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THE HISTORY OF LEBANESE CINEMA 1929 - 1979

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF LEBANESE CINEMA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate school of The Ohio State University

by

Afif J. Arabi, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1996

Dissertation Committee: Approved By
Kenneth A. Marantz, Ph.D
Robert W. Wagner, Ph.D
Joseph T. Zeidan, Ph.D

Advisor
Department of Art Education
To My Lebanon...
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To my children, Maryam and Muşbâh, I thank you for bringing light and hope for the future into my life; I hope you will forgive me for my frequent absences. To my wife, Hudá, without whom this work would not have been accomplished, I will always be indebted to your support, caring and insight. To my mother whose guidance and nurturing never diminished over the long years; I love you.
VITA

September 6, 1961 ................................................. Born - Beirut, Lebanon

1989 ............................................................... B. S., Broadcasting and Film
Boston University

1990 ............................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate
Department of Photography and Cinema
The Ohio State University

1991 ............................................................... M. A., Film and Video Production
The Ohio State University

1992 - 1996 .................................................. Graduate Administrative Associate
Wexner Center for the Arts
The Ohio State University

1991- Present .................................................. Independent Filmmaker/Curator of Arab
Cinema

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Art Education

Studies in Film and Video, Film / Art Education Curriculum, Computer Graphics and Animation, Arab Dramatic Arts and Literature.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ................................................................. ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................. iii  
VITA ................................................................................ iv  
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................ viii  
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................... ix  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Data Collection</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Data Analysis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitation of Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DRAMATIC TRADITIONS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Traditions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE PIONEER STAGE: 1929 - 1949</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silent Era</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beginning of Sound Cinema</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Films of the Fedayeen ...................................................... 130
Analysis of *The Rebellious Palestinian* ............................................ 138

### VII. CINEMA OF THE SEVENTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Digression 1970 - 1974</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Influences</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Departure of Egyptian Film Operations</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Wave of Egyptian Entertainment Films</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departure of Capital</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Influences</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Instability</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in Audience's Taste and the Dominance of Foreign Films</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Early Films of the Seventies</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beginnings of Alternative Cinema</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burhan 'Alawiyah: <em>Kafr Qāsim</em></td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mārun Baghdādi: <em>Beirut, Beirut</em></td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Civil War Films: 1975 - 1979</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summery</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VIII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relevancy</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to Local Dramatic Arts</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Influence</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Figures in the Development of Lebanese Cinema</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Studies</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The Lebanese Filmography: Narrative Films 1929 - 1980</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Film Stills of Lebanese narrative films 1929 - 1978</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ENDNOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1920 Administrative Committee Seats Distribution</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A Comparison Between Egyptian and Lebanese Film Attendance Market</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Attendance Market in the 1960's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Capital Invested in Lebanese Film Industry (1959-1965)</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Governorate of Mount Lebanon, 1861-1920</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A scene from Jordano Pidutti’s first film <em>The Adventures of Elias Mabrûk</em> (1929). Elias Mabrûk (Muṣṭafā Qlaylāt) and his wife (Maḥibo Cānīpolo) - standing in the middle - watch two men performing a folklore dance at the <em>Gḥlayyūni</em> cafe in Beirut</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A scene from Michael Hārūn’s <em>Red Flowers</em> (1957) the first Lebanese film in Lebanese local dialect</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. From right: Shālīb Khūîî (Ṣa’īd), Ṭūr ‘Āzār, and Nazhah Yūnūs in a scene from George Naṣr’s <em>Where To?</em> (1957), the first Lebanese film to represent Lebanon at an international film festival - Cannes Film Festival, 1957</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tony Ni’mah (left) and Lucyanne Harb in a scene from George Qaṭi’s film <em>Memories</em> (1958)</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Director George Naṣr and cinematographer Ibrāhīm Shāmāt during the filming of <em>The Little Stranger</em> (1961)</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Nazhah Yūnūs (right) in George Qaṭi’s <em>The Devil’s Chariot</em> (1962)</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pierre Salāmah (right) and Nidal al-Ashqar (left) in Yūṣuf Ma’ilūf’s <em>The Broken Wings</em> (1964)</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Durayd Lahhām (left) and Nīhād Qal’ī (right) in Yūṣuf Ma’ilūf’s <em>‘Uqḍ al-Lūḥ</em> (1964)</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Nasrī Shamms al-Dīn (left) and Fayrūz (to his left) in Yūṣuf Shāḥīn’s <em>The Ring Seller</em> (1965)</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. ʿAbdū (right) in Muhammad Salmān’s *Mawwāl* (1966) ............. 234

13. Tarīb (left) and Ibrāhīm Khān (right) in Fāruq ʿAjramah’s *Farwell to Poverty* (1966) ....................................................... 234

14. Ihsān Sādiq (left) and Fayruz (right) in Henri Barakāt’s *Safar Barlik* (1967) ........................................................................ 235

15. Fayruz (left) and Marcelle Marīnā (right) in Henri Barakāt’s *The Night Guard’s Daughter* (1968) ............................................ 235

16. Maryam Fakhr al-Dīn (left) and Fahd Ballān (right) in Alber Najib’s *Where is My Love?* (1967) ............................................. 236

17. Munā Saʿīd (left) and Sāmīʿ Attār (right) in Samīr Naṣrī’s *The Victory of the Loser* (1967) .......................................................... 236

18. ʿĀydhī Hilāl (right) in Simon Sālih’s *Sinful Mary* (1968) ............ 237

19. Fāṭīn Hamāmah (left) and Fārīd al-Atrash (right) in Henri Barakāt’s *Great Love* (1968) .............................................................. 237

20. Akram (Ghassān Matar) under interrogation by Israeli soldiers in Rida Myassar’s *The Rebelious Palestinian* (1969) .................. 238

21. During the filming of Gary Garabidian’s *We’re All Fedayeen* (1969) ................................................................. 238

22. From left: Mahmūd Saʿīd, Sana Jamīl and Talʿat Hamdī in Antoine Rime’s *For Your Sake Palestine* (1969) ......................... 239

23. Nāhid Yusri (left) and Hasan Yūsuf (right) in Nayāzī Muṣṭafā’s *Women Without Future* (1970) .............................................. 239


26. Habībah (left) and Munīr Maʿāsri (right) in Munīr Maʿāsri’s *The Destiny* (1972) ................................................................. 241
27. Huwaydah (right) in 'Ātif Sālim's *My Wife is a Hippy* (1972) .... 241

28. A scene from Burhān 'Alawīyah's film, *Kafr Qāsim* (1974) where several Kafr Qāsim citizens lie dead after being shot by Israeli soldiers .... 242

29. Mīray Ma‘lūf (left) and 'Izzat al-'Ālāylī in Mārūn Baghdaḍī’s *Beirut, Beirut* (1975) .... 242

30. A scene from Subḥī Sayf al-Dīn’s *The Steadfast Man* (1975) .... 243

31. Hind 'Umrū (left) and Ighrā (right) in Subḥī Sayf al-Dīn’s *Earth’s Wedding* (1978) .... 243
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1992/1993, while I was curating a series of Arab films for the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University, I had the opportunity to meet with prominent documentary filmmaker Jean Sham‘ūn and to talk with film critic Muhammad Rida (both of whom I respect and admire). During my discussions with them, they showed sincere concern regarding the unknown history of Lebanese cinema. Jean jokingly suggested that the Lebanese cinema legacy is only comprised of George Nasr’s film ‘Ilá Ayn? / Where To? (1957). It was this occurrence that gave rise to this research. I wanted to know, and tell the story of Lebanese cinema.

One of the inherent problems related to the subject of Lebanese cinema is the ambiguity surrounding its history, as the years prior to 1952 are almost a total mystery (Shmait, 1973). A history of Lebanese cinema needs yet to be written. Previous writings on Lebanese cinema lacked analytical methodology and were merely quick reviews of this subject. Lebanon cannot reminisce about its films from the past as other countries can; quite possibly, no one knows about the early history of this cinema (Swaid, 1986). How did the Lebanese cinema evolve? Under what circumstances did it
develop? What influenced this development? Who were the key figures in this
development? These questions are the main focus of this research which attempts to
trace and analyze the history of Lebanese cinema over a fifty year period from its
beginning in 1929 to 1979.

Background to the Problem

Lebanon - a country small in size but rich in experience. Before the 1975 civil war,
Lebanon was the financial, cultural, and political capital of the Arab World. Because of
its unique location on the Mediterranean, Lebanon was the Middle East's link to the
West. The Lebanese society was as a rich soil nurturing a great number of political
movements, ideological contradictions, religious beliefs, cultural exchanges, and literary
and artistic movements. Al-'Arîs (1979) wrote that “the Lebanese society, with its
contradictions, intricacies and circumstances, represented rich ground for the
establishment of an art and literature that could reflect the reality of the Lebanese society
in an unprecedented way” (p. 43).

Lebanon is one of the world’s most ancient inhabited places. “In ancient geography,
much of Lebanon was part of Phoenicia” (Bustros, 1977, p.28). Parts of Lebanon were
either independent city-states or absorbed into the Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian,
Macedonian and Roman empires. Costal cities, such as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Arwad,
played a major role in the ancient history of Lebanon acting as centers of trade and
culture. A form of the Semitic language was the speech of most of the region. Arabic
was also spoken by the Arabs who settled in the region in the Bekka Valley and in the North. While maintaining its dialects, the region accepted and absorbed much of the cultural attributes of other cultures encountered, such as Greek literature and philosophy, Roman law, and the Jewish and Christian religions.

At the end of the war between Byzantium and Sassanid Persia (502 - 628), the region was “opened” by the Islamic conquest to become part of the Arab-Islamic empire (635). The region then fell under the rule of the Egyptian rulers including the Shi’ite Fatimids until it was captured by the Crusaders in 1109-1110. It was recaptured by Salâh al-Dîn in 1187. After that, the region came under the Mameluks reign and then under the Ottoman empire for about four centuries.

In 1920, a new Lebanon was formed by the French mandate that controlled Lebanon from the end of WWI until 1943. In this process, Lebanon came to include myriad religious sects and peoples who lived in this region as a result of the long historical process of various civilizations’ traffic into this country. The pluralist nature of the Lebanese society gave the country a special character. In a country so small in area, it was difficult to contain all these variances and contradicting interests of its sects without reaching an explosive situation as happened in 1975 with the eruption of the civil war.

In addition to its fame in trade, the region functioned as a cultural center throughout its history. In ancient Phoenicia, medical and philosophy schools were vibrant centers for knowledge seekers. With the coming of Islam to the region, the country became a center for translation of Roman and Greek sciences into Arabic. In recent history, Beirut operated as the capital for Arab intellectuals and thinkers, absorbing all political
ideologies of the region. While Arabic is the official language of the country today, French is used widely and is regarded as Lebanon's second language.

The fundamental purpose of this research is to trace and analyze the history of Lebanese cinema from its beginning in 1929 until 1979, within its political environment and social setting. The history of Lebanese cinema is, to a great extent, intertwined with the contemporary history of Lebanon itself. To understand the nature of the Lebanese film industry, it is imperative to view this industry within its historical context. The major historical events and factors surrounding the formation of the present socio-political structure of Lebanon ultimately represent a relevant influence on the nature of Lebanese cinema and its development.

The film industry in Lebanon was an unorganized industry characterized by sporadic film productions until the emigration of a significant portion of the Egyptian film operations to Lebanon in the sixties. The Lebanese film industry, consequently, flourished quantitatively to become the second largest in film production in the Arab World, second only to Egypt. The majority of the films of this phase were oriented toward entertaining the audience in order to make money at the box office. A significant change in the mentality of filmmaking came in the seventies with the return of a number of Lebanese filmmakers to Lebanon after studying filmmaking in film schools in Europe and the United States. This shift in filmmaking was greatly influenced by the political and social developments in Lebanon starting in the late sixties.
Review of Related Literature

The history of Lebanese cinema is a neglected subject of research in studies concerning Lebanese society. The detailed account of the beginning of cinema in Lebanon is shrouded with obscurity due to the absence of documentation on the subject caused, in general, by the consecutive waves of political and military unrest in 20th century Lebanon, and specifically by the loss of documents during the civil war (1975-1986). Perhaps, most significantly, this absence was caused by the lack of interest in this medium in its infancy. Research in this subject is almost nonexistent, except for a few fragmented works by 'Àzâr (1980), Swaid (1986), al-'Arîs (1979), and Shmaït (1973), who attempted to narrate the major events in Lebanese cinema. As a result of the absence of records, it is customary to divide the history of cinema in Lebanon into two eras: pre-1952, and post-1952. While the post-1952 era is more accessible because of its relative immediacy in time, the pre-1952 era is relatively unknown.

The book by al-'Arîs (1979) is a brief outline of the major events in the development of filmmaking in Lebanon. In this work, he discusses Lebanese cinema in two brief chapters, originally published in Qadâýâ 'Arabîyâh (Arab Issues) as articles; the rest of the book is devoted to issues related to Arab and foreign cinemas. The importance of this volume, however, lies in the valuable information and discussions included. In this publication, al-'Arîs arranges the history of Lebanese film production into five stages:

1- The Pioneer Stage (1930-1952)
2- The Adventurer Stage (1953-1963)
3- The Traffic Stage (1963-1970)
4- The Decline Stage (early 1970’s)

5- The Renaissance Stage (1970’s)

Swaid (1986) is mainly concerned with the films produced during the civil war (1978 - 1985). In his publication, Swaid reviews key films of this era. The author discusses several key issues concerning Lebanese cinema, such as identity, political standpoints, and place in society. Although Swaid’s study is rich in information on the cinema of the civil war, it is romantic in its presentation and underestimates the relevancy of the previous stages of Lebanese cinema.

‘Azâr (1980) admits in his book that the task of writing the history of Lebanese cinema is difficult. His book is composed mostly of interviews with filmmakers, distributors, cinematographers, and officials. It also contains reprints of official documents, such as the legislation regarding the Lebanese film industry. However, this study, considered valuable in relation to the lack of information on this subject, still suffers greatly from the absence of critical analysis and substantial research.

Shmait’s (1973) contribution is perhaps the most advanced among the volumes of literature written on this subject. Although brief, it tends to be more critical and analytical in style. This work was published in Akhbâr, the bimonthly news report on cinema and television issued by the (Lebanese) National Center for Cinema.

Purpose of Study

Because of the lack of a substantive and coherent body of literature, the study is designed to build upon available fragmented information in order to expand the process
of analytical study of Lebanese cinema. It is my purpose to put forward an analytical
history of Lebanese cinema: a history concerned with tracing the diachronic dimensions
and the intersection of film with the culture and with the historical process of Lebanon.

Research Methodology

This study primarily makes use of both the historical and the descriptive research
methods of analysis.

Historical research method may be defined as “a systematic body of principles and
rules designed to aid effectively in gathering the source-material of history, appraising
them critically, and presenting a synthesis (generally in written form) of the results
achieved” (Garraghan, 1946, p.33). The critical appraisement of sources from the
viewpoint of evidential value will be conducted using “external criticism” and “internal
criticism.” While external criticism deals with the authenticity of the evidence, internal
criticism deals with the credibility of the evidence. According to Shafer (1980),
“External criticism authenticates evidence and establishes texts as accurately as
possible...saving us from using false evidence. External criticism deals with both
intentional and accidental errors in texts” (p. 128). External criticism prepares the text
for internal criticism which deals with the credibility of evidence. Shafer (1980) states,
“Internal criticism determines the meaning and value, or credibility, of evidence” (p. 41).
Shafer (1980) further wrote:

The historian is interested in lies as well as truth, but he must be able to distinguish
between them. This is the task of internal criticism: to determine the credibility
of evidence. It thus deals with statements about specific things or ideas or customs. (p. 149)

In the case of the filmography, I used official publications from the Ministry of Information as a reference of critical appraisement for non-Lebanese filmography sources to determine the validity of such information. At the same time, it is noteworthy to mention that even in these official publications, I found numerous print errors in the names of some film casts. These accidental errors were, in turn, subjected to external criticism using cross referencing with other information from the same source, and using my own knowledge in the field. For example, the printed name Munir Manasri has been found for Munīr Ma‘āṣri.

The historical research method adopted in this study, the study of the evolution and development of Lebanese cinema, therefore, is a synthesis and exposition operation for assembling the historical data and their presentation. Through Synthesis, the history of Lebanese cinema, its evolution and development, is chronologically synthesized and presented within a unified body. According to Shafer (1980, pp. 41-42), “Synthesis here means the blending of evidence into an account that accurately describes historical events or solves historical problems.” Garraghan (1946) recognizes two categories of synthesis: external and internal synthesis. He wrote:

The synthesis will be both external and internal. External synthesis is the grouping of data in order according to time, place, topic, or a combination of these categories; internal synthesis is the grouping of data according to inner relationships, chiefly those of cause, with a view to achieve, as far as practicable, a living picture of the past in which the true significance of it emerges from the retrospect. (p. 338)
Exposition is the framework within which several factors relevant to evolution and development of Lebanese cinema, such as the relations, causality, effects of events, and institutional conditions - political, social, religious, educational, and economic - are studied and understood. According to Marius (1989), “Expositions explain - philosophical ideas, causes of events, significance of actions, participant’s motives, an organization’s working, and political party’s ideology” (p. 75).

Descriptive research method is a useful means to investigate what is at hand. According to Hopkins (1976), “Descriptive research, in addition to merely describing, is the study of relationships, present practices, attitudes, and trends that seem to be developing” (pp. 68-69). This research method is employed to deal with issues, such as:

1) What were the socio-political circumstances under which film was introduced to Lebanon?
2) How was film treated by the Lebanese government?
3) What ideological movements influenced the development of Lebanese cinema?
4) What was the effect of the financial aspects of film production on the progress of filmmaking in Lebanon?

Methods of Data Collection

The data collected in this study are of two kinds: visual data and textual data.

Visual data: The visual data in this study are comprised of available video duplications of long-feature films produced in Lebanon. Most of these films come from the early stages of productions in the sixties until 1979, the end date of the study.
Textual data: These data include the majority of literature on the subject of this study including books, articles, bibliographies, film theaters’ schedules, festivals’ publications, and official documents. The interviews used in this study have been conducted by outside sources. Most of this data is available only in Arabic. All translations of data into English used in the study were conducted by using a back-translation method from English to Arabic to detect the accuracy of these translations. I have been working in the field of Arabic-English translation for several years and am quite confident in conducting these translations.

Methods of Data Analysis

The studied visual data are qualitatively and contextually analyzed. The qualitative analysis is concerned with the production quality of these films, i.e. directing, acting, cinematography, and editing. The other elements of production which are aesthetic in nature, such as lighting and the use of color, will not be included in the analysis due to limitations ensuing from the poor quality of video duplications. The contextual analysis is concerned with the contents and themes of the studied films. The themes and contents of these films are evaluated in terms of their social-political relevancy and influences of genre.

Limitations of Study

This study is limited to the time frame examined (1929-1979). The reason for this time limitation is relative to a major shift in the Lebanese cinema created by the civil
war - through its ideological, physical, and psychological effects. The influence of the civil war on the Lebanese cinema started as early as 1975 on documentary filmmaking and as early as 1978 on long feature filmmaking. It is my intention to conduct an inclusive study of this particular stage in the future.

The scope of this research is unfortunately narrowed due to several external limitations, most significantly - the unavailability of documentation and film prints. This research was originally to include an aesthetical study of Lebanese films. However, this intention was challenged by the absence of original film prints of the early films, and the unavailability of film prints from the sixties and the seventies. Any aesthetic study of Lebanese cinema is insufficient if it is not based on actual viewing of either well-preserved film prints or, at least, good quality video recordings. The allocation of a vast volume of Lebanese films is another issue that requires further research and laborious work. The absence of earlier prints (discussed in Chapter 3) was unfortunately the result of the general careless attitude in Lebanon toward this new art form. Most of the films from the sixties and the seventies - some of which are available on video - are the films of “entertainment” appeal. I was able to locate only a handful of these films from the major distributors in Lebanon, such as al-Ṣabbāḥ Ikhwān. Although several inquiries were made to locate many of the available prints, the destiny of these prints is unknown. In addition, the horrendous recordings of these films on video tapes abolish the possibility to evaluate any aesthetic quality of these films.

The accurate and comprehensive statistical analysis of Lebanese film distribution is also hindered due to the absence of official documents of exportations. I was forced to
depended on available, but not complete, previous information published by the National Center for Cinema in Lebanon.

This study also suffers from the unavailability of sufficient archival documents on the subject especially relating to the earlier stages of Lebanese cinema. This unavailability was caused by the loss of archival materials during the war and due to the primitive system of archiving in Lebanon, i.e., no fireproof, waterproof, or airtight storage. Tragically, most of the archives at the National Center for Cinema were lost to fire during the war.

Significance of the Study

Despite the limitations discussed above, this study remains significant due to the numerous contributions it lends to the world history of cinema and specifically to the history of Lebanese cinema. The results of this study directly provide evidences to questions surrounding the major influences on the development of Lebanese cinema. This study marks a new beginning for research in the discipline of Lebanese cinema. The results of this study also lead to a better conceptualization of the lost history of Lebanese cinema.

The study presents concerned readers with the opportunity to approach the history of Lebanese cinema with a cohesive and unified perspective where the evolution, the development, and the relevant discourses and practices are studied chronologically. The study also portrays the connections between Lebanese cinema and other literary and dramatic arts of the region.
The study is unique in its nature, for it is the first time the history of Lebanese cinema is approached within a critical and analytical framework. One of the study’s major contributions is the information it extends to the discipline of Middle Eastern film history and to the world film history. This study provides the discipline of film history with the opportunity to examine the history of Lebanese cinema analytically. It also adds to the world film history an unwritten chapter, the history of Lebanese cinema. My intention in this work is to provide film history scholars with information otherwise unavailable to them.
CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DRAMATIC TRADITIONS

Historical Background

In 1975, the people of Lebanon witnessed the beginning of an extensive, costly, and exhausting civil war which lasted approximately 14 years. This war is pivotal in the history of contemporary Lebanon, not because of the obvious pestilence it brought about, but because it signified to its people that the very foundation of the country was weak, or worse, it was rotten. Dr. al-Hus (1984), previous Prime Minister of Lebanon proselytized:

The struggle for independence is a small struggle compared to the struggle after independence for building a home based on two fulcrums: an efficient government, and a good citizen. However, what actually happened in Lebanon was quite the opposite. The war that is consuming Lebanon presently is the fruit of the apathetic negligence upon independence in failing to create an efficient government or a good citizen. (p. 27)

The civil war in 1975 was the manifestation of the failure of the status quo which existed in the political structure after independence. After the independence in 1943 from the French mandate, instead of attending to the perpetual conflict between coexisting religious sects that constituted the Lebanese population - mainly between the Christian Maronites and the Muslims - the National Charter of 1943 exacerbated this chasm by granting more power to the Maronites. The Charter gave them control of the
presidency, the army, and other major positions throughout the government. Although the Christians were fewer in number than the Muslims, seats and positions in the government were distributed between the two major religious populations with a ratio of 5 Christians to 3 Muslims.

This conflict between Christian Maronites and Muslims has its roots deep in the history of the region. Kamāl Šalībī (1978) wrote that the Maronites lived in peace in the region until the end of the 13th century when they aroused the hatred of the Muslims toward them after they aided and fought alongside the Crusaders against the Muslims in Lebanon and Jerusalem. In 1916, Archbishop Durian reported that the Holy King of France in ‘Akko wrote a letter to the Maronites in the 13th century promising them French protection and placed them in an equal status with the French subjects. This French protection, although diminished after the defeat of the Crusaders, was re-instated when France declared its protection of the Maronites in the 1800’s during the Ottoman Empire’s weakened rule, as it had become known as the sick man of Europe. In 1860, the French supported the Maronites in their war against the Druze, who at the time were supported by the British for strategic reasons - the British were in competition with the French. (Russia, as well, declared its protection of the Melchite Orthodox minority in Lebanon.) This protection culminated in 1919 when the French, at the request of the Maronites, declared the Republic of Greater Lebanon and gave the Maronites the upper hand in this new republic.

This episode turned out to be a major turning point in the immediate history of Lebanon leaving an imprint on the future development in all aspects of life in what
became known as Lebanon. In order to understand the consequences of this shift in the political structure of Lebanon, it is prudent to examine the circumstances under which this new geographical entity (Lebanon) existed.

The whole region of the Middle East came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in 1516, which became the center of the Islamic Caliphate after Sultan Salīm Ottoman finished the Mameluks regime. The region known as Barr al-Shām, the land of Shem, included present Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the northern parts of Palestine/Israel. In 1520, Syria was divided into the following provinces: Damascus, Tripoli, and Aleppo. Lebanon was divided into al-Shûf (Mount Lebanon), Beirut, and Sidon which sometimes included 'Akko and Nāblus in Palestine. Each province was governed by a Wāli (ruler) who reported to the central government in Istanbul.

In 1861, at the end of the Maronite-Druze war, the Mutasarrīfiyyah - a special administrative regime was established on Mount Lebanon¹ to resolve the 1860 crisis. It was organized by an international commission that included five principle European powers: Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Under the auspices of this regime, Lebanon gained autonomous self-rule with the provision that the governor be a non-Lebanese, Christian Ottoman acceptable to the European powers. He would be assisted by an administrative council composed of representatives from all religious communities found in Lebanon, with exception of the small Lebanese Jewish community residing mainly in Beirut and Sidon. In Diller (1991), the treaty was described as follows:

The treaty created a twelve-member central administrative council with representatives from the principal religious communities in the country: two Maronites, two Druze, two Greek Orthodox, two Greek Catholics, two Shi‘ītes, and
two Sunni Muslims. The council had the authority to assess taxes, manage the
budget, and give advice on questions submitted to it by the governor. This
system of confessional representation (political participation based on quotas
allotted to different religious sects) later characterized the independent Lebanese
government. (p. 186)

Lebanon continued to exist under this special regime until its abrogation by Turkey
During WWI. However, during the 50 years of the *Mutasarrifîyah*, Lebanon prospered.
Landlords in the mountain, and trading families in the coastal cities acquired great
wealth and political power that remains true until present.

The majority of the population of coastal cities, such as Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon
were Muslim Sunnis. In Mount Lebanon, the Druze lived in the Shûf area and the
Maronites in the Kisîrwân area. The Shi‘iites were mainly concentrated in the Southern
parts of the mountain range, in the South, and in some enclaves of Mount Lebanon
(Lagha, 1991).

The rise of wealthy families into political power consequentially made them
representatives of their religious sects, as was the role of the Jumblāt family for the
Druze, al-Sulh for the Sunnis, As‘ad for the Shi‘iites. The political representation for the
Christians, however, entailed their religious leaders. Diller (1991) claimed that the
*Mutasarrifîyah* regime created a sense of national identity among the Lebanese. Perhaps
this is true in the case of the Lebanese Christians, who viewed themselves as part of the
European civilization based on their Christianity and their favorable connections with
France and Russia. However, during the pre-WWI era, when the Arabs, in general, were
in pursuit of freedom from the advent of Turkification imposed on them by the Young
Turk regime in Istanbul, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria became the center for political
activities opposing this Young Turk regime. Previous to this action, the Muslims of these regions considered themselves part of the Muslim *ummah* (nation) under the Ottoman caliphate. However, with the coming of the Young Turk in 1908, the Arab character was threatened with dissolution by the new Turkish Unionist regime. The Turks, then, had undergone a major nationalistic metamorphosis led by Muştafâ Kemal Ataturk, and had developed a Turkification policy toward the provinces of the former Ottoman Islamic empire. This new policy stirred the sentiments of Arab nationalism and outlined the differences between the national interest and the interest of the Muslim *ummah*. The national interest conceptualized loyalty and adherence to Arab nationalism as the identity of Arabs regardless of their religious faith. On the other hand, loyalty to Turkey fell under the loyalty to the Muslim *ummah*.

Al-‘Araysî, one of the prominent Arab intellectuals of that era (executed in 1916), defines Arab nationalism as possessing three conditions: unity of language, common ancestry, and Arab inclinations - showing zeal and concern for Arabs. Al-Dûri (1986/1987) wrote:

Al-‘Araysî emphasizes the Arab identity in opposition to pan-Turanianism, declaring that the Arabs are created Arabs and that it is impossible for a man to cast off his identity. He corroborates his idea when he declares that the spiritual, cultural and even physiological character of the nation are all inherited . . . . He concludes that nationalist feelings comprise a current of dynamism in peoples,' and further, that the Arab sense of nationhood (i.e., nationalism) took shape in the past and is the Arab nation's expression of its sense of identity. (p. 241)

While this reflects the ideology of the Muslims in Lebanon, to a great extent, the Christians, however, were working secretly with France to gain power over Lebanon, in their eyes, a superior Lebanon than the one they already had. In his research on Beirut
Constructionist Society established in 1912/1913, Hallaq (1983) discovered that the Christians had a secret agenda contrary to what they publicly expressed concerning their participation with the Muslims in gaining independent self-rule within the Turkish Empire. While they declared they were working for the same goals as their Muslim compatriots, the Christian members secretly corresponded with the French General Consul requesting French control over all the Syrian states (this includes Syria, Lebanon and Palestine). This request was verified in Consul Coujet’s secret report to French Foreign Minister Jounart on the 18th of March, 1913. Hallaq wrote:

In their letter they sent to me on behalf of their religious sects, these gentlemen precisely made clear the wishes of the Syrian Christians and their ties with France. This document represents a certificate to the profound sympathy the Christians of this region relates to us, as well, it indicates the great effect, hopes and aspirations the French promises created within them. (pp. 28-29)

After the victory of the Arab revolt, achieved by the Arab armies who fought with the Allies against the Turks in the Middle East, Prince Sa‘īd al-Jazā’irī in Damascus sent two telegrams on behalf of Prince Faysal, one to ‘Umar Bek al-Dā‘ūq, then Mayor of Beirut, requesting him to establish the Arab government in Beirut. The other went to the Maronite Patriarch, Eliās al-Ḥuwayyik requesting him to establish the Arab government in Mount Lebanon. While al-Dā‘ūq enthusiastically welcomed the invitation, the Patriarch declined it.

On October 1, 1918, the Muslims terminated the Ottoman rule and established the first Arab government giving Christians and Muslims equal representation in Lebanon. Lagha (1991) stated, “Muslims and Christians simultaneously celebrated this Islamic-Christian cooperation and brotherhood raising the slogan: Arabs before Jesus
and Muhammad” (p. 63). However, this celebration was replaced with sorrow for the Muslims and with euphoria for the Christians when France abolished the Arab government on October 11, 1918. Lagha (1991) wrote:

> When France finished off the Arab government on October 11, 1918, after eleven days of its birth, the Muslims were pained, not only because France obliterated their dream government, but also because of the swift change in the Christians’ position toward the Muslims. The Christians used the French soldiers against the Muslims; they demonstrated in the streets welcoming the French who, they chanted, had saved them from Turkish and Muslim occupation. (p. 64)

The destiny of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine was the focus of many conferences, committees, and organizations inside and outside the region. The issue remained a conflict between Maronite Christians - supporting the concept of a French mandate and demanding an independent Greater Lebanon, independent from the Muslims and the Sunni Muslims - opposing the creation of Greater Lebanon and demanding to be incorporated into a confederacy with Syria under the Faisal Hashemite sovereignty. Despite this existential dilemma, the French continued in their promises to the Maronite Patriarch al-Huwayyik to grant them independence and to expand the territory of Mount Lebanon. This was clear in Clemenceau’s correspondence with the Patriarch on November 10, 1919, assuring him that France would grant the Christians their wishes.

**King-Crane Commission:** By the request of American President Wilson, on March 15, 1919, the Peace Conference decided to send an allied Commission of Inquiry to the Syrian region to assess the wishes of the population concerning the future of Syria. Since the French and the British had already outlined the region’s map secretly, they and the Italians withdrew from the Commission. President Wilson persisted on sending his
delegates Henry King and Charles Crane. After a thorough investigative assessment, the commission recommended the establishment of a Syrian confederacy to include Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. However, the Allies chose not to take the Commission’s recommendations into account, especially since the United States, the initiator of this investigation, reneged on its policy of non-interference. Furthermore, the American congress itself did not approve the King-Crane report because of its anti-Zionist implication.3

On September 1, 1920, French General Goroux publicly announced during an official celebration the establishment of Grand Liban, or Greater Lebanon, with its present borders.4 This confirmed that the French had committed themselves to the annexation of the Bekka Valley, part of the eastern mountain range, the southern parts of both mountain ranges, and all costal cities that spread on the Mediterranean including Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre. All this was decided before the Assembly of Nations approved the decisions for dividing the region presented in the San Remo conference in April of 1920.

Goroux ordered the formation of an administrative body to Greater Lebanon that consisted of 15 members distributed according to religious representation, and he called it the Administrative Committee of Greater Lebanon. He distributed the seats in this committee in the ratio shown in Table 1, as reported in Hallâq (1985).

The Muslims were enraged by the dissemination of seats by General Goroux, and they chose to voice their anger against the French by launching massive demonstrations denouncing France and its participation. Hallâq (1985) stated that the demonstrators confirmed Lebanon’s Arab identity, demanded the withdrawal of the French from all of
Syria, and solicited to unite with Syria. The Muslims’ reaction to this great injustice, as perceived especially by the people of Tripoli and the regions which originally belonged to Syria, did not dissipate.

TABLE 1.

1920 Administrative committee

Seats Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maronites</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi’ites</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the contrary, they continued to work toward a union with Syria and independence from France through different channels, such as political activism, refusal to recognize the Lebanese citizenship issued in 1922, correspondence with foreign politicians, all of which increasingly made it difficult for the French to undermine the Muslim’s determination for freedom. As some Maronites realized that France was merely a profiteering occupier, they respectively worked with the Muslims to achieve
discontinuity with the French. Bishārah al-Khūry, later to be the first Lebanese President after independence, acknowledged that cooperation with the Muslims was inevitable in order to achieve the goal of independence. Al-Khūry represented a new polarity among the Christians toward their counterpart. On the Muslim behalf, Riyād al-Sulh, leader of a Sunni bloc who favored an independent Lebanon, saw that cooperation with the Maronites was necessary to end the French Mandate. Consequently, the 1943 National Charter was developed by these two prominent figures in Lebanese politics.

While these prominent figures publicly announced the need for the Lebanese to liberate themselves from the shadows of sectarianism, they themselves were confirming yet another more dangerous type of clan-sectarianism. Diller (1991) illustrated:

All of Lebanon’s major sectarian communities had leading families who dominated the country’s politics: the Khourys, Eddes, Chamouns, Chehabs, Franjiehs, and Gemayels (sic) among the Maronites; the Solhs, Salams, Yafis, and Karamis (sic) among the Sunnis; the Jumblatts and Arslans (sic) among the Druze; and the Assads and Hamadahs (sic) among the Shi’ites. (p. 187)

Governmental seats were handed down from one generation to another. Assigning tasks and positions in the government and in other private institutions was dominated by the practice of favoritism and clan-ties. Corruption, negligence and inefficiency were the result of this family-network, patron-client political system of the Lebanese aristocracy.

An Outline of major developments

The political situation of Lebanon, regressed from one presidential term to another. Al-Khūry and Shamʿīn, his predecessor, were accused of fraudulently influencing parliamentary elections. They both were re-elected by means of securing constitutional
amendments. Sectarianism was reinforced through the distribution of governmental posts across religions, thereby, designating the presidency to the Maronites, prime-ministry to the Sunnis and the Speaker of the Parliament to the Shi’ites.

In 1958, a rebellion against Sham’ûn was enacted by Nasserist sympathizers in attempt to join the United Arab Republic uniting Egypt and Syria. Sham’ûn was protected by American Marines coming to his aid to suppress the rebellion.

The Palestinian flocks of refugees added to the political unrest in Lebanon, especially after the formation of the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) in 1965. The PLO established training camps in south Lebanon which became the launching base for suicidal attacks on Israel. In 1970, the PLO was expelled from Jordan and established its headquarters in Lebanon.

