end of the novel; and the protagonists in *Tuyur* turn their everyday into events in their own rights, countering the silencing and hegemonic effect of the monolithic representation of the historical narrative, through their practices of making place, as this thesis argues.

Trauma, according to Andreas Huyssen is a 'psychic phenomenon' that is located 'on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, seeing and not seeing, transparency and occlusion, experience and its absence in repetition'.[82] However, trauma 'cannot be the central category in addressing the larger memory discourse'.[83] There is also the question of memory work and the practices of representation embedded in these processes that cannot be denied when discussing memory discourses. Therefore, collapsing memory into trauma 'would unduly confine our understanding of memory, marking it too exclusively in terms of pain, suffering, and loss. It would deny human agency and lock us into compulsive repetition'.[84] Whether 'individual or generational, political or public', Huyssen maintains, memory 'is always more than only the prison house of the past'.[85] These novels reveal this process of breaking out of this prison, real or imaginary. As relevant chapters show, memory-work and reclamations of past and present, and

---

[82] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (California: Stanford University, 2003), p. 8.
[83] ibid, p. 8.
[84] ibid, p. 8.
[85] ibid, p. 8.

by extension the future, are articulated through diverse practices, which, when taken in context, can be read as transgressive. These articulations allow for an understanding of the 'political layers of memory', to borrow the term from Huyssen, that have underlined the two grand narratives under contestation: the Lebanese civil war and the Palestinian *nakba*. These novels, therefore, offer a re-imagining of a memory discourse, on the one hand, and an active reclamation of and reconciliation with (through narration or writing) a traumatic experience. In one way or another, these novels facilitate and contribute to the function of public memory discourses, set to 'allow individuals to break out of traumatic repetitions'.[86]

In their own unique way, Chouman, Jaber, and Khoury employ literary techniques that facilitate this memory-work and activate its transgressive effect. This transgression is highlighted against the erasure of the *nakba* experience within the Palestinian context, and the amnesiac discourse endorsed by the state through practices of urbicide and memoricide,[87] both of which will be discussed in their relevant chapters, within the Lebanese context. However, the 'representations of the visible will always show residues and traces of the invisible'; in other words, the said, or the articulated, will always contain along with it, traces of the unsaid and the silent.[88] As shall be demonstrated, all four novels contribute to this display of visibility/invisibility, this lingering between speech/silence, the present/absent, the real/the fictitious. Doing so challenges the traditional narrative, the Historical Event, and their monolithic and exclusive representations – a process embedded in exploitation, oppression, and disenfranchisement of voices relegated to the margins of society. These novels, therefore, allow for a re-imagining of a counter-discourse and a creation of an alternative, more representative

---

[86] ibid, p. 9.
[87] See Chapter Two and Four, respectively.
[88] Huyssen, p. 10.

and inclusive narrative of these voices that are not usually heard or accounted for in history. These novels offer a literature 'that is both post-mimetic and postmodernist, both historical and attuned to the erasures of the historical record', a literature that partakes in the play 'of remembrance and forgetting, vision and blindness, transparency and opaqueness of the world'.[89]

As human beings, especially when dealing with a traumatic experience, we are unable to 'self-consciously forget or purposely forget; forgetting happens. Nor can experts selectively engineer forgetfulness'.[90] In the case of enforced amnesia or absented narratives, relevant to both contexts under study, 'the mmenomic does not obediently dissolve itself'.[91] Instead, it 'cussedly dogs our steps and reminds us in our "weaker" moments that other worlds and other selves exist and have their own versions of reality'.[92] In other words, it allows for these alternative and 'other' stories to be brought forth, as do the four novels under study here, since they challenge official strategies and practices of forgetting. As shall be demonstrated, these novels represent and feature ordinary people in their everyday experiences of war and trauma. When ordinary citizens 'nostalgically invoke the past or stubbornly return to traumatic events of the past, it can be refutation of official invitations to forget and get on with life'.[93] It is after all the aim of the established power order to destroy, erase, rewrite, or dismantle any collective memories that it deems inconvenient.[94] These novels can be considered to contribute to memory-work since they focus on representing and revealing memories and stories of ordinary people, and turning them into 'a part of the rhythm of everyday life to avoid erasure'.[95]

---

[89] ibid, p. 10.
[90] Ashis Nandy, 'Memory Work', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 16.4 (2015): 598-606, p. 599.
[91] ibid, p. 599.
[92] ibid, p. 599.
[93] ibid, p. 599.
[94] ibid, p. 602.
[95] ibid, p. 602.

2.   **Socio-spatial Configurations in Postwar Beirut: Reconstruction and the Amnesiac Discourse**

Between the years of 1975 and 1990, the Lebanese people endured armed civil strife, which included the direct or indirect interference of foreign armies, both Arab and Israeli, as well as a siege on parts of Beirut in 1982 by the Israeli Army. The war left the country at colossal economic, topographic, and political disadvantages, whose consequences the Lebanese people still suffer from today. This study suggests that the civil war is yet to end,[96] and its entrenched repercussions on the socio-political fabric of the Lebanese society are currently responsible, among multiple other factors, for the ongoing political conflict between different parties, as well as the politico-economic deadlock which has sparked the still ongoing 17 October uprising. Additionally, the civil war brought about detrimental socio-spatial impacts on the everyday lives of the Lebanese, from death of loved ones or their disappearances, to traumatic relocations, displacement, and the effacement of pre-war spaces, whose physical as well as symbolic and social meanings were mutilated, ruined, and replaced, rather than restored, as shall be explored. In the early 1990s, following the Ta'if Accord (1989), which marked the end of the civil war and the cessation of the warring factions from further engaging in civil conflicts, efforts for restoration and reconstruction started taking place. However, the war ended with a general amnesty law (1991), passed by the Lebanese parliament, granting pardon to all leaders of the warring factions, and transforming their roles from militia godfathers to guardians of the new nation.

However, despite the official termination of war, 'postwar government institutions continued to be subjected to interference of political parties, warlords, and traditional leadership,

---

[96] The ongoing status of the civil war will be further explored in later chapters.

44

in addition to regional and international developers'.[97] In 1991, all militias, with the exception of

Hizbullah, officially gave up their arms and heavy artillery, and were subsequently dissolved.

The exception made for Hizbullah was premised on its ability to fight Israel, which was then still

occupying a portion of South Lebanon. The area was liberated in 2001, with the exception of

locations still in contestation till this very day. As such, the Lebanese people, after 1991, were

forced to forget the war and pretend that the past 15 years of bloodshed and violence did not

even happen.

Reconstructing a Divided City: A Costly Amnesiac Endeavour

During the civil war, Beirut was divided along sectarian lines into the Muslim West and the

Christian East. Crossing from one part of the city to the other became prohibited and life-

threatening as militias took to executing people based on their religious affiliations. Beirut's

physical segregation into these two sectors resulted in problematising the 'connection between

territorial space and sectarian identity', and intensifying and exacerbating 'religious prejudice'.[98]

Consequently, it became necessary for the Lebanese people to reformulate their understanding of

space amidst the destruction of familiar spaces as well as confinement, segregation, and

restrictions on mobility.

The city's two sectors were divided by an imaginary, invisible line, called The Green

Line, that is described by many critics, artists, writers, and scholars (such as Samir Khalaf, Saree

Makdisi, and Sune Haugbolle) as a no-man's land. This demarcation point retained its name due

to the greenery which sprouted along 'the buffer zone after buildings and roads were destroyed

---

[97] Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), pp. 24-5.

[98] Jumana Bayeh, *The Literature of the Lebanese Diaspora: Representations of Place and Transnational Identity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 36.

and abandoned'.[99] In Arabic, the phrase *khutoot tamas*, which translates to 'confrontation lines', became the most accurately used reference to The Green Line. Along the 15 years of the war's life-span, the Green Line gradually grew to include various other parts of the city.

However, socio-spatial demarcations, real and symbolic, were not only linked to religious affiliations, though the latter were the most impactful elements in this regard. John Calame and Esther Charlesworth mention Beirut's pre-war mixed areas that remained heterogeneous as people formed affiliations along socio-economic lines. Bayeh expands on this point, noting the inability of the Beirutis to surpass the city's demarcations even after the official termination of the war. She writes, 'In the post-civil war era, where the East/West divide no longer officially exists, Beirutis have been unable to transcend the "mental geography" of the city's protracted division'.[100] The Green Line has therefore persisted as 'a mental and cultural referent of separation', but is now, as she stresses, accompanied by 'other layers of division', related to 'security and class'.[101]

According to Bayeh, the reason behind this persistence is that the Lebanese were never really faced with the opportunity to think, remember, treat, and question the civil war and its memory. They were therefore unable to go beyond the physical and 'confessional divides' that tore into the fabric of the Lebanese society during and after the war.[102] Furthermore, this persistence, she claims, 'exposes the danger of ignoring and suppressing the war's unresolved issues'.[103] Lebanese history is riddled with blind spots that emerge as a result of the establishment of an amnesiac discourse by the State in the political, economic, social, as well as

[99] ibid, p. 39.
[100] ibid, p. 39.
[101] ibid, p. 39.
[102] ibid, p. 42.
[103] ibid, p. 42.

educational and urban sectors. The cessation of armed conflict in Lebanon, despite being official, did not bring any closure to the Lebanese for reasons that will be expanded on later. This 'unfinished nature' of the postwar era reflected on how the whole Lebanese population dealt with the memory of the conflict. Sune Haugbolle writes, 'On a popular level, social practices structuring interpretations of the war feed into simplified antagonistic discourses of "the other", exacerbating the division between the Lebanese along sectarian lines'.[104]

Following the official end of the civil war, the Lebanese were promised serious reconstruction and rehabilitation projects for the war-ravaged city. The reconstruction of Downtown Beirut, specifically, was very controversial and problematic, triggering heated debates in different political, literary, and urban scholarship over the years. The late Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, commissioned the privately-owned company, Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth (Solidere), to handle the reconstruction process. Solidere became the sole authority on the reconstruction project following Law 117, which was passed by the Lebanese parliament in 1991. Solidere then demolished, expropriated, appropriated, and claimed possession of Downtown Beirut, backed up by the law, as the rights of more than 120,000 properties were transferred to it.[105] Through Law 117, Solidere legitimised socio-spatial injustice as it did not refrain from forcing demolitions or harassing owners who might have shown reluctance in cooperating with the execution of its project in the downtown area. It went as far as to violate the Lebanese constitution which 'permit property confiscation only for the public good and with the prompt compensation'.[106] As a result,

---

[104] Sune Haugbolle, 'Public and Private Memory of the Lebanese Civil War', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 25.1 (2005): 191-203, p. 192.
[105] Nagle, 'Defying the State of Amnesia and Memory Wars: Non-Sectarian Memory Activism in Beirut and Belfast City Centres', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10 (2018): 1-22, p. 8.
[106] Tarek Saad Ragab, 'The Crisis of Cultural Identity in Rehabilitating Historic Beirut-Downtown', *Cities*, 28 (2011): 107-14, p. 112.

Solidere erased the claims to '5,043 homes and apartments, 7,092 shops and businesses, 5,597 offices, 1, 368 workshops, 702 warehouses, 343 hotels, 361 restaurants, and 45 bars that had animated the prewar *suq*'.[107]

The company claimed that its reconstruction project would give the Lebanese a fresh new start, in a new, ideal space true to its image before the war when the city was said to have been in its most glorious years. However, Solidere's intentions were far from the reality of their project's consequences. In fact, Solidere contributed to the state-sponsored amnesia in five different ways: 1. Divorcing Beirut from its violent past; 2. Overwriting people's individual war experiences; 3. Disrupting people's relationship and their understanding of space; 4. Depriving people from their right to their city; and 5. Furthering the rift between the Lebanese along class/social divides. Instead of being viewed as an 'erasure of the civil war', the amnesiac new Beirut acted 'as one component of the politics of memory in Lebanon'.[108] Forcing an amnesiac discourse onto everyday life can be regarded as a direct imposition of socio-spatial restrictions. These restrictions resemble a re-programming of people's memories, of what to remember, of what to talk about, and of what to do with these memories. Such an approach to the civil war memory in public discourse and in the management of public and political affairs led to the deliberate exclusion of the Lebanese population. The result was the purposeful marginalisation of the Lebanese population in favour of increased profitability for the state and non-state elite agents, as well as the reproduction of political and cultural hegemony. In her study of space and its power dynamic, specifically the perception and practice of movement and mobility within a Lebanese context, Aseel Sawalha considers space to be produced by 'power actions', with the

---

[107] Najib Hourani, 'People or Profit? Two Post-Conflict Reconstructions in Beirut', *Human Organization*, 74.2 (2015): 174-84, p. 174.
[108] Caroline Nagel, 'Reconstructing Space, Re-Creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban Development in Post-War Beirut', *Political* Geography, 21 (2002): 717-25, pp.724-25.

intention to 'dominate, discipline, and control the less powerful'.[109] In a country like Lebanon,

where the war disrupted the capital's demographical and topographical blueprint and postwar

reconstruction effaced its fragments, the question of exclusion/inclusion is problematic. Building

a city that has risen from the ashes of war and terror necessitated the creation of an image that

denies and rejects poverty, ruin, and devastation. Low-income people, therefore, along with

refugees, the majority of whom were immigrants, were relegated to 'unseen' spaces; they were

abandoned and marginalised.

Furthermore, this amnesiac discourse enforced by Solidere and the postwar State in

Lebanon was facilitated by the neoliberalisation of its control mechanisms and socio-economic

strategies of governance. The repercussion and consequences of a political system 'based on

premises that were highly instrumental in producing and sustaining the war are nowhere more

visible than in the urban space in Beirut'.[110] In fact, the severity of the reconstruction process

was more monstrous than the war itself, as Saree Makdisi claims. Its effects did not only result in

the exclusion of a portion of the Lebanese population from their city, but it also led to the

destruction of their shops and houses, and their expulsion from the area that was to be

reconstructed. Makdisi writes, '[I]n the months since the reconstruction officially began in

earnest (summer 1994), more buildings have been demolished than in almost twenty years of

artillery bombardment and house-to-house combat'.[111] He adds,

> Solidere thus presents itself as a healing agency, designed to help central Beirut recover from its
> 'afflictions'. It makes no mention [in its official information booklet published in 1995] of the previous
> history of reconstruction [attempted in the years 1983 and 1986, during the war], not only because these
> histories do not exist in official terms but also because of the company's peculiar and contradictory
> relationship to history.[112]

---

[109] Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, p. 10.
[110] Haugbolle, 'Public and Private Memory', p. 198.
[111] Saree Makdisi, 'Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere', *Critical Inquiry, Front Lines/Border Posts*, 23.3 (1997): 660-705, p. 662.
[112] ibid, p. 675.

On this point, he claims that it is important to question why Solidere, through its project, insists on clinging to 'the language of the *re-* rather than admitting that it is not about the resurrection, redemption, recuperation, reinvention, remembrance of the past, but rather its invention from scratch'.[113] It is precisely this invention from scratch that is problematic. The aim of these practices and strategies, of which Solidere is heavily culpable, was to accumulate more profit, and this led to the enormous strengthening of the 'repressive apparatus of the State'.[114] As a result, the ordinary, average person, people of low-income, and the working class in Lebanon were further abandoned by the war. Makdisi claims,

> One could say that the informal, unregulated economy that sprang up — and persisted — during the war has not yet been fully colonised and incorporated into the intensified form of capitalism that the Haririst State has come to represent. Once again this sector of the economy carries on with or without regard to the presence of the State; people are left to their devices, to make do as best they can, for the better or for worse.[115]

As such, Solidere and the neoliberal State accentuated further the segregation of the Lebanese population across social divides. Makdisi opines that 'what is central to the discussion of the reconstruction of central Beirut is a discourse of limits, of boundaries, and frontiers'.[116] The reason behind the efficiency of the State lies in the fact that state and capital 'have become incorporated as one and the same force or process defined by the same discourse', which Makdisi calls, 'Harirism'.[117] On another level, this discourse removed the Lebanese from their former spaces and places, as well as from their past, their history, and their memory. Similarly, Bayeh attempts to offer an understanding of this amnesiac discourse by looking at it as a form of forgetting, stating that, 'amnesia can also be thought of as a disturbance of memory'.[118] In this

---

[113] ibid, p. 682.
[114] ibid, p. 697.
[115] ibid, p. 698.
[116] ibid, p. 701.
[117] ibid, p. 698.
[118] Bayeh, p. 73.

manner, it could be read as a form of controlling memory and hindering potential memory-work.

Within the context of Beirut, this strategy is intentional. Haugbolle believes that it was employed

to alienate a portion of the Lebanese population. He believes that this 'process of others', as he

calls it, has been institutionalised by Hariri through his neoliberal politics and his consignment of

Solidere to reconstruct Downtown Beirut. On the same topic, Ghenwa Hayek suggests that 'the

creation of a collective memory narrative is predicated on the selective rewriting of history; in

Lebanon, Solidere's narrative rewrote Beirut's past to suit its purposes'.[119] In this respect,

considering the novels under study from within this context allows for the reading of their

significance in resisting an amnesiac discourse by rewriting history, even if on an individual

imaginative level. These novels demonstrate this resistance against silencing and erasure in the

contexts of both the postwar amnesiac discourse and practices of Solidere and the postwar

Lebanese state, and that of post-*nakba* historiography and place-naming by Israel in occupied

territories. The interconnectedness of both narratives, as illustrated in this study, facilitate their

reading in parallel as counter-narratives in the face of systemic silencing and attempted erasure

in terms of both history and material space.

      Describing the general atmosphere during Solidere's reconstruction endeavours,

Haugbolle writes,

> [T]he unwillingness of leading politicians to probe into the misdeeds of their past careers does not
> constitute the only impediment to a sound healing process and a public discussion. The Lebanese civil
> society itself has shown structural resistance to public memory, even if certain components have been more
> willing than others to look at the past. Thus for a long time, legal, political, and sociopsychological factors
> combined to create a situation where the memory was at the same time taboo and predominant, while the
> results of the war were evidently influencing politics and society, the memory of it was not publicly
> debated. In many ways this situation lingers on despite new openings.[120]

---

[119] Ghenwa Hayek, *Beirut: Imagining the City: Space and Place in Lebanese Literature* (London and New York:
I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 130.
[120] Haugbolle, 'Public and Private Memory', p. 193

Solidere's attempts at effacing the war's collective narrative and memory, in addition to those of symbolic and actual space, are met with resistance from writers, artists, and intellectuals who began writing about this era. According to Haugbolle, what made the Lebanese engage in a public discourse about the war, or even attempt to talk about it, is the massacre committed by Israel against 106 Lebanese refugees sheltered in a UN compound, in Qana, in Southern Lebanon, on the 18th of April, 1996.[121] Prior to that, and despite limited events and articles, such discussions 'were confined to a small group of distinctly leftist intellectuals, specifically the writer Elias Khoury'.[122] This suppression of historical events and experiences from the collective and cultural memory of a people brings forth tremendous dangers. Forcing people to forget aspects of their 'historical experience' is one of the 'most devastating forms of social oppression'.[123] In the case of Lebanon and Palestine, alike, the consequence was a population torn between adhering to an enforced suppression of experiences (and more so within the Palestinian context, to various forms of self-censorship), and the need to verbalise, articulate, and express themselves.

To elucidate further, the Lebanese were forced to engage in amnesiac discourse on more than one front. On an educational level, for example, the Lebanese authorities, up until this very day, cannot agree to a single version of the war narrative. As a result, a unified history textbook is still absent from the Lebanese curriculum. A considerably small country of 10425 km², Lebanon boasts 18 different religious sects and more than 20 different sectarian political parties. Therefore, on a socio-political level, a dangerous status quo was later normalised: the General Amnesty in 1991 that was granted all militia leaders, and the legitimisation of a power-sharing

---

[121] ibid, p. 195.
[122] ibid, p. 195.
[123] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, *Tranlation|Transnation*, ed. by Emily Apter (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 16.

political order; the absence of a criminal tribunal; the broadcast censorship effective since 1994;

the absence of any agreement regarding the historical narration of the events leading to and of

the civil war; and the reconstruction efforts of Hariri through Solidere. Consequently, attempts at

removing Beirut from its dark past can be seen as a way to de-contextualise the city from its

socio-historical and political framework, to expose it and adorn with a completely new face,

more attractive than its war-ravaged one.

As such, the Lebanese population was split between those seeking to forget and move on

with their lives to the best of their abilities, and those resisting erasure, alienation, and

exclusion.[124] Recent years have witnessed efforts to counteract public amnesia, but 'it has been

mainly the artists – writers, filmmakers, documentary-makers, photographers, and musicians –

who have done so'.[125] The renderings of such writers and artists came to pose a challenge, which

will be explored in more depth further on in this thesis, to this amnesiac discourse and the state

apparatus that has been perpetuating it. Haugbolle names the Beirut Decentrists (as miriam cooke

calls a group of female writers during the war, a usually male-dominated realm), and postwar

novelists Elias Khoury and Tony Hanania, as examples. He writes, 'their books are full of

memories of murder, uprooting of families and communities, sectarian hatred, and most of all of

the troubling consequences that these events have had for the individual'.[126] The theme of war

permeates Lebanese postwar literature till this very day, not only because people are still haunted

by an experience that they just recently started talking about, but also because the Lebanese have

been facing successive bouts of violence since the end of the war – the 1996 Qana massacre, the

2005 Hariri assassination and the following series of bombings targeting politicians and

---

[124] Syrine Hout, *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*, ed. by Rashed el Enany (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 3.
[125] Hout, p. 3.
[126] Haugbolle, 'Public and Private Memory', p. 195.

intellectuals opposing the Syrian interference and the presence of its intelligence and military forces in Lebanon, the 2006 July war with Israel, the 2007 Nahr al Bared camp events between the army and a terrorist group, the 2008 internal conflict between Hizbullah and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the 2015 civil movement (known as YouStink), and the still ongoing uprising of 17th October, 2019, to name a few.

Authors who write about the war seem to grapple with remembering and representing the traumatic experience they have either undergone or are still undergoing. However, what also takes up the bulk of their work is the concern with the disintegration of the familiar. Felix Lang attributes this not to their inability to incorporate the war in a 'pre-existing conceptual framework' but to 'the very basis for the creation of these frameworks, the individual and the social body, are being broken up'.[127] The problematic therefore lies in the inability of the Lebanese population to recognise structure and forms that they have formerly employed in order to make sense of the world and the spaces around them.

This study considers the removal of space and history, as illustrated in the four chosen novels, to be forms of social control, exercised through the employment of strategies that are concerned with the 'killing' of space and memory. Both terms urbicide and memoricide will be further elaborated on in relevant chapters. The aim behind these strategies is to withhold and suppress the experiences of space, processes of making place, and the exercise of the right to the city, as shall be illustrated. These strategies also inhibit memory-work and potential reconciliations with a traumatic past.

---

[127] Felix Lang, *The Lebanese Post-Civil War Novel: Memory, Trauma, and Capital* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 90.

3.   Defiance and Resistance: Writing Palestine and Lebanon

A series of political events led to the strong socio-political and economic presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon and their commitment to armed resistance from within the Lebanese territories against Israel: the 1948 *nakba* (known as the catastrophe) and the subsequent displacement of many Palestinians; the 1967 Arab defeat against Israel, which resulted in the loss of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights; in addition to the expulsion of the *fida'eyeen* (freedom fighters) from their base in Jordan following the armed clashes between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1970 (in what later came to be known as Black September). Consequently, this cultural/intellectual and militant presence translated into another form of resistance through the medium of cultural production. At the time, Beirut was home to many prominent intellectuals and writers since the city enjoyed an atmosphere of relative liberty that distinguished it from its Arab counterparts. Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, and Naji al-Ali are a few examples of prominent Palestinian artists, poets, and thinkers who were either based in Lebanon or visited on a regular basis. As such, Palestine appeared as a protagonist in many a Lebanese novel. Notwithstanding the shared spatial, social, and political history and experiences, the two countries both struggle against a dominant discourse: the Lebanese against the enforced silence surrounding the civil war and its aftermath, and the Palestinians against the silencing of the *nakba* narrative.

To counter this silence, or attempt to break it, both the Palestinians and the Lebanese found themselves in possession of a common weapon. As this study highlights, writing forms a powerful counter-hegemonic tool, through which both Palestinian and Lebanese writers attempt to reclaim their silenced narratives. These attempts vary in genre, and include testimonies,

autobiographies and memoirs, plays, poetry, and novels. Haugbolle highlights these attempts as an 'expression of interiority' and as 'effects produced through public discourses of identity and truth-telling'.[128] In this study, both acts of writing memory and remembering are treated as socio-spatial practices. Writing can thus be considered as a form of *spatialisation*, to use Robert Tally's term; it is a transgressive act par excellence through which boundaries are stretched, crossed, challenged, and unsettled. Tally explores how the 'imaginative writer functions as a kind of mapmaker', while also examining ways in which 'narrative especially operates as a form of mapping'.[129] He proceeds,

> Sometimes the very act of telling a story is also a process of producing a map. And this operates in both directions, of course: storytelling involves mapping, but a map also tells a story, and *the interrelation between space and writing tend to generate new places and new narratives*.[130]

This dialectical and interdependent relationship between space and writing pronounces writing as a spatial act, and the product of writing (the narrative itself) as a multifarious space rife with difference.

In the case of Lebanon, the inhabitants of Beirut, like those of any city, possess their own distinct ways through which to express their 'cultural, religious, and political beliefs' and to inscribe meaning and belonging onto their spaces.[131] This expression is exhibited through the translation and (re)presentation of the inhabitants' socio-spatial identity, within the context of spaces of violence/conflict. As such, symbols, poster, jewellery, graffiti, and other items, worn or displayed, are all reminders 'for the people who inhabit space and the people who pass through it alike, of the cultural, religious, political, ideological worldview that holds sways over this

---

[128] Sune Haugbolle, 'The (Little) Militia Man: Memory and Militarised Masculinity in Lebanon', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8.1 (2012): 115-89, p. 116.
[129] Robert Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 7.
[130] Tally, p. 46, my emphasis.
[131] Haugbolle, 'Public and Private Memory', p. 199.

particular part of the city'.[132] Therefore, and most importantly, Haugbolle considers these expressions/practices to be part of the process of the 'production of social space'.[133] He states that '"posters of the body" transport the private space beyond the safe haven of the neighbourhood into the public, making the difference, or privacy, recognisable'.[134] Such practices/expressions can therefore be said to articulate and assert people's right to difference and their experience of a certain space.

Additionally, writing, specifically of memory (and a traumatic event nonetheless), is a different form of inscription that bridges private and public spaces. Engrained within these processes are potentials for transgression and subversion. Seyhan contends that '[t]he work of commemoration is often the only means of releasing our (hi)stories from subjugation or institutionalised regimes of forgetting'.[135] In these novels, literature's transgressive potential lies in the fact that most of their protagonists are narrators of their own experiences and stories. Consequently, they are in possession of the agency to be selective in what to include/exclude, reflect on, and represent. They are socio-politically aware of the exclusionary established order in which they are contained, as well as of the necessity to resist it.

For Seyhan, memory is a 'phenomenon of conceptual border zones' as hegemony controls the details of what is forgotten and remembered.[136] She maintains that memory in 'the larger social world and the public sphere in which the individual dwells is controlled by public, political, and educational institutions'.[137] With respect to both Lebanon and Palestine, in which struggle against the institutionalisation of violence (with full consideration to and awareness of

---

[132] ibid, p. 200.
[133] ibid, p. 200.
[134] ibid, p. 200.
[135] Seyhan, pp. 3-4.
[136] ibid, p. 31.
[137] ibid, p. 31.

their very different mechanisms and their degrees) is a daily activity, cultural productions cannot be separated from the political. Postwar Lebanese writers, therefore, when writing about either Lebanon or Palestine, politicise their writings in this respect. A politicised text, for this study, is not one that stands with one group against another, but is rather one that is first and foremost aware of its position within a political milieu, one that calls for change, or commits to a counter-hegemonic discourse or approach to historical events.

As this study seeks to show, the act of narration itself, within the specific contexts of each of the novels, is prioritised over what is being remembered or narrated. This alone stands out as a powerful statement. Discussing Mashriqi writing, Norbert Bugeja contends that 'the act of narration enables the passage from past events to the present act of promulgation in narration'.[138] Bugeja's use of the word 'passage' is of great significance in the present context of this study, and the formulation of the spatial premises of both remembrance and writing since it alludes to a crossing of or across boundaries, insinuating, in the process, a spatial movement. This movement undermines forms of control and set structures. Victor Turner calls these 'anti-structures', which usually take place through rituals of rites of passage, or in other words, through action that also involves a movement from one space to another.[139] In this regard, Turner views structures as pertaining a social dimension, and 'man's social life as a process, or rather as a multiplicity of processes'.[140] By structure, Turner is here specifically referring to social structure.[141] In the novels under study, all spaces contain within them the possibility of their own negation – within

---

[138] Norbert, Bugeja, *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 25-6, original emphasis.
[139] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Aldine Publishing CO., 1969), p. 139.
[140] ibid, p. 139.
[141] ibid, p. 139.

their centre, their very margins. It is from these margins, and through the appropriation of 'anti-structures', as shall be explored, that the protagonists inhabiting them are able to produce space.

In this sense, wartime and postwar novels are an endeavour to engage in a discourse, involved in individual and everyday experiences, battling attempts at official silencing as they are enforced on the Lebanese people's collective memory. It is through such acts of initiating a (counter)-discourse that literature retains its transgressive potential and produces space, not only by writing about the war, but also by creating a new form through which to do so, as the following section elucidates. For Bayeh, the postwar novel has acted as a writing against amnesia and erasure, but it did so through a more accurate assessment of Lebanon than prewar action. 'Lebanon's post-war novels', she writes, 'reflect in many ways an attempt to write back to the history and pain of the civil war'.[142] In such a manner, writing for most postwar novelists can be considered an affirmative and transgressive attempt against silencing and absenting part of their history.

4.   The Birth of the Lebanese Novel

The Lebanese civil war inspired a break from the traditional, national narrative, both in content and in form as Lebanese authors became disenchanted by nationalist ideology. Andreas Pflitsch considers this disenchantment as a breach in political commitment and the result of both the 1967 Arab defeat against Israel, and the Lebanese civil war in 1975. He describes literature following these two historical incidents as having changed forever; it is the form of 'political intervention' that changed as 'the nature of political literature altered drastically'.[143] The most

---

[142] Bayeh, p. 26.
[143] Andreas Pflitsch, 'The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism', *Arab Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. by Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (London: Saqi, 2010), pp. 25-40, p. 30.

recognised impact that the Arab defeat engendered on the historical memory and psyche of the Arab writer is what Pflitsch terms a 'crisis of representation' in both art and literature.[144] In this sense writing becomes a necessary political priority toward self-determination, and against the dominant order.

Palestinian voices, disenfranchised both in Israel and in the diaspora/exile, became more audible following the 1967 defeat. Literary and artistic works produced in Beirut, increased in production in the 1960s and throughout the duration of the Lebanese civil war, becoming more recognisably transgressive. In Palestine, the Palestinians were situated 'in a land where the dominant Israeli population intensively nurtures its own cultural memory'.[145] The Palestinians therefore were recognised as what Homi Bhabha would call 'marginalised minorities'.[146] As a result, their writings were both unsettling and challenging since they were writing from 'positions on the margins of society'.[147] Such writers had no other option than to produce their own 'counter-texts' within this dynamic and 'vis-a-vis the public self-representation of the dominant majority'.[148]

Prior to the war, the novel was an underdeveloped genre in Lebanon, with poetry in the more popular and esteemed lead. It was the civil war itself that 'triggered massive ruptures in intellectual and literary traditions amongst those authors who would go on to establish the pre-eminence of the Lebanese novel in the Arab world'.[149] Lebanese authors resorted to writing as a political statement against the terrors of war and the silencing enforced upon them by official political establishments and institutions.[150] One of the most prominent authors who contributed

---

[144] ibid, p. 41.
[145] ibid, p. 49.
[146] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[147] Pflitsch, p. 51.
[148] ibid, p. 51.
[149] ibid, pp. 60-1.
[150] ibid, p. 61.

to the birth of the Lebanese novel is Elias Khoury who brought in a unique style, a transgressive content, and an experimental form. Pflitsch describes Khoury's style as a 'juxtaposition of rival and alternative perspectives and ideas on the future'.[151] Pflitsch believes that 'what distinguishes the Lebanese novel from the rest of contemporary Arab literature is not only its introspection and rigorous destruction of political grand narratives but its experimental character, unique in its daringness'.[152] Disenchanted with romanticised notions of nation and belonging, Lebanese writers became more forward. After a half century 'of serving the Arab cause', Seigneurie writes, 'realism in the Arabic novel became an overnight anachronism, and from its grip emerged the Lebanese war novel'.[153]

As such, the literature produced after the war ranged from 'feelings of alienation, dispossession, and exile to cries of resistance and triumph'.[154] Authors like Elias Khoury, Rashid al-Daif, Rabi' Jaber, Hassan Daoud, Hoda Barakat, and Iman Humaydan, to name just a few, attempted to reconstruct a collective memory that the political elite was trying to suppress, in conjunction to representing individual everyday accounts of the war experience. By reclaiming individual remembrances and focusing on the everyday experiences of violence, the imposed denial of which is shared on a collective level, such writers produced a literature that is able to challenge, and at times, counter the hegemonic, amnesiac discourse. Hayek contends that postwar writers, especially those writing in the 1990s, successfully wrote against the effacement of memory by 'invoking personal memory as counter-memory, and by re-inscribing these personal memories onto the devastated space of central Beirut'.[155]

---

[151] ibid, p. 61.
[152] ibid, p. 61.
[153] Seigneurie, 'Anointing with Rubble', pp. 50-1.
[154] Hout, *Post-war Anglophone Lebanese Fiction*, pp. 1-2.
[155] Hayek, *Beirut*, p. 132.

Seyhan ascertains that for history to 'be transformed into emancipatory memory, its fragments need to be reconfigured in such a way as to release their revolutionary potential'.[156] The objectives of the new literary techniques endorsed by these writers serve this very purpose. One such example is fragmentation. Those writers challenge the traditional representation of temporality and spatiality in both form and content. However, their attempts are in no way a denial of the inseparability of time and space, or the prioritising of one against the other; they choose to represent such a relationship in an alternative manner. Such authors, therefore, emphasise the importance of everyday space, and all the practices exercised within it, from negotiation to contestation. Additionally, they stress the significance of revisiting history and reclaiming lost (absented) narratives. In postwar Lebanese literature, fragmentation is prominently evident in the works of Elias Khoury, Rabih Alameddine, and Rabi' Jaber, for instance.

In addition to its experimental form and daring content, the Lebanese postwar now figured formerly unrepresented social groups, such as the 'lumpenproletariat, the marginalised, the delinquents, [and] the drug dealers', and became central figures.[157] The inclusion of society's excluded, who are also occluded from literary representation, is a transgressive act in itself. Such an action corresponds to a new understanding of space, specifically its socio-political dimension as well as its entrenchment within hegemonic power-dynamics and social relations. The protagonists' relationship with their city and its spaces is highlighted in novels as Rabi' Jaber's *Madina taht al Ard* and Hoda Barakat's *Hajar al Dahik* and *Harith al Miyah*.

The new socio-spatial reality that necessitated a new textuality, or a new form of writing, also necessitates a new kind of reading, based on critique and questioning. These writing

---

[156] Seyhan, p. 34.
[157] Abbas Baydoun in Lang, p. 60.

exposed the exclusion that their protagonists endure and the dominant ideologies which keeps them there. Soja writes, 'We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideologies'.[158] A spatial reading of postwar narratives, as such, is necessary following the effacement of memory and space, and the new-born textuality. In a way, it can be stated that such novels adopted an experimental form to expose and explore a transgressive narrative.

Additionally, such narratives were more intimate, more subjective, and more fragmented, relaying the effects of war and violence on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. Lebanese wartime and postwar writings, therefore, can be read as part of a 'counter-hegemonic discourse seeking to challenge the war narrative developed by the different warring factions'.[159] These writers distinguished and distanced themselves from the dominant cultural voices of the 1990s.[160] War, for them, is not one single event or experience, but an opportunity to 'raise a set of concerns about individual and collective belonging to the city and the nation'.[161] In all novels, the singularity of the war event is challenged as different stories and versions of the war are recounted. Jaber juxtaposes fictional vignettes with news reports and public announcements, allowing the reader a view into the war from various angles. Jaber, like Chouman and Khoury, cannot be considered anti-nationalist per se. Instead, their novels expose various stories that the official historical narrative leaves untold.

Suppressing memory and having limited or no access to remembrances of life-changing events unhinge people's sense of place. Jaber's *Tuyur*, specifically, illustrates this problematic

---

[158] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 6.
[159] Lang, p. 69.
[160] Hayek, *Beirut*, p. 133.
[161] ibid, p. 133.

and the removal of people from their sense of familiarity to home. The protagonists are forced to refamiliarise themselves with the spaces of the war-torn city and their homes. An individual's sense of place, as Hayek contends, is not merely connected, in an intimate manner, to his/her wellbeing, 'but also [to] that individual's ability to situate him- or herself within the social sphere'.[162] This explains why most of the Lebanese population struggle to feel at home in their own country, constantly feel out of place, and are compelled to continually negotiate their spaces as well as their positions within them.

With the above problematic in mind, these writers were compelled to distinguish between collective urban memory and personal memory, and highlight their own personal experiences and understandings of space and history. By doing so, they gave 'their generation a participatory voice in the articulation of Beirut's past and present'.[163] This rejection of a monolithic version of history, in literature specifically, is foregrounded in Khoury's and Jaber's work, more specifically. As the following chapters illustrate, both Khoury and Jaber employ a polyvocality and a multiplicity of narratives, while stressing the political significance of the act of narration. Reading and writing history from the outlook of 'just one monumental space *silences* and represses all the other urban space and experiences of the city, both past and present'.[164] The novels under study, thus, come as a cry and a protest against this repression.

5.   The Right to the City in Postwar Lebanese Literature

As writers take to focusing on portraying the everyday, lived experience of the Lebanese during the war, while also being keen on retrieving a silenced collective narrative, the individual and

---

[162] ibid, p. 133.
[163] ibid, p. 135.
[164] ibid, p. 153, my emphasis.

collective merge conceptually in postwar Lebanese novels. The intricate details of the everyday, as portrayed in the selected novels, specifically the experience of space and the making of place, reveal a concern with the spatial and the city. The protagonists' social practices within the context of the everyday lived experience, including the act of narrating their stories in a manner unique to each, display an affirmation of their right to the city. Even though the protagonists of all the chosen novels confirm this concern with the right to the city, it is in Chouman's novel that it is most highly visible. The protagonist, Khaled, attempts to reclaim this right, not only through reclaiming narratives, but also by walking freely in city spaces that marginalise him.

In Lebanon, the right to the city is controlled by a dominant sectarian-clientelist regime at the expense of low-income dwellers, threatening their right as citizens in the city by excluding them from partaking in decisions related to the management and transformation of their spaces. Such a situation, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, was exacerbated following the civil war and during the period of reconstruction. In other words, the powerful centre tends to divorce the 'other[s]' from their right to difference, resistance, appropriation, and production of space, all of which are considered important aspects of the right to the city as exemplified by the works of Lefebvre. His work in the 1960s on the right to the city, which matured as an idea along the years to culminate in his seminal work, *The Production of Space*, in 1974, influenced many writers, critics, and activists, specifically during the critical period of civil unrest and student movements and strikes that took place in France in 1968. According to Lebanese architect, Mona Fawaz, the aim behind this notion of the right to the city is 'to strengthen the ability of the "city-zen" to take charge of processes of spatial production'.[165] This right, in itself, comprises two

---

[165] Mona Fawaz, 'Neoliberal Urbanity and the Right to the City: A View from Beirut's Periphery', *Development and Change*, 40.5 (2009): 827-52, p. 831.

others: the right to participation and the right to appropriation of space.[166] For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to concisely distinguish between the appropriation of space and its production. According to Lefebvre, the appropriation of space is a process that cannot possibly be understood 'apart from the rhythms of time and of life'.[167] He writes,

> It may be said of a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group that it has been appropriated by a group […] An appropriated space *resembles* a work of art, which is not to say that it is in any sense an *imitation* work of art. Often such a space is a structure — a monument or building — but this is not always the case: a site, a square, or a street may also be legitimately described as an appropriated space.[168]

The concept of appropriation and reappropriation of space are both integral to the understanding of the process of the production of space.[169] The latter entails a participation in the creation of what Lefebvre calls the *oeuvre*, and the formation of spaces usually reserved for decision-makers and capital-owners, while appropriation entails the freedom to use space in the everyday.

Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city considers the city to be an outcome of collective work, or *oeuvre*. For him, the city is comprised of a network of social relations and encounters; the *oeuvre* therefore bears more semblance to a work of art than to an object or a product. His approach to the right to the city prioritises a city's use value, accentuating the role of the inhabitants of the city, without however denying the importance of capital or exchange value. In so doing, Lefebvre gives agency (and with it responsibility) to 'city-zens' in shaping and transforming their spaces. Similarly, Mustafa Dikeç believes the right to the city to imply not only a formulation of certain rights and the cultivation of the political among city inhabitants, but 'also a reconsideration of the spatial dynamics that make the city'.[170]

Considering the city as an *oeuvre*, Lefebvre lays emphasis on social relations by

---

[166] ibid, p. 831.
[167] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 166.
[168] ibid, p.165.
[169] ibid, p. 167.
[170] Mustafa Dikeç, 'Justice and Spatial Imagination', *Environment and Planning, A*, 33 (2001): 1785-1805, p. 1801.

highlighting the significance of participation, in reference to the undertaking of the active engagement in the political life in one's city. The right to the city, for him, is based on struggle, and achieved through struggle. With centrality and marginalisation, which ensue as a result of this struggle, come issues of inclusion and exclusion or segregation. Both marginalisation and segregation, according to Lefebvre, are social mechanisms that deny the citizens their right to the city. Don Mitchell, in turn, regards dominated spaces as exclusionary with respect to those who are considered ineligible to be included in a certain space, or to form 'the public', to use his terms. Such spaces, backed by the law, exclude 'undesirable[s]' and banish them to a realm outside the political by removing them from places of gathering in the city.[171] In other words, they are denied both their right to the city and their right to difference. Exclusion and abandonment are indicative of the inability of the power order to accept difference, and their insistence on taking away the right to the city of others.

However, powers are always faced with potential, wilful intentions, or organised actions 'to combat it'.[172] The right to the city, whose selectivity and exclusivity are indicative of marginalisation and abandonment, demands conflict. And it can therefore only be achieved through struggle. This is done through processes of spatial production and appropriation, which in turn facilitate the production of social formation appropriate for each distinct process, as shall be explored in the coming chapters.[173] In other words, the struggle over space between margin and centre, the dominated and the dominant, the representational spaces and the spaces of representation, shapes the city.

---

[171] Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (London: The Guilford Press, 2014), p. 141.
[172] ibid, p. 140.
[173] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 158.

Lefebvre believes that the inhabitants of the city have the right to more than just mere space; they have the right to the *oeuvre* itself — the right to produce and appropriate space. Building on Lefebvre's statement, Mitchell notes that '[I]f the right to the city is a cry and a demand, then it is only a cry that is heard and a demand that has force to the degree that there is space from and within which this cry and demand is visible'.[174] However, the right to the city does not only entail the right of the individual to access urban resources or use city space. Rather, and most importantly, it is the right to 'change ourselves by changing the city […] after our heart's desire'.[175] As the following chapters explore, it is from within the heart of such a struggle that postwar Lebanese authors commit to writing of and about the city.

Out of the conviction that we shape our spaces to the same extent that they shape us, a notion that he shares with David Harvey, Dikeç focuses his analysis on the interrelation between space and social injustice. Change, achieved through struggle in the request for the right to the city, is not merely spatial, but societal, as well.[176] For him, notions of spatial justice, the right to the city, and the right to difference, together form a 'part of an *emancipatory* politics'.[177] Believing that exclusion acts on the marginalisation and deprivation of the 'other' from his/her right to the city, Lefebvre's the right to the city is also the right to fight against segregation.[178] Dikeç, like Lefebvre, calls for a movement beyond the state and its power structures stating that the right to the city is the right of both participation in political life — 'fighting against discrimination' — and the right to resistance — 'fighting against repression'.[179] The right to the city, to him, is not a mere participatory right. Rather, it is an enabling right that is 'to be defined

---

[174] Mitchell, p.129.
[175] David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', *Debates and Developments: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27.4 (2003): 939-41, p. 939.
[176] Dikeç, 'Justice and Spatial Imagination', p. 1801.
[177] ibid, p. 1793, my emphasis.
[178] Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities*, p.195.
[179] Dikeç, 'Justice and Spatial Imagination', p. 1800.

and refined through political struggle'.[180] It therefore focuses on the subject's socio-spatial

practices and their agentive potential against the constant homogenisation strategies by the power

structures at play.

Gregory Busquet also believes that achieving effective participation within the city, and

acquiring one's right to the city, is 'conquered, not granted'.[181] Following the same logic, Gareth

Millington stresses the importance of difference and the significance of the right to difference,

reiterating Lefebvre's ideation of a subject's agency. Millington states that '[t]he city as *oeuvre*

contains the capacity to overcome divisions and restore totality. Appropriation must triumph

over domination'.[182] Giving agency over space to an inhabitant exposes the relationship between

individual and space, thus rejecting the ideology of spatial determinism. It further exposes what

Busquet deems a 'more complex interrelation between spaces and social becoming'.[183]

In the novels under study, the postwar socio-spatial reality is exposed on a collective

plane, through the city's practices against its people, and on an individual plane, through the

recollections and experiences of the everyday. From writing against the grain, to occupying and

producing spaces, these novels resist the enforced divorce between the inhabitants and their right

to the city. Writing within the context of Beirut, Fawaz believes that it is the inhabitants' right to

> retain the ability to produce their spaces without conforming to the dominant modes of spatial production,
> to participate in re-shaping the existing norms and forces in which space is being produced within the
> capitalist order, rather than being themselves engulfed in its modes.[184]

In this context, Solidere, through its contribution to the fragmentation of the Lebanese socio-

economic and spatial fabric, problematised the right to the city. Marginalisation and exclusion

---

[180] ibid, p. 1790.
[181] Gregory Busquet, 'Political Space in the Work of Henri Lefebvre: Ideolgoy and Utopia', trans. by Sharon Moren, *Justice Spatiale|Spatial Justice*, 5 (2012-13): 1-12, p. 9.
[182] Gareth Millinton, *'Race', Culture, and the Right to the City: Centres, Peripheries, Margins* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 10.
[183] Busquet, p. 6.
[184] Fawaz, p. 831.

extended to reach not only the refugees and immigrants in the camps in the peripheral suburbs or *banlieues*, most of whom are Palestinian, but also a larger portion of disenfranchised, low-income Lebanese. This fact drove Diana Martin to favour the term 'campscapes' over 'the spaces of the camp' since marginalisation is no longer concentrated in specific zones. She writes, 'bare life and the exception exceed the boundaries of the refugees' bodies and spaces to include the citizens and other outcasts'.[185] Thus, a large portion of the Lebanese population, along with disenfranchised Palestinian refugees, were reduced to what Giorgio Agamben calls 'bare life', those who are abandoned by the central power and the excluded from political life.[186]

With the above theoretical context in mind, postwar literature posed questions that people were struggling with, which included: 'Who does this city belong to?' or 'Whose city? By whom? For whom?'. Voicing such concerns is a form of writing against this socio-spatial and economic marginalisation. The themes that overwhelm postwar literature include issues of classism, elitism, and exclusion, in addition to war and violence, gender and sexuality, all of which are represented and translated spatially. The importance of narrating the spatial experience of war is accompanied by verbalising one's understanding of and relationship to intimate and public spaces, those that were destroyed as well as those that remain. Thus, within such a framework, writing becomes not only assertive of its unsettling potential against fading out in the system, but also of its own function as a socio-political practice.

Lebanese writers and intellectuals held Solidere accountable. They warned against the latter's violent attempts against memory. They argued that Solidere was removing people from their own sense of spatial belonging, by defamiliarising and denaturalising their spatial practices,

---

[185] Diana Martin, 'From Spaces of Exception to "Campscapes": Palestinian Refugee Camps and Informal Settlements in Beirut', *Political Geography*, 44 (2015): 9-18, p. 10.
[186] See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

and by extension, from the possibility of appropriating and/or producing their own spaces. Elias Khoury, for example, admits to experiencing a sense of disorientation, defamiliarisation, loss, and helplessness due to Solidere's impingement on people's memories of the downtown area of Beirut.[187] Postwar Lebanese literature is rife with examples illustrating the protagonists' relationship with public space, the city, and their lived environment. References to places, monuments, landmarks, cafés, prominent buildings, hotels, restaurants, and squares, abound. A prominent example here would be Nazek Saba Yared's novel *Cancelled Memories*, Ghada Samman's *Beirut Nightmares*, and works by Rashid al Da'if and Hassan Daoud, among others. This process 'of remembering', Sawalha writes, 'was a cry for recognition and a protest against the exclusion from the deciding future of the city'.[188] Other novels dealt directly with spaces contested during the war and the postwar reconstruction era. Burj al Murr (al Murr Tower) and the Holiday Inn (which appears in both Jaber's and Chouman's novels under study) are two significant examples in this regard.

Sawalha uses the term 'prohibited spaces' to refer to the marginalised spaces that have appeared after the war and during the reconstruction process in Beirut. Her term offers an alternative understanding of these contested spaces. She argues that it is employed to refer to public urban spaces that were accessible to the majority of Beirutis before the outbreak of civil strife. However, due to the war and the controversial reconstruction initiatives that followed it, these spaces have become 'private', that is 'inaccessible and out of reach for the majority of the population'.[189] These 'prohibited spaces' became more popular during the war, following the physical segregation of the capital along the Green Line. The physical-cum-symbolic

---

[187] Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, p. 30.
[188] ibid, p. 30.
[189] ibid, pp. 11-2.

71

demarcation therefore transformed into a marker of a fear of the other. Fear became part and parcel of people's everyday spatial vocabulary and practice, as they avoided crossing from one part of the city to the other for a good few years, even after the erasure of the Green Line in official discourse. Solidere's initiative came as the straw that broke the camel's back, as sectarian boundaries, symbolic or otherwise, between people extended beyond religious belonging to include class distinctions. Consequently, the sites that were formerly inaccessible during the war turned into sites of remembrance and nostalgia.[190] The downtown area itself became a prohibited zone *after* the war and during the reconstruction phase, and transformed into a symbolic site that can only be experienced through remembrance.

War and the reconstruction process following that period transformed the relationships and the power dynamics within Beirut's cityscapes. Sawalha saw Beirutis employ various strategies in their everyday lived experiences as a means for survival and reclamation of their right to the city. She writes, 'they proclaimed multiple identities, formed formal and informal alliances, and established socioeconomic and political networks to negotiate for urban rights and services'.[191] In consequence, the Lebanese who opposed the new Haririst reconstruction project, were split into two groups (both excluded from participating in the attempts to give new meaning and definition to the city's new -scapes). The first group comprised intellectuals, writers, historians, architects, and social scientists who voiced their opposition to Solidere's plan through their counter-hegemonic texts and constant meetings that spoke against the latter's efforts. The second group included 'less powerful' collectives, such as 'the displaced families, local residents, and long-standing tenants'.[192] The latter group verbalised their rejection of and

---

[190] ibid, p. 12.
[191] ibid, p. 15.
[192] ibid, p. 23.

opposition to Solidere's plans by 'evoking their prewar and wartime spatial memories, announcing religious decrees (*fatwas*), spreading rumours in informal gatherings, [and] forming neighbourhood collectives'.[193] While the first group was more progressive and transgressive, the second was more conservative and nostalgic.

The novels under study feature an engagement with a socio-spatial dynamic that reflects on the transgressive everyday practices of the protagonists. Therefore, the understanding of space and its transformation as a 'dynamic process' is intrinsic for determining how it reflected on the form, style, and content of the literature produced at that time. As mentioned in the earlier section, war and postwar Lebanese literature showed a break away from the literary tradition maintained before that period. Hayek interprets this shift in form, content, and intention of Lebanese literature to be representative of the changes in Beirut's spatial identity. In this light, these novels can be considered to be as more experimental than literary works produced at earlier periods in Lebanon's history. Consequently, this shift demanded different socio-spatial practices, and a different approach to space (and to reading it), as people learned how to understand, interact, and use their new spaces. It comes as no surprise then that the literary spatial discourse witnessed a transformation as well. Comparing postwar novels to those that predate the 1982 Israeli invasion and the enforced siege on West Beirut, Hayek notes, '[t]he shift from ideological narratives of war to the more subjective, individualised experience of conflict can be registered in this changing representation of Beirut'.[194] Hayek states that 'literature not only reflects, but also produces new spatial understandings and divisions of collective space'.[195]

---

[193] ibid, p. 23.
[194] Hayek, *Beirut*, p. 67.
[195] ibid, pp. 22-3.

