Discipline and Disorder in Women’s Fiction Through the Lebanese Civil War

THESIS

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Abstract

The focus on both psychological disorder and total institutions in fiction written by Arab women during the Lebanese Civil War demonstrates the inherent relationship between the two in the modern nation-state. The particular of case of Lebanon and its capital, Beirut, is distinct because of its history as an ethnically and religiously diverse colony. Vestiges of the discipline and order imposed by former colonizers remain in the form of institutions, although their influence is not total and all-encompassing. The Lebanese Civil War was in part a manifestation of the contradiction between Beirut as an integral part of a unifying national project and as a city composed of various ethnically and religiously motivated sects with differing political goals. Hoda Barakat, Ghada Samman, Hanan Shaykh, and Iman Yunus are four novelists who wrote through the war depicting its drama, senselessness, and brutality through its everydayness as well as the formerly imposed modern institutions, even as their authority is undermined and their domains of influence reconfigured. The discipline, order, and representation of both colonialism and institutions rely on psychological discipline and its internalization by the subject — by force and by threat of explicit violence in the colony and by the conditioning, regimentation, and surveillance inherent in modern institutions. When the organization of the modern city, as a system of institutions, is reconfigured and the legitimacy and authority of the institutions of which it is composed are contested, the result in the novels is the proliferation of psychological disorder.
The choice to focus on novels written by women is strategically deliberate to combat the flattening of non-Western women into a monolithic group and as a humble attempt to live up to Mohanty’s call for “careful, historically specific generalisations responsive to complex realities” (Mohanty 1988). My aim is not to represent or speak for anyone, but to analyze their artistic works in their political and historical contexts. In fiction written by these particular Arab women the depiction of the relationship between psychological and political disorder in the context of the modern nation-state and its sectarian systems is clear and significant — it suggests a trend of intuitive connection.

The historical context is Beirut’s past as a colony and the ways that it was represented and regimented by its colonizer and more importantly its modern sectarian political configuration, which is a vestige of this colonial past. The ethnic and religious differences that make up the different sects were emphasized, exaggerated, and weaponized by the colonizers to avoid collective resistance against its rule. Ironically, it is this same political configuration that undermines Beirut as a national project — the foundation of which are its institutions.

The psychological factor in the experiences of the modern subject and the institutions of the modern city are directly related — social and psychological disorder reflect one another. The institutions discipline and invent the subject, which is critical to understanding the phenomena of disorder and its cause in novels written through the civil war, as well as why characters continually find themselves in and relate their experiences to the prison and the hospital as places alternately of refuge or terror.
Dedication

Dedicated to Umm Muhammad in Tartous and Abu Ahmad in Damascus.
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Introduction

The Lebanese Civil War was a critical point in history and has produced a rich body of fiction. A number of Arab women wrote through and about the war — among them the Lebanese Hoda Barakat, Hanan Shaykh, and Iman Younes; and the Syrian Ghada Samman who moved to Beirut and lived there during the war. Hoda Barakat wrote *The Tiller of Waters*, which deal with one man’s isolation and abandonment in which she muses upon the complex history of the city; and *The Stone of Laughter*, which similarly examines the solitary life of a compulsive man shut in his apartment during the war. Hanan Shaykh wrote *The Story of Zahra*, a girl who has difficulty relating to others throughout her life, culminating in her death at the hands of her own lover. Iman Younes detailed the lives of several Lebanese women who live in one apartment building and the effects the war has on their lives in *B As in Beirut*. Ghada Samman critically profiled the culture of Beirut through two young, ambitious newcomers in *Beirut ’75* and fictionalized her own experience trapped in her apartment close to the fighting in a series of vignettes she called *Beirut Nightmares*.¹ Miriam Cooke, a professor of modern Arabic literature who has written extensively on Arab women’s fiction written during the civil

¹ These novels most effectively demonstrate the dailiness of the war and psychological and political disorder and depict the institution as an essential part of the urban landscape. The novels were chosen to reflect this pattern in Arab women’s fiction written at the time, but these features are not to be regarded as totally characteristic of this body of fiction or specific only to it. See Ghandour 1990 and 1991.
war, attributes Arab women’s perspective with an eye to the dailiness of war to their role typically as non-combatants. As such, the works of these authors are particularly significant because they capture the everyday processes and structures which compose the city. Through these observations, a pattern emerges: a character imagines she is being wheeled on a stretcher through a hospital though she is really being evacuated in a tank from her home, which she likened to a prison. The character Farah has violent hallucinations in the hospital, escapes in terror, and places the “Hospital for the Mentally Insane” sign over the “Welcome to Beirut” sign at the entrance to the city while another character, Khalil, loves the hospital and doesn’t want to leave it. Militiamen undermine and kill doctors, and people imprison themselves in their own homes.

Why do these “total institutions,” (Goffman 1961) as places where people are formally enclosed, surveilled, and controlled, feature so prominently within these novels? The nature of the institutions is to compulsively and effectively order and discipline human bodies and to create citizens according to its own logic — it either negates or organizes disorder, which would be any processes or structures outside of itself. In the case of the civil war, the agents of disorder are the non-state actors — particularly sectarian militias.²

The compulsion to counterpoint sectarian actors and institutions within these works of fiction is an intuitive observation. Within the city of Beirut, they are a part of

² Although the Lebanese Civil War occurred in a global geopolitical context, I am reigning in analysis to remain inside the borders of the modern nation-state. It should be understood that there were many non-state and state actors outside of Lebanon who exerted their influence during the civil war either directly or indirectly in supporting a particular militia or army. Their ability to exert this influence only further emphasizes the fact that sects sometimes function as agitators of the modern nation-state.
the same political and social system, but play themselves out as separate and simultaneous harmonies that are opposed to one another. Maya Mikdashi describes the sectarian system as “productive” and states that it “produces a unitary citizenship that is differentiated according to sex and sect” (Mikdashi 2011). The modern institutions attempt to totalize, while the sects maintain and assert their independence. To a certain extent, the state grants its citizenship through the sectarian system — this contradiction is at the core of the sectarian issue as a political issue. The civil war is the physical manifestation of this tension as the sects reconfigure the space of the city and disrupt the functioning of the institutions. This disorder of the modern city leads to psychological disorder as well, due to the direct relationship between the psychological and the social and political. The modern city has everything to do with the psychological — its compositions are only made possible by the discipline of human bodies and the invention of citizens. In the novels, the authors observe and elucidate the complicity of political and psychological disorder and its occurrence between modern institutions and sects counterposed.

Psychological disorder takes many forms — the word disorder itself simply describes a systematic disruption of functioning or organization. Pathology is both an account of pain or experience in its literal meaning from its Greek etymological origin as well as a synonym for disease itself. Disease is a disorder within a biological entity. Psychosis is psychological disease or disorder in which a mental break from commonly perceived reality occurs. Much of what occurs to characters in the novels could be described as psychosis in their experiences of hallucinations and thoughts which do not
reasonably correspond to reality, while others become pathological in their thoughts and behaviors but retain their reason. However, all of these cases will be described as a disorder — whether or not this disorder is to the extent that the subject could be considered psychotic and therefore insane, mad, or crazy (all of which are different colloquialisms for the same thing: one who has emotionally and mentally lost contact with reality) is a matter of degree and quantitative rather than qualitative. On the other hand, a neurosis is a mild mental disorder, caused not by an organic disease, but by stress or trauma. The emphasis will be placed not on the extent to which one suffers disorder as a result of the war, but whether one does at all.
Chapter 1: Colonial City

The city of Beirut is a port city in Lebanon that was placed under the French Mandate after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. During this time, it underwent colonization, partitioning, and exploitation which contributed heavily to its configuration as a nation-state. Its people were divided by the occupiers based on their religious and ethnic differences, which are politically known as sects, and forced into the concept of the modern, western nation-state. This political system, known as the confessional system, was one of the factors that led to the Lebanese Civil War.

“Sectarianism — a creation that dates back no further than the beginnings of the modern era — reached a peak in Lebanon’s 15-year civil war” (Makdisi, U. 1996 : 23). As early as 1842, a decision carried out by the Europeans and the Ottomans together to create political and social categories, splitting Mount Lebanon into religious groups (Makdisi 2000: 67).

The confessional or sectarian political system, which mandates a *de jure* mix of politics and religion, represents each of the nine major religious groups in Beirut. The religious authorities of each sect handle issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance and the issue of civil marriage is still contentious (Slemrod 2013). This system is meant to maintain a balance of power between each group, and their representation in the government is supposed to be proportional and fair. The real result is the entrenching of
political values and beliefs based on religious ideologies to the detriment of political and civic cohesion.

This political system was crystallized and firmly grounded in the modern era with the colonial encounter, which was marked by a strange optimism on the part of the French who were motivated to create a Lebanese nation-state based on an idea of a pre-Islamic or Phoenician myth — “European travelers, missionaries and consuls saw Mount Lebanon as a non-Muslim enclave from which the movement to civilize and reform the ‘fanatical’ and ‘Mohammedan’ Ottoman Empire could be launched” (Makdisi 1996: 24). An effort was made to decontextualize religion and to use it as a defining and exclusive representation for various groups of people in order to favor Christian communities over Muslim communities. Lange and Dawson conclude in their statistical analysis of the effects of colonialism on postcolonial violence that “a history of colonial rule promotes either oppositional communal identities, communal divisions of labor, ethnic-based stratification, animosity between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, or some combination of the four” (Lange and Dawson 803-805).

