Lebanese Literature in English and Art as A Response to War Traumas

Abstract:

Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, centre of the civil war, described once, by Iman Humaydan, as “the city that dances on its wounds” is the space that has inspired all the artistic and literary creations set and framed by the Civil War that this paper explores with the aim of studying the relation between the Civil War Trauma and the production of fiction narratives, memoirs, prose and poetic texts, paintings, comic, graphical stories and films.

This is part of an on-going research that focuses on works written in English produced by Lebanese female writers, poets, painters comic creators and film makers. They all belong to different generations that mostly lived in Beirut some time during the Civil War. Their creations are the objects of this study, such as Etel Adnan’s poetry, Ghada Samman’s novel, Jean Said Makdisi’s war memoir, Zena El Khalil’s memoir and artistic installations, Zeina Abirached’s graphic story, Maryam Yaka’s comic, and Lebanese actress and director Nadine Labaki’s film Where Do we Go Now?

This research relies heavily on Cathy Caruth’s framework on trauma experience and history, and on her idea about trauma as an oscillation between the encounter with death or the experience of having survived it. This research is also enlightened by Graig Larkin’s approach to the idea that brings together the need to live and reconcile contradictory concepts as remembering and forgetting and the ways the different generations deal with everyday life regarding space as well as social and emotional codes and encounters. The literary and art works under study show how the authors seek peace and reconciliation. They write about fright, hatred, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation rejecting violence. Thus they express their trauma through different strategies. Sometimes they prefer not to speak loud about things that should not be mentioned in case they happen again. Other times they just speak up loud to let the pain out and ease their souls. Finally, this investigation is enriched by the observations of a Lebanese researcher who belongs to this cultural context.

Keywords: Civil War Trauma, Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Lebanese Literature, Lebanese Art and comic
Biographical note:

Dr. Violetta Jojo Verge is a (Lebanese-Spanish) lecturer at the University of La Laguna in Tenerife. She belongs to the Department of English and German Philology. She teaches English. She also taught Arabic for more than 10 years at la UNED. Title of her Phd: *The Re-Presentation of Africa and the African in the Anglophone West African Literature: Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo.* (It is an International Phd and got the University of La Laguna Doctorate Award) Her research fields are: African Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Middle-East Studies, Fine Arts and Comic. She has lived in Ghana, Lebanon and Spain.