In the sixties and the seventies, Israel repeatedly bombed south Lebanon and launched military operations against the Palestinians dwelling in refugee camps and in cities among Lebanese civilians. This led to internal migration from the South to the surroundings of Beirut where these refugees, mostly Shi’ites, built poor housing neighborhoods known as “the belt of misery.”

The centralization of government in Beirut led great numbers of people to move to the capital for financial reasons. This created a population problem in Beirut resulting in an insufficiency in public services which were not suitable to handle a heavy population.

In 1973, a major confrontation between the PLO groups and the Lebanese government culminated in a military clash between the two entities. The Lebanese army launched air attacks against the camps in an attempt to capture the moment. The
Palestinians, as a result, strengthened their armed existence in Lebanon. While at the public level, sentiments of discomfort spread among the sympathizers to the Palestinians, precisely those who shared a common political and religious backgrounds, mainly the Muslims and the Nationalists.

Political awareness became eminent due to the rising population of the educated class. The issue of the national identity of Lebanon was again the focus of political organizations; the Maronites' refusal to admit to the Arabness of Lebanon, holding firmly to the Phoenician theory, was met with growing voices of intellectuals asserting the Arabness of all of Lebanon in its Christian-Muslim entirety.

In 1976, a multi-Arab mission entered Lebanon to separate the warring factions. Syria was the greatest contributor to this mission deploying about 100,000 of its troops. The Syrian army later became an occupation force and remains in Lebanon at present. As a result, Lebanon's economy and political life has become subject to Syrian control.

Dramatic Traditions

The history of cinema in the Arab World can be traced back to January 1886, two weeks after the Lumiere brothers' debut in Paris on December 28, 1885, where it was reported that projections were held in Alexandria and Cairo. In the following two years, the show was viewed in Tunis, Susa, Algiers, Tlemcen, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Bethlehem, Beirut, and Damascus. An Egyptian newspaper of the time called this new invention "the greatest wonder of the world." From that time, a compulsion toward cinema in the
Middle East grew, leading to the opening of regular movie theaters in the early 1900's and to the establishing of local film productions as early as the 1920's.

When cinema arrived to Lebanon, the country was not void of dramatic traditions. Contrary to Landau's hypothesis (1958) that cinema in the Arab World was wholly a foreign product transplanted on virgin soil, Lebanon at the end of the 19th century witnessed a vibrant movement in dramatic arts. Among those forms which have been documented are the shadow play (Khâyâl al-zill), the passion play, puppetry, the peep-box, the tradition of story-telling (hikâyah), and theater. 'Isâm Mahfûz (1981) wrote:

At the beginning of the century, similar to the regions under the Ottoman rule, Lebanon enjoyed the theatrical forms of the shadow play, puppetry, and peep box. In addition, the Lebanese had the hakawâti (story-teller) which was taken from Arab tradition...The shadow play and the puppetry spread in the Arab World, especially in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, from 1820, where the shows were put in public cafes and parks. (pp.7-8)

Shadow play is a histrionics performed on a wooden stage by casting shadows of large figures (which are made from drawing on clear leather) on a white curtain 1 meter in height by 1 ½ meters in width. This process of casting the shadows is done by spotting the light sources on the screen behind the figures. 'Abd al-Wahhâb (1966) wrote:

The characters were drawn and shaped on transparent cow hide. Then, they were dyed in various colors required for faces, clothes, animal bodies, tree branches and leaves so when projected in front of the light, they appeared on the screen in color. (p. 33)

Landau (1958) stated that the shadow play in Syria (pre-WWI) was influenced by its contemporary Turkish model from which characters and subject matter were copied to become Syrian plays. He wrote:
The plays performed in Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo, Jaffa, and Jerusalem (all towns in the province of Syria before the First World War) show unmistakable traces of Turkish influence; this is particularly true of the first two of the above mentioned towns...It is quite clear, however, that not only Karagoz and 'Aiwa (sic), i.e., Hagivad, were copied but a host of other characters too, often with their full Turkish names. The subject matter was somewhat changed, however, drawing material from local conditions to suit the untutored audience, eager to see images and hear things they could easily grasp. (p. 34)

Landau drew his hypothesis on resemblances found in both Turkish and Syrian plays in characters and somewhat close subject matter. The possibility of Turkish influence on the Syrian shadow play is perceivable, especially when a two-way cultural influence took place between the Ottoman Islamic Empire and its provinces. However, Landau’s suggestions seem far fetched taking into consideration the strong Arab tradition of shadow play centered in Iraq which is east of Syria.

The oldest scripts known about Khayâl al-Zill (shadow play) are the works of Ibn Daniyä (d. 710/1311) which manifests a great deal of mastery of this art form. Ibn Daniyä moved from Baghdad to Cairo after the fall of Baghdad at the hands of Mongols in the 13th century. Nevertheless, there still exists a debate over the origin of the shadow play itself - China vs. India - and on how it arrived to the Arab World. The work of Ibn Daniyä proves that a well-developed tradition of shadow play was present in the Arab World dating back at least to the era before Ibn-Daniyä. The inability to detect the specific beginning of this tradition in the Arab World, as well as its specific nature in Syria, is due to the fact that Khayâl al-Zill, having been a popular art form, was of no literary importance, and therefore, was not canonized. On this issue, Hamâdah (1979) wrote:
The Arab documentarians didn’t concern themselves with this (specifying on how and when the shadow play appeared in the Arab World) because *Khayâl al-Zill* was not important to them compared to the other subjects they studied and documented. The narrative scripts of this art didn’t represent the literary culture and was not concurrent with the level of literary standards - in form, content and subject - which were taken as criteria by poets, authors, scholars and linguistics in evaluating the literary or poetic works. On the contrary, it was counted among the popular stories which were of no importance due to the substandard level of language used. (p. 38)

However, Ḥamādah suggested that the Arabic *Khayâl al-Zill* had developed through time, starting at least from the 9th century, to have reached a level of creativity and artistic excellence. He based his suggestion on several historical citations referring to the presence of the shadow play in the Arab society found in the writings of al-Ḥusarî al-Qayrawānî and in al-Shâbishtî’s book, *Al-Diyârât*.

The shadow play worked from a narrative script, usually unwritten, based on the two dramatic units, place and time. It included poetry, most of the time strophic verse (*zajal*), music and singing. Although the general objectives of these plays were to entertain the public, they included social and political criticism, as evident in the characters of the Turkish soldier and the European doctor found in some Syrian shadow plays.

The names ‘Avâ: and Karagoz, which Landau stipulated as Turkish names, are originally Arabic names. The name ‘Avâ: means the one who gives advice or it also could be wise-one, and it does represent the character and his actions. While ‘Avâ:’s Arabic meaning is simple to detect, Ḥamādah (1979) mentioned that Karagoz is the Turkish pronunciation of *Karakosh*, the name of Saladdine’s minister.
Landau (1958) mentioned that the Syrian shadow play seemed to have been immensely popular, mainly in the 19th century. Next to Egypt, Syria was the only Arabic-speaking country with a great number of shadow plays produced. Among the plays that were known and performed fairly often at the end of the 19th century were *The Badgers*, *The Foreign Doctor*, *The Opium Addict*, *The Bathhouse*, *The Evening Party*, and *The Firewood*. Landau (1958) observed that “the majority of performances were given during the month of Ramadán” (p.38).

Another common dramatic art in Syria was the *hikayah*, the story-telling, which was the telling of a story often mixed with humorous content accompanied by acting and re-enactment of voices and sounds. Characters of stories were represented by voice, movement, and appearance which was done through stage outfits. In addition to the narration and acting of a story, the *hikayah* included some music and dancing.

Story-telling grew wider in concept than merely being the telling of a humorous story. The difficult socio-political conditions of the Arab World had given way to increasing popularity of the various story-telling arts and their social importance as dramatic performances. These performances provided an imaginary world to the vast majority of the people who lived in hard financial conditions. This notion of escapism from reality could only be achieved by a story-telling art at a high level of effectiveness.

From this notion stems the necessity for further study and analysis of the dramatic components and characteristics of the *hikayah* theater. These components are the following:
Denial of the two basic units of place and time

"Stories, such as *One Thousand and One Nights*, abstained from real time and space and depended on an illusionary existence for the purpose of furnishing a dreamy atmosphere for its audience" (Dughmān, 1973, p. 76). The author of the story manipulated the audience’s belief in metaphysical existence by presenting unseen powers of “good” and “evil.”

Unrealistic representation of action

The author was free of all realistic and logical limits in portraying the events in his stories. Dughmān (1973) wrote that “in order to satisfy the audience’s need for escapism and their fondness of this art, the author used all kinds of exaggerations and miracles in creating the story, the plot, and the ending” (p. 77). ‘ Antar’s Biography, a pre-Islamic-black-knight-hero type, is full of such practices.

Religious beliefs

Religious values and beliefs were commonly portrayed in Hikayah theater. As the audience was mostly compromised of Muslims, religious values and conflicts with other religious groups were often emphasized.

Heroic figures

The hero in these stories came true to the audience’s expectations. The hero was an ideal person - intelligent, strong, undefeated, representative of all “good” - and fought against evil forces and oppression. Above all, he always fulfilled his audience’s dreams and expectations. The heroine, likewise, was characterized
with upmost beauty, wealth, purity, fidelity, intelligence, education, spirituality, manners, etc.

Although the art of story-telling was based on these premises, it explored varied subjects. “Among the most important of them were those that addressed social issues, heroic adventures, and political conflicts” (Dughmān, 1973, p. 83). Socially oriented stories aimed at presenting social issues, such as injustice, inequality and poverty, while finding solutions to these problems. Heroic oriented stories arose as a result of the bad political environment and the continuous wars in the region at the time.

The importance of the story-telling art was in two aspects: entertainment and social responsibility. As seen from the characteristics of the hikayah, this art managed to entertain the people by satisfying their tastes, while at the same time, attempting to educate and direct people into the correct way of life as perceived by their religious beliefs.

The addressing of the hikayah and qissah (story) can be considered discussion of the dramatic text. Indeed, the hākiyah (the story-teller) is a major factor in understanding the evolution of Arab drama, because the hākiyah is the person who makes the link between the scripted story and its Ikhrāj. Ikhrāj is the Arabic term which is still used to denote the directing of a play and putting on the show. The character of the story-teller is the important factor in determining the form of the story and the shaping of the audiences’ reception.

The hākiyah used to take a distinguished seat among the audience, either amidst them or in front of them. His performance depended on two dynamics: his voice and his
physical movement. The quality of his performance was a crucial element in
determining the effectiveness of the story. The ḥākiyah's delivery of the story, its events
and climaxes, was what visualized the story and transformed it into reality. He - alone
with his performance and his artistic abilities - excited the audience’s senses and their
anxieties. The ḥākiyah’s talent stemmed from his great sense of observation, vast ability
for imitation of voices, characters, and dialects, his ability to attract people’s attention
and interest, and his sharp wit and sense of humor.

In order to make his scenes more believable and closer to the audience’s perception,
the ḥākiyah used props and devices. For example, because of his inability to change into
different costumes while visualizing the characters of his story, the ḥākiyah used
different head covers to represent his characters. And in order to dramatize scenes, he
depended heavily on his body movement and on tools when possible. For example, he
would use a sword to act out a battle scene, and perform dynamic and jolting body
movements.

Modern Theater

Theater in Lebanon started in 1847 by a young Maronite, Mārūn al-Naqāšt (1817 -
1855). At the age of 14, he moved from Sidon with his father to Beirut in 1825, which
was one of the most important commercial center on the Mediterranean. At the age of
18, he was fond of Arabic classical poetry and languages. Mahfūz (1981) wrote, “At the
age of 18, he superseded his contemporary poets, for his poetry came strong, highly
classical, and flowed easily. His love of languages inspired him to learn Turkish, Italian,
and French” (p. 14). Al-Naqqāsh showed, at an early age, qualities and readiness for what he became later, a theatrical dramatist.

In 1846, al-Naqqāsh traveled to Italy on a business trip. There, he had the opportunity, for the first time in his life, to watch the crema of Italian opera culture. As soon as he returned to Beirut, he started working on his first play, Al-Bakhil, which Landau considered an adaptation of Moliere’s L’Avare into Arabic verse. He further wrote:

This comedy he presented on an improvised stage at his own house in Beirut in the year 1848. The select audience consisted of foreign consuls and local dignitaries. Some characteristics in the play and in its performance merit special mention, since they would seem to be criteria of the Arab theater for a long time:

1) Al-Naqqash (sic) refrained from inserting organic changes in the original plot, but abbreviated or expanded the comedy at will, to suit his taste and the understanding of his audience...

2) He enlivened the play by inserting several airs and tunes of Oriental character...

3) No actresses were allowed to appear on the stage and hardly any women were tolerated in the audience...

4) All actors were from the Naqqash (sic) family. (p. 57)

Shortly after al-Naqqāsh initiated Lebanese theater, and Arab theater as well, since this was the first European theatrical attempt, more people became interested in following Mārūn’s steps. People, such as Nqūla al-Naqqāsh, Salīm al-Naqqāsh, Tannūs al-Ḥur, Yūsuf al-Khayyāt, Salīm al-Qurdāḥi, Khalīl al-Ŷāziji, and Iskandar Farah joined the pioneering ranks.

This new form of entertainment, perhaps, did not attract as large an audience as the other traditional forms. This could be detected in the immigration of people working in
this field to Egypt, where theater was favored by Khedive Ismā‘īl, who built the great Opera House in Cairo for the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Al-Rā‘ī (1980) wrote that “Lebanon exported its theater’s most important components to Egypt” (p. 222). Among the Lebanese who moved to Cairo are the Salīm al-Naqqāsh group, Yūsuf al-Khayyāt, Salīm al-Qurdāḥi, Iskandar Farah, the writer Farah Antūn, and George Abyad. Al-Rā‘ī claimed that “this immigration left Lebanon vacant of any theater for the general public” (p. 222). However, Landau (1958) asserted the continuity of theater in Syria despite the mass immigration of theatrical groups and dramatists to Egypt. He wrote:

While it is evident that the mass immigration of actors to Egypt deprived the Arab theater in Syria of some of its ablest exponents, this theater, nevertheless, continued to exist in the large Syrian towns. No other explanation but this continuity can be given to the unusually speedy development of play-writing and acting in twentieth-century Syria. (p. 60)

Theatrical performances continued in Lebanon, but they were limited mostly to schools and amateur clubs or shown at social occasions like birthday parties. Landau (1958) wrote, “Various Maronite and Jesuit schools presented, time and again, plays written by their priests. Before the end of the century, at the latest, this practice of play-writing and acting was to penetrate several Muslim and Jewish schools as well” (p. 60).

The development of theater in Lebanon is easier to trace than the other traditional dramatic forms because of its young age. Theater grew from al-Naqqāsh’s early attempts, where he tried to imitate Western theater - and simultaneously, attempted to spill his own cultural heritage into the process - to a translation phase where European
plays were Arabized. After the techniques of theater were relatively mastered, new and original compositions dealing with themes from within the Arab culture nurtured the Lebanese theater into a new plane of existence. Political ideologies carried Lebanese theater one step further toward its development into a mature art. For example, in 1977, a Lebanese theatrical group called the *Hakawātī* group was established by Roje ‘Assāf to revive the story-telling dramatic art form in an attempt to return to the “cultural roots” in confronting the Westernization of Lebanese theater.

Al-Rā‘î (1980) wrote that Abd al-Latif Shararah divided the development of Lebanese theater into four stages:

1) The early trials - Mârûn al-Naqqâsh

2) Translations - mostly from French drama, such as Adīb Ishāq’s translation of Racine’s (1667) Andromaque, Fāris Kalab and Liyasha‘ Karam’s translation of Voltair’s (1732) *Zaire*

3) Historical rebirth - the national Arab history was the theme of this movement. It dealt with historical characters and events, such as Najib al-Haddad’s play *Hamdān* which portrayed the life of Abd al-Rahman al-Dākhil, and Shaykh Ahmad ‘Abbās al-Azhari’s play, *The Race Between Issa and Dhu‘yān*.

4) Social realism - this practice came to Lebanon through the Adab al-Mahjar (Exile Literature) movement. Among the contributors were Jubran Khalīl Jubran - *Iram That al-‘Imād* portraying the self as the most precious thing in life, Mikhā‘īl Nu‘aymah - *Al-‘Ābā‘ wal-Banūn* portraying the conflict between a conservative generation and a liberal generation. (pp. 222-223)

The influence of social realism was rapidly felt in the Lebanese theater. Al-Rā‘î (1980) further wrote:

One of the effects of *Al-‘Ābā‘ wal-Banūn*, which was greatly received, it inspired play writers to leave the style of: advice and guidance, and the search in the glories of the past, and focus on the reality of their societies criticizing the discrepancies found in their social atmosphere. In this manner, Farid Mudawwar wrote his play,
Fawq al-Intiqām: Above Revenge which portrayed social problems of the common people. (P. 227)

Theater faced cultural problems, such as dialect and female representation. As discussed previously, women were not permitted to appear due to social/religious reasons, and they were hardly tolerated among the audience. This issue was solved by time, when the Lebanese public absorbed this relatively new form of theater, and after they grew familiar and attached to it. However, the issue of language was dealt with differently. Theatrical groups used the local dialect for the illiterate audience, and classical Arabic for the learned audience. The same play would be shown in these two dialects respectively. Of course, the repercussion of two dialects led to a certain degree of difference between versions. On this issue, Mikhā’īl Nu’aymah stated that both the classical Arabic and the Lebanese local dialect has its own genius and mood.

Other attempts to solve this problem took a different direction by combining both dialects at the same time. When Farīd Mudawwar wrote his play Above Revenge in 1931, which was shown on stage at the American University in Beirut, he gave the actors the freedom to choose between classical and local dialect.

These were the conditions and circumstances under which cinema arrived to Lebanon. The audience was trained by a long tradition of theatrical and dramatic performances, which paved the way to the absorption of the new dramatic form of film.
CHAPTER III
THE PIONEER STAGE: 1929-1949

The Silent Era

The detailed account of the beginning of cinema in Lebanon is shrouded with obscurity due to absence of documentation on the subject, generally, as a result of the consecutive waves of political and military unrest in 20th century Lebanon, and specifically due to the loss of documents during the civil war (1975-1986), and to a great extent, due to the lack of interest in this medium at its infancy. As a result of this defilement, primary sources of events and circumstances of the early stages of cinema in Lebanon are unavailable for this research; therefore, the data used are extracted from secondary sources, such as documents and writings that discussed this subject at various lengths dated from post 1960’s to present.

Ibrāhīm al-‘Aris (1979) mentioned in his discussion on the problems of cinema in Lebanon that the Lebanese society was acquainted with film screening as early as the closing years of the 19th century. Miriam Rosen (1990) wrote that film projections were held in Beirut sometime during the two years following the Lumiere Brothers’ Cinematographe in 1895. She wrote:

The cinema came to the Middle East and North Africa, as elsewhere, on the backs of men more properly termed adventurers than filmmakers. The first public screening
of the Lumiere Brothers' Cinematographe was held in Paris on December 28, 1895, and in the weeks and months that followed, some one hundred Lumiere representatives carried the new invention to the four corners and five continents of the earth (Antarctica excluded). Projections were reportedly held in an Alexandria cafe less than two weeks after the Paris debut. Over the next two years, Lumiere emissaries were to visit Tunis, Susa, Algiers, Tlemcen, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Bethlehem, Beirut, and Damascus. (p. 1)

Walid Shmait (1972) wrote:

It is unknown when exactly the first film theater was built in Lebanon. However, Rashid 'Ali Sha'ban, nicknamed Abu 'Abd al-Jaras, the film producer of Mughamarat Abu 'Abd / The Adventures of Abu 'Abd - the second Lebanese film confirms that "Zahrat Sūriyah" [The Flower of Syria] was the first theater in Beirut, established in 1909, and which was later known as "Pathé." Later on, two other theaters emerged, Crystal and Cosmograph. (p. 12)

The presence of more than one film theater in Beirut as early as 1909, and their continuing operation during WWI, indicates the development of a film viewing tradition in Beirut. This speculation is supported by the opening of more film theaters in Beirut immediately after the end of WWI in 1918. Empire Cinema, Grand Theater, Roxi, and other film theaters were established and started their operation after the end of the war. It is also significant to note that all these theaters were located in the center of the city - the downtown area - which was a major shopping attraction and the hub of night life.

Whereas the tradition of film projection grew wider, the first film made in Lebanon, Adventures of Elias Mabrūk, did not appear until 1929. It was produced by an Italian resident of Lebanon, Jordano Pidutti. Lucienne Khoury (1966) wrote:

The first Lebanese film was called The Adventures of Elias Mabrūk, and appeared in the year 1929. It was a silent comedy produced by an amateur, Jordano Pidutti, with the aid of a few friends who were also inexperienced. The scenes were shot with "Kinamo" cameras, and the film was developed and released in a small factory built by Mr. Pidutti himself. The films were put in basins full of development liquids, and
then they were dried on frames. The filmstrips were wound on spools, each containing one 30 meter length. (p.120)

Although it was generally acknowledged that the beginning of Lebanese cinema started in 1929, Swaid (1986) mentioned that some of the first Lebanese who worked in film claimed that the beginning of cinema in Lebanon started at the beginning of WWI (1914-1918) through Pidutti's first trials. Swaid suggested that this claim “does not stir worthy arguments because it was not openly presented before, and also because it is not supported by any documents. It is only personal memory of these people” (p. 11).

From a historical perspective, the memories or personal accounts of people - particularly if they worked in the field being investigated - should be regarded on the same level as the textual work. According to Carraghan (1949) personal memory is one of the criteria of knowledge of a direct witness. He wrote:

Three steps can be recognized in the apprehension of a fact of history and its communication to others. (a) The witness' perception of it by sight, hearing, or other senses. . . . (b) The witness' retention of the perception in memory, recall, or reproduction of it at need, and when recalled, recognition of it as identical with the original perception. This step comprises the specific acts of the memory, which has been defined as the “faculty of retaining, reproducing, and recognizing representations of past experiences.” (c) Externalization of the recalled perception by means of words, writing, or other medium. (pp. 283-284)

If there is such a claim, then we need to investigate it thoroughly for the record.

What captures our attention is that we do not know if these people are direct witnesses or indirect witnesses. However, their recollections confirm one historical account, an aspect which strengthens their validity as a reliable historical source. Whether they are direct or indirect witnesses, then, by virtue of having various independent testimonies of the same historical account, their testimonies may be accepted as truthful if they have no
personal gain from their claim as Carraghan (1949) suggested in his criteria of veracity. He wrote:

Testimony may be accepted as truthful when its contents are of such a nature that lying would be of no advantage whatever to the informant, whereas telling the truth could not harm him in a known way. regard for the truth is inherent in human nature; no one goes counter to it unless moved by the prospect of some advantage to be gained. (p.287)

In analyzing this claim, I found the following observations to be noteworthy and relevant to the truthfulness criteria suggested by Carraghan. First of all, it appears that these people who worked in film have no personal benefit from their claims. Secondly, no patriotic or national pride arises from their claim since they did not suggest that cinema was started by a Lebanese filmmaker rather than Pidutti. Their claim does not rob Pidutti of his crown as the pioneer of Lebanese cinema. Thirdly, considering the fact that Pidutti took care of the shooting and the developing of the 1929 film, it is quite possible that he had some knowledge of filmmaking and experience in film processing through earlier attempts. Finally, ‘Āzār mentioned that Pidutti built his film lab in 1925, which indicates that Pidutti started before 1929.

A look into Pidutti’s life can present some answers to this issue. Unfortunately, not much is known about him other than some brief information pertaining to his presence in Lebanon. He came to Lebanon at the age of 24 and worked as a driver for seven years for the Sursuq family, a well-known Beiruti family. From his correspondence with the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Treasury, and his daily communication skills, it appears that his knowledge of the Arabic language was rather sophisticated. This indicates that Pidutti lived in Lebanon for a long period of time before he embraced the
business of filmmaking. After his second film, *The Adventures of Abu 'Abd*, he divorced fiction filmmaking and devoted his expertise to shooting news footage for Western news agencies.

Pidutti's first film, *The Adventures of Elias Mabrûk*, was a social comedy that dealt with the subject of emigration - a Lebanese social issue at the time. This black and white silent film told the story of a Lebanese emigrant who returned from America after a long absence to see his family and relatives. The film contained a few scenes of Spanish dancing to the rhythm of the castanet, and it was accompanied by music during projection. The film was shot in one of the Sursuq's family houses, in the Ghlayyînî café located in the Rawshi region in Beirut, and in some streets of the city. The film cast were all amateurs who most probably participated in the film for their own amusement. Among the amateur actors were Muṣṭafâ Qlaylāt, Vlādo Rizq, Edwār Farhî, Emil Abu Râshid, and Malibo Casnipolo - the only female actor and who was of Greek origin.

The film's screening at the Royal Theater was canceled one week before its scheduled opening. The screening was canceled because the Royal Theater suspended its operation for the installation of a sound system in order to show Western sound films which had already started arriving at Lebanese film theaters. Pidutti, nevertheless, succeeded to arrange a special screening for his film on March 14, 1932, under the sponsorship of August Adîb, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, at the time. The film was very well received by a sizable audience who flocked to the Empire Theater to see the first film made in Lebanon. As a result, the film made 100 golden Liras in net profit. On
the March 4, 1932, Pidutti wrote to the Minister of the Treasury requesting to exempt the film screening from taxation. In his letter reported in ‘Āzār (1980), Pidutti wrote:

Our company decided to screen the film *Elias Mabrūk* which is the first national film under the sponsorship of his Excellency Prime Minister August Pasha Adīb, on the eve of March 14, 1932, at the Empire Theater in Beirut. The film presents a number of young Lebanese film amateurs, along with several exciting sceneries from Beirut and Lebanon. We would like to mention that our company exhorted its best efforts to satisfy the taste of the Lebanese audience. Considering the importance of tourism to each Lebanese, we plead you to exempt this Oriental film, which deserves your support, from all required taxes. (p.14)

This was the film’s only public screening. The film itself did not survive and it was destroyed. Aliksān (1982) narrated that when Pidutti was arrested by the French army during WWII because he was Italian, he gave the only two copies of the film and the negative to one of his friends who resorted to selling these films to the Belgium Embassy in Beirut to be used as part of an explosive device, since film stock at that time was made of a nitrate base.

In 1931, Rashīd ‘Ali Sha’bān, nicknamed Abu ‘Abd, produced the second Lebanese film, *The Adventures of Abu ‘Abd*. Abu ‘Abd requested Pidutti to shoot a film that he was willing to produce. With the presence of a producer in charge of all expenses, Pidutti immediately accepted the offer. The result of this cooperation was a silent comedy film, completed in the same year and was shown in Beirut several times where it was met with great success.

Shot in black and white, *The Adventures of Abu ‘Abd* told the story of the return of Abu ‘Abd from Africa to share with his friends and family the adventures he encountered in the African jungles. It was a family operation where Abu ‘Abd, his son ‘Abd, and his
daughter Fātimah, played the leading roles. The film was successfully edited to portray Abu 'Abd in the African jungles. Pidutti used clips of wild animals from Western films and juxtaposed them with scenes of Abu 'Abd encountering these animals. Although we do not know much about the destiny of the film, it was most probably damaged due to the improper storage of the nitrate-based stock used.

With these two attempts, the chapter of silent Lebanese cinema was closed, to be superseded by sound film production. Nonetheless, Pidutti's two films represent an important phase in Lebanese cinema. The significance of these films exists within their thematic implications. Both films dealt, to some extent, with the issue of emigration from Lebanon, which at the time was a pertinent issue to the Lebanese society. As a result of hard financial conditions in Lebanon, tens of thousands of young men immigrated to the African and the American continents seeking a better life or a sufficient income to support their families at home. In The Adventures of Elias Mabrūk, the film portrayed the importance of family bonds, a concept inherent to the Lebanese society. The Adventures of Abu 'Abd effectively delivered the stories of Abu 'Abd and became known in Beirut as one of the most humorous comedies (and is still circulating to this date). It is not clear whether 'Ali Sha'bān developed the character of Abu 'Abd or just impersonated it for the film. It is not documented how the character of Abu 'Abd was developed and transmitted. This uncertainty stems from the lack of information on the origin of Abu 'Abd’s character. The character was impersonated by a Beirut actor, a fireman at the central fire station in West Beirut, named Abu Sa'd from the early 1970’s until the early 1980’s. Abu 'Abd’s character was frequently presented in the 70’s
and 80’s in films and television shows. At present, several actors employ the impersonation of Abu ‘Abd’s character.

The character of Abu ‘Abd represents a simple man from the Beiruti Muslim working class. He is a symbolic representation of the social ideals of his class. Men like Abu ‘Abd take pride in strength, heroism, wit, exuberance, and humor. Abu ‘Abd’s physical appearance, as perceived now, comes from traditional fashion. He is dressed in the Jallabiyah (a long garment for men), with a handsome Izâr (a cloth belt) wrapped around his waist, and he always swings his weapon - a thin bamboo cane. The man Abu ‘Abd, behind all this facade, is a man of exaggeration, fabrication, and most of all, he is a man of words rather than action. This character bears a great deal of similarity to the characters found in the shadow play and the tradition of story-telling of the region, such as the characters Juha, ‘Iwâz, and others.

The film capitalized on a comical folkloric character which was popular to almost all Lebanese. Its popularity helped to propagate this character to a larger audience at the time. The Adventures of Abu ‘Abd were known to be exaggerated, and perhaps too, were all Abu ‘Abd’s fantasies. Yet, with the help of a skillful montage, the film succeeded in bringing these extraordinary situations to a feasible visual reality. ‘Àzâr (1980) wrote on the subject:

_The Adventures of Abu ‘Abd_ presented the return of Abu ‘Abd from Africa and the adventures he had presumably encountered there. Pidutti and Abu ‘Abd inserted into the film scenes from foreign movies and scenes filmed in Beirut in a convincing montage, which made the audience believe that Abu ‘Abd had these adventures in Africa. (p. 15)
The film’s montage indicated that these two filmmakers, Pidutti and Abu ‘Abd, had developed a keen sense and understanding of the use of the film medium merely from viewing foreign films. It also indicated the development of a film viewing culture in Beirut.

It is wrong to hold the skillful cinematic structure of *The Adventures of Abu ‘Abd* as a cheap imitation of Charlie Chaplin’s film’s as suggested by al-‘Arîs (1979). By the time Pidutti started his film career, film montage was already discovered in American films as early as D. W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916) and expanded by the Russian filmmakers Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergie Eisenstein in the 1920’s. Should they have refrained from using montage in *The Adventure of Abu ‘Abd*, this may have indicated the filmmakers’ sterility and ignorance of the use of this film technique, despite their film viewing experience.

**The Beginning of Sound Cinema**

In 1933, Herta Garghûr, a Lebanese woman of German origin, established Lumnar Film Company, the first production studio in Lebanon. She did so in cooperation with Niqûla Qattan and George Haddâd, the owners of the Empire Cinema chain in Lebanon and Syria. Describing the set-up and operation of Lumnar Studios, Khoury (1966) wrote:

The equipment the company possessed was primitive. Interior scenes used to be shot in Mrs. Garghour’s (sic) sitting room which was converted into a set. The laboratory contained wooden frames on which were wound the pellicles, as a preliminary to putting them in cement basins painted with a kind of protective paint. There was a drying room which was made dust-free and which contained a cylinder - 7 meters in length and 4 meters in diameter - that revolved on an axis. It was possible to dry two hundred meters of film at once. (p. 121)
From Khoury’s illustration, the operation budget appeared to be very limited, yet at the same time, innovative. The person who was in charge of the technical aspect of this operation was most probably George Costi, who was sent by the company to Paris for training. Costi studied and worked at the Pathe Studios for six months where he learned all aspects of filmmaking, including film processing and developing.

In 1936, Lumnar Studio released its first sound film in Arabic with French subtitles, Bayna Hayākil Ba‘albak / In the Ruins of Ba‘albak. This was the first film completely produced in an Arab country. Egyptian films, at the time, were sent to France for developing. The company hired the Italian director Julio De Luca and sound engineer Rossi to work with the studio’s cinematographer George Costi. The Italian recruits brought to Lebanon modern equipment for use in the film. The expenses of the film, including salaries and equipment rental, reached an astounding figure of 30,000 LL ($12,000 apprx.), which was considered a fortune in those days. The film was met with considerable success, and the producer was able to generate some profit. The film was screened in several local cinemas and six copies were sold to France, Africa, and other Arab countries.

The story and screen play of In the Ruins of Ba‘albak were written by Karam Bustānī. The film told the story of a young tourist who fell in love with an Arab Prince whom she met in Ba‘albak, a city in east Lebanon featuring the site of Roman temple ruins. After they decided to get married, the Prince’s family opposed the marriage and the relation between the couple, and they prohibited the Prince from further seeing the young tourist who eventually returned to her country with a broken heart. In an attempt
to appeal to the Arab audience, the film included traditional music and several dances common in Egyptian films of the time and hosted a cast from the artistic community, such as singer Nīna Khayyāt - better known as Kawthar - who played the role of the tourist, singer Adrian 'Arab, Salīm Ridwān, and Amīn 'Atallah, who was known as Kashkash.

The film presented several social issues relative to the Lebanese society. First, arranged marriages were common within the Lebanese society, for it represented lineage continuity and family honor. The fact that the man involved in this love relation was a Prince, not an average Lebanese, made the breaking of these rules even harder. Second, the marriage to a foreign women was consider taboo according to tribal code. In the case of this film, tribal affiliation and obedience was evident in the Prince’s submission to the will of his family. The film was true to these issues and did not attempt to override the enforced social regulations. However, it portrayed these regulations as a destructive force on the life of the couple, resulting in oppression of love. The return of the tourist to her country with a broken heart represented the dead-end road between the West and the East based on cultural and religious differences. The film came at a time when Lebanon was under French occupation and still in a state of paradox in terms of national identity.

The absence of documented journalistic criticism on the film, other than a few words stating it was well received by the audience, limits the knowledge of the actual social perception of the film. It is, nonetheless, significant to mention that all the people who worked, wrote, and produced the film were Christians, who were, at that time, known for
their openness toward the European trends, more than their fellow Muslim countrymen. This observation is significant because it is mildly indicative of a social criticism directed by one social class against the rigid tradition of another found in Lebanon.

On the business level after the film, the Ḥaddād and Qaṭṭān Company separated from Lumnar Film which continued its operation until 1938. Khoury (1966) explained that Lumnar activities became limited to producing news-bulletins covering major political and social events, such as the death of President Dabbās and the election of President Eddah. These bulletins were presented in film theaters throughout Beirut as part of their screening programs. The company also produced a few documentaries on Lebanon and Syria at the request of mostly French residents.

When the company closed its operation in 1938, Costi and Pidutti accepted an invitation to Iraq to produce a documentary film on Iraq for the Iraqi government to be presented at the New York Fair. Costi then returned to Lebanon to work for French High Commissioner Ponsot in the production of French propaganda news-bulletins. Pidutti, on the other hand, was arrested by the French army during WWII, and nothing is known about his fate after the end of the war.

The onset of WWII led to the paralysis of film production in Lebanon. This was most probably caused by the unavailability of film stock in Lebanon during the early years of the war. In 1940, ‘Ali al-‘Arīs, an enthusiastic new arrival to the Lebanese film industry, commenced his work on his first film, Bā‘ī’at al-Ward / The Florist, which was completed in 1943 after the independence of Lebanon from France. The film featured Zayn al-Ṣidānī and Nadya al-‘Arīs, the latter ‘Ali’s first wife. In 1946, ‘Ali al-‘Arīs
followed his first debut with another film titled *Kawkab: Amīrat al-Ṣaḥrā’*, titled *Princess of the Desert*, and featured in his cast: Amal, his second wife, Milvina Amīn, and Muńır al-Atrash. In the same year, he produced a short documentary on the resort areas in the mountains of Lebanon, which were considered a major attraction of the country. With this short documentary, al-‘Aris’ career as a filmmaker ended. However, his contribution to cinema in Lebanon, although mentioned, was and still is unappreciated. A negative attitude resulted from an inability of contemporary Arab film critics, such as Aliksān and al-‘Arīs, to comprehend the circumstantial environment of the early Lebanese cinema. These pioneer filmmakers, namely Pidutti and al-Arīs, worked with crude talent, primitive production equipment, and starving budgets. Their work should be viewed within its framework, and not in comparison with Western film forms of the time, nor with contemporary film productions.