The emphasis on religion was largely a result of the colonial experience — it was in the interest of the French colonizer to politically weaponize religion and ethnicity as the Ottomans did — and “prior to the nineteenth century, communities in Mount Lebanon were predicated not so much on religious distinctions as on hierarchical politics of notability that cut across religious lines … The notion of a unified, territorially demarcated nationalism of adherents of a particular religion that transcended kin, village or region was absent” (Makdisi 1996: 24) and “Mount Lebanon was communally
reinvented in the sense that a public and political sectarian identity replaced a nonsectarian politics of notability” (Makdisi 2000: 68) in which communities relied on respected members to wield political and social authority. The violence of pre-colonial periods of strife which were labeled as “sectarian” was in fact a result of the common people demanding influence in a political system characterized by social hierarchy, kinship, and underrepresentation. “Labeling the period between 1840-1860 as ‘sectarian,’ the current Lebanese state has sought to limit discussion of this era due to the obvious burden it places on the narrative of national history” (25) — the narrative that places those issues in the past. At the creation of Lebanon as a nation-state, of which the French were in favor, the pro-French Maronites claimed legitimacy as the ruling sect, while the Sunni Muslims generally rejected the idea of a Lebanese state altogether and advocated for a pan-Arab Greater Syria (Maktabi 232).

The Maronites got their wish in 1926 by receiving the greatest amount of influence within the government when the republic of Lebanon was created — an influence which was emphasized by the National Pact of 1943, the year in which the state became formally independent. Afterwards, the country enjoyed a short period of anticolonial patriotic unity.

Presented to the people as a fait accompli, the National Pact, itself a result of elite compromises, essentially legitimated a system of patronage and division of spoils among the elites of the new nation-state, thus betraying the inability to locate a genuinely national base. The Maronite elites were guaranteed the presidency, the Sunnis the prime ministership and the Shi’a the speaker of parliament (25).
The impossibility of determining — or more accurately, inventing — a “genuinely national base” was caused by the colonial contrasting of sectarian differences on a political level. The degree of influence of each sect was determined by a population census in 1932, the findings of which Rania Maktabi discovers were “heavily politicized” in favor of the Christian communities, “and embodied contested issues regarding the identity of the Lebanese state with which the country is still grappling” (Maktabi 1999: 220). Even now, the 1932 census is the only demographic survey of the country and Maktabi concludes that “in states where vital internal security considerations have taken on more importance than accurate population figures, the ruling regime does not refrain from applying different forms of the ‘numbers game’ in order to arrange demographic data, applying citizenship policies that are in accordance with what it wishes to exhibit as the identity of the state” (241). These policies were meant to reign in the sects while not completely assimilating them into the modern nation-state. Individuating the various political representations was crucial for their being kept track of and controlled.

No person could escape the compulsion of the state to enframe, manipulate, and enforce the representation of the sectarian system. “Electoral and personal status laws were regulated by religious affiliation such that to be Lebanese meant to be defined according to religious affiliation. There could be no Lebanese citizen who was not at the same time a member of a particular religious community” (Makdisi 25). Additionally, non-Arab Christians were granted citizenship while non-Arab Muslims, such as the Kurds, were not (Maktabi 227) and still are not (Bou Akar 76). This is a prime example of the rigging of the system which has led to its loss of legitimacy and authority in the
eyes of those who feel they are underrepresented. The artificiality of the representational system is evoked when Benedict Anderson quotes Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist” (Anderson 2006 6). Additionally, this invention may have political ambitions which skew it in favor of one group or another.

In the lead-up to the war, the country experienced political unrest and demonstrations by students and workers against the political and economic elite — the Ghandour strike in 1972, for example (Makdisi 1996: 25). These demonstrators were from all religions and ethnicities and the protests cut across sectarian lines, the fact of which demonstrates why it was so important to French to have pitted them against one another the other. However, another form of unrest developed, inspired by militia politics and the activity of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, founded only a few years before in 1964. “This popular sectarianism accentuated the untenable contradictions upon which the nation was anchored” (Makdisi 26), and Makdisi and Kliot argue that while the nation of Lebanon survived, the war would result in the state’s “total collapse,” “evidenced by the inability to provide electricity and water, not to mention voting or security” (26). The end of the war marked the revival of the state, but no significant change to the confessional system through which it functioned.

It would be a mistake to point out or seek a singular cause for the war; but, among the most significant were the disproportionate affluence of Maronite Christians — as a result of their acceptance and solicitation of the French colonial powers to achieve their own ends (Salibi 32) — in contrast with the disproportionate poverty of Muslims, the
corrupt political and economic elite whose power cut across sectarian lines, radical
demographic shifts of the city, manipulation of the state by neighboring Syria with which
Lebanon shares close cultural and geographic ties, and the increasing agitation of
Palestinian refugees who many perceived as outsiders.

Internationally, the Cold War and the resulting strategic and shifting alliances
between different Arab states with the West and the Soviet Bloc played a role in creating
divisions among the Lebanese people. Many interested parties outside of the country took
a keen interest in the war and participated in some way, violating the government’s and
the peoples’ sovereignty, whether through a national army or a proxy militia (Kliot 54).
These militias were variously supported by — and thus fought on behalf of — Israel,
Syria, Socialists, Communists, Palestinian refugees, Iran (by proxy through the internal
Hezbollah), the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Pan-Arabists, Islamists, the Arab
Socialist Baath Party (one pro-Syria and one pro-Iraq), and the Lebanese Army itself (in
addition to the Lebanese Army’s own direct involvement in the war). The national armies
of both Syria and Israel were also involved. Throughout the 1950s, 60s and early 70s
Beirut had been the playground of its neighbors; in 1975 it became their battleground”
(Cooke 1).

Within the country itself, the various sects (and groups within those sects) have all
had different ideas about what kind of city Beirut should be, and what kind of country
Lebanon should be, on a fundamental level — whether it should be capitalist, socialist, or
communist; whether it should maintain a Lebanese identity or join the pan-Arab
bandwagon that Syria and Egypt had tried to establish; or whether it should have an
official religion, a number of official religions, or if it should be completely secular. Most of the political sects therein are religiously oriented or affiliated, the nine largest of which are the Maronite Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Apostolics, Armenian Catholics, Protestants, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, and the Druze. Political tensions manifest themselves through these ideological differences and representations. Hoda Barakat’s character Mitri addresses his grandfather concerning the multifarious history of Beirut:

A city that does not advance in time but rather in accumulating layers, a city that will sink as deeply in the earth as its edifices tower high. How many cities lie beneath the city, papa … grandfather … how many cities lie there to be forgotten? (66)

This literary acknowledgment of the accumulative nature of a place that sits at the intersection of various cultural, political, and economic flows in this context is not a celebration of diversity, but somewhat of a lamentation at the difficulties the region has faced being at the fault line of various empires and cultures. While it has enjoyed both peaceful and tumultuous times as a heterogenous society, the civil war was clearly one of its most divisive. Asking how many cities lie beneath the city is an acknowledgment that the city, or the configuration of the people and material in the space of contemporary Beirut, is and always has been changing. Beirut is not a static, coherent whole — it is a system of processes, the contemporary iteration of which can be historicized. The space has been marked by many different groups of people throughout its history, and the civil war is a part of this history from which it cannot be extracted. The historical context of the war and its processes is crucial to understanding how it happened.
The physical space on which the war played out is very important to understanding its political and psychological effects. For example, during the war West Beirut became populated predominantly by Muslims and East Beirut by Christians. The Green Line between the two became a symbol of the division of society during the war and a liminal space within fiction and in the imaginations of the people. The significance of the Green Line and its separation of society demonstrate the nation’s struggle to bring together and maintain the unity of the people. Bou Akar (2011, 2012) along with Hafeda, Amouri, and Mazraani have written about the different neighborhoods of Beirut as sectarian territories, marking the geographic space as well as the political, economic, and psychological. Some people have marked their territory sonically, from projecting sectarian slogans and songs while cruising around other neighborhoods to everyday conversations. (19) The very act of filming and surveilling the neighborhoods aroused suspicion among patrolling members of the respective sects, whose job was to surveil the area and make sure that no outsiders or troublemakers would disturb the peace or challenge their legitimacy. Ammouri details the “House of the Druze” community building which is preserved by a *waqf*, or religious endowment, in the center of the city that has historically isolated itself within its own space (Bou Akar 87). The *waqf*, as a site of resistance against the modern nation-states attempt to secure its influence over every aspect of daily life, is a prime example of the struggle of the state to take total control over its subjects and their property.

James Scott describes the efficiency with which modern subjects are *usually* brought under the rule of the nation in his book about Southeast Asia, *The Art of Not*
Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia, to which Beirut can be noted as a glaring exception: “Only the modern state, in both its colonial and its independent guises, has had the resources to realize a project of rule that was a mere glint in the eye of its precolonial ancestor: namely to bring nonstate spaces and people to heel” (Scott 2009: 4). Ultimately a result of the sectarian system is that Beirutis cannot be reined in by the state completely, and the struggle in the story of Beirut has been the same before, during, and after the war: a significant majority of the population, for one reason or another, refuses to pledge allegiance — or at the very least they prioritize their allegiance to their sect above their allegiance to country. Having been bound up with religion and ethnicity, a person’s sect may become deeply embedded within the self, and thus political representation becomes internalized psychologically. The Lebanese Civil War was a violent manifestation of this complicated system of entrenched disenfranchisement and privileging.

