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Imagining mid-nineteenth-century Beirut as a 'City of the World': Public intellectuals, photography, cartography and historical literature

ABSTRACT

This study explores the process of constructing mid-nineteenth-century (1858–76) Beirut as a city of the world not merely through its gradual material instantiation in mechanisms of technological modernization and in the built environment but also, more emphatically and enduringly, as a product of the cultural imagination. The article engages the ethico-political parameters of a 'crisis of representation' in the context of both the selected historical period that is one of geopolitical crisis, specifically the 1860 civil conflict in Mount Lebanon and Damascus that brought refugees, military and diplomatic intervention into Beirut, and our ongoing era of intensive contestation and critical attention to Beirut's urban heritage. This contrapuntal framework of geocreativity invites an examination of the output of mid-nineteenth-century Beiruti intellectuals and missionaries (including newspapers, public lectures,

1. This article will not engage with the particulars of urban planning and modernization of Beirut's infrastructure in the mid-nineteenth century as the main interest is in the cultural imaginings and representational spaces that projected an image of a city of the world before the peak of its material transformation and geopolitical ascendancy in the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. For an authoritative study of the various aspects of expansion and development in late nineteenth-century Beirut, see Hanssen (2005).

2. See, for example, the scholarship of Khalaf and Khoury (1993), S. Makdisi (1997), Rowe and Sarkis (1998), E. Verdeil (2001), Sawalha (2010) and Saliba (2016) and the output of various participants at the *City Debates 2015* conference that is linked with the American University of Beirut Neighborhood Initiative, among others.

the encyclopaedia and the memoir), alongside mid-nineteenth-century photography and cartography by military and civilian visitors to Beirut, and twenty-first-century Lebanese historical literature, particularly Rabī' Jabir's Bayrūt *trilogy (2003–07), that recreates mid-nineteenth-century Beirut as a city of the world from the perspectives of the archive and the consciousness of the city's post-war transformations.*

Alongside and beyond the influential conceptualizations of the world city from Fernand Braudel and John Friedmann to Doreen Massey and Saskia Sassen, this article addresses the mid-nineteenth-century city of the world as a multi-layered construct that signifies: a geopolitically significant locale, a site and project of cosmopolitics, a material platform on which the flow of people, ideas and goods channels and sustains progressive and disruptive forms of urbanization, thus placing it as a node in a global capitalist system, and most particularly, a space on which the world refracts its multiple cultural-geographical imaginings of what a connected city can or should be. From an urban cultural studies perspective (see Fraser 2015), an emergent city of the world defines itself both through its gradual material instantiation in mechanisms of technological modernization and in the built environment,[1] and – even perhaps more enduringly – as a product of the cultural imagination. These parameters of definition are often anchored in a contemporaneous geopolitical crisis that triggers a quickening of both internal development and self-definition and external connection with space-times that reflexively impact both the process of *becoming a city* and its multifarious worlding processes with respect to a conception of modernity. And this seems to be at the heart of continued tension in the definition of the cultural geographical heritage and parentage of Beirut. The crisis and tension are hence not only relevant to the historical period that I address here, 1858–76, but are also evident in today's socio-spatial crises in Beirut in the light of the post-war (post-1990) reconstruction of the city centre and the gentrification of various quarters – a topic that has been recently addressed by many urban studies experts.[2]

Historically, the period addressed here is 1858–76: 1858 as the date of the Beiruti intellectual Khalīl al-Khūrī's inaugural essay 'Fī t-tamaddun' on urban life in his newspaper *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār*, the first Arabic newspaper in Beirut, which also started to appear that year, and 1876 as the date of the first iconic map of Beirut, the Löytved map by the Danish vice-consul, missionary and building contractor Julius Löytved. Methodologically, this study engages with the production of Beirut as a city of the world in relation to that specific period but also from a transnational and trans-historical perspective: in the output of mid-nineteenth-century Beiruti intellectuals and missionaries (including newspapers, public lectures, the encyclopaedia and the memoir), alongside mid-nineteenth-century photography and cartography by military and civilian visitors to Beirut, and in twenty-first-century Lebanese historical literature that recreates mid-nineteenth-century Beirut from the perspectives of the archive and the consciousness of the city's post-war transformations.

This article hence explores the production of the representational spaces of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut as a 'city of the world' on the basis of cultural, economic and social capital wielded across the urban process and experience (if we may adapt Henri Lefebvre's, Pierre Bourdieu's and David Harvey's seminal concepts for the purposes of the argument). It also recognizes that this process of production involves several elements of

'geocreativity' (Dear 2011: 5) that includes a complex interplay of structure and agency. A broad question here relates to the ethico-political parameters of the implied 'crisis of representation' with respect to the space that we are studying in the context of both its historical period that is one of geopolitical crisis, specifically the 1860 civil conflict in Mount Lebanon and Damascus that brought refugees, military and diplomatic intervention into Beirut, and our contemporary moment of interpretation and hence to our situatedness in an era of intensive contestation and critical attention to Beirut's urban heritage. On one level, this entails a historicization and mapping of agency with respect to a cultural geographical imagination that, out of fragments, persists in its drive to build a totalizing image of a world city. Hence to approach this cultural geographical framework requires a 'thick description' that comes close to Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' concepts of both the 'lifeworld' that includes 'the totality of a person's direct involvement with the places and environments experienced in everyday life' (2001: 153) in mid-nineteenth-century Beirut and the 'deep map' (2001: 144) that takes account of the discursive and the material, the fictional and factual, and the various temporalities and spatialities connected to Beirut as an envisioned 'city of the world'.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, projecting Beirut as a 'city of the world'[3] would have been an implicitly integral part of the period's economic Zeitgeist since, as Cyrus Schayegh argues,

> Although the bedrock of Beirut's wealth – silk – was productive as much as mercantile – it leveraged that wealth and its improving infrastructures to become the region's biggest trade hub. Certainly, its trade knew its downs, and it kept a nervous eye on the competition. But its relative preeminence persisted. The figures proved it; Beirut's look and its attraction to traders across Bilad al-Sham reflected it; and interactions with Istanbul's and European capitalist and imperial interests explained it.
>
> (2017: 61)

This article aims at locating key time–spaces in this project of worlding Beirut across intersecting cultural imaginaries that not only emerged from but also preceded and then shaped – and, in the case of historical literature, revisited – the variously material realities of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut.

One of the inevitable epistemological paradigms evoked by the city of the world is that of cosmopolitanism. Beirut's cosmopolitanism was first articulated at a moment of heightened imperial interventionism, trade, military, missionary and diplomatic presence that impacted its socio-spatial history and contributed towards prospectively constructing its features according to an emergent global urban modernity. Paradoxically, one could argue that the 1860 moment of crisis, the civil war between Druze, Sunni Muslims and Christians, in the surrounding mountains and Syrian hinterlands contributed towards a cultural imaginary and ethico-political project of cosmopolitanism. In this context, Beirut as an imagined self-contained city of the world, presumably emancipated from the geopolitics of crisis around it, could mediate an alternative vision of hospitality, peace and prosperity to the political currents of Syrianism, Arabism and later, Lebanese nationalism that presupposed a larger, more contested geography.[4] Yet this alternative could only persist in the cultural geographical imagination that sustained it as a phantasmagoric utopian project that was continually undermined by

3. See the essays in Rowe and Sarkis's excellent collection *Projecting Beirut* (1998).

4. See Fawaz (1984: 491) for a reflection on Beirut's 'growing involvement with the Mountain'. According to Kolluoğlu and Toksöz, 'Whether in Salonica, Baku, Beirut, or Alexandria, one could find politics of all hues, ranging from cosmopolitanism to nationalism, from imperial atavism to urban separatism' (2010: 4).

5. See also Michael Davie (2003) and May Davie (1996, 2004) for a discussion of these structures as well as scholarship focused on specific Beiruti quarters, for example Zokak el-Blat, by Bodenstein (2005) and Hammoud (2014).

the conflictual socio-political realities underlying this agglomeration of built spaces that precariously gained the label of a city.

