

# Lebanese Cinema

IMAGINING THE CIVIL WAR AND BEYOND

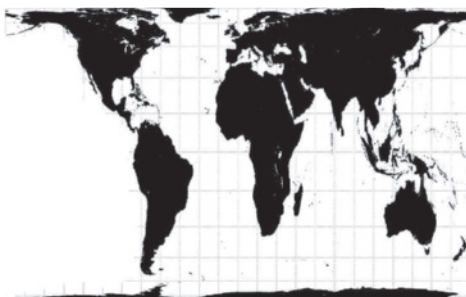
**Lina Khatib**



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# **LEBANESE CINEMA**

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# **LEBANESE CINEMA**

## **Imagining the Civil War and Beyond**

Lina Khatib

**I.B. TAURIS**

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*To Hikmat and Maha*



# CONTENTS

	<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
	Preface	xiii
	Introduction: Lebanese Cinema and the Civil War	xvii
<b>Part I</b>	<b>Contexts</b>	<b>1</b>
Chapter One	On Lebanese National Identity	3
Chapter Two	A Brief History of Cinema in Lebanon	21
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Representations</b>	<b>55</b>
Chapter Three	Imagining Beirut	57
Chapter Four	Social and Religious Breakdown	83
Chapter Five	Violence and Masculinity	105
Chapter Six	Mothers, Fighters and Taboo Breakers	129
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Reflections</b>	<b>151</b>
Chapter Seven	War and Memory	153
	Epilogue: On National Cinema	185
	<i>Bibliography</i>	191
	<i>Filmography</i>	207
	<i>Index</i>	209
	<i>Index of Films</i>	213



# ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>When Maryam Spoke Out</i>	43
<i>Little Wars</i>	62
<i>Little Wars</i>	63
<i>To you wherever you are</i>	64
<i>Around the Pink House</i>	64
<i>In the Battlefields</i>	67
<i>Letter from a Time of Exile</i>	69
<i>Beirut, The Encounter</i>	73
<i>Around the Pink House</i>	77
<i>The Belt of Fire</i>	87
<i>Zozo</i>	88
<i>The Explosion</i>	94
<i>The Tornado</i>	98
<i>Little Wars</i>	109
<i>Land of Honey and Incense</i>	116
<i>Outside Life</i>	119
<i>The Shelter</i>	131
<i>Martyrs</i>	139
<i>In the Battlefields</i>	141
<i>Kite</i>	146

<i>The Veiled Man</i>	156
<i>Al-Sheikha</i>	159
<i>Bosta</i>	161
<i>Terra Incognita</i>	163
<i>Beirut Phantoms</i>	167

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# PREFACE

How do you write about Lebanese cinema when its existence is still contested? Like most Lebanese people, I did not grow up watching Lebanese films. Cinema for me meant either Hollywood or Egyptian cinema, but mainly the latter, seen on television rather than in film theaters. However, in the early years of the Lebanese Civil War, Lebanese cinema did occasionally feature in my life. My earliest memory of Lebanese cinema is of my parents dressing up smartly as they prepared to attend the premiere of Mohammad Salman's film *Man Youtfi' An-Nar (Who Puts Out the Fire)* in 1982. I was too young to accompany them at the time, but I remember their excitement as they spoke about their delight at watching Raghda and Walid Toufic in a musical about the war. The premiere they went to was at Cinema Edison, owned by our neighbor who lived on the floor above us in a Beirut suburb. I never made it to Cinema Edison. Like the few other cinemas scattered in Beirut's Southern Suburb, the cinema died a slow, painful death. After *Man Youtfi' An-Nar*, all that was shown in such cinemas was a combination of Asian martial arts films and pornography. Cinema Edison opted for the former, until – like the others in the area – finally closing down in the late 1980s.

