# INTERTEXTUALITY AS A REFLECTION OF THEMATIC CONCERNS IN GHADA SAMMAN'S *BEIRUT NIGHTMARES*

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**Abstract:** This article sheds light on role of intertextuality in reflecting some of the major thematic concerns in Ghada Samman's *Beirut Nightmares*. Through a matrix of different texts, she attempts to convey the honorific experience of her narrator during the Lebanese Civil War. Samman exposes the impact of civil war on the daily life and the psychology of her major character. Thus, intertextuality serves as an important thematic tool that contributes in providing a nuanced understanding of the narrator's tragic experience. Samman weaves myths and literary texts in her narrative in order to comment on the devastating situation resulted from this internal conflict. She highlights the dialogical relationship between her work and previous ones to locate the narrator's experience within a broader historical and literary context. In this study, *Beirut Nightmares* is understood through its dependency on prior works to explore themes of confinement, fear, issues of artistic creativity and destruction. Samman's use of a web of texts enables her to evoke similar feelings within a different socio-cultural context. Accordingly, intertextuality contributes in creating different levels of understanding regarding the narrator's suffering.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, *Beirut Nightmares*, Ghada Samman, Civil War.

## L'INTERTEXTUALITÉ COMME REFLET DES PRÉOCCUPATIONS THÉMATIQUES DANS LES CAUCHEMARS DE GHADA SAMMAN À BEYROUTH

**Résumé :** L'objectif de cet article est de clarifier le rôle de l'intertextualité pour refléter certaines des principales préoccupations thématiques dans *Les Cauchemars de Beyrouth* de Ghada Samman. Grâce à une matrice de textes différents, elle tente de transmettre l'expérience honorifique de son narrateur pendant la Guerre Civile Libanaise. Samman expose l'impact de la guerre civile sur la vie quotidienne et montre son effet sur la psychologie de son personnage principal. Ainsi, l'intertextualité est considérée comme un moyen important afin de parvenir à une compréhension approfondie de l'expérience horrible du narrateur. Samman tisse des mythes et des textes littéraires dans son récit afin de commenter la situation dévastatrice résultant du conflit interne. Elle expose la relation dialogique entre son travail et les précédents afin de localiser son expérience dans un contexte historique et littéraire plus large. Dans cette étude, *Les Cauchemars de Beyrouth* est compris par sa dépendance aux œuvres précédentes pour explorer des thèmes comme le confinement, la peur, les questions de créativité artistique et la destruction. L'utilisation par Samman d'un filet de textes lui permet d'évoquer des sentiments similaires dans un contexte socio-culturel différent. En conséquence, l'intertextualité contribue à créer différents niveaux de compréhension concernant la souffrance du narrateur.

**Mots-clés :** Intertextualité, *Cauchemars de Beyrouth*, Ghada Samman, Guerre Civile

## Introduction

Ghada Samman (Ghādah al-Sammān) is one of the prominent female writers in the Arab World. Her novel *Beirut Nightmares* (Kawābīs Bayrūt ) ,which was published in 1976, is set against the backdrop of the Lebanese Civil War. Samman's major character is presented as an intellectual; she is a writer and works as a journalist. She is fascinated with reading books, and it breaks her heart seeing them devoured by the flames. The narrator treats the book like "a human being with whom [she]'d engaged in a conversation, an exchange of ideas…" (Samman,1976/1997:292). This fascination creates a dialogical relationship between the narrator and her books. As we read the novel, we notice how she incorporates different texts and myths. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the intertextual echoes that reverberate throughout Samman's novel. This paper attempts to answer the following questions: What role does intertextuality play in *Beirut Nightmares*? What are the reasons behind Samman's use of intertextuality? And How does intertextuality contribute in providing an in-depth understanding of the narrator's experience? In order to answer these questions, this paper explores the importance of intertextuality in reflecting and reinforcing some of the major concerns in the novel, such as fear, confinement, problems of artistic creativity and destruction.