Rejecting pre-war romanticism and nationalism, postwar narratives became more individualised, subjective, and fragmented, and more concerned with representations of the right to the city. To reflect this change in the geographical and topographical face of the city, specifically in how it affected the everyday life of Beirutis, 'the language of division and fragmentation dominat[ed] description of Beirut during the war'.[196] Therefore, living a new spatial identity on a daily basis altered the way people moved, reacted to new spaces, navigated and negotiated them, and the way in which they talked and wrote about them. It also, therefore, significantly transformed the way in which they read their right to their city, and the strategies they employ in their attempts to reclaim it, even on an individual, intimate, and everyday level. With their focus on the everyday experiences of space and the accompanying processes of making place, the novels under study demonstrate a new form of writing about the city and understanding it. Hayek argues that the 'fragmentation of Lebanese society, and the destruction of the city, mandated and brought about a new form of textuality'.[197]

The fragmentation present in most wartime and postwar literature, specifically in the works of authors such as Khoury, Jaber, and Chouman, is both purposeful and intentional; it is a textual resistance to 'dominant narratives, whether they are patriarchal, socioeconomic, or colonial', or even sexual.[198] It was impossible to remain neutral in the face of a changing spatial reality if one were to actively participate in and appropriate it, and attempt to transform it in the process. However, the portrayal of the break in space and time formally and stylistically in Lebanese novels cannot be reduced to its interpretation as a lamentation of the ensuing ruin, but rather as a celebration of its potential. Additionally, it should be understood as a challenge to the

---

[196] ibid, p. 67.
[197] ibid, p. 70.
[198] ibid, pp. 70-1.

dominant narrative, specifically the inaccurate state-sponsored Solidere narrative (that the new face of the city is for all the Lebanese), as the following chapters explore.

6.   Concluding Remarks

The Lebanese civil war gave birth to a new kind of reading, writing, and interpreting literature, as well as to the production of a new literary genre. Therefore, the fragmented socio-spatial fabric of the city, 'wove', to borrow a term from Khoury, a new textuality, in order to accommodate this new reality. The novels under study present various representations of everyday struggles as experienced within cityscapes torn by violence and incessant conflict. The four novels, to varying degrees, employ literary techniques that foment their transgressive nature, such as polyvocality, formal fragmentation, and the intentional manipulation of the boundaries separating history from fiction. These are not historical novels per se, but they are rather novels that rebel against a lost and suppressed collective memory by accentuating individual, quotidian experiences and remembrances, within the grander silenced history and suppressed collective memory/narrative.

These novels, thus, offer an insight into the socio-spatial reality of the protagonists' everyday lived experiences and struggles in times of disintegration, displacement, and silencing. These novels locate the said struggles within the context of a war/conflict, that despite its termination as perpetuated in dominant public discourse, in 1991 (in the case of Chouman and Jaber) and 1949 (in the case of Khoury), is still ongoing. The continuity of these two struggles forms a significant framework to the critical reading of these novels. It is here important to reiterate that this study, in no way, attempts a comparison of any kind between the Palestinian *nakba* (1948) and the Lebanese civil war (1975). However, the Palestinians and the Lebanese

share more than just a border and a common enemy. The Palestinian narrative is embedded within the Lebanese wartime and postwar narrative due to the militant, socio-economic, and intellectual presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon as mentioned earlier. Khoury's novel *Gate of the Sun* is a great example in this respect. It reveals the implication of one narrative in another, as Khalil, the main protagonist, incessantly crosses the Lebanese borders into Palestine to see his family. The novel extensively details the massacre of Sabra and Shatila that took place in Lebanon, during the Lebanese civil war, and the Israeli invasion in 1982. The massacre was committed by Lebanese right-wing militants (the Phalangists), and was facilitated by Israel. In the same year, the Israelis laid siege to Beirut, and Lebanese Leftist militants fought alongside the PLO against the Israelis. Chapter Two will discuss this context more thoroughly as it ties the links more substantively between the Palestinian and the Lebanese narrative.

The analysis in this thesis is informed by Henri Lefebvre's work on social space and its production, specifically by his concept of the right to the city (which includes, but is not exclusive to, the right to participation and the right to difference). This study aims to build on the idea of socio-spatial justice and the process of production of space by investigating their transgressive potential, through exploring the everyday practices of the protagonists in the chosen novels. Within this context, the reproduction of space, or the social mode of production, responsible for the perpetuation of the power order is investigated with references made to Michel Foucault's work on power, knowledge, and discipline. The spatial analysis endeavoured here makes possible the investigation of space, the experiences of space, and the processes of making place within the Lebanese context. The attention lent to the everyday as a site for contestation, negotiation, and reclamation of space and history, as it appears in the various and multiple stories of ordinary people as presented in each of the novels, prioritises its significance

vis-à-vis allowing a re-imagining of a counter-discourse. Alternative narratives, or at least their possibility, are created and produced on a daily basis through specific socio-spatial practices that this study focuses on, namely, walking and writing.

Chapter Two 'Reclaiming Lost Time and Space in Elias Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto: ISmi Adam*', seeks to explore the everyday experience of space, specifically, the space of trauma and ghettoisation, as represented by Adam, the protagonist and narrator. The reading of this novel focuses on the everyday socio-spatial practices of captives in the *al Lidd* (Lydda) ghetto in Palestine in 1948, during their incarceration and after their release. Their ghettoisation transcends the physical boundaries of the ghetto and the time of their captivity. This chapter argues that, Adam, through the manuscript that he produces, and in which he writes down his *nakba* experience, amidst an atmosphere of oppression, suppression, and silencing, challenges the ongoing systematic erasure of the Palestinian experience and narrative. His manuscript can therefore be considered counter-hegemonic; it constitutes a re-imagining of a transgressive discourse.

Chapter Three, 'Their War Stories: Experiencing Space, Making Place in Rabi' Jaber's *Tuyur al Holiday Inn*', focuses on exploring the processes of experiencing space and making place (while drawing on the conceptual and theoretical distinctions between the two) in Jaber's novel. It investigates the changing socio-spatial practices of the everyday inhabitants of the Ayyub Building, located in what was then the Eastern part of Beirut. As a result of this division, and of the influx of refugees (of a lower socio-economic background) into the building and its neighbourhood, with the raging ongoing violence, the socio-spatial identity of both building and neighbourhood witnesses a transformation. As a result, people are forced into new experiences of space. This chapter, therefore, taking into consideration these changes and their aftermaths, seeks

to investigate how these process of making place become transgressive. By focusing on the multiple narratives of making place, as represented in the novel, and Jaber's narrative style, specifically his employment of intertextuality, this study understands this multiplicity as a challenge to the monolithic representation of history, and the unsettling of war as a singular event. In fact, the everyday practices of the various inhabitants, and the ensuing narratives about the war included in *Tuyur*, in all their variations and multiplicities, are history-making events in their own right. As such, this chapter reads Jaber's novel as counter-hegemonic, able to create an alternative reading of history, and a re-imagining of a counter-discourse.

The final chapter, 'Quotidian License: Writing and Walking in Hilal Chouman', starts out from the premise that the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) is still ongoing under different forms of violence, namely, the neoliberalisation of the country following the official termination of the war in 1990. Both of Chouman's novels under study in this chapter, *Limbo Beirut* (2016) and *Kana Ghadan* (2017), depict the everyday negotiations of space and the right to the city. This study reads the processes of urbicide and memoricide, against the context of both novels, as forms of social control adopted by the postwar Lebanese state. Urbicide, the killing of urban space and its social formations, will be tackled vis-à-vis the reconstruction process which ravaged Beirut's social and physical space. Memoricide, the erasure of memory and memory-work, will be analysed with respect to the amnesiac discourse endorsed by the postwar state, and facilitated by the reconstruction process and its neoliberal mechanisms. This chapter specifically focuses on the socio-spatial practices of walking and writing, as they are experienced by the protagonists of the two novels. These practices are read as counter-hegemonic in their constant attempts to challenge the established power order, by acting in spite of it. These transgressive practices are considered as acts that demand a more just city, and reclaim the right to it, in the

Lefebvrean sense of the word.

1.   Introduction

Elias Khoury, author of *Awlad al Ghetto: Ismi Adam* (*The Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*, (2016), is a Lebanese writer renowned for his close intellectual and personal affinities with the Palestinians and Palestinian authors, writers, and artists. His literary career is rife with stories of loss and trauma relevant to the Palestinian struggle and *nakba*,[199] among others exploring the effects of the Lebanese civil war and its implications on its people. The book under study is the first in a trilogy and is a recollection of stories, told by and through the protagonist, Adam, of Palestinians who lived through the 1948 *nakba*, specifically the massacre that took place in the city of *al- Lidd* (or Lydda, renamed Lod by Israel) in Palestine on July 11-13, 1948. With the exception of the opening chapter, this novel presents a fragmented, and often interrupted, manuscript, authored by Adam. This chapter reads Adam's manuscript within the context of systemic silencing and erasure that the Palestinian narrative still faces today, as a political necessity. As such, the manuscript can be considered as counter-hegemonic, as shall be explained. This chapter suggests that the process of ghettoisation, of constant entrapment, real and imaginary in the times of the ghetto, hinders Adam's ability to write (and live), and reflects on both planes, in the forms of interruptions, fragmentation, displacement, and alienation.

The novel maps the experiences of the inhabitants of the *al-Lidd* ghetto, including Adam's, during and after their release. This study focuses on the everyday socio-spatial experiences of these inhabitants, and reads their practices as attempts to unsettle the socio-

---

[199] See Constantine Zurayk, *Ma'na al Nakba* (Beirut: Dar al 'Ilm lil Malayeen, 1948). See also, Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds), *Cultures of History: Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Oxford, 2006; and Ilan Pappe, 'The Vicissitude of the 1948 Historiography of Israel', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 39.1 (2009): 6-23.

political and power relations that define these spaces. Everyday transgressions in *Ismi Adam* operate within power relations of domination/subjugation, exclusion/inclusion, and the segregation/participation that the inhabitants accept, negotiate, contest, and subvert. The analysis in this chapter goes beyond popular representations of such narratives, while considering their overarching context of *nakba* history and literature. In the words of Edward Said, 'it is apparent that, to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by literature of exile itself'.[200] *Awlad al Ghetto* is read as a literary text that transcends the boundaries of literature into the realm where fiction and reality meet. Its focus on the everyday socio-spatial practices of inhabitants of spaces of conflict and domination, amid a continuous atmosphere of oppression, suppression, and silencing, illustrates a mode of cultural resistance that this thesis explores via its spatial approach to literary productions. This chapter, therefore, seeks to explore how Adam's attempt at a manuscript that accounts for his own experience of the *nakba* (as an ongoing reality, rather than mere event) as implicated within the traumatic experience of the Palestinians during the *nakba*, is, in fact, an attempt at understanding his own survival. The *nakba* is a key date for the Palestinians. That year, 'a country and its people disappeared from both maps and dictionaries'.[201] Elias Sanbar writes,

> The short war which raged from November 1947 to 15 May 1948 and terminated in the proclamation of the State of Israel, far from being a straightforward colonial occupation of one country by another, resulted in the replacement of one people by a community of 600,000 settlers transported to Palestine during the British Mandate. A universe disappeared, and of the 1,400,000 Palestinian in the country prior to the Nakba – "the catastrophe" – just 150,000 individuals were listed as being present during the first census carried out by the new Israeli state'.[202]

---

[200] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), p. 139.
[201] Elias Sanbar, 'Out of Place, Out of Time', trans. by Ruth Morris, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 16.1 (2001): 87-94, p. 87.
[202] ibid, p. 87.

Adam's writing of this event springs from a need to register his trauma, validate it, and allow its witnessing. When considering the above context as a continuous reality in the lives of the Palestinians, Adam's attempt seems counter-hegemonic in the sense that it breaks the enforced silencing against which the Palestinian narrative is still struggling today.

Ismi Adam's fragmented structure and its non-linear, interrupted narration facilitates Khoury's intention of giving voice to the voiceless, and in this specific case, a Palestinian refugee living in New York City. The book is divided into five parts. The first part, titled 'Introduction', is signed by Elias Khoury who explains the random incident which led him to receive Adam's manuscript. Whether Khoury assumes authorship of this part, or whether he appears as a fictional character in this novel, is a question that can only be answered through an extensive reading of the three novels in this trilogy, of which *Ismi Adam* is the first. This chapter is mainly concerned with the latter, and further explorations of this question will be endeavoured following the publication of all three volumes. For the purpose of this study, this chapter recognises the employment of literary techniques such as polyvocality, intertextuality, and the blurred distinction between fiction and reality, for which Khoury is renowned. Such attempts, as this chapter argues, should not be mistaken for creating a simplistic confusion between reality and fiction. Rather, they should be read as a purposeful re-assessment, questioning, and rereading of history. In other words, these attempts contribute to a re-imagining of the dominant discourse that excludes voices from below and silences them, towards one that accounts for and represents them.

This study is not concerned with whether Khoury is a character in the novel who happens to share the author's name; it is rather Adam and his story which are the main focus here. In the first chapter in *Ismi Adam*, Khoury claims that he decided to publish Adam's manuscript after he

read it. Therefore, the following four parts are presented as entirely authored by Adam, as are volumes two and three. This distinction between author and narrator is extremely significant, especially that Khoury appears again through a pivotal encounter in Adam's narrative. This distinction is also paramount in light of the significance of Adam's story within the grander context of the muted Palestinian narrative and of Adam's transgressive action of remembering and writing his *nakba* experience. Adam not only authors his narrative, but exercises the autonomy of structuring it, breaking it, interrupting it, and being selective over its content, as later sections explain. Adam's manuscript is also divided into parts; the first comprises his attempt at writing the life story of the Umayyad poet Waddah al Yaman, which he abandons in the coming parts to dedicate them to writing his own story. As he writes, Adam is situated in New York, under the guise of a different identity; instead of identifying as a Palestinian refugee, Adam claims he is a Jew whose father is a Warsaw survivor. This identification will be returned to in more depth in coming sections. However, suffice it to mention, that Adam's recreation of himself throughout the novel is an indication of his dispossession. Like most Palestinians during the *nakba*, Adam feels removed from both space and time, stuck in an endless quest for identification and self-determination, as shall be demonstrated. In *Ismi Adam*, the residents of *al-Lidd* ghetto represent a sample of those Palestinians who endured (and still do) the experience of the *nakba* and its aftermath.

The *al-Lidd* massacre led to the encampment of over 500 Palestinians in a small enclosed space within the city square. It caused the death and the displacement of many in what was known as the Grand Exodus or the Death March, out of the city. Israeli New Historian Benny Morris, states that, 'The expulsion of the Arab populations of Lydda and Ramle in July 1948

accounted for a full one-tenth of the Arab exodus from Palestine'.[203] According to Morris, and as

a result of the initial Israeli attacks on *al-Lidd*, 250 were reported dead, a curfew was imposed on

the town, and able-bodied males were placed in temporary detention centres in the mosques and

churches before being questioned and taken to camps.[204] The remaining residents who survived

the atrocities, which included rape, theft, and murder, were at least 1000 souls, altogether.[205]

Morris claims that they were "concentrated" into

> three areas (one in Ramle and two in Lydda) behind barbed wire fences. These areas were placed under
> curfew, with military or military police supervision and patrols. The inhabitants were allowed to leave their
> areas or move from one concentration area to another only with special passes. Their conditions of
> existence for months remained extremely difficult.[206]

While writing down stories from the *nakba*, and specifically of the *al-Lidd* massacre, 'the largest

operation of its kind in the Arab-Israeli war',[207] Adam struggles to make sense of its

consequences on his personal life, as a result of his own displacement and dispossession. When

Adam writes the story of Waddah al Yaman, for instance, he interrupts himself continuously by

interjecting the flow of the narrative with brackets, a habit he carries with him across all parts

and sections of his manuscript. The interruptions take the form of flashbacks, dreams/visions,

remembrances, past conversations, ideas and thoughts, literary critique, and self-explorative

ramblings. While in the first part these interruptions portray Adam's ghettoisation and the urgent

need to narrate his story, in the parts to come, when he actually starts telling it, these

interruptions signify the pain of remembering and writing a traumatic experience.

---

[203] Benny Morris, 'Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948', *Middle East Journal*, 40.1 (1986): 82-109, p. 88.
[204] ibid, p. 88.
[205] ibid, p. 106.
[206] ibid, p. 106.
[207] ibid, p. 88. See, Moshe Daya, '*Katibat al Maghawir "tahtuk" al Lidd*', trans. by Nabih Basher, *Majallat al Dirasat al Falastiniyya,* 111 (2017): 180-92.

However, despite these struggles in writing, these interruptions convey the urgency of Adam's narration. He becomes invested, to the point of obsession and consumption, with writing down his own story. The decision to abandon the initial project on al Yaman in favour of writing his own story constitutes a turning point in the novel. In fact, this moment contextualises the significance of this decision within the grander historico-political frame of the Palestinian narrative. This turning point occurs in a movie theatre in New York, during the screening of an Israeli film depicting the struggles of the Palestinians at the beginning of the second *intifada* (2000). Following a conversation that takes place between the film director, Haim Zilberman, the Lebanese novelist and author of *Gate of the Sun* (2005),[208] Elias Khoury, and Adam himself, the latter is provoked by what he considers to be an inappropriate behaviour. Consequently, Adam surrenders to writing down his own story in an act that challenges its appropriation by the likes of Zilberman and Khoury.

As a literary work, *Ismi Adam* remains faithful to the spirit of Khoury's previous writings, as recurrent themes include: displacement, violence, trauma, and war and their effect on human behaviour and relations. Additionally, storytelling, as a theme and practice, figures intensively in *Ismi Adam* (as well as volume two, *Nijmat al Bahir*)[209] revealing the significance of telling one's own story, specifically during times of conflict. *Ismi Adam* borrows characters from previous novels, such as *Gate of the Sun*, in addition to reiterating incidents, events, and geo-social markers and references. This is significant because, on the one hand, it consolidates Palestine within the Lebanese narrative and by doing so stretches out the Palestinian *nakba* to the experiences of the Palestinians in exile. And on the other hand, it is a reminder of the impact of literary works such as *Gate of the Sun*, as examples of resistance literature whose political

---

[208] Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (New York: Picador, 2006).
[209] Elias Khoury, *Awlad al Ghetto: Nijmat al Bahir, Vol. 2* (Beirut: dar al adab, 2018).

dimension extends beyond the boundaries of a fictional text. The massacre of Sabra and

Shatila,[210] which took place in Lebanon, during the civil war (1975-1990), in September 1982 is

one example of incidents and geo-social references that are repeatedly mentioned in Khoury's

works. The significance of these references will be explored in more detail later on in this

chapter. Suffice it to mention, that such an evocation foregrounds the socio-political and

historical ties between the Palestinians and the Lebanese and foregrounds as such the Palestinian

narrative within the Lebanese, and more specifically within Lebanese literature and its spatial

imaginary. In such a manner, it partially alleviates the question of appropriation of which Adam

in *Ismi Adam* accuses Khoury. Edward Said highlights the presence (and the significance) of

Palestine in the Lebanese political context. He considers the Israeli war on the Palestinians in

Lebanon to be a continuation, 'as brutal, inhumane, and compatible — of its war against those

innocent Palestinian civilians who were driven from their homeland in 1948'.[211] Said's

statements justify the intertwining narratives of the Palestinians and the Lebanese. More

importantly, Said views the *nakba* as a still ongoing struggle endured by the Palestinians till this

very day, a viewpoint that is reiterated by many Palestinians, as well as artists, critics, and

scholars who write about Palestine. In further claims, Said explains how Palestinian politics

became a 'function of Lebanese politics'.[212] He writes,

> Palestinian sections of Beirut were mirror images of strictly Lebanese sections, Palestinian leaders adopted
> the style of traditional Lebanese leaders […] The [Palestinian refugee] camps were protected as political
> domains ruled over by Palestinians, and on every level an impressive array of health care, educational,
> social, occupational self-help, and economic organisations provided Palestinians with the communal and
> political identity denied them everywhere else.[213]

---

[210] See Chapter One and Bayan Nuwayed al-Hout, *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).
[211] Edward Said, 'Palestinians in the Aftermath of Beirut', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 12.2 (1983): 3-9, p. 4.
[212] ibid, p. 5.
[213] ibid, pp. 4-5.

Khoury's literary productions present the Palestinian struggle and cause within the reality exposed above. His literary, critical, and journalistic works exhibit a frustration on account of the diverse silencing practices exercised against the Palestinians. His works also interweave the Palestinian and Lebanese narratives, by juxtaposing (and not contrasting or equating) the two forms of silencing that each narrative endures; the Palestinians' resistance against 'cultural genocide',[214] as Nur Masalha calls it, and the Lebanese people's struggle against an amnesiac discourse imposed upon them after the civil war by the neoliberal state.[215] Khoury's resistance to these two dominant discourses and practices is revealed through his daring novels and their experimental forms.

Khoury leaves his novels open-ended; he does not provide the reader with a closure, or a definite ending. By doing so, Khoury defies a rigidity that he considers to be the result of the glorification and the sanctification of the truth, or the monopolisation of truth, exemplified in the dominance of a narrative over another. Such a technique is specifically significant within the historico-political context of Khoury's novels, such as the civil war in Lebanon and the *nakba* in Palestine. This is also further achieved through Khoury's incorporation of multiple versions of the same story, as a recurrent technique in most of his literary works. Leaving literature open allows room for rewriting and interpretation, creating a flexible relationship between reader and writer. Additionally, this open-endedness complements Khoury's defiance of monolithic, historical narratives that exclude and misrepresent everyday experiences of ordinary individuals.

Khoury's resistance to dominant narratives and their political impacts on marginalised voices, specifically within the Palestinian-Israeli context, explains his insistence on

---

[214] Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), p. 10.
[215] See Chapter Four.

distinguishing between identity and identification. Adam is presented as struggling to belong in Palestine and in New York alike. To avoid dealing with issues of identity, Adam creates various background stories for himself as he moves from one place to another, in what is a clear manifestation of his ghettoisation and dispossession. His longing to belong to Palestine is a sentiment shared by many Palestinians after 1948. Most of the Palestinians who survived and remained in Palestine became refugees in their own countries and were forced to re-inscribe both identity and meaning to their space. In such a manner, the 'partition of the country was not, however, the worst the people of Palestine had to face; far graver was the displacement and dispersion of the people itself and the transformation of very large numbers of them into refugees'.[216] In fact, in the past 53 years, 'the group of 1948 externally displaced Palestinians and their descendants have grown to number an estimated 5 million persons', while those dispersed internally reached an estimate of 75,000 a few years after 1948.[217] These remained 'inside the Green Line' and were eventually granted Israeli citizenship, though they are still referred to as 'internally displaced'.[218] The estimate has recently reached around 250,000 internally displaced Palestinians.[219] Such is the case of Adam, a refugee in his own country, before his departure to New York. Therefore, recreating himself every time he moves from one city to the other inside Palestine, grants him the temporary conviction that he is in control, that he belongs at least to his own story that he created. To make his stories more plausible and credible, Adam always adopts identities he can identify with, from the perspective of the victim. One such identity is that of a Jew, whose father is a Warsaw survivor. Even though not much is said in the first volume of

---

[216] Hout, p. 20.
[217] Gail J. Boeing, '"Absentees' Property" Laws and Israel's Confiscation of Palestinian Property: A Violation of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 and International Law', *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law*, *XI, 2000/2001*, (2003): 73-130, p. 76.
[218] Boeing, p. 76.
[219] ibid, p. 76.

Awlad al Ghetto about this specific choice of identity, volume two elaborates more extensively

on this issue. When Adam moves out from his mother's house in Haifa and enrols in an Israeli

university, he presents himself as a Jew to his schoolmates and professors. He even befriends one

of his more liberal and progressive professors and joins his classmates on a field trip to Warsaw.

When the truth comes out about his real identity, his relationship with his friends and professor is

severed. In an interview with Eran Tzelgov, Khoury states that he does not believe that any

person can possess one, single identity, 'with the exception of the perfect idiot or the fascist.'[220]

One should therefore speak of 'identification' instead, as a 'guiding principle' in Khoury's

literary work, emphasising our humanity.[221]

It is here important to distinguish between people who *choose* to rename themselves, and

adopt different identities by choice, and those who are forced to do so. *Ismi Adam* exposes this

difference through the resistance of the ghetto residents to the renaming of their streets and

quarters and their insistence on referring to them using their Arabic names. Their resistance in

the face of an inscription enforced by political and military powers is extremely remarkable,

since it signifies a form of political monopoly enacted by 'devising "official" toponymic systems

backed up by the force of law'.[222] The naming of streets 'produces a space in which competing

political utterances may be affirmed or resisted'.[223] The residents' rejection of such an official

erasure of their city's identity foregrounds their struggle and resistance against occupation. The

act of topographical re-inscription to which they are subjected entails the proclamation of total

control over a certain space. As such, they view such a re-inscription as bearing significant

---

[220] Eran Tzelgov, 'A Personal Discussion with Elias Khoury: An Interview', *Daka: Journal for Poetry and Criticism*, 5 (2009), p. 55.
[221] ibid, p. 55.
[222] Reuben Rose-Redwood, '"Sixth Avenue is Now a Memory": Regimes of Spatial Inscription and the Performative Limits of the Official City-Text', *Performativity, Politics, and the Production of Social Space*, ed. by Michael R. Glass and Reuben Rose-Redwood (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 176-201, p. 175.
[223] ibid, p. 179.

overtones of violence and extending towards attempts at erasing their memories of place, their existence within it, and their identity or ability to identify with it, complementing attempts of silencing their voices and erasing them.

In 'Rethinking the Nakba', Khoury stresses the significance of name appropriation, mentioning that it became a major issue specifically 'with the emergence of a new Palestinian literature in the 1960s'.[224] He presents the various forms that the insistence upon the name in Palestinian literature has taken, mentioning as examples 'the voices of the peasant [Mahmoud Darwish], the refugee [Ghassan Kanafani], the intellectual [Jabra Ibrahim Jabra], the storyteller [Anton Shammas], and the popular hero [Emile Habibi]'.[225] By stressing on representing different Palestinian names, identities, and voices, these writers contribute to resist the silence, as well as the misrepresentation, that the Palestinians are still facing till this very day. In *Ismi Adam*, Blind Ma'moun, who acts as a father figure to Adam, tells him, 'time will teach you what it means to bear two names'.[226] While he takes the name Adam, bearing the significance of the first child of the ghetto, Adam is also given another name by Ma'moun. The latter calls him Naji, which translates to survivor. It is only when Adam sheds his many identities and sets out to write his own narrative that he reconciles with his Palestinian-ness, revisits his traumatic ghetto experience, and accepts having survived it.

---

[224] Elias Khoury, 'Rethinking the Nakba', *Critical Inquiry*, 38.2 (2012): 250-66, p. 260.
[225] ibid, p. 259.
[226] Elias Khoury, *The Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam* (London: MacLehose Press, 2018), p. 135.

Defying a Silent Language

Adam's struggle against a murdered language, of a muted people, is a struggle against

forgetfulness. His manuscript can therefore be read as an attempt to reclaim memory and

remembrance, to reclaim his right to his trauma. Adam writes,

> Uglier even than the death of language is our inability to find a grave for it to rest in, so that it can decompose and return to dust. Language isn't formed of dust; it is the opposite of all other creatures that die. The problem of language is its corpse, because it stays with us. We reject it, so it comes back in different shapes and we find ourselves chewing its corpse in our mouths.[227]

Adam's statement is problematic in the sense that it involves two forms of silencing, that

inflicted by Israel and the international community, and that inflicted by the Palestinians on

themselves, mostly due to their inability to translate their pain and trauma into words. Cathy

Caruth views history to be 'inherently traumatic', and trauma 'as an overwhelming experience

that resists integration and expression'.[228] However, in the case of traumatic events, such as the

nakba, a powerful political agent is at play. Stef Craps believes that within the field of trauma

theory, founding texts 'largely fail to live up to this promise of cross-cultural ethical

engagement'.[229] This failure is the result of the marginalisation or denial of traumatic

experiences of 'non-Western or minority culture'.[230] As a result, 'rather than promoting cross-

cultural solidarity, trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices,

and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities'.[231] Most attention within trauma

theory

> has been devoted to events that took place in Europe or the United States, especially the Holocaust and, more recently, 9/11. In fact, the impetus for much of the current theorisation about trauma and representation was provided by the Nazi genocide of the European Jews. Indeed, trauma theory as a field of cultural scholarship developed out of an engagement with Holocaust testimony, literature, and history.[232]

---

[227] ibid, p. 265.
[228] Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1.
[229] ibid, p. 2.
[230] ibid, p. 2.
[231] Craps, p. 2.
[232] ibid, p. 9.

In this regard, there is also the question of recognition and the discriminatory distinction made between victims whereby one is seen as more deserving than the other. This is determined by two elements, firstly, the cultural, social, 'and perhaps even ontological proximity' between politicians and the victims.[233] A second element pertains to their evaluation of the 'validity of the cause, misfortune, a valuation that obviously implies a political and often an ethical judgement'.[234] In such a manner, trauma 'reinvents "good" and "bad" victims, or at least a ranking of legitimacy among victims'.[235] When it comes to the Palestinian question, the identification with the Palestinian as a victim is withheld, and their trauma or suffering politically undermined. In the words of Judith Butler, 'those whose lives are not "regarded" as potentially grievable, and hence valuable, are made to bear the burden of starvation, underemployment, legal disenfranchisement, and differential exposure to violence and death'.[236]

In academic literature the silencing of the Palestinian voice is prominently evident in the almost complete exclusion of *nakba* literature from the Trauma genre. According to Rosemary Sayigh, this exclusion is as political a decision as the *nakba* itself and its ongoing presence; it is the outcome of 'political and diplomatic investment on the part of the US and the UK as major architects of post-nakba agreements'.[237] Even though the trauma genre has expanded over the years to encompass various works on memory, mourning, and postcolonial trauma, the Palestinian *nakba* remains absented from the field.[238] Therefore, she adds, the question of what literature is and whose suffering matters is crucial to the understanding of why the *nakba* has

---

[233] Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 282.
[234] ibid, p. 282.
[235] ibid, p. 282.
[236] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso Books, 2016), p. 25.
[237] Rosemary Sayigh, 'On the Exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the "Trauma Genre"', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 43.1 (2013): 51-60, p. 55.
[238] ibid, p. 55.

been overlooked in trauma studies.[239] This exclusion is not only indicative of the violation

against the Palestinian history and literature. Sayigh opines that this severance can also be found

in the 'dehistoricisation of the Palestinians in the genre's few studies that mention them'.[240]

Constantine Zurayk recognised the dangers behind the active silencing and erasure that the

Palestinians were subjected to on account of the 1948 *nakba*, which is why he called for the

establishment of *nakba* studies. He was also the first to give the 1948 events the name '*nakba'* or

catastrophe.[241]

The Palestinians understand the *nakba* as *mustamirra*, or continuous, as the 'disastrous

results of the war of 1948 continue to impact the shattered communities by different ways'.[242]

Khoury, in turn, refuses to treat the *nakba* as an event that took place in 1948, out of the

conviction that it has not yet ended. In reiteration to Khoury's conviction, Adam exclaims, 'In

those days, though, we lived in a maelstrom of present memory and a present that resembled

memory, and through catastrophe after catastrophe'[243]

Adam remembers the *nakba* and its aftermath, including the *al-Lidd* experience, through

recollections of stories by and conversations between his mother, Manal, and Ma'moun. He

inherits memories of events he does not remember from these conversations. Even though the

nakba is still ongoing, and Adam gets to experience life under occupation before moving to New

York, he was only a baby at the time of the ghetto. Adam's relationship to a past he was not

conscious of, does not completely fulfil the definition of Mariam Hirsch's concept of

postmemory, since the *nakba*, as an event, is not yet over. Therefore, a 'post', in this respect,

---

[239] ibid, p. 52.
[240] ibid, p. 55.
[241] See Constantine Zurayk, *Ma'na al Nakba* (Beirut: Kayyat's College Book Cooperative, 1956).
[242] Adel Manna', 'The Palestinian Nakba and Its Continuous Repercussions', *Israel Studies*, 18.2 (2013): 86-99, p. 98.
[243] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 255.

cannot apply here. However, it is true that Adam remembers not by 'recall', but by 'imaginative investment, projection, and creation', by means of 'stories, images', and conversations about the *nakba*.[244] Adam's present is dominated by these memories of the ghetto, and these stories he gathers, so much so, that he, himself, like those who were conscious of this experience, have internalised the ghetto space.

As this internalisation intensifies, the inhabitants of the ghetto realise the importance of remembering their stories, especially after having had everything in their lives confiscated. At some point, Manal tells her son, 'we own nothing […] but words'.[245] However, despite this acknowledgement, it is rarely voluntarily that these stories are shared due to the pain that their remembrance invokes. When Adam visits Murad (an *al-Lidd* survivor), for example, in the hope of gathering information about the ghetto, the latter evades the topic at first despite Adam's insistence. Murad's wife, Itidal, intervenes and says, 'But Lydda was something else. Murad doesn't like to talk about it, but at Lydda, the ones who left drank the cup of humiliation while those who stayed drank a cup of poison'.[246] As such, their conversation lingers between silence and fragmented speech. In fact, Murad's silence is not unique to him alone. Almost everyone Adam interviews while collecting stories about the ghetto hesitates to speak to him at first. Their approach to this painful experience is marked with denial; they wish to bury their memories of the times of the ghetto, as if they all decided that words cannot contain their narratives and that silence is their only means of survival. But Adam probes further out of sheer belief that forgetting and denial obstruct life and its continuation. This idea is further emphasised by Ma'moun, who upon a visit to New York, meets up with Adam, and insists on the importance of

---

[244] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 5.
[245] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 130.
[246] ibid, p. 376.

remembering. Forgetting, to Ma'moun, resembles dying. He tells Adam, 'Only death, my boy, has no memory.'[247] For Ma'moun, those who forget what they have been through and where they came from are as good as dead. He calls memory a 'raging wind' that one needs to endure because when it wakes, it 'breaks our souls into little pieces and rips our bodies apart'.[248] Within the same grander context, Said stresses the vitality of narration, especially against such an oppressive power as Israel. He writes,

> With a competitor as formidable as the Zionist movement, the effort to rewrite the history of Palestine so as to exclude the land's peoples had a disastrous effect on the quest for Palestinian self-determination. What we never understood was the power of a narrative history to mobilise people around a common goal.[249]

Ma'moun considers death and exile to be the 'the two sides of the silence that creeps into the words of Palestinian literature', as a result of the *nakba*.[250] It is not surprising therefore that self-censorship contributes to the absenting of the Palestinian historical narrative and collective memory. It is this silence of 'the victims', Ma'moun says, that the 'tragedy of Lydda had taught him how to read.'[251] But it is not only the pain of the experience that ties the Palestinian tongue, but Israeli strategies and practices as well. Khoury explains that the representation of the Palestinian in Israeli literature contributed to this exclusion. Symbolically representing the Palestinian as a shadow, a young boy, or a Bedouin, contributes into making 'his story invisible' by destroying his 'ability to find an audience.[252] The Palestinian is the victim of the victim and this fact, to Khoury, leads to such an absence of an audience. That is because the first victim's tragedy is 'covered by another tragedy, and his victimiser is the victim of European racism'.[253]

---

[247] ibid, p. 242.
[248] ibid, p. 242.
[249] Edward Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26.2 (2000): 175-92, p. 184.
[250] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 366.
[251] ibid, p. 118.
[252] Khoury, 'Rethinking the Nakba', p. 261.
[253] ibid, p. 261.

In the words of Ahmad al Sa'di, 'this failure [to be heard] stems not only from the victims' silences […] but also from a general lack of desire by those responsible to deal with the moral weight of the Palestinian catastrophe'.[254] The result is either a denial of such narratives or a systematic silencing, both of which bear a similar outcome. Another important element in this regard is the promotion of one narrative at the expense of another. The narration of the Palestinian experience by people 'in exile (*manfa* in Arabic) from the very same "Promised Land", and the dream of return (*al-'awda*) to the very same land, raise questions about history that simultaneously generated the ingathering of the Jewish diaspora in Israel and the exile of Palestinians to the four corners of the globe'.[255] This point is crucial, specifically within this context. For Said, the Israeli attempts to erase a people were not only confined to the violence and displacement exercised against the Palestinians in Palestine and Lebanon, but also included an attack on their culture, within and outside the Palestinian territories. Said believes that the climax of the Israeli campaign to erase a whole people and their culture occurred in West Beirut during the Israeli siege in 1982. It is when the Israeli soldiers

> carted off Palestinian archives, destroyed the private libraries and homes of prominent Lebanese nationalists and Palestinian personalities, and literally heaped excrement over valuable rugs and cultural artefacts almost at the same moment that in Sabra and Shatila a gang of Lebanese psychopaths — armed, trained, and supported by Israel — was slaughtering Palestinian civilians under the light of flares provided by Israeli soldiers.[256]

Stripped of every possession and freedom, the Palestinians after 1948 left with nothing but their stories. However, Adam recalls how Manal became engulfed in silence. As a child he lived off 'crumbs of stories which are only spoken in whispers', and those turned to silence after

[254] Sa'di, p. 297.
[255] Ella Shohat, 'Exile, Diaspora, and Return: The Inscription of Palestine in Zionist Discourse', *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings of Ella Shohat* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), pp. 164-77, p. 175.
[256] Said, 'Palestinians', p. 5.

her remarriage, until she became a woman 'surrounded by a wall of silence.'[257] His mother's

language comprises shrapnel of words and their remains. In fact, Adam is raised on the principle

of caution and invisibility, as a means of survival; self-inflicted silence is a defence mechanism,

a survivors' mode to control pain. Speaking of his relationship with his girlfriend at the time,

Adam writes,

> She used to say that my silence was the sign of the deficiency of my love, and I'd say nothing. How was I
> to tell her a story that had no tongue? How was I to tell her about the invisible child I'd been and the
> journey of my life that had hidden itself under a magic cap of invisibility? My mother used to tell me to put
> on the cap so I'd disappear and no-one could see me, because we had to live as invisible people if we
> weren't to be thrown out of our country, or be killed.[258]

Khoury blames the disregard and exclusion of the Palestinian narrative from the international

and literary community on the fact that the Arab culture, during the *nakba*, was passing through

what he constantly refers to as 'ideological hegemony' that is not concerned with details.

Enraged by such attempts to silence and/or erase the Palestinian narrative, Khoury's literary and

critical work can be seen as defiant and resistant to them; *Awlad al Ghetto*, specifically, can be

considered a work that seeks to contribute to breaking this silence. Adam, for example, makes a

reference to Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (1962), lamenting not the Palestinians trapped

in the tank, as they were being smuggled across the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, for not shouting and

screaming to save their lives, but the world, for turning a deaf ear.[259] This reference exposes the

silencing efforts, done collectively, while at the same time accentuates the significance of

persevering in speaking out loudly against it.

    In *al-Lidd*, the residents resort to silence because words are futile for their survival. Adam

comments, it is 'as if the victims had unconsciously decided that the words could not be spoken

---

[257] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 149.
[258] ibid, p. 102.
[259] ibid, p. 31. See Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, trans. by Hilary Kilpatrick
(Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1988).

and that their only means to survive in the abyss of death was silence.[260] However, despite the

silence that the Palestinians assumed since the beginning of the *nakba*, a new surge of writing-

against-the-silence rose to the forefront of Palestinian writing and literature in the 60s. Khoury

states that even in the Arab world, 'where Palestinian refugees became a reminder of defeat, the

Palestinians were silenced. There, the *nakba* took new forms'.[261] As a result, the Palestinians

resorted to shrouding their silence with symbolism and metaphors; 'they rebuilt their lives

through imagination'.[262] Their silence, he adds,

> was their secret way to make a way of life from their loss. The occupation/unification of all of Palestine, that is, the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, witnessed the emergence of the Palestinian national movement and the major role of Palestinian literature in creating a new image of Palestinian identity, with which fragments of the stories of 1947 began to be told and heard.[263]

In this manner, writing, within the Palestinian context, not only becomes a necessity, but gains a

significant and powerful political dimension. The lingering between silence and speech prevalent

throughout the novel highlights the powerful potential that silence harbours. Bill Ashcroft claims

that silence 'is at the centre of writing because it is writing's horizon, the real absolute

possibility'.[264] Adam's manuscript is an attempt to realise this possibility, as shall be illustrated.

The following section explores the experiences of space in the *al-Lidd* ghetto as

presented in Adam's manuscript. The ghettoisation endured by its residents and the cruelty of

their encampment is manifested as a daily struggle. As such, through an examination of their

everyday socio-spatial practices within the ghetto (in the case of the residents) and outside it (in

the case of Adam), this study seeks to investigate the possibility and potentiality of transgressive

---

[260] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 314.
[261] Khoury, 'Rethinking the Nakba', p. 262.
[262] ibid, p. 262.
[263] ibid, p. 262.
[264] Bill Ashcroft, 'Silence as Heterotopias in Coetzee's Fiction', *Strong Opinions: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Chris Danta, Sue Kossew, and Julian Murphet (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 141-57, p. 145.

action through the processes of spatial appropriation and production. The sections that follow

explore Adam's own acts of resistance, specifically writing, read as a socio-spatial practice.

2.   Transgressions: Space as an Embodied Experience

Those encamped by the Israelis in July 1948 in *al-Lidd*, of which those represented in Adam's

manuscript are a sample, found themselves removed from their once familiar city. This

defamiliarisation forced the captives into perpetual states of displacement and ghettoisation

which they carried within them wherever they went, even after the dismantlement of the ghetto

in *al-Lidd* in 1949. Like all the Palestinians during the *nakba*, they were displaced from time and

space, simultaneously, from both history and geography. In this regard Elias Sanbar writes,

> By departing from space, the Palestinians, about whom the whole world agreed to say "they do not exist",
> also departed from time. Their history and their past were denied. Their aspirations and their future were
> forbidden […] Since the present was forbidden to them, they would occupy a temporal space made up of
> both a past preserved by a memory afflicted by madness and a dreamt-of-future which aspired to restore
> time. And their obsession with places would be accompanied by a fervent desire to reestablish the
> normality of everyday lives.[265]

As a result, they now carry with them the burden of their stories and their displacement wherever

they go. Being out of place and out of time, and dispersed in the diaspora, suggest 'a powerful

and conspicuous intersection of the temporal and the spatial in representing Palestine'.[266] The

nakba can therefore be said to have marked the 'beginning of contemporary Palestinian history',

one that is heralded by 'catastrophic changes, violent suppression, and refusal to disappear'.[267]

Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod consider the *nakba* as

> the point of reference for other events, past and future […] Landmark events in Palestinian history such as
> Black September (Jordan, 1970), the massacre at Sabra and Shatila (Lebanon, 1982), Land Day (Israel,

---

[265] Sanbar, p. 90.
[266] Samar H. Aljahdali, 'Venturing into a Vanishing Space: The Chronotope in Representing Palestinian Postcoloniality', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50.2 (2014): 216-29, p. 218.
[267] Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.), 'Introduction: The Claims of Memory', *Cultures of History, Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007): pp. 1-26, p. 5.

1976), and the first and second intifadas (1987-1993; 2000-present) would not have occurred if they had not been preceded by the Nakba, to which they refer back.[268]

The *nakba* is 'the creator of an unsettled inner time' since 'it deflects Palestinians from the flow of social time and into their own specific history and often into a melancholic existence'.[269] Therefore, the consequences of the war in 1948 extend to present-day Israeli practices and the current experience of Palestinians, both under occupation and in exile.

Ismi Adam offers a sample of this experience exposing how the ghetto inhabitants, who along with displacement, the burden of survival, grief, and loss, have to carry with them the experience of the ghetto they were held in as if they never left it. They internalise their encampment so much so that their ghettoisation extends beyond the physical and temporal boundaries of the ghetto. This chapter examines the ghettoisation of the inhabitants, Adam included, by focusing on how they negotiate, appropriate, and produce space. Through their everyday, embodied, socio-spatial practices, both collective and individual, they manage to unsettle the political order that subjugates, silences, and excludes them. By doing so, they succeed in appropriating their new space and endow it with a transgressive potential for resistance, affirmative of their existence, as shall be discussed.

The ghetto, according to Adam's manuscript, confined five-hundred Palestinians and placed them into a haphazardly divided assemblage of houses, a mosque, a church, and a hospital, enclosed with barbed wire. The only clearing within the new space is a courtyard formerly belonging to the mosque, in the midst of which is a fountain with a scarce water supply. The ghetto has one gate only, controlled and guarded by three soldiers who prohibit entry and exit without permission, which is almost never granted. Additionally, the Israeli forces confiscate

---

[268] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Venturing', p. 5.
[269] ibid, p. 5.

all possessions and properties, to the extent that they cease to feel human. They are reduced to 'bare life', as Agamben would describe them; the Israelis even address them as the 'present-absentees', on more than one occasion throughout Adam's narration of the events in the ghetto.[270] As per a law drafted by the Israeli authorities and passed in 1949, all internal Palestinian refugees were referred to as 'present absentees' since 'in spite of their physical presence in the country they are legally considered as absentees and their property is taken from them and transferred to the Custodian of Absentee Property'.[271]

In *Ismi Adam*, the ghetto inhabitants, classified as 'present absentees', soon find themselves no longer entitled to their role as citizens and no longer possessing any rights in that regard. They are rather abandoned as stateless, de-naturalised, and de-humanised specimen of bare life, caged 'like animals'.[272] The term *abandonment* and within the context of the camp, is described by Bulent Diken and Carsten Bagge Lausten as 'a movement from the "pan-opticon" to the "ban-opticon"' in reference to Foucault's expansion and critical exploration of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon.[273] In explanation, they add, 'The power based on abandonment refers […] to a model of disengagement; it is a "ban-opticon" in the sense that it seeks pro-active control and risk management rather than normalisation'.[274]

In *Ismi Adam*, the ghetto inhabitants are completely abandoned to their fate; they are provided with no access to water, food, or medication. They finally understand the gravity of their situation when one Israeli soldier exclaims, 'The Israeli army is not responsible for

---

[270] See Hillel Cohen, 'The Internal Refugees in the State of Israel: Israeli Citizens, Palestinian Refugees', *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, 9.2 (2002):1-6, p. 2.
[271] ibid, pp. 2-3.
[272] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 202.
[273] Bulent Diken and Cartsen Bagge Lausten, 'The Camp', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 88.4 (2006): 443-52, p. 449. See also, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), and Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon, or, The Inspection-House* (Berkshire: Dado Press, 2008).
[274] ibid, p. 449.

providing the inhabitants with food and drink. This is the responsibility of the inhabitants and we will accept no further discussion of the matter'.[275] Following this announcement, the inhabitants realise they are being regarded as lesser humans, if human at all, and they will be made to suffer the humiliation. This realisation is firstly acknowledged when they find themselves compelled to fight for their right to drink from the fountain that is already present in the ghetto's square. Once they are given permission to drink, they realise that they have no cups in which to hold the water. Adam writes,

> [S]o we started scooping it [water] up in the palms of our hands, and people bent their heads over the water and gulped and gulped. We did it like animals and only noticed at the end, when we'd had quenched our thirst and we started laughing at ourselves.[276]

The power exercised over these inhabitants, with its respective encampment, abandonment, and control over their bodies, can be described as biopolitical. They are in effect reduced to disposable and dispensable, menial lives, and transformed, as a result, into 'docile bodies' — to use a Foucauldian term — that can be easily governed. Power, writes Foucault, 'would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body'.[277] He continues by stating,

> If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the moments of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the real explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.[278]

The governance of docile bodies is made possible through the institutionalisation of power and the utilisation of techniques of power that enable them to maintain and sustain their domination.

---

[275] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 235.
[276] ibid*,* p. 224.
[277] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 142.
[278] ibid, pp. 142-43.

They also act as 'factors of segregation and social hierarchisation, exerting their influence on the irrespective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony'.[279] As such, '[t]he investment of the body, its valorisation, and the distributive management of its forces were […] indispensable'.[280]

The 'docile bodies' of the *al-Lidd* captives are governed through the employment of the politics of the ban. According to Giorgio Agamben, the ban is a form of relation; it is what ties the oppressors to their subjects.[281] In the case of the Palestinians, being abandoned and banned turns them into what Agamben would call 'bare life', a life that is situated at the 'margins of the political order' and is no longer 'confined to a particular place or a definite category'.[282] The entire political and hegemonic system of the State is therefore founded on this very separateness, of at once 'excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order.'[283] In *al-Lidd*, the inhabitants are abandoned politically within the ghetto and outside it. Significantly, the ghetto here, 'can only be defined in relation, or perhaps rather in "non-relation", to what is historically termed a "city"; that is, a geographical and social space opened up by a clear demarcation, a differentiation between what is inside and outside, between civilisation and barbarism'.[284] The camp, according to Diken and Lausten, has become the 'organising principle'[285] in a society, a fact that is specifically true in the case of the Palestinian people.

To be 'abandoned' is to be completely stripped of any rights, including the right to demand and possess rights. To 'abandon', is to

> remit, entrust, or trust over to … a sovereign power, and to remit entrust, or turn over to its *ban*, that is, to its proclaiming, to its convening, and to its sentencing. One always abandons to a law […] Turned over to

---

[279] ibid, p. 141.
[280] ibid, p. 141.
[281] Agamben, p. 25.
[282] ibid, p. 9, 140.
[283] ibid, p. 9.
[284] Diken and Lausten, p. 443.
[285] ibid, p. 444.

the absolute of the law, the abandoned one is thereby abandoned completely outside its jurisdiction … Abandonment respects the law; it cannot do otherwise.[286]

The biopolitical governance to which the *al-Lidd* inhabitants are subjugated is exacerbated through the physical labour they have to endure. They are forced to clean the streets after the massacre, bury and burn its victims, and loot their own properties that are now no longer theirs. In another example, when the fountain runs out of water, the inhabitants face the risk of dying from dehydration and thirst. One inhabitant proposes to the Israeli soldier that he be allowed to pump water from his own nearby land. The Israeli replies by firstly stating that no one is allowed out of the ghetto and by secondly affirming that pumping water is prohibited because these lands and waters are now properties of the State. In such a manner, the *al-Lidd* inhabitants are left in a space in between life and death; the banned are indeed as good as dead, as Agamben would maintain. However, they do not submit to their death, confinement, or marginalisation easily. Their resistance is evident through their insistence on becoming familiar with their new space, understanding its constituents, limitations, and their own position(ality) within it. The acquisition of such knowledge suggests an awareness and a political engagement that is essential in transgressive actions and acts of resistance, as this chapter elaborates.

A distinction is here important to be made between the two terms, transgression and resistance. The concept of transgression is informed by Foucault's understanding of it carrying the limit 'right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes […] to experience its positive truth in

---

[286] Jean-Luc Nancy,*The Birth to Presence*, trans. by Brian Holmes et al., *Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 44.

its downward fall'.[287] For him transgression affirms difference. Building on Foucault's conceptualisation of power relations and hegemonic systems, Brent Pickett states that

> The historical division of reason and unreason, the creation of a gulf between them over which no communication can take place is the most important instance of the creation of a limit. Transgression (after Bataille) or contestation (after Blanchot) is an "excess" that crosses such a limit and thereby puts the division itself into a question'.[288]

Resistance, on the other hand, is 'concomitant with the process of subjectification'.[289] For Foucault, 'inequality is an essential [element] of power', and resistance therefore, 'with its absence of hierarchy, is what [he] calls "counter-power"'.[290] Its definition as such lies in its 'opposition to 'a pre-established system of power'.[291] Other theorists have made a clearer distinction between the two terms; they acknowledge that transgression is a form of resistance, but what distinguishes the two is that the latter can be considered intentional and the former unintentional. However, that does not mean that it is accidental. Rather, 'it suggests that resistance does not necessarily oppose a perceived source of oppression, but is inspired by other, less obvious, motives'.[292] Mitch Rose presents the smuggling of food in prison as one of the many examples of such actions. In this case, the 'intent is not to undermine the prison system per se, but to combat its everyday alienating effects'.[293] He concludes, 'Whereas the first form of resistance [intentional] is a direct response to power, the second [unintentional/transgression] is motivated by interests and desires that can lie outside the purview of hegemony'.[294]

---

[287] Michel Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and trans. by Donald F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 29-52, p. 34.
[288] Brent L. Pickett, 'Foucault and the Politics of Resistance', *Polity*, 28.4 (1996): 446-66, p. 448.
[289] ibid, p. 458.
[290] ibid, p. 458.
[291] Mitch Rose, 'The Seductions of Resistance: Power, Politics, and a Performative Style of Systems', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20 (2002): 383- 400, p. 384.
[292] Rose, p. 385.
[293] ibid, p. 385.
[294] ibid, p. 385. Also, see: Steve Pile and Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997).

In *Ismi Adam*, the *al-Lidd* inhabitants' transgressive actions demonstrate the potentiality

of their encamped and dominated bodies. As this chapter shows, their actions illustrate the

body's ability to resist, to stand firm against oppression, and to actively transform its space of

captivity into sites of resistance. Such actions are specifically revealed in *Ismi Adam* through the

stories of Khuloud, Mufid, and Adam. The practices of these three are reminiscent of David

Harvey's belief that the dominated body possesses an agentive potential; the dominated body

either submits or resists. He writes, '[t]he body exists in place and must either submit to authority

(through, for example, incarceration or surveillance in an organised space) or carve out particular

spaces of resistance and freedom from an otherwise repressive space'.[295] The ghetto inhabitants,

despite their captivity, demonstrate a kind of power that unsettles the 'the mechanisms of

repression and the desire for absolute control'.[296] Their practices are indicators of the possibility

of transgression, of transcending bare life that the body possesses. The individual actions of the

al-Lidd inhabitants becomes double, since they 'conjoin' the individual body of the

prisoner/refugee with the larger body of the nation or the group.[297] When read within the grander

context of Palestine, the *al-Lidd* residents' small triumphs against the soldiers as well as their

acts of resistance, gain a stronger significance.