Of course, any modern nation-state is socially split up and categorized into affiliations composed by a compulsive tribal instinct within humans — whether they are ethnic, religious, or political. No state is truly homogenous, and the totalizing effect of modern institutions is never complete or finished. Sectarian tensions flared during the war, but sectarian affiliations themselves cannot be characterized as permanent or static — like any sort of social or political affiliation or tribalist identity, it can disappear and reappear; for example, at moments of nationalist fervor or social crisis.

It is important to note that before the war and during colonization, the country is controlled unabashedly by force and its obedience is maintained by the explicit threat of
violence. The sudden and dramatic shift from the very public and graphic punishment to the regimented discipline of western penal systems back home in France as described by Foucault (1977) is problematic in the colony because of the essential difference between the colonizer and the colonized — the colonizer perceiving itself as justified in its use of force against what it sees as an inferior group. The *officially* egalitarian nature of the more orderly and less bloody disciplinary system in France was not a necessary justification in the face of such an imbalance of power and does not apply to the colonial project. There was no “general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle,” yet “supported … by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical” (Foucault 1977 222). The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized was necessarily asymmetrical. It is unequal in principle. The different ethnicities and religions of the peoples of the colony were represented not to grant them an illusory system of rights, but to divide them in order to better control them.

The confessional system, the sectarian theater of representations that both undermines and is a part of Lebanon as a national project, comes down to a battle of narratives: who belongs in Beirut, who was there first, who should remain. Each political narrative makes a claim for the city that necessarily contradicts another. The political system in place compulsively reinforces this entrenchment rather than providing a forum in which ideas can be exchanged and debated in order to reach a compromise.

This absence of dialogue or communication is challenged by Arab women novelists during the war, whom Miriam Cooke terms the Beirut Decentrists. She argues
that in rejecting the totalizing narratives and simplified representations of the sniper, for example, they are advocating for a new patriotism — a love of country from a maternal perspective by which “[w]omen were involved in the war not as fighters but as conflict resolvers and as mothers, both real and potential. Lebanon was a sick child and they had to tend its sickness, for now they were needed as never before. The child was sick.” In the end, she rejects representations that artificially construct justifications for the violence or try to make the war into a glorious revolution rather than tragic and senseless, but relies on representations by which the country is a sick child, and the author is the vigilant and caring mother or nurse. However, the fundamental issue is not how to represent the country or the war, but whether or not it is ever justifiable to do so — and if so, who can claim to represent whom or what?

In a panel of curators, Christine Tohme remarks on the project of another panelist entitled, “Contemporary Arab Representations” in terms of representation and its relationship to identity: “Well, I would question the term ‘contemporary Arab representation’ because I am critical of the idea of representation. I don’t believe in specifically Arab representation, Egyptian representation, or German representation” (Tohme et al. 110). By “believe in” I interpret that Tohme is indicating that representation only categorizes and limits what one would expect a particular group of artists to create, and that it is simply not a useful distinction, particularly when it comes to ethnicity and politics in which a power dynamic is generally involved. It can become a political and economic shorthand to limit the practice of a group of people based on a distinction which has nothing to do with their art:
And I am skeptical of geopolitical or ethnically oriented projects. Why should I circumscribe a practice in terms of identity? ... This frenzy over identity is part of the global political picture; it’s all about partitioning these days, creating entities on a national level. One can’t separate art practice from politics or the market. Identity serves as a way to create a framework for artists in order to market them, to create a seductive image (Demos et al. 110).

Tohme indicates that when something is labeled, simplified, and represented then it becomes easier to control and its possibilities become limited. In the case of a work of art, it is easier to commodify and market, and in the case of a people, they become easier to rule over. The “seductive image” can also be a political act, law, or ideology. Seeing oneself as part of a representative model leaves one open to being manipulated. Rather than manipulating individuals, a person of ambition would only have to manipulate the representations of themselves with which they identify. As Tohme indicates, this manipulation is used in both an economic and political sense. In the former, advertisement appeals to peoples’ identities so that they may be more likely to buy certain products. This is most obvious in gendered marketing geared towards children — they are conditioned to believe that because they are a particular gender then they should play with particular toys: Boys with trucks and soldier figurines and girls with dolls and toy kitchens. Politicians appeal to peoples’ representations of themselves as well — particularly in nativist appeals to the “true” members of a nation: “real” Americans would speak English and own a gun, “real” Frenchmen would speak French and eat pork. Manipulating these essentialist symbols is a political act (See Barthes 1972).
Representation is also one of the many ways by which Deleuze and Guattari critique Freudian psychoanalysis and capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). The psychoanalyst relies on representation to provide a framework, or even a theater, by which to resolve a pathology. The capitalist relies on it to commodify or, to use the term utilized by Deleuze and Guattari, reterritorialize a subject. Representation traps desire and limits its potential in the same way that the confessional system limits self-determination (Holland 1999: 11). In fact, Deleuze and Guattari consider representation to be not just a distortion of desire but the principal means of repressing desire and of betraying its authentic schizophrenic form (Holland 21-22). By representing a group of people, one can name them, define them, and thus control them.

Miriam Cooke, in her analysis of women’s writing during the civil war, does not stray from a representational view of the war and its actors. In her book, *War’s Other Voices*, she identifies and analyzes the contribution of female writers on the war from a contemporary, Western literary feminist perspective. She focuses on their works in the context of modern Arabic literature in general, particularly in contrast to Arab men’s literature about the war, and categorizes them as “The Beirut Decentrists,” who, “regardless of confession and political persuasion, wrote of the dailiness of war. … They are a group of women writers who have shared Beirut as their home and the war as their experience. They have been decentred in a double sense: physically, they were scattered all over a self-destructing city; intellectually, they moved in separate spheres” (Cooke xiii). By this definition, all four novelists whose works are to be analyzed would be considered a part of this group. The emphasis of their work on the “dailiness” of the war
c Cooke’s thesis is motivated by contemporary feminist concerns, and her analysis of the literature focuses on it as a documentation of the war’s pervasiveness and dailiness and as a rejection of the totalizing narratives used to justify the violence. In their novels, the Beirut Decentrists individualize characters like snipers (Cooke 15) and dismantle the
delusion that violence is justified for those who participate in it. For outsiders, or those who are affected by the war but who had deluded themselves to believe that the war was far from them, or not their concern, when in fact there was no “front” to avoid or obvious enemy, “there had never before been such a war, no war myth to which it approximated. The easiest course was to pretend that it did not exist as long as it remained distant” (Cooke 14). But the pervasive nature of the war meant that it could not be distant. “Each person, each Becoming-Enemy, recognized and defined him /herself in terms of the Becoming-Other. Combat could not be relegated to a somewhere else. The enemy was everywhere, the battlefield was everywhere. The war was everyone's war” (Cooke 13). Trying to separate oneself from the war and determining who was an enemy or not was thus impossible. The war could not be represented through individuals and its existence could not be isolated from everyday life.
Chapter 2: Postcolonial City

The modern, western strategy of international politics is to try to “make sense” of a people, a country, or a city and to find it legible and understandable. Mitchell (1991) recounts the colonial project as one of establishing a cultural and colonial hierarchy and that in order to make this project feasible, the world had to be simplified and represented. Circumscribing areas and breaking spectra into discrete units allows them to be named and categorized. They are more easily observed and more importantly, more easily controlled. In these same terms Mitchell describes the meticulous detail by which the Egyptian exhibition in Paris was created, which was so carefully and deliberately made accurate that it disturbed the Egyptian delegation, who also found themselves being gawked at as if they themselves were a part of the exhibition (Mitchell 1-2). Mitchell argues that to the colonial Western mind, every space, object, and subject is an exhibition to be observed, understood, and made sense of, to the extent that if no “Orientals” were available, they would be represented by Europeans themselves:

The members of an Egyptian student mission sent to Paris in the 1820s were confined to the college where they lived and allowed out onto the streets only every second Sunday (Mitchell 4).
For them, the institution of the school is a place of disciplinary power in which they are confined, with infrequent yet regular excursions outside of the school. A significant part of their scholarly discipline is also physical discipline and regimentation.

But during their stay in Paris they found themselves parodied in vaudeville on the Paris stage, for the entertainment of the French public. 'They construct the stage as the play demands', explained one of the students. 'For example, if they want to imitate a sultan and the things that happen to him, they set up the stage in the form of a palace and portray him in person. If for instance they want to play the Shah of Persia, they dress someone in the clothes of the Persian monarch and then put him there and sit him on a throne’ (Mitchell 4)

This compulsion and ease with which the Europeans represented the other indicates the degree to which they believed that the other was simple and well-understood. The fact that this takes place on a stage demonstrates this simplification as well. The phenomenon of the Middle Easterner visiting Europe and being stared at as if he were a circus show or part of an exhibition became such a trope that Mitchell himself indulges in a couple of examples before remarking, “Such stories could be multiplied, but for the time being I want to indicate only this, that for the visitor from the Middle East, Europe was a place where one was liable to become an object on exhibit, at which people gathered and stared” (Mitchell 5).