Cosmopolitan utopianism was not simply threatened by the dynamics of sectarianism or deep interventionism from regional and international powers. From the outset in the mid-nineteenth century, constructing Beirut as a 'city of the world' went beyond the cultural parameters of cosmopolitanism, and suffered from disruptive contradictions not only as a concept, as a construct, but also, simultaneously as a building project. Primarily, the project operated fragmentarily on urbanistic and architectural levels and continues to do so. The expanding space of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut included ramshackle and random semi-urban quarters juxtaposed to agglomerations of institutional edifices and residential spaces mediating a sense of mid-century architectural modernity anchored in such structures as the 'hybrid' central-hall, red-tiled, three-bay façade house and building, some of whose materials and aspects of style were imported from Europe and represented the aspirations of a merchant class while 'showing enough flexibility to adapt to the different social classes and various locations and parcel configurations' (Saliba 2004: 30).[5] To understand the conceptual tensions of this multi-scalar emergent urban modernity, it is useful to return to the question of *tamaddun* that was prominent in the intellectual world of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut, particularly in the works of Butrus al-Bustānī and Khalīl al-Khūrī.

THE 1860 CRISIS AND BEIRUT'S PLACE IN THE PROJECT OF *TAMADDUN*: AL-BUSTĀNĪ AND AL-KHŪRĪ

Several scholars have approached the concept of *tamaddun* in the public speeches and writings of the hugely influential Beiruti thinker Butrus al-Bustānī. The different perspectives articulated by Ussama Makdisi and Nadia Bou Ali on sectarianism and the 1860 war address al-Bustānī's contribution to the political-philosophical argument on this issue and this period. However, neither engages significantly with the predominant place of Beirut itself in relation to the question of *tamaddun* in this context. According to Fruma Zachs,

> the Christian intellectuals conceived patriotism as one of the parameters of *tamaddun*. So, if someone wished to become *mutamaddin*, a man of civilisation and culture, he must invest in his local patriotism and love his country and its people, regardless of their different religious backgrounds.
>
> (2005: 73)

Fāyiz 'Alam ad-Dīn al-Qais (2005) views the type of *tamaddun* that al-Bustānī called for as equivalent to today's concept of cultural and scientific progress. Jens Hanssen moves closer to linking *tamaddun* to Beirut's concrete process of urban transformation:

> Against the experience of communal violence in the mid-nineteenth century, early Arab intellectuals such as Butrus al-Bustāni, Ahmad Fāris al-Shidyāq and Jirjī Zaydān understood and used the notion of *tamaddun* ('urbaneness/civilization') as 'a generic term behind which disquieting compromise[s] lurked' for the concept of Arab civilization.
>
> (2005: 15)

However, Hanssen does not delve further into al-Bustānī's contribution to the conceptualization of this link as part of an evolving cultural geography of Beirut as a city of the world.

Al-Bustānī's and al-Khūrī's conceptions of *tamaddun* are not restricted to its significance as civilization/*tahaddur* but are also rooted in the original etymological link to *madana* and *Madīna* in the specific sense of urbanization/urbaneness/life of the city/urban development/*'umrān* (as conceived by Ibn Khaldūn and others). Based in Beirut around 1860, both intellectuals witnessed and re-conceptualized *tamaddun* in terms of a contrast between civil strife in Mount Lebanon and civic prosperity and security led by the emergent civil society in the city that absorbed the civil war refugees who fuelled a boom in construction and modern expansion. This tension and its possible resolution through a cosmopolitan but also site-specific process of *tamaddun* that transposes the constructive aspects of the urban environment, as exemplified in Beirut, onto its hinterlands, were central to both intellectuals' vision of a future *watan* (homeland or nation).

In an entry 'On Beirut' in *A'māl al-jam'iyya as-sūriyya* (1852), al-Bustānī states that Beirut attracted foreign trade and became a seat of government. Many great buildings appeared in the city and commerce expanded. It increased in grandeur and its people became *mutamaddinīn*. These early thoughts gestured towards the ways in which Beirut would become the heart of an approach to city life whereby the bedrock of *tamaddun* is not only generally cultural but is also structured into the evolution of the material urban landscape and the sociopolitical environment at the crossroads of cosmopolitan and provincial trends. Significantly, four pieces by prominent Protestant missionaries (Eli Smith, Cornelius Van Dyck, William Thomson and John Wortabet) were included in *A'māl al-jam'iyya as-sūriyya* (Zachs 2005: 142–47); this inclusion reflects the impact of the missionary cultural imaginary – which will be discussed in a later section – on the emergent conceptual framework of *tamaddun* that was alternately anchored in the imagined political geography of 'Syria' and later in its gradually concretized counterpart in Beirut.

In his thesis on Arab cultural output, 'Khutba fī ādāb al-'arab' (1859), al-Bustānī presents some of his thoughts on the significance of *tamaddun* especially in terms of cosmopolitan culture and as an amalgam of tradition and modernization. He touches briefly on the centrality of Beirut to the project of *tamaddun*. He refers to it twice as *madīna* or city and once as *balda* or town. However, at this stage, al-Bustānī still has not extensively dealt with the transformations of the city per se as key to *tamaddun*. The 1860 civil war seems to be a turning point in this respect as al-Bustānī initiates a series of reflections in which the project of *tamaddun* is closely linked to the period's political and social geographies and to the specific role of Beirut in realizing this project in its renascent role as a city of the world.

Al-Bustānī's series of pamphlets *Nafīr Suriyya* (September 1860–April 1861), which was published as a response to the 1860 crisis, marks this turning point as it explores the relationship between *tamaddun* and the following concerns: civil conflict, rule of law, ethics/culture, good governance, relationship with the West and the world, women's status, separation of state and religious authorities, and the Arabic language. He ends with an entire article on *tamaddun*. His views on *tamaddun* are articulated in terms of the urban environment of Beirut that resisted civil conflict, and they aim at envisioning a Syrian political geography as *watan* in which both the mountain and the city become *mutamaddinayn*. Among the material losses that he enumerates as a

result of the civil war are aspects that are particularly associated with a flourishing urban life. As opposed to Beirut that was thriving in these areas, Mount Lebanon lost in general safety and commercial security (eighth *Nafīr*). Among the moral and cultural gains is the realization that these embattled communities are a link in the connected chain of the world (ninth *Nafīr*). Through this perspective, al-Bustānī evokes a cosmopolitan ethos involving law, hospitality and economic interconnectivity as cosmopolitical ideals in relation to *tamaddun* along intellectual lines that intersect with Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace* ([1795] 1983). He then delves into the etymology of *tamaddun* by going back to its root *madīna* as a space where settled communities dwell and contribute to urbanization, or in terms of its opposition to the village in the sense of the availability of secure, comfortable living (eleventh *Nafīr*). Remarkably, there is ambivalence throughout the instalments of *Nafīr* regarding the significance and potential of *tamaddun* for material and technological urbanization in the geopolitical context of conflict. As Stephen Sheehi notes, 'al-Bustānī imagines reconstruction and the return of a productive environment. However, fear and angst invade even his vision of normalcy' (2000: 22).

In his published public lecture *Khitāb fī-l-hay'a al-ijtimā'iyya* (1869a), al-Bustānī sets up Beirut as an integral part of a worldwide chain and as the connection between Syria and other countries. He argues that the majority of Beirut's inhabitants belong to commercial, property-owning, security-loving classes with a multinational character as opposed to a small minority of uncivilized, riotous people. He also contends that when Arabs lost civic bonds, they became inferior to the West. From this perspective, Beirut emerges as al-Bustānī's conceptual and physical platform for articulating the roles of cosmopolitanism and provincialism in enabling or hindering the project of *tamaddun*. The other key elements in this argument are the impact of civil strife and the urgency of urban development. He focuses on the reestablishment of commercial security as the crucial element in Beirut's future welfare, but adds that the flow of refugees after the 1860 war requires rapid and extensive construction, including lecture halls, theatres and museums. There is a clear sense here of an association between al-Bustānī's political-philosophical and cultural-historical notions and an essentialist, elitist urbanist viewpoint that can be assessed within a larger cultural geographical framework inflected by global capitalist principles.