In his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), T. S. Eliot argues that "│[n]o poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (294). Eliot believes that a poet, a writer or an artist of any sort cannot claim to forge original works because his ideas are built upon a preceding set of ideas and models, which they should acknowledge. Thus, Eliot attempts to establish intertextual connections with past knowledge within the process of artistic creativity. Similarly, the French-Bulgarian theorist Julia Kristeva, to whom the term intertextuality is attributed, declares that "any text is a construct as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 1980:66). Intertextuality, then, refers to how a text is interlaced with a number of other texts. It highlights the interconnectedness of texts, which all together participate in the generation of a given text's meaning. In other words, texts are not self-sufficient products/constructs of their authors; instead, they are in constant dialogue with a myriad of previous works. In her work "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966), Kristeva uses Mikhail Bakhtin's notions on dialogism and carnival as her points of departure. Kristeva maintains that Bakhtin's pioneering ideas alter the conventional thinking of seeing literary texts as stable and self-contained. He perceived them as dynamic and drawing relation from other literary structures (Kristeva,1966: 35/36). Thus, Bakhtin's concepts open a gateway to the existence of tapestry of textual relations inherent in novelistic discourse.

Roland Barthes, in his turn, focuses on the premise that texts are modeled after their predecessors. In his essay, " The Death of the Author" (1967), Barthes sees the text as "a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture" and the only function of an author is "to mingle writings, to counter some by others, so as never rely on just one" (53). Judith Still and Michael Worthon, in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practice (*1999), note that "the writer is a reader of texts (in the broadest sense) before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations, and influences of every kind"(1). It means that the initial position of a writer is that of a reader, a consumer of previous material and sources which are manifested in his/her creative works in forms of citations, references or

quotations. The interpretative process, according to Barthes, belongs to the realm of the reader. The multilayered meanings that a text may engender due its intertextual relation is under the monopoly of the reader's interpretation (1967:53).By the same token, Graham Allen maintains that the reading process "plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts"(2000:1).Therefore, intertextuality adds depth and multiplicity to the understanding of texts as the reader attempts to figure out the different possible connections.

In "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" (1986), James E. Porter differentiates between iterability and presupposition as two kinds of intertextuality. He states that "[i]terability refers to the "repeatability" of certain textual fragments, to citation in its broadest sense to include not only explicit allusions, references, and quotations within a discourse, but also unannounced sources and influences, cliches, phrases in the air, and traditions"(Porter,1986:35). Porter clarifies that texts embody different ideas and pieces from previous texts which contribute in the construction of their meaning. For presupposition, he explains that it "refers to assumptions a text makes about its referent, its readers, and its context- to portions of the text which are read, but which are not explicitly 'there' " (35). Intertextuality works through certain techniques that can be explicit or implicit. Among these techniques, we have allusion, citations, references, parody, pastiche, collage and sources.

The author of a given text can use intertextuality consciously or unconsciously. According to John Fitzsimmons (2013), intertextuality can be "obligatory, optional and accidental" where "[t]hese variations depend on two key factors: the intention of the writer and the significance of the reference" (15). By obligatory intertextuality, he means the deliberate infusion of texts within a certain writer's work to make a comparison or to set up relationships with other texts. This act, in his perspective, depends on how much knowledge the reader possesses about the original material before he can fully grasp the text in hand. Optional intertextuality is considered less interesting because it does not really add depth to the meaning of a text (Fitzsimmons, 2013). For Accidental intertextuality, Fitzsimmons contends that "[a]ccidental intertextuality is when readers often connect a text with another text, cultural practice or a personal experience, without there being any tangible anchor-point within the original text" (2013:15). Simply put, it is when a writer use ideas of previous authors without being aware of this. In this case, it is the job of the reader to locate the intertextuality through making connections in order to understand the underlying meaning (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Intertextuality along its different tropes and strategies can be a useful method to analyze literary texts and give them new dimensions to reflect the worries and the aims of writers.