The exhibit was the colonial city, and the colonial city was the exhibit. Derek Gregory in his article, “Performing Cairo” (2005) explores the ways that Cairo was “narrativized” or made legible by Western travellers and tourists through their fascination with the stories of The Thousand and One Nights. The British Orientalist Edward Lane in particular describes the collection of stories as one “which presents most admirable
pictures of the manners and customs of the Arabs, and particularly those of the Egyptians … If the English reader had possessed a close translation of it with sufficient illustrative notes, I might almost have spared myself the labour of the present undertaking” (Lane 2003) and described it “as the epitome of what he called ‘the Arab city’” (Gregory 4).

Thinking of the city as a representational theater which is acted out in a sensible and legible way is counterproductive to understanding how the city works. As Abu-Lughod asks in her exploration of the concept of the “Islamic city,” “The fact is that most studies still focus on a single case and try to generalize, rather than start with the more fundamental question: Why would one expect Islamic cities to be similar and in what ways?” (Abu-Lughod 160) Rather than consisting of frozen actors who are representations in a “world of signs” (Mitchell 14), as the Westerner saw the Orient, it is composed of heterogenous flows. A series of flows which does not present itself as legible to the Orientalist, which he therefore designated as the “paradox of Islamic society”: that the religion of Islam is distinctly urban yet yields no “urban structure” or “forms” (Mitchell 58). However, the concept that an Islamic city is inherently characterized by a paradox of structure or forms is unsustainable, for ultimately all cities are characterized by a chaotic heterogeneity that is regulated by institutions which take different forms at different times and places. Institutions are human constructions which are often taken for granted as a necessary and natural part of the urban. In the postcolonial city of Beirut, these institutions are what compose the nation in counterposition to sectarianism. Both institutions and sects are essential aspects of the Lebanese national project while also being a result of colonization; at the same time, they
are strengthened by the anticolonial push at the expense of marginal political and social aspirations. “Nationalism … continues to play a part … towards a homogenous cultural recognition that it is produced and driven from Euroamerica” (Childs 207). It is a modern phenomenon which attempts to totalize cultural identities into coherent national identities. Colonialism and nationalism are ultimately incompatible — the colonization of one state by another subverts the sovereignty of the colonized and undermines nationalism at its core. For this and other reasons, the push against colonialism and towards decolonization was steeped in nationalism. Childs, however, brings up four problematic concerns.

However, nationalism as a resistance to colonialism and neocolonialism, though often effective in that aim, encounters a number of political and theoretical difficulties. First, thought it speaks for the collective it is often conducted by and in the interests of elite classes. Secondly, the abstraction of national identity makes it difficult to locate … Thirdly, its totalizing of political resistance obscures and often negates other interests, such as the rights of ethnic or religious minorities. Lastly, because anti-colonial nationalism arises as a production of and a reaction to imperialism, it cannot be considered to function separately from it (Childs 207).

The establishment of the sectarian system was an attempt to deal with the second and third of these issues: the abstraction of identity and the rights of minorities. If identities are differentiated and rigidly defined by the state, then their location can be held static. It defines the minorities, separates them, and doles out their rights. Having been carried out by the political elites, however, it ultimately serves their interests and not the interests of the nation as a whole. As a result, not all minorities are recognized and granted their rights, and even those who do enjoy this privilege are not given their fair share of
political power. All of this was conducted on a trajectory set by those previously in power: Ottomans and Europeans.

Moreover, the totalizing effort on the part of the political elite is necessarily in opposition to each and every sect. During the war the institutional figures of authority, whose domain is effectively the human body and its placement and behaviors, are challenged by the sectarian militias — the police force loses its monopoly on violence and the doctor is manipulated and contradicted. The institutional order is infiltrated, intersected, and undermined by sectarian forces. The institutions, being an inheritance from previous ruling powers, historically operated in counterposition with the sectarian system — they are both limited in their powers by the state and function both in tandem and in tension. Mitchell argues that these institutions, having been artificially imposed, never truly took root in colonial cities, and likewise post-colonial cities.

What this anomalous urban life lacked in particular, we are sometimes told, is formal institutions - the 'inner structure' of the 'material' city. When we speak of an institution, somewhere in our thinking there often lurks the picture of a building or a street. The building stands for an institution, giving a visible exterior to the invisible 'inner structure', and it is remarkably difficult to think of a public institution without thinking of the building or street that represents it (Mitchell 58).

This emphasis on institutions as physically conceptualized in the landscape of the city is peculiar, given the importance of institutions not in terms of a single monolithic building or center, but a highly controlled network that regulates and orders. While an imposing building may inspire a sense of awe and obedience to authority, it is not crucial to the actual functioning of institutions. What is most important is the functioning of
surveillance and discipline through form and design which is not only established in the
Middle Eastern city as a colonized space, but as Mitchell himself argues originated from
it.

Foucault's analyses are focussed on France and northern Europe. Perhaps
this focus has tended to obscure the colonising nature of disciplinary
power. Yet the panopticon, the model institution whose geometric order
and generalised surveillance serve as a motif for this kind of power, was a
colonial invention. (Mitchell 35)

This concept of disciplinary and totalizing function through form was an
invention of necessity for the colonizer to surveil the colonized and instill discipline. Of
course, it is true that the monolithic institution characterizes the modern Western city and
that the political nature of the city of Beirut is less straightforward, given the sectarian
confessional system. Many more historical factors such as kinship, social hierarchy,
ethnicity, and religion downplay the influence of modern institutions, particularly in light
of occupying powers having weaponized religion and ethnicity in order to divide and rule
over the city. The result is that for a significant section of the population, their
identification with and allegiance to a religious- or ethnic-based sect comes before
citizenship. Strengthening the influence of a new patriotism or citizenship over sectarian
allegiances as a sort of solution to the unstable political situation, if possible, would
simply be a reigning in of various groups that lay claim to the legitimate use of violence
and a consolidation of their political and social power. Representation, surveillance,
enframing, coercion, and the oppression of marginal figures would remain.
Novels relating the horror of the Lebanese Civil War reflect this heterogeneity and the chaos, frequently complicating simple representation and emphasizing the uncanny similarities between different types of institutions in the wake of their subversion during the war. Juxtaposing institutions and the sectarian militias reveals the arbitrary consistency and leads to a rejection of the totalizing effect that institutions undertake at the expense of marginal subjects.

The city’s boundaries have become far too permeable and stretched, both geographically and socially, for it to be theorized as a whole. The city has no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts (Amin and Thrift 8).

The idea of the city as a coherent and complete whole is a discourse that is imposed upon it rather than an accurate description. It has no true borders, only waves of influence that radiate from a complex network with no true center.

Instead, it is an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions (Amin and Thrift 8).

Where a city ends and begins is not always clear and its political and cultural influence may reach far beyond its physical borders. Within, a downtown area may be a center of commerce or part of a tourist attraction, but the perception of where the center of the city is may vary depending on who is asked or the criteria on which it is being determined. The dimensions of the city’s constellations of matter, human bodies, and ideas are distinct yet interrelated and taken together are an amalgam of nodes, flows, and rhythms. The Islamic city would be no exception:
Cities are the products of many forces, and the forms that evolve in response to these forces are unique to the combination of those forces. A city at one point in time is a still photograph of a complex system of building and destroying, of organizing and reorganizing, etc. In short, the intellectual question we need to ask ourselves is: Out of what forces were the prototypical Islamic cities created? (Abu-Lughod 162)

What effect does the colonial imposition of ordering and disciplining processes introduced from outside of the history of Beirut have on its people and its overall configuration? The entrenching and assimilation of sectarian difference creates a paradox which is embodied in the civil war.

This paradox is also depicted in each of the novels; the city of Beirut is characterized as “crazy” or full of “mad people.” The city does not make itself legible or does not “make sense” to its inhabitants or the readers because of this paradox of representation and identity. During the war, these differences are brought into stark contrast with each other — sects being against one another and against the state institutions. “The war was a force exploding out of everyone's depths, and as it tore its way up, it sent a charge through the system making those who had lost feeling briefly revive” (Cooke 17). Ghada Samman’s narrator rails against the simple representation of the city during the war as a prisoner in her own home by equating the dominant discourse being that the war was playing itself out on a “stage” as being a simple case of good versus bad:

The gap between what was taking place behind the scenes and what was being presented to us on the official ‘stage’ was truly frightening. So who could blame the ‘audience’ if they stormed the stage, set it on fire and hanged the actors, thereby exposing the wretchedness behind the curtain to the light of truth? (Samman 1997: 111)
She enunciates a rejection of the city as an authoritative wielder of violence and order even by those who would otherwise be law-abiding citizens, such as her brother who is arrested and jailed for taking an ancient revolver with him to try to buy some food (Samman 1997 73). While ironic, it is perfectly in harmony with the rationale of the institutions which claim a monopoly on violence. The fact that the militias have challenged this authority makes the police force even more vigilant, on the watch for individuals who make a grab for power. Even if that individual only intends to defend himself.

When the militias hold a considerable amount of influence concerning aspects of daily life, they encroach upon the authority of the institutions. Each militia observes, monitors, and controls, just as the policeman do. After joining a militia, Zahra’s brother delights in his newfound power (Shaykh 168), stealing from other peoples’ houses and notably intimidating and coercing a doctor at the hospital (187).