Language, both etymologically and semantically, is a crucial element in the conception of this cultural geography. In his dictionary *Qutr al-Muhīt*, al-Bustānī defines the root 'madana' as 'aqāma' and 'madana al-madīna' as 'atāha' and 'maddana al-madā'in' as 'massaraha wa banāha' (1869b: 2026). This definition accentuates an urbanist perspective within which construction, inhabitedness and development are the essential dynamics of *tamaddun*. In this context, in his encyclopaedia *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif* (1877), al-Bustānī again exaggerates by describing a construction boom in Beirut unequalled in contemporary Europe and defines the city as a link between Europe and Syria. He claims that the aspects that attract people to live in Beirut include comfort, security, cleanliness and a vibrant social and cultural life. The urbanist perspective thus intersects again with the cultural-historical imaginary, and Beirut features centre-stage in the contested vision of what a city of the world is, can and should be in relation to various temporalities and spatialities spanning a global capitalist network.

Taking his cue from al-Bustānī, the other prominent public intellectual Khalīl al-Khūrī engaged with the project of *tamaddun* in relation to the

contemporaneous transformations of Beirut in the context of a tense geopolitical situation. In the 16 July 1858 issue of *Hadīqat al-Akhbār*, al-Khūrī includes a piece 'Fī t-tamaddun' that can be considered the start of the gradual process of the dissemination of the concept of Beirut as a city of the world through the mass media. Primarily, al-Khūrī focuses on the links of *tamaddun* to modern culture per se. He also contends that there is false *tamaddun* that is just mimicry while true *tamaddun* is linked to an advance in knowledge, human dignity and deeds leading to public and private security and prosperity.

Besides these explicit general reflections on *tamaddun*, al-Khūrī's writings in other issues of *Hadīqat al-Akhbār*, especially in the aftermath of the civil war, articulate his vision of Beirut's centrality in the dynamics of cosmopolitanism and modernization that counter the devastating impact of conflict. The newspaper's issues from May to December 1860 include several advertisements for Beiruti real estate, where emphasis is placed on location (near consuls, with a panoramic view, attached to mulberry lands, etc.). Other advertisements announce new consumer products, noting their sale in both Paris and Beirut. There is a pervading sense throughout of a progressively booming city of the world both absorbing and transforming the conflictual currents that crisscross it. More significantly, these reflections contribute further to the emergent capitalist cultural discourse of Beirut as a city of the world on the basis of its property market and cosmopolitan consumer environment – a discourse that is repeated with a difference in the post-war marketing of Beirut's reconstruction project.

In engaging with the 1860 civil war, the *khulāsa siyāsiyya* or political summary of *Hadīqat al-Akhbār* invites the embattled parties to turn to the cause of *tamaddun*. In the October to December 1860 issues of *Hadīqat al-Akhbār*, there is an implicit contrast between the chaotic state of the Mountain (flouting human rights, rule of law and *rūh al-'asr* or zeitgeist) and the emerging civil and civic order in Beirut. The 'Beirut' section (29 November 1860) elaborately engages with this new epoch for the city under the auspices of the Ottoman envoy Fuād Pasha: thriving morally, culturally and materially, through rapid development of the built landscape and the introduction of the telegraph, civic hygiene policy and plans for a municipal council that would be eventually established in 1868 and would embody the reform-minded ethos of *tamaddun* in its public works.

If the cultural project of *tamaddun* (primarily through education and the promotion of cultural institutions in Beirut) was a very ambitious and progressive manifestation of the rise of civil society, its urbanistic and architectural counterpart (*tamaddun* as development and building activity) was mostly limited to private enterprise. The fissured project mediated through the double valency of *tamaddun* could not adequately address the ethical and practical links between built space and social realities while it incorporated a contradictory cultural geographical vision of worlding Beirut or what al-Bustānī and al-Khūrī repeatedly described as the link that is Beirut in a chain that is the world. Mid-nineteenth-century Beirut was becoming a world city, on a smaller semi-peripheral scale but still in the international metropolitan tradition, through a simultaneous movement of socio-spatial progressive idealism and an emergent trend of uneven urban development. The role of local public intellectuals in this contested cultural geography intersects with the contributions of Catholic and Protestant missionaries who simultaneously participated in the construction of some of the key

elements of the Beiruti built environment and in forging the construct of Beirut as a city of the world.

PROTESTANT AND JESUIT MISSIONARY SPATIAL POLITICS IN BEIRUT

In *Fifty-Three Years in Syria* ([1910] 2002), the American Presbyterian Henry Jessup comments on the disparity between the mountains that were ravaged by the 1860 war and Beirut as a lively although tense urban space of growing development and building activity. He focuses on international intervention and particularly the role of Protestant missionaries and the arrival of a Protestant general 'to save this city as a refuge for the homeless, houseless and hungry refugees from Lebanon and the interior' (Jessup [1910] 2002: 192). In his study of the prominent role of the Municipality of Beirut, Malek Sharif notes that the increase in the city's population to around 50,000 in 1860 can be partly attributed to the influx of refugees, including 'many Christian merchants and craftsmen' (2013: 3) from the conflict. He adds that

> the arrival of this large number of migrants left its permanent mark on the city's urban features in the form of new quarters which were established on its outskirts in such places as Rumayl and Ghalghul. The city's expansion and the rise of its population resulted in the need for a specialized body to manage its more complex urban affairs.
>
> (Sharif 2013: 4)

The missionaries were involved in various activities that anticipated and then supplemented the role of the municipal administration. As Samir Khalaf notes, 'in 1860 an Anglo-American and German relief committee was feeding more than fifteen thousand displaced persons in Beirut' (2012: 240).

The influential Reverend Daniel Bliss's reminiscences and letters evoke the missionaries' agency not only in civil relief but also, crucially, in urban development and expansion towards the west of the old city after the 1860 crisis. In his memoir, the western quarter of Ras Beirut's spatiality emerges as a landscape that the missionaries and their local associates walked, surveyed, valued, purchased, conceived and planned as strategically situated real estate and as the site of a culturally and socially influential institution in a series of edifices that participated in the construction of the meaning of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut as a city of the world. In his recollections of the specific period when the Syrian Protestant College Board of Trustees were looking to purchase land for the college, Bliss writes:

> We rode everywhere through the city, looking as we rode. Finally we saw the site where the College now stands and fell in love with it at sight, and immediately decided that we had found the finest site in all Beirut if not in all Syria.
>
> (1920: 189)

Crucially, Bliss notes the impact of the 1860 crisis as a catalyst that provided the rationale for translating a perceived popular desire to integrate global capitalist modernity through the educational institution that they built:

> The events of 1860 […] were a kind of mental earthquake that shook the people out of a self-satisfied lethargy and made them long to know

more of the world outside of Syria. This desire for knowledge was more or less indefinite, floating in the air until 1862, when the Syrian Mission gave it a bodily shape by appointing one of its members to establish a school of higher education, in order to meet the growing demand.

(1920: 212)

The Syrian Protestant College, which was established in 1866 and later became the American University of Beirut, like the major European and American missionary establishments that were being built in mid-nineteenth-century Beirut, was architecturally similar to institutions in the home country – in this case the United States. Like the Université Saint-Joseph and other Catholic institutions, the SPC was built 'away from the old city' according to 'the latest western hygienist norms' (Davie 2016: 63). It combined a sense of open space that extended into the surrounding landscape with the clear implication of a self-contained place that belongs not strictly to its immediate environment but to an international cultural geography of Protestant missionary activity (Figure 1) and that can be more specifically read in the context of what Zachs discusses as the American Presbyterian missionaries' contribution to a 'globalising modernity' (2005: 126). The socio-spatial impact of the Syrian Protestant College can be seen as epitomizing, in the context of worlding Beirut from the West Beirut platform, the results of what Khalaf refers to as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' (ABCFM) shift from an aggressive 'imperialistic thrust' (2012: 113) in the Levant to the abandonment by the Puritans of 'their confrontational evangelizing strategies and champion[ing] instead "softer" forms of power' (2012: 258).

