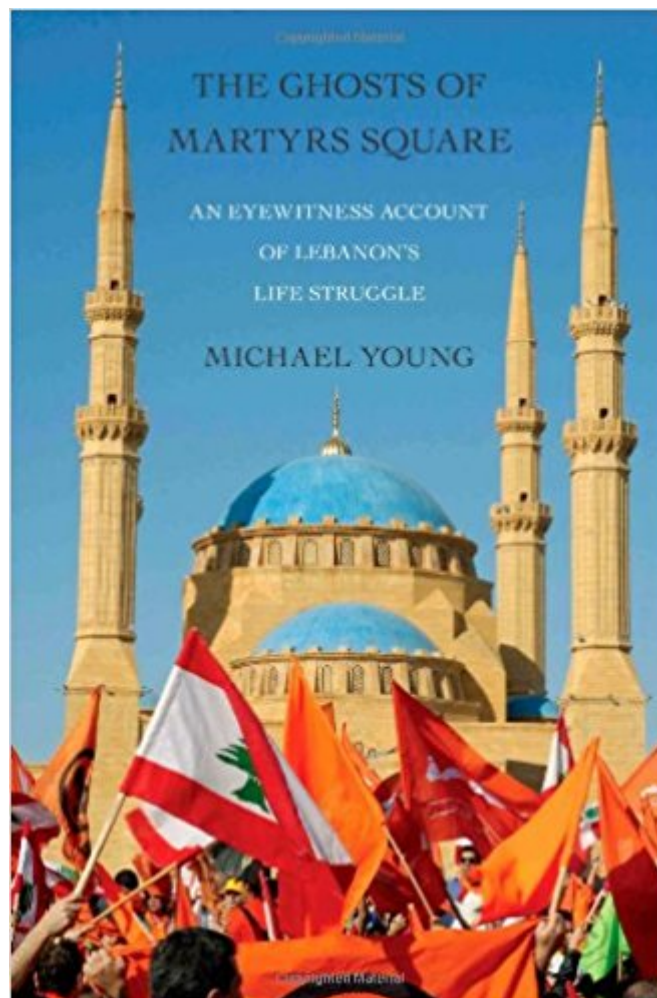




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The Ghosts Of Martyrs Square: An Eyewitness Account Of Lebanon's Life Struggle



Synopsis

NOT SINCE THOMAS FRIEDMAN'S FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM IN 1989 HAS A JOURNALIST OFFERED SUCH A POIGNANT AND PASSIONATE PORTRAIT OF LEBANON "A UNIQUELY PLURALIST ARAB COUNTRY STRUGGLING TO DEFEND ITS VIABILITY IN A TURBULENT AND TREACHEROUS MIDDLE EAST. Michael Young, who was taken to Lebanon at age seven by his Lebanese mother after the death of his American father and who has worked most of his career as a journalist there for American publications, brings to life a country in the crossfire of invasions, war, domestic division, incessant sectarian scheming, and often living in fear of its neighbors. Young knows or has known many of the players, politicians, writers, and religious leaders. A country riven by domestic tensions that have often resulted in assassinations, under the considerable sway of Hezbollah (in alliance with Iran and Syria), frequently set upon by Israel and Syria, nearly destroyed by civil war, Lebanon remains an exception among Arab countries because it is a place where liberal instincts and tolerance struggle to stay alive. An important and enduring symbol, Lebanon was once the outstanding example of an (almost) democratic society in an inhospitable, dangerous region "a laboratory both for modernity and violence, as a Lebanese intellectual who was later assassinated once put it. Young relates the growing tension between a domineering Syria and a Lebanese opposition in which charismatic leader and politician Rafiq al-Hariri was assassinated and the Independence Intifada "the Cedar Revolution" broke out. His searing account of his country's confrontation with its domestic and regional demons is one of hope found and possibly lost. In this stunning narrative, Young tells us what might have been his country's history, and what it may yet be. *Selected by The Wall Street Journal as one of its 10 notable books of 2010. *Awarded the Silver Prize in The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's annual book prize competition.

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Customer Reviews

While I typically enjoy Michael Young's writing this was a little too philosophical for my taste. The book provided for a good historical recap of the last 5 years but it came with a side of bias and preconceptions. In my opinion I could have had less opinion and the book would have been shorter and more enjoyable. This felt like a long essay that no one bothered to edit. Though I will give Mr. Young credit for being open with his opinions and blame while still living in Beirut and seeing many of his peers assassinated. That has to count for a lot. Overall good book if you can look past the prose.

I have read Michael Young for years on the Daily Star where he has been an editorial writer. He has the unique perspective on Lebanon of being half American and half Lebanese and for having lived in the country during the Civil War years, the years of occupation and now the post Cedar Revolution period that has continued since March 14, 2005. Most people see Lebanon, if at all, as a blip on a radar screen. Young knows the history and knows the players and this gives him excellent insight into where the country is going since many of the civil war players are now players in this chapter of the country's life. The sectarianism, which many see as a hinderance to the eventual evolution of Lebanon into modernity, Young sees as a possible path toward that future. Lebanon is the barometer of the entire region. Change Lebanon and change the region. Both sides know this, Iran and the US. Iran has been in the game much longer than has the US. Young touches on this and on the efforts of the US to catch up and to bring Lebanon more toward its natural Western orientation. For years known as the Western window into the East. Young tells us of a future Lebanon as an Eastern Window into the West. A place where the East ever fearful of the ability of the West to swallow them whole, can experience the West and find ways to accommodate their Eastern Ways to the Western culture. This is Lebanon's mission and Young writes it so well.

I confess I have not quite finished "The Ghosts of Martyrs Square...." but am fascinated so far. I admit some may find it more about Lebanon than they really want to know, but I lived there, very happily, some years ago and returned for a visit in 2002. I maintain a strong affection for the country and its people, mourn for their suffering. I do feel the author, Michael Young (Lebanese/American

and long-time resident and reporter in Beirut), goes a long way in making sense of this small, complicated, and important country. It is probably still Phoenician, pragmatic, and determined to outlast its neighbors.

An objective account and analysis of recent Lebanese history with good working explanations of the policies and tactics of the Syrians, Israelis, Maronites, Iranians, Sunnis, Hezbollah, Americans and French. Would have benefited greatly, however, from some photographs of the principle players. A pretty tragic tale in all, which leads one to forecast a pessimistic future.

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