In Iman Yunes’ novel *B As in Beirut*, the doctor is likewise challenged and dominated by a militia member: Camilia, who has effectively made herself an outsider by moving to London and returning to help her friends create a documentary about the war, moves in with Maha at the suggestion of a mutual acquaintance (140) and breaks down the walls that Maha has constructed around herself since the war began. While Maha opens up to Camilia, she also is wary of the friendship that Camilia cultivates with the militia members outside, particularly one man named Ranger (143), who eventually becomes one of her two lovers. She initially rebukes her for allowing them into their
apartment, but lets her guard down once she becomes attracted to Ranger (209). As one of the members of the militia at the checkpoint, who are effectively the wardens of the neighborhood, Ranger takes up this same role inside their own apartment. He decides what they eat and what they do, he always wins at cards, and forbids Camilia from leaving to meet her other lover, Muhammad, who is a doctor. Muhammad comes to their apartment, worried that she has not arrived (214). They all sit down to eat dinner together. Camilia does not want to eat, seemingly ashamed of herself for letting Ranger control her to the point that Ranger and Muhammad have awkwardly met. Ranger physically pushes her face into the food, and Muhammad objects to Ranger’s treatment of her. Maha and Camilia urge Muhammad to leave in order to avoid further disagreement, and also for his own safety, as the rest of the militia have come to the apartment, exuding hostility towards the doctor.

Muhammad leaves, but shortly after is killed by Ranger and his militia (215). Camilia and Maha get Ranger drunk and tie him to a bed, and he admits to them the story of how he and his men had captured Muhammad only to intimidate him, but accidentally killed him in a fit of rage because he’d laughed at them. In a moment of disassociation and schizophrenia, Maha cannot differentiate between herself and Camilia as they both beat him as he’s tied down on the bed. As soon as Maha remembers that Ranger’s gun was in the room, Camilia is holding it in her hand, and shoots him (223-224). This particular scene is marked by its confusion: everyone is drunk, and Maha makes a point of blurring the line between her own and Camilia’s consciousness. It is also an act of revenge against the militia members who have upended the balance of power in their
neighborhood: it demonstrates the undermining of the hospital embodied by the doctor, Muhammad, who is killed and the subsequent resentment and hostility of Camilia and Maha towards the militia member who is responsible. So they take their revenge – notably through a schizophrenic episode seemingly brought on by the elimination of the doctor.

In *The Story of Zahra*, the doctor is directly contradicted by the sniper at the end of Zahra’s street, with whom she strikes up a sexual relationship. She comes to him daily on the roof of the building on which he is stationed and, during the second week, begins to enjoy having sex for the first time in her life (149-150). Despite having bought and diligently taken birth control pills shortly after beginning her relationship with the sniper, she becomes pregnant (192). The doctor tells her that she is too far along to abort the pregnancy and she becomes frantic and despairs about what to do next. She decides to tell the sniper, hoping that he’ll marry her. After offering her money to have an abortion and initially resisting the inevitability of the child’s birth, he reassures Zahra that he’ll marry her. Instead, he shoots and kills her as she leaves to go tell her parents that she is engaged (214). Directly contradicting the doctor, he aborts the child. More importantly he exerts the utmost power over her body, and she submits to him at first without resistance and later it appears willingly. She not only endures his sexual violence, but internalizes her own oppression. Ultimately he destroys her body.

The regulation and government of human bodies is supposed to be the domain of the institutions by which subjects are created through mechanisms of social and physical interaction. They are unique in that they are an emergence of collective human choices in
a modern nation-state, yet not of individual intention. From a young age, children are
taught and conditioned to compulsively respect authority and to organize themselves —
particularly through the educational system, which imposes upon them a discourse of
discipline on their bodies and minds. “Every educational system is a political means of
maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the
powers it carries with it” (Foucault 2008). Children who do not adhere to social norms
are considered delinquent and, particularly if violent, may be referred to the police and
prison institution by way of juvenile detention centers and courts. The police force and
prison system, for their part, regulate, mete out, and contain the violence which is not of
their production. They ensure that the state is the sole wielder of violence. Hospitals and
mental institutions identify disorder and aberrant pathology and regulate their
manifestations within society.

Is a medical experience … not bound up with the very structure of
society? Does it not involve, because of the special attention that it pays to
the individual, a generalized vigilance that by extension applies to the
group as a whole? … Medicine becomes a task for the nation (Foucault
2003 17-18).

It is the responsibility of the hospital to thoroughly rid each body of its disorders — this
authority wielded en masse becomes a part of the national project of maintaining order.
Thus the clinic and the hospital become inextricably bound up with the nation-state and
its discipline, along with other institutions such as the prison and the school. People
become represented subjects as students, prisoners, and patients. At the same time, others
become teachers and principals, guards and officers, and doctors and nurses. The prison
and the hospital in particular loom in the background in all explorations of war, trauma, and insanity. Insanity and war could be most broadly described as aberrations in patterns — in the case of insanity, aberrations in the patterns of the mind; in the case of war, those of society.

Also of interest is the emphasis on the medical institution specifically on the family and a dialectic relationship between the two. This relationship and its dissolution are demonstrated in Iman Younes’ novel, *B As in Beirut* (2008), which focuses on the deteriorating mental states of various individuals in the context of their family (or lack of family) during the war. The characters Lillian and Warda deal, or fail to deal, with their anxiety concerning the war by being alienated from and unable to rely on their loved ones. Lillian grows apart from her husband, a writer who loses his hand as a result of the conflict. The hospital having failed them, their home life grows increasingly strained. She compulsively packs her bags and rearranges the things in them, always prepared to leave at a moment’s notice out of a concern for her family’s safety (2). However, at the same time, she is easily distracted and grows very disinterested and emotionally dissociated from them — particularly her children (36-37). “Talk here, talk there: I could no longer stand hearing talk; talk aggravated the sickness in my soul; it was no longer possible for me to talk” (45).

As she withdraws into herself, she becomes increasingly nostalgic for her childhood (44) and continually tries to return to the past. Lillian eventually travels to Cyprus with her two children in order to apply for a visa to leave the country, and finds an old friend there with whom she has a half-hearted affair (53), which is another attempt
to regain what has been lost through the war. At this point, her nostalgia appears pathological and one of the only people to whom she can relate is the German wife of her brother-in-law, who feels both personally and culturally alienated from society in both Lebanon and her native Germany. She feels them both to be prisons which one can go to and from, but ultimately cannot be escaped. “All cities look alike. This place is a big prison and Germany is no different” (32). The city as a prison, particularly during war, is an image that recurs frequently — particularly in the novels of Ghada Samman. Seeing themselves as without any ability to exert any influence or power over the situation, they see themselves as prisoners — marginalized and forgotten.

Even more abandoned than Lillian is Warda, whose story Barakat eventually pieces together: her awkward marriage, pregnancy, and subsequent estrangement from her husband and child. The split between her and her husband occurs after the birth of their child after they have moved to the Gulf. She pleads with her husband to “fill her back up,” to which he responds that she is crazy (86) and eventually decides to rid himself of her. She goes back to Beirut alone. Her mental state is such that once she’s on the plane, she thinks that her daughter is on the plane with her, and searches frantically for her (69).

Back in Beirut, she is convinced that her husband’s sister, Najla, means her harm and hurts her when no one else is around (75) as some sort of cruel warden of the prison that is her bed. She eventually leads herself to believe that Najla has kidnapped her daughter and won’t allow them to be together (82) when in reality her husband has moved to America and taken their daughter with him (88). The haze of anxiety and
confusion in which her story is told, presented bit by bit, adds to the chaotic nature of the order and causes of events. Warda is an extremely unreliable narrator, even forgetting the name of her own child (74), yet she is obsessive-compulsive about the organization of her house and knowing where everything is (61).

Her friends and acquaintances put up with her bizarre behavior at first. In one instance, she imagines a bout of leg paralysis (58) — a psychosomatic manifestation of her deteriorating mental state into the serious disorder of psychosis, a complete break from reality. She even recounts how difficult it is for her to muster the will to bathe, frequently failing and assuring herself that she will succeed the next day (68). She cannot execute even the everyday routines of life, and reenacts the experience of the prisoner or hospital patient in her own home.

Despite the traumatic separation from her husband and child appearing to be the cause of her troubles, her neurotic behavior and seizures were apparent before her arranged marriage and stems from her childhood and that during her courtship she and her family tried to hide her “madness” to her older fiancé.

It’s near the end of her story when it becomes clear that her father molested her, though she attributes these traumatic experiences to a jinn (80). One is lead to believe that this sexual abuse is the source of her anxiety and neurosis, which culminates in her chasing a vision of her daughter into the sea and drowning (92). Unlike Lillian, Warda is plagued by thoughts of her family and children. Her inability to be with them leads to her increasingly fragile mental state and anxiety. She is always reaching out and trying to be with her daughter again, which eventually leads to her delusion and demise.
Women who wrote through the war chose marginalized subjects — subjects of these patterns and their reorganization and reorientation, because they are most significantly affected by the attempts on the part of institutions to regain or maintain order. These subjects are rearranged or reorganized structurally within the institutions, creating a chain of command and a network of surveillance which ensure there are no breaches or escapes. Central to this coercion is the physical body itself which is conditioned to be self-organizing and policing. To its subjects, the system of institutions appears to be a natural part of modern, urban life. In reality, they are artifacts of their time, place, and society. Outside of their historical contexts they appear arbitrary or artificial, yet consistent.

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it.