This article attempts to explore intertextuality as an effective thematic tool to reflect the sufferings of the major character. This diary-like narrative mixed with surrealistic and supernatural elements exhibits the horrors of the civil war through building connections with previous work. The narrator, who remains anonymous, portrays her dreadful circumstances as she struggles to survive amidst chaos and destruction. Subsequently, the novel is examined through the prism of intertextuality which contributes in providing a multifaceted understanding of the narrator's horrific experience.

## 1. Fear and Confinement

In *Beirut Nightmares*, Samman exposes the impact of civil war on the daily life as well as highlights its effect on the psychology of people. Stefan G. Meyer maintains that "[w]hat Ghada Samman evokes is not a social or political reality, but an inner truth, the state of the city's 'soul'"(2001:119). The novel presents the narrator's painful experience and her feelings of confusion due to "her traumatic recognition of the superficiality of social ties, the dark side of the human soul, and her disenchantment with previously held social values . . ." (Al-Mousa, 2020: 239). The opening of the novel reflects the overwhelming mood of the whole story. Samman writes that:

> When dawn broke, we were all staring at each other in amazement, wondering: how did we stay alive? How did we survive that night? We'd spent a night during which bombs, explosives and rockets had been galloping around our house as if the elements had gone mad. The explosions were coming so thick and fast you might have thought we were in some tacky, overdone film.
>
> Samman (1976/1997:1)

The atmosphere of the novel's beginning evokes a state of terror and demise. In the middle of this, the narrator is trying hard to evacuate young and old people who are "least capable of enduring the terror" (Samman, 1976/1997:2). After returning home, she realizes that she is going to be "the prisoner of a nightmare that was to drag on and on …" (Samman, 1976/1997:3). It becomes very difficult to leave the house and go outside even to buy food or other necessities. The feelings of confinement and imprisonment are fostered when a sniper is mercilessly shooting whatever moves. Anyone who dares to come out, a bullet will pierce through his/her head. The sniper shoots a basket containing some loaves of bread that a woman was trying to rise with a rope. The narrator considers this a clear message from the sniper, telling them all that "I'm capable of hitting any target, however tiny or delicate it may be. Every one of your hearts is within my range. I could aim inside the very pupils of your eyes without missing the mark. I can aim my bullets at any part of your bodies I choose" (Samman, 1976/1997:7).

The sniper represents the high surveillance and the nightmarish reality where individual freedom is limited. The narrator realizes that they "were all prisoners of that mysterious ghoul, hidden somewhere" (Samman, 1976/1997:8). Samman compares the sniper to a ghoul, a mythical creature common in the Arabic folklore. She incorporates this concept as an intertext to reinforce the sense of fear, horror and violence. In Arabic folklore, the ghoul is depicted as a fearsome creature, a monster or demon with a violent nature. Regardless of the different descriptions, this mythical creature circulates in tales and stories, including children ones to induce fear. Considering the writer's Arabic background, she borrows the idea of the ghoul to reinforce the cruelty of the sniper, who is like a ghoul, evokes imminent death. His ghoulish spirit cannot distinguish between humans and animals because his motive is to instil the feeling of terror and powerlessness. The internalization of fear on the part of the inhabitants serves to create docile bodies; no one dares to step the thresholds of his/her house. The narrator understands that this ghoulish sniper "held sway over not only the circulation of the blood in our veins but also the course of our minds and souls"( Samman, 1976/1997:8). The ghoul is used not only to induce fear, but also to ensure a disciplinary power. By incorporating this myth,

Samman seeks to pierce through the reader's collective imagination in order to emphasise the brutality of war, and this sniper will be remembered as the ghoul of the civil war due to his cruelty.