The resistance of the *al-Lidd* inhabitants is portrayed through their daily negotiations of

space through which they attempt to re-inscribe their new space with meaning. The novelty of

the space they are now confined in lies in the mere fact that it is a space, formerly part and parcel

of their geography, that now rejects, confines, and oppresses them. It is therefore a space that is

de-familiarised, made alien, and whose estrangement and violence are naturalised and

---

[295] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989), p. 213.
[296] Joseph Pugliese, 'Penal Asylum: Refugees, Ethics, Hospitality', *Borderlands*, 1.1 (2002): 1-9. par. 12.
[297] Pugliese, par. 7.

normalised. Additionally, their exclusion and abandonment and the subsequent silencing of their experience, should not, as some might, be read as a metaphor of the Palestinians' mute language or the exclusion of their narrative from history and public/academic discourse. Such an exclusion should rather be considered as an example of the continuity of the *nakba* and its consequences. Murad tells Adam, 'Words never say what you want them to. That was the first lesson our bitter experience with our cousins the Jews taught us. They put us someplace where there's no language, and left us in the darkness of silence'.[298] Silence for Murad is a political position, an attitude, that can either be inflicted on you, or that you choose for yourself, and at times it can be both at the same time. In a such a manner, the continuous *nakba* experienced by the Palestinians today, as *Awlad al Ghetto* reveals, is conceptually an extension of the state of abandonment and exception that has been inflicted upon them.

However, every space based on the system of exclusion/inclusion, including a ghetto, contains within it the possibility of becoming other. According to Benjamin Meiches, the significance of physical boundaries does not only lie in their ability to confine, but also in their 'ability to produce'.[299] What distinguishes the boundaries of the ghetto from any others are their elasticity. This feature allows the camp, here in the form of an enclosed ghetto, the potential of creating 'new forms of habitation, resistance, and protest'.[300] The analysis of these present potentialities in *Ismi Adam* is made possible by focusing on space as an embodied experience. The *al-Lidd* inhabitants find water, retrieve a confiscated table from the soldiers, smuggle food, cattle, and people, call for prayers, hold a wedding and a funeral, and organise a religious ceremony, all of which are carried out in spite of the Israeli authorities' restrictions. One of the

---

[298] Khoury, *My Name is Adam,* p. 386.
[299] Benjamin Meiches, 'A Political Ecology of the Camp', *Security Dialogue*, 46.5 (2015): 476-92, p. 486.
[300] ibid, p. 478.

earliest incidents through which the inhabitants challenge the soldiers occurs when they run out of food. The inhabitants gather in the courtyard, taunting the soldiers, until one of them fires a few shots in the air. He announces that they will only allow four men out to look for food, on the condition that they wear Red Cross badges. He says so as he renounces his responsibility for their safety. Such are the transgressions of the *al-Lidd* residents, a series of mini triumphs.

Acknowledging their new space, as well as their limitations within it, and working together as a community, the *al-Lidd* inhabitants attempt to transform their confining space into a site of resistance. Giving Tahrir Square in Egypt as an example, Adam Ramadan states that the concept of camp is emulated transnationally as it becomes a '*tool of resistance*'.[301] However, even though Ramadan is here referring to demonstrators' camps, his statement applies to the case of the *al-Lidd* ghetto. A distinction between practices of spatial appropriation and those of spatial production should be noted here. While erecting a protestors' camp occurs through a transgressive process of spatial production, transgressions within a concentration camp/ghetto occur through and by a process of spatial appropriation.[302] The inhabitants defy the limitations imposed on them by working around them. To use Lefebvre's terms, they appropriate the 'existing space' of the ghetto they are fenced in, and modify it to serve 'the[ir] needs and possibilities'.[303]

Furthermore, the inhabitants realise that they can only manage to survive if they work together. Adam describes the ghetto as

> a society in which everything was mixed up with everything else. Even the houses were somehow shared with everyone, since, because of the shortage of food and the crippling water crisis, the inhabitants of the ghetto were obliged to live communally. The result was the creation of a society, peculiar to the Arabs of the ghetto, in which boundaries were erased.[304]

---

[301] Adam Ramadan, 'From Tahrir to the World: The Camp as a Political Public Space', *Euro-commentary*, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 20.1 (2012): 145-49, p. 148.
[302] See Chapter One.
[303] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. p. 165.
[304] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 304.

However, the reality of life in the ghetto, according to Adam, was far from that of an 'ideal communal life'.[305] He says that 'despite their attempts to adapt to the cage into which they had been placed, they were constantly discovering, to their surprise, that their disaster had no bottom to hit and that they were forced, each day, to find new ways to eke out their existence'.[306] As such, adjusting to the new socio-spatial reality within the ghetto, the inhabitants are forced to redefine and restructure their lives and their communal living, prioritising their survival. Joined by a shared mission and objective, the inhabitants move together, organise their mobility within the restrictive borders of the ghetto, and share the space along with the tasks inherent for their sustenance, such as cooking, obtaining water, keeping the place clean and tidy, and so on. Such an experience, built on need and the necessity of a communal life, provides the inhabitants with a sense of imagined identity and belonging. 'We are the Orphans of the Ghetto',[307] Adam tells his teachers a few years later. Despite its tragic undertones, Adam's statement reflects a sense of belonging; the inhabitants of the *al-Lidd* are forever joined by the ghetto experience which transcended the physical boundaries of the space they were confined in. Put in Crouch's terms, 'their imagined identity' can be considered as 'with a distanced but fantasy past of who they are: an imaginary community of practice'.[308]

The inhabitants understand that their spaces, their bodies, and their autonomy over both, have been confiscated. Their everyday actions therefore acquire a new dimension; the quotidian within the ghetto enters the realm of the political. Politicising the space of the everyday reinstates what Lefebvre would refer to as the 'use value' of space. The recognition of their positionality

---

[305] ibid, p. 304.
[306] ibid, p. 304.
[307] ibid, p. 270.
[308] David Crouch, *Flirting with Space: Journeys and Creativity* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), pp. 74-5.

within that space, as well as their limitations, coupled with an awareness of the spatiality of the

ghetto vis-à-vis other spaces around it, and an adherence (but not submission) to their

exceptional captivity, allow the *al-Lidd* inhabitants to experience the space of the ghetto as active

producers, instead of mere consumers. This productive politicisation comes in the form of

gestures, a term borrowed from Lefebvre, that puncture through the political order that excludes

them, facilitated by the ghetto's elastic nature.

As such, the *al-Lidd* residents familiarise themselves with the de-normalised features of

their new space as primary steps toward reclaiming a sense of agency over their lived

environment. Adam writes,

> The barbed wire that surrounded the place became a part of the scenery through which they became
> acquainted with the boundaries of their new city, which now consisted of a small fenced rectangle with a
> single gate guarded by three soldiers.[309]

He further narrates how the only small open clearing, the courtyard of the mosque holding the

fountain in its midst, becomes the children's playground. Within it, the laughter of the children

blends in with the reprimands of the mothers, as if it were a normal site in any other city. By

virtue of the inhabitants' spatial observations, they are able to collectively decipher the new

spatial codes that now govern their lives. This spatial knowledge further allows them to re-

inscribe meaning to their new space, a transgression par excellence, within this context. The re-

ordering of the space that the inhabitants undertake can therefore be seen as a means to inhabit

the ghetto. These spatial codes are not mere references to the means through which to read or

interpret space. But rather, they are a 'means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of

producing it', of inhabiting it.[310] Decoding the spaces of the *al-Lidd* ghetto, the inhabitants'

negotiations and expressions of multiple spatialities as they present themselves, contribute to

---

[309] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 322.
[310] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 47.

engendering an understanding of the potential production of *representational spaces*. Apart from making difference visible, decoding space shows 'correspondences, analogies, and a certain unity in spatial practice and in the theory of space'.[311] It is a tactic that therefore exposes the complexities of a space, its internal power structure, and its interconnected and multilayered social relations. Additionally, it allows the inhabitants to recognise themselves as subjects, with potential and agency, and a positionality within the socio-spatial constituency and biopolitical dynamic of the ghetto. In this regard, to exercise this agency, subjects should *become* members who *belong* to that space, a highlighted feature in the process of spatial appropriation. In the case of the *al-Lidd* inhabitants, their objective is not to belong to a space dominated as much as it is to belong to the space that they appropriate within it. Such an objective constitutes a key element in their struggle against cultural erasure, the de-Arabisation of Palestine, and what Nur Masalha calls 'toponymicide', exemplified in the 'erasure of ancient Palestinian place names and their replacement by newly coined Zionist Hebrew toponymy'.[312] Their attempts therefore are significant within the grander struggle of return, as well as the struggle to reclaim land following dispossession, displacement, and exile.

To understand this process of spatial appropriation in *Ismi Adam*, it is imperative to consider the experience of space as embodied, and to lend awareness to the significant role played by the subjects' relationship to their own bodies within that space. The inhabitants understand that the ghetto does not only define the boundaries of their space, but it also confines their bodies, with complete abandon of its biological survival or interest, and regulates their mobility within it and outside it. They are therefore aware of two conceptual signifiers: the notions of *body-in-space* and *body-as-space*. To them, both body and ghetto become a cage, and,

---

[311] ibid, p. 163.
[312] Masalha, p. 10.

by proxy the reclamation of their space presupposes and necessitates the reclamation of their dominated bodies, and vice-versa. In this regard, Lefebvre claims that one's relationship to space, 'as a "subject", who is a member of a group of society, implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa'.[313] By virtue of such a statement, 'social practice presupposes the use of the body'.[314] It is based on this comprehension and this political consciousness that the *al-Lidd* inhabitants become keen politicised producers of transgression.

Expanding on the notions of *body-in-space* and *body-as-space*, and the inseparability of space and body in this context, it can be claimed that our spaces (and practices) are an extension of our experience of our bodies. Considering that the experience of space is embodied par excellence, our spaces are conceptualised, experienced, and produced through the body. This line of logic is justified by the body's ability to produce difference. The *body-in-space* transgresses, speaks, acts, and progresses or regresses in movement, and in relation to other entities surrounding it. Space and body, therefore, can be separated neither in practice nor in discourse. Any revolutionary project today, writes Lefebvre, 'whether utopi[c] or realistic, must, if it is to avoid banality, make the reappropriation of the body, in association with the reappropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda'.[315] This relationship is further problematised within the ghetto since the inhabitants' biological and physical survival depends on their ability to move outside the ghetto for sustenance. Their transgressions, in such a manner, are a necessity for survival. At the same time, however, these actions, can be considered as forms of 'articulation of power'.[316] The potency of such articulations and manifestations of power lies in

---

[313] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 40.
[314] ibid, p. 40.
[315] ibid, pp. 166-67.
[316] Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose, 'Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities, and Subjectivities', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18.4 (2000): 433-52, p. 434.

their repetition; once repeated, they take the form of 'organised gestures', as Lefebvre would call them. Such gestures foment productive acts within a certain social space, which cannot simply be reduced to mere performances or practices exercised in a physical space or 'in the space of the body'.[317] Additionally, the exceptionality of the situation in which the said physical space is in fact a space of captivity and restrictions, resists the simplification of these actions, and their deliverance from politicised attributions and connotations.

Therefore, the *al-Lidd* inhabitants can be said to have reclaimed their subjectivity and articulated their power upon understanding this relationship. They translate this comprehension in firstly understanding the need for a new social formation, an organisation that demands the division of space amongst them, its structuring according to the requirements of their survival, and transforming it into a shelter that also includes stations of rest and play. Adam writes,

> The committee held its first meeting then and there in the middle of the square and discussed the need for a plan to distribute the people among the empty houses, with the aim of lightening the pressure on, above all, the hospital, and, in second place, the mosque and the church.[318]

From this perspective, the residents' bodies themselves successfully 'generate[d] spaces, which [were] produced by and for their gestures'.[319] The linking of gestures, writes Lefebvre,

> corresponds to the articulation and linking of well-defined spatial segments, segments which repeat, and whose repetition give rise to novelty […] Many such social spaces are given rhythm by the gestures which are produced within them, and which produce them.[320]

The inhabitants therefore reorganise and reconfigure the spatial arrangement imposed on them, as if creating an alternative urban planning. They attempt to re-create their space by re-assigning it with new functions, and re-inscribing it with new meaning and value, all of which are articulations of power and agency. Any exercise of power in the face of an oppression is a form of transgression

---

[317] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 216-17.
[318] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 240-41.
[319] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 216-17.
[320] ibid, pp. 216-17.

and an act of resistance. It is in this manner that the inhabitants of the ghetto transform their confinement into a site of resistance.

On an individual level, the most significant transgressive gesture carried out within the ghetto is dancing. The act of dancing in war bears a symbolic significance in the collective memory of the Palestinians. In the massacre of Shatila, in Beirut in 1982, the Phalangists (a far-right Christian militia operative during the Lebanese civil war) forced their victims to dance prior to massacring them, under Israeli coverage and support. The specific incident of dancing discloses the importance of its documentation, as an event that occurred during a traumatic history. Khoury mentions this incident in both his novels *Gate of the Sun* and *Awlad al Ghetto.* This reference and repetition in both novels firstly foregrounds the intersection of the Lebanese and Palestinian narrative mentioned earlier. Within the same context of the grander Palestinian narrative, both novels by Khoury assemble stories of *nakba* and post-*nakba* incidents, some of which are true and others based on real events. It secondly highlights the importance of having these stories told by their protagonists. Consequently, the importance here is invested more in the act of narration and storytelling and their subsequent role in preserving memory against attempts at erasure or mutilation. Such acts of narration attempt to un-mute the Palestinian voice and challenge what Masalha has called 'Nakba memoricide', a term he uses to describe 'the silencing, denial, and repression of Palestinian history'.[321] In a similar vein, Sayigh emphasises the importance of writing, recording, and narrating experiences of the *nakba*. She writes,

> Though the cultural resources through which disaster-struck people cope with suffering are hard to articulate, they are surely a kind of cultural property that needs to be recorded so that the dispossessed are not forced into an appearance of helpless victims but rather as agents of their own physical, cultural, and political survival.[322]

---

[321] Masalha, p. 10.
[322] Rosemary Sayigh in 'Silenced Suffering', *Borderlands*, 14.1 (2015): 1-20, pp. 3-4.

In *Ismi Adam*, Khalil Ayyub, the main character of *Gate of the Sun*, makes an appearance as a witness to the dancing incident in Shatila. The significance of this incident in turn lends great power to Khuloud's own dancing in *al- Lidd* which features in *Ismi Adam*. Khalil breaks his silence in a shaky voice and recalls,

> The memory of pain was more terrible than pain itself.
> The story does not lie in the killing, or in the bodies of the victims, or in the savagery that etched itself on the faces of the killers, which shone under the flares fired by the Israeli army; the memory of pain […] is death by humiliation.[323]

Khalil adds, 'Imagine us dancing — yes, dancing — while we were being killed, and that I danced and was killed but didn't die'.[324] The incident, Khoury writes in *Gate of the Sun*, takes place on the last day of the massacre on 17 September 1982 in the Shatila camp, in Lebanon. The militiamen surround the people marching like 'sheep' in the camp. They first ask them to clap, then to make their applause stronger and more audible, then later to scream slogans asking God for the long life of the Phalangist leader who had ordered their murder. And at last, they ask them to dance. It is here that Umm Hassan, a prominent figure in the collective memory of the Palestinians, appears.

Umm Hassan is a historically symbolic figure whose dancing turns that of *al-Lidd*'s Khuloud into a transgressive act in its own right. As Khoury states in *Gate of the Sun*, and reiterates in *Ismi Adam*, Umm Hassan was the Shatila camp's most revered midwife. Even Adam, at some point, wishes she were his real mother. She was a fierce, strong, and revolutionary woman admired by all. That day in September, as the crowd was being marched to its death, Umm Hassan was the first to break into dance and comply with the militiamen's orders. In tears, with a white cloth on her head, and wearing her long black dress, Umm Hassan

---

[323] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 214.
[324] ibid, p. 214.

danced to the rhythm of falling bullets. She had 'a mysterious smile' on her face, as her dancing infected everyone with a dancing frenzy.[325] Khalil, now featured as a character in *Awlad al Ghetto*, says he does not remember for how long they danced. He says, 'time disappears at two moments only — of dancing and of death — so what's one to do when they coincide?'.[326] Both Khalil and Umm Hassan miraculously survived that day. Khalil says that 'Fifteen hundred people died here, or so they say, but the number says nothing, because everybody died here. The entirety of mankind died in that moment of dance, when some were driven to the execution wall still dancing'.[327] Adam describes Umm Hassan as the leader of the death dance, refusing to reduce her dance to mere surrender.

Even though the dance that Khuloud initiates in *Ismi Adam* precedes Umm Hassan's historically, the juxtaposition of both stories fortifies the impact of Khuloud's dance, and situates her transgressive action within the grander Palestinian narrative of resistance. Khuloud's actions are triggered by the death of her husband during the *al-Lidd* massacre, her encampment, and the detention of her fourteen-year-old son by the Israeli Army. At that moment, Adam writes, a woman in rags appears, 'carrying an infant. She lifted the baby up with her hands, and approached the officer saying "Take her! Take the girl! Take her! I want to die. Take her!"'.[328] The officer starts shouting at the people gathering around the woman and orders them to disperse. Adam remembers Manal saying 'that the woman was seized by a fit of madness. She lifted her child up high and started dancing. She danced as though listening to a drumbeat in her ears and started circling around the soldiers, who stood there, dumbfounded and immobilised'.[329]

---

[325] ibid, p. 215.
[326] ibid, p. 216.
[327] ibid, p. 216.
[328] ibid, p. 229.
[329] ibid, p. 230.

The incident ends with one of the residents, Elia, screaming at the soldiers to leave as he takes Khuloud in. Khuloud's dance is a gesture she adopts in an expression of a desperate situation, as well as a reclamation of the space that was hers in the first place and no longer is. Through her dance, she reclaims the body encamped, hungered, hurt, shot at, and massacred. By doing so and making those who initially placed her in such a position watch, she challenges their expectations that the dominated body would be frail, subservient, complacent, and obedient.

The power of Khuloud's performative act exceeds its symbolism: the reiteration of her practices transforms them into potent, embodied, and productive practices of spatiality. By appropriating the dominated space of the ghetto, and the controlled space of her body within it, in addition to creating a present audience to witness her actions, Khuloud challenges the silence and passivity of the audience that overlooks the Palestinian narrative and contributes to the erasure of its history. Khuloud's actions become conscious and politically charged as she repeats them. Significantly, repetitive action 'involves us semi-aware in a process of feeling complicated by the varied social and cultural contexts of bodily practice'.[330] Khuloud does not only repeat the movements she creates, she becomes them, she embodies them, and there lies the forte of her actions. Gaston Bachelard believes that 'learning a move, embodying it, might be described as "inhabitation"'.[331] Inhabiting both her body and her movement, Khuloud empowers her dancing beyond its historical significance and emotional sensitivity. As such, Khuloud's dance constitutes the perfect example of individual spatial practices within the ghetto, which involve an embodied enactment of an experience and suggest an imagination or re-imagination of the subject's place in the world. Through her dance, a political socio-spatial practice in this context,

---

[330] Crouch, p. 71.

[331] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958, rprt. 1969), pp. 14-5.

Khuloud re-imagines her space and re-inscribes it with meaning. Thus, through her *perceived* space, or *spatial practice*, to use a Lefebvrean logic, Khoulud is able to transform a *conceived* space, or *representations of space* into a *lived* space, or *representational space*. She challenges the space that dominates her by creating within it, within the bounds of the space's limitations, a space that she is momentarily (until the end of the dance) in control of.

Another significant incident that takes place in the ghetto and instigates a collective gestural action is Mufid's death. Mufid is a teenager who possesses a letter from an Israeli commander that he believes can save them from encampment and death. Driven by youthful heroic sentiments and a naive confidence in his poor command of Hebrew, Mufid climbs the barbed wire, refusing to come down before his request to meet with the officer in command is met. There are multiple stories describing Mufid's death. Some say he died of sunstroke since he refused to climb down before meeting with the officer who never shows up. Others claim that he was shot. And others still say he was hit in the head with the butt of a rifle. Adam writes, 'Nothing is sure except that Mufid Shahada died with open hands and closed eyes beneath the setting sun, his head in a pool of blood'.[332] The fact that multiple stories are told with regards to Mufid's death signifies the importance of the act of narration itself, regardless of the truth. Adam comments on the multiplicity of stories surrounding this incident by stating,

> I don't believe that the multiplicity of versions is attributable solely to the fact that they were never written down. Basically, it should be attributed instead to the victims' attempts to adapt themselves to the new reality by viewing the succession of tragic events through the third eye, which sees only what a person can bear to see. This is the basic cause of the confusions in stories about the Nakba.[333]

Read through a wider lens, the multiplicity of stories, which unsettles the monopoly over the truth or its dominant representation, reveals the significance of writing and narration in the

---

[332] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 249.
[333] ibid, p. 252.

Palestinian context. In this regard, Said believes that should one stop telling a story, it would simply disappear, adding that no 'narrative of Palestinian history has even been institutionalised in a different framework'.[334] On more than one occasion in *Ismi Adam*, it is repeated, by different characters, that they are now left with nothing but their words and stories. Telling these stories then becomes politically transgressive. Through storytelling, the inhabitants become the story they are telling and the space they have been denied becomes inhabited and embodied; the act of narration becomes an affirmative action against silence, oppression, and exclusion. It is here the story of the story, as Khoury keeps saying, that becomes more important, to some certain extent, than the story itself.

In *Ismi Adam*, regardless of which story is true, Mufid dies on the barbed wire and stays there all day and night. The Israelis dismiss the pleas of the residents to take Mufid's body down and give him a proper burial. It is not until the next day that the men succeed in convincing the soldiers to allow them access to the graveyard to bury Mufid properly. All the while the women stay up all night guarding Mufid's body, in an act of defiance against the soldiers' orders to return home. Adam asks, 'Wherein lies the truth of the death of Mufid, who could remain the ghetto's memory as its first martyr?'.[335] The people of the ghetto give Mufid the nickname 'sparrow'; he promises them freedom and dies in its name, 'suspended from the barbed wire like a sparrow with a broken neck and scattered feathers, and then fell, his arms outstretched'.[336]

Leaving the dead body of the boy who had promised his people salvation, hanging on the barbed wire, all bloody, with arms wide open, is an assertion of hierarchy and authority and an affirmation of the soldiers' complete indifference to the fate of the ghetto's inhabitants.

---

[334] Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), pp. 118-19.
[335] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 249.
[336] ibid, p. 241.

According to Meiches, 'the importance of the boundary lies not only in its ability to confine but also in its ability to produce'.[337] Keeping him there is a reminder of this very transformation and a threat against any transgression. The residents insist on doing things the proper way, and request justice for Mufid. They ask that the soldier who shot Mufid be tried. But their request is denied with the city's military governor exclaiming

> Listen, *Hajj*, I want to cooperate with you and fulfil all requests that I find justified, but we can't start like this. Forget putting the soldier on trial. He's a hero of the Palmarch. The soldier didn't kill Mufid — Mufid fell and died. Plus, there are hundreds of dead bodies strewn around the streets of Lydda. I don't want to hear any more demands of this kind.[338]

This incident accentuates, as well, the soldiers' willingness to humiliate and degrade the ghetto inhabitants. As a result, the inhabitants feel anger and resentment, exhibiting their own readiness to sanctify the boy's memory and efforts. Following this incident, the inhabitants become bolder in their requests and their practices, succeeding thus in carrying out actions in spite of the soldiers' restrictions. Adam's transgressive actions are as much a necessity for his survival and continuity as it is for the ghetto residents. His ghettoisation manifests in similar patterns, shared with other Palestinians, that hinder his ability to carry on with his life. The following section explores the ghettoisation patterns that steer the lives of its victims as experienced by Adam, and investigates the means through which the latter produces an alternative discourse, articulating his power in the manuscript he produces.

3.   Adam's Ghettoisation: (Dis)Placement

Adam's everyday life in New York exposes his ghettoised self as a life still caged in a yet-to-be-narrated experience. Like all other *al-Lidd* survivors, Adam becomes the ghetto. The silence that envelops his life encumbers what he came to New York for: writing. As he moves from one city

---

[337] Meiches, p. 486.
[338] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 248-49.

in Palestine to another, Adam experiences first-hand how 'Palestine' seems to have 'left

Palestine' to be replaced by a ghetto. He writes,

> And so the city became a kind of Tower of Babel. Languages barged into one another, strangers trod strangers under foot […] They took over the houses and lived in them, and Lydda became a "development city", to use the Israeli authorities' term, meaning a marginal city […] When they allowed the inhabitants of the ghetto to go to their homes in November 1948, to get blankets and winter clothing, the ghetto-dwellers discovered that their houses had been looted of everything.[339]

Such a statement echoes the post-1948 dispossession of Palestinians, their loss of space, and their

dispersal across various cities within Palestine. It is a statement that resonates throughout the

novel. Blind Ma'moun, for example, claims that 'Lydda has come to be as though it were not

Lydda […] There is nowhere left in Palestine that has not left its place'.[340] The displacement that

befell the Palestinians, from both their history and their geography, is double-edged. Ma'moun

seems to be saying that it is not only the people who were forced to leave Palestine; even

Palestine itself left its rightful place.

In his conversation with Adam years later, in New York, Ma'moun says that despite its

dismantlement a year later, 'the wires remained entrenched in the hearts', and that 'the ghetto

became the symbol of a whole people'.[341] These recurring statements in *Ismi Adam*, serve as

constant reminders that situate the story told by Adam within the grander collective experience

of Palestinians post-1948. The *al-Lidd* inhabitants struggled against Israeli attempts to erase, not

only their identity records and geography, but also their history and culture. It is therefore a

removal and attempted erasure of time and space, history and geography, simultaneously. Both

concepts of time and space, within this specific Palestinian context, become problematised and

politicised. Adam's inability to 'belong' anywhere, even to Palestine, and his struggle to write

his story (and that of his people) fall within these lines.

---

[339] ibid, pp. 422-23.
[340] ibid, p. 421.
[341] ibid, p. 429, p. 323.

Furthermore, and as illustrated in the previous section, attempts at erasing the Palestinians operate on temporal, physical, and cultural fronts, with clear manifestations in hegemonic discourse (whether literary, academic, or other). Euphemisms such as 'transfer', in reference to mass expulsions, and 'present absentees', in reference to internal refugees who were stripped of their possessions, displaced, and forbidden to return to their former homes, undermine the conceptual removal of Palestinians 'before, during, and after their physical removal in 1948'.[342] It is then no surprise that Adam and Ma'moun feel alienated and estranged in post-1948 Palestine. Additionally, Arabs, during that period, were seen as guests in their own country, as the names of their 'original villages and towns were removed from the map'.[343] As a result, 'their presence must be downplayed, much of the surface of the land has at times been "remodelled" to hide or bury remnants of Arab life, and Palestinian villages, in certain instances, have been replaced with Jewish ones, or completely erased'.[344]

Like most of the Palestinians post-*nakba*, Adam becomes a stranger in his own country and in his own body. His need to constantly relocate and change his identity as he does so demonstrates an inability to negotiate his past and come to terms with its traumatic impacts in addition to his inability to accept his own survival. Following the dismantlement of the ghetto, Adam moves in with his mother and her new husband to Haifa. However, despite having relocated to a different city and acquiring a decent house as shelter, Manal and all former ghetto inhabitants are not able to find home. Displacement then becomes their constant and consistent plight, their only reality. Adam says 'It was that house, which we were not allowed to enter, that my mother called "our house", while she called the one that we lived in "the Kayyali house"'.[345]

---

[342] Masalha, p. 89.
[343] ibid, p.102.
[344] Shohat, 'Exile', p. 170.
[345] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 132.

As such, their home is now a space they yearn to return to but can no longer access. And the 'house' they live in is a mere space they will never identify as theirs or belong to. For this reason, Adam chooses to relocate to New York.

But little did Adam know that he takes the ghetto with him. In New York, Adam acknowledges that his sense of dispossession is not confined to the confiscation of a physical environment or its ruin. In the words of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Adam's reality became that of ruin. Describing this condition shared by all Palestinians, Darwish says, 'our ruins lie ahead of us here as well as there'.[346] Adam was therefore incapable of ridding himself of the ghetto's dominance over his life (and life choices). His ghettoisation, as a result, becomes a perpetual state. In this regard, Adam explains, 'The truth is, we never left the ghetto. We stayed in it, but when the barbed wire was removed, they said, "The ghetto is over", though it wasn't. The fact is it enriches us to this day'.[347] His life becomes a series of boundaries that he struggles to transgress and cross on a daily basis.

The book's present situates Adam in New York, as a Palestinian refugee. His identity politics at this stage is hazy and confused; people mistake him for an Israeli primarily because he claims to be a Jew and works in a falafel shop owned by an Israeli. His ghettoisation reflects itself through his constant feelings of displacement and incompetence; he is a writer unable to write, forced to negotiate his sense of belonging and identity, as an outsider in a new country and foreigner in his own. Adam fights his feelings of non-belonging by assuming that he can substitute living life by writing it. However, he soon finds himself incapable of doing both writing and living. His struggle to write is predominantly reflected in his inability to see his book

---

[346] Mahmoud Darwish, 'The Hoopoe', *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems*, trans. and ed. by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forche (with Sinan Anton and Amira el Zein) (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 38.
[347] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 180.

on the poet Waddah al-Yaman through to the end — even his heartfelt conviction that al-Yaman

deserves a better representation than the one he had received from scholars and academics

throughout the years is not enough drive to help him finish his project. It is not the lack or the

scarcity of information about al-Yaman that hinder Adam's attempts at writing about him.

Rather, his book is constantly interrupted by his own literary reflections on and critiques of, not

only al-Yaman's poetry, but also works of other classical Arabic poets. However, most

distinctively, it is those personal and private interruptions that take him back to his *al-Lidd*

experience in the form of flashbacks. In other words, Adam's own narrative keeps interrupting

the one he is writing to the extent that his attempts are nothing more than shortcomings and

incoherent fragments, in his opinion, that do not do al-Yaman the justice he deserves. He admits

that writing the story of al-Yaman does not solely serve the altruistic purpose of representing an

underrepresented poet; rather, it is the pretext he uses to hide his fear of writing his own story —

a fine example of a traumatic haunting. He says,

> I […] don't have the courage to commit suicide, which is why I cannot write my own story the way heroes
> do. On the contrary, I have to write their stories in order to come close to myself, and by making up stories
> conceal my inability to be a hero.[348]

His refusal of heroism and symbolism is premised on his conviction that they both undermine the

story and constrict it, jeopardising its impact and meaning. While he takes courage in the fact

that he is writing the story of al-Yaman, that sense of new-found purpose does not last long.

Prior to reaching its current state in New York, Adam's ghettoisation takes various forms

and guises. As a child, Adam is dreamy, imaginative, and rebellious. Adam, the teenager,

identifies with the ghetto and adopts it as a name. And as an adult, he denies the ghetto

completely by hiding behind different identities. As early as six years old, Adam develops a

---

[348] ibid, pp. 41.

relationship with his confiscated city, as well as a sense of spatiality. It must be noted that after

1948,

> the Palestinians inside Israel had to endure eighteen years of military administration, which restricted their movements, controlled almost every aspect of their life and acted as an instrument for the expropriation of the bulk of their lands […] The military government declared Palestinian villages "closed military zones" to prevent displaced Palestinians from returning.[349]

It is within this reality that Adam grows up, as a second-class citizen, along with those who

remained inside Israel subjugated to military occupation. He recounts, for example, how he and

his classmates were forced to celebrate Israel's Independence Day, a day before the

commemoration of the *nakba*. They were made to march in the city carrying the Israeli flags as

tears strolled down their faces and that of the accompanying teacher. That day Adam realises that

he lost the city to which he belongs; he witnesses how it was being repainted with different

colours and re-inscribed within an identity that excludes, denies, and oppresses him. Any signs

of (or practices that insinuate) the Palestinian-ness of the land, any attempts at reclaiming what

has been taken, become pretexts for further confinement, harassment, restrictions, persecution,

and other forms of punishment. By virtue of such consequences, transgressions gain prominence

as political acts and as affirmative actions of existence and resistance. Faced with the two options

of submission or resistance, Adam chooses the latter as early as six years of age by proactively

engaging in small acts of transgression. While his act of stealing figs from a nearby orchard

confiscated by the Israeli authorities does not bear any consequences, stealing olives at a later

occasion results in his detention. Regarding these two incidents, the adult Adam comments:

'How can a child at the outset of his life understand that he has to begin from zero and from

loss?'[350] As a child, Adam struggles with accepting the helplessness of his people, which he

---

[349] Masalha, p. 5.
[350] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 409.

attempts to counter through his imaginative convictions. However, his bouts of resistance were always met with ridicule and belittlement from his friends, in addition to accusations of being delusional. Despite that, Adam's imagination and professed agency do not stop him from claiming, for example, that he is the master of the winds, or of genuinely believing that he can ride and control them at whim, and that nothing malicious can ever touch him. He even goes as far as refusing to play with the other children in the school playground on the pretext that he has a very dangerous disease called 'trauma'.

Adam's ghettoised self becomes more strongly manifest after he leaves *al-Lidd* and relocates to Haifa. As a young adult and a university student, he identifies with his lived environment using the word 'ghetto' as a substitute for his own name. He says, 'When I was asked at Haifa University where I was from, I'd always reply with a single word – the ghetto'.[351] Unable to liberate himself from the confines of the ghetto that are now no longer physical, Adam runs away from everything that reminds him of who he is. It is as if re-inscribing a new identity for himself challenges the Israeli attempts to negate his. As such, Adam relocates to different cities in Palestine, donning a different identity every time. He therefore enters a vicious cycle of beginnings; deluding himself that he can start afresh, Adam commits to constantly undoing who he is and starting over whenever possible. He hopes that by trapping himself in potential becomings, he will be able to forget what he has endured under occupation. 'In order to exist', he says, 'I was supposed not to have existed. That's the trick that fashioned the beginnings of my life and has stayed with me for fifty years. I've put my life together anew six times'.[352] But Adam's plan backfires, for by denying his true identity, his ghettoisation grips him further. Every time he creates a new story for himself, he realises that he is falling captive of another. He states,

---

[351] ibid, p. 127.
[352] ibid, p. 121.

'I flee from a book that was never written and discover that I don't know who I am. Am I a child of the story?'[353] Palestinian scholar Ra'ef Zurayk views Adam's obsession with forgetting the past as manifest in the latter's constant attempts at self-creation and the adoption of various identities. However, these attempts lead to Adam's imprisonment in a cycle that constantly asks him to start over.[354] As such, he becomes divorced from any sense of belonging, estranged to his own language. He describes himself as a loner who has taken to recreate himself so much that he 'forgot all the emotions at one go'; he is a 'man without affiliation or language, a man over fifty beginning his life in its final moments, intoxicated with death'.[355]

At first, Adam views New York as a safe haven, as a city that will save him from the snares of the ghetto and liberate him from the cycle in which he has trapped himself. His desire for a new start becomes a priority as Palestine can no longer contain him, as he claims. He says, 'I can no longer find a foothold in my own country. The paths there had ended up leading me into the wilderness'.[356] Therefore, he reasons, 'I had to find a new place so I could come to an end. Usually people emigrate in order to begin a new life. My decision to do so was a search for the end'.[357] Adam tries to make the most of his new life and has high hopes that New York will offer him the opportunity to write as he pleases. He finds a menial job and leaves behind the scholarly and academic life he led in Palestine. He spends the first two years in New York watching films, enjoying ballet and music, drinking French wine and vodka, and reading as if he were writing. However, he soon becomes disenchanted with New York. His hopes of recreating a better life for himself wane as soon as he learns that ghetto is still alive within him. He writes,

---

[353] ibid, p. 121.
[354] Ra'ef Zurayk, '*Kayfa Yatakkallamu al-Samtu wa Yasmutu al-Kalam*', *Journal of Palestine Studies*,107(2017): 189-98, p. 195.
[355] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 114-15.
[356] ibid, p. 107.
[357] ibid, pp. 107-8.

'[In New York], I can say that I've lived inside the cages of the ghetto made out of my mother's words and stories and her nostalgia of the days of the barbed wire'.[358] He realises that he still struggles to belong and that he had lost the language through which he can articulate his pain. His sense of displacement leads him force a new disappointment unto him. New York is not the refuge he sought; he is still far removed from his true self. Not only does he still assume a non-Arab, Jewish identity, but he also plans on changing his name altogether once he receives the green card. He describes New York as beautiful, but also as a city which decided to 'expel him from the circle of those who deserve to live'.[359] To compensate for the life he was not able to (re)create, Adam tries to write it. His decision to write reflects a refusal to sit on the 'sidelines nursing a wound', as Said says, because he understands the lesson he should learn.[360] He learns that substituting life by trying to reproduce it on paper is no longer satisfying or productive; it confines him to the 'world of the imagination', and reproduces the substitute of things instead of their reality.[361] It is at this point that he decides to surrender to writing his story. Adam's act of writing, in this sense, is a transgressive, political act in its own right; it is a cry against silence and an attempt at representation, validation, documentation, and affirmation of existence, as shall be explored in the following section.

4.   Adam Writes Back: The Production of an Alternative Space

Since he started writing his story of the ghetto which he complements with the stories of the other ghetto-dwellers, Adam joins his personal narrative with the collective consciousness and experience of the Palestinians as a whole. He does not aim to present a complete story, or a

---

[358] ibid, p. 127.
[359] ibid, p. 347.
[360] Edward Said, *Reflections*, pp. 146-47.
[361] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 131-32.

testimony, or a work of fiction. Instead, Adam insists on articulating his narrative, on contextualising it, and on giving voice to a story that has been made to be forgotten. Masalha claims that the Palestinians endured (and still do so today) various forms of genocide: politicide (manifest through the acts of side-lining the Palestinian experience and denying its significance and validity), cultural genocide, memoricide, and toponymicide.[362] This section situates Adam's act of writing within the transgressive framework of writing against all these forms of genocide. Steeled with stories he had heard and others that he had gathered, and with an incessant need to write them, Adam transfers the memories he possesses unto the physical space of his manuscript. In doing so, this section claims, Adam transforms the space of the manuscript into a legitimate site of resistance through which he reclaims a fraction of a lost time-space. To produce such a space, Adam engages in the transgressive, embodied actions of writing and remembering (an act through which both spatiality and temporality intermingle). The act of remembering allows Adam to challenge and reclaim a silenced history (by accounting for what has not been said/documented) and remap this reclaimed narrative onto the pages of his manuscript.

Adam's initial writings in New York reveal a struggling writer paralysed by interruptions and interjections that hinder the completion of his project. His past experiences, mainly those of encampment, displacement, and occupation, obstruct his everyday life and arrest his ability to express it through writing. In acknowledgement of these interruptions that disappoint his attempts at writing a coherent story of Waddah al-Yaman's life, Adam admits to himself, in the first degree, that he is the son of a silent narrative. He is therefore aware of the impact of his silence and its significance within the collective Palestinian experience of the *nakba*, as well as of the urgency to break it. He writes, 'All the stories about Lydda that I've heard and collected

---

[362] Masalha, p. 10.

have one basic source, which is Manal, who, whenever she got to the end of a story from those days in the ghetto, would sigh and say, "We have to forget, but sorrow can't be forgotten"'.[363]

The urgency of Adam's story, as a traumatic recounting, can help explain why he refuses to collapse his experience into a mere story or a symbol, and why he is adamant on not being turned into a hero or a fictitious character in a novel. By doing so, Adam resists dehumanisation or sanctification; he refuses to be turned into a spectacle. This instance calls to mind Murid al Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah* (1997). In his memoir describing his return to Ramallah after more than thirty years, Barghouti laments how reducing Palestine into a symbol contributes to its forgetfulness. He writes, 'The world only knows from Jerusalem the power of its symbolism. The eye catches the rocky dome, [and] sees Jerusalem, and is content […] But the world is not concerned with our Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of the people'.[364] Such endeavours are counterproductive and reinforce the 'impression that Palestine no longer existed geographically or politically', which is precisely what the Israeli state seeks.[365] It is therefore important to situate the existence of the space one is keen on representing 'within the historical and temporal contexts of its loss without succumbing to the throes of individual and communal commiseration, idealisation, or nostalgia'.[366] Symbolism is then as much a threat as silence, it overdetermines the referent so that it loses its initial meaning and its significance; such is the case of Jerusalem, 'a city, an idea, an entire history, and of course a specifiable geographical locale often typified by a photograph of the Dome of the Rock, the city walls, and the surrounding houses seen from Mount of Olives' all become an overdetermined space.[367]

---

[363] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 211.
[364] Murid al Barghouti, *Ra'aytu Ramallah* (Beirut: al Markaz al thaqafi al 'arabi, 2015 [1997]), p.1 70.
[365] Norbert Bugeja, *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriq Writing* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 48.
[366] Bugeja, p. 48.
[367] Said, 'Invention', p. 180.

Adam's refusal to fictionalise his experience is accurately expressed on more than one occasion throughout the novel. In this regard, and describing his anger at Ma'moun for having abandoned him and moving to Egypt, Adam says, 'I lost the capacity to speak when I discovered that the man [Ma'moun] had been dealing with me not as the son he'd abandoned but as a story. I felt anger and grief. I'm a person, not a story'.[368] Adam's statements extends to encompass the fate of the history of the Palestinian *nakba* and narrative. However, as Adam's manuscript demonstrates, silence is not necessarily a form of passivity or a negation. It is as important as writing. In fact, Ma'moun believes that the key to reading *nakba* literature is to read what has not been said, or the interstices of silence (*fawasil al samt*), as he states in a talk that he gives in New York on the topic. Khoury describes the 'muteness of literature' as 'part of the muteness of history or, in other words, part of the inability of the victim to write the story'.[369] A constant reminder of displacement and dispossession, of loss and death, as well as of 'failings and injustice',[370] the *nakba*, as a traumatic occurrence that is not yet over, can be said to resist being written by its sufferers. Consequently, both the delay in the establishment of a Palestinian collective memory and the self-censorship that some Palestinians exercised can be seen as justifiable in this regard. *My Name is Adam*, for instance, presents moments that depict the trouble that Adam goes through to make former *al-Lidd* inhabitants remember and share their memories with him. Keen on depicting the internal struggle that *al-Lidd* inhabitants still have to endure on a daily basis, Adam starts by justifying their silence. 'I believe', he states, that

> the victims of this massacre didn't tell its tale because these were etched into their souls and went with them everywhere throughout their lives of misery, and they could see no need to demonstrate the self-evident truth of what they had lived through. Furthermore, they wanted to forget them, and that is their right, for how is a person supposed to carry his corpse on his back while continuing to live an ordinary life?[371]

---

[368] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 143.
[369] Khoury, 'Rethinking the Nakba', p. 254.
[370] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction', p. 8.
[371] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 318-19.

Scholars of collective memory 'are well aware that individuals who undergo traumatic events produce belated memories; it can take victims years to be able to assimilate their experiences and give them meaning and form'.[372] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod reason that most of the Palestinians are unable to write or tell their stories, not only because they are too painful, but because the past is not that distant, and their struggle is still ongoing. To tell a story in the past, the present needs to be detached from that past. They write,

> When the past is still entrenched in the present existential conditions of the individual, affecting the myriad aspects of her or his life, perhaps he or she cannot secure the conditions to narrate the past. For Palestinians, still living their dispossession, still struggling or hoping for return, many under military occupation, many still immersed in matters of survival, the past is neither distant nor over.[373]

Palestinian writers, according to them, present this failure or reluctance or even difficulty in narrating the *nakba* by writing stories that resist closure and are left open-ended. But Adam is not concerned with that. His main aim is to write in whichever form or structure his story wishes to be articulated through.

Khoury reiterates, in both his fiction and his critical essays, that experiences as traumatic as the *nakba* or the Lebanese civil war sometimes necessitate silence and present it as more eloquent, at times, than any volume written about such experiences. However, such a statement by Khoury should neither be considered as a defence against articulation, nor as an invitation to remain silent. On the very contrary, Khoury's critical and literary writings have always sought to break the oppressive silence that obstructs the articulation of historical, representative narratives. He reminds his readers of Anton Shammas, author of the acclaimed *Arabesques* (1988) who relates the Palestinian struggle against silence and muteness to a struggle that concerns the storyteller. Khoury believes that whoever 'owns the story and the language will own the land'.[374]

---

[372] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction', p. 10.
[373] ibid, p. 10.
[374] Khoury, 'Rethinking the Nakba', p. 254.

Khoury's statement is a reference to Darwish's poem 'To My End and to Its End', in which the latter says, 'Whoever writes his story will inherit the land of the words, and possess meaning, entirely'.[375] With respect to Adam's manuscript, as well as the wider context within which it is situated, his writing can be considered as a reclamation of space lost and a history erased, an affirmation of existence.

In his commentary on *My Name is Adam*, Zurayk describes the novel as an attempt to 'understand the silence shrouding a massacre of this size, as well as an attempt to give the victim his right to speak'.[376] Both silence and speaking are here highlighted, depicting the agentive role played by the subject in having the freedom not only to speak, but also to remain silent, choosing when to speak and when not to. In Adam's case, speaking is imperative for his survival and a political statement par excellence when read within the grander Palestinian context. Within the same context, Zurayk considers silence to be a form of absolute absence, and a 'synonym for death'.[377] As such, 'retrieving the victim's voice', as this novel does, 'is an attempt to save it from the fangs of forgetfulness'.[378] Writing memory, in this respect, becomes counter-death and counter-hegemonic, a transgression in its own right. Sa'di and Abu-Lughod consider remembrance an agentive tool and weapon to silenced or marginalised victims. To them, 'Palestinian memory is, by dint of its preservation and social production under the conditions of its silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident memory, counter-memory. It contributes to a counter-history'.[379] In this respect, Adam's attempts at writing his history are no exception.

---

[375] Mahmoud Darwish, 'To My End and to Its End', *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* (Brooklyn: Archipelago, 2006).
[376] Zurayk, p. 189.
[377] ibid, p. 189.
[378] ibid, p. 189.
[379] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction', p. 6.

In choosing to write his story, Adam highlights the significance of self-representation, which he describes on more than occasion as an attempt to construct his 'mirror', to reflect his identity, and perfect a language through which he can articulate his experience and his silence. He writes, 'No-one listened to the cries of the Palestinians, who died and were dispossessed in silence. This is why literature came to forge a new language for the victim'.[380] Writing in this sense becomes 'an attempt to uncover a language; the Palestinian [individual] was not only displaced, but he was also removed from his language'.[381] Considering Adam's silence within this context allows for the reading of his act of writing as a reclamation of both space and language as embodied experiences that resist this displacement and removal.

Adam decides to break his silence following an incident that constitutes a major turning point in his conflicted life in New York. This turning point takes place at a movie theatre during the previously mentioned screening of Zilberman's film, which depicts stories from the beginning of the second *intifada* in Palestine (2000). An argument ensues when Adam accuses both Zilberman and Khoury of appropriating the Palestinian narrative and unrightfully speaking on behalf of the Palestinians. It infuriates him that both their works feature real people that he knows in person, such as Assaf, Umm Hassan, and Khalil Ayyub. He expresses his indignation at how more privileged people appropriate a narrative and a struggle that is not theirs, turning real people into fictionalised characters and transforming their lives into a piece of art. He says, 'No-one has the right to turn memory into a corpse and then dissect it and rip its joints apart in front of everybody just to make a movie'.[382] His violent reaction leads him to storm out of the theatre and to fight with his concerned friend Sarang Lee who attempts to follow him. Once in

---

[380] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 367.
[381] Zurayk, p. 189.
[382] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 97.

his room, all alone, Adam enters a feverish reverie that lasts for two days during which his tongue slurs in three languages (Arabic, English, and Hebrew), all of which seem incomprehensible to Sarang. In other words, his story bursts out of him. Adam sees Zilberman and Khoury as toying with people's affections. He says, 'I don't like playing games with life. We aren't heroes of novels that our fates and stories should be played around with like that'.[383] Here again Adam affirms his insistence against being a hero or being reduced to a story, objectified, frozen, and forgotten, asserting instead that he is an ordinary human being. In that regard, he writes,

> I'm not a child and I hate heroes. I'm just a man who has tried to live and has discovered the impossibility of doing so […] I'm a man who's lived all his life in the postponed and the temporary.[384]

Seeing that narratives, like his own, are being told by people other than those who have experienced them, he decides to author his own narrative instead of consenting to its confiscation. Consumed by anger, Adam finds no other resort but to write: 'I've noted here both my rage and my errors. I told myself it was my duty, that I have to end my life with a story. We live to be turned into stories, no more and no less!'.[385] Whether it is his intention or not, writing empowers Adam and gives him a taste of the freedom to say whatever he has been repressing; given his attempt's political dimension, writing becomes a transgression that Adam is eager to make. He writes, 'Unlike Waddah al-Yaman, I entered no coffer, though now I discover that I've lived my whole life inside a coffer of fear, which, in order to escape, I must not just write, but break'.[386] Adam becomes adamant on speaking up, more determined to tell his story, and to highlight it within its grander context by collecting testimonies and stories of the *nakba*

---

[383] ibid, p. 147.
[384] ibid, p. 147.
[385] ibid, p. 24.
[386] ibid, p. 100.

experience. He says, 'I'm the son of a story that has no tongue, and I want to be the one to make it speak'.[387]

Storytelling, documentation, and narration are all important acts of resistance in liberation struggles, specifically within the Palestinian context. Adam's manuscript contrives a medium that brings together personal narratives of the ghetto experience, which while affirming their validity in the face of silencing and trauma, turns them into a force akin to what Tahrir Hamdi calls 'creative resistance'. Such resistance contributes to 'creatively shaping a Palestinian experience that would be meaningful to the storyteller and his or her audience, and which would enable a mass witnessing of that experiencing, thus keeping the idea of Palestine alive in the Palestinian and Arab psyche'.[388] Even though Adam incessantly declares that his manuscript is not a work of literature or an attempt at a novel, he succeeds, however, in presenting his manuscript as 'an arena of struggle', to borrow Barbara Harlow's term.[389] She writes,

> [F]or the writers of resistance literature and the theorists of the resistance struggle, cultural production plays a decisive and critical role in the activation of what Edward Said has referred to as a "repressed or resistant literature". Resistance literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicised activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production.[390]

The 'arena of struggle' that Adam's manuscript becomes, and the manner through which Adam assumes ownership over it, politicise its materiality, revealing his profound preoccupation with space-time, from which he is systematically removed. His transgressive act of writing the *nakba* experience in the manner in which it demands to be written, unfettered and unrestrained, allows his manuscript as a spatial body or entity, to transcend its physicality. Sa'di and Abu-Lughod write,

---

[387] ibid, p. 99.
[388] Tahrir Hamdi, 'Bearing Witness in Palestinian Resistance Literature', *Race and Class*, 52.3 (2011): 21-42, p. 41.
[389] Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 2.
[390] ibid, pp. 28-9.

> The obsession with place and places, and the longing for the land may be especially characteristic of Palestinian memory not just because of the location of Palestinian social life in that early period […] or because, as philosophers tell us, all memory is embodied, but because the *nakba* was, above all, an odyssey, a mass movement of people.[391]

Haunted with this removal, the manuscript becomes Adam's 'produced' space; it is a space that he can belong to, own, and somehow control. It is a space that can contain the entirety of narrative — in the sense that it carries the said and the unsaid, at the same time. It is a 'mixed space', to borrow the term from Lefebvre, the space 'in a word, of representation: representational space'.[392] Taken in context, it is a space that challenges the systemic exclusion and silencing of the said narrative.

It is a space through which Adam can 'become' the Palestinian who endured (and still does) the *nakba*, instead of being stuck in beginnings that demand that he starts over with a different identity and story. His sentiments reflect Gilles Deleuze's statement in *Dialogues II* which declares the act of writing as a form of becoming.[393] When Adam finally adopts his own narrative and identity, he appropriates the space of silence imposed on him and decides to break it; he thus substitutes it with the space he creates for his story. Silence, as a realm and a space, can be employed to reveal difference and multiplicity. Looked at from this perspective, silence becomes subversive since it harbours within it multiple possibilities.[394] According to Bill Ashcroft, silence is not

> a *site* in any but the most metaphorical sense. But we might consider it a *space* — a space in and between languages — and a *horizon* to which all language is directed. It is perhaps at its most disruptive, rebellious and illicit when it appears as a space in literature. In its 'absent presence' silence, like the mirror, is the meeting point of the utopia and the real.[395]

---

[391] Sa'di and Abu-Lughhod, p. 14.
[392] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 203.
[393] See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. by Hugh Tomlison and Barbara Habberjam (Paris: Flammarion, 1977).
[394] Ashcroft, p. 147.
[395] ibid, p. 145.