This policy of coercions is primarily carried out by surveillance and separation — one cannot communicate laterally among peers or up a chain of command, because one is separated and simply watched. Cues and signals manipulate behavior, but not communication takes place. This leads to a total submission with no compromise. This obedience is political through its physicality.

A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’, was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines (Foucault 1977: 142).
 Having taken control of the body and the power extracted from it, it is honed through discipline to become as efficient and effective as possible, alienated the subject from his or her own power.

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (Foucault 1977: 142-143)

Thus the influence is exerted within subjects and through them, so that their own confinement and discipline is internalized rather than exerted over them. Ghada Samman’s protagonist in Beirut Nightmares establishes a routine for herself after several days of confinement in her apartment building (Samman 130), demonstrating the point that her confinement determines not only what she does, but also how she does it. Hoda Barakat’s novel, The Stone of Laughter, details the solitary life and alienation of Khalil — particularly after the object of his confused homosexual affections dies in the war. He stays in his apartment, whiling away his time cleaning and cooking as if there is no war going on outside his windows. Obsessively and compulsively cleaning is a way for him to maintain a routine, which quickly deteriorates into a mindless exercise that provides him no fulfillment. “When Khalil went back to his room he would make haste to do the things he was wont to do after the bombings … cleaning the room, washing the sheets and clothes but with more enthusiasm, more neurotically and with less satisfaction with the results. He felt something like despair when he reached the happy, peaceful state that he used to reach after cleaning” (Barakat: 82). Khalil is paranoid of others and of the
world outside to the point that it makes him physically ill. What institutions are
ultimately preoccupied with are the body and its orientation and practices.

No matter the ideology or lack thereof, one is conditioned to be a subject from
one’s birth in the hospital and to one’s first day of school. This is why even those who are
philosophically or ideologically opposed to the institutions continue to participate in
them: People are defined by their mechanical roles and functions within society rather
than through markers of kinship, social hierarchy, philosophies, or politics. Foucault
explains that it “dissociates power from the body,” but put another way, it also dissociates
the subject herself from her own complicity with the system through her own alienation.
One believes oneself to be powerless, and therefore is absolved of the guilt of
participation. But in order for this conditioning to work, one must remain self-disciplined.
This docility is achieved by constant surveillance both by oneself and by others. The
policeman monitors the people on the street, and the guard watches over the prisoners.
The prisoners monitor and arrange themselves under threat of physical and mental
violence. If a person does not behave properly in public, they may be taken to prison or,
if determined to be psychotic, to the hospital. The police may aid the doctors in subduing
patients who are considered violent or a “danger to society.” The guard in the school
stands watch as each child passes through a metal detector, as more policemen surveil the
hallways. If two children get into a fight and come to physical violence, they are stopped
and detained. If another is disturbed or inconsolable, he’ll be sent to the school nurse and
at his or her advice may be institutionalized. “Each individual has his own place; and
each place its individual … Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections
as there are bodies or elements to be distributed” (Foucault 1997 148). This discipline as a technology is the link that connects the school, the hospital, and the prison.
Chapter 3: Therapy City

Frantz Fanon’s impassioned chronicle and analysis of the psychological aspect of colonialism as a Martinique-born French-Algerian psychiatrist and revolutionary provides the appropriate context for the psychology of the colonized during periods of violence. He explicitly and directly links colonial oppression with psychological disorder:

Because it is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: “Who am I in reality?” The defensive positions born of this violent confrontation between the colonized and the colonial constitute a structure which then reveals the colonized personality … We must remember in any case that a colonized people is not just a dominated people. Under the German occupation the French remained human beings. Under the French occupation the Germans remained human beings. In Algeria there is not simply domination but the decision, literally, to occupy nothing else but a territory (Fanon 250).

A complete negation of the other leads to a collective crisis of identity that has profound effects on the psychology of the individual. In an unstable environment in which the colonized are marginalized as an entire group of people, psychological disorders and pathologies persist and even provide a justification for the colonizer’s perceived inferiority of the colonized and they are perceived as even more vulnerable, unstable, and in need of being overwhelmed and coerced. As a psychiatrist, he directly relates mental disorder and pathology to oppression. As a revolutionary, Fanon advocates for armed
struggle in order to resist the colonizer and therefore as a prescription for the mental illness which the oppression causes.

Armed resistance, which is notably not only a mental but a physical resistance, is a true form of resistance in that it deals with human bodies and their placement. Though one may resist an institution or colonial project in the mind, it is not actually challenged until it is resisted with the body. Furthermore, a lack of physical resistance leads to a collapse of the colonial subject’s mental state. Either resistance or obedience must be embodied.

Fanon further asserts this very direct and insidious relationship between colonization and psychology in the use of psychiatric medicine as a way to coerce and manipulate subjects. In the colony, the clinic’s true complicity with the police is revealed. As an example, administering drugs to Algerian resisters against the French is cynically justified by as a superficial “non-violent” alternative to torture and interrogation.

In Algeria the military doctors and psychiatrists have discovered further possibilities for experimenting with this method in the police detention centers. If Pentothal can release repression in the case of neuroses, then, in the case of Algerian patriots, it must also be able to break the political barrier and get the prisoner to confess without recourse to electricity—for according to medical tradition any suffering must be avoided.

The use of drugs and medical methods to interrogate and extract information from the prisoner is a level of complicity between the policeman and the doctor that demonstrates the extent to which their goals are one and the same. They root out disorder, whether it is political, physical, or psychological. In this case, insurgents must be identified and either
rehabilitated or isolated from the larger community. His destination is either the mental hospital or the prison.

This is the medical equivalent of “psychological warfare.” The scene goes as follows: First of all, the psychiatrist states, “I am a doctor, not a policeman. I’m here to help you.” Thus the prisoner’s trust is won after a few days. Then: “I’m going to give you a few shots to clear your head.” For several days all kinds of vitamins, heart stimulants and other placebos are administered. On the fourth or fifth day the Pentothal is injected intravenously. The interrogation begins (Fanon 279-280).

The doctor emphasizes that he is not a policeman even though he is working with the policeman to achieve the same end. He can go about this goal by taking advantage of the perception that the doctor heals and makes one healthy. After gaining trust, the doctor hands him over to the policeman, effectively making them partners in getting the information that they want from the prisoner and using it to find others. Thus the process is repeated until the political epidemic has been eradicated.

The knowledge gained from the interrogation translates directly into power for the colonizer in its suppression of any and all forms of opposition to its rule. The fact that this information is extracted by means of modern medicine or psychiatry, which claims to heal people rather than to subjugate them, indicates that the clinic has no qualms against pursuing the same strategy of discipline as the police, albeit through its own particular tactics.

After decolonization, the same institutions persist given that the Western-educated elite then aspire to create the nation in the same mold as the Western nation-state, complete with a constitution, judicial system, laws, and institutions. It is important to
stress that this configuration and conception of the modern, Western nation-state is an imposed model which is inserted into the social and political environment of the region or territory and has no bearing of or regard for its particular pre-colonial past. Thus nationalism seeks to leave its colonial past behind while being an extension or vestige of it at the same time. “Anti-colonial nationalism is a diverse and complex network of cultural signifiers, partly because it faces two ways, selling itself as a forward-looking, emancipatory, modern project and as a reaffirmation of collective customs, cultural practices, and histories” (Childs 205). Those who suffer the most from this homogenizing “reaffirmation” are those who were already and still are on the margins of society before, during, and after colonization.

These marginalized subjects are those who suffer the most and are considered sick, weak, or disturbed. In the case of the novels, they are those who are at the point of violence — whether that violence is physical, economic, sexual, or is channeled through any other avenue makes no difference to the impact it has on them mentally and physically. When these subjects suffer from this violence and go off course from the patterns of behavior that their families and society expect of them, the institutions kick in to attempt to fix, reform, heal, or rehabilitate them. In this way the entire city can the theorized as a system that regulates and soothes the populace through and in spite of its heterogeneous flows — a therapy city which is regulated by its institutions through the organization and circulation of the human bodies of which it is composed.

As the city grows in size and, more importantly, as it adds in new entities, so its circulation becomes more complex, and so practices need to be
invented to cope with the complexity of the uncertainty that is induced. These practices are clearly to do with the management of *encounters*, especially as a settlement moves beyond face-to-face interaction as the only means of such management.

These encounters are the interactions of human bodies. The organization of the city manages the flows of bodies through its design and creates function through its form. The creation of these spaces is inherently psychological in order for it to produce the desired result.

Above all, this management of encounters requires the invention of new spaces and times that regiment and therefore direct bodily energies in productive ways (Amin 93-94).

During the civil war the power and influence of the institutions are undermined and reconfigured. The various militias become more powerful collectively than the police force, exaggerating Amin and Thrift’s characterization of the city as heterogenous and disjointed processes, and the prison becomes characterized alternately by its being ineffectual and its being inverted — inverted in that the people are prisoners in their own homes and neighborhoods, and every building becomes a prison when one does not dare to go outside for fear of being taken by a sniper or stopped at a checkpoint by a particular militia with which one does not share allegiance. “It was the sniper, never seen but always felt, who had turned Beirut into a zoo/prison” (Cooke 20). For those who are trapped inside their homes, the prison thus becomes internalized and each becomes his or her own warden. They begin to manifest symptoms of obsessive compulsiveness and become paranoid and suspicious of their own sanity and of others.
“One of the continuing themes of writing on the city — from Baudelaire through Benjamin to Jacques Réda — is that the city dreams itself through its inhabitants. In a sense, the city itself becomes an enormous dreaming” (Amin 122). Thus it can also become a nightmare or psychotic episode, such as when characters become schizophrenic and disassociated from themselves and others, or lose track of themselves in their relationships to or separateness from others. In some of the characters, these symptoms are very explicit. In others, they are more subtle. What these actions and reactions present are an exploration of the relationship between power, violence, and sickness. The characters are a conversation between the author and her society — a conversation about who is considered mentally ill and who is considered powerful. The interesting ways in which they depict these manifestations of insanity and power prove insightful to the ways that power works in modern society in general and particularly during the time of the civil war.