Figure 1: 'College Hall, Built 1871–1873, Syrian Protestant College, Beirut',
American University of Beirut Special Collections (Blatchford Collection, Ph:1/206s,
[Studio Sarrafian Bros. Beirut]).

6. See Sami Kuri (1996) and Charles Libois (2009) for extensive reflections on the Jesuit archival sources.

7. Fouad Debbas's *Des photographes à Beyrouth 1840–1918* (2001) offers a seminal overview of the photographers who arrived during this period and most of whom accompanied the French expedition of General Beaufort d'Hautpoul. They included, in addition to Louis Vignes, Jean-Baptiste Charlier and Tancrede Dumas, Edouard Lockroy, Gustave Le Gray, Albert-Victor Nau de Champlouis, Henri Sauvaire, Raoul de Saint-Seine, Claude-Marie Ferrier and Jules Couppier, and others.

   In mapping the selected four French photographers' impact on 1860s Beirut, I rely on material available in Badr el-Hage (2014), Debbas (2001) and Hoffman (2007).

   Notably, Louis de Clercq (who arrived in 1859) and Louis Vignes both received French government support for their explorations (see Hoffman 2007: 1030).

Marwa Elshakry notes that 'Protestant–Catholic rivalry had been evident in Beirut from the early decades of the century, but after 1860, their competition intensified' (2007: 190). The Jesuit missionaries, like their Protestant counterparts, were implementing soft colonial strategies mediated through the educational medium (see Verdeil 2009). They reconceptualized the material and cultural space of their educational institution by relocating and renaming, in 1875, the Jesuit seminary-college of Ghazir-Mount Lebanon into the Université Saint-Joseph in the eastern sectors of Beirut. This relocation occurred at the crossroads of the realities of the multi-religious, increasingly open, urban society in which they were situated and the expansionist objectives of the transnational, yet religiously circumscribed organization to which they belonged (see Verdeil 2007). To cite one example, the letters of Père Jean-Francois Badour, like Bliss's reminiscences, are attentive to the strategic importance of Beirut as filtered by the 1860 moment of crisis and the need for the Jesuit institutions to keep up with their Protestant rivals' role in the flourishing construction activity and cultural geographical project of worlding Beirut specifically by erecting new edifices for their houses, convents, schools, churches and presses.[6]

In both Protestant and Jesuit correspondence and memoirs, construction plans are interlocked with assumptions about security, the intertwined impulses of cosmopolitanism and expansionism, the symbolism of the dominant built structure and the role of Beirut as a connected city on the capitalist world stage. Crucially, both the Syrian Protestant College and the Université Saint-Joseph were built on elevated sites and, as Michael Davie argues, they 'set the tone for being "modern," and those aspiring to become so had to move topographically upwards, or at least look upwards and turn their backs to the (dirty and unorganized) city' (2016: 66). The 'visual control [afforded by these edifices] was an avatar of physical or symbolic domination' (Davie 2016: 54), and by implication, of projective reflection on the material and metaphorical location of the city in a global cultural geography. Missionary topography thus coincided with two other media that panoptically projected Beirut as a city of the world: photography and cartography.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE 1860 FRENCH EXPEDITION

One of the most significant visual vehicles of the cultural geographical imagination is photography. This medium of re-imagining space emerged internationally around the same time that Beirut was expanding and opening to the world. As Michèle Hannooch affirms, '[f]rom the very beginning, the history of photography was closely tied to the Mediterranean: to travel, scholarship, archeology, art, global politics, and war' (2016: 3). Here I will look at this representational process through a brief consideration of the work of four French photographers: Louis Vignes, Jean-Baptiste Charlier, Tancrede Dumas and Felix Bonfils, given that all four arrived in Beirut in 1860, the year of the crisis, and had an influential output that set the framework for how the contemporaneous and projective image of Beirut as an urban, connected built environment that is firmly embedded in the cultural geography of the Mediterranean and the capitalist imperial interests that crisscrossed it was propagated in the emergent city and abroad.[7]

Louis Vignes arrived in Beirut on 16 August 1860 on the Donawerth military ship and was assigned to direct the disembarkment of the French military expedition sent to rescue the victims of the civil conflict. He immediately took

Figure 2: 'Consulat de France à Beyrouth, 1862', Bibliothèque nationale de France (Louis Vignes, photographie positive, FN-8458231).

panoramic photographs of Beirut and photographs of its rather new edifices, many of which became iconic representations and were later reproduced. His work included photographs of the affluent eastern quarter of Ras-Medawwar, the mansion of the Picciotto family, who were wealthy Jewish traders and consuls from Aleppo, the Geday Palace in the western quarter of Mussaitbeh housing the French consulate at the time (Figure 2), and general panoramas with the iconic Ottoman barracks that later housed the Grand Serail or Lebanese government seat. Vignes's photographs highlighted growing prosperity and strong consular presence in the city.

Another French man, Jean-Baptiste Charlier, in this case an amateur photographer, also arrived in 1860 in Beirut, and took photos that became very popular locally and internationally. He produced albums titled *Vues de la Syrie et Souvenirs d'Orient* covering Beirut, Baalbek, Damascus and Jerusalem, thus connecting Beirut to Levantine cities that occupied a prominent role in the European cultural geographical imagination, given the popularity of the 'Grand Tour' of the Orient. These were pioneering albums in the Eastern Mediterranean. His bookstore that sold the albums was regularly advertised in *Hadīqat al-Akhbār*. Charlier also focused on the neighbourhood of the consulates, the barracks, the iconic Khan Antoun Bek and the new port facilities in 1875.

Both Tancrede Dumas and Felix Bonfils took panoramic photographs of Beirut in the 1860s and the 1870s. They captured the development of Zeytouneh as a hub for hotels facing the beach and connecting Beirut with the world through tourism and trade – a phenomenon that would be reproduced in the post-war redevelopment of the area as Zeytouneh Bay. In one of Dumas's photographs, the Bellevue hotel appears near the Dumas photography studio, thus epitomizing the inextricability of the image of the city of the world

Figure 3: 'Beyrouth vu du Collège Américain, c. 1870', American University of Beirut Special Collections (Félix Bonfils, no. 488).

from the agents and structures of the cultural geographical imagination that produced it. Dumas also became the official photographer for the American expedition that arrived in Lebanon in 1875, hence again marking the interpenetration of various western imaginaries in the exploration and representation of Beirut.

Félix Bonfils was the first professional photographer to establish his studio in Beirut. The Bonfils trademark became associated with an industry that produced individual photos of visiting-card size and albums of epochal images of Beirut as a rapidly developing city juxtaposed with images of other world cities of the Eastern Mediterranean and France. Among Bonfils's many photographs are panoramic views of the flourishing Ashrafiyyeh quarter, the façade of Khan Antoun Bek over the port basin in 1870 and Beirut generally as captured from the vantage point of the Syrian Protestant College (Figure 3).