The silence that the *al-Lidd* inhabitants, Adam included, have been reduced to, attests to their struggle to speak and remain silent at once. Between Manal constantly reiterating that they are left with nothing but their words, and Murad, stating that silence is a political position, Adam struggles between either writing his story or leaving it behind. He realises that sometimes, silence is more eloquent than words. However, at the same time and on more than one occasion, he likens his manuscript to a mirror, highlighting its utopic ideal that lingers between the unsaid and the said. Writing the ghetto experience can then be considered as an attempt at actualising this utopic ideal and the possibility of representation of a silenced people. The same struggle between speech and silence is echoed in Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* to which Adam refers multiple times throughout the novel. Following the horrific, traumatic experience of the Shatila massacre in Lebanon, Khalil exclaims, 'We've made a shelter out of words, a country out of words, and women out of words'.[396] Words and stories thus become the temporary space they live through. Writing these stories down, as Adam does, can be read as the production of a space that cannot be taken away from him, a space over which he is sovereign, a space he can return to, take refuge in, and rest.

The significance of Adam's writing is that he is writing memory. Such an act gains a further transgressive dimension since both acts, writing and remembering, entail a spatial reconstruction and reconfiguration that culminate, in Adam's case, in the production of the space of the manuscript. Thus 'the area of spatialising memory', which Adam exercises through re-mapping his experience and enclosing this map within the boundaries of a manuscript, 'is on the one hand, the territory of expression and creating identities, and on the other, the fight for

---

[396] Khoury, *Gate of the Sun*, p. 503.

power'.[397] To break the silence and write it, Adam needs to return to the beginning of his story, to the ghetto. This return necessitates that he succumbs to the flow of memory. He says, 'And the writing led me where it wanted, and I found myself emerging from the coffer of Waddah al-Yaman to climb into the coffer of my own story, and was obliged to go back to the beginning'.[398] In doing so, Adam is able to 'retrieve everything' he previously lost.[399] However, this return is not only significant because it facilitates this; its significance is that Adam's approach to his own identity is clearer since going back to his story parallels a return to his own self. Writing, specifically in times of conflict and transition, can be seen as a journey 'towards what we do not know and towards the shock of writing what we know, which will lead us to discover how writing changes things and does not only reflect them'.[400] We notice in Adam's writing of memory that it follows a back-and-forth movement in time and space, a movement denied him as a Palestinian in reality. Therefore, considering how both time and space are compromised, removed, and erased for the Palestinian, Adam's mobility across both, figuratively speaking, is, on the one hand, transgressive, and on the other, affirmative of a presence and a legitimacy that the Israeli state constantly attempts to revoke.

To Adam, memory is a homeland to those who do not possess any. And this specific characteristic, especially when taken in context, valorises memory-work and endows it with a sense of urgency. Adam also feels responsible and powerful; his task allows him the possibility and the chance to transform his lived reality, to re-arrange his life and re-create it. He says, 'These words that I write have become my mirrors. I look into them to discover the world and

---

[397] Slawomir Kapralski, 'The (Non-)Presence of the Jews in the Memoryscapes of South-Eastern Poland', *Sensus Historiae*, 9.4 (2012): 89-118, p. 89.
[398] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 244.
[399] ibid, p. 244.
[400] Elias Khoury, 'The Unfolding of Modern Fiction and Arab Memory,' *The Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association*, 23.1 (1990): 1-8, p. 8.

recompose it'.[401] However, Adam is not reconstructing his life in a void. Instead, he is

representing the experience of the ghetto and reconstructing a lost history. By doing so, he

challenges the rigid representation of historiography as dictated by the (dominant) victor, and the

systemic denial and suppression of an individual and collective experience. The novelist, for

Khoury, like a historian or a sociological analyst, in his/her ability to write history, is innocent

from the 'rigidity of power'; the novelist writes 'history for the communal consciousness, to

form it'.[402] The writer, thus, is able to break the chains binding silenced narratives and to

contribute to their reclamation. It is not surprising then that Adam takes pride in the fact that he

remembers everything. He announces that he is now compelled to write 'the truth — naked,

shocking, contradictory and cruel' as he lived it.[403]

Challenging the institutionalised and systemic oppression of historiography is best

exposed, in the novel, in a scene that joins Adam with a historian who refuses the former's

recollections because they are not documented officially. The historian accuses Adam of faking

history by falsifying and fictionalising events. This infuriates Adam since his main concern is to

write back against an exclusion which 'had a disastrous effect on the quest for Palestinian self-

determination'.[404] The historian further provokes Adam when he dismisses the latter's tales and

undermines their relevancy and validity. Accordingly, Adam says, 'What kind of nonsense is

that? […] The whole history of our Nakba is unwritten. Does that mean we don't have a history?

That there was no Nakba? Does that make sense?'[405] Adam never claims that literature

substitutes history. But his reaction accentuates the significant role played by literature in

---

[401] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 191.
[402] Khoury, *al Dhakira al Mafquda*, (Beirut: dar al Adab, 1982), p. 85.
[403] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 101.
[404] Said, 'Invention, Memory, Place', p. 184.
[405] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, pp. 162-63.

contributing to revealing absented individual stories which in turn resist injustice, exclusion, and misrepresentation. He writes,

> I wasn't suggesting faking history, just filling the gaps. He said imagination was alright for literature but not for writing history; although, if that's so, how does the historian expect us to write it? Are we supposed to leave it to the Zionists? And who told him that the histories that have been written of Palestine are true and not an out-and-out orgy of fakery?[406]

Adam does not write for recognition by Arab and Israeli historians. His tragedy does not need their acknowledgements: 'phooey to the scholarship of scholars, if it is going to remain captive to a mendacious story based on deficient documents'.[407] He rather writes to challenge the forgetfulness of his story. Here the act of telling, despite of and considering the multiplicity of narratives, counters those attempts to 'deprive Palestinians of their voice and their knowledge of their own history'.[408] Adam's manuscript can thus be considered a counter-hegemonic medium that exposes 'a voice from below', a subaltern, othered voice.[409]

Despite Adam's efforts to remain faithful to his memory by allowing it, without any restrictions, to flow on paper, he realises that it is still lacking; it is porous, foggy, and incomplete. The stories that he inherited from Manal and Ma'moun are also nothing more than 'word motes and memory shards', mere shrapnel.[410]Aware of the gaps in his memory, Adam resorts to research and interviews; he rummages through other people's memories. With a little bit of imagination, and in addition to a few words of his own, Adam celebrates the gaps in his own story instead of erasing them. 'I want my story to uncover its own gaps', he says, affirming that he is not writing a testimony; 'I'm not writing a witness report, I'm writing a story derived from the scraps of stories that I patch together with the glue of pain and arrange using the

---

[406] ibid, p. 164.
[407] ibid, p. 189.
[408] Masalha, p. 89.
[409] ibid, p. 9.
[410] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 314.

probabilities of memory'.[411] Exposing these gaps retains a significance of its own; what is missing is always as important as what is present, specifically within the power dynamic dominating the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. On another occasion, Adam states,

> For my part, I refuse to write from a deficient or gappy memory. I'm going to fill in all the gaps in the story and when I lack facts, I shall look for them in the works of others. Thus shall I construct my mirror, with which I shall make myself whole.[412]

A porous memory that necessitates resorting to that of other people accentuates the urgency of narration, and conjoins the individual and the collective in its affirmation and representation of a shared traumatic experience.

Adam does not seek, nor does he ever claim, to write a complete, coherent story. He is only concerned with one final attempt at affirmation and validation, not as a 'present-absentee', but as a human being. He writes,

> I'm not trying for a complete story, not to mention that what I'm writing here isn't a story but my final rehearsal for death. I'm not probing the past because I feel nostalgia for it — I hate nostalgia. I am, rather, surrendering to my memory, which is settling accounts with me before it too becomes extinct, at the moment of my own extinction and demise.[413]

Adam's manuscript transcends both its physicality and its functionality; it is not only a space that contains a certain story or transmits it or makes it visible. It is a space that has become a home, a refuge, a shroud for Adam's final rest, a map of experience, and a certificate of his presence.

Adam writes in an apparent tug between surrender and control; while at times he seems willing to completely surrender to his memory and its flow, he still manages to experiment with its form — not in the sense of binding it within one, but on the contrary, by letting his memory take the form it sees fit to express its full potential. Adam's memory takes form on paper. In this manner, writing becomes not a supplement or a mere complementary tool to memory, but, rather,

---

[411] ibid, p. 296.
[412] ibid, p. 218.
[413] ibid, p. 220.

an action that facilitates its construction. Adam becomes one of the *Fedayeen* from Ghassan

Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (1962) who instead of suffocating inside the tank, succeeds in

breaking out. He therefore demonstrates how any *recovery* of 'space and especially of repressed

spatial consciousness will, therefore, also make the "recovery" of alternative repressed

histories'.[414] The significance of acquiring an audience is accentuated across the novel through

the stories of Mufid, Khoulud, and Adam. In the grander context of the Palestinian collective

experience, Sa'di and Abu-Lughod state that the Palestinians were excluded and left to fend off a

power in whose 'hands was [the] apparatus of history production'.[415] They emphasise that

Palestinians 'find the absence of an audience to be painful,' for in the absence of 'palliatives or

moral solace, while facing the crushing demands of new lives as refugees or as second-class

citizens, they sometimes have dark visions of the world and tend toward either silence or

violence'.[416] Adam turns to neither, he chooses speech over silence, and writing over violence,

and still succeeds, whether intentionally or not, in reaping an audience to witness his narrative.

This tug between surrender and control that Adam experiences also manifests itself in his

exercise of agency and sense of autonomy over his narrative. As mentioned earlier, Adam

reclaims being a Palestinian who survived the ghetto, instead of adopting a myriad of identities

and stories and denying himself. Owning his story, Adam insistently exhibits this ownership over

its form or structure. As such, on more than one occasion throughout the novel, Adam prides

himself in not confining his memory to any form/structure or genre, not following a chronology

or flow of events, and not providing it with any closure. He states, 'I let my memory say what it

likes and its images generate themselves unordered, and that is why I don't care about the

---

[414] Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 276.
[415] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction', p. 12.
[416] ibid, p. 12.

ending, which I shall not, in any case, write'.[417] At this point, Adam no longer attempts to substitute life by writing it since now, writing and living become reflective of one another, as processes of tantamount significance. On another occasion he exclaims, 'I shall let my self address itself as it desires, without rules, I shan't change the names to make myself think that I'm writing a work of literature, and I shan't cobble together a framework'.[418] By writing in a non-conforming manner, independent of rules and regulations that bind his narrative in the confines (of form and content) of a certain method of reading history, Adam demands an alternative — one that is more engaged, more involved, and more aware and knowledgeable. Metafiction, in this sense, is nothing new to the readers of Khoury; in fact, he adopts it as a technique that aims to accentuate the difficulty of articulating silence and pain, on the one hand, and the political and agentive significance that such an act retains, on the other.

Additionally, Adam is aware of the gaps in both form and content, and allows himself to fill them, either by further breaking the form and flow of events (chronology) through interjections, or in filling in the gaps, by resorting to the memories of others. These interjections reveal themselves in between brackets and include: commentaries, memories, explanations, thoughts and entries, literary criticism, and so on. They serve as an affirmation of *owning* the space in which he writes; it is a space he controls, a space he can break, reconfigure, and re-arrange, highlighting thus his agency over his own narrative. There is a total of forty-one brackets distributed across four parts; Part I does not include any, Part II includes thirteen brackets, while Part III has eight, and Part IV twenty.

In addition to a broken and fragmented structuring, Adam's manuscript also fragments time; it is divided into four parts, the first of which is titled 'The Will' and comprises one

---

[417] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 113.
[418] ibid, p. 102.

chapter. The second part, titled 'The Coffer of Love Chest (concept paper for a novel, first draft)' is made up of seven chapters and comprises entries on Waddah al-Yaman. The third part focuses on Adam's own story and bears the title 'Adam Dannoun', and is made up of eight chapters. The fourth and final part is titled 'The Days of the Ghetto', and is a continuation of Adam's story and the ghetto experience, including recollections by Murad who fills in the gap of Adam's lost memory. This part is written in a non-linear manner that is unique to Adam's recollections and memories. The number of fragments amount to a total of twenty-five and reflects the logic of a troubled mind which uses writing to resist a discursive ghettoisation. While some chapters bear distinct titles, others fall under lists, whereby one chapter continues into the next, before abruptly ending and a new set of chapters beginning. He justifies such a division by announcing to the readers that he is following his memory. He even defies the whole genre by giving some of his fragments titles one would normally give a screenplay.

The manner in which Adam assumes ownership over content and form of his narrative reveals a structured attempt to transform his memories into a tangible account of an experience. Allowing his memory its flow into his manuscript, Adam engages in a form of mapmaking, a characteristic that Robert Tally Jr. sees in literary works.[419] To Tally, a map can potentially constitute itself in words as 'storytelling involves mapping, but a map also tells a story, and the interrelations between space and writing tends to generate new places and new narratives'.[420] Adam tells his story by going back in time to when it starts, back to the ghetto days. His narration is a re-imagining of a past, which entails, in turn, a re-imagining of a socio-spatial reality, and therefore a re-mapping of these spaces. In fact, Adam's narration of the ghetto days

---

[419] Robert Tally Jr., *Spatiality, the New Critical Idiom*, ed. by John Drakakis (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 43.
[420] ibid, p. 46.

begins by him providing a spatial map, not of the ghetto itself as he later does but of people's

lived experiences and everyday lives within their new confinement. This is specifically

illustrated in the fragment titled, 'The Map of Pain', from which Adam outlines the beginning of

his narrative. 'The map', he writes, was sketched 'with the barbed wire that marked the borders

of the ghetto'.[421] The constituents of this map, according to Adam, are more oppressive and

restrictive than the ghetto itself; he locates it in people, on their faces, in their actions, and

movements. He writes,

> I could recall everything. I saw the remnants of the people of Lydda living in a ghetto fenced off with wire
> by the Israelis, and I smelled death. I even saw before me the words in which my mother recounted to me
> the story of my birth, as though I were remembering them. I recalled everything.[422]

His remembrances come to him in images; through his imagination, he is able to reconstruct a

visual and spatially vivid projection of his memories. This space of memories, which he

translates into a written manuscript, is an agentive production in which Adam takes pride; it is an

affirmative act of a new beginning and at the same time of a final resting place. In a sense, his

manuscript becomes the place in which he can be born again and in which he can die at last, the

homeland he never had. He says, 'I'm putting my life together by collecting its pieces, unpicking

it and reweaving it, so as to make a new garment that can only be my shroud. Such is writing'.[423]

Not only is his manuscript a 'space' which he carved for himself, but also a place invested with

meaning and value. By doing so, the manuscript becomes a validation in the face of erasure and

oppression. Adam connects his personal experience of the *nakba* with those of others like him,

which foregrounds Adam's sense of belonging and reclamation of being a Palestinian who

survived the *al-Lidd* experience. The mental map he reconstructs of the *al-Lidd* inhabitants is

---

[421] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 295.
[422] ibid, pp. 99-100.
[423] ibid, p. 122.

woven to reveal these experiences as transcending the physical boundaries of the ghetto. He

writes,

> This map begins at the face of my mother, at Ma'moun's closed eyes, at Khuloud's dance, and Hatim al-
> Laqqis's calls for help before he vanished, at the stories of the captives returning from the cages, at the
> people bowing in front of the military governor, at the houses occupied by strangers, and so on.[424]

The act of weaving (in addition to cross-stitching and embroidering), already a significant act of

resistance that the Palestinian women still propagate across generations, is very significant

within this context. As far back as the *Odyssey*, the act of (un)weaving has symbolically

embodied a significant act of resilience in the face of hardships and oppression as well as a

cunning act of resistance against misrepresentation and narrative erasure. Both acts of resistance,

writing and weaving, are likened to one another and given prominence: Adam is a

weaver/creator of his own shroud, unafraid of dying; Adam is the narrator of his own story,

unafraid of breaking the silence; Adam is a producer of a space, completely his own, in which he

reclaims a lost time and a lost space. It is again Darwish that best captures this power which

Adam exhibits through his act of writing. Darwish says, 'the poem threads us through the

needle's eye/ to wear the *aba* of a new horizon'.[425] In Adam's case, writing allows him to

mediate between past and present and recall a lost time, while the manuscript serves as the

spatial representation and manifestation of his memory. The acts of writing and producing a text

(a spatial entity in itself), in Adam's case, directly involve the body. As such, both his experience

of space (and the aftermath of displacement, dispossession, loss, and exile, in addition to

perpetual ghettoisation) and the means through which he expresses this experience and tells it,

are embodied, socio-spatial practices. Such a practice enables him, as demonstrated, to reclaim

parts of time/history and space/geography denied him.

---

[424] Khoury, *My Name is Adam*, p. 295.
[425] Darwish, p.31

5.   Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the different practices through which the *al-Lidd* inhabitants and Adam appropriate and produce space, respectively. Through their mini-triumphs over the Israeli soldiers, the inhabitants are able to transcend their captivity momentarily. The two most prominent incidents in the ghetto, namely, Mufid's death and Khuloud's dance, turn its space into a site of protest and resistance. Through the acts of dance more prominently, the individuals concerned in both instances succeed in reclaiming both dominated body and space. What makes these practices more productive is not only the fact that they are repeated or affirmed, but most importantly is that they are witnessed and made public. However, despite the transgressions that they carry out during their encampment, those who survive the ghetto still carry with them the burden of their survival. This materialised, as illustrated in the case of Murad, for example, in the inhabitants' internalisation of the ghetto space and experience and their adoption of self-imposed silence. By doing so, they in turn contribute to the censorship inflicted on the Palestinian narrative. Adam comes to break this cycle, for himself in the first degree and for those he visits and interviews while researching, in the second. Adam tells his own story of the ghetto experience and forces some of the other inhabitants, like Murad, to reconstruct their memories of the ghetto in order to fill in the gaps of what has been left out (or silenced) from their history, in addition to what he fails to remember himself. The strength of Adam's manuscript lies in firstly revealing the unsaid and in his refusal to be written by someone else. By writing his own story and claiming agency over his manuscript through the control he demonstrates of both form and content, Adam reclaims his voice, his identity, and his sense of belonging; he is the son of a Palestinian narrative who actively refuses to be silent (or silenced) anymore.

Through producing a space that is entirely his, in which he articulates his experience, Adam unsettles the silence surrounding narratives that resemble his. He also emphasises its historical significance as he situates his narrative within the grander context of the Palestinian *nakba*. His manuscript, therefore, engages a discourse that contributes to resisting the silence enforced against the Palestinians. As such, Adam's attempt is a cross-over from a personal and an individual reclamation of a voice and an affirmation of an identity to a collective one.

The relationship of the *al-Lidd* inhabitants (Adam included) with their spaces, as presented in the novel and analysed in this study, reveal the intricate dimensions involved in social space that extend beyond its physicality. These dimensions incorporate power dynamics (which include concepts and techniques of opening/closing, separation and segregation, domination and resistance), socio-spatial practices (such as movement and mobility, spatial (re)production and appropriation), and the relationship between said space and its surroundings. The reading of *My Name is Adam* exposed in this chapter focuses on the practices through which the protagonists in the novel negotiate, move in, unsettle, challenge, appropriate, and produce space through and against various textual and non-textual productions. Through these practices, the protagonists are able to unsettle the hegemonic system that oppresses them by transforming their site of subjugation and erasure into a space of resistance.

This chapter also offers insight into the effect that social space, specifically that of discipline and confinement, has on the lives, practices, and socio-spatial, historical, and political experiences of its inhabitants. The significance of Khoury's novel is its socio-political context; he seeks to break the bondage of silence, to contribute to the fight against and the challenge of the systematic cultural erasure exercised by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinians. Khoury's novels, his recent trilogy included, create a space through which marginalised voices

narrate their own experiences of trauma and recall their own memories themselves. In the words

of Ella Shohat, 'The project of carving space for the suppressed narrative of Palestine has thus

meant a constant challenge to the Zionist discourse of national liberation'.[426] The inclusion of

multiple versions of the same story emphasises Khoury's resistance of historical hegemony.

After all, history 'is mostly written and rewritten by those in power'.[427] The variety of voices and

the multiple narratives of memory that are presented in the novel, form what Masalha calls the

'archaeology of a people criss-crossed with individual experiences'.[428] Such voices offer

narratives 'of suffering and *sumud* (steadfastness), of courage and resistance, born out of anger

and revolt against oppression'.[429] Khoury's novel contributes to the history-from-below

approach; the voices revealed in his novel are those of marginalised, ordinary people who live at

the margins of society, excluded by the political power structure, and whose narratives speak of

their everyday socio-spatial experiences. Their accounts are a challenge against erasure and

disappearance, and in the words of Harlow, 'the struggle over the historical record is seen from

all sides as no less crucial than the armed struggle'.[430]

Adam's acts of both writing and remembering contribute to enticing the articulation of a

traumatic event. The trauma experienced by the Palestinians extends to their struggle for

geography and history alike. Adam's is therefore an attempt to reclaim a story denied, and a

space confiscated. His manuscript, a space containing his memories and his experiences, can be

read as a transgression toward resisting this denial and this confiscation. Sayigh eloquently

expresses the significance of narration within this context by stating,

---

[426] Ella Shohat, 'Exile, Diaspora, and Resturn: The Inscription of Palestine in Zionist Discourse', *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings of Ella Shohat* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), pp. 164-77, p. 165.
[427] Masalha, p. 154.
[428] ibid, p. 211.
[429] ibid, p. 211.
[430] Harlow, p. 7.

> Though the cultural resources through which disaster-struck people cope with suffering are hard to articulate, they are surely a kind of cultural property that needs to be recorded so that the dispossessed are not forced into an appearance of helpless victims, but rather as agents of their own physical, cultural, and political survival.[431]

Adam writes to reclaim agency over representation and affirmation. He depicts that by transforming his manuscript into the most intimate of spaces; it is not only a space that holds his memories, or narrates an experience, or challenges a hegemonic system. Rather, Adam creates a space in which his narrative can be reborn, a space to which he can belong, and a shroud in which he can die. His manuscript is his truth and his return; whether that is taken to be a spiritual return, a metaphoric or symbolic one, or a political one, is a matter of reading.

---

[431] Sayigh, 'Silenced Suffering', pp. 3-4.

THEIR WAR STORIES: EXPERIENCING SPACE, MAKING PLACE IN RABI' JABER'S *TUYUR AL HOLIDAY INN*

1.   Introduction

This chapter investigates the experience of space and the processes of making place in the Ayyub Building, as presented in Rabi' Jaber's novel *Tuyur al Holiday Inn* (2011), or The Birds of the Holiday Inn.[432] The focus on spatial experiences falls in line with the general thesis undertaken by this study. This chapter specifically explores the effect of these experiences on practices of making place in light of the changing physical and social organisation of the building and its neighbourhood. The novel presents the civil war and the influx of migrants of a lower socio-economic background as the reasons behind this forced re-organisation. As this chapter argues, the residents of the building, old and new, are forced to negotiate their sense of place. This forced negotiation reflects on their everyday socio-spatial practices as well as their place-making processes. The displaced and the disappeared are also featured in Jaber's novel. However, their presence is that of absence. This creates a reminder, prevalent throughout the novel as shall be explained, of narratives that go missing and voices that remain unheard. These form an emphasis on the significance of bringing to light voices from below, against the monolithic official historical narrative which excludes them.

The experience of space in this novel is read against the backdrop of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) during which the events of *Tuyur* take place. It is revealed through the multiple stories and interactions of the residents of the Ayyub Building. However, the residents' experience of city and building, both of which have been turned into a war zone as shall be

---

[432] Jaber's novel has not been translated, mostly due to the author's wishes. Therefore, all translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

explored, are valid historical events in their own right. It is the concern of this chapter to investigate how each of these articulated stories represented in *Tuyur*, unsettle, in their multiplicity, the monopolisation of The War Story and its monolithic representation of the human condition. War in this novel is not read as a singular historical event. As multiple war narratives are juxtaposed and revealed in this novel, Jaber seems to be calling for an alternative reading of history. He also calls for re-imagining a war discourse toward one that accounts for absented voices, revealing, as such, the problematic official war narrative as represented in Lebanese history and politics.

The events of *Tuyur* take place during the Two-Year War (1975-1976) which featured one of the most gruesome of battles, the Battle of Hotels. Following the battle, Beirut was segregated between a Christian East and a Muslim West.[433] In *Tuyur*, the Ayyub Building, located in the Ashrafieh area in East Beirut, witnesses the everyday terrors of shelling, random checkpoints, kidnappings (and other traumatic violent incidents), heavy militarisation and fighting. Scenes of militarisation overtake the city; barricades and sandbags secure building entrances; and posters of martyrs and the disappeared compete over wall-space with public announcements, safety procedures, and obituaries. Some buildings, the Ayyub Building included, receive an upgrade from the militiamen holding the area as its entrance gets turned into an operational fighting post. The influx of migrants, specifically those of a lower socio-economic background, complicates the residents' sense of place even further. Shacks selling vegetables and fish, random street vendors, and newcomers with different lifestyles, described in the novel as filthy, noisy, and violent, change the socio-spatial identity of both the neighbourhood and the building. The original residents view the arrival of the newcomers as threatening and their practices as

---

[433] See Chapter One.

unbecoming. Following the departure of the Muslims from the Eastern sector of Beirut, the conflict in the area becomes concentrated on socio-economic differences instead of sectarian ones. Samira Aghacy describes the Ayyub Building as a 'place that inscribes the social order as it changes over time, and many of the encounters within the inner space juxtapose gender and class differences. The various apartments reflect a fixed social order and prescribed patterns of behaviour'.[434] As a result, she continues, political sectarian power relations within the building 'begin to change'.[435] And the struggle for belonging and identity-formation is manifest in the constant negotiations of place-making within the building and in its neighbourhood.

This chapter analyses the processes of making place within this context. By focusing on the everyday, in all its multiplicity of socio-spatial practices, in all its difference and heterogeneity, this study exposes the various ways in which these protagonists represent their war experience. Furthermore, this chapter argues that Jaber's unique style, which manipulates the boundaries between history and fiction, and his focus on multiple narratives, as well as his employment of intertextuality, in which he juxtaposes fictional fragments with journalistic ones, facilitates exposing these narratives as events in their own right, as shall be explained. The following two sections explore the political and historical setting of *Tuyur* (the Battle of Hotels) and the literary techniques employed by Jaber in this novel.

2.   Brief Encounters with Context

The complicated relationships that develop between the different residents of the Ayyub Building are displayed through the different processes of place-making that they each undertake.

---

[434] Samira Aghacy, 'Domestic Spaces in Lebanese War Fiction: Entrapment or Liberation?', *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*, ed. by Ken Seigneurie (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2003), pp. 83-99, p. 85.
[435] ibid, p. 85.

This conflict can initially be brought back to the different way in which these residents understand and experience space. A brief exploration of context allows for a more accurate reading of these differences, practices, and processes of place-making. Informed by Edward Soja's emphasis on 'how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life', and 'how human geographies are filled with politics and ideology', this chapter seeks to identify and explore the inherent consciousness and ideologies that make up space and place within the Ayyub Building.[436]

The Battle of Hotels (1975-76) was named one of the most ferocious of battles during the war. The battle was a fight over territory between the Lebanese Front (Christian right-wing militias backed by the Lebanese Army and holding East Beirut) and the Lebanese National Movement (Leftist militias backed by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and holding West Beirut). It involved several hotels: the Holiday Inn, the St. Georges, the Phoenicia Intercontinental, Melkart, the Palm Beach, the Excelsior, the Normandy, the Royal, the Hilton, and the Alcazar. Other prominent high-rises that were incorporated into the battleground included the Burj al Murr (al Murr Tower) in the Kantari District in West Beirut. Fawwaz Traboulsi describes each of the warring factions as fervent to 'impose itself on the country while simultaneously imposing itself as the unique representative of its own "camp", while the increased involvement of the PLO in the fighting encouraged the intervention of outside parties, notably Israel and Syria'.[437] Around 25,000 fighters from both sides were involved in the fighting, and more than 1000 victims and 2000 injured.[438]

---

[436] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 6.
[437] Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 198.
[438] Moe-Ali Nayel, 'Beirut's Bullet-Riddled Holiday Inn — A History of Cities in 50 Buildings, Day 28', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2015.

The LNM launched the Battle of Hotels to 'dislodge the Phalange militia from a mixed quarter of West Beirut that was located on the strategic road to the central bank'.[439] The offensive was a reaction to 'Black Saturday', a massacre which took place on 6 December 1975, carried out by the Phalange militia in East Beirut. The massacre was triggered 'by the discovery of the corpses of four slain Phalange members', and resulted in the slaughter of 'some 200 Muslim civilians'.[440] The Battle of Hotels was further complicated by the intervention of the Lebanese Army (affiliated with the LF) to 'recover the Saint-Georges and Phoenicia hotels', which in turn spurred the intervention of the PLO in the fighting.[441] Accompanying the hotel front, there raged a series of retaliation massacres between the two factions. The battle was a struggle over territory in Downtown Beirut; however, 'the modalities of the violence were more complex than a quest for territory'.[442] The hotel, as a physical and social structure in Beirut, was neither a passive object nor a pre-meditated 'performed symbol of identity'.[443] Rather, 'it was a real-and-imagined space', according to Sara Fregonese, that 'gradually became part of the geopolitical imaginations of the militias that transcended the urban scale'.[444] In the physical and social dimension of its structure, the hotel holds a dual value; while its verticality 'represents a militarily strategic asset during conflict', it also retains a significance as a social space.[445] The Holiday Inn is a prime example in this regard since 'for almost its entire existence, [it] has stood

[439] Traboulsi, p. 198.
[440] ibid, p. 198.
[441] ibid, p. 198.
[442] Sara Fregonese, 'Between a Refuge and a Battleground: Beirut's Discrepant Cosmopolitanisms', *The Geographical Review*, 102.3 (2012): 316-36, p. 326.
[443] ibid, pp. 326-27.
[444] ibid, p. 327.
[445] Sara Fregonese and Adam Ramadan, 'Hotel Geopolitics: A Research Agenda', *Geopolitics*, 20.4 (2015): 793-813, p. 802.

as a ruin overlooking west and central Beirut'.[446] Since the beginning of the Battle of Hotels, the

Holiday Inn became

> a strategic base for armed militias to target the city below. Fighting between rival militias spread across Beirut, and a bloody frontline (the "Green Line"), dividing the city in two, was sealed amidst the high-rise hotels at the waterfront. The Holiday Inn was the last stronghold in a six-month battle, after which the hotel district became a no-man's land for the rest of the war. The hotels became strategic assets within the urban geopolitics of the civil war.[447]

In *Tuyur*, Raymond Zakhour, a resident in the Ayyub Building and a militiaman, fights in the

Battle of Hotels, and specifically on the Holiday Inn front, as a member of the LF. In a fragment

featuring him, the fictional vignette about Raymond is interrupted by a journalistic excerpt, with

the subtitle 'Thursday's Newspaper 25-3-1976'. The excerpt is a report by foreign journalists

about the Battle of Hotels and announces that, 'No civil war in the world witnessed days as crazy

as those witnessed by the hotels' fronts'.[448] It is even included in between quotation marks as if

to signify and validate its authenticity. The foreign reporters' comment on the ferocity of the

battles on the hotels' fronts is further supported by the personal, everyday experiences of

Raymond and his girlfriend as fighters. The personal and the political are juxtaposed here in such

a manner as to form a dialectical relationship, whereby not only the battle but also its direct

personal experience by the fighters is read as an event.

The significance of the title of Jaber's novel is its direct reference to the context and its

significance. While the 'Holiday Inn', in the title, refers to the Battle of Hotels in general and to

the Holiday Inn front in specific, the word 'birds' refers to the atrocity committed against the

militias who invaded the hotel by those defending it. In fact, the defenders were known to have

thrown their enemies from off the top floors of the hotel as they were cleansing it from the

attackers to safeguard their territory and defeat the latter's attempt to expand theirs inside the

---

[446] ibid, p. 802.
[447] ibid, p. 802.
[448] Rabi' Jaber, *Tuyur al Holiday Inn* (Beirut: Dar al Tanwir, 2012), p. 146.

drawn green line (into West Beirut). A former militiaman, Ibrahim Abu Darwish, who

participated in the Holiday Inn front as a member of the LNM, told the *National Public Radio*

how they threw the enemy from 'the top to the bottom', without any signs of regret.[449]

However, Jaber's play on the word 'birds' in the title is complicated later in the text, as a

more 'optimistic' picture is drawn in fragment '#120: The Howayek Family 8 — 7th Floor'.

Bchara Howayek is a photojournalist who visits the Holiday Inn along with a British journalist,

and meets the militias at their posts. While there, Bchara describes the charred furniture, the

broken and skewed portraits hanging on the wall or sprawled on the ground. At some point,

however, he sees a few birds flying from behind the bar and snaps a picture, which a week later

he sees published in *The Times* with the title 'The Birds of the Holiday Inn — West Beirut'.[450]

The bird in this picture is not the militiaman who is thrown to his death from off the roof of the

Holiday Inn, but the bird who has flown out of its own volition towards the vast possibility of

freedom.

As the above demonstrates, the reader of *Tuyur* is informed of the Battle of Hotels and the

Holiday Inn front either through the narrative of Raymond's experience there, or through the

journalistic vignettes and excerpts that interrupt the narrative, be it Raymond's or that of other

characters. While the first exposes the first-hand experience of Raymond and other fighters (none

of whom are residents of the *Ayyub* Building, with the exception of Raymond), the journalistic

excerpts are more removed or less personal updates about the battle. The outcome is a complex

conceptualisation of the events and an affirmation of the validity and significance of personal

experiences of battle and violence. In a sense, the two come to complement one another, forming

---

[449] Alice Fordham, 'Beirut's Holiday Inn: Once Chic, Then Battered, Still Contested', 27 May 2014, *National Public Radio*.
[450] Jaber, p. 431.

a dialogue between the multiple representations of an event and/or incident. This complexity is made more visible in a fragment that narrates Raymond's final battle during which his militia loses their front to the opposing faction and Raymond almost loses his life. The fragment reads,

> Raymond Issa Zakhour lingered at the edge of death in the Intensive Care Room for 72 hours. Life was cheap during the last week of March 1976. But the doctors at [the hospital of] Hôtel Dieu de France kept him alive for this specific reason: life seemed precious to them as the hotel front faltered one hotel after another (the Holiday Inn, then the Hilton, then the Royal, then the Normandy), and the enemy advanced towards the port threatening East [Beirut]. East [Beirut] was besieging the *al Nab'a*, and *Jisr al Basha*, and *Tal al Zaatar*. *Fatah* crawled in and besieged East [Beirut]. Terror struck the shelters. The rumour went around from mouth to mouth like a rat infected with the plague: the Palestinians, the *Murabitun*, and the communists were gathering their heavy artillery on the axes of battle to invade East [Beirut].[451]

The above vignette exposes the situation as it was on the ground at the same time that it reveals the concern and terror that those in East Beirut were facing as a result of their defeat in the Battle of Hotels. Additionally, it reiterates the danger which haunts the residents of the Ayyub Building; the possibility that the LNM will invade East Beirut is prevalent throughout the novel.

3.   **Jaber's Literary Style: Structure, Intertextuality, and the Multiplicity of Narratives**

As an acclaimed and established novelist, Jaber is well-known for his unique literary style that primarily unsettles the problematic distinction between history and fiction, through the employment of a variety of techniques. These techniques, which include fragmentation, polyvocality, and intertextuality, facilitate exposing the everyday of the ordinary individual whose experience is overlooked by historical accounts. Thus, it can be said that Jaber's style contributes to the reinvention of the historical novel. While this is not a novelty to historical novels, Jaber's style is significant when considered in context of a silenced narrative within a continued atmosphere of suppression. Jaber's focus on the everyday lends meticulous attention to the residents' socio-spatial practices through which processes of place-making, within the

---

[451] ibid, pp. 260-61.

Ayyub Building, are initiated, negotiated, and contested. The multiplicity of stories, which abound in number and version, offer alternative readings and understandings of the Event of the civil war. However, this multiplicity does not aim to replace or undermine the war as an event. Rather, it seeks to challenge the dominance of a monolithic representation of a historic event, which has been founded on exclusion and silencing.[452] As a result, this chapter claims that *The War Story* is replaced by *their war stories*, and the Lebanese Civil War can no longer be treated as a singular event in history. Rather, these experiences themselves — sometimes presented in the first-person point of view and others in the third — become events in their own right. This novel contributes to a model of memory-work that has been absented and scarce since the official termination of the Lebanese civil war. In fact, it was only recently that initiatives such as Beit Beirut (Museum and Urban Culture Centre) and UMAM for Documentation and Research were established, in 2016 and 2005, respectively. However, it is not the aim of this study to engage in a comparative analysis of the novel's role in the said memory-work since that would betray the limits of this study and manipulate its scope and direction. What this study is concerned with is the novel's role in offering a re-imagining of a counter-discourse about the war through its representation of personal narratives (usually unaccounted for) as well as its unique employment of intertextuality that problematises the distinction between fiction and history.

Jaber's novel is not divided into chapters per se, but into what resembles fragments, vignettes and excerpts instead. These fragments tell the stories of the 19 families residing in the Ayyub Building. The fragments are numbered to a total of 176, with each bearing the title of the family it represents along with the floor number on which they are on, such as for example, '64: The Howayek Family — Seventh Floor'. The fragments alternate between the stories of the

---

[452] See Chapters One and Four.

different family members, without necessarily adhering to a certain chronology. The fragments also alternate between writings in the first-person point of view and the third, sometimes within the same fragment. The novel is divided into two parts, the first of which ends with Fragment #111, with no clear inherent logic to explain the abrupt ending. Both parts begin in the same way, however, with a different list of those that went missing during the Lebanese civil war, some of whom are residents of the Ayyub Building. The list retains the style and format of newspaper announcements, a technique that is prevalent throughout this novel and which will be returned to at a later point in this chapter. However, suffice it now to mention that such a technique is adopted by Jaber to complicate the distinction between fiction and reality, to challenge the monolithic representation of historical accounts, and to validate the legitimacy of personal narratives.

Each fragment, with its distinct narrative voice, allows the reader glimpses into the private and personal socio-spatial everyday experiences of the characters during the war, and the consequent trauma, terror, and violence that it entails. As if to make the stories more credible or valid, some fragments, specifically those in the first person, are included in between quotation marks. These specific fragments range across varied genres: quoted letters, journal entries, or dated testimonies which are claimed to have been published in a particular newspaper. The first-person point of view here, not only gains voice, credibility, and validity, but becomes alive and real to the reader. The alternation between different fictional voices produces a complex relationship between characters (and narrators) and the readers, while at the same time complicating the fictional presence/absence of the former. The result is an open window into the everyday experiences of these characters, with the opportunity to read them from a variety of angles. Jaber, for instance, juxtaposes first-person fictional accounts about first-hand experiences

by a certain character, with journalistic accounts of violent incidents of kidnapping, torture, rape, and displacement. This juxtaposition is significant as it potentially exposes the reader not only to news and headlines, but also to the inner thoughts, feelings, guilt, and various other affectations that the characters go through as they experience them in the novel. With the same event represented on the news and elaborated on through the first-hand experience of the character, the reader is forced into an alternative textuality. He/she are compelled to a different reading of both history and fiction. The significance of this opportunity as such is a matter of representation in the sense that most of these characters are usually dismissed, misrepresented, or not represented at all. However, they are now presented with a chance to speak for themselves, such as the militiamen, Jirji Khoury and Raymond Zakhour, the migrants and the displaced, the newcomers into the building, or the ordinary and the less socio-economically privileged, such as the concierge, Raghida Zaghloul. In such a manner, the inclusion of multiple perspectives on a specific incident or event, complicates historical truth and representation in a manner more faithful to the experience of the people in times of war, rather than the event, so that their experiences become events in their own right.

Additionally, structure plays an important role in facilitating this manipulation of the boundaries between fiction and history. Nearly every fragment is itself written in an interrupted manner; nearly every fragment includes within it various interjections in the form of juxtaposed vignettes. They are not, for example, mere flashbacks, memories, monologues, or dialogues that can be used to interrupt the flow of a certain narration. But they also include vignettes of a different genre altogether. In addition to juxtaposing fictional vignettes with journal entries, letters, and testimonies, Jaber also uses journalistic and historical vignettes, in the form of newspaper clippings, public announcements, commercial ads, references to posters, itineraries

(the contents of a room, a drawer, a photo album), menus, and other forms of lists. Such

juxtapositions and intertextuality are prevalent in most of Jaber's novels. In *Bayrut: Madinat al*

'Alam, for example, Jaber includes an eight-page bibliography of his sources. The inclusion,

while adding credibility to his writings, complicates and problematises itself at the same time

since it is included within a medium that does not usually rely on it. The outcome is a text that

challenges not only the rigidity of historical accounts, but also the distinction professed between

history and fiction, the real and the imagined.[453] The juxtaposition of narrative fragments with

others that are historical or journalistic brings forth the questions of documentation and archiving

that are prevalent in Jaber's novels. For David Wrisley, for example, Jaber's novels do more than

instigate a provocation of a post-national space.[454] He further states that Jaber's novels go

beyond Kamal Salibi's notion of 'a creative expansion of the archive, since they accompany such

imaginative storytelling with a sophisticated, self-reflexive skepticism about the nature of

historical narration itself'.[455]

   In a disclaimer through which he opens *Tuyur*, Jaber further complicates this relationship

between fiction and history. He writes, 'This novel is a work of fiction. Any resemblance of

characters, events, and places to real individuals, events, and places is mere coincidence devoid

of any intentionality'.[456] Such a disclaimer is nothing new to Jaber's readers. In fact, Jaber seems

keen on such disclaimers to the extent that they have become a signature, not because they are

original to him, but because they are read against the techniques employed that problematise, if

not contradict, his statement. The below section offers insight on Jaber's intertextuality as an

---

[453] See Kamal Salibi, *Bayrūt wal zamān: Qira'a fi thulāthiyyat Rabī' Jabir Bayrūt madinat al 'ālam* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009).
[454] See David Wrisley, 'Metafiction Meets Migration: Art from the Archives in Rabee Jaber's *Amerika*', *Mashriq & Mahjar*, 1.2 (2013): 99-119, p. 104.
[455] ibid, p. 104.
[456] Jaber, p. 6.

attempt to understand the context within which the novel is set, as well as the processes of place-making that the characters undertake within the building as a result. This understanding aims to set the grounds for a reading of these characters' experiences as events in their own rights, transgressions in the face of the monopolisation of the War Story.

Manipulating the Boundaries of History and Fiction

The relationship between history and fiction is thorny and cannot simply be reduced to a distinction between what is true and what is false, or between what is 'known and what is made-up'.[457] According to Stacie Friend, fiction as a genre is distinguished by an authorial intention that 'readers imagine' or 'make-believe' certain events or content, 'in virtue of recognising that very intention'.[458] Authors of non-fiction, on the other hand, invite their readers to believe the assertions that they make.[459] In Jaber's case, authorial intention is problematised through his employment of intertextuality — or the 'hybridisation' of the fiction genre —, as well as the exposure of multiple narratives pertaining to the same 'event'. Furthermore, the distinction maintained above by Friend cannot be effected in a text such as *Tuyur*. The blurring of the distinction between the fictional and the factual in Jaber's narratives, is the result of what Francisco Rodriguez Sierra calls narrative cycles that Jaber employs.[460] These cycles operate 'by suggesting links between intratextual events and characters, on the one hand, and the extratextual factual world, on the other'.[461] Both his employment of intertextuality (and the juxtaposition of

---

[457] Stacie Friend, 'Fiction as Genre', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 112 (2012): 197-209, p. 180.
[458] ibid, p. 182.
[459] ibid p. 182.
[460] Francisco Rodriguez Sierra, 'Fictional Boundaries in the "Journalistic Fiction" of Gabriel García Márquez and Rabee Jaber', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 37 (2017): 199-228, p. 199.
[461] ibid, pp. 199-200.

fictional and journalistic narrations), as well as his multiplicity of voices and narratives, allow for the intratextual and the extratextual to overlap, coincide, and mesh into one another.

This intertextuality and the overlapping of fiction and history in Jaber's novel allow him to simultaneously construct and deconstruct 'narratives about the past'.[462] Wrisley points to a 'strong ambivalence about the power of [the] historical narrative in the present'.[463] This is a technique that Jaber has been faithful to across his works of fiction. The intertextuality that Jaber employs necessitates a re-reading of history; it 'opens up a past — an unstable past that haunts the unstable present — allowing it to circulate amongst contemporary readers keen to make sense of twentieth-century Lebanon'.[464] History, as such, is deemed incompetent to carry the weight of the human experience in full. Like Adam in Elias Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto* who resorts to the stories of the other inhabitants to fill in the gaps of (an absented) history and those of his own memory, intertextuality and polyvocality, in Jaber's novel, serve, not the replacement of history, but its enrichment. Wrisley writes, 'One of the primary means for representing the confrontation with fragmentary historical records is the use of the different narrative voices'.[465]

In *Tuyur*, Jirji Khoury, a former militiaman who fought alongside the Phalangists during the civil war, and a resident of the Ayyub Building, writes down his experience of the war in the form of testimonies (published in *al Hurriyya*, a daily newspaper, with references to a specific date of publication, 1986) or journal entries, both of which are vignettes included in between quotation marks. Jirji is not the only voice that writes in the first person. The experience that Jirji narrates is more intimate, detailed, and personal than any rendering of the occurrences and development on the fronts reported in newspapers or on the radios against which Jirji's vignettes

---

[462] Wrisley, p. 100.
[463] ibid, p. 100.
[464] ibid, p. 104.
[465] ibid, p. 109.

are juxtaposed. Considered and read together, the juxtaposed narrative written from Jirji's perspective and the journalistic reports and records informing the same event or incident mentioned by Jirji, allow for a more life-like rendering of the experience of war, which poses the question of the role of fiction and its complicated relationship with history.

However, despite Jaber's construction and representation of Jirji as a real historical figure, *Tuyur* is still considered a work of fiction regardless of its infringement upon history and the blurred distinction between the two. This separation of the historical novel such as *Tuyur* from 'nonfictional kinds of writings such as history and journalism' signals 'its adoption of a new view of the historical process shaping the relation of character to event'[466]. Instead of prioritising the event, as historical accounts do, novels such as Jaber's, are more concerned with people and their experiences, with the human condition during war. Jaber's techniques, therefore, come to call on 'history in order to determine precisely the limits of the profession and [reject] history through his clever and satirical interlinking methods'.[467] To use Barbara Foley's words, Jaber's novel 'participates in a broader transformation of historical consciousness' since it calls for a reading of history, here the Lebanese civil war, from different angles instead of just one.[468] In such a manner, Jaber

> summons the voice of history, builds it, contemplates it and transforms it into an echo that rebounds in many different directions, proving that the real literatteur makes a connection between the text and the historical environment that produced it on the one hand, and history and the distressing human time that lurks within it on the other.[469]

Additionally, Jaber's incorporation of a real figure in his novel not only complicates and validates the experiences of ordinary people in history, but can also be understood as mocking

---

[466] Barbara Foley, 'The Historical Novel', *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 143-84, p. 144.
[467] Faisal Darraj, 'The Voice of Writing and Dawn of History', *Banipal*, 17 (2003): 4-6.
[468] Foley, p. 144.
[469] Darraj, p. 6.

history's incompetence at representing them adequately. 'Factual references', according to Foley, 'in the historical novel must be plausible, yet they need make no pretension to a literal retelling of events'.[470] Jaber transcends this pretension by presenting not only the figure of the militiaman, but also that militiaman's own testimonies, some of which have already been published elsewhere. This presence 'verifies the trajectory of the plot; when the corroborative preface or footnote is attached to the text, it authenticates the proportionality embedded in the analogous configuration'.[471]

In such a manner, Jirji is a prime example of how Jaber, through his narrative style that leaves much room for intimate details of the everyday and the personal, transforms the accounts of his characters (i.e., their experiences of the everyday during war) into events in themselves. An elaboration on the notion of the event, as read in this study, is here imperative. Gilles Deleuze distinguishes between the historical event and the pure event.[472] While the first is understood as an impersonal and incorporeal event that constitutes a border in time, in the sense that it creates a distinctive determining reference to the time before it and the time after it, the second is seen as a movement and a becoming that transcends the boundaries of time, by switching between past and future. The first is monolithic, determining, rigid, and 'linked to a distinctively *modern* political order — an order that is based upon the notion of an indisputable sovereign presence as an originary voice of truth and meaning'.[473] The second is linked

> to paradoxes of thought, sense, and experience — as ambiguous events that seem to lack a straightforward connection to a present state of affairs. The pure event highlights something much more paradoxical and indeterminate, eluding the "being" of subjects, objects, and separate moments in time.[474]

---

[470] Foley, p. 145.
[471] ibid, p. 145.
[472] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1987).
[473] Tom Lundborg, *Politics of the Event: Time, Movement, Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 2.
[474] ibid, p. 3.

Therefore, rather than a 'clear and present "being"', the pure event expresses an ambiguous process of *becoming*'.[475] In such a manner, it eludes and resists the monolithic rigidity of The Story, displacing its (mis)representation and monopolisation. As such, 'the pure event can also be said to elude the systems of representation that order life in accordance with successive moments in time, historical timeliness, narrative orders, stable identities, and clear temporal boundaries'.[476] The pure event, therefore, seems more faithful to how human beings undergo a certain experience.

Furthermore, a traumatic experience, such as the Lebanese civil war, for example, is not made sense of in a linear manner; we attempt to understand it only in retrospect, by moving back and forth in time; every time we remember the trauma, we seem to be reliving it. Therefore, there seems to be a constant movement between past and future, with no clear definite distinction as to where each starts and ends — a constant becoming, since there is no 'middle point, or present, in relation to which these movements can be tied'.[477] The constant movement across the temporal plane that is emblematic of the traumatic recall engenders a 'sense in which life itself is suddenly transform[ed] into the uncertain and the unpredictable'; in other words, '[s]omething has happened, a movement that cuts through deep-rooted perceptions of what everyday life is "supposed" to be'.[478] This movement resists comprehension and grapples in its own void and disruption. The result is either a failure of language or its silencing, such as the case with Adam and the ghetto inhabitants in Khoury's *Awlad al Ghetto*, or its insufficiency to 'make sense' and attempt to understand 'what has happened and what is seen'.[479] In the latter, there exists a

---

[475] ibid, p. 3.
[476] ibid, p. 3.
[477] ibid, p. 17.
[478] ibid, pp. 18-9.
[479] ibid, p. 21.

'widening gap between what is seen and what can be said',[480] and the validity of the multiplicity

of narratives. That is because the traumatic event 'exceeds experience'; it resists explanation and

narration since it lays 'outside the worlds we have made for ourselves'.[481] However, that does

not mean it cannot be written about, 'but words always in a sense fail: they are insufficient. And

their failure is precisely a failure to capture what was traumatic about what has happened'.[482]

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as

> the story of wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language.[483]

In such a manner, the multiple stories and narratives told about the war experience and presented

in their heterogeneity and non-linearity in Jaber's novel, articulate what official historical

accounts have left out. They are the voices that have been missing from record and accounts, and

subjects who have been excluded or silenced.

However, despite manipulating the boundaries between history and fiction, the real and

the imagined, the problematic lack of distinction between these concepts also proposes the

inevitability and necessity of their coexistence. In fact, to Jaber, history and fiction cannot blend;

however, their coexistence is 'necessary, and the text can neither privilege nor silence one at the

expense of the other'.[484] The following section explores this coexistence as foundational for the

reading of the processes of making place in the everyday. *Tuyur* succeeds in representing an

'experience that cannot be conveyed by "natural" discourse in *any* manner or form', whereby the

---

[480] ibid, p. 21.

[481] Jenny Edkins, 'The Absence of Meaning: Trauma and the Events of 11 September', *The Information Technology, War and Peace Project, The Watson Institute for International Studies*, http://infopeace.org/911/index.cfm?id=4#

[482] ibid, par. 5.

[483] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience, Trauma, Narrative, History* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4. See also, Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and Cath Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[484] Ghenwa Hayek, 'Rabi' Jaber's *Bayrut* Trilogy: Recovering an Obscured Urban History', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 42 (2011): 183-204, p. 192.

narrative acts as complementary to the juxtaposed journalistic fragments that interrupt its flow.[485]

While this juxtaposition and intertextuality complicate the relationship between fiction and reality, it by no means seeks to place one in opposition to another. History is still the reference point against which these narratives fall and within which they occur and are articulated. In fact, these individual and personal experiences, more intimate, detailed, and contradictory in nature, cannot be made sense of without studying their interplay with the more abstract and incorporeal historical event (or referential context). This constant interaction 'and dynamic interplay between the paradoxes and movements of the pure event and the content and temporal borders of the historical event' is what Lundborg refers to as the '*politics of the event*'.[486] These movements make up the historical event but go 'missing' in its final production; however, they do not completely disappear, according to Lundborg, but remain on the margins or in the background, 'expressing a never-ending potential to spring back to life and disrupt what has been actualised or produced'.[487] The multiplicity of the stories and voices presented in *Tuyur* in its expression of the everyday war experience can therefore be read as a springing back to life of this potential and a disruption of the monopolisation of the war experience by history. In such a manner, the multiplicity of voices and narratives presented in *Tuyur* produce an alternative reading of the normative, historical discourse of the Lebanese civil war which endorsed a state-sponsored amnesia.[488] They 'open up to something different and unknown which is yet to come and still to be determined', disrupting the order's representation of history and its normative practices of exclusion.[489]

---

[485] Dorrit Cohn, 'Fictional versus Historical Lives: Borderlines and Borderline Cases', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 19.1 (1989): 3-24, p. 6.
[486] Lundborg, p. 7.
[487] ibid, p. 7.
[488] See Chapter One.
[489] Lundborg, p. 18.