In the novels, the prison is a recurring image. Next door to the apartment building of the narrator of *Beirut Nightmares* is a pet store that seems to be abandoned by its owner. In it, the animals are caged and she likens them to the inhabitants of the neighborhood, who dare not leave their houses for fear of being killed by the sadistic sniper who has taken up an unknown post and demonstrated that he has no regard for their lives. The animals in their cages become a metaphor for the people in the sense that they are trapped and cannot leave their cages (13). She frequently compares humans to animals, indicating that she believes that people are ultimately selfish animals and fight amongst themselves even if they have what they need (87-88), calling them “human
wolves” (49). The character Mitri makes a distinction in *The Tiller of Waters* between a stray dog, which was tame but had returned to the wild, and a wolf. Having believed to be chased and stalked by a pack of wolves, he eventually realized that they were formerly pets who had taken to the streets. “He did not prey on the living … he was not a wolf” (Barakat 107), unlike the manipulative and merciless people that Samman designates “human wolves” in opposition to the animals in their cages, which she compares to the people afraid in their homes.

Her attempt to free these animals from their cages is a demonstration of the discipline and internalization of confinement. She delivers a speech to the animals and briefly considers she might be going insane (86). Upon unlocking and opening all of the cages, she is surprised to find that none of the animals want to leave, and remain in their little prisons (91). Early in her memoir, she notes that “[e]ven in prisons, some sort of affinity develops between the prison guard and the inmate, since both of them are generally from the same downtrodden class” (14). In this case, the prison guard and the inmate are one and the same. The animals and the people have both internalized their own imprisonment and willingly remain in their cages. The narrator justifies this behavior by coming to the conclusion that war has made it so that prison is the safest place (108). But their behavior is not based on logic — neither the animals nor the people who willingly remain institutionalized. Their unwillingness to challenge their own imprisonment is a result of their conditioning and institutionalization. A few days later in the novel, the narrator tries to let the animals out again and physically expels them from their cages. “Then, as in a nightmare that takes place in utter silence, I looked on aghast
as every one of them, down to the last animal, padded calmly and silently back to its
cage. It was as if some elusive, wicked sorcerer were commanding their destinies by
remote control!” (129) While the observation is astute, it is not a remote control that
sends them back to the cages, but their own internalized discipline.

However, as time goes on, the animals become desperate and hungry. When the
pet shop owner finally arrives, the dogs attack and devour him (301). In the same vein,
she turns into an owl in a vision and flies to find her brother in jail — the state jail, not
the individual apartments to which their residents are confined. When the jail catches on
fire, he escapes and becomes a fighter (328-333). From his perspective, the state unjustly
imprisoned him which inadvertently encouraged him to join a militia as a fighter. Just as
the pet shop owner is devoured by his own animals, the state’s police apparatus becomes
all but useless in the face of perceived injustice. The rule of violence has been
decentralized and reconfigured and the various militias control certain parts of the city.

“After all, the only criminals who ended up in our prisons were the ‘little guys,’ so to
speak. As for the ‘big guys,’ they were still out carousing in the cages of an illusory
freedom, or occupying positions of power and influence” (236). The police become
powerless against the militias in particular neighborhoods, as demonstrated by a militia
beating someone outside of a police station while he cries out for help. A policeman
looks on in horror, and eventually comes to help him only to meet the same fate —
they’re both killed (72). Ghada notes, “What people were doing all over the country was
typical of what anyone might do if he found himself under siege: instead of bothering to
scream ‘Police!’ he might just go and buy himself a gun...” (111).
Each institution follows the same pattern as the others: surveil, organize, separate, and enforce. They each support and blend into one another. The city is the concentration, hub, or rhizome of these institutions. While their influences extend out into rural areas, they do not proliferate. Outside of cities social norms and kinship relations show a greater degree of influence. Likewise, each of the institutions is generally funded and maintained by the municipality and supported by the state, particularly in the case of police forces and prisons. Schools and hospitals can be publicly or privately funded, but all of them have a vested interest in the functioning of institutions as an interdependent system.

The principles and modus operandi of each institution are essentially the same. Each one monitors, surveils, regulates, and curtails. The child in the school, the prisoner in the cell, and the patient in the hospital bed are each subject to surveillance and confinement. The child requires discipline until behaviors are internalized, the patient cured, and the prisoner either rehabilitated or simply locked away. The methods of these systems of coercions blend into one another.

Freud made sure that all the structures integrated by Pinel and Tuke into confinement were appropriated by the doctor. He freed the patient from that asylum existence to which his ‘liberators’ had condemned him, but he failed to spare him the essential components of that existence (Foucault 2006: 517).

The doctor does not lock a person up, but utilizes the essential components of surveillance and organization so that one does not need to be physically restrained in order to stay in one place. The discipline of the patient causes him or her to remain, as the doctor claims, for the sake of health. However, the patient is still separated from others.
and kept under close surveillance, just as in the prison. The patient’s confinement is internalized to an extent that would cause a prison warden to be quite envious. “[Freud] concentrated its powers, stretched them to the limit, and placed them in the hands of the doctor” (Foucault 2006: 517). Rather than simply confining disorder, the hospital locates the source of the disorder, confines it and obscures it, and cultivates order both physically and mentally.

It is no coincidence that one of the meanings of the phrase “institutionalized” is that a person has been determined mentally ill and must undergo treatment, usually against his or her will. How exactly one is determined to be “mad” has undergone various transformations throughout history, as Michel Foucault demonstrates in his *History of Madness*. Rather than being some intrinsic or essential flaw or pathological behavior which must be discovered, he describes madness as a historically constructed concept. “Madness was no longer conceived of as the counterpart of history, but as the hidden face of society” (Foucault 2006: 381). This face was hidden because it was either cured by the doctor or locked away by the policeman, and eventually that confinement became the primary means of dealing with those who were pathological. “As an economic measure and a social precaution, [confinement] was an invention. But in the history of unreason, it signals a decisive event: the moment when madness is seen against the social horizon of poverty, the inability to work and the impossibility of integrating into a social group” [emphasis mine] (Foucault 77). The sentiment that “everyone is mad” is expressed very poignantly by Farah in Ghada Samman’s *Beirut ’75* when he
places the sign from the mental hospital over the “Welcome to Beirut” sign outside of the city (Samman 1995: 115).

Likening the city to a mental hospital, in the context of this analysis of institutions in their different forms, is quite apt. One may theorize the city as “therapeutic” in the way that a mental institution cures and a prison rehabilitates. Cities could be theorized alternately as a macrocosm of a prison or hospital. In the case of Germany, cities known as “spa towns” or Kurorte are destinations to which one can be prescribed a visit by a doctor. They maintain required government standards to maintain this designation, and are a manifestation of the natural affinity between institutions and the cities which they compose. After a prolonged confinement in her neighborhood apartment, the protagonist of Beirut Nightmares is rescued by the Lebanese army, and describes being taken through the city by the tank like being taken on a stretcher through a hospital (Samman 360). Her novel describes the city not in terms of anarchy or chaos, but confinement and detention.

In Samman’s other novel, Beirut 75, the Syrian from the village of Douma, Farah, who was overwhelmed and ultimately destroyed by his fame, finds himself in a hospital after having a series of hallucinations and panic attacks. He reacts with horror and panic at the hospital. He hallucinates that the doctors and nurses have the heads of animals, and one of them refuses to treat him:

If you don’t have any money with you, I’ll let you bleed to death.’ … Then they started playing catch with organs that had been surgically removed from various patients. I screamed and tried to take the whiskey serum I.V. out of my arm, but they tied me up with a man’s intestines, wrapping them around me like ropes. They bound me so tightly I couldn’t move (Samman 111).
In Farah’s psychotic episode, his break from reality provides insight into the manipulation of the processes of the human body by the doctors in their playing catch with parts of the body. When Farah attempts to resist, he is tied up with parts of the human body. In this case, the confinement is internal in both a mental sense and in a physical and concrete sense. He hallucinates that the means of his confinement are the interior of the body.

Farah eventually rejects the prognosis that he is insane, and is the one who takes the sign from the mental hospital and places it over the “Welcome to Beirut” sign outside of the city. In opposition, the main character of *The Stone of Laughter*, Khalil, is brought to a hospital and describes it as “the city’s real paradise” (Barakat 1995: 156-157):

> The hospital was one of the places most isolated from the outside … A whiteness that washes the brain clean of any images of the blood and urine and vomit and bandages with dried skin and severed limbs which the sewers of the hospital, its excretory ducts, may send to the outside

In Khalil’s account, the hospital is pristine and the parts and internal organs of the body are hidden. He not only realizes that he is the source of his own confinement as Farah does, but *desires* this confinement. He totally submits to the hospital and the doctor in an attempt to avoid the violence outside. Khalil is a veritable model for the institutionalized subject of Beirut. He avoids sectarian conflict and seeks refuge in the isolation of the hospital.