Cinemas suffered all over the country, however. Mohammad Soueid's book *Ya Fouadi* offers a rare, evocative account of the lives and fate of film theaters in Beirut during the war. One by one, they would see their audiences decline, the regular attendants replaced with bored militiamen, until most of them could bear it no more and closed down. Walking down Hamra Street in the 1980s, I was used to seeing the cinemas' colorful, often garish, posters of tired Egyptian films and Bruce Lee features. Occasionally, a Lebanese film would be advertised. All the Lebanese films at the time, it seemed to me, were poor imitations of Hollywood action films and South-East Asian martial arts films. The names of the directors – Samir al-Ghoussaini, Youssef Sharaf Ed-Din – symbolized the dream that Lebanese cinema existed. Little did I know that, at the time, other Lebanese films were being made, or had been made, but were never shown. Behind the action films existed a cinema trying to come to

terms with the present. Unlike the films of Ghoussaini and Sharaf Ed-Din, this cinema did not aspire to escapism. Nor did it aspire to Hollywood-esque standards. It was a quiet cinema, though not always because it intended to be so.

My most vivid memory of Lebanese cinema in the immediate postwar period is of seemingly endless television advertisements for *Al-I'sar* (*The Tornado*) by Samir Habchi (1992). I had no idea who Samir Habchi was, but the country was hyped up with news of real-life explosions being staged for the filming of *The Tornado*. The television adverts for the film presented it as a bleak take on the Civil War. It was the first Lebanese film to be made in the postwar period. Two years later, Maroun Baghdadi died by falling down a stairwell. He was only 37, and was Lebanon's most prominent filmmaker of his generation. I had not seen any of Baghdadi's films, but the newspapers were full of praise for them. He was mourned as a lost potential for Lebanese cinema. I stopped thinking about Lebanese cinema and moved to the United Kingdom.

Five years after Baghdadi's death, I found myself doing a PhD where I researched Egyptian cinema. I was surprised at the reaction I got from people when they found out what I was researching. 'Are you Egyptian?', some would ask. To me, it was natural to choose Egypt as the focus of a study partly addressing Arab film. I did not question my choice of researching Egyptian cinema, for it was, and still is, the biggest film industry in the Arab world. However, as the years went by, I knew that I wanted to write about Lebanese cinema too. I was a bit scared at the prospect. Egyptian cinema was familiar. I knew all the stars. I could mimic the accent to perfection. I grew up with it in all its forms: the romances, the comedies, the tragedies and the melodramas (I was not a fan of the musicals). I had a certain nostalgia for the early black-and-white Egyptian films that I had watched endlessly in my childhood. Egyptian cinema was part of me. Lebanese cinema, on the other hand, felt foreign. I thought hard, but I could not come up with a single Lebanese film I knew like I did an Egyptian one. I had seen some films in passing: *Bayya' al-Khawatem*, with Fairuz; some of the action films of the 1980s ... but that was it. Like many other Lebanese people, I had merely heard of the titles of some Lebanese films. And my mother's comments that Lebanese films were difficult to watch because acting in the Lebanese dialect made the delivery of lines 'heavy' further discouraged any curiosity I may have had about Lebanese cinema as I was growing up.

There was another reason why I found it difficult to acquaint myself with Lebanese cinema. As soon as I got over my apprehension about the use of the Lebanese dialect and started investigating what Lebanese cinema might be, it struck me that – with the exception of the commercial films of the 1980s – all Lebanese films seemed to be about the Civil War in one way or another. I do

not remember the precise day the Civil War ended. I do not think many Lebanese people do either. People in Lebanon are well aware of when the war started: 13 April 1975. But no one seems to agree on when the war ended. The Taef Agreement of 1989 is often cited as the reason behind the ending of hostilities; however, there is no mutually agreed on date commemorating the beginning of the postwar period. The war seemed to have fizzled out gradually, rather than coming to a defined end. Like many fellow Lebanese, I was keen to move on after the war ended. I remember the 1990s as a good-time decade. The country was being rebuilt, and so were people's lives. Those of us who were lucky not to have lost our homes or loved ones embraced the decade's promises of prosperity and peace. We did not talk about the war. We behaved as if it had not existed. We tried our best to enjoy our present and look forward to the future. So the prospect of facing the war again in a mediated form, through Lebanese cinema, was frightening. I simply did not feel I was ready to go there again. It was too painful.