Within the specific Lebanese context, Zeina Halabi contends that with the outbreak of the civil war, 'Beirut became a recurrent, if not the most central motif in the Lebanese war novel', producing a literature 'akin to that of the 1967 defeat, which introduced to Arabic literature what Idwar Kharrat called "the new literary sensibility"'[490]. In fact, Lebanese novelists 'who write about the war tackled the violent disposition the city represented as both victim and victimiser'.[491] What is of interest to this chapter is Halabi's emphasis on Jaber's ability to '[reinvent] the historical novel, both thematically and stylistically.[492] Re-inventing or re-writing history in Jaber's novels, through his employment of intertextuality, stems from the former's belief in the 'inevitability of channelling his precursors', as well as from his emphasis on the role of the archive, prevalent throughout his work.[493] However, Jaber understands 'mimesis not as blind reproduction of the precursor's work. Rather, he defines it as the creation of a new text by re-writing the old'[494]. The publication of his trilogy *Bayrut: Madinat al 'alam* (Beirut: A City of the World), in 2003, led scholars and critics, such as 'Abbas Baydoun and Kamal Salibi, to regard Jaber 'as the master of the postmodern historical novel, weaving intertextuality and metafiction into historical documentation'.[495] In *Tuyur*, in a fragment introducing the Howayek family residing in the *Ayyub* Building, for example, the flow of the narration is interrupted by a detailed account of the al-Fanar (an area in East Beirut) incident, with direct references made to Black Saturday, and the specific date (06-12-1975) on which it happened.[496] The interruption is included in between quotation marks, as if to indicate, not only a change in the authorial voice

---

[490] Zeina Halabi, 'The Unbearable Heaviness of Being: The Suicide of the Intellectual in Rabi' Jaber's "Ralf Rizqallah through the Looking Glass', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 44.1 (2013): 53-82, p. 55.
[491] ibid, p. 55.
[492] ibid, p. 65.
[493] ibid, p. 70.
[494] ibid, p. 70.
[495] ibid, p. 65.
[496] Refer to timeline for more information.

and point of view, but also a change in the vignette's generic type. The result of such

juxtapositions and their (not-haphazard) interruptions of the flow of the narrative is a more

intimate angle into the lives of the inhabitants and their everyday experiences of war. This

technique, the 'manipulation of the boundaries between the fictive and the real, the authentic and

the artificial, the original and the replica is also the property of intertextuality, a defining feature

of Jabir's novels'.[497]

However, rewriting history is not Jaber's main purpose, 'although one learns a lot from his

historical setting'.[498] In fact,

> Jaber's historical erudition and meticulous research are very clear in his novel writing, for in his novels, he
> refers to detailed historical facts, employs archival materials and information from rare books and
> manuscripts, and makes good use of the unique particulars of the historical period of the novel's setting, its
> personalities and events, its fashions, manners, and lifestyles.[499]

It remains evident, and importantly so, that Jaber's main preoccupation is the human experience

of war, and how it affects their everyday practices. He is therefore more concerned with the

absented personal narratives of war. The multiplicity of narratives that *Tuyur* highlights, for

example, exposes 'the human heart and how a human being faces life and its slowing stream of

days with hardly any power to change anything, and how he puzzles over life's meaning, hardly

able to reach an answer'.[500]

The forte of Jaber's narrative techniques is his ability to involve the reader in the intimate

details, thoughts, fears, and experiences of the everyday during war, without resorting to direct

techniques, such as stream of consciousness, internal dialogues and so on[501]. This is done

through the details exposed in the personal narratives that are featured in the novel, as shall be

---

[497] Halabi, p. 69.
[498] Issa J. Ballouta, 'Rabi Jabir and His Novel, Yusuf al-Inglizi', *Domes*, 13.2 (2004):1-6, p. 2.
[499] ibid, p. 2.
[500] ibid, p. 2.
[501] ibid, p. 3.

explained. His employment of intertextuality plays a paramount role in advancing this

manipulation of the boundaries between history and fiction. The use of journalistic and

documentary materials, allows the 'data that would presumably anchor the text in an extratextual

reality' to become 'absorbed into the fictional representation, with the result that the analogous

configuration, while more densely concretised than ever', loses 'the possibility of formulating a

critical relation to its referent'.[502] Additionally, documentation 'validates not by effacing the

relation between evidence and generalisation but by arguing for the text's particular construction

of that relation'.[503] As such, the construction of such a relation in *Tuyur* allows the reader to

perceive Jaber's characters in a manner that problematises Ballouta's reading of them as

'passive'. Making the best out of desperate situations, the characters in *Tuyur* can be said to be

helpless (while others are resourceful), but certainly not passive. Deeming passive such

characters who succumb to militarisation and violence, despite their initial reservations against

doing so, is misleading. They are characters who are aware of their actions and their

consequences. In fact, they seem to revel in the pleasure and satisfaction of control and power

that their actions engender in them. Jirji Khoury, for example, kills in cold blood, and not only in

vengeance or retaliation. He is aware of his inclinations to violence. He is neither oblivious nor

in denial. He is rather critical, analytic, and observant about his decisions and actions. He

describes the rush of battle and the thrill of torturing others as that of falling 'upward' — a kind

of satisfying intoxication. He writes, 'I felt dizzy, but instead of falling downward, I rose

upward. I was getting dizzy and rising to the highest point in the universe. And I did not fall'.[504]

Jirji even goes as far as to kidnap and torture two Muslim brothers in order to see and feel what

---

[502] Foley, p. 157.
[503] ibid, p. 158.
[504] Jaber, p. 160.

his brother, who was also kidnapped, tortured, and killed, went through. He writes, 'Every time one of them [the enemy] is killed in front of me, I feel my brother, sitting next to me, smiling'.[505] Jirji's actions are therefore calculated and satisfying; he seems to be motivated by his brother's death to commit further atrocities and violence.

Through the practices of such characters, among others, insight into the objectives, intentions, and internal logic (or illogic) that governs the characters' actions (and inactions) are portrayed through first-person narrations, testimonies, letters, and internal dialogues. As such, describing Jaber's characters as passive is inaccurate since characters are constantly being portrayed as reflecting on their actions, attempting to make sense of them. Journalist Bchara Howayek, for example, understands how random it is of him to search for someone who has gone missing many years before the war started, instead of actively contributing to finding those who are being kidnapped (or who go missing) on a daily basis in the present time of the novel. The various and disparate practices of the everyday in the lives of the residents of the Ayyub Building reflect on their attempt to safeguard a 'place' for themselves in this world, in spite of the war. As the examples above briefly illustrate, people tend to do so differently. However, their making of place remains manifest in their practices of the quotidian. The following section explores how the residents of the Ayyub Building, old and new, engage in such place-making processes.

4.   The Experience of Space and the Making of Place

In this reading, place is understood as a relational and dynamic process — as opposed to a static one— open to constant transformations, challenges, contestations, and negotiations. Place is

---

[505] ibid, p. 514.

treated as influencing and influenced by social and power relations, or in other words, as both a product and an agent. The conceptualisations of place and place-making are informed by the new cultural geographical turn, specifically by theorists such as Tim Cresswell, Doreen Massey, and Henri Lefebvre, as shall be developed throughout this section. Place is seen as reflective of relations of power; it is not merely a setting or a physical location, but harbours human relations, interactions, affectations, and senses of belonging and identity. In turn, these relations are analysed as formative not only of the identity of the place itself, but also of people's practices and behaviours within them which reflects on the domain of the everyday.

As briefly exemplified in the previous sections of this chapter, the residents of the Ayyub Building can be divided into two groups, those who find purpose within the chaos and violence, and those who succumb to them. For both groups, as this section elaborates, their experiences are manifest in their relationship to their building, specifically in their way of organising space in order to understand it and create a sense of belonging. The making of place in *Tuyur* is expressed on disparate levels and in distinct fashions. The original residents and the newcomers construct their places, forge their own positions within them, and create their sense of place differently. While some of the original residents could not tolerate the new socio-spatial order of their neighbourhood and building and choose to leave, others seclude themselves in their apartments and refuse any elaborate or intimate encounter with the newcomers. Other original residents cling to the quotidian and the ordinary in order to 'survive' both the war and its violence, on the one hand, and the new socio-spatial makeup forced upon them by the arrival of migrants, on the other. These specifically include the militiamen who find meaning in fighting on the fronts, home in bullet-riddled buildings, and life-long friendships formed in trenches. The newcomers also cling to the quotidian, as is the case of Edgar Maalouf, who insists on writing a book in

order to avoid losing his mind. However, distinctively so, the newcomers overhaul the socio-spatial identity of the building and its neighbourhood by repurposing space; they build their businesses in the neighbourhood and claim ownership over its streets by their rowdy and unruly presence. Imm Jean and her husband, for example, take over one of the two basements in the building (the other being used as shelter) in order to start their illegal business of selling stolen goods and appliances. Raghida Zaghloul is yet another prime example in this regard. She can neither be considered an original resident, nor belong to the group of people newly arrived. However, Raghida is socio-economically associated with the newcomers as concierge of the building. She successfully manages to make a little garden and safe haven out of the roof, all for herself, since she is the only one who possesses the keys. This focus on the intimate and the quotidian reveals the personal, everyday experience of war by different kinds of people: the housewife, the socially underprivileged, the concierge, the university professor, the journalist, the nurse, and the fighter. The rigorous description and exploration of the internalised and normalised violence, on the level of the everyday indicates the transformations that the war accrued on the experiences of the quotidian. The following section will explore these experiences in relation to the processes of place-making that the residents of the Ayyub Building undertake as a result.

Spatialising the Everyday: Bodies in the City

The residents of the Ayyub Building come to realise that the war that has flared up in the country will not be ending any time soon, specifically when 'newspapers replaced the word "incidents" with "war"', in reference to the bloody conflict.[506] As the war takes on a more permanent status,

---

[506] Jaber, p. 104.

the everydayness of the inhabitants faces a different reality. In Fragment #36, for example,

Raymond Zakhour, after being slightly injured in battle, exclaims,

> When things occur, they do so forever. You cannot go back in time after that, and change your position, or choose this point [in time] instead of that, this life instead of that, this fate instead of that. Things occur once and forever. This is terrifying, horrendous, deadly. But what can we do?'.[507]

The permanence of the war as a perpetual status with repercussions one cannot undo drives the

city dwellers to transform their everyday practices accordingly, each in his or her own distinct

fashion. The effects of war on the practices of everyday in *Tuyur* are also reflected in the issues

of mobility and movement that constrain the residents. These issues will be analysed vis-à-vis

their manifestation in the city and the building through an analysis of topographical changes and

processes of (un)making of place. More importantly, the analysis in this section focuses on how

spaces and places are negotiated, how they acquire a new meaning and value, and how their uses

are transformed due to the raging violence.

The threat of war as ongoing imparts on the residents a sense of attachment to places as

refuges and reference points they can belong to. In the Ayyub Building, Michel Habib, for

example, remembers the time he had once spent in New York, and how when there he kept

recalling the beautiful time he used to spend in Tyr, in South Lebanon, when he was a child. He

writes, 'All this [reminiscing] seems to me to be so far away now, but at the same time, how do I

proceed if I do not remind myself every moment that I am somewhere?'.[508] Michel regards place

as a reference point to his own existence; it is after all the milieu which contains, instigates, and

explains his practices and behaviours on an everyday basis.

The war estranges the residents of the Ayyub Building, as city dwellers, from places that

used to be familiar. As a result, they encounter a dissociation from these places and an unsettled

---

[507] ibid, pp. 89-90.
[508] ibid p. 353.

relationship to them. Not only do they no longer recognise familiar streets and neighbourhoods,

or feel they belong to them, but their movement and mobility within them are now restricted,

forbidden, and most of the times life-threatening. Describing the devastation in Beirut during the

war, Jaber writes,

> In the nearby buildings, traces of change that swept through the neighbourhood appeared […] Elegant
> buildings, those whose original residents have fled, and which now show signs of having aged in a
> fortnight. Coloured clothes hung from balconies. The walls were covered with posters of martyrs and civil
> war slogans. The quiet bourgeois street was transformed into a crowded popular market. Vegetables and
> fruits. Chicken were slaughtered, plucked, and boiled on the pavement. Sheep were being hung in
> anticipation of *Adha*[509]. Fish were being defrosted so that their stench would reach the end of the world.
> Soviet bullets were being sold in sealed boxes or in bulk ([considered] cheaper).[510]

The above excerpt is specifically indicative of the changes that have befallen the streets,

neighbourhoods, and buildings in Beirut during the civil war. The major perpetrator of these

changes is overcrowding, itself the result of the arrival of migrants from other parts of the city.

Life, for them, has become impossible due to the increased violence of the fighting and the

bloody sectarian division of the city into two sectors. However, and in addition to the invasion of

bourgeois neighbourhoods by migrants, war in *Tuyur* transforms the city through physical

segregation, random checkpoints, sandbags and trenches, posters of martyrs and the missing, and

obituaries, as well as ruins.

The new arrival of migrants into the Ayyub Building forces the residents, old and new, to

reconceptualise the notion of place, to redefine it, to re-organise it in manners that are contingent

upon its use and functionality, and to re-determine its meaning and value. As different residents

retain their own conceptualisations of place, along with its use, meaning, and value, conflict

ensues within the building. Place, as used here, and as a concept distinct from space, a distinction

---

[509] A public religious holiday observed by Muslims 40 days after Ramadan.
[510] Jaber, p. 483.

explored in depth in the previous chapter, is 'practised' or 'lived' space.[511] Place is therefore

contingent upon the ways in which those residing within it, inhabit it. A space can be

transformed into place when meaning and value are invested in it. [512] It is a transformation that is

made possible when we experience place, or inhabit it as Tim Cresswell and Yi-Fu Tuan

contend. According to Cresswell, place transcends its mere spatial reference to designate

something or someone belonging 'in one place and not in another'.[513] In such a manner, place is

seen as relational and combining the spatial with the social.[514] Consequently, it can be claimed

that place does not necessarily contain rules or laws, as much as '*expectations* about behaviour

that relate a position in a social structure to actions in space'.[515] The social organisation of a

certain place, therefore, is also dependent on the power relations that circulate within it. In the

case of the Ayyub Building, an antagonism is created between the original residents and the

newcomers. Coupled with the threat of war, this antagonism is founded on the threat of

displacement or removal from place, and can therefore be read as reflective of the processes of

placemaking initiated within the building. This section aims to provide a contextualising

background for this antagonism by firstly exploring the complication in the residents'

relationship to the space of the city and their positions within it.

Focusing on the residents' experiences of space necessitates the exploration of placemaking

as a process which depends on the conceptualisation of place as a lived experience. The fact that

the newcomers and the original residents either clash or avoid one another is an indication of

---

[511] See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991) and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
[512] See Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015) and Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective Experience* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
[513] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 3.
[514] ibid, p. 3.
[515] ibid, p. 3, original emphasis.

differences in conceptualising space and investing it with meaning. Since placemaking is an ongoing process, that necessitates ordering space and organising experience, the manner in which the residents, old and new, negotiate these new social formations becomes visible spatially.[516] From this viewpoint, space and place are dialectically structured 'in human environmental experience, since our understanding of space is related to the places we inhabit, which in turn derive meaning from their spatial context'.[517] Therefore, each spatial organisation carries with it the weight of its own implications, values, order, and meaning, with its unique and varying effect on everyday life. Using the words of John Agnew, the original and new residents are unable to agree on a shared vision of how place matters. Agnew states that the question of space and place 'in geographical knowledge is ultimately not just about whether the question of "where" matters in the way that "when" does in explaining "how" and even "why" something happens. It is also about *how* it matters'.[518] With the change in the lifestyles, behaviours, and mannerisms expressed in the building and the neighbourhood, 'how' the everyday expression of the socio-spatial matters shifts in favour of the newcomers. And it is this 'how' that complicates their relationship as well as the everyday life that they now share as shall be explored.

The struggle begins in the Ayyub Building and its neighbourhood around how to inhabit place. A place 'in which one can dwell' is a place 'that provides a space in which dwelling can occur — it "gives space" to the possibility of dwelling — and yet a place to dwell must be more than just a "space" alone'.[519] For the residents in *Tuyur*, this 'possibility' of dwelling is complicated by the constant threat of displacement or shelling; the war is not a reality they can

---

[516] David Seamon and Jacob Sowers, 'Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph', *Key Texts in Human Geography*, ed. by Paul Hubbard, R. Kitchen, and G. Vallentine (London: Sage, 2008), pp. 43-51, p. 4.

[517] ibid, p. 44.

[518] John Agnew, 'Space and Place', *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. By John Agnew and David Livingstone (London: Sage, 2011), pp.1-34, p. 1.

[519] Jodi Ellen Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 22.

run away from into their homes for the war is not a mere external event. The war in Beirut

seeped into the details of the everyday life of all Beirutis; it entered every corner and every

home. With the public and the private space both turned into war zones or potential war zones,

the residents' relationship with their city becomes as complicated as their relationship with their

homes and their own bodies — a point that will be returned to in more details in this section.

However, suffice it to mention that the resindents' experience of space and their changing

relationship with their places cannot be reduced to a mere consequence. Place, therefore, is not

'properly something only encountered "in" experience', but rather 'place *is integral to the very*

structure and possibility of experience'.[520] This transformation in the type, kind, and form of the

experience of place in the Ayyub Building and its neighbourhood is responsible for incurring

necessary transformations in the everyday practices of the residents, old and new.

Pertinent to the understanding of the experience and sense of place is a comprehension of

spatial structures of the world and its representations that we tend to take for granted.[521] The

meaning and the value invested in a place are not inherent in the sense that they 'must be created,

reproduced, and defended from heresy'.[522] In the case of the residents in *Tuyur*, the

transformations in the meanings and values inscribed on the building and its neighbourhood —

and therefore the transformation in the socio-spatial identity of the place — drive them to

negotiate their place and their sense of belonging.

The way different people identify place (identity of a place) and the way that they identify

with a certain place, distinguishes the said place from others. Edward Relph describes this

'persistent identity' in terms of three components: a place's physical setting; the events and

---

[520] ibid, pp. 21-2, original emphasis.
[521] Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*, p. 9.
[522] ibid, p. 9.

situations that this place harbours; and, 'the individual and group meanings created through people's experiences and intentions in regard to that place'.[523] In *Tuyur*, all of these three components are jeopardised, threatening in the process the residents' association with the building and its neighbourhood. Relph explains people's sense of place through components of what he calls 'outsideness' and 'insideness', which form a dialectic engendering various and diverse combinations and configurations. These in turn construct people's sense of identity and identification with a certain place (in addition to their attachment to it which grows stronger when that place falls under any eminent threat), delineating their experience within it, giving it both meaning and value (and action, under certain circumstances). What concerns us here is Relph's description and visualisation of the 'strongest sense of place experience,' which he refers to as 'existential insideness'.[524] He defines existential insideness as a 'situation of deep unself-conscious immersion in place and the experience most people know when they are at home in their own community and region'.[525] In *Tuyur*, it is only after the war starts that the residents of East Beirut, in which their building is situated, become aware of the socio-demographic and spatial organisation of their area. It is during that time that Muslim residents in East Beirut flee to the Muslim Western section of their city. Lydia Thabet, for example, is married to Suleiman Sharara, a Muslim. When the war starts Lydia informs the residents of her building that Suleiman has fled to West Beirut to be with his family, safe from the atrocities that might be committed against him in the Eastern sector. However, what no one knows is that her husband never actually leaves, but remains hidden in the apartment, living in complete silence away from prying eyes.

---

[523] Seamon and Sower, p. 45.
[524] ibid, p. 45.
[525] ibid, p. 45.

The new homogenisation to which the building and its neighbourhood succumb, in terms of sectarian belonging, is resisted with a different form of difference that arises with the arrival of the migrants. As a result of their different socio-economic backgrounds, the original residents of the building encounter a sense of 'alienation' or estrangement compatible with Relph's definition of the second main constituent of place which he terms, 'existential outsideness'. Relph explains this sense of alienation 'as that often felt by newcomers to a place or by people who, having been away from their birth place, turn to feel strangers because the place is no longer what it was when they knew it earlier'.[526] While the following section will take up the analyses of the complicated 'sense of place' and alienation that the residents encounter in *Tuyur* (and the subsequent making of place), this section focuses on the exploration of everyday practices within the city. It lends specific attention to issues of mobility and the paramount significance of spatial knowledge intrinsic to the safety and survival of walkers and inhabitants of a war-torn city.

In *Tuyur*, the residents' experience of space in a city physically and socially fragmented by war, comprises 'capacities to think, to feel, to grasp, to act, and so on'.[527] Albert Semaan, for example, in a scene which places him on a bus en-route to the airport in Beirut after finally succumbing to pressures to join his family in Cyprus, is filled with terror as he realises (and faces) the dangers of driving through the devastated city. Jaber writes,

> The bus went around the neighbourhoods of Achrafieh. It gathered passengers, airport employees, and three unarmed internal security force members. His [Albert's] fear diminished as all seats were filled. They took the *al Adlieh* Road. Burnt cars and war-torn apartments came into view. There were debris and dead dogs under the bridge. Faces looked anxious. The bus driver attempted to calm the passengers down. He looked at them in the mirror and assured them that sniping is not scheduled to begin before six. Albert Semaan's wristwatch suddenly gained importance. He did not understand the two hands [of the watch]. He did not understand the Roman numbers. He did not understand what was happening or why fear crippled him in the way it did. With intense sorrow he discovered that he was a coward.[528]

---

[526] ibid, p. 45.
[527] Malpas, p. 16.
[528] Jaber, p. 413.

While Albert feels he is not strong enough to survive the city, Jirji Khoury and Lydia Thabet, on

the other hand, accept their new roles in the city, as fighter and nurse, respectively. They both

understand the importance of spatial knowledge and awareness, specifically in times of danger.

They are aware that their knowledge of the reality of the situation on the ground, as well as of

ways to navigate the city in such situations, can save a life or take it away. Even though their

experiences might seem contradictory in the sense that the former is a ferocious militiaman and

the latter a nurse; however, they both are prime examples of the significance of spatial

knowledge and awareness in their experience of the city. To Jirji, knowledge is power which

begets safety. In a fragment which describes his meeting with a foreign journalist, Jirji writes,

> The American, Jimmy, whom I had told you about, asked me the night we stayed in Jamil Atieh's villa, why we give names to every corner, every alleyway, and every pothole on the road. He used to get lost in Beirut whenever he would ask about any place in any street due to the endless names [used in reference to them]. We could give the same alleyway a number of names, depending on which side we use in order to enter it, or which year, or on [which militia] controls it. *In war, it is important to know the nature of the ground, the area's ambit in which you can move. The most minor mistake can kill you.*[529]

Consequently, a grasp of space does not mean a grasp over the concept of space; rather to

possess a grasp of space is to possess certain 'behavioural capacities or dispositions' to use said

space.[530] And this capacity is also tied to one's awareness of one's body and one's surrounding

environment, to one's awareness that they can locate and orient themselves[531]. In *Tuyur*, this

spatial awareness and knowledge is specifically of great import since it either signifies a certain

level of authority that a character possesses, such as the case with Jirji, and/or reflects on that

character's safety. Like Jirji's tactical navigation of the city, Lydia's mobility is informed by the

limitations that hinder her free movement. However, unlike Jirji, she possesses no authority or

sense of control since she lacks the military knowledge and tactics that Jirji is privileged to

---

[529] Jaber, p. 420, my emphasis.
[530] Malpas, p. 47.
[531] ibid, p. 50.

enjoy. Also, unlike him, she does not abuse her knowledge for any motive save her own safety. Jaber writes, 'Lydia most probably knew. She was forced, during that period, to take different roads from the ones she usually takes'.[532] Lydia, in this sense, is portrayed as navigating the city to the best of her knowledge and ability.

Lydia's and Jirji's awareness of their spaces as they navigate the city also translate into an awareness that involves their selves and their bodies; the experience of space cannot be divorced from the body.[533] Georges Perec expands on the notion of the experience of space being embodied, since it is after all with and through our bodies and senses that we make place. He writes, 'Our graze travels through space and gives us the illusion of relief and distance. This is how we construct space, with an up and down, a left and a right, an in front and a behind, a near and a far'.[534] A focus on the embodied experience of space as such facilitates the understanding of place-making as an ongoing process.

In *Tuyur*, this embodied experience is made visible through the psychological process of internalising war and violence that takes the form of normalisation. Violence becomes an ordinary and everyday scene that most either embrace, or bask in, or accommodate. Some even see the war as their saviour, like Raymond and Said, explored in the following section. Some others yet, use the war as pretext for increasing their monetary gain and capital, like the Howayek family. However, for the majority of the residents of the Ayyub Building, specifically those who do not indulge in fighting or profiteering, the violence reflects on their psyche and on their bodies. Exploring these reflections from this lens helps in the understanding of the

---

[532] Jaber, p. 622.
[533] Malpas, p. 53.
[534] Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 81.

experience of space as embodied, as well as foments an understanding of processes of making place and meaning.

In this study, the human body is understood as enabling and enabled by a set of socio-spatial relations. Informed by Setha Low's conceptualisation of embodied space, this study views the body as 'the original tool with which humans shape their world', and at the same time, 'the substance out of which the world is shaped'.[535] In such a manner, the body grants its subject tools not only to shape the world, but also to understand it. With the destruction of their physical environment and the increasing threat over their lives, the relationship of the residents with their bodies in *Tuyur* becomes more complex. Their bodies, even in the privacy of their own apartments, are no longer safe, neither in their everyday habits and practices, nor in their everyday existence, as the building enters into a new 'mode of being'.[536] Informed by Ian Tucker's conviction that spaces are in constant states of becoming and change 'according to how they are created', this section attempts to reflect on the changes that have affected both body and space, and by proxy their ability to socially influence and construct one another.[537] Tucker's perception stems from viewing bodies as relational forms; in such a manner, they cannot be separated from spaces, nor their study be separated from the study of space.[538]

In this study, the body is recognised as a set of relations that are constituted by and through (and at the same time constituting) socio-spatial practices. Such a view complicates the experience of the body in a given society and endows the body with a subjective agency. Following Tucker, this study emphasises that the embodied experience is 'always socially bound,

---

[535] Setha Low, 'Embodied Space(s): Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture', *Space and Culture*, 6.1 (2003): 9-18, p. 12.
[536] Ian Tucker, 'Psychology as Space: Embodied Relationality', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5.5 (2011): 231-38, p. 235.
[537] ibid, p. 232.
[538] ibid, p. 236.

and, as such, emphasis needs to be placed on the ways that it operates relationally with the other occupants of our everyday environment'.[539] Tucker adds,

> Bodies are no doubt subject to societal pressures, but key to this is that society and bodies do not exist as distinct entities. They are part of the same constitutive practices; society does not exist outside of the embodied material practices through which it is formed.[540]

Considering the experience of space as embodied facilitates the understanding of our external spaces as extensions of our own bodies. As such, in order to understand 'the habitual agency and embodiment', we are required to grasp 'how the body structures society through habituated actions, which in turn feed back into corporeal actions'.[541] The physical segregation of the city and the constant threat of military attack, or acts of kidnappings, torment the residents, so much so that the claustrophobic nature of their apartments extends to their bodies, which become either graveyards, or coffins, or prisons in which they are trapped. In such a manner, exploring the effect of war and violence on the bodies of the residents in the Ayyub Building is useful to the analysis of their effect on their space. That is because the body plays an important role in both the experience of space and the making of place. Within this context, social practices, the body, and social processes are considered part of the same system, a thought that will form the analysis explored in the following section.

Low conceptualises the intersectionality between space, body, and culture as 'embodied space'. She argues that these 'understandings require theories of body and space that are experience-near and yet allow linkage to be made to larger, social, and cultural processes'.[542] She adds that the concept of embodied space 'draws these disparate notions together, underscoring the importance of body as a physical and biological entity, lived experience, and centre of

---

[539] Ian Tucker, 'Towards the Multiple Body', *Theory & Psychology*, 16.3 (2006): 433-40, p. 439.
[540] ibid, p. 439.
[541] ibid, pp. 436-37.
[542] Low, 'Embodied Space(s)', p. 10.

agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world'.[543] Low's conceptualisation of

embodied space, therefore, allows for an understanding of how place is created through 'spatial

orientation, movement, and language'.[544] In such a manner, the space occupied by the body, 'and

the perception and experience of that space, contracts and expands in relationship to a person's

emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural dispositions'.[545]

In *Tuyur*, the experience of a city at war, the residents' incapacity to accept the new socio-

spatial organisation that has come to reign in the building, and their inability to cope with one

another culturally, all complicate their relationship not only to spaces occupied by their bodies,

but also to their bodies themselves. This complication can be brought back to the fact that war

has managed to infiltrate all spaces. In some, like Gabi Habib, Melhem Saab, and Lydia Thabet,

the traumatic effect that the war brings about manifests itself in forgetfulness as well as in

physical and mental breakdowns. In the case of Gabi, for example, she acknowledges her

depression and her inability to deal with the war and its consequences on her direct environment.

Her body, to her, has failed her. However, she completely refuses any signs of sympathy from

people, specifically from her husband who insists on showering her with affection as an

indication of solidarity, understanding, and support. Sometimes,

> she would like to ask him to stop that [taking care of her and being kind to her], if possible. And it is true (she is nonexistent) but not all the time. The strong sedatives and the anti-depressants had numbed her at the beginning and erased portions of her memories. But the pain did not abate […] The medication broke her and her pain intensified when she found out the extent to which therapy erases what she remembers. She felt herself being divided into strangers she does not recognise. She wanted to jump off the balcony, but her body remained lumped on the huge couch, alongside the big, black telephone.[546]

However, even though Gabi resists life, in the sense that she consciously removes herself from

all encounters and situations, succumbing to the numbing effects of anti-depressants, she still

---

[543] ibid, p. 10.
[544] ibid, p. 10.
[545] ibid, p. 10.
[546] Jaber, pp. 63-4.

waits by the phone in the hope that someone would call her and inform her of the whereabouts of her missing son. It is as if she is only clinging to her body, her breath, and her existence, only for her son's sake. In a fragment that describes these changes to Gabi as observed by her husband, Michel, Jaber writes,

> A long time passed before Michel Habib realised that he was avoiding looking at his wife. Like his son who had disappeared, the Gabi he knew has disappeared during the past months. As he averted his gaze from hers, [he realised that he was] unable to tolerate the catastrophe in her eyes; time has thrown its harshest of blows. The hair on her head has turned white. Her face has become all loose. The wrinkles around her eyes and neck have multiplied. She did not completely die out following her nervous breakdown. Her remaining form moved slowly between rooms; it placed the coffee pot on the stove, checked the phone line, watched the street from the window. But she was not herself — only the shadow that had been left there to welcome him at night.[547]

As in the case of Gabi, trauma manifests psychosomatically in Melhem Saab as well, who despite taking the decision of not participating in war and maintaining a safe distance from incidents, clashes, and armed encounters, realises that such encounters are inevitable, no matter where he goes or how careful he is. In fact, as soon as he passes by a bloodied victim on the side of the road, and recognises him, he does not stop, but decides to get into his car and drive away. However, not only is he haunted by the image of the bloodied face which he imagines to be riding the car along with him, but he also senses a sharp pain in his back that accompanies him throughout the novel. The case of Cecilia Zeidan is even more extreme. Her breakdown leaves her completely helpless and paralysed to the extent that she has to be admitted to the psychiatric ward. Her detachment from her body is coupled with a complete detachment from herself and her surrounding, made more complex by the sedatives and medications she is put on. After bringing her back home to be with her family, after the fighting intensified, her husband notices that the 'medication tied her tongue. The doctor said that this was necessary. A nervous breakdown cannot be treated otherwise'.[548] Upon seeing her state, her husband, in turn, also feels

---

[547] ibid, p. 448.
[548] ibid, p. 207.

completely helpless, powerless even to move, unable to do anything to make her come back to herself. The intensity of Cecilia's situation is made even more pronounced by Jaber's intentional interruption of the fictional fragment describing her situation with a vignette detailing the side effects of the medication she is taking. The list of side effects is presented as a proper list one would find inside the medication packet.

Lydia, on the other hand, lives in silence and whispers, having decided to hide her Muslim husband from the residents of the building instead of risking losing all contact with him were he to leave to the Muslim West end of the city. The silence in her apartment is met with the raging violence of the war outside it; Lydia finds herself imprisoned in her apartment, in her body, and in her city alike. In fact, her body 'becomes powerless. Detached from her. But she feels its heaviness'.[549] The feeling of estrangement that she experiences within her body hinders her from identifying with and feeling safe in both her apartment and the war-torn city. Albert is yet another example in this regard. However, in Albert's case, his sense of detachment is manifest in a different manner, in a detachment from himself. In other words, Albert no longer recognises who he is, or who he is supposed to be. Having finally decided to leave the city and join his family in Cyprus, Albert realises that the war is adamant on not leaving him. He finds himself unable to make sense neither of the Albert he has left behind nor of the Albert that he now is. The change of his physical environment leaves Albert feeling like a ghost, divided into different persons who seem incompetent in comprehending and containing one another. Albert admits his fear that 'terror would be the death of him'. [550] And as he takes the passenger seat in the car his wife is driving as she picks him up from the airport in Cyprus, he wonders,

> Who is the ghost sitting in the front? Who is Albert Semaan sitting in the backseat? His children were singing a Cypriot song to celebrate [his arrival]. Strange words and a Greek beat. The car's radio was

---

[549] ibid, p. 129.
[550] ibid, p. 414.

rattling in Cypriot. The sea was running against traffic. No checkpoints and no sniping. Sounds were coming from afar. He was split in half on the airport road.[551]

The examples illustrated above indicate a clear sense of removal from their spatial reference points; their city, their building, and their bodies become strange, endangered entities to them. This experienced estrangement alienates the residents from their sense of place and forces them to engage in new attempts at making place, as the following section explores. Furthermore, the following section investigates in more detail an additional complication: the arrival of migrants into the neighbourhood and the building, and the consequent social conflict that ensues as a result of the establishment of a new power and social order.

Reconfiguring the Socio-Spatial Order in the Ayyub Building: Repurposing Space, Making Place

The antagonism created within the Ayyub Building and its neighbourhood between the newcomers and the original residents materialised itself on numerous fronts. Firstly, the original residents feel offended and othered by the way in which the newcomers organise and use their spaces. And secondly, they are repulsed by the way in which these newcomers carry themselves — how they treat their bodies. Raymond, an original resident, defines the social difference between the two groups based on the socio-spatial orderings, practices, and habits that they undertake. As Raymond casually observes, it suffices to take a good look at the front doors to distinguish between the newcomers and the original residents. He writes, 'To the right, as you ascend [the stairs], and from the mat outside the door, you know that original residents live there: a thick expensive rug, red and blotched with yellow'.[552] Melhem, on the other hand, is provoked

---

[551] ibid, pp. 414-15.
[552] ibid, p. 21.

by this socio-economic difference, and awaits the fighting to subside so he can relocate his business. Jaber writes,

> Like his neighbour the engineer Albert Semaan, [Melhem] grew up in [a household] of a higher [social] status. He did not change his decision after the *souq* [market] of the goldsmiths burned down: he has to move away from here at the first chance he gets and set up shop in a more appropriate place.[553]

Raymond's simple observation and Melhem's decision foreshadow the antagonism that sprouts in the building following the arrival of these newcomers, an antagonism that defines and reflects the kind of social relations that come to govern the building and shape the practices of its residents, old and new. The new arrival does not only shape and transform the socio-spatial relations of the building, or the inherent power relations within it, but also the physical and social identity of the whole neighbourhood.

The Ayyub Building is described in Jaber's novel as an ordinary building, only gaining prominence and significance, along with the neighbourhood in which it is situated, after the start of the civil war. The fragment in *Tuyur* describing the history of the building, specifically the manner in which it had acquired its name, lays emphasis on the transformations that the building suffers as a result of the conflict in the city and the influx of migrants. The fragment reads as follows:

> Within a few months, the orchards and trees disappeared with the invasion of concrete and tin. Impoverished houses surrounded the European-style building, the old beauty of its old walls faded with the passing of time. As the rowdiness rose around it, along with chicken feathers and sardine odours, its original residents abandoned it to newer buildings in more luxurious locations.[554]

However, few original residents still remain. And those who do, do so primarily out of an inability to leave due to technical or procedural matters. A sick grandmother, a hidden husband, or a disappeared member of the family are but a few examples. However, almost all of the original residents refuse their new reality which throws them in with a group of people whose

---

[553] ibid, p. 490.
[554] ibid, pp. 14-5.

values they do not share, and whose meaning- and place-making (as in, their understanding of place and their use of it) are not compatible with theirs. The result is a complicated elitist encounter with the other, a forced negotiation of home and place, and a necessary reformulation of a sense of place.

In a study similar to this one, focused on Hassan Daoud's *House of Mathilde* (1983), Ken Seigneurie, building on both de Certeau and Lefebvre, argues that 'if narratives are important in studying actual spaces, then represented spaces are probably important in studying narratives'.[555] In such a manner, the building becomes a space that can be read as a microcosm 'of the Lebanese nation, recapitulating its power structures, fault lines, and borders'[556]. Significantly, and with the outbreak of war and violence in Beirut, 'housing, as a verb, developed into the physical embodiment of a city in transition. It evolved into a powerful depiction of an urban fabric in violent metamorphosis'.[557] According to Maya Yahya, 'dwelling […] now characterised the city's spatial transformations representing the mutilations in its social fabric'.[558] Similarly, in *Tuyur*, the forced reorganisation of space within the building, coupled with the problematic arrival of the newcomers, transforms the buildings into a site for encounters, negotiations, and mediations of class relations.

In fact, the original residents do not feign their sentiments of disgust, or rein in their tongues from criticism towards the newcomers. To them, the less privileged newcomers are filthy, rowdy, ignorant, and uncivilised, with insatiable appetites, to the extent that they prefer to avoid

---

[555] Ken Seigneurie, 'The Everyday World of War in Hassan Daoud's *House of Mathilde*', *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*, ed. by Ken Seigeurie (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2003), pp. 101-13, p. 104.
[556] ibid, p. 104.
[557] Maya Yahya, 'Reconstituting Space: The Aberration of the Urban in Beirut', *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*, ed. by Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury (Leiden, New York, Koln: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 128-66, p. 130.
[558] Yahya, p. 130.

them at all costs. The bodies of the newcomers repulse the original residents; they are bodies that use too much space, that are neither clean nor refined, and alongside which theirs cannot exist. Huda Atieh, an original resident, for example, expresses her admiration and respect towards one of her neighbours, Louis Khoury, because he is one of the old residents of the building, and unlike any of the newcomers, such as the Zeidans, the Azars, and the Baddours, he would 'never (whatever happens) go down the stairs in a pyjama, a flannel shirt, and slippers'.[559] The newcomers are also viewed as lesser humans and common, with a very humble intellect, and minimal education, even by some of the more cultured and bourgeois migrants. Edgar Maalouf is a professor who now lives in the apartment that belongs to another professor who returned to his home country once the war started. Being able to acquire rare manuscripts from a medical doctor friend of his, Edgar scoffs at the other residents' ingratitude towards treasures, as they would use them as packaging for the meat that they might purchase from the butcher's. Another original resident, Albert Semaan, wonders what his father's reaction to the newcomers would have been, had the latter still been alive. He writes,

> If he were in the *al Mabroomi* [the name given to the building by the original residents] right now, what would he have said of the shacks that are forming around it like mushrooms on the trunk of an olive tree? At night, their noise would have prevented him from falling asleep. He would have wished to be living on the fifth or the sixth [floor]. Houses with no permits. Migrants! People who do not know which land they came from.[560]

Albert's statement, specifically his comment about migrants being a people without a sense of belonging to a land, exemplifies a bourgeois, xenophobic rhetoric prevalent during the war against refugees, Muslims, and low-income earners. Invoking his late father in this comment signifies a relief that his father is not present to witness such an atrocity, and represents the classist mind-set with which the original residents confront the newcomers. Furthermore, Albert

---

[559] Jaber, p. 86.
[560] ibid, p. 370.

does not shy away from expressing his disturbance at the migrants who devoured orchards, made wood out of their trees, and erected shacks and structures with no foundations. His elitist approach to the presence of these migrants prevent him from understanding and acknowledging the migrants' practices as means of survival and continuity. He expresses his annoyance at their lifestyle and the constant noise and hustle which now interfere with the serenity of the neighbourhood and the quietude which once distinguished the building. They listen to hideous, popular songs, stay up late on the streets, and blast their radios to full volume. He describes them as having turned the neighbourhood into a *ma'rasa*, which is an untranslatable, derogatory word, used to refer to a space of promiscuity, a brothel, or a whorehouse. Albert does not understand how the newcomers 'can make love every night when they are migrants. Rabbits. Every night a new infant screams […] Fierce women with voices the like of which he has never heard before'.[561] Albert cannot comprehend how the newcomers have acclimatised to their new situation with such boldness. He judges their behaviour as outrageous, shameful, degenerate, and audacious, in direct opposition to his system of values and morals. To him, they are animals in their lovemaking, vulgar in their everyday habits and encounters, and inferior in their culture. He takes his comment even further when he compares the new socio-spatial reality of the building to a Palestinian refugee camp formerly razed by Christian militias at the beginning of the war. Referring to the 'shabbiness' — in his standards — of the Karantina area, he says, 'They have burnt the Karantina in matches. This, here, is the new Karantina'.[562] Albert seems to neither condemn nor condone the atrocities committed in the Karantina area; however, his tone carries a strong disregard and condemnation of the displaced as well as a lack of empathy to their predicament. He also does not refrain from expressing how unsettled and threatened he is by

---

[561] ibid, p. 371.
[562] ibid, p. 371.

their presence. He, for instance, does not dare venture down to the end of the street for fear of being assailed by '*shisha* and *hasheesh*'.[563] As such, the presence of the newcomers seems to threaten the space that the original residents occupy within their building, and their own physical existence (and with it their bodies) out of a fear of a physical attack. Occupied by the bodies of the newcomers, the building and its neighbourhood thus acquire a different identity as a new socio-spatial order replaces the old. This example is demonstrative of how both body and space 'may be seen as a potent means of regulating social relations as well as the social identity of the person that those relations define'.[564] Consequently, '[c]ollectively standardised alterations and treatments of the body', such as the ones brought about into the neighbourhood by the newcomers, 'become a basic technique for appropriating and co-opting the natural forces and changes of the body to (re)produce social relations, groups, and persons'.[565]

Furthermore, the examples mentioned above are indicative of different conceptualisations of place that can be considered as originating from the class difference between the two groups of residents; place is read, understood, valued, and used in a different manner. This distinction becomes the defining feature of the conflict that ensues between the two groups and complicates their coexistence, reflecting and affecting their making of place. Agnew contends that places 'give us as well as acquire meaning in terms of what they offer socially and morally'.[566] In the case of the residents of the Ayyub Building, the moral compass that regulates the meaning of place, its value, and its use is now skewed. Being the 'setting for social rootedness and landscape continuity', place in the Ayyub Building, in its socio-spatial order prior to war and due to the

---

[563] ibid, p. 371.
[564] Terence Turner, 'Social Body and Embodied Subject: Bodiliness, Subjectivity, and Sociality among the Kayapo', *Cultural Anthropology*, 10.2 (1995): 143-70, p. 147.
[565] ibid, p. 147.
[566] Agnew, p. 13.

arrival of newcomers, is now dishevelled. The original residents' sense of place is thus shaken and the formerly present socio-spatial organisation of the building is challenged.

Faced with this new dilemma, the original residents feel obligated to hold on to their homes and apartments (to their most intimate places), as places they can still possess all by themselves. However, they soon realise that their place within the building and inside the apartment cannot be completely divorced from one another. The original residents also note the transformations that have befallen their neighbourhood and building by the war. As a result, their relationship to both neighbourhood and building are further complicated as they fail to identify with and belong to them in the same manner as before the war started. For in addition to the appearance of an un-ordered utilisation of spaces and the making of places at random by the newcomers briefly outlined above, the neighbourhood and the building suffer from the transformation of building entrances into trenches and sniping posts; buildings into headquarters, warehouses, gathering centres, and shelters; and walls as backgrounds for poster-boards for pictures of martyrs and missing persons, obituaries, or public announcements and safety instructions, all of which complement the military scenes which have overtaken the city. In a sense, the neighbourhood ceases to be a neighbourhood as war transforms its geographical and demographical constitution, and hostility replaces amicability. Isaac Atieh explains to his wife how the place in which he sat a few minutes before rising to speak to her is dangerous in only one circumstance,

> [i]f a bomb were to fall vertically down the hill, in the narrow spot between the buildings. And that is only possible using the 155, 121, or 120 mortar shells. She did not feel scared as he listed the mortar calibres because she knew that they had piled up a large number of sandbags outside on that wall, and because whenever she worked in the kitchen, she could still hear the curses of those descending the *al-Mabroomi* stairway that was blocked by sandbags.[567]

---

[567] Jaber, p. 85.

Isaac's mother, for example, notes a change in the air inside the building. She says, 'the air in this building is acidic, like acid on flagstones. It pares my brains. It fills me with holes. Memories seep out of my body'.[568] For Isaac's mother, even her apartment threatens her physical and mental existence. Not only does the air smell differently, but it also seems to be attacking her, killing her, as if the raging violence outside is not sufficiently threatening.

While for some their own homes have become accomplices in violence, for others, they have become claustrophobic and constant reminders of loss and death — constituting another form of violence. After the disappearance of Carlos Habib, for example, his sister feels that the house is haunted by his absence. If she 'opens the closet, she finds his scent. Sometimes she would sit at the edge of the bed and look toward the window. And if she were alone at home, she would lie [on the bed] without bothering his shirt'.[569] Bernadette Thabet, Lydia's mother, is also assailed by her memories that seem to be harboured within the confines of the apartment in which she is stuck (Lydia's mother is on a wheelchair). Sometimes, she would even scream as her memories flood in, 'as if she were burnt by matches'.[570] Sometimes,

> she felt that she would gasp and die in her seat, looking at Suleiman [Lydia's husband] standing as a ghost in front of the library, or next to the cabinet, or the wooden door of the balcony. Pain would suddenly explode from her brain, thick, fanged, and black as coal, blinding her eyes until she cannot see.[571]

The idea of home in this regard is complicated by the fact that it is no longer a safe space, or a shelter, or even a place they can dwell in. The weight of this removal from home can be better understood through an exploration of the meaning and value that the original residents inscribe onto their Building. For the original residents, the building is more than just a mere location or a shelter; it is a home with its own distinct set of social relations, familiar and intimate. Almost all

---

[568] ibid, pp. 265-66.
[569] ibid, p. 315.
[570] ibid, p. 308.
[571] ibid, p. 308.

of them, starting with the owner, get into the trouble of making a place out of the building,

unique to them and to its desired personality. Ayyub al-Abed, the owner, refuses to use his last

name in the official naming of the building due to the derogative reference that it entails. The

word *abed* in Arabic translates to the English 'slave'. He therefore 'placed an order for a stone-

carved plaque [to be] hung above the entrance, above the black iron gate [and] to read: Ayyub

Building'.[572] In addition to the owner's inscription of a more suitable name for his building, the

original residents themselves choose not to refer to their building by its official name. They call

it *al-Mabroomi*, a name closer to their own visualisation of the building and more representative

of their everyday relationship with it. By doing so, the original residents translate their sense of

place into a more concrete actualisation through place-naming. The naming process here

corresponds to the means in which they visualise, define, use, and interact with their building, or

in other words, to how they 'identify' with it.[573]

In this manner, their place-naming can be understood as a means through which they validate

their sense of attachment to and ownership over their building, including, but not exclusive to,

how they use it and the values and meaning that they instil in it. Place as location and locale, as

being located and having a material visual form, is a conceptualisation informed by Agnew, and

corresponds to what can be understood as a sense of place. Elaborating on this concept,

Cresswell states that 'places must have some relationship to the human capacity to produce and

consume meaning'[574]. In the case of the original residents in *Tuyur*, their insistence on choosing

another name for their building corresponds to their process of making place and their production

of meaning. Naming, after all, 'is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become

---

[572] ibid, p. 15.
[573] Perec, p. 47.
[574] Cresswell, *Place*, p. 13.

place'.[575] With the war changing the topographical reality of the city, the original residents become more aware of the importance and significance of their building to them. Any threat, therefore, to their sense of attachment, to their existence in it prior to the war, to the meanings they ascribed to the building, to the building's functionality, and its socio-spatial ordering, will neither be welcomed nor appreciated.

In other words, the conflict between the original and the new residents of the building can, at a basic level, be reduced to their different understanding of place, and specifically to the distinct conceptualisation of what constitutes home (and the specific ways in which it should be experienced and inhabited). For Cresswell, understanding a place is best reached through considering place not just as a 'thing in the world but a way of understanding the world'.[576] The main reasons behind this difference in the worldview between old and new residents in *Tuyur* can be brought back to the difference in their socio-economic backgrounds, which in turn distinguishes their socio-spatial practices and informs their making of meaning as a result of their distinct biographies and experiences. Therefore, place is 'also a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world'.[577] As illustrated earlier, the new residents, in the eyes of the original, become too comfortable too quickly, and use the spaces of the buildings in ways and manners contrary to the norms that had been established prior to their arrival. In other words, the original residents consider the newcomers as 'out of place', to the extent that they are threatened by what they perceive as an invasion of their space and an infringement on their sense of place. In this case, the act of being out-of-place, or of being perceived as such, can be considered as an act of

---

[575] ibid, p. 15.
[576] ibid, p. 18.
[577] ibid, p. 18.

transgression against the former makeup of place, its meaning, its use and value, and its social and power relations as they are already established.[578]

However, it is not the newcomers who feel out-of-place in the Ayyub Building, but the original residents themselves. The repetitive and insistent actions and practices undertaken by the newcomers on a daily basis challenge the sense of ownership and agency that the original residents formerly enjoyed. Human agency, according to Cresswell, is not 'so easily structured', with the consideration that 'structures themselves are made through the reparation of practices by agents'.[579] Building on the idea that it is what people do in a certain place repetitively that produces a sense of place, the social order/organisation or structure of a place is maintained and perpetuated in the same manner that it is influenced, changed, and transformed, by our daily practices — and the changes that ensue as a result of social relations and both internal and external socio-political forces (such as conflict, war, or the arrival of other social groups and individuals). As such, the rhythm of place, the constituents of which include a sense of place and belonging (and the consequent sense of attachment it evokes), is formed through the interaction, movement, and mobilities of bodies within it.[580] It is through participating in 'these daily performances that we get to know a place and feel part of it. It also suggests that those who do not know the routine will appear clumsy or "out-of-place" simply through the nonconformity of their bodily practice'.[581]

The treatment of place in this chapter as dynamic, open, and relational consigns place to the status of constant becoming. As such, it can be said that place is a form of spatial identity, a construction and representation of a spatial and socio-spatial imaginary. The question of our

---

[578] ibid, p. 42.
[579] ibid, p. 67.
[580] ibid, p. 64.
[581] ibid, p. 64.

relational construction of our place in the world bears on the political question of our relationship to and the responsibility toward these places, and conversely, as Massey would put it, 'perhaps less expectedly [the question] of the potential geography of our social responsibility'.[582] Understanding the making of place as a process inherent in the conceptualisation of space as a sphere for the possibility of our existence, complicates the very idea of existence for the original residents within the changing spatiality of their building and their city, a spatiality imbued with the conflicts of war and violence nonetheless. In *Tuyur*, the construction of a spatial imaginary is undertaken through the processes of making place in which the characters in the novel engage. The possession of different social backgrounds (and experiences dictated by them), engenders different values vis-à-vis the use of space and the making of place. Migrants, such as Imm Jean and her husband, for example, appropriate the space of one of the basements and turn it into headquarters for their illegal trade in stolen goods and appliances. Raghida, the concierge, takes over the rooftop, and creates a garden to which she can retreat every day for a few hours of solitude. The militiamen, on the other hand, abandon the building, and find their place (and intimate social connections) on battlegrounds and fronts as they overtake the whole city.