> They are so concerned to isolate us that they thought to provide Thai or Filipino nurses who speak no Arabic except for the short, functional phrases that they coo. What they say is so broken that they manage to
make the patients forget their own language, so it does not provoke any sensitivity in them which a familiar dialect might provoke, to remind them or make them fear evil from those who supervise their rest.

Khalil loves the hospital because it is a distraction from the violence. He focuses on it as a place of purity, whereas he considers the outside world bloody and unclean. He desires his own coddling. The foreign nurses who do not speak his language appear to be automated, relying solely on a “system of signals,” which is why the hospital is orderly and consistent. Khalil welcomes this consistency and finds it comforting, reminding him of his childhood — a time when he was safe, but powerless.

Everything in the hospital makes the people staying in it revert to their childhood which they lost when all forms of care and protection went missing. They are in another time, completely different because it has its own, precise order (157).

The hospital is a regimented place of precision and organization. By its very nature, there are no decisions to make because all of the decisions have been made beforehand. It is consistent and regular. Its endless cycle places it outside of time:

The day goes back to its original relationship with the light. Mealtimes, and the time for injections and drips and colored pills, bring the bodies back to the cycle of another day which does not recognize the foolery outside, brings them back to recognize the body’s right to stretch out and knit the flesh together again.

Khalil recognizes that the emphasis is on the body. He perceives it as the body’s right to mend itself and heal, though he does not recognize that he cannot leave if he wants to. The hospital functions based not on communication, but by regular intervals, switches,
and the recognition of and reaction to cues. These are built into the ordering of the hospital itself, and systematically negate disorder:

Here there is total recognition, without language, total compliance to an illness they could treat, which they could not ignore, or refuse to recognize or impose order on it to conceal it. (157)

His preoccupation with the body and its repair and ordering within the hospital credits conceiving of the hospital as primarily concerned with the physical body. Its reliance on signals rather than language or consent in order to the function efficiently is an indicator of its hierarchical nature and its tyranny. There is no true communication involved — only ordering, automation, and signals.

Having been exposed to the violence of the war outside, Khalil is justifiably reassured by the sterile and safe hospital. Having spent the war in his apartment obsessively cleaning and tidying, a place of sterility and order seems to be his preferred environment. He has internalized his own subjection. After his release from the hospital he goes on to become a part of the violence that takes place outside by raping his neighbor and taking advantage of the people in his apartment building. He “escapes” from Barakat, as she calls to him and the end of the novel, but he does not answer to her any longer (209). Likewise, the protagonist of her novel Ahl lil-Hawa goes insane, kills his lover, and is sent to a mental institution. “Her protagonist was kidnapped and tortured. He went mad and was placed in the (psychiatric) Hospital of the Cross, above Nahr el-Kalb on the east side of Beirut. The hospital (which is still in operation) becomes the emblem of a sick nation murdering itself” (Amyuni 1999: 38)
Taking illness from the isolation of the hospital to the city in general causes the city to order itself as a hospital, as demonstrated in a description of the measures taken when confronted by the plague in the 17th century. The procedures documented by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* evoke the description of any institutional body and, interestingly, some of the neighborhoods described by the authors during the war:

First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals; the division of the town into distinct quarters, each governed by an intendant (Foucault 1997 208).

No one may leave, similarly to a jail. The town is split into sections and anyone or anything that does not fit into this order, including animals, are killed and disposed of. Each section has an administrator — a warden.

Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death. On the appointed day, everyone is ordered to stay indoors: it is forbidden to leave on pain of death. ... Each family will have made its own provisions; ... meat, fish and herbs will be hoisted up into the houses with pulleys and baskets (Foucault 1997 208).

There can be no association or exchange between those who are separated. No transaction or interaction may be made without it being specifically allowed by the administrators. This is enforced by the threat of violence and death. Goods are exchanged with pulleys, a practice which is similar to that during the war of hoisting up bread and food from the street and into an apartment in baskets and buckets.
If it is absolutely necessary to leave the house, it will be done in turn, avoiding any meeting. Only the intendants, syndics and guards will move about the streets and also, between the infected houses, from one corpse to another … It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment (Foucault 1997 208).

This description mirrors the detention of inhabitants of neighborhoods in each novel. Families must ration their food and take care of their own, and if they do leave for provisions, they do so at their own risk. The neighborhood is severely partitioned and surveilled. In the case of the civil war and this procedural quarantine, authority rests with the militia and its agents, whose unceasing gaze guarantees that no one challenges their authority. The lines between hospital, prison, and city blur:

Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere: "A considerable body of militia, commanded by good officers and men of substance", guards at the gates, at the town hall and in every quarter to ensure the prompt obedience of the people and the most absolute authority of the magistrates, "as also to observe all disorder, theft and extortion". At each of the town gates there will be an observation post; at the end of each street sentinels (Foucault 209).

Similarly at the end of the street awaits a sniper, described in both The Story of Zahra and Beirut Nightmares, who is an unrelenting hostile presence on the street. This never-ending surveillance evokes Foucault’s panoptic model of control, in which the confinement itself is the punishment rather than direct physical violence. The only thing barring someone from leaving their apartment or cell is the potential for violence, which requires no actual guard or observer — only the perception of one. The street is organized in such a way that the possibility of being surveilled is constant and there is always
potential violence hanging in the air. Therefore, the people organize themselves under this threat, with no constant need for actualized violence or surveillance. The discipline of the subjects is built into the very structure and organization of the people in their apartments in the street.

Faced with the threat of rival militias, the people isolate and self-discipline themselves like prisoners in cells or like patients in hospital rooms. Human bodies under threat naturally order themselves in such a way, having been conditioned to do so since childhood. Thus the neighborhood under siege mirrors a hospital or prison, and confinement becomes impulsive and habitual to the point that it appears voluntary. On an intellectual yet seemingly subliminal level, Cooke also invokes the representation of the city in terms of health and sickness — not as a hospital or prison but as a sick child itself, and relegates the Beirut Decentrists to the function of caring mothers or vigilant nurses who must attend to the ailing city which is itself sick rather than being a source of therapy.

It is not a coincidence that the language used to describe the organization and processes of the state are similar to the language of health and sickness: order and disorder; function and dysfunction. The ordering of the body and the ordering of the state are two dimensions of the totalizing project to harness and control discourses of power to wield disciplinary authority. The clinic regulates the processes and functions of the human body, and the city does the same to the body politic and the collective unconscious in the Durkheimian sense. Healthy bodies are those that function properly, and proper citizens are self-disciplined and have internalized their own ordering. In
proper cities, human bodies, material, and capital flow not freely, but where they are meant to just as the mind and the body are orderly and regulated. The doctor and the city smooth out the disorder and thus keep both the subject and the state healthy. The clinic and the city as centers of therapy support and necessitate one another so that if one falters then the other will as well. This is why when the state is divided and the authority of the total institutions are challenged and disrupted, the result is psychological disorder within individuals – particularly those who are most vulnerable.

While a more unified nation would be preferable to one that is divided, the representational framework on which the modern nation-state is founded limits possibilities and regulates the bodies of the people nonetheless. Its institutions, imposed on society and a lingering construction of the colonial project, coerce and surveil not through explicit violence or punishment, but through implicit violence and discipline, causing the subject to internalize his or her own obedience. The city of Beirut during the civil war provides an example of when this system is challenged by rogue forces that exist within the system yet defy it and literature written through the war manifests symptoms of pathology and disorder that follows by this rupture of the modern nation-state.
Conclusion

The city is therapeutic in that it regulates flows and actively rids itself of the disorders of functions and processes within itself. The clinic is concerned with the human body and mind; the city is concerned with the body. Arab women who wrote through the civil war were particularly concerned with its dailiness and the mental stress and disorder that resulted psychologically from the physical and political disorder because of the inherent affinity between the project of totalizing behavior and thought and the project of totalizing and unifying the nation. The two are essential to each other.

The institutionalization and invention of the modern postcolonial nation-state of Lebanon is an imposition — a vestige of colonialism, that undermined the heterogenous society and the historical and social ties that bound them together. The colonial project weaponized ethnicity and religion, dividing and enframing the various groups of people to more easily control and rule over them. Fundamental to this process was the notion that everything can be labeled, categorized, and understood. The embodiment of these colonial representations and the internalization of institutional discipline and order are two antagonistic phenomena which are brought into stark contrast during the war, in which the physical battle between sectarian groups and the state played out.

As Berman laments, whether or not there can (or should) be a reconciliation between the past and the modern present is doubtful — particularly in the case of a postcolonial city in which there is no clear consensus on the past. “[M]odernism’s rapport
with the past, whatever it turns out to be, will not be easy” (Berman 333). Even then, is it possible to escape from disciplinary authority in the first place or is it simply a matter of one winning out over the others?

Being ensnared in these discourses of power is not particular to a postcolonialism, but modernity at large. As shifting institutions become an increasingly prominent part of the urban landscape and their disciplining tactics begin to resemble one another — the militarization of schools and the privatization of prison systems, for example — one can only speculate the psychological effect. In the case of the Lebanese Civil War, the novels written by Arab women who lived it demonstrated a keen insight into the precarious relationship between the institutions of the modern nation-state and the sectarian system through which its people are represented.
References