Consequently, the sniper becomes a source of evil, terror and imprisonment. In another instance, the narrator describes the sniper's head as having "a single eye in the middle of his forehead, like the ogres in fairy tales, and the body of a robot, like the ogres of modern time"( Samman, 1976/199757). Again, the idea of ghoul is present to reflect the ruthlessness of the sniper. Yet, this time, Samman remodels it through creating a hybridized image of this creature. Samman provides a different view of ogres through placing them within a different socio-cultural context that fits the prevailing mood of the civil war. The robot-like characteristic of the ogre is attributed to the modern technologies used in wars, which render the image even uglier and scarier.

Her description of the sniper as having one eye in his face may recall another mythical creature from the Greek mythology, the Cyclops. This connection offers a different layer of understanding and a profound view of the narrator's plight. The single eye refers to the sniperscope mounted on the sniper's rifle to enable him locate his target and shoot accurately. The suffering that the sniper evokes can be understood within the myth of Polyphemus and Odysseus to emphasise the sense of terror, panic and entrapment in a country torn apart by war. He is portrayed as a modern Polyphemus, in the sense that, he holds people as captives inside their homes by means of a deadly bullet instead of the huge rock used to block the cave's entry in the original myth. Unlike Polyphemus whose visible giant features establish his strength, the sniper reinforces his authority by being invisible and undetectable. Like what happened to Odysseus, the narrator along her neighbours, Amin and Amm Fu'ad, become captives in the virtual prison the sniper has created. Thus, any escape plan becomes a difficult matter because, in this case, Odysseus's stake is deemed impractical. The narrator needs a more sophisticated plan to escape; she requires something that copes with the modern war technologies. Through the incorporation of mythical creatures, the writer explores the human nature and the capability of humans to transform into harmful beings able to bring demolition and long-lasting suffering. Samman portrays the sniper as the "enemy of life in all its forms"(1976/1997:57). In addition to shooting people, he shoots animals, like what happen to a poor dog and objects, such as the case of the bread loaf in the basket. The writer uses common imagined creatures to indict the dreadful circumstances that have swept the country as well as to emphasise the amount of violence and terror.

To emphasize more the idea of confinement, Samman weaves a famous fairy tale within the fabrics of her novel. The narrator comments on her inability to deliver her article to the journal where she works. She says, "I'll tie the article to my long hair and let it down from the window. Then along will come a horseman on a bullet-proof horse and climb up to the window on my braided tresses. H'll ask me if I'm in need of anything, then climb back down my braids to read the article and whisk it away to the printer" (Samman, 1976/1997:56). This alludes to the story of Rapunzel, one of the famous tales recorded by the Brothers Grimm. What attracts the reader is the way Samman rewrites the story to accentuate the issue of incarceration. The bullet-proof horse symbolizes the modern vehicle used in war, like the narrator describes "[t]he only modern-day bullet proof horse was the armoured car" (Samman, 1976/1997:56). Because

of the bitterness of circumstances, the only means of transportation that can be safe is a tank. The massive bombardments and the stray bullets restrict the mobility of people. As a journalist, the narrator experiences a deep sense of confinement due to her incapacity to send her articles on time. In addition to her physical entrapment, she is unable to make her own words heard to the reading public. The narrator, as a modern Rapunzel, transcends the mere romantic dimension of the tale. The relation that she establishes with the horseman on the armoured horse seems to be more occupational. His ultimate job is to get her article printed and to see if she needs something. By placing Rapunzel in a milieu of conflicts, Samman problematizes the idea of confinement in order to expose the difficulty and the severity of the situation. In times of war, specifically in modern days, Rapunzel is a reflection of those who are forced to stay locked out facing food shortage, fatal bullets and bombs. Yet, they are still clinging to the braids and the tresses of hope, believing that help is coming no matter how complex the situation is.