The Beginning of Bedouin Genre

From the themes used in some of the early Lebanese films, it is evident that the Bedouin life attracted the interest of filmmakers because of its representation of Arab genuine tradition. Lumnar and ‘Ali al-‘Arīs, the pioneers of Lebanese Bedouin film genre, produced two musical Bedouin films within a decade. Bedouin life was commonly perceived as the pure form of Arabness. The portrayal of stories taken from the Bedouin life presented a parallel to the dramatic works of the story-teller, which was common at the popular level as late as the early twentieth century. This was perhaps an attempt to cater to the taste of the popular masses. This cinematic form later flourished
with the establishment of the Egyptian film operations in Lebanon in the 1960's to become known as the Bedouin film genre. The most well-known films of this genre were the films of Muhammad Salman featuring the Bedouin singer Samirah Tawfiq. These films included *Badawyah fi Paris / A Bedouin in Paris* (1964), *Badawyah fi Româ / A Bedouin in Rome* (1965), *Badawyah fi Bayrût / A Bedouin in Beirut* (1972), and *Fâris al-Sahra‘ / Desert Knight* (1974).

Bedouin genre depended heavily on love stories, the concept of honor and revenge, heroism, conspiracies, singing, and happy endings. Great literary works of the past, such as *The Life of ‘Antarah bin Shaddad*, were either adapted for the screen or for television.

Although the greatest majority of the Lebanese were city dwellers, astonishingly, the Bedouin theme was popular and well received during the sixties and seventies. In Arab countries such as Jordan, and the Gulf area, where Bedouin life is more evident, Bedouin TV shows are still premiered at present. It is perhaps the antiquity of the represented lifestyle that made this genre successful.

**The First Egyptians in Lebanon**

After the attempts of ‘Ali al-‘Arîs, Lebanese cinema production was halted from 1946 until 1952 for unknown reasons - perhaps one reason was the lack of interested investors - thus resulting in the first long production depression in the history of Lebanese cinema. At the same time, in 1946, Egyptian filmmakers started their operation in Lebanon where the first three Egyptian films were made between the years 1946 and 1951. This operation resulted in an obscure form of Egyptian-Lebanese
coproduction which was left undocumented, save pieces of information on the film titles, film directors and the participant actors of these films. The first film, *Al-Šayf fī Lūbnān* (Summer Season in Lebanon) (1946), was made by Salāḥ Badrakhān, whose resume as an "Egyptian" filmmaker remained empty until his 1949 film, *Ahlām Laylā* (The Dream of Leila), which marked the end of his career. The second film, *Summer Vacation in Lebanon*, was made by Egyptian actor Bishārah Wakīm in 1947. And the third film, *‘Aruṣ Lūbnān / The Bride of Lebanon*, was made by Egyptian director and actor, Husayn Fawzī in 1951. *The Bride of Lebanon* is a musical comedy typical of Egyptian cinema. The cast included director/singer/actor Husayn Fawzī, comedian Muḥammad Salmān (who later became a film director), and actress Hanān.

The first two films appear from their titles to have dealt with the stories of Egyptians spending summer vacations in Lebanon. Lebanon was once an oasis for tourists and vacationers. The various climates, from the Mediterranean shore to the European city life of Beirut to the luscious mountains steeped in romanticized Arab culture, had been an attraction to people from all over the world.
CHAPTER IV
THE FIFTIES: STUDIOS AND TALENTED FILMMAKERS

Introduction

In 1952, after a five year production freeze, Lebanese cinema witnessed a production revival through the establishment of two new private film studios, Studio Hârün and Studio al-'Arz, which were fully equipped with the latest technology: lighting equipment, cameras, film processors and developers, and sound recording facilities. The films produced in these studios were intended as popular, entertainment, commercial, commodities divorced from an artistic value. 'Àzâr (1980) observed that the studios' commercially oriented intentions were demonstrated through the poor quality of several films they produced. However, 'Àzâr's observation is not totally true since Michael Hârün, the owner of Studio Hârün, presented in his work, as illustrated later, a sincere intention toward filmmaking contrary to 'Àzâr's observation. Perhaps 'Àzâr's claim could be true in the case of Studio al-'Arz considering the work that studio produced.

George Qâ‘î

In 1953, Studio al-'Arz hired George Qâ‘î to make a long feature film titled, 'Adhâb al-Damîr / Remorse. This social melodrama was Qâ‘î's first feature film and it was,
more or less, Qā’î’s individual project, since he directed, wrote, and shot the film. The story of the film was not any different than the previous film plots. The film told the story of a couple in love who went through the rhetorical obstacles of getting married, such as the parent’s disapproval, and finally, they happily were wedded. Despite the film’s obvious intentions to please the public’s taste for “Egyptian” musical love stories, the film failed to achieve its commercial goal as a result of artistic problems and the use of classical Arabic. Because of these shortcomings, the film was shown at the Metropole Cinema for only two weeks. ‘Azār (1980), however, suggested that “in spite of its failure, the film meant a great deal to ‘Lebanese cinema’ and ‘Lebanese film,’ because it was produced with one hundred percent Lebanese talent and local equipment” (p. 19). Aliksān (1982) mentioned that “the film’s failure, as suggested by one of the critics, was due to the film’s classical Arabic dialect which was difficult for the audience to fully understand” (p. 175). The decision for using classical Arabic rather than local dialect was not motivated by literary value or a nationalistic vision, but was based, merely, on commercial motives in an attempt to cater to other Arab countries in competition with Egyptian films. The film was successful in reaching other Arab regions, such as Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait, as each country purchased a copy of the film.

After Qā’î’s first experience, feature film production was halted once again until 1957. This freeze was, perhaps, caused by the unanticipated failure of the studios’ policy of adapting classical Arabic in order to widen its distribution market. In 1957, film production resumed to yield four films, and three new filmmakers. Michael Hārün, the owner of Studio Hārün, directed Zuhūr Ḥamrāʾ / Red Flowers. Muḥammad Salmān made
Al-Lahn al-Awwal / The First Melody. And George Nasr presented his debut Ilá Ayn? / Where To? at the 1957 Cannes Festival. An Egyptian filmmaker, Hilmi Raflah, directed the fourth film, Mahrajân al-Ḥubb / Love Festival, which was an Egyptian-Lebanese co-production.

Michael Hârün: Red Flowers

Michael Hârün’s film Red Flowers was a social melodrama that dealt with the relations between the bourgeoisie class of the city and the peasant class of rural Lebanon. The film approached this important social issue from a humanistic perspective, and it was successful in representing the simplicity of the rural lifestyle in Lebanese villages. The story revolved around a relationship between a young villager and a young disabled bourgeoisie.

Learning from previous experiences, Hârün employed the local Lebanese dialect in his film, rather than the customary classical Arabic. The use of the Lebanese dialect contributed immensely to the success of this film and marked a bold attempt to break away from dependency on the Arab market. The decision for using the local dialect stemmed from Hârün’s theatrical experience and the success he had experienced from his popular plays. Aliksân (1982) considered Red Flowers “the only classical Lebanese film which is worthy of adding to film library collections due to its purity, truthfulness and uniqueness” (p.176). In addition, ‘Āzâr (1980) wrote:

Despite the film’s severe artistic shortcomings, this naive melodramatic film succeeded to clearly demonstrate the true bondage between the luxurious bourgeoisie and what the director considered as the peasants all from a completely humanistic
viewpoint. The filmmaker was successful in his vision for he possessed an honest intention to represent the simplicity of life in rural Lebanon, and because he attempted to be innovative in his cinematic style in several situations. (p. 19)

Hārün’s film Red Flowers demonstrated a hopeful attempt toward the further development of Lebanese film, for it was in touch with its local environment and talked directly to its people who spoke its language and lived, somewhat, its problems and dreams.

Muhammad Salmān: Egypt’s Graduate

Muhammad Salmān’s first film, The First Melody, was a regression toward meaningless melodramatic films in the style of bad Egyptian films, which propagated cheap entertainment using sexual appetizers, belly dancing, and obnoxious humor. The film was met with great success and attracted a sizable audience from among those who had grown fond of Egyptian melodramas. The film’s success, as suggested by ‘Āzār (1980), was the result of none other than its cheap entertainment content.

Salmān was able to attract Lebanese film investors, such as Sabbah and the Fawwāz brothers, to finance his movies. With this formula -Muhammad Salmān, his producers, and his manipulative techniques - Lebanese cinema found its equivalent of the musical melodramas of Egyptian cinema giving Salman and his investors the opportunity to flood the Lebanese film market with their films. Between 1957 and 1973, Salmān produced a record 28 films in Lebanon. In the course of his life, Salmān directed a total of 30 films, the highest number of films made by one filmmaker in Lebanon. After 1973, his films started to lose their audience. This was, perhaps, due to Salmān’s inability to please the younger generation, as he tended to keep the same style and genre throughout the years;
and the younger generation’s interest in more Western films using advanced techniques in action film genre.

Salman started his career as a singer and then an actor in Egyptian films, such as *Umm al-Sa’d: The Mother of Fortune* (1946) and *Al-Khayr wa al-Shar: Good and Evil* (1946), and later in Lebanese films which he directed. He also participated in the 1948 Iraqi-Lebanese co-production, *Laylâ fi al-‘Irâq: Leila in Iraq*. Landau (1957) included Salman in his discussion on Arab stars; he wrote:

A Lebanese from a poor villager family, Salman (sic) left his country at the age of twenty-five, arriving in Cairo with a suitcase containing all his worldly possessions - a suit and pajamas. Now he has become known for his sonorous voice and above-average acting in various Egyptian film melodramas. The Lebanese melodies he sang in his films (which have reached as far as Brazil) were considered such an important service to his native country that, in 1952 the Lebanese government decorated him. (pp. 189-190)

He worked in Egypt until 1957 when he returned to Lebanon with the hope to work in Lebanese cinema. In the same year, he succeeded in finding local producers for his first film, *The First Melody*, which was a musical comedy he had written. The success and the profit generated by the film encouraged him and the producers, Sabbâh and the Fawwâz brothers, to continue their work together.

By reviewing Salman’s films, it is obvious that they were carelessly (if not badly) made, and it is also evident that the filmmaker was not aware of the cinematic forms other than carrying the picture to the audience. This is clearly presented in ‘Azâr’s (1980) criticism of Salman. He wrote:

Salman did not know much about filmmaking, not even on the level of its most simple aspects. He did not possess the required working experience. He did not receive training with any director, nor did he work in any field of production. In his films,
Muhammad Salmān was only concerned with shooting cheap scenes, empty of any issue, whether it be of sexual, slapsticks or belly-dancing content. He did so in imitation of the Egyptian melodramas and comedies that saturated Lebanese theaters during the forties. (p. 20)

Despite the harsh criticism by 'Āzār and other Lebanese film critics, such as al-‘Aris, Muhammad Salmān and his films created a cinematic revolution at the public level and opened the Arab market to Lebanese film productions. In an interview with ‘Ināyah Jābir (1994) Salmān said:

I lifted the Lebanese cinema from its narrow horizon, from being seriously dependent on its local audience in al-Basta and al-Ashrafiyah (both are small neighborhoods in Beirut) and delivered it to the Arab World until Lebanese film became in circulation in all of the Arab countries. I could only do this major achievement by incorporating Egyptian film actors into my films along side the Lebanese actors. (p. 14)

Salmān clearly understood the entertainment aspect of cinema as presented in his films, and he was able to cater to the Lebanese and Arab public taste which was easily entertained by music, dancing, and arousing scenes. He, however, was not an inventor of this audience-film relation, rather, he was following the path paved for him by Hollywood’s commercial production and its emulator in the Arab World, the Egyptian cinema, which was better known as the Hollywood of the Nile. Salmān’s relation with his audience is reciprocal. He gave his audience what they longed for, and at the same time, they made Salmān into a popular filmmaker by attending his films in large numbers.

George Naṣr: Where To?

While Salmān represented a more successful commercial method of filmmaking than previous attempts in Lebanese cinema, in the same year, George Naṣr - a young Lebanese
filmmaker, was leading the way toward a more elevated and serious Lebanese cinema. In
1956, he started shooting his first film, *Where To?*, and in 1957, he participated in Cannes
Festival screening this film. Nasr was the first Lebanese filmmaker to enter a European
film Festival. He was not fortunate enough to receive an award for his film, but he
managed to attract the attention of European film critics. Nasr’s entry in Cannes was
representative of Nasr’s high cinematic standard and recognizable of a Lebanese cinematic
talent at an international level. Later, Nasr participated with his film in Moscow and
Beijing Film Festivals where he also managed to earn film critics’ and filmmakers’
attention and admiration.

*Where To?* was a social film that dealt with the issue of emigration from Lebanon that
was seen in previous films discussed earlier. Although the film presented this issue at a
time when it was not an imminent social problem, as suggested by al-'Arïs (1979), or at
least not in the magnitude it used to be at the dawn of the century, the film remained
relevant to this issue by presenting its tragic consequences, by analyzing it and by
preserving it as a social document. In Shmait (1973), Nasr explained that his concern
with the issue of emigration stemmed from his search for real Lebanese problems that
could be used as material for his work as a Lebanese filmmaker. He said:

I returned from Hollywood thirsty to make films in Lebanon. I wanted my first film to
deal with a local problem facing the country, thus, I chose the issue of emigration. At
that time, the number of people emigrating from Lebanon averaged between 1800-
2000 per month. And during my travels, I closely observed the situation of Lebanese
immigrants to Brazil and the USA. They were not all as rich as we all imagine. In my
film, I aimed at saying two things: first, to say to the people in the government that
they need to create jobs in order to keep the youth from leaving the country; second, to
say to those who are intending to emigrate that life outside is not easy and wealth is not
a sure thing. (p. 11)
The film told the story of a poor peasant Lebanese family who owned a small farm which was not enough to support them. Because of poor living conditions, Hamid, the father, was consequently forced to emigrate to the United States for work and fortune, and to leave behind his wife, Umm Sa'id, and his two sons. The family did not hear from Hamid for some time, nor did they receive any support from him. Umm Sa'id, was then forced to work the land by herself to support her children. It was not too long before she was bed-ridden because of illness. Her eldest son, Sa'id, as a result quit school and took over his mother's responsibilities. Twenty years passed after Hamid's departure, and there was no word from him. The family finally abandoned hope of his return and considered him dead.

Sa'id's work supported his brother's education and his mother's medical expenses. Later, he married the neighbor's daughter who always helped his mother with her house chores. The new family was content with their lives, except Farid, who was unhappy living a life of poverty, and started thinking of leaving Lebanon. When his mother knew of his intentions, she tried to discourage him from emigrating. Hamid, suddenly returns to his village without any notice. He returned sick, poor, and greatly changed to the extent that no one could recognize him. His pride prevented him from confronting his family. He took shelter in the deserted ruins of an old nearby palace. Gradually, he befriended his youngest son, Farid, who opened his heart to this stranger and told him of his problems and intentions to travel. Hamid succeeded in convincing Farid to forfeit the idea of leaving his country. When Farid realized Hamid's influence on him, he started cussing and shouting angrily at his friend. Farid then left Hamid's place in a haste, confused and unfocused. On
the way, while he was trying to cross one of the roads, a car hit him. The film ended by
the departure of Hamid from the village without notice or return after he realized that he
would be a burden on his family if he chose to stay.

The film's tragic ending culminated Naṣr's subtle vision of patriotism. His idea of
home was relayed as a protective shelter where people found happiness regardless of
wealth. Naṣr's "happy family" was a family content with the basic necessities of life, such
as Sa'īd's new family.

In this film, Naṣr also painted the experience of immigration to the West as painful and
fruitless. Naṣr, in this film, also suggested that the concept of immigration-wealth was a
false concept. He did so by showing Hamid returning to Lebanon penniless, overtaken by
sickness. Although Fārid knew of his father's fate, he still thought that emigration was the
only alternative to a life of poverty.

In analyzing the role this film played within the Lebanese history, it was evident that
the filmmaker was making a profound and valid social statement, not as superficial as it
might have seemed. This film clearly portrayed a film true to the traditional school of
"realism." The film was profound in its portrayal of life in rural Lebanon, and effective in
its representation of the villagers' problems. It subtly stirred the issue of governmental
neglect in these areas, which was the primary cause of emigration of peasants from
Lebanon to the Americas and Africa, as well.

The film, in addition, voiced other concerns, such as the family unit and education.
The family in Where to? was a collective unit, where individuality was sacrificed for the
good of the collective. Family members, here, looked after each other. The father

61
sacrificed his life for the sake of his family twice; first, when he left to the United States to find work, and second, when he chose not to become a burden to them. Umm Sa‘ıd sacrificed her health and worked the land by herself in order to feed her children and keep them in school. Sa‘ıd, on the other hand, when he took over from his exhausted mother, sacrificed his education for the sake of his younger brother’s education.

The filmmaker, also, emphasized the importance of education through the sacrifice made by the mother and the elder brother. This importance was demonstrated through the mother’s persistence on her children’s education, and when she fell ill, Sa‘ıd carried the responsibility for his younger brother, Farıd. This theme was incorporated due to the increased educational awareness Lebanon witnessed in those years.

Despite the film’s advanced technical and artistic level, the film was not met with commercial success in Lebanon. Only six copies were sold to China and Yugoslavia combined. Not one Arab country bought a copy of the film. The disinterest in the film was perhaps the result of the film’s political atmosphere and the saturated criticism of the social conflicts created by the governmental negligence of the working masses in Lebanon, which was a shared cry throughout the Arab World. The film, however, elicited a positive response from French film critics upon its presentation at Cannes Film Festival in 1957.

Al-Sharqāwī (1970) wrote:

The film was received with admiration and respect by the French film critics at the Cannes Festival... The film critic for the Figaro newspaper wrote that although Where to? is a propaganda film that aims at discouraging the Lebanese youth from emigrating, it is very convincing in its true observation of the daily life of a certain group of people who live in a region overlooking magnificent scenery. The scenes of daily life, costumes, traditional parties, and folkloric dances, are all sensationa

62
presented. The story plot almost disappears in front of the reality of its content, and the film's slow rhythm coincides with Nasr's poetic and descriptive goals. (pp. 64-65)

Another film critic, as mentioned in 'Azár (1980, p. 21) and Khoury (1966, p. 123), described the film as an attempt at Lebanese poetry, and a live humane document more important and more interesting than academic lectures. Al-'Arîs (1979, p.46) considered this film as a serious attempt to present the issue of emigration.

George Naṣr's film, Where to?, was considered a leap forward in the movement towards the sophistication of Lebanese film in all of its aspects. George Sadoul, a French film critic, described Naṣr's effort as "the beginning of Lebanese national cinema" ('Azár, 1980, p. 103). In Jâbir's (1993) interview with Naṣr, Naṣr stated that in making Where to?, "he was motivated by the search for the Lebanese identity and the search for a cinematic language representative of that identity" (p.14). This new direction was the fruit of many factors combined: the efforts of Naṣr, his talent, and the education and the experience he received in the USA.

George Naṣr was born in 1927 in Tripoli and in 1949 he started his education as a student of architectural engineering at the University of Chicago. After a year and a half of his schooling, he left engineering to study cinema at UCLA for four years (1950 - 1954). After graduating, al-Sharqâwï (1970) stated that Naṣr worked in Hollywood for some time, however, it is not known where Naṣr worked and what was the scope of his experience. Bustros (1977) mentioned that Naṣr received his training at the French Government TV station ORTF in Paris. Upon his return to Lebanon, he made his first film, Where to? for
which he received in 1967 the first prize at the film festival organized by the Lebanese National Film Center. Al-Sharqawi (1970) wrote:

The committee of this festival wrote in its report that it has offered the prize of Best Director to George Nasr al-Din for his film Where to? because of the poetic atmosphere and the sensitivity which characterized his work. The film caught the attention of the committee by its social realism and its strong directing and acting. The committee believes that this film, produced in 1957, is the first successful Lebanese film representative of an honorable portrayal of Lebanese cinema. (pp. 64-65)

The film’s failure at home was due to the increasing attachment of the Lebanese audience to the Egyptian style cinema, such as the films of Muhammad Salmân. Although the film succeeded in introducing new standards to Lebanese cinema, it, unfortunately, had to compete against the lower standard films of which the Lebanese audience had already grown fond. ‘Âzâr (1987) wrote that, “It was unfortunate for George Naṣr to have started his patriotic career at a time when Egyptian film operation with all of its retrogression, had moved to Lebanon as a result of Egyptian President Nasser’s national policies” (p. 18).

Naṣr himself blamed his film’s failure on the circumstances of the film industry in Lebanon at the time. He said, “They say a good film is a good film at all times, but only under given conditions and circumstances can a good film be considered a good film” (‘Âzâr, 1980, p. 112).

The making of Where to? was not an easy process because of the absence of advanced film equipment, professionals, and actors. In making the film, Naṣr had to work his way around these deficiencies. The film, in its entirety was processed in Paris. And for the lack of sync-sound equipment, Naṣr had to transfer his 35 mm footage to 16 mm in order to use the screening facilities at the television station. Second, the editing was done in
segments because of the unavailability of editing flat beds, and the voice dubbing, music, and sound effects recording were all done on 16 mm magnetic stock. The speed of the machines Naṣr used in Lebanon was different than the one he used in Paris during the post-production of the film, therefore, the sound was shorter than its film corresponding segments. Naṣr did not have enough time to correct this problem because the film was due to be screened in Cannes Festival in that same year. Naṣr stated (Shmait, 1973, 'Āzār 1980, p.114) that this was the reason why the film had a slow pace.

Under these circumstances, Nasr fulfilled, perhaps, one of the best films in the history of Lebanese cinema. Naṣr’s filmmaking future, however, was not as bright as one might think considering his talent and ambition. His pursue of “serious” filmmaking was annoyed by the immigration of a large number of Egyptian filmmakers and producers to Lebanon. With the establishment of new Lebanese film studios and with the presence of an active film production industry, Lebanon represented a fertile soil for Egyptian filmmakers and producers running away from Nasserism to establish a secondary Egyptian film operation in Beirut, as discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V
EGYPTIAN CINEMA OPERATIONS IN LEBANON

Introduction

One of the most important stages in the history of Lebanese cinema is the time span from 1957 to 1972 when some Egyptian film artists, producers, and directors moved their operations to Lebanon as a result of political measures and reforms that were engulfing Egypt. The significance of this phase is distinguished by the effects and consequences of this operation on the development of the Lebanese film industry. The past writings on this subject are extremely brief and all point to the production of cheap melodramas within a traditional Egyptian style as an outcome of this economic invasion. But, there is much more to be said about this period, including the consequences and influences it rendered upon cinema in Lebanon.

The flow of Arab capital into Lebanon

The location of Lebanon on the Mediterranean gave the country the opportunity to play a key role in the economy of the Middle East as a center for trading and finance by providing the region with commercial and financial services. Aside from its beautiful climate and scenery, Lebanon has poor natural resources, unsubstantial to support any
country’s economy. The Lebanese economy has always depended on the major
developments happening in the countries of the region. Bustros (1977) included:

Since WWII, liberal foreign trade and payment policies have fostered the growth of
Beirut as a major financial and commercial entrepot in the Middle East. Economic
development has at times been set back by external events, but other occurrences
such as the dramatic increases in economic activity in neighboring oil producing
countries and the closure of the Suez Canal have presented opportunities to Lebanon.
As a result of this combination of policy and circumstances, Lebanon has been able
to benefit from substantial inflows of foreign capital, rapid growth of merchandise
exports, and large foreign exchange earnings from services. (p. 221)

The socialist policies adopted in Egypt and Syria alike toward the aristocrats in these
countries, which stipulated the confiscation of a great deal of their wealth, motivated
these aristocrats to sneak their wealth into Lebanon. In addition to this transfer of wealth
from Egypt and Syria, Lebanon also witnessed the deployment of Palestinian wealth that
was hidden since 1948, the year when Palestinians took refuge into Arab states during
and after the 1948 war with Israel. These factors combined led to the flourishing of the
Lebanese economy and subsequently the flourishing of the film industry.

The Generalization of Cinema in Egypt

The June 1956 general elections held in Egypt brought to power Jamal 'Abd al-
Nasser who originally was a prominent figure in the July 23, 1952 armed forces’ coup
d’etat. Nasser launched a wide scale public reform to build a socialist Egyptian society.
The Egyptian film industry was one of the targets of this reform. In 1957, the public
sector for film industry was formed to achieve higher standards in film production both
on the technical and intellectual levels. As a result, in July 1957, the Ministry of

67
National Culture and Guidance established the National Organization for the Consolidation of Cinema, the first public cinema institution in Egypt and in the Arab World as well. This Organization was given the responsibility “to initiate legislation and to adopt schemes calculated to develop the art of cinema and endowed it with an annual budget of 150,000 Egyptian pounds” (Khan, 1969, p. 38). The Organization’s understanding and commitment to fulfill its responsibility toward Egyptian cinema was clearly reflected in the inclusive objectives it designed for its operation. These objectives, reported in Al-Sinama al-Maṣrīyah (1969, August) were to:

1) Elevate the technical standards of cinema.
2) Encourage the exhibition of Arab films in Egypt and other countries.
3) Secure loans for people producing films which aim at social betterment.
4) Take concern in the affairs of the people who are working in the field of cinema.
5) Present encouragement prizes for film productions.
6) Send people for short-term and long-term cinema studies and training.
7) Participate in film conferences and festivals.
8) Send representatives to study the Arab film market.
9) Sponsor presentations of Arab and foreign films. (pp. 5-6)

This Organization represented the vivid interest of the new revolutionary Egyptian government, using cinema as a constructive social vehicle and an authentic voice of Egypt to the world. From the time of its conception, it effectively started funding a handful of films and in 1959, established the Higher Cinema Institute which graduated
some of the finest Egyptian filmmakers, such as ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Khâliq, ‘Atif al-Tayyâr, and Khayri Bishârah.

The cultural revolution brought forth by the July 1952 free officers coup d’etat emphasized the importance of cinema through the Ministry of Culture and Guidance which “gave rise to new genres and new themes with socio-politics as its base” (Thoraval, 1975, p 31). Films characterizing this episode were Yusuf Shâhîn’s Sirâ’ fî al-Wâdî / Struggle in the Valley (1954); Ahmad Badrakhân’s Muṣṭafâ Kâmil (1953); Ibrâhîm Hilmi’s Kilometer 99 (1953); and Hussayn Sidqi’s Fal Yasqut al-‘Isti’mâr / Down with Imperialism (1954). These sentiments were further accentuated by the England-France-Israel trilateral assault on Egypt in 1956. Several films after the attack on the city of Port Sa‘îd, such as ‘Izz al-Dîn dhu al-Fuqâ‘r’s Port Sa‘îd (1957), were overtly concerned with nationalist and political themes extracted from the Egyptian reality.

This increasingly charged political atmosphere caused some of the Egyptian business investors to traffic their capital into Lebanon because of its relaxed political environment and its flourishing economy. Iraq and Syria, at that time, were also undergoing similar socialist transformations as Egypt. This was when the second wave of Egyptian filmmakers started their operation in Lebanon continuing their melodramatic and musical line of work which characterized Egyptian cinema during the post-WWII period. Filmmaker Hîlmi Raflá was the first Egyptian director to come to Lebanon during this period. He made Mahrajân al-Ḥubb / Love Festival in 1958, and Bint al-Shaykh / The Sheikh’s Daughter in 1970.
The theme of these films employed the typical plots of superficial Egyptian love stories (A review of a number of these films is included at the end of this chapter). For example, *Love Festival* is a melodramatic musical film that tells the story of a music instructor who falls in love with a young singer played by Šabāh, the famous Lebanese singer/actor known as the Bird of the Valley. The cast included Muhammad Salmān, Ahmad Ramzī and Jackline Monroe, and it was co-produced by Raflā himself and Ḥabīb Kayrūz & Company.

The *Sheikh’s Daughter* tells the story of a governor of a city who feels that he is on the verge of death. He sends for his friend, Shaykh Hishām, to rule in his place and to bring with him a knight called Karīm Khān to be the chief of security. The governor’s wife conspires with her secret lover, Shaykh Marjān, to kill her husband by poisoning him before the arrival of Shaykh Hishām. The governor writes his will as a precautionary measure and then dies. Samārah, the governor’s daughter, falls under accusation for the death of the governor and as a result is arrested. On the day of the trial, and before the issuance of the judgment against Samārah, Karīm Khān arrives to uncover the wife’s plot and to rescue Samarah.

The film included a mixed cast of Egyptian and Lebanese actors. In order to appeal to audience, the film used ‘Imād Ḥamdī, a prominent star of the Egyptian screen who played the role of the hero, and Samīrah Tawfīq, a Lebanese singer known as the singer of the desert, who played the role of the heroine. The film was produced and financed by the Fawwāż brothers who participated in financing Salmān’s *The First Melody* in the same year.
The nature of these films in essence was exploitative of the Lebanese and Arab audience alike. It offered them a combination of music stars and love stories that did not relate in any shape or form to their lifestyle, thus reaffirming the Egyptian screen world, a world independent of its social surroundings, more than that, contrary to the surroundings as they existed in reality. Al-ʿAris (1979) describes this movement within the Lebanese cinema as:

A movement which tries to make the Arab World a natural market to its films that are specifically made to satisfy the audience of such market. Films that are made on the famous Egyptian style of melodramatic musical stories, and the star system, etc. (p. 45)

Despite the changes produced by the 1952 revolution, the commercial nature of pre-1952 Egyptian cinema remained in effect until 1962 when the National Organization for the Consolidation of Cinema was restructured into the General Organization of Egyptian Cinema. Hasan (1976) wrote that “the effective beginning of generalizing the film industry in Egypt occurred in February 1960 when the government attained the ownership of the Miṣr Company for Acting and Cinema as a result of generalizing Bank Miṣr and all of its branches” (p. 123). The Egyptian government’s ineffectiveness in applying its political agenda to Egyptian cinema from 1957 to 1962, and the 1958 political unrest Lebanon witnessed, led to the cessation of the Egyptian film operation in Lebanon for some time. Egyptian producers were unsure of political situations both in Egypt and Lebanon. However, when the reality of socialism intended by Nasser became evident in 1962 with the initiation of the 1962 Charter of National Action, Egyptian film operations in Lebanon were reinstated in 1962-63, and this time in full force, unlike the
previous episodes, to where film production soared to a new record of eight films in 1963, 11 films in 1964 and continued to increase respectively in the following years until it reached its highest number of 22 films in 1965. (These numbers are concluded from my own analysis of film production in Lebanon. See Filmography for detailed listing of these films.)

In fulfilling Nasser’s socialist vision, the 1962 Charter of National Action stipulated that each Egyptian citizen should enjoy an equal opportunity with his fellow citizens, to enjoy a fair share of the national wealth. Mansfield (1976) wrote:

...the Charter said that most of the economy should be publicly owned - that is, all railways, roads, ports, airports and other public services, banks and insurance companies and the majority of heavy, medium, and mining industries. All the import trade and three quarters of the export trade must be controlled by the public sector, which within the coming eight years must also take share of at least one quarter of domestic trade to prevent monopoly. (p. 322)

With this charter, the future of the Egyptian film industry was still not clearly decided. Being a very successful industry, film studios and producers thought their industry would be publicly owned like other large Egyptian industries. But it was not until 1963 when public film institutions, mainly the General Company of Egyptian Studios and the General Company for Film Distribution and Exhibition, started buying the respective film entities from studios, distribution companies, and exhibition theaters. The General Company of Egyptian Studios was formed in January 1963 with a capital of 600,000 Egyptian pounds and annexed to it the following studios: Miṣr, al-Ahrām, Naḥḥās, and Jalāl. The General Company for Film Distribution and Exhibition, on the other hand, was formed in January 1964 with 650,000 Egyptian pounds as a budget and
purchased al-Sharq and Dollar distribution companies and some 46 theaters which compromised approximately 15% of the total number of Egyptian film theaters (Hasan, 1976, pp 126-127).

**Private Investors and Distributors**

The establishment of these public institutions created a sense of anxiety among the ranks of private film investors. Not knowing what would be the quality of the public sector's production, these investors decided to wait to see what the public sector would release. Tawfiq remarked:

> When it was declared that the General Organization for Cinema will enter into film producing, a wave of fear, worry and hesitation took over the companies of the private sector. Production was halted in most of these companies, and they all waited cautiously for the Organization's new born, its first film. (p. 131)

But this was not the only reason for the increased anxiety among the private operators in Egyptian cinema. The private industry was in a state of confusion because of the ambiguity surrounding the implementation of public generalization to their industry. Farīd (1978) observed this condition in Egyptian film industry, he wrote:

> During this stage, the Egyptian film industry was shaken due to the unclear position of the government toward cinema. The studios, film laboratories and exhibition theaters were neither generalized nor were they in the hands of their owners. The General Organization for Cinema's form of ownership to these institutions varied, as did the administrative and financing structures. (p. 43)

Another factor involved in the Egyptian operation in Lebanon was the role film distributors played in the Egyptian film industry. Lebanese immigrants to Egypt as well as Lebanese investors in Lebanon invested heavily in this profitable Egyptian industry,
men such as film producer/director Henri Barakāt. In addition to financing, Lebanese businessmen played an influential role in the distribution of Egyptian films in Egypt and in the Arab World. Among the ranks of the distributors (Hasan, 1976, p. 70) were companies such as al-Šabbah Film, Bahna Film, and Naḥḥās Film, all owned by Lebanese businessmen. In her discussion on this issue, Rosen (1991) wrote that “Lebanon, meanwhile, was even more of an Egyptian outpost, first of all through the virtual Lebanese monopoly on the distribution of Egyptian films, and then through the influx of Egyptian filmmakers disgruntled with Nasser’s Arab socialism in the 1960's” (p. 5).

Effects On The Lebanese Film Industry

The Egyptian operation lasted in Lebanon from 1963 until 1974, creating a boom in the Lebanese film industry unwitnessed before. The peak of this operation took place during 1963-1968 when Lebanon produced 83 long feature films. But with the coming of 1969, this operation started to decline mainly due to political transformations in Egypt and in Lebanon. Al-'Aris (1979) wrote:

During the 1963-70 period Lebanon produced one hundred films, half of it in color: 79 comedy and detective adventures film, 16 social films, 5 guerilla films, and 1 religious film. As for the dialect used in these films, 54 films completely used the Egyptian dialect, 22 used the Lebanese dialect, 20 used a mixture of dialects, and 4 used the Palestinian dialect. (p. 48)

While the number of films produced in Lebanon increased drastically during the 1963-1968 period, the production average in Egypt dropped from 50 per year to 40 per year where it reached its lowest in 1967 with a total production of 33 films. This drop in Egyptian production can be explained by the transfer of production to Lebanon through
the Egyptian operation discussed here. One important issue raised by the Egyptian nature of the films produced in Lebanon is the identity of these films. In my opinion, these films should be considered Egyptian films made in Lebanon rather than Lebanese films. This issue is discussed thoroughly in the chapter on the analysis of Egyptian films made in Lebanon.