The examples briefly outlined above will be returned to in more details toward the end of this section. However, it suffices to mention that the acts of appropriating a space, of transforming it at will, and re-ordering without consideration to the other residents, revoke the sense of responsibility that Massey believes as integral to the process of making place. While the newcomers seem as if they are taking over the building and the neighbourhood, the original residents fail to understand space as dynamic, relational, and rich with multiplicity. This failure translates in their refusal to reconfigure their sense of place as well as to share their power over

---

[582] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 10.

these places. Viewing places in such a manner, as stable and bearing the beacon of a form of stability and continuity, the original residents refuse any interaction or encounter that can problematise this imaginary. Massey contends that '[i]f time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction. In that sense space is the *social* dimension'.[583] Malpas shares a similar viewpoint, an idea which not only reiterates the conceptualisation of place as lived space, to use a Lefebvrean reference, but also informs the conceptualisation of making place as a process. She states that,

> The idea of place encompasses both the idea of the social activities and institutions that are expressed in and through the structure of a particular place (and which can be seen as partially determinative of place) and the idea of physical objects and events in the world (along with the associated causal processes) that constrain, and are sometimes, constrained by, those social activities and institutions.[584]

In such a manner, Malpas refuses to collapse place to a mere social construction since it is not independent from an ordering deriving from 'individual subjects and from underlying physical structures'.[585] To her, the social (and its possibility) comes to exist or to be formed within and through these physical structures of place.[586] It is this possibility that comes under attack, in the eyes of the original residents, with the arrival of the newcomers and the routines they bring with them. Additionally, Massey complements Malpas' idea of the social dimension of place by stating that this 'sociality' is not that of exclusively human sociality, rather it is that of an 'engagement within a multiplicity'.[587] This idea justifies the original residents' refusal to engage or interact with the newcomers, specifically because they seem to refuse this new multiplicity that has been forced on them. Massey describes this multiplicity as the 'sphere of the

---

[583] ibid, p. 61.
[584] Malpas, p. 35.
[585] ibid, pp. 35-6.
[586] ibid, p. 36.
[587] Massey, *For Space*, p. 61.

continuous production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity in all its forms — diversity, subordination, conflicting interests'.[588]

Massey's conceptualisation of the political relationality of space is inherent in her concept of power-geometry, and reiterates Cresswell's idea of human agency. Massey considers place to be socially constituted through the interrelations present within it, the social dynamic they engender, as well as through the interplay of multiplicities, which, for her, are both spatial and temporal. Massey treats place as 'an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories', a treatment which poses the question of 'living together', or the question of 'throwntogetherness' as she calls it.[589] This question is accompanied by another which is concerned with 'the negotiation of those, equally varied, wider relations within which they are constituted'[590]. In *Tuyur*, the original residents are troubled by the idea of inhabiting the same space as those whom they consider to be lesser human beings. This suggests that the way they inhabit a place, or make home out of it, is not only distinct but also problematic. In fact, this distinction represents a failure of solidarity between these two groups, and reveals the impact of negligent governance and the effect of war on socio-spatial sustainability.

When discussing the idea of home, as an intimate and personal place, one cannot but recall Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard describes the home as a place of refuge, seclusion, privacy, and dreams. It is a place that inscribes a personal sense of belonging and identity. It harbours our most intimate of thoughts, our daydreams and visions, our worst fears and nightmares, while at the same time, it shelters us and provides us with safety and security against dangers, real or imagined. What makes a house an intimate lived experience is the

---

[588] ibid, p. 61.
[589] ibid, p. 151.
[590] ibid, p. 185.

experience of solitude that it entails. He writes, '[E]very corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house'.[591] A lived experience of place entails social and political considerations since it is dependent on various cultural attributes, biographies, and experiences. In this sense, both 'home and culture — and their unsettled interplay — are intrinsically spatial and political'.[592]

The main reason behind the original residents' refusal to mix with the newcomers and for some to remain secluded in the privacy of their own homes, like Gabriella Habib, can be brought back to this perceived difference in culture, identity, and experiences. The new arrival, as such, can be read as an imposed divorce from that home, both on a conceptual level and a practised one. Home, after all, is the place one returns to be with one's thoughts, to a comfort inherent in the possibility of expressing one's feelings and emotions, unattended, without judgment, and away from the prying eyes of strangers. Raji Azar, for example, understands the weight of withholding any expression of emotions on the streets — in public — specifically those of sadness. Therefore, 'if he wanted to cry, he has to go home and lock himself behind the door', as it is not acceptable to do otherwise.[593] In the context of the Lebanese civil war, and with the physical segregation of Beirut, the city ceased to be a domain for everyone; all inhabitants of Beirut were therefore forced to adopt strategies that would allow them to adapt to the reality of a city in conflict.[594] With the arrival of the new residents, a further threat is added to that already established by the civil strife overtaking the city. It is here useful to think of this double threat as

---

[591] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (New York: Penguin Books, 2014 [1958]), p. 155.
[592] Alison Blunt, 'Cultural Geography: Cultural Geographies of Home', *Progress in Human Geography*, 29.4 (2005): 505-15, p. 506.
[593] Jaber, p. 223.
[594] Yahya, pp. 128-29.

operating against both their bodies and their spaces, and once more to highlight the experience of space as embodied, for the specific purpose of analysing the meaning and making of home in the Ayyub Building. Palin and Frith consider the concepts of embodiment and embodied space to be 'enacted through practices of inscription and of being inscribed, referring to how bodies both write and are written by spatial practices'.[595] The apartment, for the original residents who are forced into a new routine in their everyday, is the first logical barrier against that outside threat of violence, a protection against any infringement. Consequently, the new arrival can be considered as a transgression of this protective boundary. By definition, a boundary is a 'space of confrontation, intolerance, violence, and victimisation,' and with the new arrival of residents, this boundary is further complicated as such.[596] Samira Aghacy, writing specifically on domestic space in contemporary Lebanese fiction during the civil war, describes the interior spaces of a house or a home as 'both sites of resistance where inhabitants shield themselves within the walls and furniture from the brute force outside that seeks to dismantle them as well as sites of transgression where barriers between them are constantly crossed and overstepped'.[597]

For most of the original residents, such as the Azar family, for example, home, as a place of affect, shaped 'by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories, and emotions', is no longer so.[598] 'The semi-rural social life of the seventh floor', where they live, 'is ruined' by the clutter of people now residing there.[599] Some apartments are even shared by more than one family. Describing the floor's new living situation, Jaber writes,

---

[595] Jason Palin and Jordan Frith, 'Wearing the City: Memory P(a)laces, Smartphones, and the Rhetorical Invention of Embodied Space', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 46.3 (2016): 222-35, p. 223.
[596] Aghacy, p. 91.
[597] ibid, p. 92.
[598] Blunt, p. 506.
[599] Jaber, p. 226.

> Apartment doors no longer open onto the vast staircase most of the time. The neighbours no longer discuss the meal of the day. Morning coffee sessions and those of lentil picking and aubergine pricking were discontinued. The chairs that used to be left outside doors, disappeared.[600]

The floor is now seen as crowded, unclean, and no longer safe and homey, becoming foreign to the other residents as the whole building now possesses a different social identity. Even though Bachelard does not formulate a strict distinction between the concepts of space and place, home to him, is a space which allows memory-formation, the development of a sense of identity and self, as well as daydreaming. Building on this reading, any threat to the former engenders a threat to the latter. The formation of memories, in this regard, constitutes an integral component in the process of meaning-making and place-making. As such, the new arrival is considered as a threat to the original residents' sense of place. Bachelard writes,

> Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are 'housed'. Our soul is an abode and by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms', we learn to 'abide' within ourselves. Now everything becomes clear, the house image moves in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them.[601]

His approach is engrained in the argument that the imagination 'augments the values of reality'.[602] In *Tuyur*, the original residents' conflict with the newcomers imperils their sense of self, their already established modes of being and codes of inhabiting the building. The original residents therefore find themselves negotiating their places, not only as physical entities overtaken by an *other*, but also place as a possibility for memories to form, communities to be built, encounters to occur, and daydreams and visions to be thought and materialised. Such a negotiation can be considered one which invokes past, present, and future. Yasmine Khayyat, writing on the idea of home in Lebanese contemporary literature during wartime, considers home

---

[600] ibid, p. 226.
[601] Bachelard, p. 21.
[602] Bachelard, p. 25.

as a metaphor 'for existence as something that is not merely given but must be founded', evoking 'that *other* interior for which it has long been the metaphor: consciousness'.[603]

At the heart of the original residents' rejection of the sharing of place with the newcomers and their disdain at having been forced to do so, is the idea that places are formed through processes of exclusion that are constantly being challenged; it is this exclusivity (and familiarity) that comes under threat with the influx of the other into the building. Placemaking, as a process, according to Amy Zhang and Pierce et al., among others, is carried out through what they refer to as place-bundles and place-frames. According to Zhang, the process of making place is political par excellence and involves '(relatively) individually conceptualised and experienced place-bundles being drawn together selectively expressed through place-frames towards social and political ends, which results in a "strategic sharing of place"'.[604] These place-bundles are produced through a variety of heterogeneous elements and are subject to change; these meanings are 'produced through economic, social, and political connections that are constructed on multiple scales'.[605] In other words, these connections come together through a shared vision, value, and goal, and reflect an understanding between the various multiplicities involved in is construction, on what place should mean, look like, and more importantly, how it should be used. The result is a place 'with temporarily agreed [upon] identity being produced through networked politics'.[606]

In *Tuyur*, the arrival of the new residents exposes the conflicting values, uses, and meanings of place, a conflict that is primarily brought about by differences in class — which lead to a

---

[603] Yasmine Khayyat, *Memory in Ruins: The Poetics of* Atlal *in Lebanese Wartime and Postwar Cultural Production*, Doctoral Thesis, *Columbia University*, 2013, p. 48.

[604] Amy Y. Zhang, 'Thinking Temporally When Thinking Relationally: Temporality in Relational Place-Making', *Geoforum*, 90 (2018): 91-9, p. 92.

[605] ibid, p. 92.

[606] ibid, p. 92.

difference in their conceptualisation of place-frames. For Pierce et al., bundling is not limited to a specific locality or scale; it depends on and is formed by multiple constituencies, variables, biographies, experiences of place, and scale[607]. In the same manner that place is constructed through social negotiations and conflicts, so is people's understanding of place.[608] They write,

> Places/bundles may be individually conceptualised and experienced, but place-framing articulates the iterative co-bundling process through which social and political negotiations result in a strategic sharing of place. Place-frames represent only a fraction of any place, the socially negotiated and agreed place-bundle that is rhetorical and politically strategic — not fully a place but a place-frame.[609]

In this respect, the new and old residents of the Ayyub Building are unable to meet at a point of agreement to initiate the creation of place-bundles that would lead to the formation of place-frames, and therefore, a shared 'sense of place' or 'throwntogetherness', to once again use Massey's term. In other words, it is this 'throwntogetherness' that the original residents resist, and which stands in the way of their ability and willingness to form a new sense of place, inclusive of the new residents.

Furthermore, since place-making is contingent upon power relations, recognising hierarchies is intrinsic to developing an understanding of how power structures operate. Doing so, exposes the levels and techniques of exploitation and facilitates their analysis. Pierce et al. believe that 'the exploitation of this political power — e.g. a privileged positionality — is critical to the success or failure of place-framing coalitions as it shapes a community's shared place discourse and (thus) enables or disables particular socio-spatial outcomes'.[610] The ongoing struggle between old and new residents in *Tuyur*, and the original residents' chosen distance from the newcomers, can be read as an impossibility of a constructed frame; a shared 'sense of place'

---

[607] Joseph Pierce, Deborah G. Martin, and James T. Murphy, 'Relational Place-Making: The Networked Politics of Place', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36.1 (2011): 54-70, p. 60.
[608] ibid, p. 60.
[609] ibid, p. 60.
[610] ibid, p. 60.

could not be achieved or reconciled between the two groups since they were unable to form 'strategic alliances based on their shared interests in/of a place'.[611]

The newcomers do not seem too concerned with the original residents' plight. They are nonchalant and treat the building and the neighbourhood as if they have a right to it. In their turn, the original residents resist the formation of any tactical alliance that would serve the collective making of place in the building. By doing so, the original residents resist the reconfiguration of power relations that this new arrival necessitates. According to Pred, rules and power relations inherent within a social structure 'do not constrain'; they rather 'enable human agency and practice. They also emerge out of human agency and practice'[612]. The original residents of the Ayyub Building are here faced with the threat inherent in a process of the 'unmaking' of place as they know it, and its transformation into something other, that is neither them, nor for them, nor by them. This time they are on the receiving end of the exclusivity process. The unmaking of place here is not understood as a deliberate restructuring or reorganisation of place. Rather, this process is read as one which contributes to the unsettling of formerly established norms, rules, and structures that are dominant or govern a certain place, creating a unique distinct sense of place. It is in this sense similar to what Pred calls 'unknowing'; he reasons that '[b]ecause doing and knowing are dialectically intertwined, the character of unknowing in a place contains the cultural and social projects that eventually may occur there'.[613] Such a conscious retreat from the project of making place within the building deprives the original residents from contributing to the new socio-spatial order, creating a separation line between them and the new residents. As such, they choose not to 'intervene' in the process of the making of meaning in relation to place.

---

[611] Zhang, p. 91.
[612] Allan Pred, 'Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74.2 (1984): 279-97, p. 281.
[613] ibid, p. 285.

The outcome is a set of place-making processes, distinct and disparate, that occur within and outside the Ayyub Building, that is not based on any shared collective consciousness and imaginary vis-à-vis place.

The Everyday: 'Their' War Stories, Their Place

Despite the different ways in which the residents in *Tuyur* deal with the war and their suffering, all of them internalise its violence as it seeps into their homes. The war becomes a living entity, existing alongside them and fashioning their everyday. Describing the reality of war as represented in the Lebanese novel, miriam cooke writes,

> Regardless of the political intention behind writing, the war was described as having entered every home, every cell of every body. It was everywhere felt to be a constant threat, a state of alertness that made every car bomb, that one that this time had surely killed a friend or a child or a beloved. It was not necessary to have seen a corpse or a shooting or to be wounded to know that for fifteen years violence simmered just beneath the skin of the city, and that the fiction of a split space between front and home could not be sustained.[614]

Such is the case of Albert in *Tuyur*, who finally decides to follow his family to Cyprus, only to realise that the war has not left him, but travelled along with him instead. Jaber writes,

> Confusion did not leave [Albert] as he was making love to her [his wife]. On the contrary, he was incapable of gathering the two halves in one body — his two halves. Something happened to him there on the checkpoint, as he was looking at the masked [militiamen]. Even before that, when one of the soldiers glanced at him darkly. Absolute hatred, cold as ice, sliced through him.[615]

Like Albert, the other residents internalise the war and seek to normalise it in their daily lives in attempts to adapt and survive. By exposing this everydayness and the multiplicity of the experience of the quotidian during war, Jaber facilies the understanding of the characters' identities and their experience of space.[616] His literary style also allows the understanding of the

---

[614] miriam cooke, 'Beirut Reborn: The Political Aesthetics of Auto-Destruction', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15.2 (2002): 393-424, p. 398.

[615] Jaber, p. 416.

[616] Dalia Said Mustapha, 'Literary Representations of Trauma, Memory, and Identity in the Novels of Elias Khoury and Rabīʿ Jābir', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 40 (2009): 208-36, p. 226.

characters' place-making processes since it highlights the human condition in their experiences by evoking affect, allowing for a reading of their everyday practices — vis-à-vis placemaking — as events in their own right. The severity and traumatic effects of war on the daily lives of the characters are dramatised in *Tuyur* through two specific scenarios: 1. The trivialisation of traumatic experiences, whereby experiencing them becomes as banal and mundane as any daily life routine, and 2. The insistence on the mundane and the ordinary within the chaos, as a defence mechanism for an imagined (and, at some instances, achieved) sense of continuity and survival in wartime.

In the former instance, war scenes, such as dead bodies, shootings, as well as roadblocks and checkpoints, for example, become regular scenes in the everydayness of the city and the experience of its people. In no one's case is this better exemplified than in Jirji's. Speaking of his experience as a former militiaman during the war, Jirji writes,

> I saw someone throw away a blue garbage bag from the highest barricade atop Hotel Lux. It exploded on the asphalt as if it were a bomb. As I climbed the stairs, I felt another sweating episode [overwhelm me]. Blood scoured through my veins like a volcano. I sat down where we threw three corpses a few months ago. The garbage collector or the civil defence forces came and took them away. Corpses do not disintegrate on their own in mid-air. They are thrown down wells at the bottom of Allenby Street.[617]

Despite Jirji's discomfort at his observations and recollections, he is not affected in a manner that would hinder his internalisation of such incidents as normative, and thus, as part of his experience of the city now at war. Nor does this discomfort translate to any forms of guilt or remorse; his episode ends as abruptly as it starts. He realises that not only do these forms of violence become normal occurrences, but that his own authority as a militiaman allows him to perpetuate this violence and abuse of power. In addition to a former episode in which he kidnaps two brothers and tortures them in the same way that his enemies have tortured his brother, Jirji's

---

[617] Jaber, p. 297.

normalisation of violence as well as his abuse of power are specifically evident in an encounter between him and a telephone operator. Jirji decides that being irritated by the operator's voice is a fair enough justification to terrorise him. He writes,

> I tell you this because it means something. He was neither my enemy nor an enemy of the Eastern region. I did not think of my brother whose molars and toenails were pulled out before they sent [him] back to us [dead] via the Red Cross. I did not think of the Christian community nor of Lebanon's unified, independent entity. I did not think of anything or anyone. I was hungry and felt sweat wetting my back and dripping from under my armpits. I pulled out my gun and raised it to the operator's forehead. I saw him shake like a girl. He was unable to speak […] I left him shaking on the leather chair and went out.[618]

The fact that he did not pull the trigger is indicative of how much Jirji enjoys terrorising people; to him, this incident is insignificant. His actions were therefore committed out of sheer pleasure and abuse of power, simply because he is capable of doing so. Additionally, Jirji's complete indifference to his brother and the cause in whose name he fights, reduces his actions to mere terrorism. Jirji is evidently unconcerned with matters of conscience. Satisfied, he nonchalantly walks out the door, in the direction of the nearby bakery, where he buys a *manqooshi* sandwich, sits down on the street, and recalls, as if playing a film reel, other episodes of terror that he has committed or to which he has contributed.

In the latter instance, protagonists are seen clinging to the mundane and the ordinary in an attempt to understand the transformation that has befallen their lives and led to their removal from their places of refuge. Such is the case of the fighters, Raymond Zakhour and Said Azar, the professor Dr. Edgar Maalouf, the journalist Bchara Howayek, and the concierge of the Ayyub Building, Raghida Zaghloul. While the fighters abandon the building altogether and seek their place on the fronts, both Edgar and Raghida attempt to make a place for themselves within the building; Edgar retreats to his study and finds his place through writing, and Raghida creates a place for herself in the little garden that she tends on the rooftop of the building. As for Bchara,

---

[618] ibid, p. 299.

his sense of purpose is demonstrated through his commitment to his role as a journalist. Bchara is keen on documenting and recording, specifically, the everydayness of the war and its experience by the people, as shall be demonstrated.

Raymond is at first hesitant to join the war, but eventually does so in order to feel less left out, and more involved and entertained. In other words, Raymond finds purpose in fighting. Growing up, Raymond hated violence and was aware of being different from the other boys his age. Having been bullied and excluded as a child for being different and soft, Raymond joins a militia to prove otherwise. Jaber writes,

> His first battle, in the *Ain al-Rimmaneh* Zone, revealed to him a mysteriousness akin to happiness. But his real happiness started after the first cleansing operation in which he participated […] He did not know what happened exactly. And he did not care because the final objectives meant nothing to him. He was crouching over a man's chest. The latter was crying in fear despite wearing military fatigue. He placed the gun in the man's mouth, and before pulling the trigger felt alive for the very first time.[619]

Raymond, in this sense, regards the war as a saviour, and basks in his saving grace by clinging to whatever bits of pleasure and enjoyment he and his fellow fighters can afford on the fronts. For instance, he used to enjoy staying up late, smoking and drinking with them in between battles. In a fragment describing such instances, the fighters 'stay up late in places where *doshka* missiles from the *al-Murr* Tower cannot reach them because bullets are faithful to their rightful path and do not veer away in space'.[620] The fighters therefore would leave their party straight 'to their fighting posts in the top floors, as others [come] and take their place. They pick up the still lit cigarettes [that the others have left] and open new bottles'.[621] Jirji, for example, recalls all the fun that he and his fellow fighters used to have in between battles. He writes, 'I never laughed, in my entire life, the way we used to in the *souqs* war'.[622]

---

[619] ibid, p. 56.
[620] ibid, p. 94.
[621] ibid, p. 95.
[622] ibid, p. 380.

Similar to Raymond, Said is also bullied growing up for being simple-minded. Said is

conscious of how people regard him. He even refers to himself as a donkey. He hates the war and

is terrified of it more than he is terrified of both his parents.[623] Jaber writes,

> He shivered in terror as bombs shook the walls [around him]. His fear intensified in the shelter between
> pale women and open bibles and prayers that were impossible to be heard by God because the basement [in
> which they were] was under the building […] In the crowded shelter, he was transformed into a woman;
> their fear infected him.[624]

Following this incident, Said accidentally meets a few militia members on his way back home

from the grocery store. He then starts hanging out with them and consequently disappears for 27

days before returning as a feared militiaman himself. Even though Said runs towards (instead of

away from the war) in order to overcome his fear, he ends up finding himself through fighting,

by feeling empowered in his new ability to terrorise, kill, and kidnap. He is no longer scorned; he

is feared instead. He takes pleasure in his new-found power, as if it were his way of deflecting

the terror that the war has instilled in him since it started. Jaber describes him as having been

transformed into a monster:

> With the fall of the *Nab'a*, Said Azar discovered that the thrill of fighting has infiltrated his blood. He
> moved across fronts as if they were playgrounds […] During the raid of *Tal al-Zaatar* [refugee camp], he
> did not shy away from executing every creature who comes in his way. Except the children. Those he saved
> and directed to where the Red Cross were present.[625]

Even though Jirji is a different case than both Said and Raymond, in the sense that he has always

been prone to violence and enthusiastic for the war, he also makes the trenches a place to which

he belongs, not only through fighting fervently, but also through the sense of community that he

was able to feel once there. He writes, 'Friendship in trenches does not resemble anything else.

In hours, a person becomes family'.[626] Coming from someone who values family above all and

---

[623] ibid, p. 124.
[624] ibid, p. 124.
[625] ibid, p. 631.
[626] ibid, p. 512.

who would do everything in his means to safeguard their safety, Jirji's statement is a powerful

indication of the intensity of the sense of belonging that he feels in the trenches with his fellows.

The war thus gives the militiamen an opportunity to survive it and overcome its reality by

becoming active participants and perpetrators of violence. Said, for example, is lured into

fighting when one militia member tells him, '[If] you want to live, live here, on the conflict

line'.[627]

In addition to being examples of those who have made out of war an experience of belonging

— finding as a result their place in the city, and their role or purpose —, Jirji, Raymond, and

Said are all also examples of militiamen who have taken over Beirut and contributed to its

physical, social, and sectarian segregation during the war. The militiamen ruptured the physical

fabric of the city, creating boundaries and barriers that were constantly being negotiated,

contested, appropriated, or conquered. According to Yahya, the city

> changed into a perpetual series of negated opening and fissured enclosures that constrained and segregated. Breaks within the city occurred in the time-space of the city as well as within its physical fabric. Transit through the city ceased to occur through a neutral central but rather through ruptures within the surface boundaries of one zone to another […] Life in Beirut was remodelled into a series of movements through different spaces.[628]

In such a manner, the militias became the guardians of space in Beirut during the war as they

'facilitated the symbolic acquisition of a social or geographic space within their now religiously

homogenous areas. The militias thus became the new tools for urban integration and social

reordering of the population, yielding a new urban geography'.[629]

Edgar Maalouf, on the other hand, is a recipient of such violence perpetuated by militiamen

like Raymond, Jirji, and Said. He is a professor at the American University of Beirut, who finally

submits to the idea of leaving West Beirut, following an incident with militiamen on a

---

[627] ibid, p. 127.
[628] Yahya, p. 135.
[629] ibid, pp. 136-37.

checkpoint which left him injured. Once settled in the Ayyub Building, Edgar retreats to his

study in an attempt to write a book, while completely aware of the raging war outside his

window. However, Edgar realises that secluding himself in his study, and keeping himself busy

with reading and writing, are the only means through which he could survive the war without

losing a sense of himself. As such, he 'continued his persistent attempt to live outside history.

This was the only way that he knew how to safeguard his sanity. He decided not to succumb to

depression'.[630] When not writing and researching, Edgar would spend his day among books,

journals, and dictionaries. In fact, skimming through encyclopaedias and dictionaries is an old

habit that Edgar picked up in order to keep himself in check. The meticulous 'alphabetical order

of materials and the world restored to his body a peace he direly needed. He was very fragile.

The least of emergencies threatening his daily routine could destroy his nerves'.[631]

Like Edgar, the concierge, Raghida, seeks a place for herself within the building. Having a

job that demands her interaction with all the residents of the building, Raghida rarely has time

alone. For that purpose, carving a place for herself on the roof of the building plays a great

significance in alleviating the demands of the everyday in her life as concierge. She keeps

inventing tasks to keep her daughter busy and finds solace in being alone in her garden. Jaber

writes,

> On such mornings, when her body ached as if a tank had driven over her, when her soul cringed in her
> stomach to a size smaller than a dot, Raghida Zaghloul wanted nothing other than to stand alone on the
> rooftop, next to the water tank, among the tin buckets she had stealthily filled with earth and secretly
> planted with roses.[632]

Raghida even goes as far as to defend her little haven by standing up to the residents of the

building when they demand a copy of the keys to the roof. Najia Azar, Said's mother, living on

---

[630] Jaber, p. 84.
[631] ibid, pp. 545-56.
[632] ibid, p. 69.

the seventh floor, asks Raghida for roof access so she can hang her laundry despite having a

small balcony in her apartment. Raghida refuses on the pretext that the owner of the building has

stored his valuables on the roof. But Najia does not relent and screams at Raghida demanding the

keys by extending her arm forward and frowning in an attempt to terrify the concierge. Raghida

ultimately and for the first time, refuses the demands of the residents for whom she works,

forcing Najia to leave her alone with her rooftop garden and the keys.

Other protagonists establish their 'place' in a war-torn city through advocating their sense of

purpose and duty. Such is the case of the photojournalist Bchara Howayek and the young girls of

the Ayyub Building. Bchara realises the importance of recording and documenting the

'everyday' manifestations of war, and specifically, their transformative effects on people. He is

aware that 'everything gets lost if it were not recorded on paper. The human memory does not fit

the details that multiply, non-stop, as the days pass'.[633] For Bchara, it is not only about recording

history as much as it is about recording the personal narratives of people in wartime. The

committed manner with which he writes and takes pictures exposes the personal and individual

experiences of pain, loss, panic, and terror that historical and journalistic pieces leave out. In

such a manner, Bchara, reiterating Jaber's intent through this novel, contributes to representing

'their war stories' as events in themselves. His work is for instance able to capture how 'panic

had mutilated the features of people on the streets', as Dareen Azar says while observing how the

war maps itself on people's faces.[634] Bchara seeks to record and document the war itself and

what it has done to people. In a sense, his work is able to graphically pose, once more, one of the

rhetorical questions that Bchara asks himself as he takes a walk inside a football stadium: 'When,

---

[633] ibid, p. 334.
[634] ibid, p. 243.

where, and how does change occur and you cease to be yourself?'.[635] Furthermore, the earnestness of Bchara's attempts to account for these personal narratives is evident in the inclusion of a list describing in scenic detail the pictures that he has taken. Spread across five pages in the novel, the list includes pictures (and their captions) of a group of women dressed stylishly, militiamen with their full gear and military fatigue, young militiamen and women, a picture of the Maronite Saint Charbel, a woman spraying her hair in style, wrecked buses, a mobile grocery vendor, two corpses with one of the dead women covering her face with a sweater, a man in shorts standing at the head of a corpse, holding the rope that is wrapped around the dead man's neck, a corpse of a man whose eyes have been plucked out, heavy artillery and tanks with a group of men gathered around it, a woman with her children carrying water tanks and standing in line, and so on and so forth. The inclusion of such a list in *Tuyur* represents the everyday (and its reality during war) in a manner faithful to the personal stories of those experiencing them. Such an inclusion also affirms the right of these narratives to be written and remembered as events in their own right.

5.   Concluding Remarks

The examples illustrated above emphasise the significance of the everyday and its experience in portraying violence and war in an accurate manner. The emphasis on making violence ordinary and normalising it, on the one hand, and transgressing it, on the other, is crucial for the understanding of the significance of everyday practices in Jaber's novel. Jaber's style can therefore be considered as an attempt at a prioritisation of narratives and experiences over general, affect-lacking, and monolithic representations of war in official historical accounts as

---

[635] ibid, p. 477.

well as a form of unsettling them. In this sense, his novel can be read as a counter-hegemonic reading of history and a dissection of the War Event into the multiple personal narratives that constitute it. By doing so, it allows for a more accurate analysis of the process of place-making since these experiences and the characters' reactions to them inform their experiences of place and their attempts at making and maintaining it. The decentralisation of the historical event, the exposure of the personal narratives, as well as the fragmentation, non-linearity, and intertextuality are all techniques which have distinguished Jaber's novels. As explored in the previous chapter, writing trauma resists structure; each narrative proposes its own form. Jaber successfully portrays the human condition during war through his distinctive style that resists rigid structure, and through his narrative which reveals the multiplicity of the war experience. In doing so, Jaber resists the monolithic representation of war in official historical narratives, and prioritises the everyday, ordinary experiences that these narratives often absent. He also exposes the ongoing status of the civil war through the present absence of the displaced and the disappeared that is prevalent in his work.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUOTIDIAN LICENSE: THE PRACTICE OF WRITING AND WALKING IN HILAL CHOUMAN

1.   The War Changes Garments: Ongoing Violence and Ordered, Profitable Chaos

In a scene in Hilal Chouman's *Kana Ghadan*, or Once Upon a Time, Tomorrow (2017), one of

the main characters, Rim, has a dream. The dream captures the current state of affairs in 2017

Lebanon, a country reigned by sporadic, recurrent violence and forms of neoliberalisation,

creating an *ordered, profitable chaos*. In her dream, Rim realises that the Lebanese, herself

included, are 'living in the backyard', along with the dead and a bloody past, imprisoned, unable

to move any further.[636] Describing her dream, she writes,

> I see all of us advancing. I look around and I recognise everyone. All of us, including those who are dead, those who died, and those who will die, walking. We tread along forward and behind us small explosions erupt […] We name the space [behind us]: the backyard […] In it, everything that happened has happened, and everything that could have happened, has happened as well […] It were as if we live in the backyard and it lives through us, and there is no life without this contiguity. We feel as if we do not care. Death is ordinary. Survival is ordinary. We march ahead, we look back, and we do not know whether the yard behind us would one day swallow us.[637]

Being stuck in the backyard normalises both death and survival, and confines the protagonists in

the novel in a gripping sense of helplessness. In both novels under study here, Lebanon in

general and Beirut in specific, are portrayed as a milieu wrought with violence and dominated by

technologies of power and mechanisms of social control — to use a Foucauldian terminology.

These mechanisms are manifest in the neoliberalisation of Beirut, and constitute the main

analytic framework proposed in this chapter. These phenomena are read and interpreted based on

the premises that the civil war is far from over; the violence of the war has merely changed form

and materialised in the neoliberalisation of everyday life. In other words, the violence of the civil

---

[636] Hilal Chouman, *Kana Ghadan* (Beirut: dar al Saqi, 2017), p. 133. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.
[637] ibid, p. 133.

war extended itself into the postwar present, taking a different form across various dimensions, as shall be explained. In both *Limbo Beirut* (2016) and *Kana Ghadan*, these phenomena are exaggerated to reveal their gripping power over the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Beirut. The inhabitants are then forced to negotiate and contest this dominance through their socio-spatial practices, specifically those of writing and walking in the city. This chapter reads these practices as transgressive; they force the reader into an alternative reading of the experience of the city and war. By doing so, these practices unsettle the representation of city and war in official historical narratives, by accounting for experiences of the quotidian that are often omitted or undermined by official renderings.

The following section explores the socio-political and economic milieu of Lebanon during and after the war, which constitutes the contextual background of the two novels. The extended economic and political reality are manifest in two main dimensions, memoricide (the erasure and killing of memory, through the amnesiac discourse endorsed by the Lebanese state after the war) and urbicide (the killing of urban space through wartime displacement and destruction of the lived environment, and through the postwar reconstruction projects). This section argues that memoricide and urbicide are forms of violence in their own right, and are employed as mechanisms of social control by the postwar state.[638]

The term urbicide is understood as the killing of urban space or the built environment. However, it is not only 'about the destruction of the built environment but the annihilation of a certain kind of urban life (defined by agonistic heterogeneity) *through* the destruction of physical environments'.[639] The concept of memoricide and the subsequent 'non-memory', as Hiszowics et

---

[638] See Martin Coward, 'Against Anthropocentrism: The Destruction of the Built Environment as a Distinct Form of Political Violence', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006): 419-37.
[639] See Stefan Kipfer and Kanishka Goonewardena, 'Colonization and the New Imperialism: On the Meaning of Urbicide Today', *Theory & Event*, 10.2 (2007): 1-41, par. 13, original emphasis.

al. call it, informs the understanding of the amnesiac discourse that was endorsed by the state following the end of the civil war in Lebanon.[640] Both concepts and their significance to this study will be further explored in the second section of this chapter. Within this context, the quotidian is understood as the socio-spatial practices of the inhabitants, seen as constant negotiations of the spaces of the city and the making of meaning in the process. Informed by Edward Soja's concept of spatial justice, this chapter understands the inhabitants' socio-spatial practices as actions motivated towards claiming a more just relationship to the city, one that secures them a right to the lived/built environment and its experience.

The analysis of these practices focuses on their counter-hegemonic effect on the level of the everyday, and in relation to the style and form of Chouman's two novels. In both *Limbo Beirut* and *Kana Ghadan*, form and content engage in an interesting dynamic that is facilitated and supported by the multiple literary techniques that Chouman employs. These include fragmentation, metafiction, polyvocality, the alternation of the narrative voice and its multiplicity, and the juxtaposition of various genres. Interestingly enough, episodes under study here from *Limbo Beirut* converse with (and at times complement) those from *Kana Ghadan*, creating a dialogue between the two novels. This dialogue facilitates a better understanding of the effect of the city's conflict on the everyday of the protagonists. The strategies of social control evident in this chapter's reading of Chouman's two novels adopt, as their internal logic, Gupta and Ferguson's concept of the 'spatialization of the State'.[641] These strategies are specifically present in *Kana Ghadan*, through the exaggerated representation of phenomena, such as privatisation, commercialisation and commodification, the stupefying effect of popular

---

[640] Maria Hirszowics, Elzbieta Neyman, and Piotr H. Kosicki, 'The Social Framing of Non-Memory', *International Journal of Sociology*, 37.1 (2007): 74-88.
[641] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7.1 (1992): 6-23.

culture, militarisation, and securitisation, to name but a few. Both novels endow their protagonists with a spatial consciousness which allows them to manage their everyday lives in a more informed and agentive manner. It is these practices that the second half of this chapter dedicates itself to analysing and understanding, in order to affirm the continuity of the war under a different form, on the one hand, and reject the rhetoric that surrenders to the simplistic conviction behind the phrase: 'History repeats itself', on the other. The reading endeavoured by this chapter accentuates the significance of multiple alternative perspectives which are explicitly portrayed through the numerous stories and narratives explored in the novels. Influenced by both David Harvey and Antonio Gramsci, this chapter aims to contribute to highlighting the importance of the transformative effect of these alternative readings. It therefore aims to reveal the possible potentialities for counter-hegemonic practices and tactics, as understood by de Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*,[642] on the one hand, and the re-creation, re-inscription, and re-appropriation of politicized space, on the other.

Contextual Overview

The war is not over. The recurring violence in Lebanon, as expanded on in Chapter One, is not a mere repetition of past events. History does not repeat itself. This chapter, through its exploration of the various and multiple stories narrating the everyday experiences of violence of the protagonists in both novels, engage the novels as spaces for resistance and transgression. The everyday is here considered as a space rife with potentialities and possibilities. In the words of

---

[642] See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

Henri Lefebvre, '*possibilities* become apparent, more immediately perceptible, in this sphere [of the everyday] than elsewhere'.[643]

The everyday in *Kana Ghadan* is thus seen as a realm for alternative possibilities to be imagined, re-inscribed, and potentially realised. This realm, however, is complicated by the context in which it is implicated: postwar Lebanon. This chapter argues that postwar Lebanon did not reconcile with its bloody past, but chose to deny it ever happened. As thoroughly explained in chapters One and Three, the Lebanese state, following the war and the General Amnesty exonerating all warlords and turning them into guardians of the new nation, endorsed an amnesiac discourse and adopted a neoliberal reconstruction project. The effects of these measures on time and space, history and geography, within the country, are dire, and are exposed in this chapter as forms of violence in their own right. The neoliberal strategies of state and non-state agents after the war resulted in an erasure of both space (referred to here as urbicide) and history (referred to here as memoricide). The aim of these strategies is the reproduction of what Najib Hourani calls 'the militia economy', which allows these strategies to perpetuate and consolidate their control, as shall be explained. Reading these two novels through this framework, and informed by concepts such as spatial justice (Soja, Dikec, Diken) and the right to the city (Lefebvre, Harvey), allows for a more concrete understanding of such literary productions and avoids collapsing the analysis into a mere dystopian interpretation. The critique of these two novels aims to transcend a literary or theoretical imaginary and to delve into the depth of everyday praxis, stressing the emancipatory potentiality of social space juxtaposed against those of segregation, confinement, and discipline. In this reading of the two novels, the practices of the everyday are confined to those of walking and writing. It is an everyday that

---

[643] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday: The One Volume Edition* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 248, original emphasis,

conveys a 'spatial consciousness' faithful to Henri Lefebvre's 'lived space', Michel Foucault's

concept of heterotopia, and Edward Soja's 'thirdspace'. In other words, these practices are

significantly neither defeatist nor passive. On the contrary, they invoke a 'space of hope' to

borrow the phrase from David Harvey. As such, using the everyday practices of the protagonists

in these two novels as negotiations of both urbicide and memoricide, this chapter argues that the

right to the city in this context is the right to memory (history) and the right to space

(geography).

Before undertaking this reading, the following section exposes the political and historical

mise-en-scène of violence during postwar Lebanon, reading it as an *ordered, profitable chaos*.

This chaos is conserved through two specific strategies of socio-spatial control, namely urbicide

and memoricide. The scope of this study is underscored by two specific parameters: the socio-

historic and political contexts against which these two novels are set and read, and the geo-

centric approach adopted for this reading.

In Lebanon, and as portrayed in the two novels, the inhabitants are in constant search for

meaning as they navigate the space of their city. In *Limbo Beirut*, for example, one of the

protagonists describes his relationship with the city by stating,

> Sometimes I don't understand this country, I thought. How it lurches from one extreme to its opposite.
> How we create well-organised things inside of things that are not organised inside of things that are
> organised … it's a labyrinth. How each thing is done, and is assimilated, and evolves, and survives. Really,
> it's a labyrinth.[644]

It is indeed a labyrinth that all main characters in both novels attempt to navigate and make sense

of. Chouman portrays them as in constant attempts to redefine their relationship to their city

while attempting to develop a clearer understanding of it. Their practices, therefore, as analysed

---

[644] Hilal Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, trans. by Anna Ziajka Stanton (Austin: The University of Austin Texas, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2016), p. 122.

in this study, act as ruptures that they make possible on the level of the everyday. In such a manner, the everyday, for these protagonists, becomes a realm of transgression and contestation.

In his seminal work, *Writing on Cities*, Henri Lefebvre describes the city as an *oeuvre*, 'closer to a work of art than to a simple material product'.[645] It is human beings who are responsible for the production and reproduction of their city and its social formations. For Lefebvre, the city possesses a history; 'it is the work of a history, that is, of clearly defined people and groups who accomplish this *oeuvre*, in historical conditions'.[646] As the two novels under study demonstrate, the inhabitants of Beirut are alienated from this *oeuvre*. Their right to the city is dismissed and their everyday life is governed by unjust socio-spatial strategies. The city in which they live is governed by what will be referred to throughout this chapter as an *ordered, profitable chaos*. And the social relations that are being reproduced are those of segregation, domination, and trepidation.

The reconstruction project that was undertaken following the termination of the civil war, which officially began in 1992, was neoliberal par excellence. It aimed towards exclusion and homogeneity, and contributed to furthering the sectarian rift already deep in Lebanon's socio-political fabric. The unjust, violent practices that this project initiated can be read in the manner in which one private company, Solidere, was able to legally monopolise the reconstruction process. In December 1991, Law 117 was passed by the postwar government, legalising the 'expropriation of private property in the *suq* for the benefit of a private real estate holding

---

[645] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and eds. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000 [1996]), p. 101.
[646] ibid, p. 101.

company', appointing Solidere as the sole authority on the reconstruction project.[647] This Law allowed the

> erasure of right-holders' claims to 5043 homes and apartments, 7092 shops and businesses, 5597 offices and 1368 workshops and 702 warehouses, 343 hotels, 361 restaurants and 45 bars that had animated the pre-war *suq*. The neoliberal drive to rebuild the "heart of the nation" systematically removed the people.[648]

The controversial practices of the reconstruction process perpetuated the 'militia economy' that had been prevalent during the war; the political economy of postwar Lebanon stood on the premises of power-sharing and clientelism. Despite the violence and its intensity, the financial sector in Lebanon during the war did not collapse. In fact, the sector witnessed a prosperity as the number of 'representative offices opened by Western banks' grew, along with 'investments by regional and international investors, often in conjunction with militia institutions and businessmen'.[649] With the advent of Rafiq Hariri, and his acquired prominence both economically and politically, as Prime Minister in 1992 and as the owner of Solidere, 'the politico-economic interests of his transnational financial network of which he was a part' has directed 'Lebanon's globalisation-friendly "free market" ever since'.[650]

By 2017, the year *Kana Ghadan* was published, Lebanon had already endured a series of violent incidents of civil and political unrest, most of which included armed civil strife, as outlined in Chapter One. The years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2015, and 2019 constitute pivotal dates in this regard. Recent years witnessed attempts at founding alternative movements in Lebanon to protest the recurrence of violence and the domination of unjust processes of neoliberalisation which have resulted in increased injustices across socio-economic and ethico-

---

[647] Najib Hourani, 'Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Citizenship Agendas: Lessons from Beirut', *Citizenship Studies*, 19.2 (2015): 184-99, p. 188.
[648] ibid, p. 188.
[649] Najib Hourani, 'Transnational Pathways and Politico-Economic Power: Globalization and the Lebanese Civil War', *Geopolitics*, 15.2 (2010): 290-311, p. 301.
[650] ibid, p. 306.

religious groups. The YouStink movement in 2015, for example, was organised in protest to the garbage crisis that had befallen the country. The experience was short-lived for various reasons that exceed the limits of this thesis. However, and in the time of writing this thesis, the Lebanese people took to the streets in an uprising against corruption, on 17 October, 2019. The revolution is currently well into its sixth month. Whether these uprisings demonstrate tangible change, or not, is not the concern of this chapter. Their mention, however, is meant to highlight the presence and significance of counter-hegemonic potentialities within the Lebanese context. In light of these potentialities, the everyday practices of Chouman's characters can be read with the same fervour, as a 'cry and demand', as Lefebvre would say, of their right to the city and social justice. Being a realm through which the power order can effectively maintain and perpetuate its dominance through repetition and routine, the quotidian is also a space through which the status quo can be challenged.

The protagonists in both of Chouman's novels are victims of concurrent violence and injustice. In *Kana Ghadan*, a taxi driver in conversation with the main protagonist Khaled views the current situation as more dangerous than that during the civil war. Today, there are simply too many players and dangers, and an uncontainable chaos. He says,

> What is happening in this country, Sir? I mean, we have witnessed days of war, but it was not like this, we were used to it; we no longer are […] It would have been less of a disaster, Sir, if the [political] parties were kidnapping people, or even based on their identity. In that case, one would know in whom to take cover; one would know one's limits. But now what? Anyone who would want to kidnap you, would do so, then would inform you that you're kidnapped, before sending your parents word of your ransom.[651]

In *Limbo Beirut*, a novel that hosts the stories of 6 different characters, with a chapter dedicated to each, all characters struggle to navigate their chaotic city, make sense of it, and understand their experiences within it. What is striking in this novel is how the individual lives of the 6 characters intersect and overlap. The protagonist of the first chapter, for example, a gay graffiti

---

[651] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 94.

artist called Walid, asks a question that Hassan, a former militiaman, who had fought during the civil war and is currently taking up arms again, answers in the fifth chapter. Walid, in response to his reading of the violence scouring the streets in Beirut, and of which he himself was a witness and a potential victim, questions whether the war is really over. He asks, 'Had these men in their fifties, now pointing their fingers at the rain of bullets seen this all before? Were they reclaiming old customs? Did they remember how they used to go out onto rooftops as teenagers and wait for the evening round of shelling?'.[652] Walid shares his concern of war breaking out with his partner who mocks his logic by stating, 'You're dreaming! War? This is no big deal. It's nothing to get excited about. Everything that can happen has already happened to this country. Everything that can be done was done before'.[653] Alfred's statement conveys a history that is not yet over, but keeps reproducing itself with some difference. It is not a repetition, as much as it is a renewal (and reproduction) of the violence through diverse and new forms. Such is also the case in *Limbo Beirut*, when Hassan, a former militiaman, reflects on the nature of the current violence and wonders, 'But hadn't the war been like this too? Maybe it was just that I changed? No. No. The war was different. The war was longer, smellier, more violent. I was deep inside the war. No. It was inside me'.[654] Internalising this violence is one step closer towards either normalising it or contesting it. This ongoing state of affairs seeped into everyday appearances or experiences of the inhabitants' lives so much so that they normalised and internalised the violence; it made those like Hassan view violence as a living entity within them. This brings to mind Elias Khoury's *Broken Mirrors*,[655] in which one of the characters tells the protagonist Karim that the war will never be over because it is inside us.

---

[652] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 10.
[653] ibid, p. 19.
[654] ibid, p. 148.
[655] Elias Khoury, *Broken Mirrors: Silankol*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (London: Machete, 2015).

Internalising the war in such a manner, the protagonists demonstrate the extension of the

war experience and its traumatic aftermaths onto their still-violent present. The war is therefore

far from over. Zeina Tarraf rightfully places the term 'post-civil war' between quotation marks,

out of a similar conviction that the war did not really cease with the announcement of its official

termination in the early nineties. The notion of 'post', she contends,

> may not take into account the continuation of political violence under the Syrian military occupation that
> lasted for 30 years and the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon that ended in 2000. While I use the term
> "post-civil war" to designate the official end of the civil conflict, throughout the article I complicate the
> ideas of a post-conflict nation by revealing the ways in which this period continued to witness political
> violence.[656]

Similarly, Ken Seigneurie, in his introduction to *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of

Space in Modern Levantine Narratives* (2003), describes the civil war in Lebanon as ongoing.[657]

The war's ongoing status, coupled with the neoliberal political economy adopted, entered

the country into a stupor overwhelmed by amnesia, denial, and a renunciation of responsibility.

The repercussions of such a politics materialised spatially, mostly through the effect of the

reconstruction projects on the everyday spaces of Beirutis. Saree Makdisi goes as far as to

describe this effect as a 'colonisation of public interests by privatised, neoliberal ones'.[658] The

transition period from armed struggle to a city rising from the ashes necessitated a new form of

governmentality that would accompany the transformation of warlords into guardians of a new

state. This new governmentality premised its power relations on a flourishing economy, a

reconstructed facade to a surviving city, and a complete denial of the bloody past; it was thus a

strategy to rehabilitate space and rewrite memory, and engendered its own forms of domination.

Hourani opines that Lebanon's neoliberal approach to the reconstruction process heralded a

---

[656] Ziena Tarraf, 'Haunting and the Neoliberal Encounter in *Terra Incognita* and *A Perfect Day*', *Cultural Dynamics*, 29.1-2 (2017): 39-62, p. 40.
[657] See Ken Seigneurie, *Crisis and Memory: The Representation in Modern Levantine Narratives* (Michigan: Reichert, 2003).
[658] Tarraf, p.46.

'return to the Lebanese "tradition" of private sector-led development within a globalisation-friendly "new order"'.[659] Solidere's practices and strategies effectively led to the effacement of 'Beirut's local history',[660] and to the colonisation of space.[661]

The neoliberal governmentality adopted was 'rooted in entrepreneurial values such as competitiveness, self-interest, and decentralisation. It celebrate[d] individual empowerment and the devotion of central state power to smaller localised units'.[662] These practices, which Makdisi refers to as 'Harirism', led to the 'dramatic intensification of the presence of market forces', forging the way for a neoliberal capitalism to take reign in Lebanon.[663] What Harirism made possible was for the capital to '*become* the state'.[664] This new order, which Hourani considers to be an 'extension of the politics that dominated during the civil war' is founded on the rationality and rhetoric of a militia economy.[665] It is a form of pathology, 'infected by politics and cultural traditionalism, by predatory gangsterism and transnational criminality'.[666] Hourani views these practices of 'neoliberal reform' as means through which this new governmentality can 'naturalise' its own practices and strategies of social control, including 'legal and institutional reforms to formalise, commoditise, and securitise urban lands under company [Solidere] control were cast as necessary technical interventions designed to transform urban land into financial asset'.[667]

---

[659] Hourani, 'Transnational Pathways', p. 291.
[660] Tarraf, p. 45.
[661] Makdisi, p. 691.
[662] Manfred Seeger and Ravi Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 12.
[663] Makdisi, p. 694.
[664] ibid, p. 698, original emphasis.
[665] Tarraf, p. 46.
[666] Hourani, 'Transnational Pathways', p. 291.
[667] ibid, p. 292.

As a result of this new postwar strategy, 'various social groups' were marginalised, and 'alternative forms of politics to a neoliberal ethnocommunalism', were silenced.[668] This was demonstrated through the homogenising, exclusive, regulative, and controlling politics of the new governmentality that is still in effect today, and which consolidates 'the exercise of local power by former ethnic militia warlords now reinvented as political leaders'.[669] Therefore, to transition into the postwar era, Beirut underwent a remilitarisation, a remodelling of war strategies upheld by the same power structure covered up by the illusion of a new set of power and social relations. This new structure was built on premises of power sharing between elites, accompanied by the exclusion and marginalisation of groups along sectarian and class divides. Therefore, in order to accommodate the various 'ethnoreligious' groups in conflict, 'the formation of public policy came to be dominated by informal bargaining between elites. The most common outcome of this bargaining was the appointment of the spoils of public office, privileges, and state resources between the sectarian elites'.[670]

Today, nothing has changed except the appearance of the conflict and its representation or manifestation in society. Khaled in *Kana Ghadan* experiences the country's deadlock and perpetual violence as a state of limbo, a viciousness of renounced responsibility and nonchalance. As a result, the conflict appears anaesthetised, subdued, non-existent, and the system empowered:

> Nothing substantially changes in it [the country]. And when things slide towards what appears, in the first instance, to be marching along the road of no return, events are exposed as devoid of authenticity and drenched in boredom. Some kind of a failure dominates the climate; it is a failure that stands still even when the situation declines. Perhaps because it is expected, or maybe because it is not new, or because it lacks creativity. And because many know that this decline will not lead to any kind of change, neither to unbridled chaos nor to an orderly improvement. Some form of a dissociation occurs between their personal

---

[668] John Nagle, 'Ghosts, Memory, and the Right to the Divided City: Resisting Amnesia in Beirut City Centre', *Antipode*, 49.1 (2017): 149-68, p. 151.
[669] ibid, p. 153.
[670] ibid, p. 153.

lives and what goes on around them; they therefore exclude every public event from the details of their everyday lives, and throw it aside. They merely pass by it […] In this manner, the conflict disappears.[671]

In the above excerpt, responsibility is also cast on those marginalised individuals who accept the hegemony and the structure of power relations that subdues them, who renounce responsibility and accountability for their situation, who, through their acquiescence, reproduce the system and their subservience to it. Furthermore, it also accentuates the importance of the everyday as a ripe realm for resisting this structure. It is therefore a critique against those who choose to remain passive, and whose passivity contributed to the success of power strategies that were implemented socio-spatially, such as urbicide and memoricide.

2.   Faces of Ordered Chaos

2.1. Rebranded Ruins: Urbicide and Memoricide as Strategies of Social Control

Umberto Eco once said, 'Memories are built as a city is built'.[672] And in Beirut, the destruction of one necessitated the destruction of the other, during and after the war. Solidere succeeded in 'mirroring the political elite's attitude towards the memory of the civil war'.[673] The reconstruction project in the years following the official cessation of violence expedited 'disappearances and dispossession through amnesia' and corresponded to 'strategies of forgetting'.[674] This chapter will refer to these strategies as 'memoricide', which put very simply corresponds to the constant denial (and control) of memory and/or memory-formation. The reconstruction project can thus be said to have reflected on both space and memory, geography and history. It was as if Solidere re-programmed amnesia into urban space through cleansing

---

[671] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 214.
[672] Umberto Eco, 'Architecture and Memory', *Architecture and Literature: VIA*, 8 (1986): 98.
[673] Nagle, 'Ghosts, Memory, and the Right to the Divided City', p. 158.
[674] ibid, p. 151.