The feeling of confinement makes the narrator thinks that she is like "the Prisoner of Zenda, or the Count of Monte Cristo as he rapped on the wall of his dungeon in a plea for help from his fellow prison" (Samman, 1976/1997:57). Samman incorporates the works of two writers whose main preoccupation revolve around imprisonment: Anthony's Hope *The Prisoner of Zenda* and Alexandre's Dumas *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The writer makes use of these works to place her situation within a wider literary tradition. Throughout history, literature captures issues related to confinement that generally occur during times of political instability. The narrator's entrapment in her house resembles the King of Ruritania's imprisonment in the castle of Zenda by his brother. She is like a prisoner who desperately waits for someone to help her escape the imminent death. Additionally, she is like The Count of Monte Cristo (Edmond Dantès) who was innocently accused and imprisoned in Château d'If, an escape-proof prison. Many innocent people fall victims of forced house arrest during the civil war. Communication with the outside world becomes hard and almost impossible similar to the case of Edmund who was knocking the wall so that another prisoner could hear him. The narrator maintains that "[i]t was as if I myself were all those whose communication with the outside world had come to require a superhuman, creative effort" (Samman, 1976/1997:57). Building upon prior works tackling imprisonment, Samman attempts to universalize her nightmarish experience during that period of unrest. Hence, the narrator becomes an embodiment of all people who are subjected to different kinds of confinement.

## 2. The Issue of Artistic Creativity in a State of War

The mood of terror and fear resulted from the civil war reveals the tension between the pen and the bullet. As a writer, the narrator experiences a severe psychological conflict because of her feelings of helplessness. After realizing what was going around her, she states:

> I was living in a battlefield without a single weapon to my name. Nor had I mastered the use of anything other than this skinny little object that went scurrying over the paper between my fingers, leaving quivering lines behind it like the trail of blood left by a wounded man crawling over a field of white cotton. . . It seemed that I was living in a verse of poetry. My pillow was stuffed with myths and fairy tales, and my blanket was made of tomes full of philosophical treatises. All my revolutions took place and all my slain met their end in fields strewn with letters of the alphabet and bombshells made of words.
>
> Samman (1976/1997: 4-5)

The narrator begins to doubt the effectiveness of writing and its uselessness in confronting the evils of war. The feelings of weakness makes her question the very principles of artistic production as well as the role of artists in such circumstances. In times of massive bombing, the narrator takes refuge in the hallway where she "sat staring morosely at [her] books and the words that had now turned into fighters in the streets. The terror [she] felt made [her] think of what Pygmalion's creator must have experienced when the sculpture he'd fashioned uttered its first word"( Samman, 1976/1997:176). The narrator incorporates the Greek Myth of Pygmalion and Galatea narrated in Ovid's Metamorphoses to comment on her situation. She conjures up this story to highlight the process of artistic creativity within the context of war. By means of the supernatural, the narrator sees the words in the books she writes turning into fighters. Here, it is important to clarify the interconnectedness of the basic components included in this process, namely the artist and the created object, in order to understand the writer's point. Samman incorporates the theme of metamorphoses to exhibit the profound worries and the internal struggle of writers during wars. Pygmalion, a talented sculptor, makes a statue of a beautiful woman and falls in love with her . Because he sees women as flawed beings, he sculptures a perfect woman out of ivory. Galatea can be viewed as Pygmalion's aspiration for a corrected version of reality where this sculpture transcends the flaws of the women he used to encounter. Similarly, the narrator considers her books and writings as a space where she can treat the ills of her society to induce change. As a writer, she uses her pen to criticize the existing problems in her society in an effort to bring improvements. The narrator contends, "the lines I'd penned had always conveyed a call for change, a call to cleanse the face of this homeland of ours of all ugliness, washing it with justice, joy, freedom and equality" (Samman, 1976/1997:47). Perhaps, both Pygmalion and the narrator share the same objective which is to produce a better version of reality. Yet, the narrator's creation is transformed into something horrific and destructive. The words "had emerged from inside [her] books to take on flesh as human beings who were now bearing arms and fighting." (Samman, 1976/1997:47). The intertextual relationship between *Beirut Nightmares* and the myth of Pygmalion contributes in shedding light on the process of artistic productivity, which sometimes exceeds the limits of its creation and turns into something fearsome. It echoes the hardships and the psychological turmoil of writers facing difficult conditions.