Another issue regarding the transfer of Egyptian operation to Lebanon was raised by Lebanese filmmaker, Subhi Sayf al-Din. In an interview with him ('Azar, 1980) he said:

Egyptian films, which used only Egyptian dialect, overwhelmed Lebanon, and with time it took control over the Lebanese audience. This monopoly continued until the emergence of a good group of Lebanese filmmakers in the early 60’s who made some serious well funded films. They were hoping for the Lebanese film industry to flourish locally. However, the unforeseen happened. The people in charge of the Egyptian industry felt that the flourishing film industry in Lebanon was capable of competing with the Egyptian film if it continued to progress. Therefore, the Egyptian attack on the Lebanese film industry came toward the mid-1960’s. In my view, the generalization of Egyptian cinema was not the only reason for the coming of the Egyptian industry to Lebanon. (p. 179)

Sayf al-Din’s statement was speculative in its nature, hence he failed to present a formidable account of the performance of Lebanese cinema in terms of its commercial value. Nevertheless, it presented a plausible hypothesis when based on the following two reasons: first, the flourishing of a good quality film industry in Lebanon; and second, the possibility of competition and market sharing by Lebanese productions with Egyptian films.

Henri Barakat, on the other hand, denied the charge directed by Sayf al-Din and claimed that “the transfer was caused by the moving from one atmosphere to a better one at that time” ('Azar, 1980, p. 85). It was, therefore, my intention to investigate the claim suggested by Sayf al-Din in order to determine its credibility. I did so by looking at the
structure and progress of Lebanese cinema from 1957 to 1962, and by measuring the technical and commercial performance of Lebanese film in Lebanon and the Arab countries taking into consideration the aspects of film quality, technical services, capital investment, distribution and circulation. The following section is devoted in its entirety to the analysis of the performance of Lebanese cinema from 1957 to 1962.

Lebanese Cinema from 1957-1962

Introduction

The independence of Lebanon in 1943 from the French mandate did not end the country’s problems. On the contrary, Lebanon began a journey down a difficult road toward finding a common ground among the various religious sects that formed the Lebanese population. The new nation witnessed various rapid political metamorphoses as these groups attempted to secure fair parliamentary representation. In 1958, however, political communication collapsed and the first documented revolt against the government occurred. This was a revolt which threatened the existence of traditional power in Lebanon, and which forced President Sham‘ūn to seek the help of the United States who successfully deployed its armed forces in Beirut to suppress the revolt. This action created several social and political dilemmas that continued simmering until the outbreak of the 1975 civil war (See Political Background in Chapter 2).

Despite the hardships caused by the conflict, the film industry at the time did not show any signs of hindrance. Strangely enough, no film ever reflected upon this major
socio-political upheaval. This is perhaps the clearest example of how much the film industry in Lebanon was disengaged from its surroundings, i.e., the Lebanese society. Film production continued in its melodramatic path disregarding any thematic connection with reality in Lebanon. 1958 yielded four films: Salmān’s Maw’id ma’al-Damīr / Appointment with the Conscience, Raflah’s Mahrajān al-Hubb / Love Festival, Joseph Fahdāh’s Limān Tushriq al-Shams? / For Whom Does the Sun Rise?, and George Qā‘ī’s Dhikrayāt / Memories.

Salmān’s Appointment with the Conscience, written, directed and produced by Salmān, was a mixture of comedy and musical melodrama featuring Qamar, Sāmmūrah, and ‘Īsām al-Shinnāwī.

George Qā‘ī’s film Memories was a social drama featuring Qamar, Lucyanne Harb, and Tony Nī‘mah. This was Qā‘ī’s third long feature film, and it was written, directed, edited, and musically scored by Qā‘ī himself.

For Whom Does the Sun Rise?, Fahdāh’s first film, was a musical melodrama featuring the singer and famous film star Nūr al-Hudā. Fahdāh, a Syrian cinematographer, succeeded in convincing Nūr al-Hudā, a well-loved star in Egyptian cinema, to act in the film after she had retired from acting and returned to Lebanon. Nūr al-Hudā started her career as a singer and moved to acting on the screen after being discovered by Yūsuf Wahbī, one of the most prominent pillars of the Egyptian theater and cinema. Her first films were as follows: Yūsuf Wahbī’s Jawharah / Jewel (1943), and Barlinti (1944); Ahmad Jalāl’s Amīrat al-Aḥlām / Princess of Dreams (1945); and Nayāzī Muṣṭafā’s Al-‘Ānisah Būsah / Miss Kiss (1945). Fahdāh’s choice of Nūr al-Hudā
helped in making his film a successful debut, as she was an established star who possessed both a beautiful voice and a good acting talent. In his description of Nür al-Huda’s talent, Landau (1958) wrote:

More character acting may be observed in the screen interpretation of the Lebanese actress, Nur al-Huda (sic). She is not only possessed of an excellent voice for her singing parts, but she can act admirably the parts of suffering people, with both true-to-life pathos and restrained dignity. Her able interpretation of suffering humanity must be based, it seems, on her own knowledge of the common people with whom her childhood was spent. These experiences, however seem to have left no external signs on her, for she is charmingly youthful, thus being eminently suited to act the traditional part of the innocent-looking, music-loving girl come to grips with life. (p. 190)

Capital Investment and the Progress of Technical Services

The success of these films produced in 1957-58, along with the political and economic factors behind the Egyptian cinema operation in Lebanon, encouraged investors to employ their capital in this profitable and increasingly flourishing Lebanese industry. As a result of the political changes in the Arab states, previously discussed, money started pouring into Lebanon from local and Arab investors. These investors showed confidence in the successful performance of the Lebanese film industry and directed their capital toward this industry. This activity inaugurated a process of expansion and modernization in all aspects of production and post-production facilities. Khoury (1966) wrote:

The years 1959 - 1960 witnessed a remarkable renewal of activity, as large capital sums were invested in the film industry. New studios were established and were equipped with the most modern equipment necessary for all stages of film production. . . . The excellence of these studios, and the success of such films as Good Morning to Love (Greetings to Love) directed by Muhammad Salmān, and The
Birth of the Prophet, directed by Ahmad al-Tūkhī, encouraged a sudden increase in production. (p. 123)

The new studios which evolved in 1959 and 1960 were: the Modern Studio, Studio Ba'albak, and Near East Sound Studio. All of these studios were distinguished for having advanced equipment for the time. Studio Ba'albak and Near East Sound Studio provided Laboratory operations, such as film processing and printing. Filming and recording facilities for 35 mm film production were provided only by the Modern Studio and Studio Hārūn. Another studio, which was entirely equipped to handle 16 mm production, was established by George Shammas as the result of the birth of television in Lebanon in 1956.

The establishment of new studios equipped to handle large scale productions indicated that the Lebanese film industry was growing. Aliksān (1982) commented that, "there is no doubt that the establishment of these modern studios immensely supported the (Lebanese) film industry" (p. 180). The large sums of capital which were invested in the film industry reflected the development of Lebanese cinema from an unorganized industry, mainly steered by individual efforts, into a wide scale organized commercial enterprise. In addition to the promising qualifications of Lebanon's technical services in this field and the potential of Lebanese films to achieve commercial success in the Arab World, as was the case with Salmān's First Melody, the policy of free enterprise adapted by the Lebanese economy was an influential factor in attracting foreign capital from Arab countries under socialist transformation, the Gulf states, and as well, from Europe and the United States.
Lebanon’s Climate

Lebanon is characterized with having four full seasons. Its climate is moderate. Snow falls in the winter on the higher altitudes of its two mountain ranges, and rain falls on its lower regions. The country is panoramically rich. It extends 172 miles on the Mediterranean Sea embracing a costal line that varies from a sandy to a rocky structure. Lebanon is well-known for its beautiful green landscapes and sunny days.

Another equally important factor for the success of the film industry in Lebanon and in attracting film production operations was the Lebanese climate and landscape which provided a suitable base for the film industry. The Lebanese weather and scenery was an attraction for foreign film production such as Salâh Badrakhân’s *Summer in Lebanon* (1946), and Bishârah Wakîm’s *Summer Season in Lebanon* (1947). In the sixties, Lebanon was the production site for several foreign spy films, such as Mario Camirini’s *The Crime Was Almost Complete* (1965), Peter Bezencenet’s *Twenty-Four Hours to Kill* (UK, 1965), and Basil Dearden’s *Masquerade* (UK, 1965).

All these factors, discussed above, made it possible for Lebanon’s film industry to be capable of becoming a production center for the Arab World. Al-‘Arif (1979) wrote:

In the early sixties, especially in 1963, Lebanon was ready to take Cairo’s place in producing the Egyptian film. Lebanon had a good number of technicians, productions facilities, modern equipment, and a wide freedom of expression that permitted the production of the foolish and the meaningless. Lebanon also had a great deal of successful productions of Egyptian films, such as Muhammad Salmân’s films in the fifties. (P. 48)
Film Production 1959-1962

The year 1959 witnessed the completion of five films and the emergence of two new film directors: Rida Myassar who directed *Sakhrat al-Hubb / The Rock of Love* and Joseph Gharib who made *Hukm al-Qadar / The Judgment of Destiny*. It was also a busy year for George Qâ‘î who directed two films, *Qalbân wa Jasad / Two Hearts and One Body* and *Ayyâm min 'Umrî / Days of My Life*. Muhammad Salmân, as well, did not let the year pass empty-handed and presented his audience with *Anghâm Habîbatî / The Melodies of My Sweetheart*, a film he wrote and directed.

Qâ‘î’s social melodramatic film, *Two Hearts and One Body*, was a great popular success. It played in a first class cinema, the Opera Theater, in Beirut for three consecutive weeks, and seven copies were sold to several Arab countries, Australia, Brazil, and African countries which hosted large Lebanese communities. The film returns exceeded LL100,000 ($33,000 approximately) yielding a net profit of more than LL50,000 since the film’s budget was approximately LL52,000. This film was the result of Qâ‘î’s cinematic ambitions coupled with some local investors (about whom there is no information other than they had encountered a conflict with the technical team of the film for not having the film ready on its scheduled deadline). Qâ‘î, like Salmân, wrote and directed the film. The *Arab Film Encyclopaedia* (1994) mentioned that Qâ‘î took the idea of the film from Salman. Such borrowing suggests on-going cooperation among the members of a still rather small group of filmmakers. (*The Arab Film Encyclopaedia* (1994) also mentioned that in 1964 Salman and Qâ‘î co-directed a film titled *You are my Life / Anta 'Umrî*. The accuracy of this information, however, remains unverified.)
The film cast included Qamar who had worked with Qâ‘î previously in *Memories* (1958) and with Salmân in *Appointment with the Conscience* (1958), Ihsân Sâdíq, Narymân, and Muhammad Shâmil. Qamar, by that time, had developed into a leading actress with a popular appeal at the box office. Lebanese filmmakers were oriented toward establishing a star system, similar to the one in Egypt or in Hollywood, in order to attract audiences and increase the size of attendance locally and in the Arab countries. The concept of the star system proved to be efficient and helpful in keeping the wheels of production moving.

In *The Melodies of my Sweetheart*, Salmân continued his musical comedy tradition capitalizing on the charm and beautiful voice of Najâh Salâm who starred in Salmân’s first film, *The First Melody*. Similar to Salmân’s style, Rida Myassar presented to the Lebanese screen a film titled *The Rock of Love*, a film centered around the theme of love and betrayal, hosting a giant cast from the Egyptian screen: singer Samîrah Aḥmad, ‘Ímād Hamdī, Tawfīq al-Diqn and Nâhid Šâbrī. The film was produced by the Modern Institution for Cinema in Beirut and shot by the Lebanese cinematographer Yûsuf Karâmī.

The film tells the story of ‘Ādil, an Egyptian journalist, who moves to Beirut running away from his past in an attempt to forget about a murder he committed in Egypt. When he was in Egypt, ‘Ādil discovered his wife with another man having intercourse. Overwhelmed by the betrayal scene, ‘Ādil lost control of himself and killed his wife’s lover. The court, however, sympathized with ‘Ādil as being a victim of adultery who was

82
committing a crime of passion, so the judge issued a suspended death sentence against him.

In Beirut, his secretary, Safiyah, consistently tries to get closer to him but without success. He finally meets up with a rich widow, Karīmah, whom he finds attractive. But Karīmah also has her problems and a past which she is trying to hide. Apparently before she married her husband, she was poor and she sold flowers on the street. A man who knows her past finds her an easy target for blackmail and tries to take advantage of her fortune. 'Ādil suspects that there is something transpiring between the two. To add more surprise to the story of the film, the husband is discovered alive, and he, in his turn, chases Karīmah. At the end of the film, the husband falls off a mountain cliff and dies.

It is obvious from the quality of these films mentioned above that a main stream commercial film genre concurrent with the Egyptian milieu started to dominate the Lebanese film industry. The production in the following years was marked with this commercial aptitude for social melodramas, musical comedies or a combination of both, yielding 11 films within a three year period (1960-1962) which, to a great extent, were met with positive approval by the audience at home and in other Arab countries, as well. Excluded from this circle was al-Ṭūkhī's film, The Birth of the Messenger which had religious appeal.

Against all odds, George Naṣr in 1961 completed his second long feature film, Al-Gharīb al-Saghīr / The Little Stranger, a black-and-white film in French. The film told the story of the passage of a 13-year old boy from the innocent world of childhood to the sexually and psychologically turbulent world of manhood. Similar to Naṣr's first film
Where To?, The Little Stranger was characterized with its cinematic high standards both technically and thematically, and represented Lebanon at Cannes Film Festival in 1962. It was Nasr’s second attempt at keeping alive the artistically constructive Lebanese film, a genre better known in Lebanon as “serious cinema.” Unfortunately, it was Nasr’s last long feature film made in Lebanon. (His final long feature film, Al-Matlūb Rajul Wāhad / One Man is Wanted was commissioned in 1973 by the Syrian Public Film Institute.) The Little Stranger was not regarded as critical as was Where To?, and failed to be recognized in Lebanon due to the skewed circumstances of the commercially oriented Lebanese film industry and market. Nasr said (Shmait 1973):

I made The Little Stranger because I was not convinced of the failure of the “good film.” The film was characterized by a unique style and a high technical quality. . . . Locally, the film did not see the light. The opposing factors as it appeared that time were stronger than before. Therefore, I preferred to stop working in long feature films, so I would not be taken by the tide of that shameful phase in the Lebanese cinema. (p. 17)

And, in an interview with Nasr (Jābir, 1993), he stated:

At the time I presented The Little Stranger in 1962, film production in Lebanon was drastically increasing where it reached about 23/24 films per year in 1964. The problem with these films was that they did not have an identity. They were commercially exploitative. I refused to work in this wave of films because they failed to express our society, not even parts of it. (p. 14)

Film Distribution

The result of the modernization process that took place in the late 1950’s was extremely encouraging and positive, making Lebanon the second largest Arab country in film production and distribution. Between 1959 and 1962, Lebanon produced 17 films.
while the rest of the Arab countries with film production - excluding Egypt - produced 9 films in total. All of these Lebanese films were distributed to the Arab countries, Egypt’s main market. Some of these films were met with great success and others with lesser. For example, Salmān’s *Greeting to Love* (1962) was shown in Baghdad for 14 consecutive weeks (Jabre, 1966, p. 176) which at the time was considered a record.

Between 1955 and 1963, 70 copies of 30 Lebanese films were sold or rented to countries such as Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Iraq, and countries in North Africa and South America. Alunad al-Tūkî’s *Mawlid al-Rasīl / The Birth of the Messenger* (1960) set the highest record in distribution sales of one film in the history of Lebanese cinema. As many as 22 copies were sold to the Arab countries alone, while other copies, unaccounted for, were sold to Muslim countries in Asia and Africa (Khoury, 1966, p. 124).

It is noteworthy to mention that the Egyptian market remained, at large, closed to the Lebanese film. While Lebanon imported more than 100 films per year from Egypt, Egypt rarely purchased any Lebanese films, and it only rented one or two Lebanese films per year at the most. Egyptian reluctance to import Lebanese films stemmed primarily from the competition between Lebanon and Egypt for the same market offering the same products, i.e., the melodramatic musical milieu and the musical comedies. Although some authors have tried to blame this boycott on the Egyptian audience’s inexperience with the Lebanese dialect and their difficulty with understanding it. Such a rationalization is ludicrous since an abundance of Lebanese films were made with an Egyptian cast - either totally or partially, and several used the Egyptian dialect.
Importance of The Lebanese Film Market

The story of *The Rock of Love* clearly combined elements of mystery, action, betrayal and romance, elements which had proven to be profitable at the box office. Rida Myassar presented to his audience a film saturated with big Egyptian stars in an Egyptian melodrama flavoured with American action and the mystery plots of Hollywood. This mixture arose from the film director’s and producers’ understanding of the audience’s growing fondness for the excitement offered by Hollywood cinema, such as Billy Wilder’s *The Apartment* (1960), John Ford’s *The Horse Soldier* (1959), Roy Baker’s *The Valiant* (1962) to name a few of the hundreds of American films exhibited in Lebanon featuring big stars like, John Wayne, Cary Grant, James Stewart, Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, and Shirley Maclaine.

It was for these advanced Western elements that American cinema occupied first place in Lebanon in terms of importation and exhibition and captured, without competition, the minds and hearts of the Lebanese audience. Jabre (1980, p. 308) remarked that American cinema comes in first place in Lebanon and the Middle East because of the commercial nature of its subject matter and the popularity of its heroes and actors. In the UNESCO 1964 World Communications Survey, it was reported that among the 762 feature films imported by Lebanon in 1959, 407 came from the United States, whereas only 80 came from Egypt. Jabre (1966, p. 174) also noted that American movies represented 82.5% of the total amount of weekly screenings in Beirut.

By 1964, “cinema attendance in Lebanon totalled 37.2 million annually, representing an individual attendance of 22.5 per year - the highest level in Asia after Hong Kong”
This attendance figure was more than half of the annual cinema attendance in Egypt which amounted to 72 million. While Egypt's population numbered about 30 million in the early sixties, Lebanon’s population did not exceed more than 2.2 million. Considering the much smaller population of Lebanon, the attendance in Lebanon explains clearly how important the Lebanese market was to the Egyptian film industry.

In assessing the film industry in Lebanon 1958-1965 Jabre (1965, p. 172) reported that the number of cinematic theaters in Lebanon reached 210 equipped with 35 mm projectors and having a seating capacity of 112,000 seats. Of these cinemas, 180 were open every day throughout the year operating on the basis of three or four screenings per day. He added that “the showing of movies has been for many years a most prosperous business in Lebanon” (p. 172). In 1964, for example, the total for American films imported into Lebanon was 273 films compared to the 78 Egyptian film imported that same year. However, because of Lebanese distribution companies that purchase Egyptian films for the purpose of distribution outside Lebanon, the number of Egyptian films imported by Lebanon does not correspond with the Egyptian films actually shown in Lebanon.

Khoury (1966, p. 230), as shown in Table 2, reported that the 32,142,000 tickets sold per year generated 24,075,000 LL ($8,025,000 approximately) in income making the Lebanese market as big as two-thirds of the Egyptian market (where the 55,923,006 tickets sold per year generate £ 5,340,651 ($12,150,000 approximately)) and more than two thirds of the whole North African market, excluding Egypt.
TABLE 2

A Comparison Between Egyptian and Lebanese Film Attendance Market in the 1960's

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Apprx. Population</th>
<th>Tickets/year</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>30,000,000</td>
<td>55,923,006</td>
<td>$12,150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>32,142,000</td>
<td>$ 8,025,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although American films come in first place in importation and exhibition as discussed earlier, still, 50% of the audience flock to watch Arabic films - mainly Egyptian. In 1961, 1962, and 1963, Lebanese cinema theaters showed an average of 35 Egyptian films annually. This figure supports the Egyptian interest in the Lebanese market as suggested by filmmaker Sayf al-Dīn earlier in this study.

Film Quality

The majority of the films produced in Lebanon in this period, such as Salmān's *Greetings to Love* and al-Tūkhī's *The Birth of the Messenger* caught the attention of audiences around the Arab World and introduced into the Arab film market a line of films made in Lebanon similar to the Egyptian melodramatic milieu in all aspects. Despite the shallowness of these productions, excluding al-Tūkhī's *The Birth of the Messenger* which was the life story of the Prophet Muhammad, these films were not only
successful in capturing the Arab audience, but also in sending a message to Egyptian film producers that the film industry in Lebanon was capable of producing popular films on an equal footing with the Egyptian industry. Regardless of the minimal artistic qualities of these films, their production level from a technical point of view was successful in terms of their narrative structure. As for the quality of film elements in these productions, such as lighting, cinematography and direction, it is obvious that these films did not possess any level of sophistication. Hence, the ultimate goal of such films was the telling of a story and not the making of an artistic film. It is, therefore, essential not to judge these productions from an artistic perspective. On the contrary, the emphasis should be placed on their commercial performance and the public’s response to them putting in front of us as a guideline their intended exploitive mission: to entertain the public and to generate significant profit. These twin objectives were successfully realized.

The majority of film productions in Lebanon during this phase were commercially exploitive in their nature. Only a couple of films were able to reflect an artistic vision - although not completely mature - and a noteworthy level of technical mastery in the medium of film. In the two films discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Hârün’s Red Flowers and Naṣr’s Where to?, there was an indication of a major shift toward professionalism in Lebanese film. Red Flowers represented through its subject matter a daring step toward a mature and socially concerned cinema. Because of this, Khoury (1966, p. 123) considered Hârün’s film to be one of the most important Lebanese films. Naṣr’s Where to?, on the other hand, was a further step toward professional cinema, both
technically and thematically. As discussed earlier, the film was locally and internationally well-received and it was labelled as the true beginning of a national cinema in Lebanon.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the history of the film industry in Lebanon from 1957 to 1962, it is noticeable that it already possessed all of the basic requirements for a commercially strong film industry: capital, equipped studios, profile actors, and experienced personnel. The presence of such an industry, which had already gained good responses for the quality of its production from its audience in the Arab market, and had already proven that it was capable of generating profits for its investors, must be viewed to have been a competitor of Egyptian film. As noted previously, Egyptian production depended immensely on the Arab market and most importantly on the Lebanese market. It would be improbable for Egyptian investors not to have viewed the market shared by the Lebanese film industry as a threat for their investments.

Lebanese filmmaker Subhi Sayf al-Din suggested that the Egyptian film operations in Lebanon were not only motivated by Nasser’s generalization of Egyptian cinema, but also by the competitive threat imposed by the Lebanese film industry toward the prosperity of the Egyptian film industry. This statement appears to be accurate in terms of suggesting a causal relationship between the Egyptian film operations’ move to Lebanon and the decline in the quality of the Lebanese film, thus casting the doubt about the common conception that the Egyptian move was caused by none other than the
generalization schemes in Egypt. However, Sayf al-Dīn’s suggestion that the Egyptian move was to kill the Lebanese film industry is unfounded. The Egyptian move could be explained by the fact that Lebanon’s film industry possessed the best conditions for the incubation of the commercial Egyptian film industry. Lebanon had advanced studio facilities, labs, crews, stars, good weather, freedom of expression, etc. There is no question that the Egyptian operations were successful in taking over the Lebanese film industry; however, it is not obvious whether this was pre-planned or consequential.
CHAPTER VI

THE SIXTIES: STATE OF BOOM

The Boom Stage

In the beginning of the sixties, the Lebanese film industry witnessed an inflammatory increase in production that lasted until the end of the decade. The total number of long feature films produced during this phase reached 101 films, most of which were produced between 1963 and 1969 in which the number of films totaled 90. Of these films, 79 films were detective and comedy adventures; 16 were social dramatic films; 4 were Palestinian guerilla films; and 1 was a religious film. The production list of this era shows that half of these films were made in color. From a quantitative perspective, these figures made the Lebanese film industry equal to other World industries, such as those of Sweden, Denmark, East Germany and Austria (Akhbâr, 1966, p.11). The film industry in Lebanon was finally in its boom stage. Lebanese films were widely viewed in Lebanon occasionally drawing higher attendance than the competitor, Egyptian films. The overall number of Lebanese films playing at any one time in Lebanese film theaters, compared to Egyptian films, was considerable enough to consume an enormous portion of the revenue of this very important market for Egyptian cinema.
This boom in production, which was the result of the conditions discussed in the previous chapter, "Cinema from 1957-1962," accelerated the growth of the cinema industry in Lebanon rapidly and enhanced its chances of becoming a major industry. However, there was no solid basis of operation for securing a steady market to absorb the high number of productions. To rectify the problem, the Lebanese National Center for Cinema (NCC) (1965) called upon the responsible parties in the industry, i.e. producers and investors, to convene to discuss the current situation of film production and to lay the foundation for production planning in the coming years. In a report issued by the Center in its bimonthly publication Akhbar (No. 17, 1966), the Center expressed its vision of the issue in the following extract:

After the Lebanese cinema flourished, and production started to increase continuously, several obstacles arose concerning the distribution of Lebanese films. It, therefore, became necessary to open new markets for Lebanese films and to conduct analytical studies of these projected markets in order to satisfy their needs. This, eventually, will secure a continuous and regular relation with these markets. (p.3)

Despite this problem of marketing, which the Lebanese film industry started to experience due to its immense and irregular growth, the films of this phase recorded great profits. Al-'Arif explained this trend in his discussion about the problem of Lebanese cinema (1979) saying:

The films of the sixties, despite their tepidness, achieved great commercial profits due to several reasons. Some of these reasons were the result of the nature of these films which was characterized with: simplicity in style, the star system, singing, music, and light sexual teasing oriented toward exploiting a certain category of audience. Other reasons were more contextual in their nature, most importantly the decline in Egyptian production and the boycott of Egyptian films by several Arab markets due to political differences. (p. 50)
The market dilemma that faced the Lebanese film industry was primarily the result of inflation in the number of productions. It did not mean that the films made in Lebanon had no outside markets. Being second to Egypt in production/distribution, Lebanon enjoyed a sizeable share of the Arab World market, particularly its immediate neighbors: Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. In a report prepared by Kamil Munassa (1965), he recorded that Lebanon exported in 1965 approximately 30 films to 10 countries: Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Australia, and Libya (Akhbār, No. 16, p. 9).

Another secondary market, less significant in size, was the dispersed Arab communities present in various international locations formed as the result of immigration to the Western World, such as North America, Latin America, Australia, Europe, and in Africa as well. For example, in March 1966, the Lebanese film Al-Ajnînah al-Mutakassirah / The Broken Wings premiered successfully in Los Angeles where the Lebanese community, and a sizable number of Americans, flocked to watch this movie (Akhbār, 1966, No. 16, p. 7). Directed by Yusuf Ma‘lūf in 1964, The Broken Wings was the adaptation of Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān’s book The Broken Wings, and it was the first Lebanese film to be released in the United States. The film was released in the United States by The Walter Reade Organization, Inc. based in New Jersey (Aaronson, 1969, p. 470). In 1968, the film was released by Continental Distribution in New York and played at the 34th Street East Theater (Thompson, 1968). Beau (1968) mentioned that the film toured the following American cities: Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.
In order to widen the spread of Lebanese films, the government encouraged co-productions with other countries. This was viewed as a favorable method to reach markets through their participation in the making of films. The sixties period witnessed a significant amount of co-productions with various countries, such as Syria, Egypt, Spain, Morocco, Turkey, Italy, and Iran. The vast majority of these productions were a variation and/or a combination of comedy, musical and melodramatic films. The most influential co-productions that increased the marketing of Lebanese films were those with Syria. In this way, Lebanese-Syrian films encouraged a greater audience share at Syrian film theaters than Egyptian films. The co-produced films with Syria were among the best Arab movie sellers in Syria. Films such as *The Pearl Necklace*, *Sultānah*, *Meeting in Tadmur*, and *The Wanderers* were very successful both in Lebanon and Syria. The success of these films is due, mostly, to the fame of the two comedians, Durayd Lahhām and Nihād Qal‘î, both of whom were greatly loved by the audiences of the region.

The absence of accurate exportation records for these films hindered the process in assessing the flow of these films. Apparently the revenue of these films must have been the deciding factor that encouraged businessmen to invest their wealth in this industry. And since the size of the capital invested in this film industry increased gradually, yet immensely, from the turn of the decade (see Table 3), this indicates that the marketing of these films and the generated profits were more than satisfactory.

Not all of the films produced in Lebanon met with success at the box office - in Lebanon itself or in the Arab World. Nevertheless, most of these films performed well at
theaters. For example, in 1965, 34 Arab films were screened in Kuwait’s cinema theaters. Five of them were a tremendous success: two Lebanese films - Salmān’s Afrāh al-Shabāb / Joys of Youth, and Diyā’ al-Dīn’s Shādiyat al-Jabal / The Mountain Singer; one Lebanese-Syrian film - Ma’lūf’s ‘Uqd al-Lūlū / The Pearl Necklace; and two Egyptian films - Amīr al-Dahās / Prince of Mischief and Bint al-Hittah / The Neighborhood’s Girl (Akhbār, 1965, No. 3, p 9).

TABLE 3

Capital Invested in Lebanese Film Industry (1959-1965)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Capital invested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>350,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>835,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>955,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>920,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,175,680 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>5,290,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>3,015,000 L.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12,540,680 L.L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Syria during that same season, four of the five films which generated the highest revenue were Lebanese films: The Pearl Necklace played for 15 weeks; The Daughter of ‘Antar played for 15 weeks; You Are My Life and The Joys of Youth played for 8 weeks.
The successful performance of these films was due to many factors; most significant was the structure of these films combined with successful technical execution for the screen. The structure of these films was based on simplicity of story and style in addition to the usual appetizers, such as dancing, singing, and customarily, comedy. The story was simple and easy to understand. It resembled the telling of a story where the story-teller provides every detail and clarification possible to make the audience understand. The style simultaneously functioned to convey the story without any sophistication or extraordinary psychological paraphrasing of the story's events. The technical quality of the majority of the films produced in this era was acceptable and, at least, equal to the quality of the commercial Egyptian milieu. In comparison with first class European and American film productions, these films lagged behind, however, they matched the B-rate production quality.

Despite the harsh criticism made about the standards and quality of the films produced during this phase, the sixties era is an essential pivot in the history and development of the Lebanese film industry. This era is perhaps the most profound in the development of a professional and organized film industry in Lebanon. The benefits of the Egyptian film operations in Lebanon, espoused with the local film operations, brought together an environment which provided primarily, practical experience for the workers in film production; secondly, a profitable enterprise for those who wished to invest their wealth; and thirdly an organizational growth forming the infrastructure of this industry which remains in effect to the present.
Organizational Growth

The National Center for Cinema

The explosive growth of the Lebanese film industry induced the Lebanese government to establish an organizational body to supervise the film industry and to take part in its development. In this manner, the government expressed this interest in the film industry through the establishment of the National Center for Cinema (NCC) in 1964, an independent body under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Information. This measure was similar to those taken in other Arab countries such as Morocco and Egypt. In a UNESCO study (UNESCO, No. 95) on communication in Arab countries it was reported that:

The state's interest in the cinema industry is clearly indicated, at the very least, by its establishment of film institutions or departments, usually as adjuncts to Ministries of Culture and Information, in addition to the film departments of the television services. This phenomena began in the 1940's when the Moroccan Film Center was established (1944) to spread to other countries in the 50's and 60's. . . . In Lebanon, the National Center for Cinema was set up in 1964, as was also the Arab Coordination Center for Cinema and Television in the same year. (p. 25)

The duties of the National Center for Cinema were listed in the first article of the constitution of the Center. The following is the text of that article:

An independent service called the National Center for Cinema is founded to organize and develop the industry and culture of cinema in Lebanon and to help in spreading Lebanese films outside Lebanon. The film industry includes producing, making, distributing, purchasing and leasing, and all activities related to cinema directly or indirectly. And to achieve these goals the Center will:
1- Organize, coordinate, and supervise the different aspects and sections of the film industry. It will also be responsible for solving disputes among the different departments of this industry, excluding the disputes arising from employment.

2- Supervise the financing of films and their revenue.

3- Support the film industry by providing grants and loans to film producers under the condition that the Center will carefully use its funds and secure the return of these loans.

4- Create and produce a general documentation of cinema and maintain it.

5- Produce and distribute short and long feature films or participate in productions with private producers.

6- Produce films for state, public, and independent institutions and distribute them when necessary. State institutions will produce films only through the Center.

7- Make financial arrangements with private cinema institutions within the general welfare of the film industry.

8- Suggest plans, regulations, laws and implement organizational decisions related to cinema as an industry and culture in order to provide this industry with laws that suffice its needs.

9- Take all measures necessary to develop the cultural aspect of cinema by education, publication, and production.

10- Organize local and international campaigns to help spread the Lebanese film in Lebanon and the world.

11- Organize the education and technical training for the people working in cinema - technicians, artists and others.

Stipulations and laws were issued to facilitate the operation of the Center in relation to its administrative formation and financial support. Other laws were also passed to regulate the film industry in Lebanon covering all aspects of its operations, such as the
requirements for practicing a film career in Lebanon, the rules for film screening in theaters, taxes, and the identity of Lebanese films.

Among the conditions for practicing a film career in Lebanon was the requirement of licensing. No film company could operate in Lebanon without acquiring an operation license from the NCC; any person working in the field of film had to possess an operation certificate (license), in the form of an identification card, from the NCC. In this way, film as a career was directly under the supervision and control of a governmental institution, giving the NCC the ultimate authority to decide who was to practice and what films could be made. For every film, before the commencement of the production phase, the film script had to be submitted to the NCC and screened by a committee in order to obtain the NCC’s approval and permission to start with the production. This practice is still in effect today. Although there are no documented incidents of films that have been rejected by the NCC, this practice enforces a preliminary censorship on the film industry.

Another dilemma which surfaced as a result of the policies enforced by the NCC was the classification of the personnel working in the film industry and the requirements for practicing a film career. A filmmaker, for example, could not obtain an identification from the NCC as a director unless he or she had worked as an assistant director in two or more long feature films and had earned a college degree in film directing from an accredited university. Basically, the text of this regulation made it clear that a person could not work as a film director on Lebanese soil unless the NCC accredited him or her. Similarly, the NCC posted a list of requirements governing the hierarchy of careers in
the film industry, such as requirements for working as a director of photography, assistant director, etc. This practice was not only unfair to the people who possessed the ability to perform within a specific capacity, but also represented a major obstacle in terms of obtaining financial support from the NCC or any other governmental institution. Article 1 of the regulation for financial support for film production stipulated that financial aid would be given only to registered film companies which possessed the conditions for practicing film production.

The Arab Film and Television Center

Established in 1964, the Arab Film and Television Center (AFTC) was the fruit of the First Round Table Conference when the Arab representatives of their respective film industries, in conjunction with the UNESCO, met in Beirut, in October 1962, to discuss the situation of the Arab film and television industries. The Arab delegates encouraged by UNESCO recommended the creation of a "regional center of Arab cinematographic coordination in charge of the exchange of documentaries, films, and pictures of cultural interest, which would centralize all information and documentation related to pictures insofar as these are of cultural value" (Sadoul, 1966, p.250).

While waiting for the creation of such a recommended regional center through UNESCO, the Lebanese government established the Arab Film and Television Center in 1964 and placed it at the disposal of UNESCO as a temporary alternative to the awaited regional center. The following is the description of the aim of the Center from a statement prepared by the Center published in Sadoul (1966):
The Arab Film and Television Center was created in 1964, by the government of the Lebanese Republic while waiting for UNESCO to bring about the creation of a regional center of cinema and television, greatly desired by the Arab countries as expressed by them during the Round Table Conferences on Arab Cinema and Culture. This center was placed at the disposal of UNESCO to accomplish its fundamental tasks and those of all other missions with which UNESCO might wish to entrust it. Its spirit and its structure are those of the regional centers of UNESCO in the service of other disciplines. (p. 262)

The AFTC, as a result, became the nucleus of coordination among the various Arab film industries taking upon itself the burden of maintaining the bonds between these countries - at least at an informational level. Indeed, the idea behind the establishment of the AFTC was progressive in its nature and unique because of what it signified politically and ideologically to the Arab’s fragmented existence. Indeed, the Center’s role did not exceed the original goal of the regional center, primarily “to collect information and link the Arab countries together as well as linking them with other worlds of cinema and television” (AFTC, 1963, p.3). The Center with utmost sincerity tried to perform the role that it so aspired to achieve. Yet, the idea of coordination did not go beyond the hypothesis and sparkless recommendations brought forth by the Round Table Conferences, save a few activities that were initiated.