'public space of troubled histories'.[675] Nagle adds, 'The rebuilding of Beirut's city centre represents "a desire for collective amnesia"', that was meant to erase all reminders of the war.[676] This programming serves to 'elide reference to the recent history of sectarian violence in the divided city, which in turn contributes to a pernicious logic perpetuating ethnic conflict and socioeconomic inequity'.[677]

Chouman's two novels highlight this interconnection through the preoccupation that the protagonists demonstrate with both memory and space. In *Limbo Beirut*, for example, one unnamed protagonist feels an aching need to capture and claim both time and space away from the violent turmoil of the everyday. Despite the sporadic violence, roadblocks, and random militia checkpoints, he takes his dog for a walk on Hamra Street. He ties him to a pole, crosses the street, sits on the stairs of a building overlooking the main road, and observes. For a moment, he forgets the violence around him. He admits to being taken in by a reverie in which he feels as if he possesses time. He only goes back to reality when his phone rings. This harmonious moment, in which the protagonist feels in control of both time and space, allows him a sense of agency and belonging. It signifies a momentary ability to create a memory in space, to invest it with a certain meaning and value, compatible with Tuan's conceptualisation of the making of place.[678] This incident furthermore highlights the significance of history and the consequent memory in/of a space in making sense of our surroundings.

Memory as such is both complex and contextual; it is not only a matter of 'consciously lived time but of socially lived space and the collective representation of that space'.[679] Nowhere is

---

[675] ibid, p. 150.
[676] ibid, p. 150.
[677] ibid, p. 150.
[678] See Introduction.
[679] Dianne Chisholm, 'The City of Collective Memory', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7.2 (2011): 195-243, p. 195.

this displayed in such intensity, within the Lebanese context, than during postwar reconstruction, as the production of memory and social space became questions of domination and control. David Harvey conceptualises spatial and temporal productions as being distinctively and qualitatively different between societies; he contends that the 'definitions of objective space and time are deeply implicated in processes of social reproduction'.[680] In such a manner, the various and particular ways of 'representing space and time' guide both 'spatial and temporal practices which in turn secure the social order'.[681] In Chouman, the protagonists exist in a space confined by restrictions imposed by the order. These restrictions include, but are not exclusive to, mobility and movement, accessibility, and representation.

Understood as the hindrance or prevention of memory and memory-formation, memoricide in Lebanon materialised in the amnesiac discourse endorsed by the state following the official termination of the civil war.[682] Solidere's aim was to give the city not only a new 'face', but also a new story, and therefore the amnesiac approach to the civil war allowed it to give Beirut a new history. To effect its plan of reducing the city into a 'a virtual *tabula rasa'*, Solidere resorted to 'systematically razing the war damaged urban fabric'.[683] Ruined space, or any reminders or traces of it, was therefore effaced, in complete denial of the war's occurrence and removal of any evidence that gives that impression. By effacing the traces of war, Solidere contributed to effacing Beirut's memory, its history, and its stories.

As a result, the relationship that the inhabitants of Beirut shared with their city turned into a detachment from time/history and space/geography, amidst a general atmosphere of confusion.

---

[680] David Harvey, 'Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination', *Annals of the Association of the American Geographers*, 80.3 (1990): 418-34, p. 418.
[681] ibid, p. 419.
[682] See Introduction.
[683] Craig Larkin, 'Reconstructing and Deconstructing Beirut: Space, Memory, and the Lebanese Youth', *Divided Cities/Contested States*, working paper, 8 (2009): 1-22, p 5.

Both concepts have been imperative aspects of 'class (and intra-class) struggle'.[684] It is not

surprising that the postwar state would focus its energies on the spaces of the city, since the latter

are crucial for it to 'augment social power'.[685] In this regard, the new neoliberal postwar

government, with Hariri as its Prime Minister, brought new players to the game: rent-seeking,

corruption, privatisation, manipulation of the law through the abuse of power, clientelism,

foreign borrowing, and indirect taxes.[686]

Overwhelmed with a very powerful amnesiac approach to the war, the Lebanese were struck

with something different than with mere forgetting. Hirszowics et al. use the term 'non-memory'

to refer to this process and to describe 'socially significant gaps in society's memory'.[687] The

Lebanese, as a result, found themselves either completely taken by the new fostered reality that

denies the past, or at complete loss in a whirlpool of forced forgetting. This is particularly

evident in Chouman's *Limbo Beirut*; the protagonists struggle to make sense of the continuing

violence, in addition to the bouts of remembrances that keep interrupting their everyday and

which they cannot make sense of. Hassan, a former militia fighter, for example, faces a memory

block; he is neither capable of remembering the past nor of comprehending and accepting the

present. He says,

> When did it all start? When I put on that dark uniform? Why did I put it on? […] When did this really
> happen? I can't remember. Things get mixed up in my mind. Jump around. Sometimes I recall a memory,
> think about it, and place it in its correct slot, but then I get anxious. This here is not where I belong.[688]

---

[684] Harvey, 'Time and Space', p. 232.
[685] ibid, p. 232.
[686] See Hadi Makarem, *Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The Reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, Doctoral Thesis (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014); and Sami Baroudi, 'Continuity in Economic Policy in Postwar Lebanon: The Record of the Hariri and Hoss Governments Examined, 1992-2000', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 24.1 (2002): 63-90.
[687] Hirszowics et al., p. 75.
[688] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, pp. 122-23.

Hassan here struggles against the imposed loss of memory as he negotiates space and belonging. Like Hassan, Chouman's protagonists are wary in their attempts at memory, irritated from whatever hinders their ability to do so, and troubled by an enforced non-memory. If we are to consider memory 'to be the accumulations and registries of information embedded in social structures — as well as the embedded interpretations of that information — then non-memory encompasses everything outside the scope of that definition'.[689] In other words, non-memory includes all the 'unassimilated elements as well as elements either forgotten or effaced'.[690] In Chouman, the relationship of the protagonists with their past and their memories is made more complex upon their realisation that they are being replaced by other violent memories, and that violence only ends in order to be replaced by another. Stuck in a circle of violence, devoid of any reconciliation or distance, the whole population of the Lebanon presented in both novels enters an impasse. In *Kana Ghadan*, when Suha's friend questions her silence and asks her whether there is anything wrong, Suha does not answer and the reader's attention is forced in the direction of the rain that begins falling outside. Both Suha and her friend are in the car and with the falling rain, Suha turns on the wipers. The fragment ends with Suha not providing an answer to her friend's question:

> Suha turned on the wipers and looked at the glass made blurry by the rain and cleared by the wipers.
> Made blurry by the rain and cleared by the wipers.
> Made blurry by the rain and cleared by the wipers.[691]

The repetition of the sentence 'made blurry by the rain and cleared by the wipers' is here indicative of a hopeless situation that is only provided with momentary solutions. The rain still falls. Their vision is constantly being blurred by the torrential rain and wiped clean by the

---

[689] Hirszowics et al., p. 75.
[690] ibid, p. 75.
[691] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, pp. 26-7.

wipers. In a figurative sense, the rain can be read as representing the constant violence they are being subjected to, and the wipers as the diligent, clean solutions provided by the neoliberalised state, to erase any collective remembrance, social, cultural, and political, of the war. And with the unceasing rain, both Suha and her friend, like most of the Lebanese, are confined within their cars, as continuous manifestations of violence restrict their movement ahead.

In an Op-Ed fragment in *Kana Ghadan*, the alleged editor-in-chief of an unidentified newspaper, following an incident that took place in *Ain al-Rummaneh*, the exact same spot where years before the incident which sparked the civil war had taken place, writes, 'This again signifies one truth: Yesterday is today, and the fear that that yesterday remains, is the future'.[692] Despite the myriad of practices and strategies to deny the memory of the civil war, this denial does not present itself as a form of reconciliation and rebirth (like Solidere had initially positioned it to be), but as a form of absolution from the responsibility of the whole governing class in the constant reproduction of violence. With violent episodes constantly taking place, the inhabitants of the city are unable to forget, while being forced to do so at the same time. The result is a confused memory practice that lingers between the need to remember (and is informed by a socio-spatial or political consciousness) and the need to forget (and is complemented by the complete endorsement of capitalist forms of everyday life). This confusion has two possibilities, either that of acceptance or passivity, or of informed action. The final section in this chapter will explore how Chouman's protagonists commit to the latter through the specific everyday practices of walking and writing.

Durgham, Khaled's old neighbour in *Kana Ghadan* exemplifies the impact of this confusion and loss on his wellbeing and everyday life. Durgham's inability to make sense of the

---

[692] ibid, pp. 85-6.

world around him is translated in his need to tell his story. His story unfolds as he spends hours

telling Khalid, and later on Rim, about his own experience. Durgham needs an audience, needs

validation from both listeners; he needs to expose his story in order to come to terms with it.

Like Durgham, other protagonists in *Kana Ghadan* appear confused and helpless as they ask

themselves whether it matters at all that they make sense of things or whether it is important to

determine if a certain event took place or not. After several attempts, Khalid renounces his need

to find meaning in what is going on around him. He concludes that 'it is not important to search

for a relationship between events, or even to look for reasons for their occurrence'.[693] Salwa, a

pregnant woman in *Limbo Beirut*, cannot comprehend how memory is formed in times of

violence. She wonders, 'How does time pass? How does it slow down? How does it stretch?

How does it become compressed in her mind?'.[694] While powerless in front of forming

structured memories of the past and making sense of her present, Salwa is also deterred by her

memory practice. Like every social practice, memory-formation is governed and controlled by

the power structure in which it operates. Negotiations over what is to be denied or preserved 'in

the collective memory take place not only between individuals but also between institutions,

including those supported by the use of force'.[695] These institutions, in turn, are 'also subject to

the influence of doctrines, myths, and ideologies' with the state being yet another example of

such institutions.[696]

 The practice of non-memory in Lebanon necessitated forgetting and the creation of a new

discourse which involved the enforced formation of new memories around a new Beirut. These

new memories were made possible through the normalisation of behaviours and practices that

---

[693] ibid, p. 368.
[694] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 101.
[695] Hirszowics et al., p. 75.
[696] ibid, p. 75.

accommodate the neoliberal reality of postwar Beirut. These included commodification and commercialisation, for example. Additionally, any attempt to peel off the new varnish from Beirut's face, and to expose its counterfeit and costly appearance of stability and prosperity, was seen as a resistance to the new spatial (dis)organisation, and was met with violence. Indeed, social non-memory does not only entail forgetting, 'but also […] the tendentious blocking of certain elements at odds with ideology or political strategy'.[697] In postwar Lebanon, anything that obstructed the preservation of the status quo established by the power order was deemed threatening, and resulted in further measures against memory practice. The resistance to these strategies of control 'alters consciousness of certain events both for currently lived individuals whose lived experience does not include the blocked elements and for future generations', and was therefore a danger in its own right.[698] Its danger lies in its ability to create a counter-memory, as the following section explores.

In postwar Lebanon, hindering the production of memories related to the war was insufficient on its own. It was therefore accompanied by a systematic erasure and denial of that chapter in Lebanon's past. The Lebanese were therefore robbed from any chance to reconcile with their past and were thrown into yet another problematic period. The term memoricide corresponds to an 'intrsumentalization of a society's unconscious, a strengthening of non-memory', which in turn eventually leads to a 'collective amnesia', emerging as a 'raison d'état'.[699] The amnesiac discourse endorsed by the postwar state, and facilitated by Solidere, contributed to the fortification of the order's power structure and its ability to manage both space and history. After all, it is the capacity of spatial form to 'alter the future course of the very

---

[697] ibid, p. 76.
[698] ibid, p. 76.
[699] ibid, p. 76.

histories which have produced it'.[700] Both space and memory, in this regard, were significant to

reconciliation, but completely belittled by Solidere and the state.[701] At the level of the state, a

policy of forgetting was implemented and imposed 'as part of the logic of political transition,

while ethnicized memory [would] proliferate at the community scale'.[702] This approach was

advertised as intrinsic for peace and healing.[703]

However, postwar memoricide was a strategy adopted to decontextualize Beirut; it sought

to build it from scratch, removed from its history.[704] Sune Haugbolle refers to this process as the

emptying out of culture of its 'social functions'; he writes, 'the downtown area that emerged in

the late 1900s was an amalgam of such decontextualized history-as-culture-cum-kitsch

overridden with international luxury consumer goods. It is not surprising to find references to the

war missing in this overall representation'.[705] Along with a compromised memory-practice, the

physical segregation that was maintained after the war, engendered the production of a

'simplified discourse of the "other"', along sectarian and socioeconomic lines.[706] Lebanon's

amnesiac approach to the civil war narrative and the reconstruction process are prime examples

of how the memories and spaces of 'ordinary people are appropriated by elites and pressed in the

service of conquest and domination'.[707] As the two novels reveal, each of the protagonists

experiences the city differently, and is affected by both strategies of urbicide and memoricide, in

a different manner. Khaled, in *Kana Ghadan*, for example, does not feel the city is able to

---

[700] Doreen Massey, 'Politics and Space/Time', *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 141-61, p. 159.
[701] John Nagle, 'Defying State Amnesia and Memory wars: Non-Sectarian Memory Activism in Beirut and Belfast City Centres', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10 (2018): 1-22, p. 2.
[702] Nagle, 'Defying State Amnesia', p. 2.
[703] ibid, p. 5.
[704] See Introduction.
[705] Haugbolle, *War and Memory*, p. 89.
[706] ibid, p. 69.
[707] Steven Hoelscher and Derek H. Alderman, 'Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship', *Social Camp; Cultural Geography*, 5.3 (2004): 347-55, p. 349.

contain him; he does not feel that he belongs to any of its spaces. Likewise, Rim avoids walking the city streets, as she does not feel safe doing so.

The protagonists therefore are forced to negotiate their spaces, on an everyday basis, amidst an atmosphere of uncertainty and repetition. Expressing a sought-after indifference, Khaled wonders why he would fear anything 'if everything is expected?'[708]. Khaled's indifference can be read as conditioned; as is the case of the other protagonists, his fear and nonchalance have been transformed into forms of control against them, a means to consolidate the status quo. The inhabitants therefore would very easily ignore piles of garbage invading their sidewalks, lack of public space, lack of parking spots, random and unofficial checkpoints, and armed militia presence. They would also go about their day as if these scenes are normal behaviour. When Walid, in *Limbo Beirut*, and following a day of infighting between various militia factions, goes out 'for a coffee on the second day of the clashes', he finds people 'in Hamra going on with their lives just as they did on regular days. Some men carrying weapons passed near him in a small truck piled high with foam mattresses. They were dressed in dark green and brown'.[709] The few people who are on the streets treat this view as if it were normal and avoid discussing it. The main reason behind this nonchalance, as shall be argued, is the normalisation of urbicide and memoricide in the everyday of the inhabitants of the city, in a manner that made them subservient to them.

In an article about Beirut, Sara Fregonese demonstrates how urban processes, no matter how dramatic they might seem, are 'manifestations of the contested relationship between the state and other views of how and for whom a city should be'.[710] These processes include, but are

[708] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 274.
[709] ibid, p. 20.
[710] Sara Fregonese, 'Beyond the "Weak State": Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30 (2012): 655-74, p. 660.

not exclusive to, 'planning, security, management, local resistance to building projects, polarisation, and segregation'.[711] So who is Beirut for then? An assessment of the practices enacted through the reconstruction process and the strategies employed by the state since then, allows the claim that Beirut is not built for all its inhabitants. Rather, the new Beirut is built on the premises of an exclusionary system. To construct such a system, a destruction of space was necessary, and is referred to in this chapter as 'urbicide'.

The usage of the term 'urbicide' in this chapter is informed by Martin Coward's approach to the 'killing' of space and Kevin Hewitt's concept of the annihilation of place. Urbicide is understood, not only as the destruction of the built environment, but also the destruction of a certain place-identity through the removal, displacement, and exclusion of a certain way of life, heterogeneity, and social formation. It is the destruction of 'human communities' in 'complex ways'.[712] The urbicide undertaken in Beirut after the war sought to homogenise the city and create a space of exclusivity, and is regarded as a 'form of political violence' in its own right.[713] In a more thorough conceptualisation of the term, Coward writes,

> [U]rbicide names a form of political violence at the heart of which is not a supposedly cultural confrontation or the destruction of a specific identity group, but, rather, the destruction of the built environment as the "substrate" in and through which a specific form of existence is constituted.[714]

In Chouman, the everyday lives of the protagonists become governed by different socio-spatial conditions that now necessitate them to move in their city according to a system of inclusion/exclusion, with its own set of configurations with which they need to familiarise themselves. Consequently, the new order is constructed on the basis of subjugating whoever fits the system's own definition of the 'other'. As Chouman's novels demonstrate, alternative

---

[711] ibid, p. 660.
[712] Coward, 'Against Anthropocentrism', p. 422.
[713] ibid, p. 422.
[714] ibid, p. 425.

mechanism of place-making or place-identity are resisted by the power order in Beirut, by attempts at what Kevin Hewitt would call 'annihilation of place'. Any policy that targets place, according to him, does so through the 'annihilation of place and people'.[715] In the context of Beirut, the reconstruction efforts cleared out the rubble, and cleaned out spaces and social formations that were deemed incompatible with the imaginary of a better, healthier Beirut.

The result was the production of exclusive spaces intended to keep out difference, and restrict the inhabitants' acquisition of the right to the city. In fact, the reconstruction process and the neoliberal strategies that followed created enclaves for the rich and the poor alike, furthering the social distance between the two. In this regard, Henri Lefebvre distinguishes between several kinds of ghettoes. He writes,

> In their own way residential areas are also ghettoes; high status people because of wealth or power isolate themselves in ghettoes of wealth. […] The phenomenon of segregation must be analysed according to various indices and criteria; *ecological* (shanty towns, slums, the rot in the heart of the city, the degradation of the *urban* by the dislocation of its architectural elements); and *sociological* (standards of living and lifestyles, ethnic groups, cultures, and sub cultures, etc.).[716]

While both can coexist within the space of one city, this chapter is concerned with the removal and alienation of a certain population. The inhabitants' temporal and spatial relations to their city have been compromised as a result, entailing, 'not only the destruction of ways of life and social practices built around preceding time-space systems, but the "creative destruction" of a wide range of physical assets in the landscape'.[717] Harvey's exploration of 'creative destruction' offers an understanding of this removal of space from the everyday life and vice versa. In Lebanon, not only did this rendering of public space segregate people, or create unaffordable enclaves, but it also alienated low-income people from access, displacing more people than it housed. Bayat and

---

[715] Kevin Hewitt, 'Place Annihilation: Area Bombing and the Fate of Urban Places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 73.1 (1983): 257-84, pp. 259-60.
[716] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, p. 140.
[717] Harvey, 'Between Space and Time', p. 425.

Beikat note that in Beirut, 'the price of land has increased, police control is heightened, [and] social services have been delegated to the local or non-state agents'.[718] Accompanying such practices are 'the development and entrepreneurial projects' which 'have proliferated' in the city along with 'the new, largely impoverished middle class as well as international migrants', all of which contributed to the pressure placed on informal settlements.[719] Consequently, all these processes 'have reduced the capacity of low-income inhabitants to organise their own neighbourhoods and participate in the management of their spaces'.[720] In other words, this reordering of space and the control over it deprives marginalised and subaltern entities from their space in the city, and their right to ownership and authorship of space, their right to participation, and their right to difference. It seems then that in Beirut the 'ideal of "the right to the city" has become a bygone dream', a point which will be developed more thoroughly in the following section.[721]

Additionally, the re-organisation of space and its social formations created new power relations invested with new meanings.[722] These new relations underlined a new set of boundaries that exclude/include people along the newly formed socio-political and economic divides. The antagonism between the different factions involved was marked with a competition over social space.[723] Space, during that period, became a 'resilient concept'; it ceased to be perceived as a fixed or non-flexible notion.[724] However, amidst questions of belonging, representation, and accessibility that Beirut's new identity posed, the Lebanese population entered a whirlwind of

---

[718] Asef Bayat and Kees Biekat, 'Cities of Extremes', *Development and Change*, 40.5 (2009): 815-25, p. 819
[719] ibid, p. 819.
[720] ibid, p. 819.
[721] ibid, p. 819.
[722] Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City*, (Austin: University Texas Press, 2010), p. 13.
[723] ibid, p. 46.
[724] ibid, p. 46.

alienation and loss of meaning. It can therefore be said that the lines of segregation and confinement established during the war, extended themselves into the postwar period to become constitutive of the inhabitants' everyday experience of the city.

The lack of public space signifies a lack of shared space, understood as neutral spaces of encounter. In this respect, Solidere and the postwar state managed to destroy 'the backdrop against which political community is enacted', what Coward calls the 'material' of space in his investigation of the term 'urbicide'.[725] And hence, 'the destruction of such "material" must be an attack on that political community'.[726] It is therefore a threat to how these people understand this space, how they use it, define it, and share it with others. From this point of view, and following Coward, all the elements of a built environment prior to the 'establishment of disciplinary or restrictive regimes' are public 'insofar as it is available to all as an indicator of place, a marker of orientation in the built environment'.[727] All public space is therefore shared 'in the sense of being-in common (prior to any restrictive actions) to all those that might navigate through, or orient themselves in relation to, the spaces and places around buildings'.[728]

In the case of Beirut, the shared aspect of space and its heterogeneity were squandered. However, the built environment 'is not simply a medium open to everyone', as each enjoys its own unique spatiality.[729] Space, after all, should be thought of in relational terms since buildings themselves are 'points from which the inhabitants of the built environment are able to compose relational networks of meaning that orientate their experiences'[730]. In this sense, a shared environment makes possible a shared spatial experience based on the coexistence of subjects

[725] Coward, 'Against Anthropocentrism', p. 423.
[726] ibid, p. 423.
[727] ibid, p. 428.
[728] ibid, p. 428.
[729] ibid, p. 428.
[730] ibid, pp. 428-29.

within a set of socio-spatial relations. And since coexistence implies plurality, then it also implies a form of alterity.[731] In such a manner, the destruction of a built environment also signifies the destruction of a shared spatiality, 'the destruction of the buildings in and around which communities live their lives', and, consequently, 'the condition of possibility of heterogeneity'.[732]

Reconstructed Beirut has indeed failed to 'provide an accessible and dynamic meeting place for a multiplicity of ideas, remembrances, and experiences'.[733] The lack of a neutral space of encounter that is non-discriminatory or exclusive of certain social formations caused many Lebanese youth to remain sceptical as to whether there will be 'open spaces for all communities and class[es]', instead of enclaves of separation and segregation between the various socio-economic groups.[734] The urbicide that Beirut endured during and after the civil war resulted in transformations in the urban milieu which 'distorted the social relationships among the residents of the city and their relations to their once familiar city spaces'.[735] As a result, the inhabitants had to negotiate their city spaces and their urban rights and services using 'formal and informal alliances', and establishing 'socioeconomic and political networks' of their own.[736]

Both urbicide and memoricide were institutionalized by the postwar state. While the latter manifested itself in public and political discourse and along the various domains of the state, the former was facilitated by Law 117. One of the most impactful strategies in the implementation of urbicide is the expropriation of properties, their demolition, and the displacement of many from their homes. More than 120,000 property rights in the area of

---

[731] ibid, p. 428.
[732] ibid, p. 428.
[733] Craig Larkin, 'Remaking Beirut: Contesting Memory, Space, and the Urban Imaginary of Lebanese Youth', *City and Community*, 9.4 (2010): 414-42, p.430.
[734] ibid, p. 430.
[735] Sawalha, p. 15.
[736] ibid, p. 15. See Introduction.

downtown were transferred to Solidere through Law 117.[737] Going beyond 'the immediate

claims of property owners who do not feel they have been properly compensated, the whole

concept of land ownership and of memory was completely obliterated'.[738] These strategies,

operating on the levels of both space and memory, geography and history, were normalised to

the extent that they created the kind of indifference exhibited in Khaled's observations of the

people in his city. Khaled reads them as a denial of and acquiescence towards violent incidents,

lack of services, and corruption.

Chouman's novels, as explored in the following sections, demonstrate the extent to which

urbicide and memoricide, as forms of violence and mechanisms of social control, serve as

'discipline and policing to deter political opponents from organising and mobilising, regardless

of their positionality'.[739] The analysis of the two novels focuses specifically on the spatial and

embodied experiences of the protagonists on the level of the everyday. This focus is primarily

intended to reveal the spatialisation of power and control that the neoliberalisation of Beirut has

wrought on its inhabitants. The possession and employment of certain spatial properties allows

the state to consolidate and secure its 'legitimacy to naturalise [its] authority, and represent

[itself] as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centres of power'.[740] Gupta

and Ferguson refer to 'the operation of these metaphors and practices as "the spatialization of the

state"'.[741] The 'spatializing of the state' makes the state's spatial organisation, or what Makdisi

terms as the monopolisation of public space, an effective means through which to regulate and

---

[737] Nagle, 'Defying Amnesia', p. 8.
[738] Tarek Saad Ragab, 'The Crisis of Cultural Identity in Rehabilitating Historic Beirut-Downtown', *Cities*, 28 (2011): 107-14, p.112.
[739] Ghenwa Sayegh, 'Incarceration, Surveillance, Policing: The Political Economies of Industrial Complexes', *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research*, 4.1 (2018): 1-5, p. 3.
[740] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 'Spatialising States: Towards an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality', *American Ethnologist*, 29.4 (2002): 981-1002, p. 981-82.
[741] ibid, p. 982.

control the citizens' usage of space, their access to it, and the meaning they attribute to it. It is also an effective means of exclusion and confinement as this section seeks to show.

The protagonists in Chouman struggle against injustice, and demand the right to a city that has been made inaccessible and unfamiliar. Both urbicide and memoricide, in this sense, function as forms of socio-spatial injustice against the inhabitants of Beirut. After all, geography or spatiality is 'an integral and formative component of justice itself, a vital part of how justice and injustice are socially constructed and evolve over time'.[742]

City Views in Kana Ghadan *and* Limbo Beirut

It is with caution that the protagonists of both of Chouman's novels regard their city. Their relationship to Beirut is sceptical; Beirut confines, segregates, and threatens them. Their city is not theirs. Rim in *Kana Ghadan* views the city as an amalgam of mere noise. In a journal entry, written in the first person, she says,

> Noise.
> I do not hear or pay attention to anything else. From the time I wake up and until I return to my bed to try to sleep once more. On the street, in the lift, in the cars, on the sidewalks, and even in the bathrooms, noise.[743]

The overwhelming noise that unsettles Rim is aggravated by feelings of insecurity and lack of safety that grip her as she navigates the city. Rim does not walk in Beirut, for the city 'does not encourage [one] to walk'.[744] Driving is no better, especially with the increased presence of militiamen and their checkpoints, as well as the impossible mission of trying to find a free parking spot and surviving traffic. Consequently, Rim does not feel comfortable being in the city, let alone using its spaces. However, she realises that, in Beirut, being a *flâneuse* and

---

[742] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 1.
[743] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 71.
[744] ibid, p.166.

walking aimlessly is a luxury she cannot afford. Following a walk that she takes with Khaled

around the city, Rim recognises that she has not been paying attention to how the city space is

structured, how its uses are defined, and how restrictive it is to the citizens' everyday experience

of Beirut. She writes,

> Walking without a destination is different than walking with the initial knowledge that you have to go back to your car at a specific time. In the latter, there is something constrictive because you would have to calculate the time of your return and approximate the distance that you have to cross, and [you would be] forced to return once half the time allowed on your parking ticket has passed. All this does not allow you to look [at the city] from the outside, and does not help you to recognise the details that pass along it every day.[745]

Similarly, Suha, Khaled's former wife, regards the city with a mixture of tension and

suspicion; for her, the city is a claustrophobic space that cannot contain her. Influenced by

Khaled's habits of observing the space around him, Suha decides to look at the city as he would.

> Today, she did what he does. She prolonged her stay behind the door's window hoping she might see something she was not aware of, but she did not see anything new. She went out to the balcony. The sky was cloudy and was carrying a strange scent, similar to that of a fire. She thought that they might be burning garbage in the containers at the beginning of the street. She did not care much and kept standing, staring in the space that separates the adjacent buildings from one another. The space was crowned with a web of strings and wires.[746]

The only difference that Suha is able to distinguish in her surroundings are the dead plants on her

balcony which she insists on watering. This insistence on finding something new or creating it, is

reflective of her destitution and her need for action regardless of its insignificance. She waters

the dead plants with the full knowledge that it is futile to do so.

Khaled, however, is more tactical. His actions are always informed and directed towards

finding his own space in the city. According to him,

> The city does not contain any landmarks that historicise moments. The buildings in the city stick to one another, accumulate, and overflow like a tumour over a body. They then take to swelling up and spending itself so much that the body disappears and the tumour remains. What happens to the tumours after the death of the body? Were tumours destined to live despite the death of the body in which it grew, what happens then? Would it endlessly grow conjoined? Would it swallow the body whole then remain

---

[745] ibid p. 167.
[746] ibid, pp. 50-1.

independently living, breathing, and eating? Or would it die? And if it dies, would a new body be born after the tumour?[747]

The cancerous growth of the city, as presented in this statement, can be indicative of the reconstruction attempts which have left no spaces for the ordinary inhabitants of Beirut. In fact, when Khaled was searching for the perfect spot to propose to his ex-wife, he felt that all the spaces of the city were suffocating him. The city, to him, is beautiful, but whatever 'surrounds it troubling and constrictive'.[748] Unsurprisingly, within the context of a city which robs its inhabitants from their rights to its public spaces, the only suitable place he could find for his proposal is a stretch of beach-land still open to the public. His observations of the city and of his experience of space within it, lead Khaled to realise that Beirut is overwhelmed with memorials and statues; the memorial statue of Hariri erected at the site of his assassination (2005) near the St. George Hotel, for example, is featured in the novel when Khaled and Rim walk past it. Other statues and memorials, especially those significant to the Lebanese independence from the French Mandate (1943) and the declaration of the establishment of modern Lebanon (1920), are also mentioned. Beirut is then seen as a dis-membered city, with a chunk of its history extracted and its place left blank.

Things are no different in *Limbo Beirut*. As the title of the novel indicates, all protagonists lead a life in a state of limbo. Rami, the only one to have left Beirut, recognises the city in his dream from the feelings of fear and confinement that it invokes in him: 'All the shutters on the buildings were closed. As if they were declining to disclose what was within them. As if they were collaborating to conceal anything that would affirm the identity of this place. But Rami knew that he was in Beirut'.[749] Like the protagonists of *Kana Ghadan*, those of

---

[747] ibid, pp. 139-40.
[748] ibid, p. 140.
[749] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 128.

Limbo Beirut experience space as violent, confining, and fear-inducing. Theirs is a constant struggle for meaning and belonging. Walid, for example, is a graffiti writer who feels his life is lacking. He is insomniac, and is constantly assailed by concerns shared with others of his generation. Having internalised them, they now appear in his work, embodied in the 'creatures' he sketches which

> become irritable (his mother's habitual irritability before his father's death), hateful (his hatred of spinach and rice), stupid (like the politicians from his neighbourhood), commercial (repugnant commercialism, not the kind that inspires artistic ideas).[750]

Walid does not seem satisfied with the scope and reach of his work. He is no longer content with drawing on his own ceiling; they are too commercial, not intimate enough, and not political. He decides that in order to make a difference, he needs an audience, and a bigger ceiling. He therefore starts writing on the walls of his city instead.

In one of the chapters of *Limbo Beirut*, an unnamed struggling writer returns home to Beirut; he is convinced that he will never be able to write about the city and his experience of it if he were away from it. He says,

> A year passed while we were in London. Things were happening in Lebanon to destabilise the status quo there. Then 2005 passed. 2006 flew by. I began to ask myself, is it the place? Can I really be productive in a place I've lived in only briefly? Can I write a story whose events take place in Lebanon while I watch what's happening from outside? Can such a thing be done remotely, using online searches, smart technology?[751]

However, he soon realises that it is not the distance that is hindering his attempts at writing Beirut but Beirut itself. Unable to write even in Beirut, he acknowledges that he is stuck in limbo, prisoner of his own story. He confesses, 'I tried to write, and all that came out was scattered words, pathetic sentences. All progress in my head stopped as my thoughts entered an endless revolving cycle of limbo'.[752] His inability to express himself is problematic. It also

---

[750] ibid, p. 4.
[751] ibid, p. 48.
[752] ibid, p. 48.

endangers the relationship he has with his wife, Takara. She accuses him of reaching a standstill and not making enough effort to overcome it. Despite his awareness of the socio-spatial dimensions of his city, he does not seem able to put his knowledge to good use for his own benefit. He says, 'Takara herself had told me more than once that she saw how I had turned all things into the substance of a novel. This was fine, she said, but in my relentless pursuit of doing so, I would overlook many aspects of real life'.[753] In a sense, like Adam in *Awlad al Ghetto*, he seems to be writing life instead of living it and doing a bad job at both. In an attempt to help him, Takara entices him to rethink the reasons for which he writes. She asks,

> Do you tell stories to entertain? Is life supposed to be entertaining? You do not know? Maybe? No? It is not important. The important thing is that when you do this all the time and not just when you write, when you see everything as a story, you lose much of the complexity of relationships and much of the simplicity of things. You are constructing a perfect scene, so you let yourself overlook everything else that has no place in your idea of it.[754]

With his wife's questions in mind, he re-evaluates his relationship to both writing and the city. He realises that it is not Beirut that has changed; it is still the same violent city, dominated by a political order that alienates its inhabitants. He takes note of the city's restrictions and wonders whether there is anything left in the city that is worth writing about. He asks, 'Has a single thing worth of being narrated ever happened to me? Do I have a story? And how can someone who doesn't have — at the minimum — even one story, write a novel? Or do I have a story and I just don't realise it? And if I have one, how can I train myself to see it?'.[755] His inability to write is in fact an inability to express himself altogether, as he also faces trouble smiling and crying. But he is not oblivious to his situation and becomes involved in self-reflection, as he asks, 'Where was my mistake? What was it I kept missing?'.[756]

---

[753] ibid, p. 45.
[754] ibid, p. 46.
[755] ibid, p. 51.
[756] ibid, p. 52.

As the above examples portray, the protagonists of both novels feel removed from the

space of their city; they view it as inaccessible, alienating, and threatening. The city's space is

pre-defined for them, and its access is regulated and monitored. Khaled understands how the

current socio-spatial arrangement in the city alienates the inhabitants from their right to it. He

notes,

> On the street, nothing much has changed: the lottery vendor is still in place selling tickets, the shop [selling] pirated DVDs expanded [its business] and the dusty men's clothing shop that no one enters maintained the dust on its window. Even the two taxi drivers who stopped for him asked him the same question: "where to, Sir?".[757]

In a city where nothing changes, the inhabitants appear oblivious to the devices of the power

order and compliant to it. It is under pretences of security, and appearances of hope and

prosperity, that the city perpetuates its authority. In an Op-Ed bearing the title 'Hope', for

example, its unnamed author defends Beirut despite its flaws, while at the same time reveals the

irony behind sentiments of hope towards it. It reads,

> But the country which overcame all these hardships, is the same country which suffers from a deficiency in form, or maybe a surplus, so that it ends up exposed at a time in which rightful revolutions have started up around it, before being robbed'.[758]

Being fed false hopes, engineered to comply, and noting no changes in their everyday lives, the

protagonists' right to the city is problematised. The right to the city is here understood as the

right to be involved in the decision-making process, in the production of social space, and in

participation and encounter, as well as the right to difference that this space affords.[759]

---

[757] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 84.
[758] ibid, p. 195.
[759] See Introduction; also see, Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27.4 (2003): 939-41; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2014); Mustafa Dikeç, 'Police, Politics, and the Right to the City', *GeoJournal*, 58 (2002): 91-8; and, Kafui A. Attoh, 'What *Kind* of the Right is the Right to the City?', *Progress in Human Geography*, 35.5 (2011): 669-85.

In a letter addressing his former girlfriend (which he never sends), the unnamed medical student in *Limbo Beirut* insists on seeing the beauty in Beirut, and of silencing any voices in his head that suggest otherwise. He writes,

> In my solitude in the mirror, […] far from you, Sanaa, Beirut was more beautiful. I do not know how I was so certain of her abundant beauty in that instant, and I do not know if I was compensating for my lost love for you with a renewed love for the city, but I was confident that I was right, and that this city is beautiful, truly beautiful.[760]

Finding beauty in what he sees is dangerous in this respect, as he, along with the other inhabitants of the city, become subservient to the images of the city he is surrounded with. They are denied the opportunity to exercise their right to envision the city, to imagine it differently, to access its public spaces, to locate spaces of encounter, and most importantly to contribute to making or producing social space, or what Lefebvre refers to as the city's *oeuvre*. In this regard, Lefebvre contends,

> The *right to the city* legitimates the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organisation. The right of the citizen […] proclaims the inevitable crisis of city centres based upon segregation and establishing it: centres of decision-making, wealth, power, of information and knowledge, which reject towards peripheral spaces all those who do not participate in political privileges. Equally, it stipulates the right to meetings and gathers; places and objects must answer to certain "needs" generally misunderstood, to certain despised and moreover transfunctional "functions": the "need" for social life and a centre, the need and the function of play, the symbolic function of space.[761]

In the Lebanese context, all of the above inclusive rights listed by Lefebvre are complicated within the neoliberal logic that governs the country. Beirut is, in fact, shaped by considerations for 'market demands and advantages than by those for the needs and benefits of the inhabitants'.[762] As such, 'greater privatisation, deregulation, and commodification' abound.[763] The responsibilities of the public and official authorities towards the inhabitants are consequently 'transferred to non-state and private agencies and corporations, which may hold little

---

[760] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 182.
[761] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, p. 195.
[762] Bayat and Beikat, p. 817.
[763] ibid, p. 817.

accountability to the public'.[764] The following section explores three specific strategies which contributed to the neoliberalisation of the Lebanese political economy, and through which the power order in Lebanon was able to consolidate and perpetuate its *ordered, profitable chaos*, as they are presented in Chouman.

Maintaining the Power Order: Commercialisation, Privatisation, and Securitisation

In his *Critique of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre describes the everyday as an arena for social praxis and for political experience and expressions, for either subjugation and control or revolution and resistance. The everyday thus becomes one '*level* of social reality', in which and through which the power order exerts its control.[765] Lefebvre maintains that whatever is 'produced or constructed' on the level of social praxis, 'must demonstrate its reality in the everyday, whether it be art, philosophy, or politics'.[766] The previous section explores urbicide and memoricide as forms of violence in their own right. This section argues that these two practices were successfully utilised to subdue and distract the Lebanese population through three interdependent strategies: commercialisation, privatisation, and securitisation. As a result, these strategies transformed the everyday life of Beirutis, tailoring it in a manner that facilitates its control and the management of social practice.

In both of Chouman's novels, the domination of the everyday appears through the intensification of phenomena such as commercialisation (including commodification and spectacularisation), privatisation (and the accompanying loss of public space and employment of a system of segregation), and securitisation (which includes restrictions on movement and

---

[764] ibid, p. 817.
[765] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 339.
[766] ibid, p. 339.

mobility). These three phenomena concretise the enforced and systematic violence of both urbicide and memoricide. The everyday then materialised as an arena for the form of power to manifest and maintain itself, as Lefebvre would describe it. Form and content are after all interdependent since content 'can only manifest itself and be grasped within a form'.[767] Therefore, what we perceive 'is always the unity' of the two.[768] Lefebvre identifies the form of a society as that which constructs it; forms are 'ideologies, institutions, culture, language, and constructed and structured activities (including art)'.[769] Thus, the exercise of alternative practices and the construction of alternative forms, such as the ones presented in Chouman, can be read as transgressions in their own right. They challenge pre-established structures by creating their own, as shall be explored.

In what is perhaps the most powerful scene in *Kana Ghadan*, and the most representative of the reality of postwar Lebanon, Suha experiences sentiments of alienation and fear, coupled with feelings of confinement. In a dream she has, she envisions herself surrounded by water. However, she is neither drowning nor struggling; she seems to be able to breathe under water, as if she were a fish. Though dreaming, Suha is well aware that she is pregnant; however, as soon as she gently pushes against her belly with her fingers, two little fish come out of her. Before she knows it, she is giving birth to many more. Towards the end of her dream, all the fish that came out of her surround her, carrying her off to a destination of their choosing. She is neither capable of resisting, nor of breaking free; she finds herself unable to move on her own. Most importantly, she is unable to speak (or protest and scream for help), no matter how hard she tries; she has lost her voice. Chouman writes,

> She looked ahead and found nothing but water.

---

[767] ibid, p. 357.
[768] ibid, p. 357.
[769] ibid, p. 358.

She thought she were in the ocean.
She did not know that she was in an aquarium.[770]

This scene is richly metaphorical, allowing a clever and accurate representation of the situation in postwar Lebanon. Suha rejoices at being able to swim at her leisure in what appears to be a beautiful, vast stretch of ocean. However, she neither controls her moves, nor possesses any voice. The water surrounding her, far from being a free accessible space, is a mere artificial illusion, a space of bondage in which reigns a school of fish, known for its short-term memory. Overwhelmed with the state-sponsored amnesiac discourse, placed in an artificial, beautiful space, and given the impression of freedom and prosperity, Suha, along with the masses swaying her off a course of her choosing, is unable to recognise and distinguish the space where she is being held. Consequently, she, like them, becomes an accomplice in reproducing the system that oppresses and controls her.

David Harvey describes the redistributive tactics of neoliberalism as 'wide-ranging, sophisticated, frequently masked by ideological gambits, but devastating for the dignity and social well-being of vulnerable populations and territories'.[771] This vulnerability is well expressed in *Kana Ghadan* through the obsession of the majority of the population with consumption. Rim, who works for an advertising agency, once tells Khaled that Lebanese clients are obsessed with street advertisements. Following a nation-wide infestation of cockroaches, the streets of Beirut themselves become infested with billboards of insecticide advertisement, juxtaposed alongside those of singers and a variety of other ads. Both types of advertisements, of pop-stars and sanitising detergents, become ironically significant when considered within the context of Solidere's intention to wipe the city clean from the socio-cultural and spatial traces of

---

[770] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 23.
[771] Harvey, 'Neoliberalism', p. 39.

259

war and distracting the population with the new and the beautiful. Commercialisation and commodification of life in the city are presented in *Kana Ghadan* in the random juxtaposition of advertisements to the extent of banality and the complete belittlement of meaning. Driving past a few billboards, Khaled spots an advertisement of a detergent with the word 'the strongest' displayed in big letters. Above the pesticide advertisement he sees a grand picture of the Virgin Mary covering 'the façade of a building tailed by the phrase "Pray for us"'.[772] But one does not question. One consumes. To use Makdisi's words, the above scene can best Beirut as a city of 'spectacle'.[773]

The spectacularisation of the city colonises its everyday, stripping it from the ability to make and inscribe meaning. Influenced by Guy Debord, Lefebvre proclaims that the everyday has been 'brought to an extreme point of alienation, in other words profound dissatisfaction, in the name of the latest technology and of "consumer society"'.[774] Under the weight of this insurgent consumerism and commercialisation, everyday life seems to have lost its dimension of depth. As a result, only 'triviality remains'.[775] Solidere allowed commercialisation to transform the way in which people use space, turning the city into a space of both exclusion and distraction.

The effective spread of commercialisation lies in the consumer mentality that the Lebanese media helped spread. The end result is an individual and collective dissociation from everyday life. In *Kana Ghadan*, the media reflects the state's nonchalant approach to socio-political and economic affairs. A most fitting example would be that of the three rival pop singers, who, in a creative and marketing stunt, launch a campaign to promote peace and

[772] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 156.
[773] Makdisi, p. 691.
[774] Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday Life*, p. 305.
[775] ibid, p. 372.

coexistence. The result is a conflict belittled and dismissed based on the signers' whims and the success of their trivial campaigns. Mass media controls and stupefies, and, in so doing, regulates everyday life. It fragmented everyday life 'integrating it with "world" current events ina way which is both too real and utterly superficial […] We cannot say what the outcome of this destructing process will be'.[776] *Kana Ghadan* presents the stupefaction of the masses as one such outcome. Harvey calls this 'wholesale dispossession', the result of 'commodification […] of cultural forms, histories, and intellectual creativity'.[777]

Other forms of neoliberal practices that hinder the everyday experience of the city for its inhabitants include securitisation and privatisation. The securitisation in Beirut, especially as portrayed in *Kana Ghadan*, can be described as panoptic. In the words of a taxi driver in the novel, there are too many eyes in Beirut. These eyes have turned people against each other, have drenched the city further in gossip and hate speech, and have successfully distracted them from their real problems. The same taxi driver tells Khaled, 'This country no longer has space for people to love one another. Seriously, during the war, people were able to love one another more. It was easy. There were plenty of space inside and out. But now what? A hundred and one eyes. Everyone has time for everyone'.[778] This statement does not only signify the abundance of monitoring and surveillance, but also of prying and gossiping. It serves as a good example for the intersection and the coalescence of the various aforementioned techniques.

In addition to the curious eyes of neighbours, informants, and CCTVs, appearances and reappearances of militarisation abound alongside the constant recurrence of sectarian violence. In Lebanon, securitisation also connotes a socio-economic dimension. The physical segregation and

---

[776] Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday Life*, p. 371.
[777] Harvey, 'Neoliberalism', p. 35.
[778] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 223.

dismemberment of the city during wartime, especially along sectarian lines, extended into

postwar times under different forms. Looking back at the modern history of Lebanon, one

notices the 'tumultuous underbelly of a multi-confessional society', and a continuous effort to

craft a modern state out of a 'continually changing terrain of hostilities and alliances, both local

and regional'.[779] Arif states,

> The changing pulse of the nation meant that in peacetime, the separate neighbourhoods sustained the spatial
> reification of the usual social, religious-political ebb and flow of the city. In conflict, however, especially
> since the civil war of 1975-1989, these became "insular community ghettoes", with armed policing of their
> borders and territories.[780]

Consequently, with the sprouting of gated communities and the consolidation of a neoliberal

culture in Beirut, a further severance of the socio-economic and political fabric of the country

started taking place, in the midst of an effective agenda to combine the force of the three

techniques employed.[781]

The streets of Beirut, as presented in both novels, abound with random militia

checkpoints and patrols. Each street bears its own politico-religious identity, with some closed

off altogether or having their entrances regulated through installing metal security gates. The

appearance of security gates is mocked in *Kana Ghadan*, as tough militiamen terrorising the

neighbourhood fail to install the gate correctly. Instead of being classified as brutal, they are

represented as dangerously idiotic. Their idiocy is further highlighted when Khaled seizes a

chance to slip through the gate unnoticed. This scene deems them useless and their brutality

laughable.

But these scenes become normal, almost naturalised into the everyday rhythms of the city

as its inhabitants internalise their own submission to them. Two examples from *Kana Ghadan*

---

[779] Arif, p. 675.
[780] ibid, p. 675
[781] See Bulent Diken, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City',
Citizenship Studies, 8.1 (2004): 83-106.

come to mind here, both of which reveal their protagonists neither culpable for their stagnation

nor capable of any change. While in a taxi, Khaled is stopped at a(n) (illegal) checkpoint, held by

one of the militias:

> Khaled inspected the street around him. The queue of cars awaiting was only getting longer with time. But none of the passengers and the drivers was complaining about the procedures. They were waiting as if what is happening in front of them is a daily regular event that they have grown accustomed to long ago. Next to the cars, the sidewalk was overflowing with piled garbage.[782]

This scene clearly demonstrates a complete urban negligence that has become an everyday

occurrence in Beirut. However, Chouman vindicates neither party; here, both the people and the

state are culprits in the reproduction of this system. In yet another 'serious' incident, the wrong

citizen is kidnapped then released. The irony does not simply lie in the occurrence of the incident

itself, or in the lack of security in the city, but rather, in the response of a government

representative, who, when questioned about the incident, dismisses its seriousness and says, 'It's

all well… It's all well… He's right here in front of you, all is well'.[783] In this power order, man's

worth and dignity become cheap.

In Chouman, this power order sustains itself by constantly reproducing its social relations

and formations. Chouman reveals this process through the novels' depiction of the struggle

between the state and its agents, on the one hand, and members of the civil society and ordinary

citizens, on the other. Calling people out on their participatory right in decision-making (through

their right to vote), while at the same time alluding to the corruption and manipulation of

electoral results, Chouman pushes forward the right to the city and exposes the continued state

power and corruption. Civil society and the government constantly exchange accusations and the

renunciation of responsibility, specifically in *Kana Ghadan*. One such scene shows a civil

---

[782] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 375.
[783] ibid, p. 54.

society representative insisting on the helplessness of the masses in the face of the state which preys on them. To this the government representative replies, 'Who elects this political class? Really, who elects it? Did it get here through fraud? And those who elected it? Are they murderers?'.[784] Commenting on this exchange between the two, one news anchor concludes that as a people, they are abandoned by the state and they are indeed helpless. He says, 'It is almost probably the case that every time you complain about it, it will continue happening. If for nothing else, it is because those responsible are addicted to patronage, and no longer care about you, you who had brought them to power'.[785]

Additionally, in Chouman, the normalisation of these practices leads to another: the normalisation of fear. In *Limbo Beirut*, for example, the unnamed medical intern in one of his unsent letters to his former girlfriend, writes,

> When I heard the news, I was sure that it would turn into something big. Without doubt. This is a safety instinct that has been bred into our population. The awareness of danger. The level of fear. When fear is practical and when we should be more nervous than afraid. Anyone who spent his childhood in this country knows these things. They are not suspicions.[786]

But this fear is what allowed the inhabitants of the city to survive its violence. The intern describes it as a safety instinct, a knowledge that they had to acquire in order to survive. Khaled, in *Kana Ghadan*, recognises his possession of such an awareness, while at the same time renouncing any accountability in the recurrence of the violence in his city. He exclaims,

> I took to thinking about everything around me. The past war. What is happening today. What we all anticipate happening, and has not yet happened. I thought of the shape of the next war, then I thought that an external factor, rife with complexities, is coming at everyone. It is not unique and does not affect me alone.[787]

---

[784] ibid, p. 241.
[785] ibid, pp. 266-67.
[786] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 195.
[787] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 30.

The indifference exemplified above is definitely not unique to Khaled. This collective indifference to acts of violence and forms of injustice become means of control against the city inhabitants. They come to 'serve as discipline and policing to deter political opponents from organising and mobilising, regardless of their position'.[788] In his critique on the everyday life under capitalism, Lefebvre mentions the system's need to turn its subjects into political and social tools, and to categorise the masses according to their value for increased profit. He opines that under capitalism, the most important thing is that 'human beings be profitable'.[789] And this profitability, in addition to its political and socio-economic value, also includes the capability and willingness to reproduce the system and with it the 'profitable' status quo.

However, Chouman's protagonists feature inhabitants who reject contributing to the system. In a dream Khaled has, for example, he realises that '[e]verything used to end before it completes its meaning. Every time he manages to hold a word's beginning, thinking he'd understood, the spelling of the rest of the word comes to negate his conviction, and dresses it with other interpretations'.[790] Khaled grapples to make sense of his surrounding and to articulate his confusion. His sense of alienation and entrapment is shared by other protagonists from both novels. However, their attempts to understand and take control of their everyday lives is what distinguishes them from those that reproduce the status quo.

---

[788] Sayegh, p. 3.
[789] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 250.
[790] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 67.

3.   Everyday Practices of Walking and Writing: Resisting Socio-Spatial Injustice,

Reclaiming the Right of the City

As demonstrated in the previous sections, postwar Beirut denied its people their right to it.

However, that does not mean that no resistance was possible or that the 'inhabitants in divided

cities [are] passive victims'.[791] Nagle writes,

> Rather than seeing postwar reconstruction as creating power as ubiquitous and insidious, power is instead a "versatile equilibrium", with "complementarity and conflicts", and where forms of "subversive agency" exist which elude or resist the interest of sectarian elites.[792]

Despite the consequences that neoliberalisation has wrought on the everyday of Beirut's

inhabitants, it would be inaccurate to assume that they are all completely complacent. Control as

such 'is not completely imposed'.[793] Rather, 'it is accepted, half-imposed, half-voluntary, in a

never-ending ambiguity'.[794] However, this same ambiguity allows the 'individual to play with

controls he imposes on himself, to make fun of them, to circumvent them, and to give himself

rules and regulations in order to disobey them'.[795] In other words, it provides one with the

opportunity to re-appropriate, retaliate, and contest, should one choose to.

In both of Chouman's novels, the protagonists succeed in taking the opportunity to

contest the forms of control imposed upon them. The socio-spatial practices of walking and

writing allow the protagonists to rupture the structures and the rhythms of the everyday. Doing

so endows them with the possibility and potential to reclaim their right to the city. Building on

Lefebvre's statement that the right to the city is both a cry and a demand, Nagle writes, 'while

the "cry" is a response to the crisis of everyday life in the city, the demand represents a

command to confront the crisis and to create an alternative urban life less alienated and open to

---

[791] Nagle, 'Ghosts', p. 150.
[792] ibid, p. 150.
[793] Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday*, p. 356.
[794] ibid, p. 356.
[795] ibid, p. 356.

encounters'.[796] Chouman's protagonists express their demand of their city by everyday practices that are employed in a manner that encroaches on and challenges the established socio-spatial organisation of their city. Through these practices, the protagonists regard the everyday as 'something which urgently needs to be transformed' and this conviction affirms the inseparability of theory 'from a revolutionary praxis'.[797]

Chouman's protagonists display a social consciousness and a commitment to a re-imagining of their city through alternative discourse and practice. They adopt an alternative route through which they can negotiate and/or contest dominant power relations. In his description of the active man, Lefebvre says that he is someone who creates 'the man world and, through the act of production, produces himself'.[798] The active man, therefore, is a conscious human being, who does not simply produce things; he also produces history. Like the Foucauldian subject, Lefebvre's active man knows the constituents of everyday life and understands their socio-spatial configurations and power relations. Steeled with this knowledge, the subject is then able to seek and forge an alternative route.