But something magical had happened. In 1998, a new Lebanese filmmaker called Ziad Doueiri made a film called *West Beyrouth*. Never before had I heard so much hype about a Lebanese film. The Lebanese critic Ibrahim al-Ariss recalls being in London at the time of the film's release, and collecting 64 newspaper articles from the British press about the film in two weeks (al-Ariss, 2006). Watching *West Beyrouth* for the first time, I felt proud. Here was a Lebanese film where the characters resembled me. They spoke in the Lebanese dialect but sounded natural. And the film was entertaining. The film marked a new era in Lebanese cinema, which I choose to call the renaissance period. Lebanese cinema had been through two different phases since 1975: the first is the wartime period, where filmmakers struggled to make films and struggled even more to distribute them; the second is the period immediately after the war, where a number of interesting art house films were made that were still haunted by the war. The year 1998 was the year Lebanese cinema began to operate on a mass – though still limited – scale. *West Beyrouth* was the first Lebanese film many young Lebanese people had seen in the cinema. It attracted a relatively high number of viewers in Lebanon, and worldwide attention, winning several awards at different film festivals. The idea of 'Lebanese cinema' became more tangible.

As the years went by, the number of Lebanese films seeing the light grew. The seeds of an industry were being sown in Lebanon, although until today cinema in the country still operates as a collection of individual efforts. As I forced myself to face the demons of the war and confront it through watching Lebanese cinema, the films themselves lured me into their world, away from the distractions of 'peacetime' Lebanon. I began to realize that Lebanese cinema was one of the few arenas where the ugliness of the war was confronted. It was a place where history was chronicled, questioned and sometimes

condemned. It was a necessary reconciliatory space. Ten years have now marked the beginning of the cinema renaissance in Lebanon, and filmmaking in the country is going from strength to strength, despite ongoing problems. Films that I never thought would be seen by the public when I started the research for this book in 2003 are now being sold on DVD in Beirut. Film festivals around the world continue to screen Lebanese films, to the extent that I have come to expect to watch a Lebanese film at the London Film Festival every year without thinking twice about this expectation.

The journey that this book has taken me on has been a fascinating, illuminating and sometimes painful one. What I did not expect was the twist in the story that started in February 2005, and that gave me a fresh perspective on postwar Lebanese films. I was in the process of writing this book when Lebanese ex-Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated on 14 February 2005. His assassination triggered a wave of changes in Lebanon, both on the political and social levels. Scenes of exhilaration and patriotism dominated the country for months after his death, but were fast replaced with scenes of terror as more political assassinations took place. The dream of a new, free Lebanon was beginning to fade. And then in the summer of 2006, conflict between Hizbullah and Israel escalated into a full-out war, killing more than 1000 Lebanese civilians and destroying much of Lebanon's infrastructure. No sooner had that war ended than intra-Lebanese tensions began to resurface. Traces of the Civil War became obvious. Sectarianism showed its ugly face again. The thirst for violence overcame some Lebanese people. And suddenly I realized that Lebanese cinema's obsession with the war was more than simply that. It was as if the cinema was warning us against the inevitability of what was to come. Postwar Lebanese cinema, in particular, had been consumed by a feeling of loss and emptiness, where violence lurks at every corner.

As I sat in Beirut on 25 January 2007 as a state of emergency had been declared, watching militarized riots in the streets on television, I thought of Borhan Alawiye's 2001 film *To you wherever you are*, where an ex-militiaman called Mohammad Atwi recalls his wartime experiences, and declares 'I get happy when I see blood ... There's going to be war soon (again). Not now, later, in a year and a half maximum'. I wondered whether Atwi was among the rioters that day. The night ended with an army-imposed curfew in Beirut – the first since the end of the Civil War – and a new-found belief in me in the prophecy of cinema.