Activities of the National Center for Cinema and the Arab Film and Television Center

In addition to the supervisory role placed on the National Center for Cinema and Television by the government, the Center had - to its credit - a list of activities which were helpful in contributing to the development of film in Lebanon. It is noteworthy to
mention that the activities of the NCC and the AFTC were intertwined in such a way that the differentiation between these two entities became almost paltry.

The Center

The Center was furnished with a projection room, a reading room, and a film library. The projection room had a capacity of 70 seats and was equipped with 35 mm and 16 mm film projectors. The library’s acquisitions consisted of materials concerned with the field of cinema, television, and theater, and it was the only specialized library on these subjects in Lebanon. The library’s value was in its accumulation of publications, such as books and periodicals that were not available in Lebanon’s bookstores and other academic libraries, and in providing the public with indiscriminate access to these publications.

Publications

One of the most vital functions of the Center was the publication of a volume of books primarily concerned with film and television in the Arab World. The Center published three books on the Round Table Conferences of 1962, 1963, and 1964. These books entailed the reports, documents, and analysis presented during the mentioned conferences. The Center also published and distributed George Sadoul’s (1966) book, *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, which was commissioned by UNESCO. All of these publications were made available in Arabic, English, and French versions indicating the serious aim of the Center to propagate the information regarding Arab cinema to an international audience. The Center also assisted in the publication of the September
1969 Swiss international film magazine's special issue on "Cinema in the Arab World" through providing the magazine with necessary documents and information.

Another valuable publication by the Center was the bimonthly periodical *Akhbār* / *News* that first appeared in August 1965. *Akhbār* was a unique publication that presented the Arab World with information and studies about the progress of cinema in all the Arab countries. Although this publication was disrupted several times and eventually discontinued in 1973, it became, through its contents, a precious historical document and an important reference to cinema and television in the Arab World.

**Special Activities**

The Center launched a wide scale of activities in an attempt to better the situation of the film industry both locally and at the Arab level. At the local level, the Center assisted in the formation of film clubs in different schools, universities, and communities. In his discussion on the cinema clubs in Lebanon, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sharqāwī (1970) wrote:

During the period between 1964 and 1970, the Center established about 65 film clubs in more than 30 academic institutions across the country. The number of people subscribing to these clubs was about five thousand members. These clubs were divided into four categories: student clubs, student relatives' clubs, public clubs, and special clubs for advanced students with special interests in film studies. (p. 68)

The Center also formed its own film club which convened bimonthly as a nucleus for the other film clubs. Participants in this club were candidates to become leaders for future organizations of film clubs in academic institutions. It also organized three seminars in 1966, 1967, and 1968 in film culture for teachers and students. In 1965, the Center organized a competition for best scenario, the first of its kind in Lebanon, and in 1966 organized a competition for the best Lebanese film for films made up to 1966.
On the Arab level, in addition to the publication of *Akhbār*, the Center organized four Round Table Conferences in Beirut for 1964, 1965, 1967, and 1969 under the supervision of UNESCO. Arab and international representatives attended the conferences. The focus of these conferences was on the current situation of the film industry in the Arab countries and on trying to find a suitable cooperation among these countries regarding cinema and television. The sessions included presentations of analytical research studies by Arab representatives on their respective film industry.

**Film Production**

Working within its constitutional jurisdiction, the Center financed several short documentaries on its own and produced a handful of other documentaries for various Ministries and governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Industry, and the Ministry of Tourism. Among the documentaries produced by the Center are the following: *Al-Ḥiraf al-Lubnānīyah / Lebanese Artisan* by George Nasr; *Al-Qaryah al-Lubnānīyah / The Lebanese Village* by Silvio Thabit; *Al-Sināʿah fīLubnān / Industry in Lebanon* by Roderick Dahdāh; *Al-Sihāfah fīLubnān / Journalism in Lebanon* by Suhayl Jabbūr; and *Al-Ṭubb Ṭinda al-ʿAraḥ / Arab Medicine* by Antoine Mashhour which won several prizes - among them, the prize for best short film at the Carthage Film Festival in 1968.

105
Film Analysis

Introduction

The fact that among the hundreds of films produced in Lebanon only a small number of these films are available at present creates a continuous problem for any researcher to write about Lebanese films of the past in an inclusive manner. There are several reasons for the disappearance of the majority of early Lebanese films. Perhaps, the most compelling factor is the mishandling of film prints and the negligent conditions of storage. (Film preservation is yet another battle which the National Center for Cinema is trying to fight during the 1990’s.)

The unavailability of video in the sixties and early seventies has also been a disadvantage for the film industry in Lebanon but not as pressing as the preservation issue. Films which were stored carefully and were generally cared for were printed on video formats such as Betacam, 3/4”, and VHS in the past decade. Nevertheless, most of the blame can be directed toward the National Center for Cinema which should have collected prints of all films produced in Lebanon in a film archive. Unfortunately, this was not a primary issue to the Center. The result of this negligence, as witnessed at present, is devastating. Most of the visual history of Lebanese cinema is lost.

The films available at present provide a rudimentary understanding of the situation, capabilities, nature, and components of the filmmaking industry in Lebanon. Although there are shared elements among the films produced in the sixties, it would be imprudent to over-generalize the elements found in these films by basing a study on several films.
The technical analysis of films can only be viewed as relevant to the films themselves; however, the themes can be compared with other films based on the availability of text and criticism.

**Analysis of 'Uqd al-Lūlū / The Pearl Necklace**

The success of this film was due to the inclusive presentation of all elements favorable to an Arab audience. Filmmaker Yūsuf Ma'lūf used every exploitative method possible to ensure the commercial success of his film by using famous stars, such as Sabāh and Durayd Lahḥām, singing, dancing, hilarious comedy, action, and drama. All of these elements were packaged in a very simple story - boy loves girl, girl loves another boy. The simplicity of this story, combined with a very successful performance by the comedian from Syria, Durayd Lahham, and the beautiful voice of the Lebanese singer Sabāh, made this film a feature event at every major film screen in the Arab World earning a high record of return and attendance.

The film’s story takes place in a village called *Tall al-Mahabbah* (The Hill of Love) somewhere in the Arab land of *Barr al-Shām* (The Land of Shem). Bdûr, a beautiful villager played by Sabāh, and Sālim, a farmer from the same village, are in love and waiting to be married in the near future. Ghawwār, the fool of the village, played by Durayd Lahḥam, is deeply in love with Bdûr. He leaves the village to work at the port of *al-Lādhiqiyah* as a luggage carrier to make enough money to buy a pearl necklace for Bdûr as her dowry. Bdûr’s younger sister, Hudá, who knows of Ghawwār’s fondness of Bdûr, plays on his feelings and writes him letters faking herself for Bdûr, expressing
Bdûr’s love to him and the anguish of having him away for so long. Ghawwâr receives these letters thinking that they are from Bdûr, grows more fond of her and strengthens his resolve to work more diligently to collect the fortune needed to buy the necklace.

While at the port in al-Lâdhikîyah, Ghawwâr meets with Farhân, played by Nihâd Qalî, the head of a muqhtarîbûn delegation - a name for Arabs who live outside the Arab World - who are arriving from the United States. Laced with hilarity, Ghawwâr, who is not well-liked by the other luggage carriers at the port, manages to unload Farhân’s luggage and fix him up with a cab. Farhân gives Ghawwâr 50 liras in compensation for his work, an unbelievably high tip that amounts to a carrier’s whole month of work. Accidentally, Farhân drops a pearl necklace from his pocket while paying Ghawwâr. When Ghawwâr finds the necklace, he runs after Farhân and returns the necklace to him. Impressed with Ghawwâr’s trustworthiness and sound morals, Farhân invites Ghawwâr to lunch. In another comic scene at the restaurant, Farhân discovers that Ghawwâr is the son of a man who had helped him tremendously in the past and that they were from neighboring villages. After discovering that, Farhân offers Ghawwâr the necklace and promises to go with him to his village, The Hill of Love, to ask for Bdûr’s hand to marry her to Ghawwâr.

In the village, Sâlim is threatened by a band of Bedouins who have their eyes on Sâlim’s land. Sâlim refuses to give up the land of his fathers, and shows resilience in the face of the bandits. When Bdûr brings his lunch, she does not know that her sister, Hudá, accidentally placed a letter written to Ghawwâr in the basket. The letter eventually falls into the hands of Sâlim who becomes outraged by the betrayal. He immediately storms
into her house shouting, belittling her, and calling her all names of betrayal. Bdūr tries to explain the situation to Sālim, but he does not listen nor understand. Sālim leaves Bdūr crying in despair.

When Ghawwār and Farḥān arrive at the village, they are received with great happiness. The villagers throw a party in honor of Farḥān’s visit. At night, Ghawwār goes to see Bdūr by the secret tree as he was instructed. It is this tree which originally told him of Bdūr’s love for him. While Ghawwār thinks it is the tree which speaks to him, it is in fact Hudā’s voice from inside the hollow trunk of the tree that Ghawwār hears. In a funny scene with Bdūr’s watch dog, Ghawwār fails to see Bdūr that night. He returns home and requests Farḥān to go with him the next day.

On the next day, when Ghawwār sees Bdūr in her house, he is confronted with the fact that Sālim and Bdūr are going to be wed in two days. Ghawwār naively claims that Bdūr is his love and no one else can marry her. Bdūr tries to explain to Ghawwār that she is in love with Sālim and she wants to marry him. Still, Ghawwār insists on his claim. Knowing Ghawwār’s naivety, Bdūr suggests that they should accept the judgment of the secret tree. They all go to the place of the tree where Hudā is hiding inside its trunk. Ghawwār asks the tree who should marry Bdūr. Hudā from inside the tree replies that Sālim and Bdūr should be wed. Ghawwār’s heart is broken when he hears the judgment. He promises to kill Sālim, shouting that Bdūr will not marry any one else but him.

After every one leaves, Hudā comes from inside the trunk jumping from the joy of her game. Sālim goes to work in his land, and Ghawwār follows him and watches him from afar. The Bedouin bandits pay an unexpected visit to Sālim, and this time they
were serious about forcing Sālim to sign the release for the land. Refusing to sign, Sālim fights with the bandits and he ends up unconscious after receiving a hard blow to the head. While Ghawwār was watching the fight, a bullet hits his hat accidentally. The bandits load Sālim on the back of a donkey and take him with them.

Shortly after, Bdūr and Hūdā come to see Sālim, bringing him his lunch. When Bdūr does not find Sālim there, she goes around shouting for him. She finds the pieces of a broken jar with blood on it. She also finds Ghawwār’s hat with a bullet hole in it. She immediately thinks that Ghawwār killed Sālim, and she decides to inform the police of the murder. Ghawwār hears all this from his hiding place and he runs away frightened. Bdūr tells Farḥān that Ghawwār has killed Sālim. Farḥān assures her that Ghawwār is incapable of committing a murder.

On the way to the mountains, the bandits pass by a Bedouin woman who sees Sālim and feels sorry for him. Later, she sneaks into the cave where they have Sālim captive and helps him to escape. She goes to the village and informs Bdūr of the situation. Sālim overpowers the Bedouin guarding the cave and escapes into the sizzling heat of the sun.

In a rescue scene, similar to the early films of Griffith, Bdūr, Hūdā and the Bedouin woman, accompanied by two police men, travel on horses to the place where Sālim is held captive. The bandits are on Sālim’s tail. Sālim, exhausted from thirst and climbing rocks, falls on the ground in despair asking in a song from God to help him. As the bandits apprehend Sālim and were ready to shoot him, the police arrive and rescue him.
Back at the village, while Bdūr and Sālim are getting married, Ghawwār is still in disguise thinking that he is still being sought for the murder of Sālim. Finally, he meets with Farhān and he gets to know that Sālim is alive, and he is marrying Bdūr. Ghawwār promises to kill him again. Farhān takes Ghawwār to the wedding in order to find a solution for him. He requests from Bdūr to take Ghawwār as a husband instead of Sālim. Bdūr laughs and tells Ghawwār that she is in love with Sālim, and she wants to live the rest of her life with him. Farhān suggests that Ghawwār marry Hudá instead. Ghawwār refuses because he vows that if he does not marry Bdūr, then he will remain single all his life. He hands Bdūr the pearl necklace as a wedding gift and leaves the wedding. The wedding continues without interruption and ends unexpectedly with a song and a dance.

As seen from the description of the events of the film, the story line was very simple and clear. It did not invite the participation of the audience nor did it stir any audience expectation. There were no twisting plots or climaxes that stirred the audience’s imagination. The story line was rather flat and straightforward. The audience knew that Bdūr would marry Sālim.

The structure of the story was, however, governed by the law of chance. Most of the film’s happenings were the result of chance, such as Ghawwār’s acquiring the necklace, the love letter that reached the hands of Sālim, the discovery of Farhān’s indebtedness to Ghawwār’s father, and the Bedouin woman noticing Sālim in captivity. Perhaps, much the dependancy on chance was related to the regional religious belief in fate. (Abrahamic faith stipulates the belief in fate and destiny as everything is ordained by the Creator.) But, in this film the use of chance was overtly exaggerated, which may have been a
reflection of the belief in a certain style of life - things just happen- or a major weakness in the writing of the script.

The comedy and musical elements of the film were decisive factors in making this film such a commercial hit. Within 90 minutes, the film included a total of 10 songs, five dances - varying between belly dancing, Dabkah, and show dancing - and approximately 20 humorous scenes - almost every time Ghawwâr appeared on the screen. The film indeed had myriad technical, acting, and directorial problems that did not escape the educated audience. Not only were the characters of the film poorly developed, but also most of the acting was horrendous. Among all the actors of the film, only Durayd and Nihâd gave a good performance. In general, these two actors were comfortable with their roles, and moved freely in front of the camera.

The performances of Šabā and Fahid Ballān were clumsily deliberate and confused. Šabā, for example appeared in the opening scene smiling extensively in an attempt to portray herself as a flamboyant charming young woman (although she was actually in her late forties). The result, however, was that she appeared stupid and empty-headed. Moreover, her acting was so forced that in every move she made, every line she delivered, and every song she sang, it was obvious that she was acting with difficulty. Astonishingly this was not her first film and it seems surprising that she was so deliberate. Šabā started acting in Egyptian cinema playing leading roles as early as 1945 working with filmmakers, such as Husayn Fawzî, Niyazî Muştafâ, and İbrâhîm Lâmâ, and starred in Lebanon in Hilmi Raflah’s film, Mahrajîn al-Ḫubb / Love Festival (1958) and ‘Ātif Sâlim’s Ma’bad al-Ḫubb / The Temple of Love (1961).
Sabāh’s weak performance failed to establish a link between the audience and Bdūr, the character she played. In viewing the film, the audience grew detached from Bdūr and insensitive to her pain when she lost Sālim. Moreover, the shallowness of her character, combined with Sabāh’s undigestible and heavy personality, created a sense of discomfort in the viewer every time she appeared on the screen, to the extent that no one was able to care for her well-being. In addition to this dilemma in her performance, Sabāh’s dialect all through the film was a confused mixture of Lebanese and Egyptian. This mixture was very annoying to the ear and also detrimental to the portrayal of the character itself in such a way that one may have felt the character to be confused more than anything else.

It is very interesting how this dialect problem appeared to be only with the female actors. Next to Sabāh, Malak Sukkar, who played Hудá, also had a confused Libano-Syrian-Egyptian dialect, while, all of the male actors in the film maintained a consistent light Syrian dialect.

In contrast with Sabāh’s performance, Durayd Lahham (Ghawwār) proved himself as a talented actor and an intelligent comedian. Durayd’s style of performing was a combination of slapstick acrobatics derived from the circus clown, expressive gestures, subtle regional facial expressions, and humorous speech. The character of Ghawwār (which he created and perfected later) was inspired by ‘Īwāz, a major character in the shadow play of the region, and by Charlie Chaplin. While the influence of ‘Īwāz could be seen through Ghawwār’s personality and attitudes toward his surroundings, Chaplin’s influence was seen through his performing, i.e., the acrobatic, clown-like movements. In addition to his style, Durayd’s powerful presence in front of the camera, where he moved
freely inside the film space without inhibition, helped him bring laughter to the audience almost every time he appeared on the screen. He presented approximately 20 humorous situations during the film varying in style from light slapstick comedy to satire and corny gestures. In scenes, such as the airport and the Dabkah dance when he returned to the village, his clown performance was exemplary in respect to other actors of the region. In the Dabkah scene, Ghawwâr hung on to the hand of the dancer at the end of the row and let himself fly in the air while the dancers moved rapidly in a circle. Also, at the airport, Ghawwâr hauled his old worthless furniture on a two-wheeled cart and pushed it on the airport ground with the help of children. Ghawwâr pushed the cart and hung on the long handles to be lifted up in the air due to the weight of the furniture on the other end of the cart, similar to the effect of riding a seesaw. This act, combined with Ghawwâr’s notion of loading his furniture into the plane was a perfect example of Durayd’s wit in working with unusual circumstances to entertain the audience. Durayd capitalized on extraordinary situations to comically shock his audience. For example, in the scene when Farhân took Ghawwâr to a five star restaurant, Ghawwâr kissed a lady from Farhân’s group on the mouth in imitation of Farhân after seeing Farhân give her a kiss of salutation on the cheek. The lady was surprised, of course, but since she was an Arab-American from the United States she took it as a nice gesture. Later in the same scene, Ghawwâr ate his soup in an audaciously noisy manner, making all kinds of sucking and slurping noises that only an uncivilized person would make. Everyone in the restaurant looked at him in disgust every time he made the noise. Farhân was embarrassed by Ghawwâr’s behavior. These two situations were unusual for any person
to do, especially in an Arab society. Ghawwār’s way of eating the soup was extremely funny, especially, to members of the working class audience who did not experience the delicacy of a five star restaurant.

Durayd’s superb performance delivered the film, despite its directorial and technical shortcomings, giving it the chance for success. Ghawwār’s comedy compensated for the film’s mistakes which did not escape the expert audience. “The appearance of Durayd and Nihād in ‘Uqd al-Lūlū was a great popular success despite the directorial mistakes” (al-Bandārī, 1994, p.238).

Yūsuf Ma’lūf, the director of the film, demonstrated his ability to tell the story of the film visually. The film’s story flowed clearly and coherently, except for the confusion created by the third and fifth sequences of the film due to an error in the montage of the film. The third segment of the film was mistakenly edited in the place of the fifth sequence and vice versa. This error produced a false notion of the presence of two characters played by Nihād Qal‘ī. Toward the end of the fifth sequence, the editing mistake became clear. Except for this incident, the overall presentation of the story was successful.

A version of the film was transferred on video tape, and the origin of this editing error is not readily identifiable. The presence of this mistake suggests several different scenarios of what had possibly happened with the film. The following are few examples: first, an editing mistake occurred in the original master film print by the editing staff; second, a splicing error happened while the film was screened in some theater; third, a reel change mixup happened during the transferring of the film to video.
This issue is known as textual variation, and it is one of the pervasive problems in film history. Textual variation is the possibility of having different versions of the same film either intentionally by the producers or unintentionally due to special circumstances, such as the previous example pertaining to editing error in *The Pearl Necklace*. R. Allen and D. Gomery (1985) suggested:

Textual variation (several versions of a single film) is not just a concern in isolated instances, but a pervasive problem in film history. Multiple versions of a film might have been prepared intentionally by a studio or distributor: to circumvent varying censorship standards, to please foreign audiences, or to provide exhibitors and/or television stations with a choice of running times, to name but a few motivations. Once the print left the producer (particularly if it was a silent film), it might have been reedited, shortened, or otherwise altered at any of a number of points. (p. 34)

Aside from this issue, the editing continued, however, all through the film to produce unpleasant incidents which represented the incompetency of the film editor, Emîl Bâhî. The film was bombarded with flash frames, black frames, the head of second takes left at the tail of edited shots, all of which signified the inexperience of the editor. In addition to these, the action continuity in some scenes suffered greatly from editorial inexperience by not using matching points from one shot to another.

Regarding directing, several problems evident in this film were due to discrepancies in Ma’lûf’s directing. From the terrible performance of most of the actors, except for Durayd and Nihâd, it seemed that Ma’lûf did not possess the ability to work with his talent. As a result, the acting was choppy and very apparent. For example, the people’s reaction in the restaurant to Ghawwâr’s eating noises was not only exaggerated, but also extremely theatrical and robotic. Their reaction was not congruent with Ghawwâr’s performance. In another situation, in the scene when Ghawwâr returned to the village,
Sâlim was upset and gloomy because of the letter he discovered in his lunch basket. During the Dabkah dance he sang after Sabâh, and as soon as he started singing he was cheerful, but when he finished singing he was frowning again. Perhaps, such problems were also the result of the shooting schedule. Judging from the discrepancy in the lighting continuity in each of the scenes, it is also evident that the cut away shots were taken at a separate time. Sâlim for example was standing in an establishing shot of the dance different than the way he was standing in the long shot focusing on him, and in both shots lighting was noticeably different.

Another noticeable problematic attitude in Ma'lûf’s directing was the placement of actors facing the camera similar to that in classical theater. The actors seemed to be lined up facing the camera almost at all times. In scenes, such as when Bdûr and Hudá were at home talking about love, they both were facing the camera instead of, for example, facing each other. Ma'lûf’s theatrical style negatively affected mise-en-scene elements, such as those of tension and interaction between the characters.

The shot selection in this film was not the film’s greatest achievement. However, Ma'lûf did a fine job in covering the accounts of his story by interplaying a wide variety of angles and shot lengths. Most of the shots were long-shots and medium-long-shots. Close-ups were very rare in this film. This possibly effected the relation between the audience and the actors. In musical dances, bird’s eye shots were used abundantly and intercut with long shots of the dance taken from various angles. Several shots in the film stood out for their good quality. Shots, such as the over the shoulder, low angle shot taken from behind Sâlim to show the small size of Ghawwâr in respect to Sâlim. The
shot was very effective in showing the weakness of Ghawwâr in front of Sālim, the strong farmer, after Ghawwâr was threatening to beat him. Another example is a transition shot of the ground that Ma’lūf used in the interactions between the Bedouin woman and Sabāh.

These poor elements, however, did not affect the audience’s acceptance and fondness of this film. As mentioned earlier, the film generated great revenues and played at theaters for durations ranging from five to fifteen weeks. It is noteworthy to mention that the comedy duet of Durayd Lahhâm and Nihād Qal‘ī, who respectively play the roles of Ghawwâr and Farhān, wrote the story for this film. As perceived from the events of the film, which revolved around Ghawwâr and Farhān, the primary focus of their story was to make their audience laugh.

This film is a perfect example to illustrate how the film producers of the decade depended heavily on big stars and singing, almost always, as a ticket for the success of their films, more than often, abandoning the technical/artistic portion of the production. As a result, some of these films suffered greatly on the technical level.

A Review of Egyptian Filmmakers and Their Work in Lebanon

The work of Egyptian filmmakers in Lebanon, as part of the Egyptian film operations, added a sizable number of films to the Lebanese film history. The majority of these films were melodramatic and/or musical comedies. The following is a concise review of the Egyptian filmmakers who worked in Lebanon and a description of one of the films each had directed.
This was Niyazi Mustafâ’s first of five films he directed in Lebanon between 1963 and 1970 while still working in Egypt. This film was produced by Lebanese producer 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Kahyah and shot by Lebanese cinematographer Yusuf Karâmî. The leading cast of the film were actor Kamál al-Shinnawî, belly-dancer Najwâ Fu’âd, Lebanese actor/singer Samïrah Tawfiq, and Moroccan actor Sayyid Mughrabî.

Mustafâ is one of the earliest Egyptian filmmakers. He started his career in 1937 by making his film debut, Salâmah fl Khayr / Salamah is Fine. Jalâl al-Sharqâwî (1970) wrote that “the majority of Mustafâ’s films (pre-1960) are Bedouin adventures and musical slapstick comedy. Mustafâ is fascinated by the desert” (p. 177). The desert life remained the theme of most of Mustafâ’s films made in Lebanon. Three of the five films he made were with Bedouin themes: The Bedouin Woman in Love; Bint 'Antar / 'Antar’s Daughter (1964), 'Antar Yaghzûal-Šahrâ / 'Antar Invades the Desert (1969). The other two films, Nisâ' Bila Ghad / Women without Tomorrow (1970) and Sâriq al-Malâyûn / Thief of the Millions (1968), were action type films which Mustafâ had made his trademark, as well.

The Bedouin Woman in Love tells story of a young Egyptian archeologist, played by Kamál al-Shinnawî, who arrives at one of the mountains of Lebanon in search for ancient ruins. While working there, he falls madly in love from first sight with a young Bedouin woman, played by Samïrah Tawfiq, who also falls in love with him. Samirah, however, is promised to her cousin, played by Sayyid Mughrabî. Kamál tries to ask for Samirah’s
hand from her father. But the father, obeying the tribe’s tradition of arranged marriages and also that of not marrying outsiders, declines Kamāl’s request.

One day, Kamāl and Samīrah meet in Beirut coincidentally. She tells him of her scheduled wedding day. Being desperately in love with Samīrah, Kamāl kidnaps her in an attempt to prevent her marriage to her cousin. The tribesmen, accompanied by Samīrah’s cousin, chase Kamāl seeking revenge. Samīrah’s cousin is killed during the chase, and Kamāl is arrested for the murder. Shortly after, the real killer is discovered and Kamāl is set free. The film ends with Kamāl marrying Samīrah with the approval of the father.

Ahmad Divâ’ al-Dīn: Shādiyat al-Jabal / The Mountain Singer (1964)

In 1964, Egyptian filmmaker Ahmad Divâ’ al-Dīn wrote and directed Shādiyat al-Jabal which was the only Lebanese-Egyptian film he made. In this film, Dīn used famous Egyptian film stars, Farid Shawqi, Hasan Yūsuf, and Mahmūd al-Milijī. The film was produced by Fawwāz Ikhwān, a Lebanese production company.

The film tells the story of Dābb’, leader of a tribe somewhere in Lebanon. Dābb’ is a tyrannical man who leads his men in an attack on the nearby tribes. The people of the tribe grow scared of him and his tyranny. Two young journalists from the city come to write a report on Dābb’. After observing Dābb’’s cruelty and witnessing the state of fear among the people, the journalists publish their report and request the government to interfere in the situation and arrest Dābb’. The police attack Dābb’’s castle and kill him.
Sayyid Tantawi: *Wulidtu min Jadil / I am Born Again* (1965)


The film revolves around the life of a male singer, played by Muharram Fuʿād, who one day loses his voice. After the medical profession fails to help him, he feels that his life has become meaningless. After several beguiling incidents, including being chased by a crazy person, he loses hope in the future. He eventually finds solace in a female singer, played by Nazhab Yūnus, who continues to support and encourage him to overcome his problems. Due to her support, his voice returns to him. Muharram changes his approach toward life because he feels as though he were reborn.

Yūsuf Maʿlūf: *Al-Milionerah / The Millionairess* (1965)

Among the seven films Yūsuf Maʿlūf made in Lebanon between 1963 and 1967, only one film, *The Broken Wings* (1965), was not a variation of a musical/comedy melodrama. Maʿlūf came to Lebanon after a successful filmmaking career in Egypt, creating the comedy series for the slapstick comedian, Ismāʿīl Yāsīn. However, after making *ʿAʾazz al-Ḥabāyib / The Dearest* in 1960, Yūsuf Maʿlūf could not find work in Egypt. Khan (1969) wrote that he “moved to Lebanon, where again he continued to make comedy-musicals and melodramas” (p. 69). The films Maʿlūf made in Lebanon were: *Rasīl al-Gharām / The Messenger of Love* (1963), *Al-Ajnīhah al-Mutakassirah / The Broken

The Millionairess is a musical-comedy featuring Sabâh, Durayd Lahham, Nihâd Qal‘î and Munir Ma’âṣrî. Nihâd Qal‘î, with a get-rich-quick prospective, reads in a newspaper that the father of a millionairess (Sabâh) is looking for a husband for his daughter. Qal‘î disguises his cousin, Durayd Lahham, as a wealthy Prince looking for a wife in order to match him with Sabâh. They hire a group of people to teach Lahham languages, etiquette, dancing, and driving. Munir Ma’âṣrî, the driver/driving teacher, a poor university student, is also asked to spy on Sabâh. Ma’âṣrî and Sabâh fall in love and at the end of the film, Sabâh elopes with Ma’âṣrî on her wedding night to Lahham.

Yûsuf Shâhin: Bayyâ’ al-Khâtim / The Ring Seller (1965)

Although Shâhin received the prize of Sa‘îd ‘Aql for his film The Ring Seller (discussed in this Chapter in “The Rahbāni Brothers’ Experience” pp. 125-126), he did not have the chance to work in Lebanon after he made this film. Perhaps, it is Shâhin’s artistic sophistication that deterred producers from working with him. Only in 1966 he was able to make, Rimâl min Dhahab / Golden Sand, a film produced by Lebanon, Spain and Morocco.

Sayf al-Dîn Shawkat: Gharâm fî Istanbul / Love in Istanbul (1966)

Sayf al-Dîn Shawkat directed and wrote a total of five films while in Lebanon between 1964 and 1968: Ḥasnâ’ al-Bâdiyah / The Desert Beauty (1964), 'Itâb / Reproof (1965), Gharâm fî Istanbul / Love in Istanbul (1966), Intiqâm al-Bâda‘yah / Revenge of
the Bedouin Woman (1967), and Tarîq Bilâ Nihâyah - Endless Road (1968). It is noteworthy to mention that Shawkat is "a Hungarian-Turkish director who settled in Egypt" (Khan, 1969, p. 66), and worked in Egyptian cinema since 1949 with his film debut, Al-Nâsih / The Advisor. After leaving Lebanon, he moved to work in Syria where he made a series of films until 1977, at which point he returned to work in Egypt.

Love in Istanbul revolves around the theme of money and conspiracy. A Princess dies leaving behind a fortune for her daughter who disappeared long ago. The relatives decide to take over the fortune because the daughter is nowhere to be found. The daughter suddenly appears, and through mockery and deception, the relatives try to prevent her from claiming her own fortune. With the help of a loving man, she finally reclaims her inheritance.


Fârûq 'Ajramah made eight films while in Lebanon between 1966-1968, four of which were produced by Adîb Jâbir. These films were as follows: Wadâ'an Ayyuhâ al-Faqr / Farewell to Poverty (1966), Wâdi al-Mawt / Valley of Death (1966), Al-Qâhirîn / The Conquerors (1966), Tarîq al-Khatîyî / The Road of Sins (1968), Lu'bat al-Hazz / The Game of Fortune (1967), Nâr al-Îubb / The Fire of Love (1967), 'Asîfah 'Alâ al-Pîtra' / Storm on Pitra (1967), and 'Isâbat al-Nîsâ' / The Women’s Gang (1968).

'Ajramah abandoned his career as a doctor and became a film director. He studied film at the University of California. Khan (1969) wrote that "upon his return to Egypt he made a stunning debut with El 'Inab El Mur (sic) / Sour Grapes (1965) . . . Instead of
continuing to work in Egypt, Ajrama moved to Lebanon where he made a series of
adventure films but none as well done and gripping as Sour Grapes” (p. 71).

The story of The Fire of Love is as obnoxious as the rest of ‘Ajramah’s films made in
Lebanon. Sa‘îd, a rich man, quits his work after he suffers a lung disease. His wife,
Dalâl, plans with her girlfriend to get rid of Sa‘îd so they can divide his fortune. After
Sa‘îd’s death, the two friends fight with each other. One ends up dead, and the other in
prison.


In 1967, Alber Najîb made two films in Lebanon featuring Egyptian film star
Maryam Fakhr al-Dîn. His two films, Ayna Hubbi? / Where is My Love? (1967) and
Fursân al-Gharâm / The Cavalier of Love (1967) were melodramatic love stories.

Where is My Love? tells the story of a stewardess, Munâ (Maryam Fakhr al-Dîn), who
falls in love with Wahîd (Fahid Ballân), a care-free singer living for his physical
pleasure. After having a good time with her, he dumps her. Wahîd loses his sight in an
accident. Munâ comes to his aid and support. He tries to get rid of her because he now
feels ashamed of what he has done to her in the past. He then starts to fall in love with
her. She convinces him to go to Europe for an eye surgery. Love triumphs after all.

‘Ârif Sâlim: Al-Malikah wa Anâ / The Queen and I (1973)

‘Ârif Sâlim made a total of four films between 1961 and 1974. These films were
Ma‘ bad al-Hubb / The Temple of Love (1961), Khayyât ilî-Sayyidât / Laddies Taylor
(1969), Al-Malikah wa Anâ / The Queen and I (1973), and Bay Bay ya Hilwah / Bye Bye
The Queen and I is a love story between an Egyptian tour guide, ‘Ādil, and a beautiful Lebanese girl, Thurāyah, played by 1973 Miss Universe Jurjīna Rizq. During a tour in Lebanon ‘Ādil meets with Thurāyah. They immediately fall in love at first sight. Upon leaving Lebanon, ‘Ādil gives Thurāyah a Pharaonic charm for good luck. Thurāyah’s becomes Miss Universe as a result of the good luck brought by the charm. She then is married to a millionaire and becomes rich. One time she visits ‘Ādil in Egypt and discovers that she is still in love with him. She gives up her fortune, divorces her husband and joins ‘Ādil.

Henri Barakāt: Nagham fī Hayātī / Melody in my Life (1974)

Henri Barakāt directed a total of six films between 1967 and 1974: Safar Barlik / Safar Barlik (1967), Bint al-Ḥāris / The Night Guard’s Daughter (1968), Al-Ḥubb al-Kabīr / Great Love (1968), Ajmal Ayyām Hayātī / The Best Days of my Life (1971), Ḥabībati / My Love (1974), and Nagham fī Hayātī / Melody in my Life (1974). These films were variations of musical/melodramas centered around love themes. Except for the first two films he made with the Rahbani brothers (discussed later in this Chapter), the films Barakāt made in Lebanon have been grouped among Barakāt’s worst films (Al-‘Arīs, 1979, p.49).

Melody in my Life is about Hanā and Muḥsin, two young college students in love. After Muḥsin, played by Husayn Fahmī, fails in his studies, he works with his father in the family night club. Hanā, played by Mīrvat Amīn, works as a secretary for the very famous Mamduḥ, played by Fārid al-‘Trash. Hana carries Muḥsin’s child. Muḥsin abandons her and leaves to Brazil. Mamduḥ helps Hanā by marrying her and adopting
the child. Muḥsin returns from Brazil and tries to re-establish his love relationship with Hanā who is still in love with him but does not want to hurt Mamdūḥ’s feelings. Muḥsin threatens to go to court to claim his son. Mamdūḥ, with a broken heart, retreats from Hanā’s life so she and her child could join Muḥsin again.

**The Rahbānī Brothers’ Experience**

The cinematic experience of the Rahbānī brothers, ʿĀṣī and Mansūr, was to a certain degree different than the prevailing films of the sixties. With the aid of the highly reputed and talented Egyptian filmmakers Yūsuf Shāhin and Barakāt, they managed to present three of their famous musical plays on the screen. The three films they contributed to the Lebanese film history were *Bayyā‘ al-Khawātim / The Ring Seller* (1965), *Safar Barlik* (1967), and *Bint al-Hāris / The Night Guard’s Daughter* (1968). In addition to the high technical standards and cinematic artistry of these films, Fayrūz the leading actress, contributed greatly to the success of these films, for she has been one of the most loved singers in Lebanon.