Between the pen and the bullets, the narrator enters a world of perplexities where her only desire is to survive. She declares that the "[c]ivil war offers a rare opportunity to the artist who goes through it and survives, since he comes out alive not just once but twice!" (Samman, 1976/1997:168). According to her, the civil war is a unique experience for artists because it has an impact on their life. The artist's first survival is physical, where he/she manages to come out alive with his/her heart beating. The second one is related to his/her art and how it holds out to tell the story of survival. This calls to mind the figure of Scheherazade from *The Arabian Nights*. The narrator believes that a "well-used pen is better than a stray bullet", and she is "waiting until the gunfire falls silent and the pen regains its voice" (Samman, 1976/1997:50) The narrator becomes a prototype of Scheherazade who tells stories in order to survive. She decides to write in order to survive the cruelty of the world that the civil war creates. She states that:

As I stood on the dividing line between life and death, I felt a kind of mysterious tranquility enveloping my spirit- the kind of tranquility that I suspect must be experienced by those who've crossed over from the realm of sanity to that of madness. It was the same sensation that always came over me whenever I sat down to write, to record what was to become *Beirut Nightmares*.

Samman (1976/1997:131)

The narrator manages to forge an in-between space (life/death) where she can write and record her frightful experience. The manuscript of *Beirut Nightmares* is born from the womb of suffering as the writer eagerly strives to register what she has witnessed. Samman emulates Scheherazade; she takes the reader from one nightmare to another in order to communicate her awful experience. In the novel, the narrator realizes that what really matters is "to remain alive-for only then could [she] [goes] on writing" (Samman, 1976/1997:324). The incorporation of this "Schahrazadian move" (Vinson,2002:21) serves to emphasize the idea of survival through writing within a poisonous socio-political context. The narrator's story will remain alive between the pages of her book for many generations. Writing motivates her to survive because, like she says "[i]t's the artist's duty to remain alive in order to continue fulfilling his mission: writing!" (Samman, 1976/1997:50). Her spirit will be stored between the lines of her story since every word will be a living witness of her painful experience.

## 3. Destruction and Chaos

The image of destruction and chaos characterizes the whole novel. In one of her nightmares, the narrator sees her brother, Shadi, in the prison, which was going up in flames. To her surprise, Shadi was overjoyed looking at people dying. She explains that "ever since he'd been slapped behind bars in what seemed like an act of tyrannical aggression, he'd felt loathing and revulsion towards everything around him" (Samman, 1976/1997:277). In fact, Shadi was captured because he was carrying an unlicensed weapon. Yet, the pistol he was holding is no more than " 'an antique-just some rare piece that people might collect as a hobby the way they do stamps'"(Samman, 1976/1997:73).  In such an awful dream, the narrator observes her beloved brother transforming into a merciless destroyer. Shadi was perplexed and did not understand what was happening to him as everything he touched turns into flames. He becomes, as the narrator describes, the "Midas of Lebanon"( Samman, 1976/1997:277), the carrier of destruction. She, further, comments:

The grass was sure to die whenever his feet trod, the women he touched would turn to mounds of ashes and singing children would fall silent whenever he came along. Even the stray cats and dogs that roamed the streets seem to avoid coming too close to him, as if he were some sort of horrifying apparition.