What is particularly interesting about these photographs is that they tend to represent Beirut as a materially thriving cosmopolitan space whose built environment is linked to world networks (of tourism, trade, education and diplomacy). These photographs often exclude the old town and focus on the port, the wealthy Europeanized neighbourhoods and consular sites, and panoramic views of the area around the Ottoman barracks and the hotels facing the beach. In these photographs, Beirut as a material space and a cultural construct of projected and gradually delineated urbanism is the protagonist rather than an Oriental type in an undefined landscape.[8] Interestingly, the French visual artist Osmond Romieux, who also accompanied the expedition, produced in 1861 several paintings and drawings that very similarly captured the port and khan in addition to several café and souk scenes that, in contrast, tend to be more Orientalist in perspective (Khoury et al. 2010).[9]

One of the notable aspects of these photographic representations is that the panorama of the city acts as a form of 'cosmopolitan realism' (Agathocleous 2010: xvi) that shares with contemporary urban literature several features, namely the construction of a worlding urban narrative out of fragments and at the intersection of perceived, conceived and lived spaces (using Lefebvre's terms). The 1860 moment of crisis, international intervention and their aftermath then triggers a quickening in the worlding of Beirut as European and local photographers, amateur and semi-professional, produce albums juxtaposing it to world cities. These are reproduced and sold worldwide. Photography, in its emergent phase, can thus be said to play a formative role in imagining Beirut as a city of the world in the mid-nineteenth-century since it is the medium, in Walter Benjamin's terms, of an 'optical unconscious' (1931–34: 1999) that covertly creates image worlds that reconstruct material reality. More interestingly, many of the French photographers were also involved in the imperial military expedition sent to quell civil strife and in other commercial enterprises that brought the newest international products to Beirut and connected it to European trading centres especially through the booming silk industry.

In this way, photography shares several features with another important representational process, cartography, that flourished in the nineteenth century and was a main visual tool of the imperial imagination in reconfiguring the material space, whether of a colonial or an imperial metropolis, as an object of powerful military, diplomatic, missionary, commercial and ultimately epistemological encroachment.

CARTOGRAPHY AND THE COMPLEX ROLE OF JULIUS LÖYTVED

In his study of the mapping of Beirut between 1830 and 1842, Michael Davie relies on contemporary maps

> surveyed by military engineers, with state-of-the-art instruments: in the 10 years between these dates, the whole of the Levant had suddenly become the theatre of intense rivalry between the European powers. Western military, political or economic interests in the Near East were no longer content with vague sketches of strategically important areas.
>
> (Davie 1987: 142)

Cartography filtered the gaze of multiple empires (European and Ottoman) on the increasingly coveted space of the Eastern Mediterranean and particularly its coastal cities. As James R. Akerman reminds us in his introduction to *The Imperial Map*: 'Intimately intertwined within imperial power relations, mapping was ultimately a site of contestation between the colonizers and colonized' (2009: 3). In the geopolitical context of mid-nineteenth-century, pre-provincial Beirut specifically, the gradually significant activity of mapping the city figured in the interlocked practices of performative knowledge production in print and the logistical performance of power in material space. This is a space that European powers militarily, diplomatically and commercially orbited and transgressed at a time when the city shifted in status and boundaries in various contexts: within the political geography of the Ottoman empire, in the nascent national imagination and in the works of the just-established municipal council in the 1860s.

From the British military cartographers' maps in the 1840s that represented a walled town transitioning into a city with gateways and defence towers

that were targeted by the British Austrian bombing campaign (Figure 4), through the maps produced by the French military expedition in 1861, to the detailed 1876 map dedicated to Sultan Abdülhamid II and commissioned by the Danish Vice-Consul Julius Löytved, one can note a movement from an archaeologically and militarily orientated perspective to an urban planning and architectural one as the later map conveys a greater attention to Beirut's built environment on a scale and according to a grid that reflect an impulse to situate it within a network of world cities even while the dedication affirms its particular place in the Ottoman empire (Figure 5).

Peter Julius Löytved began his career in Beirut as a building contractor; he became a surveyor of the British Syrian Mission in 1871 and later became
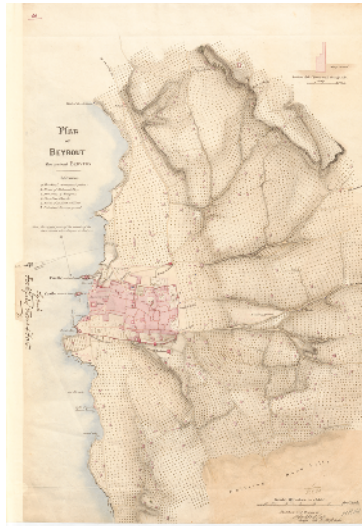

Figure 4: 'Plan of Beyrout the ancient Berytus, c. 1841', (Kew) National Archives, (WO 78/1000/31).

Figure 5: 'Plan de Beyrouth: Dédié a S.M.J. le Sultan Abdul Hamid II/ par Julius Löytved', American University of Beirut Special Collections.

the Danish vice-consul in Beirut in 1875. He had the civil engineer A. Stuckly draw a map of Beirut in 1876. His career in mid-nineteenth-century Beirut thus exemplified the interpenetration of the roles of the builder, missionary, diplomat and cultural visionary with respect to the development of the idea of a city of the world alongside its material progress in the built environment.[10]

Produced in 1876, the Löytved map lists 47 public edifices, around 85 per cent of which were constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. These buildings can almost entirely be encapsulated within what could be labelled as a 'merchant, missionary, soldier, spy' dynamic in which Beirut figures as part of a world commercial, educational, military and diplomatic network. The buildings are the locations of government departments, consulates, military posts, educational and health institutions, public parks and private gardens, hotels, cemeteries, archaeological sites, trade and transport facilities. Beirut in this map is projected as an emergent city of the world worthy of an imperial mapping exercise. Significantly, however, this cartographical projection and project had a limited immediate impact on local Beiruti everyday life at the time, yet the same cartographical imagination shaped later reconstructions of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut, as will be analysed in the following section.

HISTORICAL LITERATURE AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY BEIRUT AS A CITY OF THE WORLD

Jens Hanssen emphasizes 1888 as the pivotal year in which the Ottoman Empire officially decreed the creation of the province of Beirut and argues that 'the city of Beirut was at once the product, the object, and the project of imperial and urban politics of difference' (2005: 51, 4). Rabī' Jabir's *Bayrūt* trilogy, published between 2003 and 2007, is the most expansive body of historical literature that re-imagines the historical record pertaining to the crucial five decades preceding 1888 in the development of Beirut into a 'city of the world', a phrase that forms part of the trilogy's own title. The trilogy thus provides a retrospective counterpart to the projective cultural geographical material that has been analysed so far in this article.

Near the beginning of Volume I, the self-reflexive author-narrator describes a wealth of documents that he obtained as part of interviews with the fictional surviving but soon-to-die descendant of the al-Bārūdī family that is at the heart of the trilogy. Then we encounter an eight-page bibliography of real archival sources by both nineteenth-century Beirutis and visitors to the city, introduced by the note that 'it is a list of books (and a few manuscripts) with which one can dispense without altering anything in the life of Abd el-Jawād Ahmad al-Bārūdī' (Jabir 2003: 40–47).[11] It is possible to read in this note both an acknowledgement and a geocreative defiance of the historiographical burden that inflects Jabir's act of re-imagining mid-nineteenth-century Beirut.[12] The combined literary-historical, trans-historical and meta-historical aspects of the trilogy place it at the crossroads of the cultural geographical imaginaries that produced mid-nineteenth-century Beirut as a 'city of the world' and the historiographical imagination that reconfigured this production more than a century later both within the social sciences and the field of a nostalgia-inflected post-war cultural production.

Bayrūt stands at the intersection of various genres and discourses, namely historical literature and the urban novel or the 'city in literature'.[13] In its exploration of the rise of the nineteenth-century city in relation to the country (and the flow of merchants, migrants and soldiers across these spaces) and its

10. The holdings of the Danish National Archives in relation to Löytved's correspondence with Danish and other authorities during his consular stay in Beirut illuminate his multifaceted impact on the city.

11. All quotes from *Bayrūt* are my translation.

12. Al-Salibi (2009) and Hayek (2011) reflect on the intersections of history and fiction in the trilogy.

13. In *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Richard Lehan approaches the city as 'evolving through three stages of development – a commercial, industrial, and "world stage" city' and links its rise to the history of literary movements, particularly novelistic 'comic realism, romantic realism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism' (1998: 3). Jabir's work sets up Beirut in literature as both converging with and diverging from this western model: the turning point for the city in urban history occurs when internal and external momentum in commercial and industrial development brings it onto a new world-stage platform in the mid-nineteenth century while the turning point in its literary geography is initiated through a late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century combination of epic, realist, modernist and postmodernist modes of narration, exemplified in the trilogy.