In 1964, the Rahbānī brothers invited Yūsuf Shāhin to make their cinematic debut of their musical play, *Bayyā‘ al-Khawātim / The Ring Seller*. The result of this cooperation was a successful film well-received by the critics and audiences, as well, featuring the singers Fayrūz and Naṣrī Shams al-Dīn. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sharqāwī (1970) wrote:

Yūsuf Shāhin’s 1965 film *The Ring Seller*, which starred the famous singer Fayrūz, occupies a very special place (in Lebanese cinema). This musical film reflected the life and traditions found in a Lebanese village with honesty and originality. The film received first prize in the 1966 International Film Festival of Lebanon . . . because it
was the first time in the history of Arab cinema a musical play was adapted to the cinema in a very profound manner. (p. 66)

The film generated a revenue of 169,000 LL ($68,000 approximately) within the first five weeks of its exhibition in Beirut, setting a record in revenues of any Lebanese film at the time (Akhbâr, No. 9, pp. 10-11). Yusuf Shâhin received the Sa‘id 'Aql Prize in the Fifth International Film Festival of Lebanon for his success in making this film. Lebanon hoped that this film would effectively help to open new markets for Lebanese films. In his report on Lebanon's film production for 1964-1965, Kamîl Munassâ (1965), the Director for National Center for Cinema and Television, wrote:

*The Ring Seller* film will effectively take part in opening new film markets for Lebanese films. In addition to its several characteristics, the film captured the attention of viewers by its pure Lebanese flavor in its subject, dialogue, music, decor and clothing style. The film's humanistic context, such as man’s fear and worry of the unknown, will possibly be met with favor by all kinds of viewers everywhere. (pp. 9-10)

The Rahbânî brother's second film, *Safar Barlik* (1967), was directed by Egyptian filmmaker Barakât who was originally Lebanese. *Safar Barlik* was Barakât's first Lebanese film. Similar to *The Ring Seller*, *Safar Barlik* was commercially and technically successful featuring the same duet, Fayrûz and Nasrî Shams al-Dîn, and it officially represented Lebanon at the Carthage Second International Film Festival in October 1968 and was exhibited in Moscow's Sixth International Film Festival. *Akhbâr* (No.33, 1968) reported:

Henri Barakât's first Lebanese film, *Safar Barlik*, has been met with great success since the beginning of its exhibition ten weeks ago in Beirut. The film broke the record in revenue of any previous local Lebanese production including the Rahbânî's first feature, *The Ring Seller*, two years ago. (p. 9)
The film was also received with great fervor by local newspapers. Sa'id 'Aql, for example, wrote in *Lisân al-Ḥāl* newspaper (found in *Akhbār* No. 33, 1968, p. 9) that “this film places the Lebanese film industry at the level of European film productions. No other film portrays Lebanon's nature better than *Safar Barlik.*” Unsī al-Hajj (found in *Akhbār* No. 33, 1968, p. 9) wrote in *Al-Nahār* newspaper that “Henri Barakāt has presented a profound production that fulfilled its goals with honesty and purity. The audience watched a film in the cinemascope with brilliant colors full of beautiful panoramic tableaus without any wasted minute.”

The story of the film takes place in 1914 during the early days of WWI when Lebanon is still under Ottoman rule. Fayrūz leaves her village searching for her fiancé, 'Abdu (played by Ihsān Sādiq), who left the village to purchase wheat. ‘Abdu is arrested by the Ottomans for participating in the revolution against the Ottomans. Gradually, Fayrūz finds herself involved in the revolution, as well.

Barakāt was apparently very pleased with his first production experience in Lebanon and with working with the Raḥbānī brothers. In *Akhbār* (No. 17, 1967), Barakāt said:

> The scenario written by the Raḥbānī brothers was indeed brilliant. They knew how to demonstrate the atmosphere of oppression and war under the occupation. They also were successful in recording the tension of that period of time during the battle for freedom raised by a small village against the Ottomans. (p. 8)

The Raḥbānī’s third film, *Bint al-Ḥāris / The Night Guard’s Daughter* (1968), was also directed by Barakāt featuring Fayrūz and Naṣrī Shams al-Dīn and a sizable cast of singers. The story of the film takes place in a Lebanese village that lives in peace guarded by two night guards. Because of this peace, the people of the village decide that
the village does not need the services of the guards any longer. The guards, consequently, are left without jobs. One of them decides to emigrate with his daughter Nijmi. But, Najmah refuses to leave her village. She disguises herself as a night thief and creates security problems for the village in an attempt to force them to return her father to his old job. The village rehires the night guards who successfully capture the night thief. The father is surprised by his daughter’s involvement. However, after explaining her motive, she is pardoned by the chief of the village without disclosing the facts to the villagers. With the return of the night guards, the life in the village returns to its peaceful course.

The events of the film were shot on location in a small Lebanese village. Minor acting parts were played by some of the villagers. Barakât also used old Lebanese soldiers who participated in WWI to play the roles of Ottoman soldiers.

In addition to featuring Fayruz and Narsi Shams al-Din, the success of the films of the Rahbâni brothers was attributed to their way of reflecting the Lebanese folklore and the simplicity of life in the Lebanese village. The films portrayed the characteristics, customs, and traditions found in a Lebanese village and also presented, in color, the beautiful Lebanese landscape.

Qualitatively, the production level of these films was more advanced than other films of the sixties. It was hoped, as seen in Munassâ’s statement earlier, that this type of production would open new markets for the Lebanese film industry and, perhaps ultimately, raise the standards of local production. However, this was unlikely to happen due to the costly economic nature of the production process. The Rahbâni’s films were
made with extensive budgets which permitted the filmmakers to work with larger casts
and most importantly larger and more experienced crews. Adding to the long experience
and excellence of Shāhīn and Barakāt were the directors of cinematography who in all
three films were European: Andre Dumage in Shāhīn’s film and Claude Rubin in both
Barakāt’s films. Furthermore, the large budget of these films allowed the producers to
afford the expenses of more experienced and technologically advanced film laboratory
facilities, such as LTC labs in Paris where the films were processed, edited and printed.

In comparison with the Rahbānī films, most of the films of that decade worked with
much smaller budgets and were completely produced in Lebanon, except for the color
processing which was not available before 1970. The producers of such films viewed
film as a product regardless of its artistic merits. As seen in previous film analysis in this
chapter, the telling of the story was the primary goal in these films, for it determined
their success.

Films of the Fedayeen

During the sixties, a new movement of films that dealt with the issue of Palestine and
the work of the Fedayeen was created. These films were shallow, senseless and empty of
any substantive subject matter. Made in the manner of Hollywood action style pot-
boilers, these films played on the emotions of the Arab audience who were sympathetic
to the Palestinian cause, glamorizing the heroic activities of the Fedayeen - a name given
to the fighters belonging to the Palestinian Liberation Organizations, such as Fath and
PLFP. In his criticism of these films, al-‘Arīs (1979) wrote:
The “Fedayeen” films of that era were merely the application of the theories of cowboy cinema and individual heroism on the “Fedayeen” work which was at its peak at the end of the sixties. The film merchants exploited this work and deformed it in films that did not speak of Palestine or the Palestinian problem. These films were not shot in any of the Palestinian refugee camps, nor did they attempt to present any dimension of the Palestinian cause for which the Fedayeen were fighting. The films only portrayed the individual heroism of Palestinian fighters and the ultimate victory over the Zionist gangsters at the hands of heroes born from the void - heroes for whom even James Bond is not a match. (P. 49)

The four films made in 1969 were Gary Garabidian’s *Kullunā Fidā‘iyyūn / We’re All Fedayeen*, Rida Myassar’s *Al-Filistīnī al-Thā‘ir / The Rebellious Palestinian*, Antoine Rime’s *Fidākī Fīliṣṭīn / For Your Sake, Palestine*, and Taysir Abbūd’s *Ajrās al-‘Awdaḥ: The Bells of Return*.

Guy Hennebelle (1981) classified the first two films as belonging to the Egyptian melodramatic milieu, and the other two belonging to the Italian Western genre. However, the structure of these films, excluding *For Your Sake, Palestine*, was a mixture of melodrama and Western genres. In melodramatic scenes, the films portrayed the suffering of Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli Army. The battles between the Fedayeen and the Israeli army forces were shown using the formula found in Italian Western movies where the heroes, the Fedayeen, were untouchable and always victorious.

The story of *We’re All Fedayeen* revolves around a young Palestinian living inside the occupied land who goes through the transformation from an occupied civilian to a guerilla fighter. A group of Fedayeen sneak into the occupied land and hide inside a secluded place. Somehow, they establish a relationship with the young man who starts supplying them with food. The young man hesitates to join the Fedayeen. The Israeli
secret police detain him and interrogates him to find the hiding place of the Fedayeen. After long sessions of torture, he confesses to the whereabouts of the Fedayeen. The Israeli army then raids the Fedayeen's hiding place and kills them all. The young man's family kick him out of their home because of his treason. At the end, he regrets his pernicious deed and joins the ranks of the Palestinian resistance.

The film was written by Sahib Haddad in 1965, two years before the Arab defeat in the 1967 war to the Israeli Defense Army. Abu Ghanimah (1981) suggested that the weakness of political content in the film was due to the fact that it was written before the 1967 war. He also criticized Garabidian's imitation of the worst kind of Italian Western films, especially in the scenes of the final battles.

It is noteworthy to mention that the filmmaker, Gary Garabidian, and twenty of the shooting crew - including: the film producer, Edmond Nahhas, actor, Sami 'Attar, and cinematographer Sarkis Guganian - died in a fire that happened during the shooting of the last scene in one of Beirut's night clubs, Stereo Le Bregatoire. The film schedule, as a result, was disrupted for several months to be, then, completed by Sahib Haddad.

Garabidian studied film in the United States for four years and did his practical training in London Television. He started working in Lebanon as a producer in the Lebanese Television Company. *We're All Fedayeen* was Garabidian's sixth film. His previous work was *Al-'Ayn al-Sahirah / The Watching Eye* (1961); *Ya Layl / O Night* (1964); *Garo* (1965); *Abu Salim fil Frayya / Abu Salim in Africa* (1965); and *Inni A' tarif / I confess* (1966).
Akhhār (No. 64-65, p. 9) reported that the film was a great success with the public and film critics, alike. The following are excerpts of criticism written by Beirut film critics about the film found in Akhhār:

Walīd Shmait wrote:
*We’re All Fedayeen* is a film of happiness and sadness, awareness and purity, and, above all, the film of battle. Gary Garabidian went beyond conventionalism to get through this battle. He fought in his own way and won. He used his camera like a machine gun, because he realized that our cinema would cease to have meaning if it were not used in such a fashion. Gary also proved himself qualified to talk about the human side of the Fedayeen. In his film, he was simple, convincing, calm and polite. He did not fabricate the events nor did he invent the battles. He told the story of tragedy and heroism, the story of a man from Palestine who saw that the road to freedom was only through the barrel of his gun. He carried his weapon and walked, and thus, life began.

‘Ādil Sābā wrote:
*We’re All Fedayeen* is undoubtedly the only Lebanese film that represents the cinema industry in Lebanon in its pure form, despite the Palestinian dialect used in the film. The Lebanese cinema should start at the footsteps of this film, in the same thrust and high spirits to achieve artistically honorable films with contemporary subjects.

Farīd Jabre wrote:
It is the first revolutionary film about the Fedayeen. In each of its pictures there appears an honest faith in cinema as a means for expression and a way to communicate with the public through picture and sound. . . . The film is a clear proof of Gary’s faith in the issues he expressed. He sacrificed a great deal to make a film at the level of his thoughts and revolutionary ideology.

Sāmir Naṣr wrote:
This is the last and best film Gary Garabidian made. It is one of the most liked Lebanese films produced to date. *We’re All Fedayeen* is not an artistic masterpiece, however, it possesses what other Lebanese films do not. The film breathes with its love for cinema, a cinema that has no relation to “thinking” or “thought”. It is the cinema of movement in imitation of the best American films. Gary Garabidian was fond of the art of John Ford, Howard Hawks, Richard Brooks. Gary’s last film proves that he has digested all what he had learned from these masters. (p. 9)

In 1970, the film was entered in the “Third International Film Festival of Cinema Days at Carthage.” Tunisian film critics’ response to this film was expressed through the
criticism of Khalīfah al-Shatīr, who viewed the film favorably, and Hāshimī al-Ṭārābulṣī who was more critical in his writing. Khalīfah al-Shatīr, found in Akhbar (No. 81-83, 1970), wrote for Al-ʿAmal newspaper:

*We’re All Fedayeen* is a resistance film. The filmmaker wanted to present the struggle of the Palestinian inside the occupied land against their enemy.

This film is an epic film that stems from reality to present a group of heroic acts. The film depends on action and inspired directing. The events take place in an environment that enhances this fantastic legend. It is well-known that this type of films resorts to exaggeration and often avoids psychological analysis.

The directing is masterful and eloquent. The acting is above the expected standards. Perhaps this is the best Arab film in the epic genre despite the filmmaker’s conventionalism and his inability to cinematically innovate in this film. The film is characterized by its clarity in style and its profound expressiveness. (pp. 27-28)

Hāshimī al-Ṭārābulṣī (Akhbar, 81-83, 1970), on the other hand, wrote for L’action:

The film, *We’re All Fedayeen*, is a good film within the framework of the issue which it addresses, no more or less. It presents the issue of the Palestinians in a very simple way to the extent that we fall into demagogy. The film is clearly from the B-rated American films where it does not provide a contextual view of the Palestinian struggle. The absence of political analysis in the film leaves the speech-like structure of the film in control to present the audience with a caricature picture of the Fedayeen’s honorable struggle.

*We’re All Fedayeen* forgets that revolutions, in reality, stem from physical episodes in real life and that they attempt to enroll the largest number of people into their ranks. The film replaces these concepts, instead, with influencing the audience’s feelings through emotionally moving victory scenes. The folklorist look of these scenes achieve nothing other than hurting the Palestinian struggle. (P. 28)

The second Lebanese film dealing with the Palestinian issue, *The Rebellious Palestinian*, was produced by al-Shahbā’ for Cinema, and was Myassar’s first attempt at making a political film dealing with the Palestinian issue. His previous work included:
The Rock o f Love (drama, 1959), The Beloved of All (musical, 1964), The Bitter Honey (drama, 1965), and The Two Fugitives (comedy, 1966).

The story and the screen play for the film were written by Ghassān Matar, a Palestinian actor living in Beirut. Matar also played the leading role in the film. As reported in Akhbār (No. 50), Matar said:

_The Rebellious Palestinian_ portrays the human side of the Palestinian revolution and its close connection to the international revolutionary movements. The film unveils the racism and oppressive nature of the Zionist Israeli regime through its violations against the Arabs and the Sephardim. _The Rebellious Palestinian_ argues for the necessity to annihilate Zionism as the only solution for a peaceful coexistence between the Arabs and the Sephardic Jews. (P. 10)

_The Rebellious Palestinian_ is about a Palestinian man, Akram, and a Sephardic Jewish woman, Rachel, who are part of the Palestinian resistance inside the occupied land in post-1967 war. The film shows the heroic activities of the Fedayeen and the viciousness of the Israeli Army. Myassar (Abu Ghanīmah, 1981, p. 108) expressed his intentions behind making this film saying, “I wanted to give the audience a true picture of what happened inside the occupied land, and explain to them the reasons that make the Arabs and the Palestinians support the Fedayeen.” In Akhbār (No. 50) a brief description of the film’s agenda was reported as:

The film talks about the Palestinian calamity in the last 20 years, the Arab-Israeli wars, and the change in the Arab-Palestinian thought as a result. It also talks about the birth of the rebellious Palestinian to wage the war against the oppressive occupier. (p.10)

Unfortunately, Myassar’s goals and intentions in his film did not come true. The film developed into a colossal accumulation of battle scenes and exploitative emotional scenes of victimized Palestinians. Abu Ghanīmah (1981) explained:
Rida Myassar could never achieve his intentions in a film that lacked depth in its political analysis, its understanding of the Palestinian problem, and the nature of the Palestinian resistance’s conflict with Zionism. The film was consumed with the Hollywood hero type. In addition to its weak cinematic style, the film, timidly, presented the conflict between the Palestinians and the Zionists as a conflict between good guys and bad guys. (P. 108)

Antoine Rime’s For Your Sake, Palestine was inspired by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht’s two plays: The Guns of Mother Cara and Mother Courage (1941). “Rime wrote the script in cooperation with Marwan al-‘Abd, a script writer for Lebanese television” (Akhbār, No. 68, p. 1). This film was among the first films that dealt with the Palestinian women, although it was not realistic in accounting for the emotions of most women it tried to represent. Hassan Abu Ghanīmah (1981, p. 108) argued that this film could have been strong if it were not for the timid melodramatic presentation it adopted.

The film tells the story of a Palestinian mother who consecutively loses her three sons and her house at the hands of the Israeli army. The mother, however, does not lose faith that war is the only solution for liberating Palestine, and finds compensation for her own loss in the other children of the village.

The Bells of Return was ‘Abbūd’s first film. ‘Abbūd was only 27 years old at the time. Contrary to the other three films mentioned above, the film was shot in color. The film was shot in its entirety in Jordan, and was produced and by starred ‘Aydah Hilāl (Akhbār, No. 74-75, p. 23).

The film’s story also revolves around the work of the Fedayeen through the life of a Palestinian woman. After an Israeli attack, the woman thinks that her husband is killed during the raid. She then leaves her home and takes her child with her to live with her
family. But, she discovers that they are also killed in the same raid. She moves to a refugee camp and works as a nurse in the hospital. She establishes a friendship with one of the nurses who introduces her to the Fedayeen work. She becomes active in this work and carries out several missions against the Israeli enemy. During one of her missions, four years after the disappearance of her husband, she meets with her husband and discovers that he has joined the Palestinian resistance. After the family reunites, the woman falls prisoner to the Israeli Army during one of her missions. With the aid of his Fedayeen friends, the husband attacks the Israeli camp where she is detained and rescues his wife after fierce fighting with the enemy.

Hassān Abu Ghanimah (1981, p.108) saw that the film failed to achieve any commercial success despite all of 'Abbūd’s efforts to give his film a commercial appeal. He also suggested that the success of Garabidian’s *We’re All Fedayeen* and Myassar’s *The Rebellious Palestinian* was due to the Western action style of these films.

It is obvious that these four films did not attempt to address the political dimensions of the Palestinian issue in an analytical way. Their aim was to talk about the Palestinian struggle through the heroism of the Fedayeen. In some instances, the films presented quick glimpses of the Palestinians’ life in places such as refugee camps and villages under occupation. These brief exposures were rather shallow and insignificant in their representations. The fantasy like heroic performance of the Fedayeen in their clashes with their Israeli enemies were, overwhelmingly, the largest parts of these films. All of these films gave the message that fighting was the only solution to return Palestine to its legal owners, the Palestinians. No other agenda was proposed by these films, whether it be political or social campaigning.
The commercial appeal of these films, perhaps, was the result of the commercial environment of the Lebanese film industry. The sixties’ Lebanese cinema, the hub of Lebanese entertainment cinema, lacked the element of seriousness and analytical representation of life. The commercial aptitude of these films depended on a formation of drama and action. The dramatic influence of the Egyptian milieu could be clearly seen in these four films. The drama of losing parents, children, husbands in war was a shared motif. The Arab audience was at a high level of sympathy toward the Palestinian cause, especially after the 1967 defeat. The drama of these films, although exaggerated, moved the audience’s emotions while action scenes of courageous Fedayeen made them rejoice and applaud. (In the year *The Bells of Return* opened in theaters in Beirut, I went on a school field trip to watch the film. I still vividly remember the sounds of weeping during the dramatic scenes, and also the chanting and rejoicing remarks roaring in the theater during the battle scenes.) It was the wish and desire for victory that made most of these film popularly successful. What these films did back in 1969 or later was somehow similar to most Hollywood productions on the Middle East terrorism during the 80’s and 90’s, films such as *Delta Force, Invasion USA* and *True Lies* where heroic American individuals wipe out an army of terrorists.

**Analysis of The Rebellious Palestinian**

The story of *The Rebellious Palestinian* is about the life of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in post-1967 Arab-Israeli war, and their struggle against Israeli
militant domination. The film focuses on a Palestinian man, Akram, who belongs to the Fedayeen and the events his family experiences as a result of his militant activities.

The film opens with a long collage of archival film footage and photographs mirroring a historical background to the Palestinian problem covering the period extending from the Balfour Declaration (1917) to post-expulsion of the Palestinians from their home. This collage is accompanied by a poetic-like narration by Ghassān Matar, who plays Akram, the main character in the film, explaining the Palestinian point of view of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and questioning the international conscience and justice regarding the suffering of the Palestinians. The narration exposes the international community as a conspirer against the Palestinians by allowing the settling Jews from Europe to confiscate the country committing bloodshed against the British army, United Nation’s representatives, and the Palestinians. At the same time, it talks about the Palestinians’ sympathy toward the European expelled Jews and how they were welcomed into Palestine. It also points out the long lasting peaceful coexistence of Sephardic Jews and Arabs in Palestine before the establishment of the state of Israel, and at the same time, scorns the European Jews for betraying the hospitality of Palestinians.

The film then starts with showing Akram leading a group of the Fedayeen in an attack on an Israeli army post. Akram is responsible for many military operations against the Israeli Army causing the Israelis great casualties. The Israeli military Commander of the region later declared as Judea and Samaria becomes desperate in his task to capture Akram in order to bring a stop to the bloody attacks on his soldiers. Consequently, the Commander declares Akram’s village a military zone and orders the inhabitants to
evacuate the village in 24 hours. The army also detains Akram’s parents and tortures them to make them confess to the hiding place of their son. The mother dies under the excessive torture. Akram, moved by his mother’s death, launches a wide scale operation across Palestine against Israeli forces.

During his attack at the command office, Akram gets captured by the Israeli soldiers and is placed under torture. The captain tries to interrogate him to find more information on the Fedayeen. Of course, Akram does not cooperate. At the interrogation, Akram meets Sharīf - a Palestinian collaborator with Israel who works at the command office as an assistant to the Captain, and later is known to be a leader in the Fedayeen and orchestrates a major attack on the command office. Sharīf insensitively witnesses the vehement beating of Akram.

Akram, then, is sent to the clinic for treatment of his wounds. He is treated there by Rachel, a Sephardic Jew, played by Jamāl Sarkīs, who is also an undercover member of the Fedayeen, working as a nurse in the command office taking care of tortured Palestinians. At night, Rachel returns to the clinic and helps Akram escape. She takes him to his village where no one can come in their pursuit.

Sharīf and the mercenary assistant, Gabriel, arrive at the village to declare it part of Judea and Samaria. The crowd present at the scene voice their resistance by chanting, “Palestine is Arab, Palestine is Arab.” Rachel, in disguise, approaches the military jeep and expresses her disgust by this land rape and criticizes Sharīf for betraying his people. She falls on the ground after Gabriel slaps her. He discovers her identity and tries to apprehend her when Akram rescues her. In the process Gabriel gets shot. They drive
away in a military jeep to the home of a Sephardic Jewish doctor. The doctor is forced to treat Akram for the bullet wound.

The Israeli troops launch a chase to capture the couple. They arrive at the doctor’s home several hours later. Akram and Rachel manage to escape and leave the doctor behind who is beaten to death by the captain for his treason. Akram and Rachel seek shelter in a Christian convent where they are welcomed by Sister Maryam. The Israeli troops, on their tail, arrive at the convent and search it without finding them.

Akram and Rachel leave the convent to visit Akram’s daughter, Wafā’, at school. In the classroom, Wafā’, who is only about six years old, confronts her teacher, played by Philip ‘Aqiql, about the identity of Palestine. The teacher is teaching the children that the borders of Israel are from the Nile to the Euphrates. Wafā’ insists that Palestine is an Arab country and does not recognize the existence of Israel. The teacher gets out of control and bangs Wafā’’s head against the wall until she bleeds heavily.

As Wafā’ leaves the school, Akram gets hold of her. Before she dies, she tells him that Palestine is in his hands as a trust. Akram, enraged by his daughter’s death, storms into the classroom and kills the teacher. The children attack the teacher, as well.

At the end of the film a great battle, orchestrated by Sharīf, happens between the Fedayeen and the Israeli forces where the Fedayeen reign victorious. Abu Akram (Akram’s father) is killed on the battle field. Before he dies, he entrusts Akram with they key to their house in Akko. Sharīf also dies during the fighting. Rachel plants the Palestinian flag on the ground. Akram carries Sharīf’s body and stands by the flag next to Rachel.
The Rebellious Palestinian was a classical case of propaganda film where the primary aim of the film was to show the fascism of the Israeli military regime. The film projected a biased picture of the Israeli point of view about the Arab-Israeli conflict through the barbaric practices of the Israeli army, thus shaping the nomenclature of the conflict through the Palestinian's revolutionary eyes. The main message of the film, however, was the necessity of the armed resistance in the face of the vicious Zionist enemy.

It is historically documented that during the 1948 war, and later under occupation, militant Jewish organizations operated several massacres, such as the massacre of Dayr Yāsīn¹ (April, 1948) and the massacre of Kafr Qāsim² (1956). The exaggerated fascist picture of the Israeli's in this film was not only used as a weapon for the sake of gaining political support, but it was also a disposition - it was the picture presented to Arabs at the time. Scenes, such as the torturing of young children of ages varying from 5 to 8 years old, and the sadistic interrogation of Akram’s mother were disturbing. These scenes were placed for their dramatic solicitation. The film fell easily into the trap of becoming an oppressive tool in the hands of a very talented filmmaker.

The film clearly reflected the views of the Palestinian revolution. In addition to the terrorizing portrayal of the European Jews, the film presented several issues that were inherent in the revolution's mentality. The Sephardic Jews were portrayed as victims equal, to an extent, to the Palestinians. The participation of Sephardic Jews in the Fedayeen was simply a false notion. To apply it to all the Sephardic Jews, even though there were a few individuals who could have joined the revolution, was a gross
exaggeration. From Haddâd (1984) research, it could be concluded that the Sephardic Jews represented a sizable portion in the Israeli army. This was based on three factors discussed by Haddâd (1984) and Elazar (1989) in comparison with Ashkenazi Jews in Israel: the Sephardic majority of the Jewish population in Israel, the low ratio of university education among the Sephardic youth compared to their Ashkenazi counterparts, and the higher birthrate among the Sephardim. Furthermore, the Sephardic Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries were far from being sympathetic toward Arabs. These Jews left their Arab homes either running away from Arab despotism, in general, or to merely join the newly formed Jewish nation in Israel.

Gal (1986) wrote:

Within the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), whatever hatred toward the Arab enemy there is may be found among Sephardic soldiers, particularly those whose families came from Arabic countries. These soldiers, some of whom had personally suffered atrocities from Arabs in their countries of origin, carry within them a deep animosity that the Ashkenazi Jew cannot possibly comprehend. There were, indeed, a few incidents where Israeli soldiers used excessive force against Arab civilians. . . . These incidents of hatred and revenge as a source of motivation notwithstanding, they constitute only a negligible part of the combat motivation of the Israeli soldier. (p. 148)

Another issue, the film suggested, was the hatred of the European Jews for Sephardic Jews as shown in the scene when the doctor, who treated Akram’s bullet wound, was viciously killed by the Captain for helping the Fedayeen and was called a “dirty Jew.” The way this concept was presented was also false. The Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations in Israel were sensitive from the start when the Ashkenazi settlers dissociated themselves, to a great extent, from their Sephardic brothers. Such was the case in Jerusalem starting from 1815, and with the coming of the British mandate, the Ashkenazim were successful.
in creating an Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi for all of Palestine along side the existent Sephardic Chief Rabbi (Haddâd, 1984, pp. 97-99). However, the past and present relations between these two groups were not based on hatred as much they were based on frustration on behalf of the Sephardim for being treated as unequals to their European brothers. Haddâd (1984) suggested that “during the first thirty years of Israel’s existence, equality was not achieved and, at present, the highest positions of leadership are still in the hands of Ashkenazi Jews” (p. 124). The political situation between the two groups intensified as early as the late 50’s, and especially in the 70’s, after the Sephardim became the majority among the Jewish population of Israel. It was true that there may have been friction between the two, but the reality did not correspond with the film’s vision nor with its timing.

The other goal of the film, as expressed earlier, was to show the necessity of the armed resistance and the support for the Fedayeen, the spearhead of the revolution. The film portrayed the heroic activities and achievements of the Fedayeen. Akram was portrayed as a super hero, a symbol of the Palestinian resistance against the Zionist occupiers. When he was captured by the Israelis, he was full of steadfastness and strength in facing the fierce beating. The Fedayeen harvested Israeli soldiers in great numbers like wheat. This motif hurt the film’s cinematic integrity in view of the filmmaker’s intentions. ‘Abbûd, the filmmaker, intended to show in this film the importance of bearing arms against the Zionists. On the contrary, ‘Abbûd, in this portrayal of the Fedayeen, demonstrated his desire to create friction and to arouse the audience’s feelings invoking them as they witnessed the victory of their heroes.
The story of the film was fragmented and incoherent and it seemed the sequences were compiled with difficulty. In some instances, events were inserted purposely in order to create a sense of continuity in the story line, and in others, events were deliberately placed to propagate political propaganda, thus, disrupting the logical flow of the story.

In the scene when Sharif declared that the village was part of Judea and Samaria, Rachel's verbal attack on Sharif led to the discovery of her identity and the consequent chase sequence which included two deliberate accounts: the ill treatment of Sephardic Jews by the Israeli army expressed through the murder of the Sephardic doctor, and the desecration of the convent by the Israeli army. This sequence was cinematically illogical in the sense that it left the audience wondering why the Fedayeen couple would expose their hiding place when they were wanted by the army. Rachel's identity exposure was a deliberate account to give way to the chase sequence which itself had many continuity problems in terms of the use of time.

The film used a chronological time line as a continuum for the development of the events of the story. In the car chase, this continuum was violated several times. For example, the army arrived at least three hours after the Sephardic doctor treated Akram's wounds, although originally they were in a close chase. Another example was the confusion between night and day when the couple took shelter at the convent. Akram and Rachel left the doctor's house around six in the afternoon and reached the convent during day time. The Israeli army arrived at the convent also during day time, however, Sister Maryam spoke of the time as the night of Glorious Passover.
Another deliberately placed scene was when the women of the village gather around Abu Akram and complained to him of the loss of their husbands, sons and the rapes of their daughters. The main goal of this scene was to expose the horrendous practices of the Israeli army. It did not lend itself to the continuity of the story.

The problem with the film’s story did not stop at being fragmented and incoherent by the insertion of deliberate accounts, the script was theatrical and influenced by the rhetoric of the region which was heavily dependent on emotional stirring. The dialogue was staged in order to stir the emotions of the audience and, at the same time, to put forward political views, such as the case in the convent scene and in Akram’s interrogation scene.

In the convent scene, Sister Maryam opened the door for the Israeli officers who were chasing Akram and Rachel. The whole scene was demagogic in its presentation of the account, as if the scene itself ceased to be of any significance in front of the political propaganda it entailed. The scene portrayed the Israeli violation of the convent’s sanctity; however, the scene was ineffective in its intended function of creating an emotional impact, in making the audience feel angry about this crime. This scene was a perfect example of the deliberate, rhetorical writing of the film which, perhaps, would have been more effective on stage. This attitude toward the film script indicated an immaturity in the screen writing process for this film, and an unclear understanding of the difference between stage writing and screen writing. This phenomenon, which was also concurrent in the analysis of *The Pearl Necklace*, is recurrent in the majority of the films made in Lebanon. The following is a translation of the convent scene:

146
INT. CONVENT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

A knock is heard at the door of the convent. Sister Maryam opens the door. The Israeli officers stand at the door.

SISTER MARYAM
What do you want?

THE CAPTAIN
(with persistence)
An Arab criminal accompanied by a woman entered here.

SISTER MARYAM
This is a convent for prayer, not a shelter for murderers. And, you don't have the right to enter here in such a terrorizing way.

THE CAPTAIN
We don't care about churches and mosques. All we care about is arresting the criminals.

SISTER MARYAM
We don't have criminals here. Please, leave.

THE CAPTAIN
We represent the law. Whoever doesn't like it can leave the country.

SISTER MARYAM
This is our land. We are the legal owners. And, you have raped it barbarically.

HEAD SISTER
What is going on, Sister Maryam?

SISTER MARYAM
They want to search the convent.

HEAD SISTER
Let them search. The convent has the Lord to protect it.
SISTER MARYAM
But this is a violation of the sanctity of the Holy properties.

HEAD SISTER
Talking to them is not useful, Sister. They stole the Virgin's Crown, desecrated the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, destroyed a part of Al-Aqsa mosque, and dug up the graves of the Patriarchs, and you expect them to respect the sanctity of this small convent.

SISTER MARYAM
But, this is the night of the Glorious Passover.

HEAD SISTER
Never mind Sister Maryam.
(talking to the officers)
Please, come in.

This scene, like many others, was a set up to allow the propagation of its political content. The scene as a cinematic element collapsed, because first of all, there was blatant contradiction between the dialogue and what was taking place on the screen. While the dialogue rambled, painting the picture of the Israeli army as people who have no integrity toward Holy places, the officers waited at the door like gentlemen to be permitted into the convent. Secondly, what took place in this scene was unconvincing. Since the Israeli army knew of the presence of Akram and Rachel in the convent, the only logical measure they would have taken would have been to go in and search the whole place until they found them. What happened in this scene was that they waited for the permission to enter the convent, then they all went in the vestibule of the church where they found some nuns praying. Then, they left immediately. There was no reason why the Captain should have spoken to the Sister about the army's ideologies or saying,
“If you don’t like it here, you can go.” It was obvious that the intention of this scene, like other scenes, was to spoon feed the audience with the revolution’s dispositions on this conflict.

Similar to this scene was Akram’s interrogation. Akram was tied in a crucifixion manner and was interrogated by the Captain. The Captain asked him, for example, “What’s your name?” Akram answers, “Palestinian.” He also asked him about the hiding location of the Fedayeen, Akram answered that they were present above every grain of sand present in Palestine.

The script written for Akram, as shown in this scene, was a combination of profound poetic dialogues and monologues. Akram not only represented the super hero in his personality, but also the profound thinker, and passionate patriot. He lectured the Head Sister, Sister Maryam and Rachel on the cooperation between Christians, Sephardic Jews and Muslims as the only way to liberate Palestine.

Since the majority of the Palestinians who would have seen the film were Muslims, the film also intended to argue for the necessity of cooperation between Christians and Muslims. The Christian theme was overtly exaggerated through a long scene at the convent showing paintings and statues of Jesus and hearing Church music in the background. Although Akram came from a Muslim family, and his father was the Sheikh of the village, Akram prayed to Christ. Also in a voice-over scene, Akram begged Jesus not to return before Palestine was liberated. His voice echoed loudly in the convent while the painting of Christ crucified was shown on the screen.
If the film succeeded in demonstrating the imaginary victories of the Fedayeen and the necessity of the Fedayeen work, this was done so excessively that the film approaches the verge of collapsing. The statements made by Akram’s daughter, Wafā’, and his father, Abu Akram, at their death that the destiny of Palestine was now in the hands of Akram were not only redundant but also annoying. Wafā’, about six years old, was portrayed as possessing a developed sense of patriotism and mature political thinking. To have a girl at this age utter such a statement at her last breath was unbelievable.

It was the unbelievable situations that diminished the effect and purpose of most of the scenes in this film. The unbelievable in the film reached the degree of surrealism. This tendency was evident in the scenes that dealt with human suffering of the Palestinians, such as the torture montage when Abu Akram was detained, the confrontation between Wafā’ and the teacher at school, and the theme of Christianity at the convent, to mention a few.

_The Rebellious Palestinian_ was a disastrous work of political propaganda. The film was not other than a compilation of scenes that existed for the sake of their momentary political commentaries. The film failed to portray, as Matar claimed, the human side of the Palestinian revolution and its connection to the international revolutionary movements. The extreme exaggeration of the oppressive accounts at the hands of the Israeli army effected the process of unveiling the racist practices of the Israeli army in a negative manner. These exaggerations discredited the claims made by the film instead of reinforcing them, irrelevant of the level of their truth.
CHAPTER VII
CINEMA OF THE SEVENTIES

Introduction

In the sixties, the commercial renaissance that took place in Lebanon as a result of the presence of the private Egyptian operation in Lebanon placed the Lebanese film industry as the second largest producer, trailing Egypt, among the film industries of the Arab World. But, if the sixties put the Lebanese film industry on the map of the Arab film market, the seventies took Lebanon off that map with the departure of the Egyptian film operations.