# Introduction

## LEBANESE CINEMA AND THE CIVIL WAR

Lebanon is a country with a yet undefined identity. This ambivalence has been reflected in much contention ever since the State of Lebanon was conceived. Today, Lebanese national identity is still a contested notion. What does it mean to be Lebanese? There is no direct answer to this question; however, to get a better understanding of what national identity may mean in Lebanon, one has to look at the country's history, politics, social construction, and cultural expressions. Much has been written about Lebanon's formation, its link with the rest of the Arab world, and its diversity. However, most studies of Lebanon refrain from tackling the concept of national identity in the country, especially over the last three decades. It is as if the idea of national identity is a taboo: addressing it would mean unearthing much of Lebanon's past and present that is too painful, or perhaps too shameful.

However, one arena in which 'being Lebanese' is addressed is Lebanese cinema. Lebanese cinema is a small cinema, and does not constitute an industry in the common definition of the word. It is a collection of films by independent filmmakers, both in Lebanon and in exile, that often defies conventions by representing issues Lebanese history books dare not address. Over the last 30 years, Lebanese cinema has acted as a commentator on the development of sectarian conflict in Lebanon; on the normalization of war; on the reconstruction of Lebanon in the postwar period; and on the way the war still lurks in every corner in today's Lebanon. Reading the history books that have examined the same period is important and revealing. Having to do that for the purpose of researching this book indeed brought back painful memories that I, as a Lebanese citizen who lived there through the Civil War period, would rather have forgotten. But while the history books reveal – in much detail – who did what to whom during the war, for what reason, and with what outcome, they do not comment on the everydayness of the war experience from the point of view of people. Where history fails, the arts triumph. Lebanon has seen a surge in novels and biographies that address the everydayness of the war. The late Mai Ghossoub's book, *Leaving Beirut*; Jean Said Makdissi's

*Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir*; Youssef Bazzi's *And Arafat Looked at Me and Smiled*; and many, many others – they all challenge the dominant representation of the war through presenting stories of how the authors lived the war, how the war became a defining element of themselves. The books vary in stance from total detachment (in the case of Said Makdissi), to total immersion in the war's atrocities (in the case of Bazzi). In this sense they mirror Lebanese cinema – another arena where Lebanon's past, present and future are confronted and interrogated, but also ignored.

So why study cinema? Sharon Willis puts it eloquently:

cinema is not imposed from without on a passive public, but... [is] responsive to certain collective demands or desires ... We need to analyze a cinema that responds to, reads and maps collective fantasies, utopian and anxious, a cinema that is always reading us – reading our social configurations of power and desire, pleasure and violence. This is part of film's allure: as we read it, it also reads us.<sup>1</sup>

While Lebanon's literary tradition is well established academically, its cinema has always been relegated to the margins. The mere fact of writing this book was often met with expressions of surprise from different Lebanese people, who would comment with questions like 'is there a Lebanese cinema to study to start with?' But the status of Lebanese cinema is changing. The process of researching this book started in 2003, and it is truly fascinating to witness the vast developments that have occurred since. In the span of a few years, Lebanese cinema has become a regular presence at international festivals. Lebanese films would appear on DVD. And the Lebanese audience would become more used to the idea of watching a Lebanese film, to the extent that the marketing of the musical *Bosta* (2005) relied on the tag '100% Lebanese film'.

But Lebanese cinema is not an innocent cinema. Running parallel to the confrontation of society's ailments is its presentation of the Civil War as a process of victimization of the Self by an unknown – or known – Other. Lebanese cinema also sometimes hides the realities of wartime Lebanese society by presenting the war as a shared condition while shying away from representing the society's inherent fragmentation. Studying Lebanese cinema is therefore double edged: the cinema is as much concealing as it is revealing. In this way, Lebanese cinema plays a role in the writing of Lebanese history.