In the world-literary context of the city trilogy, it is much closer to Naguib Mahfouz's

epic scope, *Bayrūt* can be read as a Lebanese counterpart to Emile Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart* cycle, published from 1871 to 1893 and covering the period 1852–70. In Zola's collection of twenty novels, one follows the rise and fall in the fortunes of Second Empire Paris that impacted the growing commercial role of Mediterranean cities like Beirut. The relation between these contexts – one imperial and the other emergent in the imaginative geography of French influence and colonization in the Mediterranean – is elucidated especially in Zola's novel *L'Argent* (*Money*) ([1891] 2014: 233) in the aforementioned collection. In the Lebanese context, the trilogy can be considered a grander and more narratively intricate counterpart to Alexandre Najjar's *Le Roman de Beyrouth* that was published in French the same year as the second volume of the trilogy (2005), and that, like the trilogy, covers the crucial 1860s, but significantly focuses on the city's transitioning into a capital of a newly formed Lebanon just as it fell under the French Mandate while it also extends to the recent 1975–90 war and its aftermath.

Through the eyes of Abd el-Jawād Ahmad al-Bārūdī, a newly arrived migrant who has fled Damascus for Beirut, we encounter at the start of Jabir's trilogy an early nineteenth-century walled, agricultural town quite unlike the big, commercial city that he came from and also different from the other then prominent Eastern Mediterranean cities, such as Akka and Alexandria:

> He thought that it was a town, because he was born in a city, and because just by glancing at the wall and the short extension of the wall to the sea, he realised that it was not a big city.
>
> (Jabir 2003: 36)

One of the most significant literary-geographical tropes by which the trilogy weaves the projective perspective with the narrative of urban development is the use of various bird's-eye-views at several geopolitically significant moments in the nineteenth century: the flight of the bats over early nineteenth-century walled Beirut (Jabir 2003: 84); the journey of Abd el-Jawād's eldest son Shahīn on top of the walls and trees of Beirut as it is invaded by the Egyptians in 1832 and the invader Ibrahim Pasha riding a white horse and extending Shahīn's vision of Beirut from the ground (2003: 177–84); the snow that covers the city in 1840 just before the rebellion in Bilad al-Shām and the defeat and expulsion of the Egyptians and their ally in Mount Lebanon Prince Bashir II by the British Austrian army aiding the Ottomans (2003: 323–25); and then the fleet's bombs that shower and mark the city's historical and popular landmarks including the surroundings of its missionary schools (namely the American Mrs Smith's School, later transformed into a church, whose surviving plaque is reproduced by Jabir near the end of the first volume [2003: 359–63]). Another bird's-eye-view is mediated from the palimpsestic Omari Mosque minaret, where we get the double perspective of Abd el-Jawād's youngest son Omar as he sees mid-nineteenth-century Beirut expanding in all directions and that of the blind imam, who leads prayers in the mosque and whose remembered Beirut remains a walled, gated town (Jabir 2005: 233).

The trilogy's multiple narrative trajectories map the ways in which the city's social and political fabric of Sunni and Greek Orthodox families and various small minorities, notably a Jewish one, was expanded with the arrival of great numbers of particularly Maronites who were fleeing persecution and civil wars in Mount Lebanon, Aleppo and Damascus in the 1840s and in bigger numbers

in the 1860s. Complicating the impact of migration across provincial borders was the flow of merchants, missionaries and militaries from the various empires battling over the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century: Ottomans, French, British and to a lesser extent, Italians, Russians, Prussians, Austrians and eventually Americans who came to sell, buy, occupy, urbanize, revolutionize and evangelize. In many ways, the trilogy shows how Beirut was produced as an object of knowledge in the middle of the nineteenth century in as much as knowledge that traverses and condenses conflictual cultures was produced in it. The trilogy also shows how local and foreign interests clashed or coalesced over the creation, in the mid-nineteenth century, of major institutions and enterprises that proved to be the pillars of Beirut as both a cosmopolitan and contested city: the quarantine, the expanding port, the silk industry, the Jesuit and Protestant missionary schools and universities, the Beirut-Damascus road and the railway, all of which contributed to investing the city with the projective status of semi-periphery within the world system.[14]

In the discussion of the history of the Egyptian occupation in Volume I, the socially, economically and politically powerful relatives of al-Bārūdīs, the Al-Fakhūrī men, reflect on the early phenomenal growth of Beirut:

> All Beirutis (whether they were Muslims who favor the Sultan over Egypt's ruler, or Christians who favor the Egyptian over the Sultan), merchants and non-merchants felt proud because they created this prosperity that Beirut was experiencing. Neither the Prince Mahmud Nāmī Bey [the *mutasallim* over Beirut appointed by the Egyptians in 1835] produced this prosperity by paving [the central] Souk al-Fashkha, organizing the sweeping and water-sprinkling of dirt roads, and lighting the lamps inside the gates; nor the French Consul Guys with his proposal that led to the establishment of the Quarantine; nor the merchants who came from Marseilles and Alexandria; nor the caravans that came from Aleppo, Horan, and Damascus. All this played an important role in Beirut's revival. Yes, certainly. But it was the cleverness, energy, and enthusiasm of Beirutis for this work, which was the decisive factor in this rise, this prosperity.
>
> (Jabir 2003: 261–62)

This passage imaginatively reconfigures the arguments made by several historians of Beirut – including Leila Tarazi Fawaz, Samir Kassir and Jens Hanssen – concerning local agency, including the role of family notables, that cut through foreign influence and that in later decades was institutionalized through the municipal organization. *Bayrūt*'s geocreative performance is thus deeply embedded in the multiple reconfigurations of the archive that produced and still produces Beirut as an object of knowledge while it mediates a simultaneously nostalgic and projective faith in the city's 'revival'.

Jabir weaves his description of the physical collapse and death of the al-Bārūdī patriarch Abd el-Jawād into his portrayal of the slow disappearance of a walled, agricultural town and the emergence of an expanding, increasingly connected port city (Jabir 2005: 108–12). At that juncture Beirut was about to become a coastal hub for import, export and especially transit (2005: 124). The wall gradually disappears; residential building expands *extra-muro*; and the Ottomans start constructing key governmental structures transforming Beirut into the capital of the *vilayet* of Saida, thus displacing Akka (2005: 100– 03). In this context it is significant that Butrus al-Bustānī's encyclopaedia *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif*

features as item 41 in the aforementioned bibliography and provides an archival framework for Jabir's portrayal of Beirut as a link between Europe and Syria. Jabir's trilogy seems to imaginatively mediate in multiple even if implicit ways the intersection of the urbanist perspective with the cultural-historical imaginary in al-Bustānī's writings on *tamaddun,* thus bringing the nineteenth-century intellectual framework to bear on twenty-first-century historiographical studies on and cultural reconstructions of Beirut.

The second and third volumes of *Bayrūt* emphasize that the fate of the new al-Bārūdī patriarch, the son Abd el-Rahīm, is even more closely tied up with the development of the city as Beirut becomes the stage of a transformative penetration of British interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Jabir reminds us that

> the English did not help Sultan Abd el-Megīd for the sake of his honey eyes. The 1838 Balta Limani trade Treaty opened the Ottoman Empire's markets to the English. Their rapid boats racing further than sail ships […] and Beirut changed.
>
> (Jabir 2005: 242)

The British arrived in Beirut not only as merchants and military forces but also as diplomats and, most interestingly as we have seen, as cartographers. In this respect, one of the most striking literary-geographical motifs of *Bayrūt* is the production of a page-size map of nineteenth-century Beirut that Jabir introduces as follows: 'If the reader wanted to leave modern times and return to nineteenth-century Beirut, he has to depend on surviving landmarks: the mosques of the Serail, al-Omari, and al-Nawfara. Here is the map of old Beirut' (Jabir 2007*:* 62).