Samman (1976/1997:277)

Samman has plaited the Greek myth of King Midas and the Golden Touch to intensify the amount of destruction caused by the war. Shadi is a microcosmic version of those innocent people who were imprisoned without a valid accusation. This kind of people are filled with a sense of frustration and disappointment since they no longer believe in justice. As a result, they

develop vengeful feelings, which transform them into instruments of destruction making the situation even worse. Additionally, things become more complicated when certain agents in power attempt to sway these disillusioned people. According to the narrator, her brother befriends someone in the prison who appears to be " a bodyguard for a certain bey and Shadi had actually gone so far to work with him and his gang once they were released" because "the bey was too happy to have 'cultured' types join his retinue"( Samman, 1976/1997:277). Although this was a nightmare, it reflects the horrific reality that the narrator is trying to convey. According to Joseph T. Zeidan, "[n]ightmares symbolize the highest state of consciousness, and the nightmares become the expression of the heroine's state of mind during the civil war" (1995:201). Likewise, Meyer indicates that "[j]ust as there is no clear dividing line between the narrator's waking experiences and her dreams or imaginings, there is also no firm dividing line between these and the separate stories she tells"(2001:128). The incorporation of the Myth of Midas amplifies the danger residing in the civil war and its self-destructive potential. Yet, this intertextuality also carries the seeds of hope and change. In the original story, the curse of the golden touch is broken when King Midas washes his hands in the river Pactolus. Similarly, the fatal touch of destruction will definitely fade away when people realize the calamities of the civil war and plunge their hands into the river of tolerance to build a better future.

Furthermore, the narrator builds upon previous texts in order to comment more on the havoc of the war. In one of the explosion scenes, she writes, "all at once my mind was inundated with images from all the civil wars I'd ever read about, including the fire scene in the novel *Gone With the Wind*" (Samman, 1976/1997:123). The quote shows how the narrator is recalling bites and pieces from books she has read concerning civil wars. Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* chronicles the American Civil War, and tells the story of Scarlett O'Hara who survives the difficulties of such conflict. Samman injects the terrifying scene of the burning of Atlanta to create an intense atmosphere of chaos and demolition. The flames, at the night Atlanta was captured, blazed strongly as they devoured everything transforming  darkness into a luminous glow of orange and red. The narrator, in *Beirut Nightmares*, evokes a similar mood of mass destruction after an explosion took place. She observes that "the darkness was no longer as pitch-black as it had been. There was something burning at the bend in the road", she is able to "see the fire's white heat reflected in the pavement on the other side of the street, while the wind blowing towards[her]bore the scent of charred rubble, covering [her]face with a layer of fine black dust"(Samman, 1976/1997: 123). Another example that may evoke a similar image occurs when the narrator's own house goes up in flames, particularly her precious library. With immense pain, she maintains, "[t]here was nothing left for me to do but listen to the hiss of the blazing inferno above me. From where I sat I could see it as it gobbled up my precious, irreplaceable books" (Samman, 1976/1997:311). Through involving *Gone with the Wind* as an intertext, Samman attempts to locate her terrifying experience within a wider historical context. She relates the narrator's moments of devastation to a shared experience, reflecting all those who suffer the scourge of a civil war.

## Conclusion

Samman succeeds in conveying the horrific experience of her narrator through the incorporation of different texts. *Beirut Nightmare* becomes a patchwork narrative that reflects

the impact of the civil war. Intertextuality plays an important role in exploring the devastating situation by highlighting major thematic concerns. This study investigates some intertextual relations which Samman injects in order to convey the suffering of her character. She incorporates myths, literary texts and even a fairy tale in an attempt to evoke similar feelings, comment on the human nature and situate the narrator's plight within a broader historical context. Themes of confinement, fear, problems of artistic creativity and destruction are understood in relation to prior texts. The writer connects the narrator's state of ultimate fear to frightful mythical creatures to emphasis the severity of the situation. The narrator compares herself to the Prisoner of Zenda and The Count of Mount Cristo to highlight the imposed house arrest and the lack of mobility. Moreover, the issues related to artistic production are conveyed through the Myth of Pygmalion. The narrator acts like the famous Scheherazade because of her insistence on writing as a way of survival amidst the difficult circumstances. Eventually, Samman comments on the destruction of the civil war by recalling the fire scene from Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and by integrating the Myth of Midas to intensify the massive devastation. Thus, intertextuality helps in providing a profound understanding of some prominent themes in Samman's *Beirut Nightmares*.

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