There is no consensus on the nature of Lebanese history; as Studlar and Desser argue, 'contemporary history has been the subject of an ideological battle which seeks to rewrite, to rehabilitate, controversial and ambiguous events through the use of symbols ... what is being rewritten might justifiably be called a "trauma", a shock to the cultural system'.<sup>2</sup> Lebanese cinema reflects

the tension between revealing the ugliness of the history of Lebanon in the Civil War period, and the yearning to gloss over the trauma. When it conceals, cinema becomes part of the war machine, a silencing mechanism that stands in the way of achieving national reconciliation. When it reveals, it serves a role in national therapy:

Psychoanalytic therapy maintains that to be healed, one must recall the memory of the trauma which has been repressed by a sense of guilt. Otherwise, a 'faulty' memory or outright amnesia covers the truth, which lies somewhere deep in the unconscious. The more recent the trauma, the more quickly the memory can be recalled; the more severe the original trauma, the more completely it is repressed. In this respect, cultures can be said to act like individuals – they simply cannot live with overwhelming guilt. Like individual trauma, cultural trauma must be 'forgotten', but the guilt of such traumas continues to grow. However, as Freud notes, the mechanism of repression is inevitably flawed: the obstinately repressed material ultimately breaks through and manifests itself in unwelcome circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

I was in Beirut in April 2005, at the height of the Cedar Revolution, and I was surprised to find a re-run of Lebanese films at Espace Cinema's Screen 6 in Achrafieh. The films that were shown all dealt with the topic of the Civil War. They ranged from the popular (*West Beyrouth*), to the arty (*The Tornado*), to the in-between (*The Belt of Fire*). The impression I got from the re-run is that the films had been excavated to retell the story of the war to the audience as a cautionary measure. One of the slogans of the Cedar Revolution period – that appeared on billboards, T-shirts and television adverts – was '*tinzakar ta ma tin'ad*' (remember it so it won't be repeated). I felt that Lebanese cinema was used as a process of remembering and warning. The critic Ibrahim al-Ariss disagreed when I put my theory forward to him. His response was, 'I don't think that the film distributors and cinema owners can be given such a dimension of responsibility. Maybe it was because of the longing among citizens to hold on to something Lebanese'.<sup>4</sup> Studlar and Desser coin the term 'will to myth' to refer to 'a communal need, a cultural drive ... for a reconstruction of the national past in light of the present, a present which is, by definition of necessity, better'.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Lebanese films were used as an expression of this 'will to myth', with the myth transforming from a nation in denial of the Civil War, to alleviate guilt, into a nation with a high degree of self reflection, a nation recognizing the necessity of healing, a nation full stop.

## The Directors' View: Why the Civil War?

The Lebanese Civil War started in 1975 and ended in the early 1990s. Over the course of a decade and a half, the war slowly descended into an irrational state where differences between the warring factions, be they religious or political, ceased to be clearly defined. The war became a series of overlapping conflicts about a myriad of matters that went beyond internal Lebanese politics to include issues overarching the Middle East region, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, inter-Arab political rivalry, and American and European military intervention. From its inception, Lebanon has been a country where outside involvement has politically undermined its very existence; this was carried over during the war from its beginning, when Lebanon became a playground for external as well as internal battles. In those internal battles, the war came not to have defined parameters of good and evil, or of heroes and villains. It became a case of mutual Othering by Lebanon's many factions, where each side was at once victim and victimizer. Lebanese cinema has been occupied with depicting the Lebanese Civil War over the last 30 years. From the advent of the war in 1975 and until today – more than 15 years after its end – the war has become a central theme for Lebanese filmmakers across generations. This does not simply apply to films representing the Civil War; it also applies to films where the Civil War inhabits their stylistic elements. From the openendedness of *A Perfect Day* to the darkness of *Falafel*, the Civil War still casts a shadow on films made in the post-Civil War era.

What the war films focus on are issues of social fragmentation, sectarian animosities, class divisions, and individual devastation. Only *West Beyrouth* and *In the Battlefields* represent another side to the war, that of the possibility of having fun under difficult conditions. The other films about the Civil War, whether made during the war period or after, are more concerned with revealing its dark side. The films differ in the genres in which they present the war: while some, like *In the Shadows of the City*, take a realist angle on the war, others like *The Tornado* and *A Suspended Life* choose a more fantasy-based method of addressing it. However, what the films have in common is that none of them justifies the war as they all take part in condemning it in different ways.