On the one hand, Jabir's map departs from the nineteenth-century factual Beirut as it marks the fictional sites of the al-Bārūdī restaurant, Harat al-Bārūdī and Abdel-Jawād's Road or the White Road while it also includes several twentieth-century landmarks like the Al-Hayat newspaper for which Jabir works and the Virgin megastore that was inaugurated in the twenty-first century in what was earlier the nineteenth-century Opera building. On the other hand, this map is strikingly rectangular, its quadrangles limited by the gates of the city and the three mosques mentioned earlier. We thus encounter a fictional reproduction of the shape that emerges as dominant in Davie's study of the maps produced by the British, especially the detailed 'Beirut in 1841' map referred to earlier. However, the crucial addition of the landmarks that anchored Beirutis' 'lifeworld' in the mid-nineteenth century allows Jabir's map to stand closer to the elaborate 1876 Löytved map with its multiple public edifices and grand scale.

In *Spatiality*, Robert Tally Jr writes:

> Sometimes the very act of telling a story is also a process of producing a map. And this operates in both directions, of course: storytelling involves mapping, but a map also tells a story, and *the interrelation between space and writing tend to generate new places and new narratives.*
>
> (2013: 46, original emphasis)

Bayrūt performs an act of alternative imaginative mapping that disrupts – with the performative statement 'here is the map' – the cartographical representational process as a key instrument of empire in the mid-nineteenth century. *Bayrūt* also

Figure 6: 'Daniel Bliss standing at north corner of Bliss Hall', American University of Beirut Special Collections (Moore Collection, no. 46).

multiplies its relations to foundational maps while punctuating them with the lived and imagined spaces of the everyday and with twenty-first-century sites of capital and media that have retrospectively marked the cultural geographical imagining of Beirut. This trans-historical literary-cartographical performance is contrapuntally refracted in the bird's-eye views surveyed earlier and the narratological perspectives that filter the multiple gazes of merchants, migrants, soldiers and spies that came, saw and conquered Beirut.[15]

In many ways, the merchant-builder-visionary Abd el-Rahīm functions as the narrative locus for mediating the thread of 'projecting Beirut' that runs through the latter two volumes of the trilogy. In the gradually thriving environment of mid-nineteenth-century Beirut, he builds a *khan* or caravanserai, first known as *Khan al-Touta* or Mulberry khan, to attract the commercial flow coming from these various destinations. When Christian refugees fleeing civil strife in Aleppo arrive in Beirut in 1850, they are welcomed by missionaries who rent the khan from Abd el-Rahīm (Jabir 2005: 170), and then the refugees themselves start settling and developing new residential areas outside the perimeter of the old city. Significantly, Abd el-Rahīm's expansion of Harat al-Bārūdī reinforces the class-based construction and perception of this kind of complex of family houses as the now-established and prosperous migrant's Beiruti home.

In a sweeping literary-geographical gesture that engages the archive, specifically Bliss's reminiscences filtered through the novel's recurrent motif of the bird's-eye view, Jabir shows the impact of the American missionaries' expansionist agenda and conquering gaze on Beirut's urban development and their interconnections with emergent sectarian dynamics (Figure 6):

The Evangelicals bought a huge piece of land to build a university. Beirutis wondered (why would the Americans build a house among foxes, in the

16. See Elizabeth M. Holt's *Fictitious Capital: Silk, Cotton, and the Rise of the Arabic Novel* for a detailed discussion of the ways in which the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century serialized Arabic novel mediated 'the complex speculative practices attending the rise of finance capital' (2017: 2). It is important to remember that Jabir's trilogy was published at the cusp of the twenty-first-century financial crisis and in a volatile local financial environment marked by the fluctuating stock prices of Solidere, the controversial public–private company charged with the post-war redevelopment of Beirut's Central District and its rejuvenation as 'Paris of the Middle East'. From this perspective, *Bayrūt* can be read in dialogue with Khalīl al-Khurī's novel *Way – idhan lastu bi-ifranjī* ('Alas, I am not a foreigner') that was serialized in *Hadīqat al-Akhbār* from 1859 (published in book form in 1860) and that articulated the contemporaneous speculative dynamics of Beirut, as analysed by Holt.

Ras Beirut wilderness?) But Daniel Bliss, the missionary who chose that spot, tells us in his memoir that he did not resort to buying that land except after close study and long surveys of the fields surrounding Beirut. Bliss did not understand how this hill overlooking the rest of the country and the bay of Ain el-Mreisseh would remain empty of construction and people, while the Eastern side of Beirut was full of palaces and farms! Daniel Bliss did not realize the fears of the Sursocks and the rich displaced people from the Shām regarding construction behind the Turkish *qishlaq*, on the hills over Ain el-Mreisseh. Had Bliss lived at the time of the modern Lebanese Civil War, had he seen the city being divided into two cities between 1975 and 1990 by a line that touched Ain el-Mreisseh, he would have paid attention.

(Jabir 2005: 186–87)

In this multifaceted geocreative performance, the trilogy reviews, across the lens of the missionary archive and the political geography of 'the *modern* Lebanese civil war' (emphasis added), a contrapuntal trajectory of crisis fuelling and undermining the Beirut project.

Alongside the missionary gaze, Jabir presents Abd el-Rahīm's vision of what will become the Beirut-Damascus road in more than five pages (Jabir 2005: 264–69). The last volume tells of Beiruti fortunes rising and falling during the battle of interests over the construction of the road, emphasizing the impact, on local business, of the concession for building the Beirut–Damascus road given by the Ottomans to Edmond de Perthuis, who represented the French company Messageries Impériales. The early history of this venture that expanded the regional network of merchants across Beirut coincided with the history of the 1860 war not only in terms of the French imprint on both the conflict and the enterprise but also because the road eased the movement of refugees, referred to as the 'people of the tents' (Jabir 2007: 170) flowing into Beirut.

As a counterpart to the entrepreneur Abd el-Rahīm, one of his father's wives, the sensually corpulent matriarch Suheila al-Nabulsī, is engaged in raising silkworms, an activity that established Beirut's prominent role in trade with western industrialized metropoles in the nineteenth century. Hanssen notes that as early as the 1830s 'especially the silk trade with Mount Lebanon – propelled Beirut into the orbit of the Europe-centered world-economy' (2005: 31). By 1853 silk became the top export product from Syria and Mount Lebanon, particularly destined for the French silk factories of Lyon. The trilogy places Beirut at the centre of this trans-Mediterranean commerce that Yasar Eyup Ozveren analyses as a 'global urban hierarchy of silk-related activities' (1990: 143) in the context of which cities alternately rose and fell from prominence. The trilogy also engages with the rise in post-1860 Beirut of speculative financial transactions anchored in particular in the silk trade, thus fuelling the emergent capitalist urban ethos.[16] Through the appearances of Suheila al-Nabulsī as a resiliently productive then diseased and deteriorating force amid her mulberry trees and silkworms and by tracing the political geography of the 1860 crisis that brought refugees from burning mulberry lands, Jabir sets the shifting fortunes of the silk trade as a substantial component of the fragile yet persistent material and symbolic project of constructing Beirut as a city of the world amidst imperial (Ottoman and European) and local contests to create or consolidate positions in the world economy.

Throughout the trilogy and across a historical trajectory that starts with the Egyptian invasion, we learn about the influence of not only merchants but also diplomats in the political geography of Beirut. According to Tarazi Fawaz, 'By the 1840s, a number of European consulates had been upgraded, and by mid-century France, England, Russia, and Austria had consulates-general there. Others, including Prussia, Sardinia, Tuscany, Spain, Naples, Holland, and Greece, soon joined them' (1983: 131). In this respect *Bayrūt* often refers to the French consul Henry Guys and his contribution to the early nineteenth-century emergence of the city on the world stage through the construction of important edifices and facilities including the quarantine.