With the departure of the Egyptian film operations from Lebanon, the Lebanese film industry faced a major blow to its operations that threatened its livelihood and existence. The industry, as a result, digressed into a phase characterized by confusion, where young filmmakers tried to retain the traditional line of production passed down from previous decades, and also by a retreat in the industry’s presence in Lebanon and in the Arab states. Yet, at the same time, from beneath the ruins of the glorious years of the sixties, a new wave of filmmakers with new visions gave Lebanese cinema its first thread of hope to become a recognized cinema, one that talked to its people about their history, culture,
and present life. Among the first people to do so were Suhîî Sayf al- Dîn, Mâràîîn Baghdâdî, and Burhân ‘Alawîyâh.

In this decade, the path of the film industry in Lebanon was divided into two episodes: the pre-civil war from 1970 to 1974, and the war years from 1975 to 1979. In the first episode, the wheel of production diminished drastically totaling 28 films (less than half of the production of 1965 and 1966 combined) and maintained the lineage of the sixties. The second phase 1974-1979 witnessed the production of only five films. However, it was one of the most important phases in the history of Lebanese cinema, for it witnessed the introduction of a new direction of filmmaking that eventually shaped the future of Lebanese cinema.

State of Digression 1970-1974

The adverse reaction of the factors which made Lebanon a large center for production of Arab melodramatic films in the sixties, discussed in the previous Chapter, combined with various local factors led to the downfall of the Lebanese film industry in the seventies. These reasons were attributed to the following: the departure of the Egyptian cinema operations from Lebanon; the nature of Lebanese films; the new wave of Egyptian entertainment films; the change in audience taste locally and across the Arab World; the competition of foreign films locally; the absence of a Lebanese public sector to support the film industry; and the instability of the political situation in Lebanon.
External Influences

The Departure of Egyptian Film Operations

After the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, the Egyptian private sector started regaining its strength in Egypt. However, some Egyptian filmmakers in Lebanon continued their operations until the eruption of the Lebanese civil war on April 13, 1975. The Egyptian operation was down-sized immensely in 1970 after the death of Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nasser, the President of Egypt. The coming of his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, represented an opposite approach to Nasser's office regarding politics and social development. This new approach affected the functions of the public film sector. “The public film sector ceased to produce films in 1971 and was transformed into a service oriented institute and a co-signer for private companies in front of Creditor Banks” (Farīd, 1988, p.12). It was this shift in Egyptian politics that restored the crown to the private film sector.

In 1970, most of the Egyptian filmmakers left Lebanon to work in Egypt. Only a few of them continued their work in Lebanon as a secondary site to their productions in Egypt. Immediately, the number of Egyptian film productions increased from 38 films during 1968, to 44 films in 1969, to reach 48 films in 1970. The Egyptian filmmakers who worked between Lebanon and Egypt during that time were Henri Barakāt, Niyāzī Muṣṭafā, Faṭīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Jalāl al-Sharqāwī, ‘Ātif Sālim, and Najdī Ḥafīz.

New Wave of Egyptian Entertainment Films

After the retreat of the film ideology set by the public film sector, Egypt rapidly reclaimed its place in the Arab World by producing overwhelmingly successful musical love films, in color, that captured the admiration of the Arab audience. Among these
films were: Ḥasan al-Imām’s Khalli Bālak min Zūzū / Take care of Zuzu (1972); Husayn Kamāl’s films, Imbarātūriyyat Mīm / Mīm’s Empire, Anf wa Thalāth ‘Uyūn / A Nose and Three Eyes (1972), and Damiwa Dumū‘īwa Ibtisāmatī / My Blood, Tears, and Smiles (1973); Ḥusām al-Dīn Muṣṭafā’s Al-Banāt wa al-Marsīdīs / The Girls and Mercedes; and Ḥilmī Raflāh’s Nisā‘ Al-Layl / Women of the Night (1973).

These films introduced a new wave of Egyptian entertainment films that suited the generation of the seventies. Similar to the old Egyptian milieu, the formula of these new films was the combination of drama and music in a love theme stuffed with light sexual scenes to satisfy the vast majority of the sexually deprived Arab audiences. The difference, however, was the contemporary look of these films, from the Egyptian pop song to the lifestyle of the generation putting behind the values and morals of the Egyptian society. For example, the story of The Girls and Mercedes revolved around a young man who owned a Mercedes car and how he lent it to his friend to catch the eye of girls who, taken by the car, were easily seduced. Farīd (1988) wrote that “the film Take Care of Zuzu is a clear example of this contemporary film trend. It played in Egyptian theaters for a year generating the highest revenue recorded by one Egyptian film at that time” (pp 16-17).

These films depended on young actors, such as Nilli, Su‘ād Ḥusnī, Nāhid Sherīf, and on new faces, such as Maḥmūd Yāsīn in Naḥnū Lā Nazra‘ al-Shawk / We Don’t Plant the Thorns (1970) and Husayn Fahmī. To a great extent, these actors did not look anything like the typical Egyptian person. As part of “cinema al-Shabāb” [the cinema of young people] they were more European in their complexions, fashion and behavior. They,
nonetheless, demonstrated their talent to their audience and reigned over the crown of Egyptian cinema even into the next decade. It is also noteworthy that in this year Fatin Hamama, one of the greatest actresses in the history of Egyptian cinema, returned to the screen after an absence of four years. She first appeared in *Al-Khayt al-Rafi* 'The Thin Thread' in 1971 which drew £27,805 from 10 weeks of exhibition in the Cairo Palace and the Ramsis film theaters. Her later work included *Mīn’s Empire*, and *Urūdu Ḥallan I want a Solution* which were successful films throughout the Arab World.¹

In addition to the success of this new wave of entertainment films, Egyptian cinema was starting a great decade at all fronts. After the experience of the Egyptian public sector, the Egyptian film industry developed three modes: a serious political trend, present in the work of the New Cinema Group such as ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Khāliq in *Ughniyah ‘alād al-Mamarr / A Song on the Passage*; a commercial cinema, which was a continuation of the old milieu; and a social commentary cinema, which met both extremes halfway.

The year 1970 was a successful year in the history of Egyptian cinema. Farīd (1970) described it in the introduction of his book, *Cinema 70*, as “the year when Egyptian cinema went out to the world.” The year 1970 marked the recognition of Egyptian cinema in the world. Among the international achievements of Egyptian cinema were as follows: the French Cinematheque’s presentation of Yūsuf Shāhīn’s films in a one week program; Shādī ‘Abd al-Salām’s film *The Mummy*, winning the George Sadoul film prize for the best foreign film screened in France for 1970, and its screening in London’s International Film Festival; and the exhibition of Egyptian films in Pakistan, Tunisia and

155
East Germany in special one week programs. These films represented the “serious” good
quality work that continues to influence Egyptian cinema to date.

**Departure of Capital**

With the presence of such a strong film industry in Egypt, the capital that flooded the
Lebanese film industry during the sixties was redirected back to Egypt. Even the capital
of the Lebanese film investors was moved back to Egypt. Muḥammad Ridi (1976),
quoting information distributed in the declaration of the Lebanese Artists Union in
August 1975, wrote:

Seventy percent of the Egyptian films produced (in the seventies) are financed by
Lebanese money. Lebanese film distributors pay Egyptian production companies the
fees for the right of distribution of their films, up front, in exchange for sole
distributorship in the whole Arab world. The films consequently are made by these
monies. Several Lebanese distributors increased their investments from tens of
thousands to hundreds of thousands between 1972 and 1975. They have assured
themselves that Egyptian films will continue to draw large numbers of audiences in
the Arab World. Their assurances came true in some cases, such as Khallī Bālak min
Zūzū / Take Care of Zuzu, Bambah Kāshsharr, Al-Abtāl / The Heroes, while failed in
other cases, such as Al-Ukhwah al-‘dā’ / The Enemy Brothers, Al-Muḥim al-Hubb /
Love is What’s Important, and Bdīr. (p. 144)

The withdrawal of capital from Lebanon created a vacuum in the financial structure
of the Lebanese film industry. As a result, the annual average of film productions
dropped from 15 films, during the boom era, to five films in the period of digression.

Aliksān (1982) commented:

After the defeat in the 1967 war, the public film sector (in Egypt) was weakened.
The private film sector flourished once more and started withdrawing its presence,
which is represented in capital, filmmakers and technicians, from Lebanon. The
withdrawal created a major problem for the Lebanese film industry which had
witnessed an abnormal growth. In addition, the rise of a new competitor in the area,
the newly formed private sector in Syria, competing with the Lebanese film industry,
increased the severity of the Lebanese problem. The film industry in Lebanon
started collapsing after reaching an annual budget average of five million Lebanese Lira. (p. 186).

Local Influences

Political Instability

In addition to these adverse factors, discussed above, the destiny of the film industry in Lebanon was faced with complications as a result of the complex transformations in the social and political infrastructures within the Lebanese society. Cinema in Lebanon could not continue any more in the same manner it existed in the sixties. The Lebanese society was changing into a complex social mixture full of political ideologies and economic complications that led to the obliteration of the middle class.

One of the outcomes, among the many of the presence of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon, was that it brought the Lebanese in direct contact with the ideology and the work of a live revolution, and it unveiled the hegemony of the Lebanese government and its oppressive practices against the Palestinian camps. It is noteworthy to mention that as a result of the economic marginality in Lebanon, the refugee camps were also inhabited by poor Lebanese who moved to Beirut from impoverished rural areas seeking employment in the big city.

In the seventies, Lebanon became the center of Arab ideological resistance and the main base for the Palestinian revolution, particularly after the September incident in Jordan in 1970. The Jordanian Army crushed the Palestinian militant presence in Jordan in a fierce bloodshed that was later called, “The Black September Massacres.” A great number of the Palestinian Fedayeen flocked to Lebanon escaping the massacres in
Jordan. The Palestinians were present in refugee camps in Lebanon, unarmed. But, life there was made unendurable by the continuous Israeli air raids on the camps. The PLO requested Lebanon either to protect them or permit the Palestinians to defend themselves. The Lebanese government reaction to this matter was that “the Lebanese army is not responsible for protecting the Palestinians because this is a Palestinian affair” (Al-Nahār, 1984, p. 24). As a result of the Lebanese government’s position, the Palestinians were allowed to arm their camps through an Arab League resolution.

In the late 60’s the Palestinian presence in Lebanon resulted in a confrontation with the Lebanese authorities. Several accounts of fighting and armed confrontations took place in refugee camps in Beirut and the South as well, originating from the oppressive treatment the Palestinians received from the Deuxièm Party, the Lebanese Intelligence. These accounts are well documented in Rosemary Sayigh’s *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (1978).

Consequently, the result of these confrontations created a mass conscientiousness among the Lebanese Muslim and leftist nationalist groups of the Maronite hegemony over the government. The Muslims and nationalists were extremely sympathetic to the Palestinians and supported the Palestinian cause. In 1974, a survey conducted by *Al-Hawādīth*, a Lebanese weekly political magazine, showed that 68 percent of the interviewed people were expecting an armed revolution in Lebanon, 94 percent viewed the conditions in Lebanon as severe, and 42.7 percent expected a social eruption in 1976.

The instability of the social and political conditions of Lebanon was the result of an accumulative process of religious sectarianism. The Maronites enjoyed a great control
over the country with the support of a submissive Muslim coalition consisting of traditional Sunni and Shi'ite wealthy families. As a result of the growing awareness among the Lebanese public several years before the eruption of the civil war in 1975, especially among the student youth, the question of Lebanon's identity, whether Arab or Western, was reiterated into the public life. At the social level, this unconstitutional hegemonist control was blatant in the government's neglect of the poor Muslim areas, rural areas, and in Beirut, as well. Governmental services to these areas were almost non-existent. In the South, for example, Sayigh (1978) wrote that, "The Lebanese Army was not regarded by most southerners as a national army but as closer to an army of occupation" (p. 157).

Shift in Audience's Taste and the Dominance of Foreign Films

The Western influence on the lifestyle of the new generation was taking its toll in Lebanon, more than any other Arab country, for Lebanon was well-known for its openness to the West since the influence of the French mandate and due to its unique social structure which was made of a multitude of different religious communities. Because of this special formation, the country was established on a liberal system where the West met the East in every possible manner. Lebanon, after independence, flourished economically because of its free banking system and the transit services it furnished to the rest of the Arab countries in the Middle East. Tourism services were also a major element in the country's survival. Alcohol and prostitution were made legal. Lebanon became, in the sixties and seventies, the hub of the Middle East, and was called
“Switzerland of the East” for its lifestyle. Lebanon entertained its tourists with its glamorous Casinos, nightclubs, and restaurants.

The major influence on the young generation came from widely spread political ideologies, particularly the socialist and the communist. After the student incidents of May 1969 in France, Lebanon witnessed student demonstrations in the early seventies, not in imitation of the French students, but in response to several social, political and educational issues which the government was failing to solve. These issues included the antiquated educational curriculum, public schooling, instructors shortage and poorly paid instructors, the government’s policies toward the Palestinian, and the high expenses of living compared to the low minimum wage. The hippy lifestyle also reached university students in Lebanon. The spread of this lifestyle was clearly demonstrated in the streets. It was this reason that encouraged Samīr al-Ghusaynī to make a film on the lives of the hippies.

The volume of foreign films exhibited in Lebanese cinemas, especially the American films, were greater in number than in previous years, and they attracted a larger crowd than did Arabic films, consequently influencing the taste of the Lebanese film audience. Regarding the crucial importance of the Fourth International Festival for Cinema Days at Carthage to Arab cinema, Walīd Shmait (Akhbar, 1970, No. 124-127) wrote for Al-Usbū‘ al-‘Arabī/ The Arab Week:

Carthage is an important station for Arab and African filmmakers. It inspires them with great courage to continue with their tiresome work in their search for their roots, reality and future. For this reason, the continuity and support of the Carthage Festival is crucial in order to keep this festival as the podium for the filmmakers who are struggling to elevate the cinemas of their countries that lack the necessary
economical capabilities to support their local film industries. All of these film industries suffer from the control of American and European films over their markets. American films alone represent more than 60 percent of the films exhibited in Africa and the Arab World. (P. 12)

It was not strange to find this high percentage of American films playing in film theaters in the Arab World. In a UNESCO (1981, p.16) report on Statistics on Film and Cinema 1955-1977, the segment concerning the Arab states reported that “as everywhere the overwhelming majority of films come from countries of the Western hemisphere, above all from the USA, but also from Italy, France and the United Kingdom.” Akhbār (1970, No. 77, p.5) also reported that “in the statistics report released by the National Center for Cinema in Lebanon, among the 277 imported films for the first half of 1970, 94 of these films were American, 41 British, 31 French, 37 Italian, 33 Egyptian, 13 Turkish, 13 Indian, and 10 Soviet films.”

The progress in the American film industry, both technically and in subject matter, created a big chasm between the Arab film industry and that of the United States. The contemporaneous themes of most of American films made the outdated Egyptian milieu-Lebanese films look ludicrous, and a waste of time. Furthermore, the cinematic quality of the foreign films were far superior than the local productions, and they cost the same at the box office. The Lebanese films produced during the early years of the seventies were screened in third rate cinemas in the popular areas of Beirut, such as Cinema ʿĀydh in the Zaydāniyāh area and Cinema Beirut in the Mazraʿah area. Samīr al-Ghuṣaynī’s (1973) film, Shirwāl wa MinīJīp / Farmers Pants and Miniskirt, was screened in 1974 in Cinema ʿĀydh for one week only.3 The Lebanese film audience
grew indifferent toward the boring melodramatic milieu that accounted for the majority of films produced in Lebanon. Beyond this, the majority of the Lebanese films of the seventies did not attempt to change their course to meet this change in the audience’s taste nor did they try to at least match the sophisticated level of Western productions. To a great extent, they remained monotonous, at the level of simplicity and senselessness of the sixties. Al-‘Arīs (1979) wrote:

When the Lebanese commercial cinema entered into its “downfall” phase, Lebanon witnessed few films at the hands of several actors and previous assistant directors who, after the departure of Egyptian filmmakers from Lebanon, thought that they could revive the Lebanese film industry. This era yielded, approximately, twenty films - ten of which were made by young filmmakers - which at best were bad imitations of the worst commercial films made in Lebanon during the sixties. (p.51)

The Early Films of the Seventies

In order to attract an audience, filmmakers of the early seventies, like Samīr Khūrī, Romeo Lahhūd, and Samīr al-Ghusaynī, tried to introduce in their films new elements inspired from the seventies foreign films. While Khūrī introduced light porn, Lahhūd used science fiction, and al-Ghusaynī worked with the hippy’s life. However, these elements were objects of exploitation - furthermore; they looked like intrusions rather than inventiveness, and most of all they were meaningless tools used for attracting a crowd to the box office.

Filmmaker Samīr Khūrī, for example, in his films, Sayyidat al-Aqmâr al-Sawdâ’ / Black Moons’ Lady and Dhi‘āb lā Ta’kul al-Lahm / Wolves that Don’t eat Meat, used excessive nudity in imitation of the light porn wave of Italian films playing in some
Lebanese theaters at the time. This excessive nudity was, to a certain extent, helpful in attracting a certain type of audience making the film more successful in attendance than other Lebanese films of the time, sad as that was.

*Black Moons' Lady* told the story of 'Ayda, a woman who suffered from a trauma caused by sexual abuse by her step-father when she was a child. Driven by the moon's influence on her, she killed her lover. Nâhid Yusiï, one of the sexiest Egyptian film stars, played the role of 'Ayda. It was obvious from the story, and from Khûri's choice of Yusiï, that the intention of the film was to show flesh, and the exposure of sexual scenes in order to satisfy the desires of the young generation. If the film was commercially successful to a certain extent, as 'Azâr (1980, p. 28) claimed, it was because of the explicit nudity it presented. The filmmaker exploited the sexual abuse theme to show more of it on the screen. It seems that Khûri did not have the intention to deal with these issues seriously. The film possessed a great potential to address two important issues regarding sexuality in a quasi-conservative country as Lebanon. If he would have approached his story, which he wrote, in an socio-analytical manner, at the level of sophistication requested by the audience in Lebanon, he would have broken new ground in Arab cinema.

The sophistication of the Lebanese film audience, especially in the seventies, as demonstrated later in the analysis of the Lebanese audience, was increasing. For example, Bergman's film *Cries and Whispers* played at the *Commodore* film theater in Beirut during 1974 for six weeks. The film was apparently admired by the audience, based on the number of weeks it was screened. Bergman's film was a psycho-analysis of
recurrent themes in life: sexual guilt, disease, death, and femininity. The filmmaker did not exploit the nude scenes in the film for the sake of nudity, but it was within a sophisticated human drama of what Bergman described as “a self-portrait of (his) mother...the great beloved of (his) childhood” (Gado, 1986, p.408).

Khūrī did not come to filmmaking from oblivion. He studied film at the IDHEC in France and worked in Paris and Rome for some five years. He worked as an assistant director with directors such as Jean Delannoy and Joseph Mankievicz. When he returned to Lebanon in the beginning of the seventies, 'Āzār (1980, p. 416) considered him to be one of the most prominent filmmakers who attempted to revive Lebanese cinema. From Khūrī’s portfolio and experience one expected his work to take Lebanese cinema beyond the cliche films of the sixties. But, as he demonstrated by his two films, he, instead, continued on the same path of the older generation, such as Muhammad Salmān and the group of Egyptian filmmakers who resided in Lebanon during the sixties. Both of his films were Lebanese-Egyptian co-productions. Most of his cast were Egyptian actors, like Ḥusayn Fahmī, ‘Izzat al-'Alāylī, ‘Ādil Adham, Nāhid Sherīf, and Nāhid Yūsīrī. If ‘Āzār saw Khūrī as a person who tried to innovate Lebanese cinema, the question, therefore, would be, “How could Khūrī’s films carry any hope of reviving a tumbling cinema when he used what had originally ruined it?” It is noteworthy to mention that when Black Moon’s Lady premiered in Beirut, the film was fiercely criticized by local film critics. ‘Āzār (1980, p. 416) also mentioned that “the curiosity created by the criticism among the public increased the number of attendance to the film.”
In September, 1972, the National Center for Cinema chose Munir Ma’âsri’s film *Al-Qadar / The Destiny* to represent Lebanon, officially, at the 1972 Fourth International Film Festival for Cinema Days in Carthage. *The Destiny* was Ma’âsri’s debut. The film was an adaptation of *The Pearl* a well-known short story written by the 1962 Nobel Prize recipient John Steinbeck. This film served as a proof of the individual efforts upon which “good” Lebanese cinema was built. Ma’âsri directed and produced the film. He also wrote the screen play, and played Ḥāmid, the main character of the film.

The film tells the story of Ḥāmid, a poor peasant, who lives with his wife, Salmá, and his eight year old son, Fahd, in a secluded area of the mountain. Ḥāmid’s dream in life is to send his son to school. One day, his son falls ill. The doctor in the village refuses to treat Fahd unless he is payed his fees. Ḥāmid, betrayed by destiny, loses hope in fulfilling his dream. Suddenly, destiny interferes through the generosity of a strange old man, on his death bed, who directs Ḥāmid to the burial place of a large jewel.

When the news of the Ḥāmid’s possession of a jewel reaches the villagers, they suddenly start showing a great interest in Ḥāmid for whom they previously did not care. Ḥāmid’s life starts, then, to take a different twist. Qāsim Bek, the landlord in the village, offers Ḥāmid to buy the jewel from him for a small amount of money. Some of the villagers try to steal the jewel from him. Bothered by the misery brought by the jewel and by the attitude of the people of the village, his wife begs him to get rid off it. Ḥāmid stubbornly persists on keeping the jewel. Ḥāmid clings to the jewel which destiny will not offer twice and which represents the only hope for educating his son. He swears to protect it with his life for the sake of Fahd’s future.
One day, Salmá takes the jewel in an attempt to dispose of it. Ḥāmid runs after her. On the road, a man slays Salmá and steals the jewel from her. Ḥāmid, shocked by the sight, violently kills the man. Consequently, he runs away with the company of Fahd and a woman-friend of his in search of a safe place where they can live peacefully, sell the jewel and send his son to school. But, someone follows them. Ḥāmid finds himself forced to kill again. During his confrontation with the thieves, Fahd gets killed by a bullet. Ḥāmid’s dream dies with the death of his son. He throws the jewel away.

This was the first time an Arab filmmaker adapted an American literary work to the screen. Ṛidā al-Ťayyār\(^5\) (1983) wrote:

There is only one film (Arab film) adapted from an American novel, and it is a Lebanese film, this time. It is *Al-Qadar* (1973) directed by Munir Ma‘āṣrī. The film is adapted from John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*. Ma‘āṣrī transferred it to the environment of the Lebanese village. He portrayed the atmosphere of suspense and adventure more than the novel did. (p. 240)

In Beirut, the film was not met with great warmth. ‘Āzār (1980) wrote that “*Al-Qadar* was a good and sincere attempt by Ma‘āṣrī, but it was not met with success, not at the artistic level, nor at the box office, as the filmmaker had expected” ( p. 30).

Muḥammad Ṛidā, a film critic, criticised Ma‘āṣrī’s inability to link the message of his film with contemporary social situation. Ṛidā (1973) wrote:

What was needed in *Al-Qadar* was how could Ma‘āṣrī transfer all the elements of his film, which is directed toward humanistic and social meanings, to signs that would interest today’s audience. It is imperative to leave the audience in a state of awareness of these signs, not only through its presentation, but also through showing the relationship between them and our current lives. (p. 20)

In his film, *The Destiny*, Ma‘āṣrī demonstrated his will to present a serious work breaking away from the overwhelming general trend of cheap entertainment cinema.
Ma‘āšrī, who was among the very few actors who crossed from theater to the cinema, wanted to deal with the complexity of human nature and the behavior of mankind under difficult circumstances of hope and destiny. His choice of Steinbeck’s fable, *The Pearl*, was an outstanding decision, a decision indicative of his intellectual and cultural maturity contrary to the common standards among the filmmakers of his time. Furthermore, he demonstrated his ability to create a non-exploitative film, a film intended to communicate a social message to the audience. Ma‘āšrī did not have to relinquish his artistic freedom, because he was the producer of the film; nor did he have to deal with financial pressures from the investors, because he financed the film. The result was total control of creating onto the screen what he saw in that fable.

Ma‘āšrī did not have to be clear and simple in his cinematic language, as Riḍā suggested. And, *The Destiny* was not timid, as al-‘Arīs mentioned. The problem of the film occurred with its environment— the place where the story unfolded, the Lebanese village. Ma‘āšrī’s portrayal of Lebanese villagers as a bunch of thieves and cold-blooded viscous killers was contradictory, to a great extent, to the life and relationship found in any Lebanese village. Ma‘āšrī should have known better than to paint reality with fiction when the subject matter at hand was the treatment of life under real conditions. The majority of villagers were poor and neglected by their government in Beirut. However, even in the seventies, life in the village was still pure compared with life in Beirut, where gambling, prostitution and drugs were pervasive. The place of this story should have been Beirut not the village, and this was the problem with the film.
This problem arose from the difference in cultures between the West and East. The American rural life that Steinbeck portrayed was different than the rural life found in Lebanon. Although human suffering, represented in poverty, oppression and the harshness of destiny, is universal to a great extent, locality it is specific, for it dictates social variances across the different cultures. Even within the same country, these variances exist. Such is the case between life in the city and the mountains. The mistake in this film was unbelievability regarding the locale and short-sightedness with the attempt to adapt a literary work cross culturally.

Although *The Destiny*’s participation in Carthage did not gain Ma‘āšrī any prize, it brought him recognition as a talented filmmaker, and it was met with good reviews in Tunisian newspapers. *Al-Ṣabāḥ* newspaper, found in *Akhbār* (1972, No.124-127) viewed the film as:

*The Destiny* emphasizes on the important issue of destiny which places mankind in inescapable situations. The film is subject to several interpretations about the conflict between good and evil, man and destiny, and between the Third World and its destiny. The film is characterized by its slow beat which resembles the general perception of destiny that acts, sometimes, in an aggravating cold-blooded manner. The filmmaker succeeded in aggravating his audience more than once. (p. 41)

*Al-‘Amal* newspaper, also found in *Akhbār* (1972, No.124-127) was more critical of Ma‘āšrī’s cinematic language and his ability to tell the story of destiny. It published the following:

Munir Ma‘āšrī said that he was going to present a film that could be understood by everyone regardless of their level of sophistication. He, therefore, placed everyone at a level of simplicity. However, despite the filmmaker’s declaration that his film was humane in its appeal and that he made it for the sake of the suffering classes, and despite all of his positive efforts (in making the film easily understood) that are obvious to the audience, there remained some vagueness surrounding the film’s
meaning and goal. The film was embraced by obscurity giving the audience the freedom of interpretation. But was it possible to understand the film the way the filmmaker understood it, when he was the screen writer, director, producer and the leading actor of the film? Nonetheless, Ma'āsrî was successful in finding a simple Arabic dialect understood by all Arabs. (p. 41)

The Beginnings of Alternative Cinema

Introduction

On April 2, 1972, the First Damascus Film Festival for Young Arab Filmmakers commenced recording a massive attendance by young Arab filmmakers, scholars, and critics from all over the Arab World. The focus of this festival was the search for a “new cinema” that could best represent the social, political, and economical issues facing Arab societies - an “alternative cinema” similar, to a great extent, to the structure of the French “new wave.” Akhbār (1972, No. 112-113) reported:

From the meetings conducted during the Festival, there was a consensus among the attendants as to the necessary rejection of the current cinema of entertainment and sedation, and a call for a cinema that would become a means for struggle. The attendants were also aware of the difficulty in changing the prospective of the conventional cinema structure present in the Arab World, admitting that change would come slowly and gradually. But, they took the decision to strive for a cinema, politically and socially responsible, considering it among the effective weapons toward the progress of Arabs into a better future. (p. 9)

The Damascus Festival did not mark the commencement of “new cinema”; however, it marked, in addition to the overwhelming consensus on the need of such a cinema, the first large exhibition of films from the new generation representing various forms of the “alternative cinema.” Among the samples of this cinema were the following: Al-Fahd /
The Leopard by Nabil al-Mālih from Syria; Ughniyah ʿalā al-Mamarr A Song on the Passage by ‘Alī ʿAbd al-Khāliq from Egypt; and Bass Yā Bahar Enough, O Sea by Khālid al-Sādiq from Kuwait.

The first spark of the “new cinema” could be traced to Egypt with the declaration of the Egyptian group, Shabāb al-Sinima The Young Generation of Cinema, in May 1968, when a group of young filmmakers, influenced by socialist ideology, saw the need to bring change to the Egyptian film industry and called for the creation of a constructive cinema expressive of Egyptian life and society. This was followed by the formation of the Group of New Cinema in July 1969, which included among its members Muhammad Rādī, Fuʿād al-Tahami, Fathī Farah, ʿAlī Abu Shādi, Raʿfat al-Mīhī, Samīr Farīd, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Khāliq, Fāyiz Gḥālī, Aḥmad Mutwallī, and Nabīhah Lutfī (the only woman in the group). The group issued a declaration, found in Ramzī (1986), which included the following:

What we need is an Egyptian cinema - a cinema deeply involved with the Egyptian society, analytical of present social relations, one to discover the meaning of the life of the individual amidst these relations. And, in order to have a modern cinema, it is imperative to absorb the experiences of the new cinemas of the world. When our cinema is local in content, international in technique, clear in context due to the filmmakers deep involvement with our present reality, we will recover our audience and achieve international recognition. (P.59)

The presence of public film sectors in Arab countries with socialist systems, such as Egypt, Syria, and Algeria, helped to shape and support the pursuance of this “new cinema.” This, however, was not the case in Lebanon where the film industry remained under the influence of a “free enterprise” system including the production process and distribution methods. The serious works remained, by and large, the result of individual
efforts, such as Mārūn Baghdādī’s Bayrūt yā Bayrūt / Beirut, Beirut (1975) and rare co-productions with Arab states, such as Burhān ‘Alawīyah’s Kafr Qāsim (1975).

That there was an absence of a public sector in Lebanon to sponsor the work of filmmakers adversely affected the development of Lebanese cinema. Yet, the absence of the government’s financial assistance did not prevent the film industry from developing. The development of a “new cinema” in Lebanon was the result of individual visions stemming from the special socio-political circumstances and economical changes Lebanon experienced which led to the eruption of the civil war in 1975, discussed in “Political Instability” earlier in this chapter.

The commitment to change Lebanese film was not as blatant as was the case in Syria and Egypt; however, the atmosphere for change was present. The early manifestation of waves of change in Lebanese film in the seventies started, perhaps, with Ma‘āṣrī’s film The Destiny, despite the film’s problematic presentation as viewed by the film critics. The intentions of Ma‘āṣrī in his film were genuine symptoms for what was expected from the “new cinema,” i.e., the critical analysis of the social atmosphere present in any set Arab society and the relations among the individuals. Ma‘āṣrī successfully portrayed the conflict between the poor class (Hāmid and his son) and the ruling class represented in the character of Qāsim Bek, as based on the economical superiority of the latter. He also suggested that the only way to overcome this hegemony was through education. The interference of destiny, however, ruined the dreams of Hāmid and also the hopes of the film to have become the first Lebanese film to lead the way for “new cinema.”

171
Preceding Ma‘ârî’s film *The Destiny* was Samîr al-Ghūsāynî’s cinematic debut *Qitat Shārî‘ al-Ḥāmrah / Hamra Street Cats* (1971). Despite the film’s horrendous execution in content and technical quality, the idea of the film could be considered a feeble spark in the history of “new cinema” in Lebanon. In his film, al-Ghūsāynî took issue with the fast pace of a certain kind of Lebanese youth into the care-free lifestyle of the hippies. In an interview in *Akhbâr* (1971, No. 90-91) al-Ghūsāynî said:

I wanted to say that Middle Eastern young men and women want to get things all at once. They have a false concept of the meaning of freedom. When the Middle Eastern man faces immorality, he returns to his reality. My film talks about a kind of young man, increasing particularly in Beirut, who is characterized by the search for pleasures, relaxed living, and greed for money without working. (p. 6)

The film, however, was surrendered to the vision of the producer, Anwar al-Qawādrî, and his father who financed the film. It resorted to be a classic example of cheap entertainment heavily dependant on sexual amusement disregarding the importance of its social message. Samîr al-Ghūsāynî was also responsible for the commercial metamorphosis of his idea. Contrary to his intentions, al-Ghūsāynî did not analytically examine the social phenomena he talked about. If the idea of the film were to demonstrate the danger of falling into the trap of a fast social change, neither the script, which al-Ghūsāynî wrote, nor the film, which he directed, reflected such an idea.


The real beginning of “new cinema” started with Burhân ‘Alawīyah in his film, *Kafr Qāsim* (1974). The film was about the *Kafr Qāsim* massacre in July 1956, committed by the Israeli Army against the Arab Israeli citizens of a village called *Kafr Qāsim*.
approximately twenty miles away from the Israeli capital, Tel Aviv. The massacre happened three months prior to the trilateral assault on Egypt in October 1956, and resulted in the killing of 47 Palestinians. Al-'Aris (1994) wrote:

Until today, Kafr Qāsim is still considered one of the best ten Arab films in the last twenty-five years. Perhaps, the importance of the film lies in its reaffirmation of an Arab cause (the issue of Palestine through his telling of the massacre of Kafr Qāsim), produced in Syria with a Lebanese/Syrian/Belgium crew, and in its great achievements in several international festivals (the Golden Prize in Carthage Film Festival). Despite its non-recognition in Lebanon, the film remains one of the founders of Lebanese cinema because of the real role Lebanon should play within the Arab league, and especially because of a new perspective that makes the film belong to the world and the identity of its director - not those of its producers, actors, the Palestinian cause, nor its receptive audience. (p. 36)

'Alawiyah based the documentary/historical accounts of the film on 'Isām al-Jundi’s story, Kafr Qāsim (1973), Ḥabib Qahwaji’s book, Al-‘Arab fī Ẓill al-Iḥtilāl al-Isrā‘īlī Mundhu 1948 / Arabs Under Occupation 1948 (1972), Al-‘Arab fī ʾIsrā‘īl / The Arabs in Israel, a book written by Šabri Jurays (1967), Mahmūd Darwīsh’s writings, Al-Nuṣūs - Al-Shahādāt / Scripts - Affidavits and other articles published in the Israeli newspaper, Kāf Ḥa from October 29 through December 9, 1956. The script was the result of a group effort where 'Alawiyah participated with a group of Arab friends at the Belgian Film Institute in Bruxil, INSAS, and with a group of Palestinians from the PLO. The film was shot in eight weeks in one of the Syrian villages. The cost of the film reached 850,000 French francs.

The film’s narrative structure was divided into two different parts: a fictional dramatic part, and a faithful documentary dramatization. In his interview with Guy Hennebelle (1981), 'Alawiyah stated:
Everything preceding the presentation of the massacre is fictitious; we wanted to reconstruct the daily life of Arabs in Israel. Starting with the massacre, the film becomes a faithful documentary. We did not add anything to the sources which talked about the massacre. (p. 158)

‘Alawiyah’s main objective in *Kafr Qâsim* was to expose the brutality on the part of the Israelis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - an Israeli image unknown to the West due, in particular, to the domination of a powerful Israeli media campaign present at that time in the West. In the same interview, he elaborated:

The massacre of *Kafr Qâsim* represents a clear element in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because the enemy (Israel) in it unveils his true identity during a time of peace. The film catches the assaulting Zionists red-handed committing a crime against its own citizens (Arabs who carry Israeli citizenship). Arabs, therefore, are not normal Israeli citizens. (p. 157)

In addition to its main goal, the film was threefold in its objectives. The first objective of the film was to portray the daily life of the inhabitants of *Kafr Qâsim*, which was used as a miniature representation of the Palestinian population under Israeli occupation, under the oppressive totalitarian practices of the Israeli military. The second goal was to outline the concurrent ideological differences between various Palestinian political attitudes, mainly between the communist ideology and the nationalist Nasserism. The third objective was to suggest the necessity of an armed struggle as the only solution to the Palestinian problem, in light of the vicious enemy portrayed in the film.