This book is based on first-hand research of Lebanese films, the circumstances of which are discussed in chapter two. One of the most valuable sources of information for this book is interviews with filmmakers, critics and actors who have commented on various aspects of Lebanese cinema. What is of interest here is a question I have asked the filmmakers I interviewed for this book: why have you made a film about the war? It is interesting that virtually no filmmaker contested the notion that their film is about the war (the only exception is Assad Fouladkar, who expressed his frustration at being asked

why his feature film *When Maryam Spoke Out* is not about the war). The directors' answers reveal the reasons behind this lack of contestation.

Filmmakers who had made films while the Civil War was on seemed to be influenced by the circumstances surrounding them, and the impact they had on their individual psyches which got reflected in their films. Jocelyne Saab said about *A Suspended Life*:

My first feature film was inspired by the siege of Beirut in 1982. I encountered the internal destruction and so I wrote the story of this little girl who was of the war generation. It was a story of the violence I was fighting and of the tolerance I was advocating. We filmed it under bombings. Cinema is life and I wanted to make a film that reflected the reality around me.<sup>6</sup>

Samir Habchi took an even more personal view on the impact of the war on his artistic creation, even hinting at his inevitable seduction by the war:

We do not always choose what films to make. Sometimes the films impose a subject on you. Cinema is a means of expression, a message. I don't remember a time in my childhood or teenage years where there was no war. There was a certain 'type' of life called Lebanon, even now when you say 'Lebanon' people say war. There was one idea that overwhelmed me. It's like falling in love with one woman even though there are many beautiful women around.<sup>7</sup>

Habchi's pronouncement of a lack of choice in terms of representing the war was echoed by Borhan Alawiye, who believes that this condition still applies to Lebanese films made today:

When there is a war going on, how can you not make a film about it? 'Why choose the war as a subject?': Because it is *the* subject. It's normal to live with the war as you do with your wife and kids. When the war ended, it occupied our memory, and our memory is unable to express itself about it. I can devote the whole of my life to writing about this topic. The war has inhabited all the Lebanese films that have been made since its start. The reasons that catalyzed the war have not disappeared. We're now going back to the prewar terms to try to build our society, but those terms were what started the war. I haven't yet seen a film that has not been touched by the war in its dramatic structure, its characters. I wonder how there can be a film or a work that has escaped from this memory. All our memories are linked with the war.<sup>8</sup>

Ghassan Salhab agreed, saying that the Civil War 'is not part of our memory, it is our memory'.<sup>9</sup>

Other filmmakers who have made films about the Civil War in the postwar period confirm those statements as they reveal how they are haunted by the war. Bahij Hojeij said of *The Belt of Fire*:

I had not grieved over the war until I made this film; I could not conceive of making my first film without it being about my experience during the war and what we had to endure during the war. It was very difficult for me to talk about something else. I wanted to exorcise the war from within me. War is imprinted on our memories, and it's difficult to erase. You have to talk about it to get out of it. The Lebanese society is only recently getting over it, with all the movements about independence in the post-Hariri assassination period.<sup>10</sup>

Philippe Aractingi acquiesced in terms of the necessity of exorcism:

The war is an essential part of our identity today. My identity as a 42-year-old is 10 years without war, and 32 years within war, for example. It's hard for us not to talk about ourselves in our first films. After that you can move on to other themes. The first thing you talk about is your wound. But then, I had to think of how to present a different film, because I wanted to have a unique vision as a director. So I wanted to go beyond the wound, and into the healing process.<sup>11</sup>

Joana HadjiThomas on the other hand addressed the latency of the war in her and Khalil Joreige's films:

Our films talk about the present and how we can live in it. This present is linked to the past and to memory. How come we are not able to live in the present? Maybe we are severing our relationship with the past in a way that is too artificial. It's like being on a treadmill, you run and you run and you are not progressing. When we wrote the film [*A Perfect Day*], we felt that we are dead in this city and are not having much influence on the society around us or on the city. Maybe the relationship with the past is what is preventing us from moving on ... The fact that the war *happened*, means that the problems were there *before* the war. For us, the problems are still there. It's the same social formation.<sup>12</sup>

Some filmmakers however have tried to break away from the hegemony of the war by transforming it into a background whilst acknowledging its impact.