Similarly, a significant yet less pronounced American consular presence in Beirut started from the 1830s. The trilogy refers extensively to the consul Robert Johnson's report on the cholera epidemic that swept over Bilad al-Shām in 1865, took 3000 lives and drove tens of thousands of Beirutis temporarily out of the city. The report documents an important juncture in the transformation of Beirut's social geography in the context of migration routes that were traced and re-traced by not only political crises but also health crises, as in this case (Jabir 2007: 322–23). In addition to dividing fatality figures according to sectarian groups, the detailed numbers and statistics in the report interestingly analyse the correlations between the geography of the epidemic and that of the region. The consular knowledge and power dynamic are translated in a mapping exercise in which Beirut emerges as the centre of a geopolitically significant region where the discourse about sanitation is essential to larger security issues. Also as Hanssen notes, 'The nexus between city and civilization was most clearly expressed at the time in a new discourse on public health' (2005: 15), thus mediating the practical implications of *tamaddun* on the Beirut urban project as it faced a crisis. Interestingly, instances of urban communal recognition in the world of *Bayrūt* often occur through consular mediation: Beirutis see themselves and their increasingly heterogeneous environment in the first big mirror brought into the city by the American consul Jasper Chasseaud in the 1830s (Jabir 2003: 234).

Alexandre Najjar's *Le Roman de Beyrouth* offers a similarly complex fictionalization of the 1858–61 period, delving extensively into the role of the European (particularly French and British) consuls (represented as Comte de Bentivoglio and Sir Moore, respectively), their dragomans or translators (Roukoz, the main character), and Napoleon III's troops in negotiating the conflict and momentarily putting down the conflagration. In Najjar's literary geography of Beirut, the history of the iconic Place des Canons (or al-Burj, which is now more commonly known as Martyrs' Square) is marked by the arrival of both refugees fleeing the bloodshed in the mountains and French soldiers arriving by sea (Najjar 2005: 28–54).

The 1860 crisis and the subordination of Beirut, after 1865, as a *mutasarrifiyya* to the province of Syria, placed enormous pressures on the city's economy. The trilogy reveals how an emergent civil society changes the fortunes of the city and legitimizes the soon-to-be provincial capital – which becomes a national capital half a century later – through the social, economic, ethical and legal powers of the municipal organization. As Hanssen argues, the efforts of this institution allowed Beirut to evade 'the urban colonialism that so virulently partitioned North African cities' (2005: 220). Abd el-Rahīm's brother-in-law, with the support of a powerful established Beiruti Christian family, the Sursocks, tries to convince the council of the need to expand the port while local merchants are initially opposed to new taxes to fund the project. In the last pages of the trilogy we read about the involvement of the French Messageries Impériales in the

expansion plans and the pressure that this placed on the Ottomans to expand the internal road network.

The characters that populate Jabir's second and third volumes, business partners and family members of Abd el-Rahīm, with close contacts in Istanbul – and with historical counterparts in the real mid-nineteenth-century Beirut, and foreign residents tied to European capitals, promote and invest in these colossal projects that revolutionize mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Beirut's material structure and more importantly its representational status at the crossroads of imperial interventions and an emergent global urban modernity. As Abou-Hodeib argues with respect to Beirut in the context of the Tanzimat or 1839–76 Ottoman reforms,

> more modern governance was most successful where twinned with a local desire for self-governance and an appetite for forging a localized modernity capable of living up to the challenges posed by a world knit tighter by new technologies, modes of transport, and trade patterns.
>
> (2017: 8)

Jabir's trilogy is deeply infused with this multi-scalar cultural geographical consciousness that transpires in studies of the impact of the dynamic municipal organization on the material and symbolic transformation of the city in the period preceding Abdülhamid II's centralizing endeavours.

The finale of the trilogy comes just after Abd el-Rahīm travels to attend the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. Since its opening, the canal attracted French and British commercial, military and political interests while it allowed easier passage for tourists, photographers and cartographers. Its subsequent tumultuous history impacted the evolution of Beirut's role in the new political geography of commerce and conquest in the Eastern Mediterranean. In *Bayrūt*'s literary geography, Beirut not only welcomes merchants, migrants, diplomats, soldiers and missionaries but also thrusts its enterprising elite across the wide blue expanse. The Mediterranean brings goods and knowledge, but also invading armies and diseases. It carries away Beirutis seeking riches but also those fleeing conflict and war. Across the trilogy, the Mediterranean figures as a material and metaphorical space that marks mid-nineteenth-century Beirut's fluid boundaries as it becomes a city of the world, a significant geopolitical entity whose contested spaces would evolve in the twentieth century into the embattled heart of a nation anchored in the contradictions of the cultural geographical imagination that projected it in crisis and as crisis.

RE-IMAGINING BEIRUT AS 'CITY OF THE WORLD'

Re-conceptualizing 'cosmopolitan society and its enemies', Ulrich Beck argues that

> the cosmopolitan crisis is not only about a crisis of cosmos and nature, a crisis of polis, and a crisis of rationality and control; it is also to a great degree about profound contradiction between a time-based consciousness of a globally shared future *without* adequate forms of institutionalized action and a past-based national memory *without* a globally shared collective future (or, to be more precise, with a past-based shared *hostility* towards the future).
>
> (2002: 27, original emphasis)

A particular form of cosmopolitan crisis anchors the ongoing project of Beirut as a city of the world: it is a contested yet continued projective cultural geographical imagining of tentative collective relationality situated both within a future-orientated global capitalist urban modernity and against a consciousness of multiple beginnings in crisis. It is a project of starts and restarts, whether in the 1860s that brought migrants, merchants, soldiers, cartographers, photographers, missionaries and public intellectuals, into a forward-looking scheme of *constructing* Beirut against crisis, or in the 1990s and the current moment of *reconstructing* Beirut beyond crisis as 'An Ancient City for the Future', which is the postmodern slogan of Solidere that dangerously displaces the crucial constitutive spatio-temporality of at least one hundred and fifty years of urban history. Beirut's urban narrative can be retraced beyond the incommensurability of the ancient 'city' to the specificity of the mid-nineteenth-century emergent *city* as it is variously recovered by historians, sociologists and urbanists. Yet it remains partially opaque especially for prospective comparative approaches[17] outside a structured understanding of the network of mid-nineteenth-century discourses (particularly on *tamaddun* and missionary activity) and images (especially photographs and maps) that fuelled the cultural geographical imagining of Beirut as a city of the world and the postwar cultural, especially literary-historical, production that re-engages with it. In both instances of constructing and reconstructing Beirut, the disconnected spatialities of institutionalized action and temporalities of national consciousness have made the project of worlding Beirut a fraught undertaking that seems to repeat, with a difference, the generative and degenerative potentials of the cosmopolitan cultural, economic and socio-political ideals with which the city continues to be inflected.

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17. Due to length constraints, it is impossible to engage here with the various potentially vast possibilities of studying the production of Beirut as 'city of the world' alongside other cities in the context of a mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman world-city imaginary. While it eschews a close analysis of Beirut, the edited collection by Freitag et al. (2011) would be relevant in this context as it focuses on the crucial impact of migration on Ottoman urban modernity.

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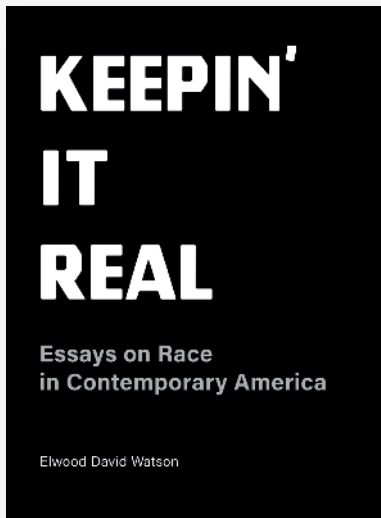
Keepin' It Real

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By Elwood David Watson

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