In Chouman, the protagonists express a need to remove themselves from their city so that they would be able to view it in a different light. Such a desire communicates observation and a keenness to analyse what they see. They want to see the city from above, to expose the intricate details of what hides, controls, and permits. Rim tells Khaled, 'Things look different when seen from a different angle'.[799] Standing on its own, this sentence might appear romantic and probably inconsequential. However, its repetition throughout the novel by various protagonists, with slight changes, becomes an affirmation, a demand for an alternative angle from which to see things,

---

[796] Nagle, 'Ghosts', p. 157.
[797] Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday Life*, p. 390.
[798] ibid, p. 389.
[799] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 42.

and a cry for change, transformation, and agency. In its second appearance, it is Khaled who exclaims, 'Looking from high up exposes the state of things'.[800] Khaled's awareness and knowledge of the state of affairs around him orient his daily practices in an empowering fashion, as his walk with Rim will shortly demonstrate. Ironically enough, the third and final appearance of the sentence occurs through Kenzi, one of the three pop-stars who seek to save the country from sectarianism through a series of ambitious and competitive commercialised campaigns. However, what Kenzi says significantly articulates the relationship between the inhabitants and the spaces of their city, as well as questions this relationship and their positionality in its view. Kenzi asks Khaled for a chat which she insists on holding on a rooftop; she tells him, 'I always like to look at Beirut from above. It is important from time to time that one exits the space in which one moves on a daily basis, and look at it from outside or from above'.[801] Observing the city's details, especially viewing it in its totality, from above, as these instances illustrate, reveals the city's intricacies and exposes its organisation. The protagonists now possess leverage; they are familiar with how the system operates on the level of the everyday (from below), since they are its victims, but they are also at advantage of seeing the city from above, of exposing how it works. Theirs is a knowledge of the everyday coupled with a 'critical knowledge of society (as a whole)'.[802] The opportunity to see and expose the 'form' of the city, to use a Lefebvrean term, along with its dominant strategies that are employed to sustain it, grants the viewers the distance and the clarity to transgress. Coming from below, from the margins of the political order, this opportunity, of knowledge, consciousness, and clarity, enable counter-hegemonic practices. As

---

[800] ibid, p. 108.
[801] ibid, p. 293.
[802] Lefebvre, *Critique of the Everyday Life*, p. 392.

Khaled demonstrates, his knowledge of the city and its everyday reflects on his practice of walking in the city, as well as on his interest and desire to 'transform it'.[803]

Unlike the *Kana Ghadan* protagonists who yearn for the scopic view of the city due to the distance and clarity it affords them to rethink their relationship with it, their place within it, and their role in transforming the quotidian, the struggling writer in *Limbo Beirut* is tormented by his removal from his city. He sees Beirut as a vortex that swallows everything that stands in its way and obliterates it in complete darkness. Observing the city from a distance, he says

> From my vantage point the capital seemed like the end of the world […] Beirut is a deep valley, yet most of the time we hardly notice. We can spend our lives there, we can go down into it every day — but the moment we realise that we're living in a valley, we no longer know how to get there. We are above it, standing on the edge. It's wholly below us, wholly remote.[804]

To him, Beirut is inaccessible and beyond reach no matter what he does. Another unnamed protagonist in *Limbo Beirut* struggles to understand the meaning and significance of viewing the city from a distance and of getting to know its makeup. He writes, 'Each rooftop made me see a different sunset. No, the rooftop did not make one see. I saw. It was I who deluded myself into thinking that I saw'.[805] Here, the protagonist is reluctant to assume an agentive role even though he admits that he can by affirming the fact that he did see and it was not only his position on the rooftop that made him capable of seeing.

The difference between Khaled and the protagonists of *Limbo Beirut* in this regard is strikingly significant, but not contradictory. In fact, the different reactions to these opportunities reflect the different potentialities and levels of awareness that people possess. However, the opportunity presented remains a stable commonality; what varies is what one chooses to do with it. In both cases, the scopic view of the city, or the ability to view it from above, places the

---

[803] ibid, p. 392.
[804] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 37.
[805] ibid, p. 164.

viewers in the shoes of those who create the city in their image, or for their own profit and gain; such a position exposes the system's use and management of the spaces of the city. Michel de Certeau sees being 'lifted to the summit of the World Trade Centre' as being 'lifted out of the city's grasp', and it is probably this removal from the city that the unnamed writer feels when he looks at Beirut from a distance in *Limbo Beirut*. But at the same time, this distance grants them the opportunity to know and experience the city in a different manner, and thus provides a different reading or interpretation of Beirut. It is an elevation that 'transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance', and this quality is hardly enjoyed or afforded in Beirut due to the systemised rendering of the city by the power dominating it, be they political, socio-economic, or confessional.[806] This elevation, according to de Certeau,

> transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a sceptic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[807]

The idea of the city in de Certeau's conceptualisation of the term approaches the act of walking in it to an act of reading it; therefore, inhabitants of the city experience its space as if they were readers and it a text. The scopic view of the city is reserved for gods in mythology and to 'space planner urbanist[s], city planner[s], or cartographer[s]'.[808] On the other hand, the

> ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below", below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk — an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmanner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognised poem in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organising a bustling city were characterised by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other.[809]

---

[806] de Certeau, p. 93.
[807] ibid, p. 93.
[808] ibid, p. 94.
[809] ibid, p. 94.

The ordinary laymen, the 'othered' are included on the margins of the political order, excluded

from the right to shape and form the city, to be effectively different. As such, any practice that

shakes, contests, or resists this 'othering', in any form, can be considered as counter-hegemonic,

and aims to reclaim a stolen right.

In Chouman, the walkers are of two kinds, those who comply with the everyday rhythms

of the city, and those who resist/transgress them by employing their socio-spatial knowledge of

Beirut. When Khaled in *Kana Ghadan*

> was making a call, the woman had already made her way barefoot to the balcony. She stood leaning on the rail, staring at dawn's bats aimlessly flying fast in the narrow space between buildings, without approaching the balconies or the people. On the opposite and adjacent balconies, the woman found a young man exercising, an old woman beating her rug, a girl reading from her school textbook as she strolls back and forth, two young men in white flannel shirts drinking coffee, a woman in her forties watering her plants and a young man hanging his laundry to dry.[810]

The above depicts the meticulous eye through which Khaled observes his surroundings. A

similar keen observation can be noted in one of *Limbo Beirut*'s unnamed protagonists: the

medical intern, describing, in his unsent love letters to his former girlfriend, the details of a day's

walk on Hamra Street in Beirut. He writes,

> I thought that we live among the reflections of time's sadness upon all things. The few glass facades on the stores dispersed around the intersection said this to me. The two intersecting streets said the same thing. The routes along which streams of cars flowed, existing from the Piccadilly Theatre or passing by me on Hamra Street. The cats underneath the parked cars in the surrounding streets that could not see but of whose presence I was certain. Even the dejected stray dogs of Beirut, two of whom I had come upon while walking Rex, and the faint light from the street lamps at the beginning of the evening, and the electrical wires that obscured any view of the sunset. To me all of these details bore witness to the reflections of time's sadness upon things. This time of "mine".[811]

It is evident from the above recorded notes that the intern utilises his observations in the service

of creating an understanding and a meaning of his experience. It is definitely a socio-spatial

experience from down below, but it is an informed and detailed experience nonetheless. In

---

[810] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 69.
[811] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 172.

another instant, in *Limbo Beirut*, the same intern demonstrates yet once more that he is attentive and aware of the space around him. He writes,

> The sidewalk is wide in this part of the city and its paving stones are unusual, different from the ones that line the sidewalk in Raouche. Sand is scattered in the unfinished spots. Near here, the sea is paved over. Trucks pass this way many times during the course of the day. They keep going by until nearly nightfall, transporting sand and chunks of rock. The hotels project light from their upper floors toward the sky in early evening. More than one of the buildings contain stores that are always empty of customers. Cars race down the road, pulling up suddenly at the traffic lights.[812]

The above are the records of an ordinary man of his experience of the city. They are observations illustrative of a sense of agency to re-imagine an alternative reading of one's city spaces.

In Chouman, it is through walking and writing such an alternative is created. This urban imaginary is understood as 'the cognitive and sometimes image which we carry within us of the places where we live, work, and play. It is an embodied material fact'; they are therefore 'part of any city's reality rather than only figments of the imagination. What we think about a city and how we experience it informs the ways we act in it'.[813] This section explores how the everyday practices of walking and writing are attempts at the production of new space or the re-appropriation of 'segregated space, through diverting its normalised uses' away from neoliberal and amnesiac functions.[814]

In a sense, the protagonists' practices to reclaim their right to the city starts with their reclamation of its *oeuvre.* The protagonists of both novels realise their need for things that cannot be satisfied commercially or culturally; they are in need of creativity, of 'information, symbolism, the imaginary, and play'.[815] However, reclaiming this *oeuvre* cannot occur prior to defeating 'currently dominant strategies and ideologies'.[816] They succeed in doing so by re-

---

[812] ibid, p. 177.
[813] Andreas Huyssen (ed.), *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 3.
[814] Nagle, 'Ghosts', p. 157.
[815] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, pp. 147-48.
[816] ibid, p. 154.

appropriating space, making alternative use of it, and endowing it with new meanings. The act of re-appropriation challenges 'how space is programmed to allow only specific functions to be performed at the expense of others'.[817] The protagonists' practices of walking – in spite of the restrictive spatial organisation – and writing – in spite of the dominant neoliberal mentality and amnesiac discourse – are read as acts of agency and reappropriation.

Walking the Violent City in Kana Ghadan

In his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau discusses the 'ways of operating'. He describes them as constituting 'the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organised by techniques of sociocultural production'.[818] It is from this standpoint that the practices of walking and writing will be read in *Kana Ghadan* and *Limbo Beirut*, respectively. These practices are varied styles of doing things; there are varied ways of 'walking, reading, producing, speaking', writing, and so on.[819] This section considers these modes or styles to be closer to 'instructions of use', which vary according to situations and circumstances, as well as subjects and levels of agency.[820] In both novels, these practices are read as transgressive and counter-hegemonic, or as de Certeau would call them, 'anti-discipline'. In this regard, de Certeau makes a distinction between the terms, 'strategies', and 'tactics', both of which are useful concepts for the analysis endeavoured in this section. De Certeau places both terms on either side of the hegemonic power order, with the first enacting techniques of social control and mechanisms of power, and the other forging ways of 'making-do' and/or contestation, within this structure, respectively.

---

[817] Nagle, 'Ghosts', p. 157.
[818] de Certeau, p. xv.
[819] ibid, p. 31.
[820] ibid, p. 31.

De Certeau considers the practices of the everyday, such as writing and walking, as 'tactical in character'. He describes them as 'victories of the "weak" over the "strong" […], clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning", manoeuvres, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike'.[821] From this perspective, two significant incidents stand out in Chouman's novels: a long walk in Beirut by Rim and Khaled, in *Kana Ghadan*, informed by Khaled's politico-historic and spatial sensibilities and knowledge, and the act of writing, as is the case of Rim and Durgham of *Kana Ghadan*, and the unnamed writer of *Limbo Beirut*.

Khaled appears from the onset to be more knowledgeable and aware of his surroundings than most of the other characters in the novel. His former wife, Suha, even goes as far as to use him as inspiration and follow his example as she attempts to 'locate' novelty in familiar scenes that she encounters every day. Khaled appears, in this respect, to be placed in a different category than the rest of the protagonists; he is able to perceive with new eyes, be attentive to detail, and understand the space of the city differently from his counterparts. He also questions, analyses, and critiques, and is aware of the power dynamic that governs his city. On one of his walks with Rim, Khaled admits to finding nothing natural or representative in Beirut. He walks as if tracing the map of the streets he has memorised. However, retracing a map and enacting its trajectory, in spite of restrictions, is only half the story. Through their walk, and specifically in the case of Rim who views walking in Beirut to be both suffocating and unsafe, both Rim and Khaled defy preconceived and dominant perceptions of and prohibitions in the city.

What Rim and Khaled do on their walks transcends a mere transgression of boundaries, into the production of their own map, an alternative to the one they are supposed to abide by. The

---

[821] ibid, p. xx.

fragment titled 'Roadmap' in *Kana Ghadan* exposes the details of this walk, on which both

walkers sketch the blueprints of the streets they trace as they experience them. In fact,

> if it is true that a spatial order organises an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualises some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them above and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.[822]

De Certeau describes the walkers in the city as an 'innumerable collection of singularities', able

to give shape to their spaces and 'weave places together'.[823] As they walk, Rim and Khaled

inscribe their own meaning onto the spaces that they pass by. They create a new narrative of their

city. In other words, they make up their own version of their city based solely on their

knowledge and their experience of it first-hand. In such a manner, making up the city becomes

synonymous with exercising the right to it, inclusive of the right of access, identification,

mobility, use, and production of both space and meaning. It is here useful to recall de Certeau's

insistence on not reducing the act of walking to a mere reading of the trajectory since that would

reduce our observations to those traces that are left on the map, and that 'constitute procedures

for forgetting'.[824]

Khaled and Rim resist these procedures by being able to transform 'each spatial signifier

into something else'.[825] The fact that they are actualising some of the possibilities of the city

space while denying others as they walk means that they have made a choice and a selection.[826]

Thus, the meaning that they create as they walk is unique to their walking experience. The very

fact that they do so facilitates Rim's and Khaled's negotiation of the dominant spatial

organisation and social formations in their city.

---

[822] ibid, p. 99.
[823] ibid, p. 98.
[824] ibid, p. 98.
[825] ibid, p. 99.
[826] ibid, p. 99.

Rim and Khaled do not walk aimlessly. They choose specific streets and make sure to learn their names; they identify monuments and statues they pass along the way and discuss their historic and political significance; and they share stories they know, or have heard, about most of the streets they walk. When they encounter a street whose name they do not recall or know, they make sure to find the plate on which is written the street's original name. They therefore demand full knowledge of the street they are experiencing. When they pass by the statue and memorial of the late prime minister Rafiq Hariri, and therefore the site in which he was assassinated, Khaled pauses to narrate the details of that day as he recalls them. Their walk also identifies major streets, such as Wafic Sinno, Ain Mreisseh, Mina al Hosn, Ibn Sina, Fakher al Din, General Found Chehab, Omar Daouk, Clemenceau, and so on. Additionally, prime hotels in the area are pointed out. Interestingly, most of these hotels have had a prominent role to play during the first two years of the Lebanese civil war, in what was known as the Battle of Hotels (1975-1976). These include: St. George, the Holiday Inn, and Phoenicia Hotel.[827]

As they walk, Khaled and Rim also remember, and inscribe the streets of the city not only with their own experience of it, but also with their own memory of it. Their walk therefore transgresses the physical and socio-cultural boundaries erected by the power order to maintain its hegemony. They also select their streets themselves. Their walking, therefore, 'affirms, tries out, transgresses, respects etc., the trajectories, it "speaks"'.[828]

It is Rim that highlights Khaled's knowledge of the streets and his awareness of the power order that dictates its rhythms, configurations, and social formations. It is Rim who articulates Khaled's agency, and lends affirmation to the alternative city narrative that their walk creates. In a journal entry following the walk, which Rim titles 'Walking', she writes,

---

[827] See Chapter Three.
[828] de Certeau, p. 100.

> It is not random, for example, that we do not know the names of our streets, and refer to them using other names. Or that we toil to locate their names on the walls every time we are invited to a birthday or a night out in a new apartment, which we do not find. So we resort to tailing special signs: shops, electricity poles, remaining potholes, political party posters, […] billboards. All this is not random; it is part of our way of life here — to pass through things without noticing them, and without asking.[829]

It is this 'passing through things without noticing them' that her walk with Khaled negates while, at the same time, makes her aware of the dangers of not asking. In the same journal entry, Rim describes the normative practices of walking in the city without paying attention to one's surrounding or registering important and useful information that could inform one's practices and renounce one's subservience and passivity. She writes,

> We kick, we walk, we stop, we get up. Like particles bumping into one another inside a box that had been forcedly shut, on a chaos with no known rules. We are inside it. Every minute, we discover a new law, we then deny it at the next instant, with the creation of an alternative law. We repeat the denial and the invention, non-stop. Is it for that reason that I see me running with no consideration, when I drive and when I walk? Is it just me or is it the general rhythm of all passers-by in these streets? Is this why I have become easily swayed without any objections, pursuing every opportunity that presents itself in the horizon? Could Khaled be an opportunity, for example?[830]

Rim sees an opportunity in Khaled, a chance to experience the city in an alternative manner. Additionally, by focusing on the names of the streets, Rim and Khaled also prioritise making sense of their surroundings. This making sense is both an agentive spatial practice and a conscious action. It therefore repels (and contests) the notion of an assumed passivity forced by the dominant order. De Certeau writes,

> In the spaces brutally lit by an alien reason, proper names carve out pockets of hidden and familiar meanings. They "make sense"; in other words, they are the impetus of movements, like vocations and calls that turn or divert an itinerary by giving it a meaning (or a direction) (sens) that was previously unforeseen. These names create a nowhere in places; they change them into passages.[831]

What is important in this respect is the fact that these created passages allow the walker the creation of alternative, 'liberated spaces that can be occupied'.[832]

---

[829] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, pp. 167-68.
[830] ibid, p. 168.
[831] de Certeau, p. 105.
[832] ibid, p. 106.

Writing the Violent City

De Certeau believes that the city becomes for the walker a text that can be read. He refers to this as the 'long poem of walking', able to manipulate 'spatial organisations, no matter how panoptic they may be'.[833] In this statement, de Certeau grants the walker agency not only to transgress and challenge the status quo, but also to create and invent an alternative. From this perspective, writing, as a practice in these novels, constitutes a means through which protagonists 'make do', resist, and transgress a dominant system; it tells untold stories and allows alternative voices to be heard.

In both novels, all those protagonists who articulate their stories, whether in the form of diary entries, letters, or snippets, struggle to locate the beginning of their stories; they struggle to make sense of their past and present experiences. Khaled's neighbour, Durgham, insists on telling the former his story from the beginning, enlisting him not only to document and record it, but to also fill in its gaps. In a way, Durgham resembles Adam in *Awlad al Ghetto*, but instead of writing his own story himself, he narrates it, in front of an audience, without mediation. Durgham tells Khaled,

> I should tell you the story from the beginning. Stories are not understood unless narrated from their beginning. It does not matter where a story starts. What matters is that you choose a beginning, to say that it is from here that things stated, to be convinced that whatever happens after — should it happen — started off from the beginning, and that everything that has happened before it, facilitated its occurrence.[834]

Considering the context within which these two novels are set, writing about the war and its violence, and the dangers of navigating the city, gives the act a paramount significance. The narrativising of socio-spatial practices is a 'textual "way of operating" having its own procedures and tactics'.[835] A story, for de Certeau, 'does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to

---

[833] ibid, p. 102.
[834] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, pp. 118-19.
[835] de Certeau, p. 79.

telling about a movement. It makes it. One understands it, then, if one enters into this movement oneself'.[836] In the same manner that Rim and Khaled create the space of their city during their walk, re-imagine it, and re-inscribe it with new meanings, Durgham in *Kana Ghadan* and the struggling writer in *Limbo Beirut* create their own narrative by telling it.

Durgham's insistence on telling his story from the beginning can be considered as an attempt to re-write his own history and make sense of a haunting and traumatising experience. While he understands that there is nothing he can do to change the past, he decides to change his relationship with it since it paralyses his present. In other words, he chooses to challenge a dismembered and denied memory, and to transform his fragmented relationship with the past into something more meaningful. It is as if Durgham 'substitutes the hardship he now lives with narrating his story, which he dissects into scenes and tells it as if it happened yesterday'.[837] He grants his story a new pair of eyes by turning Rim and Khaled into witnesses, while assuming the responsibility of telling and reclaiming it. All fragments concerning Durgham open with a narrator, using the third person, introducing the scene. Durgham then addresses Khaled and the readers alike, using the second person. However, the last fragment featuring Durgham breaks this consistency. Instead of bearing the title 'Durgham' with the corresponding number of the fragment in which he appears in the novel, the last fragment, titled: 'Falling is Part of Crossing Over', bears no direct reference to Durgham; the reader can guess that the narrator is Durgham through the content. Additionally, the 'optimistic' and empowering manner in which Durgham ends this novel is extremely significant as it assures the fallen that they can rise, and encourage the passive to be mobilised; his optimism, therefore, gives those who read him a motive. Addressing his late wife, he writes, 'We stand together, and we are amazed at the amount of

---

[836] ibid, p. 82.
[837] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, pp. 153-54.

things that we are seeing for the first time'.[838] The significance of this statement contrasts the sense of non-meaning that almost all protagonists wallow in throughout the novel, along the familiar repetition of violent episodes.

In *Limbo Beirut*, the struggling writer expresses his inability to write; he is unable to focus his thought, or be inspired, or feel emancipated from the story that is gripping him. He admits that he has become prisoner of his story. He adds, 'I tried to write and all that came out was scattered words, pathetic sentences. All progress in my head stopped as my thoughts entered an endless revolving cycle of limbo'.[839] However, all protagonists who resort to writing in both novels, write of what confines, prohibits, threatens, or scares them. Through their written attempts, they seek closure, an ending that will provide them with a clarity and understanding amidst the chaos in which they live. Rim, in *Kana Ghadan*, writes to make sense of things, but keeps her writing to herself. She analyses her personal life and Khaled's walks. The medical intern in *Limbo Beirut* admits taking up writing in order to gain perspective on things. Addressing his former girlfriend, he writes in his diary:

> I decided to start a correspondence with you, Sanaa. I did not care about actually sending you the letters […] And in this way, I started to review everything again […] and I began to inscribe it all in my memory next to the medical terms and scientific names that I struggled for so long to memorise.[840]

Hassan, on the other hand, a former militiaman, wants to write in order to reconcile with his past, as well as to comprehend his present actions. He does not understand why he is taking up arms again. His desperate need to write his story down, he believes, will allow him the opportunity to justify his actions and redeem himself. He says, 'If only I could tell my story like the voice at the beginning of the films I used to watch at Cinema Strand'.[841] In his statement, Hassan yearns for a

---

[838] ibid, p. 381.
[839] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 48.
[840] ibid, p. 166.
[841] ibid, p. 153.

voice, for the ordinary, the mundane, and the detachment from appearances and phenomena of violence that have entered him into a world he never wanted to be part of. He yearns for the daily routines of making coffee, of not sleeping in, of having a today different from yesterday and tomorrow, of liberating himself from the current cycle of 'sameness', of the status quo, and the set 'everyday' he has been thrown into. He writes, 'But nothing is this easy. If only I was really granted this moment. If only I was able to see myself from the outside. To study aspects of myself I had not noticed before. If only'.[842] This moment does come for Hassan, but it comes too late, for both the ability to comprehend and then articulate this understanding well come to him as he lay dying: 'I knew that I had died only when I discovered that I possessed language. I became certain of my death when I found my own voice. This voice'.[843] The irony in this statement resounds in the last sentence Durgham writes in *Kana Ghadan*, as he finally acquires the last say, concluding the entire novel and gaining an audience that exceeds the mere presence of Rim or Khaled. He writes, 'We have died and we have looked over the entire world'.[844]

The significance of the protagonists writing their own experiences, stories, or reflections lies in two important details: Firstly, that their stories have mostly never been told before (the everyday, the ordinary, the marginalised rarely make history), and secondly, they are all trying to write down an ending to their stories, not only to reclaim a voice, but also a degree of agency. Durgham starts telling his story to Khaled on the pretext that he needs help finding out what had happened to his wife, who he claims went missing during the war. Towards the end of the novel, the reader learns that Durgham already knows everything about his past. He was only missing an audience and an affirmation of his right to his story and to writing it. In *Limbo Beirut*, the

[842] ibid, p. 153.
[843] ibid, p. 157.
[844] Chouman, *Kana Ghadan*, p. 381.

medical intern insists on the originality of his story. He tells his former girlfriend in a letter he never sends that theirs is a story that has never been told before. He also is looking for an ending. He writes, 'In my story with you, I had been lacking an ending, and I had gotten one at last'.[845] The only way any of the protagonists succeed in securing proper endings or closure, is by writing their stories themselves. Towards the end of his story, the intern realises that he always has a choice. This realisation endows him with an agency he never thought he possessed. Looking at a corpse in the hospital, the intern wonders whether he should follow up on the dead man's story, and bring him closure. The corpse turns out to be Hassan, the militiaman, whose death the intern had witnessed while walking his dog. The chapter, along with the novel, ends with the following statement by the intern:

> Perhaps I must let the man's corpse die so that I can move on with my life. Perhaps I must bury the death that I witnessed; perhaps I must help, as much as possible, to bring the story of which I was a part to a close.
> Perhaps.[846]

This is where *Limbo Beirut* ends, on uncertainty, but with the hope of a viable choice, reminiscent of how *Kana Ghadan* ends with Durgham reminding us that 'falling is part of crossing over'.

Within the context of postwar Beirut, and amidst the snares of an amnesiac discourse, writing down stories of ordinary people untold before and of the everyday, reflect on matters of visibility, representation, and identity politics, as Chapter Three demonstrates. In *Limbo Beirut*, six different narratives finally intersect to form one story. Reading the story from multiple perspectives allows the reader an attempt to understand the story in its entirety, while also granting the protagonists the opportunity at representation and agency. The same thing is

---

[845] Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, p. 194.
[846] ibid, pp. 215-16.

repeated in *Kana Ghadan*. The reader encounters fragments that relay the same incident but from the point of view of the other protagonist involved, or fragments such as those titled: 'What Khaled did not say', or 'What Rim did not say', as well as those that are not narratives per se but provide the reader with a contextual clarity. Such a clarity is provided by fragments that are radio announcements, text messages, dreams, journal entries, interviews, and so on.

In other words, the format or structure of the stories told and the multiple perspectives provided by both novels challenge the postwar reticence internalised by many Lebanese so much so that silence in the face of violence and injustice became a habit. As the writing practices of the protagonists demonstrate, stories told were able to produce meaning when there was none and to challenge its excessive presence when it was oversaturated. The writers in both novels were active and aware subjects in search of a consolidated meaning and a sense of agency and control. By narrating glimpses of their everyday, these protagonists were able to tell us 'what one can do in it and make out of it'; in other words, they were able to 'found space', and therein lies their agency, for where stories disappear, 'there is a loss of space'.[847]

Both *Limbo Beirut* and *Kana Ghadan* expose the violent everyday of the ordinary person. The protagonists struggle in a city that forgets, yet still lives through the harrowing tribulations of sporadic violence, denial, and neoliberalisation. What Chouman's novels present are protagonists who, through their everyday practices of walking and writing, exhibit an awareness and a readiness to challenge these phenomena. By choosing to become 'active' subjects in their city, the protagonists insist on their right to it and on the injustice committed against them. Asef Bayat describes an active use as challenging to 'the state and those social groups that benefit from such order'.[848] In Chouman, the protagonists tell stories untold before,

---

[847] de Certeau, p. 124.
[848] Bayat, p. 63.

choose their endings themselves, along with the way, the timing and the structure, and insist on their agency within a system that denies it, by using the city spaces in spite of restrictions. In a sense, they, like Adam in *Awlad al Ghetto*, and the protagonists in Jaber's *Tuyur*, demonstrate the importance of narration as a counter-hegemonic act and a re-imagining of an alternative.

The study endeavoured in this thesis focused on exposing the transgressive role that Lebanese

literary works, specifically novels, can play in challenging and unsettling grand narratives of

war. This thesis argues that the four novels under study contribute to unsettling the monolithic

presentation of the war event, in official historical narratives, each within its own context. Their

ability to do so is facilitated by stylistic elements found across the novels as well as by their

experimental form. This thesis maintains that literary techniques, such as fragmentation,

multiplicity of voices and versions of the war story as well as intertexuality, allow for a

manipulation of the boundaries between fiction and history, while at the same time, making

visible the stories of ordinary people on the level of the everyday. The employment of these

techniques as such contributes to a removal from rigid historical presentations of the war event,

and simultaneously unsettles the power that these presentations have over voices from below.

The two contexts intersecting in this study, be it the Palestinian *nakba* (1948-present) or

the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), both of which are read as still ongoing, have had

detrimental impacts on Palestinian and Lebanese geography/space and history/time respectively.

In addition to the struggle of both peoples against displacement, dispossession, and the horrors

and trauma of the war experience, theirs is also a struggle against forgetfulness. Both narratives

have undergone, and still do, forms of systemic silencing and denial. These novels boast an

experimental form, facilitated by the authors' choice of literary techniques, as well as the

multiplicity of stories. They all focus on the everyday experience of violence and expose the

human condition under war. By doing so, these novels exhibit the potential for an alternative

imagining and an engagement in counter-discourses that resist erasure and forgetfulness. The

novels are then able to represent, to make visible, and to articulate what the monolithic, historical narrative leaves out. When considered against the historico-political contexts in which they are set, these novels' transgressions become powerful statements against the systemic violence that they have been enduring for years.

Since 17th October, 2019, Lebanon has been witnessing a nation-wide uprising against the clientelist, confessional power-sharing regime governing the country. The political order currently in power is both an extension and a reproduction of the militia mentality that had exhausted the country and its resources during the 15-year-war. Despite its official termination in 1990, the war's violent system was successfully reproduced under different forms, and extended into postwar Lebanon when the warlords became its guardians. The 17th October uprising is proof that this system is being reproduced. But it is also proof, that this system has become outdated. The novels under study were written well before Lebanon entered this transformative period. However, Chouman's novel, in specific, with its amalgam of events that have already occurred, and those that might occur, and the exaggeration of these events as they happen simultaneously, has unknowingly engaged with possibilities, such as the ones the country is currently witnessing. The transgressive streak inherent in these chosen novels, therefore, was not effected out of a general atmosphere of revolt. Rather, it was enacted individually, as represented in these novels, on the level of the ordinary and the everyday. This study treats the ordinary and the everyday as a realm rife with contradictions, heterogeneity, and difference. It is a realm that allows transgressions and harbours rebellions and revolutions.

The struggle of the protagonists of Elias Khoury, Rabi' Jaber, and Hilal Chouman, as presented in their novels under study, is a struggle for space and time, and over geography and history. Adam in *Awlad al Ghetto* writes out of the political need to un-silence the Palestinian

narrative. The protagonists in *Tuyur* narrate their everyday experience of the war and engage in processes of making place, challenging the monolithic representation of the Lebanese civil war story in historical accounts. Khaled and Rim in *Kana Ghadan* walk the streets of Beirut, forming their own blueprints of the city and controlling their experience of space in spite of the restrictions imposed on them. In their own way, these protagonists refuse to succumb to silence or idleness.

Each in his/her own way, these novels' protagonists attempt to reclaim a space that has been taken away from them. However, this thesis is not concerned with reading space from a nationalist perspective. Rather, it primary focuses on socio-spatial experiences presented in the novel and undertaken by ordinary citizens on the level of the everyday. The concept of social space is here understood as the socio-spatial ordering or organisation present in a certain space. This ordering includes power dynamics, social formations, the functions and purpose of space, the experience of space within its limitations (its openings and closings, its barriers and borders, and so on), and the processes of making meaning and making place.

Samira Aghacy and Ghenwa Hayek, whose works amongst others support the study endeavoured here, have written about private and public space in Lebanese postwar literature. Evelyne Accad and miriam cooke have also both spoken about the civil war and its literary representation with a few references made to the spaces of the city from a feminist perspective. While my thesis is influenced by their works, it differs in its reading of postwar spaces, considering them as sites enabling resistance and transgression on the level of the everyday. The contestation and negotiation of space, in addition to the processes of place-making as they are represented in the novels under study, expose the mechanisms of social control that govern the

lives of the protagonists. These mechanisms are effected spatially and bear consequences that constrict their relationship with both space (of the city) and history.

The experience of space undertaken by the protagonists in the four novels includes the navigation of the spaces of a divided city or a city in conflict. The protagonists manipulate the system out of a political need to create space and safeguard their memories. Space, within the Lebanese context, as demonstrated in this thesis, is an experience lived through memory. Following the official termination of the war, spaces which were previously inaccessible no longer were so due to the removal of the division between the two sectors of the city. However, some public spaces remained inaccessible due to other considerations such as privatisation, as explained in Chapter One.

This study's approach to reading social space focuses on the literary analysis of such space and the practices that it allows, denies, or engenders as represented in the chosen novels. As argued, the new socio-spatial reality created by both the war and the reconstruction process, created a new relationship to the city by producing new relations. As a result, new meanings were produced and reflected in literature, influencing both its formal and narrative styles. These changes therefore can be said to have created a new form of textuality and, with it, a new form of reading. This new textuality contributed to a re-imagining of a counter-discourse. Writers became more experimental and daring as disenchantments with ideologies and romanticisms of the past necessitated a reassessment of writing literature and its purpose. This new textuality, in turn, necessitated a different reading of literature, such as the one proposed here. This reading was made possible by focusing on how alternative narratives have been forged out of the new relationship with space, and how postwar literature became keen on revealing and representing them both in form and content.

This thesis reads the works of three male Lebanese novelists. By doing so this study does not seek to exclude Lebanese female writers. The aim behind this focus is the interest in conducting a future research concerned with the experience of the female body in cities of conflict such as the works of Arab writers, Dima Wannous, Sahar Khalife, Sahar Mandour, and Arij Jamal, for example. I am specifically interested in the art of walking cityscapes with emphasis on the *flâneuse* as presented in Arabic literature. The works of Sahar Mandour and Arij Jamal, for example, focus on the female and queer body and its relationship to a city rife with conflict. The violence experienced by these bodies exposes an additional layer for analysis. In addition to the control that these bodies have to resist on a daily basis, in the masculine realm of the city, as tackled by Evelyne Accad, for example, these bodies, within the specific contexts of the novels in which they are portrayed, have to face a more complicated system during revolutions, protests, and war. I am interested in exposing these dynamics, and offering a reading that would highlight their experience of the city as transgressive acts of reclamation, not only of their cities but also of their bodies. I wish to draw a parallel between city and body, in this respect. The work endeavoured in this thesis, especially the exploration of the act of walking, offers a background through further socio-spatial analytic explorations of subaltern bodies and voices can be investigated.

REFERENCES

Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

Aghacy, Samira, 'Domestic Spaces in Lebanese War Fiction: Entrapment or Liberation?' *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*, ed. by Ken Seigneurie (Wiesbaden: Reichart Verlag, 2003), pp. 83-99

Agnew, John, 'Space and Place', *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. by John Agnew and David Livingstone (London: Sage, 2011), p. 1-34

Al Barghouti, Murid, *Ra'aytu Ramallah* (Beirut: *al Markaz al thaqafi al 'arabi*, 2015 [1997])

Al Hout, Bayan Nuwayhed, *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982* (London: Pluto Press, 2004)

Aljahdali, Samar H., 'Venturing into a Vanishing Space: The Chronotope in Representing Palestinian Postcoloniality', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50.2 (2014): 216-29

Ashcroft, Bill, 'Silence as Heterotopias in Coetzee's Fiction', *Strong Opinions: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Chris Danta, Sue Kossew, and Julian Murphet (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 141-57

Attoh, Kafui A., 'What *Kind* of Right is the Right to the City?', *Progress in Human Geography*, 35.5 (2011): 669-85

Bacherlard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958, rprt. 1969)

Ballouta, Issa J., 'Rabi Jaber and His Novel, Yusuf al-Inglizi', *Domes*, 13.2(2004): 1-6

Baroudi, Sami, 'Continuity in Economic Policy in Postwar Lebanon: The Record of the Hariri and Hoss Governments Examined, 1992-2000', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 24.1 (2002): 63-90

Bayat, Asef, and Kees Biekat, 'Cities of Extremes', *Development and Change*, 40.5 (2009): 815-25

Bayeh, Jumana, *The Literature of the Lebanese Diaspora: Representations of Place and Transnational Identity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015)

Bentham, Jeremy, *Panopticon, or, The Inspection-House* (Berkshire: Dado Press, 2008)

Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Blunt, Alison, 'Cultural Geography: Cultural Geographies of Home', *Progress in Human Geography*, 29.4 (2005): 505-15

Boeing, Gail J., '"Absentees' Property" Laws and Israel's Confiscation of Palestinian Property: A Violation of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 and International Law', *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law, XI 2000/2001*, (2003): 73-130

Bugeja, Norbert, *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012)

Busquet, Gregory, 'Political Space in the Work of Henri Lefebvre: Ideology and Utopia', trans. by Sharon Moren, *Justice Spatiale|Spatial Justice*, 5 (2012-13): 1-12

Butler, Judith, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso Books, 2016)

Caruth, Cathy, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995)

---, *Unclaimed Experience, Trauma, Narrative, History* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

Chisholm, Dianne, 'The City of Collective Memory', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7.2 (2011): 195-243

Chouman, Hilal, *Kana Ghadan* (Beirut: Dar al Saqi, 2017)

---, *Limbo Beirut*, trans. by Anna Ziajka Stanton (Austin: The University of Austin Texas, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2016)

Craps, Stef, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Cresswell, Tim, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

---, *Place: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015)

Cohen, Hillel, 'The Internal Refugees in the State of Israel: Israeli Citizens, Palestinian Refugees', *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, 9.2 (2009): 1-6

Cohn, Dorrit, 'Fictional versus Historical Lives: Borderlines and Borderline Cases', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 19.1 (1989): 3-24

cooke, miriam, 'Beirut Reborn: The Political Aesthetics of Auto-Destruction', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15.2 (2002): 393-424

Coward, Martin, 'Against Anthropocentrism: The Destruction of the Built Environment as a District Form of Political Violence', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006): 419-37

Crouch, David, *Flirting with Space: Journeys and Creativity* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010)

Darwish, Mahmoud, 'The Hoopoe', *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems*, trans. and ed. by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forche (with Sinan Anton and Amira el Zein) (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003)

---, 'To My End and to its End', *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* (Brooklyn: Archipelago, 2006)

Daya, Moshe, '*Katibat al Maghawir "tahtuk" al Lidd*', trans. by Nabih Basher, *Majallat al Dirasat al Falastiniyya*, 111 (2017): 180-92

De Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)

Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Paris: Flammarion, 1977)

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1987)

Dikeç, Mustafa, 'Justice and Spatial Imagination', *Environment and Planning, A,* 33 (2001): 1785-1805

---, 'Police, Politics, and the Right to the City', *GeoJournal*, 58 (2002): 91-8

Diken, Bulent, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City', *Citizenship Studies*, 8.1 (2004): 83-106

Diken, Bulent and Carsten Bagge Lausten, 'The Camp', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, 88.4 (2006): 443-52

Eco, Umberto, 'Architecture and Memory, *Architecture and Literature*: *VIA*, 8 (1986): 98

Edkins, Jenny, 'The Absence of Meaning: Trauma and the Events of 11 September', *The Information Technology, War and Peace Project, The Watson Institute for International Studies*, http://infopeace.org/911/index.cfm?id=4#

Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. by Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princton University Press, 2009)

Fawaz, Mona, 'Neoliberal Urbanity and the Right to the City: A View from Beirut's Periphery',

    Development and Change, 40.5 (2009): 927-52

Fregonese, Sara, 'Between a Refuge and a Battleground: Beirut's Discrepant

    Cosmopolitanisms', *The Geographical Review*, 102.3 (2012): 316-36

---, 'Beyond the "Weak State": Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut', *Environment and Planning D:*

    Society and Space, 30 (2012): 655-74

Fregonese Sara, and Adam Ramadan, 'Hotel Geopolitics: A Research Agenda', *Geopolitics*, 20.4

    (2015): 793-813

Friend, Stacie, 'Fiction as Genre', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 112(2012): 197-209

Foley, Barbara, 'The Historical Novel', *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of*

    Documentary Fiction (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 143-84

Fordham, Alice, 'Beirut's Holiday Inn: Once Chic, Then Battered, Still Contested', 27 May

    2014, *National Public Radio*

Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Selected Essays*

    and Interviews, ed. and trans. by Donal F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University

    Press, 1977)

---, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin

    Books, 1991)

---, Michel, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by

    Richard Howard (London and New York: Routledge, 1989)

---, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. by Miskowiec,

    Architecture.Movement/Continuité, 1984

---, 'Questions on Geography', *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-77*, ed. by Conlin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Merphan, and Kate Sopper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)

---, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge: 1989)

Gregson, Nicky, and Gillian Rose, 'Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities, and Subjectivities', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18.4 (2000): 433-52

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson, 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7.1 (1992): 6-23

---, 'Spatializing States: Towards an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality', *American Ethnologist*, 29.4 (2002): 981-1002

Halabi, Zeina, 'The Unbearable Heaviness of Being: The Suicide of the Intellectual in Rabi's Jaber's "Raif Rizqallah Through the Looking Glass"', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 44.1 (2013): 53-82

Hamdi, Tahrir, 'Bearing Witness in Palestinian Resistance Literature', *Race and Class*, 52.3 (2011): 21-42

Harlow, Barbara, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987)

Harvey, David, 'Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination', *Annals of the Association of the American Geographers*, 80.3 (1990): 418-34

---, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989)

---, 'The Right to the City', *Debates and Developments: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27.4 (2003): 939-41

Haugbolle, Sune, 'Public and Private Memory of the Lebanese Civil War', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 25.1 (2005): 191-203

---, 'The (Little) Militia Man: Memory and Militarized Masculinity in Lebanon', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8.1 (2012): 115-89

Hayek, Ghenwa, *Beirut: Imagining the City: Space and Place in Lebanese Literature* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015)

---, 'Rabi' Jaber's *Bayrut* Trilogy: Recovering an Obscured Urban History', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 42 (2011): 183-204

Hetherington, Kevin, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Hewitt, Kevin, 'Place Annihilation: Area Bombing and the Fate of Urban Places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 73.1 (1983): 257-84

Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)

Hirszowics, Maria, Elzbieta Neyman, and Piotr H. Kosicki, 'The Social Framing of Non-Memory', *International Journal of Sociology*, 37.1 (2007): 74-88

Hoelscher, Steven, and Derek H. Alderman, 'Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship', *Social Camp: Cultural Geography*, 5.3 (2004): 347-55

Hourani, Najib, 'People or Profit? Two Post-Conflict Reconstructions in Beirut', *Human Organization*, 74.2 (2015): 174-84

---, 'Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Citizenship Agendas: Lessons from Beirut', *Citizenship Studies*, 19.2 (2015): 194-99

---, 'Transnational Pathways and Politico-Economic Power: Globalization and the Lebanese
Civil War', *Geopolitics*, 15.2 (2010): 290-311

Hout, Syrine, *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*, ed. by
Rashed el Enany (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

Huyssen, Andreas, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (California:
Stanford University Press, 2003)

---, (ed.) *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Durham: Duke
University Press, 2008)

Jaber, Rabi', *Tuyur al Holiday Inn* (Beirut: Dar al Tanwir, 2012)

Kanafani, Ghassan, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, trans. by Hilary Kilpatrick
(Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1988)

Kapralski, Slawomir, 'The (Non-)Presence of the Jews in the Memoryscapes of South-Eastern
Poland', *Sensus Historiae*, 9.4 (2012):89-118

Khayyat, Yasmine, *Memory in Ruins: The Poetics of* Atlal *in Lebanese Wartime and Postwar
Cultural Productions*, Doctoral Thesis, *Columbia University*, 2013

Khoury, Elias, al *Dhakira al Mafquda* (Beirut: dar al Adab, 1982)

---, *Awlad al Ghetto: Nijmat al Bahir*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: dar al adab, 2018)

---, *Broken Mirrors: Silankol*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (London: Machete, 2015)

---, *Gate of the Sun*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (New York: Picador, 2006)

---, 'Rethinking the Nakba', *Critical Inquiry*, 38.2 (2012): 250-66

---, *The Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (London:
MacLehose Press, 2018)

---, 'The Unfolding of Modern Fiction and Arab Memory', *The Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association*, 23.1 (1990): 1-8

Kipfer, Stefan and Kanishka Goonewardena, 'Colonization and the New Imperialism: On the Meaning of Urbicide Today', *Theory & Event*, 10.2 (2007): 1-41

Kohn, Margaret, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003)

Lang, Felix, *The Lebanese Post-Civil War Novel: Memory, Trauma, and Capital* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Larkin, Craig, 'Reconstruction and Deconstructing Beirut: Space, Memory, and the Lebanese Youth', *Divided Cities/Contested Cities, working paper*, 8 (2009): 1-22

---, 'Remaking Beirut: Contesting Memory, Space, and the Urban Imaginary of Lebanese Youth', *City and Community*, 9.4 (2010): 414-42

Lefebvre, Henri, *Critique of the Everyday: The One Volume Edition* (London: Verso, 2014)

---, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', trans. by Michel Enders, *Antipode*, 8 (1976): 30-7

---, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991)

---, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleanore Kofman and Elizabth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000)

Low, Setha, 'Embodied Space(s): Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture', *Space and Culture*, 6.1 (2003): 9-18

Lundborg, Tom, *Politics of the Event: Time, Movement, Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2012)

Makarem, Hadi, *Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The Reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, Doctoral Thesis (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014)

Makdisi, Saree, 'Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere', *Critical Inquiry, Front Lines/Border Posts*, 23.3 (1997): 660-705

Malpas, Jodi Ellen, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Manna', Adel, 'The Palestinian Nakba and Its Continuous Repercussions', *Israel Studies*, 18.2 (2013): 86-99

Martin, Diana, 'From Space of Exception to "Campscapes": Palestinian Refugee Camps and Informal Settlements in Beirut', *Political Geography*, 22 (2015): 9-18

Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005, rprt. 2008)

---, 'Politics and Space/Time', *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 141-61

Masalha, Nur, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zeb Books, 2012)

Meiches, Benjamin, 'A Political Ecology of the Camp', *Security Dialogue*, 46.5 (2015): 476-92

Middleton, Peter and Tom Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

Millinton, Gareth, *'Race', Culture, and the Right to the City: Centres, Peripheries, Margins* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Mitchell, Don, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (London: The Guilford Press, 2014)

Morris, Benny, 'Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948',
        Middle Easte Journal, 40.1(1986): 82-109

Mustapha, Dalia Said, 'Literary Representations of Trauma, Memory, and Identity in the Novels
        of Elias Khoury and Rabi Jabir', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 40 (2009): 208-36

Nagel, Caroline, 'Reconstructing Space, Re-creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban
        Development in Post-War Beirut', *Political Geography*, 21 (2002): 717-25

Nagle, John, 'Defying the State of Amnesia and Memory Wars: Non-Sectarian Memory
        Activism in Beirut and Belfast City Centres', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10 (2018):
        1-22

---, 'Ghosts, Memory, and the Right to the Divided City: Resisting Amnesia in Beirut City
        Centre', *Antipode*, 49.1 (2017): 149-68

Nancy, Jean-Luc, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. by Brian Holmes et al., *Meridian: Crossing
        Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993)

Nandy, Ashis, 'Memory Work', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 16.4 (2015): 598-606

Nayel, Moe-Ali, 'Beirut's Bullet-Riddled Holiday Inn – A History of Cities in 50 Buildings, Day
        28', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2015

Palin, Jason and Jordan Frith, 'Wearing the City: Memory P(a)laces, Smartphones, and the
        Rhetorical Invention of Embodied Space', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 46.3 (2016): 222-
        35

Pappe, Ilan, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Oxford, 2006)

---, 'The Vicissitude of the 1948 Historiography of Israel', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 39.1
        (2009): 6-23

Perec, Georges, *Species of Space and Other Pieces*, trans. by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1974)

Pickett, Brent L., 'Foucault and the Politics of Resistance', *Polity*, 28.4 (1996): 446-66

Pierce, Joseph, Deborah G. Martin, and James T. Murphy, 'Relational Place-Making: The Networked Politics of Place', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36.1 (2011): 54-70

Pile, Steve, and Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Pflitsch, Andreas, 'The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism', *Arab Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. by Angelika Neuwrith, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (London: Saqi, 2010)

Pred, Allan, 'Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74.2 (1984): 279-97

Pugliese, Joseph, 'Penal Asylum; Refugees, Ethics, Ethics, Hospitality', *Borderlands*, 1.1 (2002): 1-9

Ragab, Tarek Saad, 'The Crisis of Cultural Identity in Rehabilitating Historic Beirut-Downtown', *Cities*, 28 (2011): 107-14

Ramadan, Adam, 'From Tahrir to the World: The Camp as a Political Public Space', *Euro-commentary, European Urban and Regional Studies*, 20.1 (2012): 145-49

Rose, Mitch, 'The Seductions of Resistance: Power, Politics, and a Performative Style of Systems', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20 (2002): 383-400

Rose-Redwood, Reuben, '"Sixth Avenue is Now a Memory": Regimes of Spatial Inscription and the Performative Limits of the Official City-Text', *Performativity, Politics, and the*

Production of Social Space, ed. by Michael R. Glass and Reuben Rose-Redwood

(London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 176-201

Sa'di, Ahmad and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.), *Cultures of History: Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the*

Claims of Memory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)

---, 'Introduction: The Claim of Memory', *Cultures of History: Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the*

Claims of Memory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 1-26

Said, Edward, 'Invention, Memory, Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26.2 (2000): 175-92

---, 'Palestinians in the Aftermath of Beirut', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 12.2 (1983): 3-9

---, *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001)

---, *The Politics of Dispossession* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994)

Salibi, Kamal, *Bayrut wal Zaman: Qira'a fi thulathiyat Rabi Jaber Bayrut madinat al 'alam*

(Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009)

Sanbar, Elias, 'Out of Place, Out of Time', trans. by Ruth Morris, *Mediterranean Historical*

Review, 16.1 (2001): 87-94

Sawalha, Aseel, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City* (Austin:

University of Texas Press, 2010)

Sayegh, Ghenwa, 'Incarceration, Surveillance, Policing: The Political Economies of Industrial

Complexes', *Kohl: A Journal of Body and Gender Research*, 4.1 (2018): 1-5

Sayigh, Rosemary, 'On the Exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the "Trauma Genre"',

Journal of Palestine Studies, 43/1 (2013): 51-60

---, 'Silenced Suffering', *Borderlands*, 14.1 (2015): 1-20

Seamon, David and Jacob Sowers, 'Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph', *Key Texts in Human Geography*, ed. by Paul Hubbard, R. Kitchen, and G. Vallentine (London: Sage, 2008), pp. 42-51

Seeger, Manfred, and Ravi Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Seigneuri, Ken, 'Anointing with Rubble: Ruins in the Lebanese War Novel', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 28.1 (2008): 50-60

---, *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative* (Michigan: Reichart, 2003)

---, 'The Everyday World of War in Hassan Daoud's *House of Mathilde*', *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*, ed. by Ken Seigneurie (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2003), pp. 101-13

Seyhan, Azade, *Writing Outside the Nation, Translation|Transnation*, ed. by Emily Apter (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001)

Shields, Rob, *Spatial Questions: Cultural Topologies and Social Spatialization* (London: Sage, 2013)

Sierra, Francisco Rodriquez, 'Fictional Boundaries in the "Journalistic Fiction" of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Rabee Jaber', *Alif: Journal of Contemporary Poetics*, 37(107): 199-228

Shohat, Ella, 'Exile, Diaspora, Return: The Inscription of Palestine in Zionist Discourse', *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings of Ella Shohat* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), pp. 164-77

Soja, Edward, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989)

---, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

---, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996)

Tally Jr., Robert, *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013)

Tarraf, Zeina, 'Haunting and the Neoliberal Encounter in *Terra Incognita* and *A Perfect Day*', *Cultural Dynamics*, 29.1-2 (2017): 39-62

Traboulsi, Fawwaz, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2008)

Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective Experience* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977)

Tucker, Ian, 'Psychology as Space: Embodied Relationality', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5.5 (2011): 231-38

---, 'Towards the Multiple Body', *Theory & Psychology*, 16.3 (2006): 433-40

Turner, Terence, 'Social Body and Embodied Subject: Bodiliness, Subjectivity, and Sociality among the Kayapo', *Cultural Anthropology*, 10.2 (1995): 143-70

Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969)

Tzelgov, Eran, 'A Personal Interview with Elias Khoury: An Interview', *Daka: Journal for Poetry and Criticism*, 5 (2009)

Wrisley, David, 'Metafiction Meets Migration: Art from the Archives in Rabee Jaber's *Amerika*', *Mashriq & Mahjar*, 1.2 (2013): 99-119

Yahya, Maya, 'Reconstituting Space: The Aberration of the Urban in Beirut', *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*, ed. by Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury (Leiden, New York, Koln: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 128-66

Zhang, Amy Y., 'Thinking Temporally When Thinking Relationally: Remporality in Relational

Place-Making', *Geoforum*, 90 (2018): 91-9

Zurayk, Constantine, *Ma'na al Nakba* (Beirut: Dar al 'Ilm lil Malayeen, 1948)

Zurayk, Ra'ef, '*Kayfa Yatakallamu al-Samt wa Yasmutu al-Kalam*', *Journal of Palestine Studies*,

107 (2017): 1890-98