Danielle Arbid said of *In the Battlefields*:

The war is not the focus of the film, and was not the motive behind making the film. The story is a personal one which could have occurred without the war. The film could have been set in a country where there is peace. My relationship with the war is that when I was twelve, I thought war was normal and that the whole world was going through war. Only when I grew up did I discover that war was not the norm. I wanted the film to be harsher than the war that surrounds the characters; the society in the film is harsher than the war. The Lebanese have good qualities, but at the same time the society is harsh. Even today, in 'peace' time, everyday life in Lebanon is harsh. You can hide from missiles, but not from internal problems.<sup>13</sup>

A similar focus on internal conflict and dilemmas was reflected by Ziad Doueiri in his comment on *West Beyrouth*: 'The war was just a background. The focus of the film is on how you survive in a difficult environment, how you establish friendship, how people behave under extraordinary pressure; how you can still have fun under extraordinary pressure'.<sup>14</sup>

But the war remains a primary, if not the only, concern for the future. Jean Chamoun believes that talking about the war would work as a precautionary measure: 'We should talk about the war and make films about it. Memory is important in the life of societies. Memory is what drives people. It teaches them to learn from their mistakes'.<sup>15</sup>

Jean-Claude Codsì agreed but added other dimensions:

The war should be remembered so it won't be repeated. Representing the war would also help us get over it and move on. I imagine that every Lebanese filmmaker who lived through the war would want to make a film about it, because everyone in Lebanon was affected by the war, we all suffered from it. But the war built Lebanon in a way. Lebanon has remained after the war, which means there is something called Lebanon. We should represent the war because it is a crucial part of our history.<sup>16</sup>

Randa Chahal also said:

I will go back to making films about the war, whether fiction or documentary. Nothing has really been spoken about the war. We should talk about the past when talking about the present. If we don't talk about the war, what else are we going to talk about? The French, Germans and Americans all talk about their wars. There are books

that talk about the war, the press does and art does. But those who complain about talking about the war just want to be entertained. But of course we should not have a fixation with the war.<sup>17</sup>

In 2001 Kiki Kennedy-Day commented on the obsession with representing the Civil War that permeates postwar Lebanese cinema. She wrote: 'It will be interesting to see what the film-makers turn to as the war fades from memory and new concerns overtake them'.<sup>18</sup> The instability that has plagued Lebanon since the assassination of Rafic Hariri poses a challenge to Kennedy-Day's statement. If the statements of the directors on their relationship with the Civil War are representative of a wider one between filmmakers and socio-political conditions in Lebanon, then it will be difficult to imagine a future where Lebanese films are not concerned with the representation of conflict. Of course, Lebanese films not dealing with this issue are emerging, one example being Nadine Labake's debut feature *Caramel* which screened at Cannes in 2007. However, it seems that Lebanese cinema is condemned to act as a socio-political commentator in a country where the shadow of the war – it seems – still lurks in the corner.

This book is divided into three parts. Part I: Contexts sets the scene with a chapter interrogating the concept of national identity in Lebanon, and another giving an overview of the history of cinema in Lebanon and an account of how this book was researched. Part II: Representations deals with the four main themes in which the Civil War has been represented in Lebanese cinema, from the representation of space (focusing on Beirut), to the representation of social breakdown and sectarianism, and the representation of gender (where men and women play different, but sometimes overlapping, roles). Finally, Part III: Reflections concludes the arguments of the book and reflects on the relationship between Lebanese cinema and war memory, with a focus on postwar Lebanese cinema, its invocation of the Civil War and its meaning in present-time Lebanon. The book ends with a short epilogue critiquing Lebanese cinema's contribution to the debate on the concept of national cinema.

## Endnotes

- 1 Willis, Sharon (1993). 'Disputed territories: masculinity and social space', in Penley, Constance and Sharon Willis (eds), *Male Trouble*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.266.
- 2 Studlar, Gaylyn and Desser, David (1988). 'Never having to say you're sorry: *Rambo's* rewriting of the Vietnam War', *Film Quarterly* (Autumn) 42(1), p.9.
- 3 Studlar and Desser: 'Never having to say you're sorry', p.10.