‘Alawiyah was not only successful in fulfilling these objectives of the film, but he was also able to express them in an elaborate and eloquent cinematic structure strong in style and content. He painted the life in the village with aesthetic fluency and profound
realism bringing the audience in direct contact with the life of the village, as opposed to keeping them as spectators only. In Hennebelle’s (1981) description of the film’s structure, he wrote:

The most apparent element in the structure of the film is its advanced, intelligent, aesthetic method which serves the political objectives most effectively without disregarding the value of the film’s presentation. This fertility places Kafr Qāsim, among the best contemporary films of the revolutionary cinema, which is characterized by the will to unite the ideological depth with the general aesthetic structure of the film. . . . Kafr Qāsim is a tightly composed and a skillfully structured film where the elements of thought consistently enrich the element of description. . . . The director’s main objective is to expose the crime in order to preserve it in the memory of the Palestinians and the Arabs, and to inform the international public opinion. The film, undoubtedly, performs this task despite the lack of a profound and descriptive representation of the Israeli society. . . . It at least presents the life of the Palestinians under the Israeli occupation in a realistic and tactile method showing the complications of their situation, as he did, for example in the scene where Radio Israel visits the village which can be compared to the short Syrian film, Nahnu Bikhayr / We’re Well, by Faysal al-Yasiri. (pp. 115-116)

‘Alawīyah in this film, contrary to previous Lebanese films on the Palestinian issue, analyzed the political affiliations found in the village which symbolized the general ideologies that shaped the Palestinian resistance, mainly dealing with the national Nasserist ideology and the communist ideology. He distinguished between the two at the beginning of the film after Nasser’s Radio address to the Arab World regarding the nationalization of the Suez Canal. ‘Alawīyah criticized the incorrect communist view of the Palestinian struggle which considered the Palestinian problem as a class struggle. The communists in the film suggested that the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem was through the unification between the Israeli and Palestinian proletariat, a strategy similarly used by other socialist revolutions, such as in Czarist Russia and the revolutions in Latin America. The communist vision of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict overlooked
the difference in the political equation found in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is
based on race (Arabs vs. Hebrews) and national identity, as opposed to class struggle
found in other world socialist revolutions.

After the long dramatization sequences of the massacre, the film ended with a scene
where the character playing the Palestinian poet, Mahmūd Darwīsh, was sitting outside a
cafe dictating the famous lines from his poem, *MughannFal-Damm: The Blood Chanter*
(Darwish, 1980, pp. 68-69):

*Kafr Qāsim*

I returned from death to Live, to Sing
Let me draw my voice from a glowing wound
and, help me with the hatred which plants bramble in my heart
I am a delegate from a wound that does not compromise
The lasher’s strike taught me to walk on my wound
and walk...
and walk...
and Resist!

In this scene and after seeing the orchestrated intentional killings of the innocent
citizens of the village, ‘Alawīyah suggested that fighting was the only possible solution in
facing such an enemy. He did so through the voice of Mahmūd Darwīsh, and not through
fictional heroic Fedayeen attacks on the Israeli Army. ‘Alawīyah refrained from such an
ending because of three reasons. First, the Fedayeen work was not present in 1956.
Secondly, ‘Alawīyah did not believe in individual heroism as the expressive voice of the
Palestinian revolution. On the contrary, collectivism was a dominant underlying theme
in *Kafr Qāsim* which was the whole village’s shared experience. Thirdly, ‘Alawīyah was
concerned with the actual accounts of *Kafr Qāsim* within an analytical framework and
not the mere agitation of emotions.

176
The ending of *Kafr Qāsim* was as intelligent as the beginning of the film where the Captain, who was responsible for the massacre, received his suspended sentence from a military court, and was put in charge of the cultural affairs in the West Bank. In this manner, ‘Alawiyah proved himself as a sophisticated filmmaker who gave the Lebanese film industry in the seventies its first real thread of hope toward becoming a mature and socially responsible film industry.

One issue pertinent to the film was the presentation of Palestinian women. The film focused largely on male characters reflecting their political affiliations and their views on the Palestinian issue, while the Palestinian woman was characterized only marginally. Haynî Surûr (1986) wrote:

Here (in *Kafr Qāsim*) again the Palestinian woman is portrayed as a negative element sinking in its shallowness. They are either complaining or thinking about marriage. This is the way the young communist meets his sweetheart in the olive fields where he talks to her about his political worries after listening to ‘Abd al-Nasser’s speech. The woman changes the subject rapidly to ask him when will they get married. It is true that there are some instances where the women think of the misfortune of their people. However, it only happens when one of their sons is missing. The only political activity in which they engage was to listen to ‘Abd al-Nasser and to the rejoice celebration of “Zagradah.” (p. 35)

The portrayal of Palestinian women in *Kafr Qāsim* was indeed one of the film’s mistakes. ‘Alawiyah, when asked by Surûr about this issue, pointed to the presence of negative male characters, such as the man who sleeps during the radio address of Nasser. However, the presence of some negative male characters in the film does not compensate for the portrayal of all women in such a manner. This portrayal of women was the result of the patriarchal social structure in the Arab World. It was evident in the film that all the events of the film occurred within a masculine atmosphere. The focus of the camera
was on the masculine circles to the degree that life in the village of Kafr Qāsim revolved totally around the male society. The presence of women, on the other hand, was extremely marginal. However, it would be wise not to throw accusations at the filmmaker for such a portrayal, because he based his screen play on various literary works written by other people. It would be imperative to analyze these sources which 'Alawīyah used in order to understand the reasons for the ineffective participation of women in the film.

Mārūn Baghdādī. Beirut, Beirut (1975)

Along side 'Alawīyah, Mārūn Baghdādī returned in 1973 from France, after studying film at the IDHEC, to lead Lebanese cinema into a new “alternative” dimension. Eighteen years after Nasr's Where To?, Baghdādī entered the Lebanese society with his films analyzing the different political beliefs and religious affiliations that shaped Lebanon during that decade. Al-‘Arīs (1994a) wrote:

Beirut, Beirut dealt, for the first time, in a clear manner, with the social and religious confrontation in Lebanon during the mid-seventies. The film’s events stop at the fall of the first Southern martyr in the conflict with Israel, and with the departure of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasser. However, the film appears, intellectually, as a prophecy to the events that Lebanon will live later. It is not a coincidence that the first and last screening of the film was two days before the outbreak of the civil war. (p. 189)

In 1974, Baghdādī started the production of his first long feature film, Bayrūt, Ya Bayrūt. Beirut, Beirut starring Mirāy Ma'lūf, Philip 'Aqīqī, Ahmad al-Zayn, and the famous Egyptian actor 'Izzat al-'Alāylī. Beirut, Beirut was an individual effort where Baghdādī wrote, produced and directed the film. On April 11, 1975, two days before the
eruption of the civil war, the film was shown at Cinema Beirut in a press screening for film critics, journalists and friends. The film was only shown one more time in March 1977 at the Arab Film Festival in Paris. The film could have been aired on television if it were not for its heated content. A press release by the National Agency for Information (1993, p. 43) reported that “it was impossible to broadcast the film on television because it was a film made of dynamite.”

There were some obscure circumstances surrounding this film. Baghdādī, after making his second long feature film concerning Lebanon, Hurūb Saghīrah  Small Wars, in 1982, claimed that Small Wars was his first film, completely disregarding Beirut, Beirut. Al-'Aris (1994b, p. 149) mentioned that Baghdādī even omitted Beirut, Beirut from his filmography, and sometimes he used to describe it as a short documentary about Beirut.

In addition to Baghdādī's denial of Beirut, Beirut, the only film print was unfortunately lost between Aden and Baghdad in 1977. The negative that was stored in Studio Ba'albak was destroyed during the war. Swaid (1986, p. 36) mentioned that the only negative print of the film remained in Paris. This print was found in Baghdādī's basement in Paris after his death (al-'Arīs, 1994b, p. 149) and was shown at the Arab World Institute in Paris in 1994.

The reasons behind Baghdādī's position of denial toward his own film were unknown. However, al-'Arīs (1994b, p. 36) suggested that, perhaps, the technical quality of Beirut, Beirut was the reason why Baghdādī omitted this film from his work profile. Swaid (1994) wrote:
Upon the viewing of the reconstructed copy of the film (*Beirut, Beirut*) at the Arab World Institute (in Paris) it was clear to everyone who saw the film that the assumption of Baghdādī’s dissatisfaction with his film was very possible. (p. 1)

The importance of *Beirut, Beirut* stems from its content, and not from its form. The film presented a picture of the formation of the Lebanese society during a terminal junction in the contemporary history of Lebanon, extending from early 1969 to September 1970, the date of Nasser’s death. In addition, it was the first film where a Christian filmmaker attempted to enter the world of the Muslim community; and, the first time a film analyzed the Lebanese social structure without hiding religious and political identities. Al-‘Arīs (1994b) wrote:

It was not a coincidence that Mārūn Baghdādī’s film *Beirut, Beirut* was the first film that declared its characters’ religious, sectarian, and political affiliation. This revolution brought forth by the film earned the film its importance. Before that, Lebanese films (and the films produced in Lebanon) presented their characters without identities. Even the names were chosen in such a way not to hint to the characters’ identities. . . . With Mārūn Baghdādī, things were different. The character, itself, in the film started to have a clear identity through its name, behavior and practices. (pp. 40-41)

The story of *Beirut, Beirut* followed the events that shaped Lebanon within the twenty months extending from the beginning of 1969 until the death of Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasser in September, 1970. Mārūn Baghdādī followed the influence of the political developments on a group of characters he had chosen representing the cross-section of the Lebanese society. These characters were:

1) Kamāl was a Nasserist Lawyer who belonged to the small Muslim bourgeoisie of Beirut. The lawyer represented his social class’ hopes and outlooks for bringing constitutional change to a country which was built on sectarianism and serving
the interest of a small percentage of the Lebanese population. He also represented his class’ Pan-Arab ideology where it saw Lebanon as an inseparable part of the Arab World.

2) Emile was an educated Christian, who belonged to the small Christian bourgeoisie which was driven away from its Lebanese-Arab identity due to the influence of Western culture. He represented this small bourgeoisie’s beliefs regarding the socio-political structure and identity of Lebanon.

3) Safwān was a Southern worker who moved to Beirut looking for work. He represented the Southerners’ circumstances under the negligence of their own government from Israel’s continuous assaults. He finally returned to the South and died while fighting against Israel to become the first Southern martyr in the conflict with Israel.

4) There was also a student who belonged to the large Christian bourgeoisie which was characterized by humanitarian philosophy. She established relationships with people from all social backgrounds. Discouraged by the radicalism of the people around her, she left everyone indefinitely.

The film portrayed Emile as living isolated from the reality surrounding him, mostly occupied with his books and musical records. He discovered, later, that the life of his society, including his family, was in turmoil. His mother, for example, did not care for anything other than satisfying her desires. Another example was a confrontation that erupted between the servants and the students. Kamāl, on the other hand, was living with the idea that Beirut was divided into two parts, imperialist Beirut, and the pure Beirut.

181
He later discovered that Beirut was the imperialist who evicted people from their houses to build high buildings in their place for monetary gains.

Safwan tried to find a meaning to his life in Beirut; he was faced with failure in attempts to establish social relationships and sexual relations. Safwan was the only character in the film who realized his place and future. He returned to the South and was killed.

After Beirut, Beirut, Baghdadi refrained from working with narrative films and ventured toward working with short documentary films and television, as well. His work included: Al-Janub Bikhayr, Tamminin 'Ankum / The South is Fine, How are You Doing (1976); Al-Aktharīyah al-Samidah / The Steadfast Majority (1976); Kfar Kalā (1976) (three previous listings all about South Lebanon); Tahiyyah li-Kamal Junblāt / Greetings to Kamal Junblāt (1977), a film about Kamal Junblāt; Tis 'in / Ninety (1978), a film about Mikhā'il Nu'aymah; Ajmal al-Ummahāt / The Most Beautiful Mothers (1978); Al-Shahīd / The Martyr (1979); Kullunā lil-Watan / We're All for Our Country (1979); Hikayat Qaryah wa Harb / The Story of a Village and War (1979); Hamasāt aw Ḥanīn / Whispers or Longing (1980), a film about Lebanese poet, Nādyā Tuwaynī; and Al-Masārah / The Walk (1980).

The Civil War Films: 1975 - 1979

With the eruption of the civil war, the long feature film industry in Lebanon was crippled. The total number of films produced in Lebanon during the first five years of the war was four films, reaching its lowest average since 1953. Simultaneously, the war
gave rise to documentary filmmaking as a new direction in Lebanese filmmaking. Lebanese filmmakers, during the first five years of the war, made about twenty documentaries concerned with the war and its effects on Lebanon. This movement gave birth to new filmmakers, who mostly had graduated from film institutes in Europe and the United States; filmmakers, such as, Jocelyn Sa'b, Nabihah Lutfi, Randah al-Shahhal, and Jean Sham'ün. Unfortunately, as was explained in Chapter 1, this new and very important trend of filmmaking is outside the scope and focus of this research.

The first film to be produced during the war in 1975 was Suhii Sayf al-Din's first film, *Al-Rajul al-Sâmid / The Steadfast Man*. Sayf al-Din started working on his film in 1974 and finished it in the summer of 1975. The film was exhibited in Syria and Jordan while it was not seen in Beirut until April, 1985, when it was exhibited at the Broadway Cinema. The reason for this delay, as Swaid (1986, p. 36) mentioned, was that “it took ten years to find a Lebanese distributor willing to purchase the distribution rights for the film.”

The film was a Lebanese-Syrian production where Sayf al-Din co-produced the film with Husayyn al-Athath. In addition, Sayf al-Din wrote and directed the film, a practice congruent with the trend of individual filmmaking common to most “serious” Lebanese films. The film was shot in the Labwah village, the birthplace of Sayf al-Din and in some nearby Syrian rural areas. It included a Lebanese-Syrian cast: 'Adnân Barakât, Mahâ al-Sâlih, As'ad Fuddah, Amal Sukkar, and Joseph Nânu.

The story of *Al-Rajul al-Sâmid* was about Milhim Qâsim, the leader of the resistance against the Turkish occupation of Greater Syria during WWI. Although the film was
outside the theme of the civil war, it talked about a nationalist figure, the person of Milhim Qāsim. This was an outcome of the political atmosphere that enveloped Lebanon during the years preceding the war. In addition to its main theme, the film hinted at the concurrent situation of Lebanon as a result of the Arab negligence after the independence from the Ottoman Empire. In an interview with Sayf al-Dīn (‘Āzār, 1980), he said:

The events of the film occur in Lebanon and Syria during WWI. The film deals with the issues and problems of the Arab nation through several characters of the film, especially Milhim Qāsim, nicknamed Abu ʿAlī, who led the resistance against the Turkish rule at that time. Through him, we deal with the issue of Arab independence. Through the two groups of martyrs in 1915 and 1916, we deal with the issue of independence in Syria and Lebanon. The film portrayed, as well, the oppression during that time through symbolic representation. (P. 171)

The symbolism in the film was noteworthy. Sayf al-Dīn demonstrated his ability to use the camera expressively and profoundly. For example, during the first 100 minutes of the film, an atmosphere of pessimism and depression overwhelmed the film’s characters and events in order to create the sense of occupation and oppression. Only toward the end, with the fulfillment of liberation, the atmosphere changes into happiness and relief. Another example was the use of an extreme close-up shot of a rose bleeding for five minutes. Sayf al-Dīn intended in this shot to “represent Lebanon that was left bleeding without anyone trying to come to its aid” (‘Āzār, 1980, p. 172).

After Al-Rajul al-Sāmid, film production in Lebanon halted until 1978 when Sayf al-Dīn surprised everyone with his second film, ʿUrs al-Ard / Earth’s Wedding, which was the first film to be made in its entirety after the cessation of the first round of the civil war in 1977. The film was shot in six weeks on location in various villages in Baʿalbak.
The film was produced by Muhammad Amhaz, and it cost LL 150,000 ($ 50,000 approximately). Sayf al- Din wrote the story of the film, and co-wrote the screen play with Adib Qaddurah, a well- known Syrian actor. The cast consisted of: Adib Qaddurah and Ighrā’ from Syria; Joseph Nānu, Karīm Abu Shaqrā, Muḥammad Tlays, Muḥammad Amhaz, Hind ‘Amrū, ‘Alī al-Zayn, ‘Abd al-Ḥālim Amhaz, ‘Alī Sayf al-Dīn, and Suhayl al-Anf from Lebanon.

Contrary to Al-Rajul al-Sāmid, which was a mixture of Syrian and Lebanese dialects, 'Urs al-ARD was made using exclusively the Lebanese dialect. The film was concerned with the unfairness of the landlord system that remained in effect in several rural areas in Lebanon. Sharīf (Adib Qaddurah) and Latīfah (Ighrā’) were engaged and waiting to be wed. However, their marriage keep being postponed because of the bad harvests. Their only hope to get married was to wait for a good harvest which was impossible because of the landlords’ control over the area. The landlords, through dishonest practices, took over the harvest of the people of the villages.

Sharīf, then, started awakening the people to what was going on. He formed a group of villagers to protect their harvests and themselves from the landlords. After becoming a threat to the landlords, one of the landlords sent one of the villagers to assassinate Sharīf. However, the villager failed to kill Sharīf and instead, he joined Sharīf's group.

At the end of the film, the villagers, who had joined together against the landlords, walked across the fields holding hands rejoicing the return of their crops after having defeated the landlords. This shot was followed by a shot of the wheat fields where the wheat stalks danced together choreographed by the wind.
In this film, Sayf al-Dīn wanted to build a relationship between his story and the story of Lebanon during the war. The villagers represented the majority of the Lebanese workforce from across several religious backgrounds. The landlords represented the wealthy Lebanese investors whose only concern was gaining profits by using the working class. Sharīf and Latīfah, the cousins, represented the Christian and Muslim sections of the Lebanese society.

With the liberation from the landlords, the villagers became free, united and happy. This was portrayed in the shot where the villagers walk hand in hand across the fields.

About the ending of the film, Sayf al-Dīn (ʿAzār, 1980) explained:

The wheat shot in the end was a symbol of the Lebanese coming together after the end of the two-year war. The end was the relief of the Lebanese soil from the bloody conflict that engulfed us. The people at the end stand firmly by their land and rights in defiance of the oppressor. (p. 174)

The film’s parable of the Lebanese conflict is naive and shallow. The film oversimplifies the dimensions of the Lebanese conflict and disregards many crucial factors responsible for the outbreak of war. Within its context, it at least failed to expose the identity of the oppressors which the film labeled as “landlords” or “investors.” One fanciful ideal remains, to this day, genuine to his film. Sayf al-Dīn’s suggested in the film that love and solidarity are the solution to Lebanon’s problems. Swaid (1986) noted this discrepancy in ʿUrṣ al-Ard, he wrote:

Sayf al-Dīn’s choice of the beautiful rural areas and his choice to analyze political problems through the resistance toward landlordship was not enough for a country that surpassed the landlordship conflicts and entered into a dangerous phase full of new confrontations. Among these confrontations are the Palestinian problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, the issue of minorities, social rights, the war
with all of its outcomes, such as religious sectarianism, armed chaos, financial and social sufferings. (p. 62)

Toward the end of 1979, Shawqi Mattá, the producer of Samīr al-Ghuṣaynī’s *The Cats of Hamra Street* (1971), returned to Lebanon to work with al-Ghuṣaynī, who had moved to work in Syria during the years of the civil war, on a new film titled *Hasnā’ wa ‘Amāliqah / The Beauty and the Giants*. The result was a police action-comedy starring a large cast: Huwaydah, Sabāh’s daughter, Muhammad al-Mawlá, a local wrestler, Fu’ād Sharaf al-Dīn, and the comedy duet Fahmān and Abu Salīm, the wrestlers Sa’ādah brothers, Lebanese singer Sāmī Clark, and Gloria Gainer, among others.

Al-Ghuṣaynī used the presence of Gloria Gainer in Lebanon, as she was performing at the Summer Land Beach Resort and included her singing “I will survive” in his film. The film’s shooting lasted about two months from the end of 1979 until the beginning of 1980. Swaid (1986, p. 68) wrote that “the film was released in the winter of 1980 at Cinema Commodore after Mattá showed his readiness to rent the theater declining, at the same time, his right to the percentage revenues of the film.

To everyone’s surprise, the film was a considerable success. This success, Swaid (1986, p. 68) explained was due to several factors: the music of Elias Rahbānī, Sāmī Clark’s songs which were big hits at the time, and Gloria Gainer’s appearance. In addition to these factors, the comedy of Fahmān and Abu Salīm, and the wrestling episodes of the Sa’ādah brothers were also elements of attraction in the film.

The story of *Hasnā’ wa ‘Amāliqah* is about a gangster, played by Jospeh Nānu, who arrives in Lebanon to perform some illegal activities. The detective, played by Fu’ād
Sharaf al-Dīn, waits for Nānu at the airport to arrest him. Nānu, disguised, slips through Fu‘ād’s hands. The adventure then starts by Fu‘ād chasing Nānu in several locations in Lebanon and ends up arresting him with the help of the Lebanese Army and Interior Security Forces. Swaid (1986) suggests:

From a superficial point of view, *Hasnā‘ wa ‘Amāliqah* played on the feelings of the Lebanese public. It reunited the appearance of actors and artists from across the different religious affiliations thus presenting a picture of unity on the screen before it is fulfilled in reality. (p. 70)


**Summary**

The films of the seventies represent clearly the dichotomy present in Lebanese cinema between commercial and socially constructive, better known in Lebanon as “serious” trends of film production. This dichotomy, however, was vastly dominated by the commercial trend of production. Among the 38 films produced in this decade, there were only 6 films that can be considered as non-commercial. These films are Christian Ghāzi’s *Hundred Faces for One Day* (1972), Munīr Ma‘āṣrī’s *The Destiny* (1972),

This domination was largely the result of the economic factor of the film business. Finding a Lebanese investor to produce an entertainment film that promised monetary profits was much easier than finding one to finance a serious film that did not promise to break even. Half of these films mentioned above were entirely financed by their filmmakers, two were co-financed and only *Kafr Qāsim* was financed by the Syrian Public Sector.

Although the sum of these films does not even represent 1/6 of the total films produced in this decade, they amount to the highest number of non-commercial films produced in one decade during the entire history of Lebanese cinema. This achievement, indeed, signifies a major turning point in the history of Lebanese cinema where in spite of financial hardship these young filmmakers mentioned above were determined to save Lebanese cinema from its narrow commercial existence by expressing their own social views in an artistic and intellectual way. These films represent a renewal of the commitment toward the socio-political importance of Lebanese cinema and its cultural and social responsibility toward its public. The seventies could be considered the rebirth of the Lebanese cinema and the beginning of a long road.
CHAPTER VIII
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Lebanese cinema evolved under the influence of an Italian adventurer, Jurdano Pidutti, in 1929 with his first film *The Adventures of Elias Mabrûk*. It is not clear how involved his Lebanese friends were who helped in the making of this film. However, it was this event that triggered interest among other Lebanese, such as Sha'ban, and perhaps Herta Garghûr who produced the next two films in the history of Lebanese film.

The development of Lebanese cinema, nonetheless, as an art and an industry developed gradually under the influence of Lebanese film pioneers, such as filmmakers: Michael Hârün who established Studio Hârün and who gave Lebanese cinema its first film in a Lebanese dialect, *Red Flowers*; George Nasr, the father of political Lebanese cinema, in his film *Where to?*; and Muhammad Salmân, the king of Lebanese entertainment cinema. This development of this industry paralleled the socio-political development of Lebanon where film production lagged in times of political instability, such as during the struggle for independence in 1943, the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, and the small scale revolution in 1958. Economically, the Lebanese cinema flourished with the country’s economic renaissance extending form late fifties to early seventies. While
the commercial “entertainment” type of films had the lion’s share of this industry, “serious” films that addressed social and political issues remained, by and large, the result of individual efforts by a handful of filmmakers, namely Michael Hārūn, George Naṣr, Muḥir Maʻāṣri, Šubḥī Sayf al-Dīn, Burhān ‘Alawīyah, and Mārūn Baghdādī.

This great quantitative chasm between these two camps was created by the financial aspect of the film business (Ch. 7, pp. 188-189). Entertainment cinema was quantitatively characterized, while constructive cinema was qualitatively critical both thematically and artistically. The ratio of entertainment films to constructive films produced between 1929 and 1979 is 13:1 (out of 168 films produced, only 12 belong to the constructive cinema). Out of these 12 films, six were made in the seventies (Ch. 7, pp. 188-189). This indicates the magnitude of development witnessed in this branch of Lebanese filmmaking. While the sixties represented a quantitative peak in commercial filmmaking, the seventies represented a qualitative peak in the Lebanese film industry.

Social Relevancy

In the course of this research, it became evident that the development of Lebanese cinema did not take a simple, continuous course in relation to the Lebanese socio-political existence. Instead, it was a complex process substantially influenced by two significant factors: the Egyptian film operation in Lebanon in the early sixties, and the political atmosphere starting in the late sixties. Early Lebanese cinema was qualified to become a mature industry both technically and thematically. However, this maturity was
postponed due to the disruption caused by the Egyptian influence and the strong formation of a commercial “entertainment” trend of filmmaking.

The evolution of Lebanese cinema in relation to the Lebanese society is divided into three phases: socially relative, socially non-relative, and socially relative. The first phase expands from the beginning of filmmaking in Lebanon in 1929 to the beginning of the Egyptian influence in 1957. The second phase covers the Egyptian-milieu dominance of the industry between 1957 - 1972. The third phase intertwines with the second phase and starts in the early seventies with the movement of political awareness from 1972 to 1979. The time line of these phases is not chronologically definite; rather, it is an approximation due to the fused nature of these phases. For example, while the Egyptian influence started as early as 1957 (Ch. 4, pp. 56-58 & Ch. 5, pp. 69-71), the full flux of Egyptian film operation started in 1964 (Ch. 5, p.71).

The First Phase

Most of the early films made in Lebanon from 1929 to 1957 were characterized by their relationship to the Lebanese society, in that they were socially relative to the subjects which they addressed. The first two films, *The Adventures of Elias Mabrûk* (Chapter 3, pp. 39-43) and *The Adventures of Abu 'Abd* (Chapter 3, pp. 43-46) indirectly addressed the issue of emigration, a social problem at that time. Although these films were not consciously analytical, they managed to build on a socially recognized experience, as the films portrayed the visit of the emigrant Elias Mabrûk to his family, and the adventures and memories of Abu 'Abd in Africa.
This relevancy is more evident and mature in *In the Ruins of Ba‘albak* (1936) (Chapter 3, pp.47-49), *Red Flowers* (1957) (Chapter 4, pp. 55-66), and *Where To?* (1957) (Chapter 4, pp.59-65). *In the Ruins of Ba‘albak* deals with the cultural and social issues in a relationship between a Lebanese man and a Western woman. *Red Flowers* portrays the conflict between the comfort of the bourgeoisie’s life and the hardship of the villager’s life within the Lebanese society. *Where To?* analyzes the consequences of emigration and presents this issue as a social disease; it also suggest education as a solution to poverty in Lebanon.

Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of documentation on the films of the period extending from 1943 to 1956, the time line of this phase creates a relative vacuum. This segment is mostly concerned with the two films of ‘Ali al-‘Arīs in 1943 and 1946.

**The Second Phase**

In the second phase (1957 - 1972), the phase of social irrelevancy, the course of social relevancy in Lebanese filmmaking was disrupted by the influence of the Egyptian film milieu on the Lebanese film industry, and by the establishment of the Egyptian film operations in Lebanon. This phase is divided into two stages: the beginning of Egyptian influence, 1957-1962 (discussed in Chapter 4 & 5), and the Egyptian film operation in Lebanon, 1962-1972 (Chapter 5).

**Stage One**

In the first stage, the nature of filmmaking became commercial in its goals, emulating the worst types of Egyptian melodramas. With the presence of equipped film studios and filmmakers, such as George Qā‘ī (Chapter 4, p. 53-55) and, especially, Muhammad
Salmān (Chapter 4, p. 56-58), a successful “entertainment” trend of filmmaking in Lebanon was founded. The films of this stage were meaningless melodramas aiming toward entertaining the audience with love themes, belly dancing, singing, sensuality and ludicrous humor (Chapter 4, p. 56). These films were alienated from their social setting because they ignored, almost mockingly, the social and political developments which were taking place in Lebanon (Chapter 5, p. 77).

Stage Two

In the second stage, 1962-1974, the Egyptian film operation reinforced the previous stage of “entertainment” quality cinema by making Lebanon the working base for Egyptian filmmakers and film investors who were escaping Nasser’s socialist reforms to Egyptian Cinema by establishing the film public sector (Chapter 5, pp. 67-73). As a result, the Lebanese film industry flourished immensely to become the second largest film producer in the Arab World, trailing Egypt (Chapter 6, pp. 92-94). The increase in film production amplified the distribution of Lebanese films. Most of the Lebanese films produced during this stage were distributed, especially, in the Middle East and, to a lesser degree, in Western countries.

In addition to their social irrelevancy, the films of this stage suffered greatly on the technical level. “Film producers depended heavily on big stars and singing, almost always, as a ticket for the success of their films, abandoning the technical/artistic portion of the production” (Chapter 6, p. 118).

The benefits of this stage, however, were felt at the organizational and technical levels of the film industry in Lebanon. Lebanon witnessed a process of expansion and
modernization in all aspects of production and production facilities (Chapter 5, p. 78).

Film production became an organized industry/business governed by the three basic sectors of this business: production, distribution, and exhibition. Overwhelmed by the increasing number of film productions, the Lebanese government felt it necessary to organize and supervise this industry (Chapter 6, pp. 98-105). However, due to the "free-enterprising" economical structure of Lebanon, there was no attempt on behalf of the Lebanese government to embrace this industry and support its intellectual development, as did socialist Arab states, such as Syria, Egypt and Algeria (Chapter 7, p. 170).

**The Third Phase**

The third phase started in Lebanon during the late sixties and continued well into the seventies. This phase is the most influential phase in the history of Lebanese cinema, for it witnessed the evolution of "alternative cinema," a new socially responsible direction in Lebanese filmmaking (Chapter 7, pp. 169-189). In this phase, some of the most important Lebanese films were made. These films include the following: Munir Ma'âsî'i's *The Destiny*, 1973 (Chapter 7, pp. 165-169 & p. 171); Burhân 'Alawîyah's *Kafr Qâsim*, 1974 (Chapter 7, pp.172-178); Mârün Baghdâdi's *Beirut, Beirut*, 1975 (Chapter 7, pp.178-182); and Şubhî Sayf al-Dîn's *The Steadfast Man*, 1975 (Chapter 7, pp. 183-185).

The social relevancy of these films was different than the social relevancy found in the first phase, 1929-1957. These films addressed several crucial social and political issues inherent in the Lebanese socio-political system, such as Arab identity of Lebanon, religious sectarianism and affiliation, and social injustices against the poor working class (Chapter 2, *Historical Background*, pp. 14-26).
Although political cinema could be considered to have started with George Nasr in 1957, it was rediscovered and readdressed in a more conscientious manner by the above mentioned filmmakers, in a closer relation to its social surrounding, and in a more vivid analytical sense, unwitnessed before. This development, to a great extent, was the result of political and cultural awareness among the educated class in the seventies. This group of filmmakers belonged to the educated student class that evolved in Lebanon during the sixties.

The Arab identity of Lebanon (Chapter 2, Historical Background, pp. 20-21 & 25-26) was the underlying theme of The Steadfast Man. The rebellion of Abu ‘Alî Milhîm Qâsim against the Ottoman rule represented the Arab Muslim Nationalist consensus against the Turkish Nationalist Caliphate. This was the first time this issue was addressed by Lebanese cinema in such a fashion. Previously, it was the backlash of Barakât’s 1967, Safar Barlik.

‘Alawîyah’s film came at a time when the relations between the Palestinian Liberation Organizations in Lebanon and the Lebanese government were disastrous (Chapter 2, Historical Background, pp.25-26). This Lebanese filmmaker, using his religious and political affiliation, reenforced the Lebanese public’s concern for the Palestinian issue. The film, within a historical perspective, was a subliminal message to the Lebanese government revealing an answer toward humanitarian treatment of the Palestinian revolutionaries, and at the same time, it was a reiteration of the Arabness of the Palestinian cause and the Arabness of Lebanon.
If ‘Alawīyah worked with the Arab-Palestinian issue, Baghdādī did what no other Lebanese filmmaker has done before. He dissected the Lebanese society as it existed shortly before the eruption of the civil war, unveiling the contradictions and conflicts between the multiple sects and ideologies. The issue of religious affiliation and political representation, which caused a great chasm within the Lebanese society (Chapter 2, *Historical Background*, pp.15-24), was the central theme of Baghdādī’s film *Beirut*. It was the first time a Lebanese filmmaker addressed this very bitter reality in which Lebanon found itself.

The eruption of the civil war in 1975 halted film production in Lebanon due to the laborious process required by this industry, the hazardous conditions created by the war, and the absence of finances. The positive effects of this war on the intellectual development of filmmaking in Lebanon were tremendous. This was demonstrated in the documentary genre, mainly political, that overtook most of the new generation of filmmakers, and also in the narrative genre of the filmmakers who started their work in the mid-seventies, like ‘Alawīyah and Baghdādī together with younger filmmakers such as Rafīq Hajjār and Haynî Surūr. This movement found its basis in the aesthetics and the socio-political analysis of the early works of the seventies (Chapter 7, 182-183).

**Relation to Local Dramatic Arts**

Another significant finding in this research is the way cinema developed in Lebanon in relation to the other dramatic arts. Lebanese cinema, to a great extent, developed in isolation from the other dramatic arts known to Lebanon (Chapter 2, *Dramatic*
Traditions, pp. 26-37) and especially in relation to the theater. Lebanese theater benefited greatly from the Arabic dramatic heritage and literary movements, such as the work of Najīb al-Haddād, Roje ‘Assāf, Mīkhā’il Nu‘aymah and Farīd Mudawwar (Chapter 2, Dramatic Traditions, pp. 36-37). Yet, in the case of the Lebanese cinema, 1929-1979, the dramatic heritage was left untouched. The relation of cinema to Lebanese theater and the literary movements started in the sixties; and it was rather insignificant. Only a few film adaptations of theatrical plays were made, such as Mawwāl (1966) (Appendix A, p. 217) and The Ring Seller (Chapter 6, pp. 126-127), and were all musicals. Only one work from Adab al-Mahjar was adapted to the screen; that was Jubrān’s The Broken Wings (Chapter 6, p. 94).

However, cinema acting was influenced by theatrical performance, as discussed in the film analysis of The Pearl Necklace (Chapter 6, p. 107-118) and The Rebellious Palestinian (Chapter 6, p. 138-150). This influence was also evident in the directing style and the mise en scene of these films. The reason for this influence is due to the absence of film schools in Lebanon. Lebanese film actors could be classified into two categories: actors who received theatrical schooling, like Munīr Ma‘āsri, and the extreme opposite - actors who had no acting background.

It is meet at this juncture to address the parallel evolution of social realism found in Lebanese cinema and theater. This parallel development is evident in Mīkhā’il Nu‘aymah’s influence on the Lebanese theater with his play Al-‘Ābā’ wa al-Banīn / Fathers and Sons (1917) which inspired Farīd Mudawwar to write and direct Above Revenge (1931) (Chapter 2, Dramatic Background, p. 36), and inspired Karam Bustānī
to write *In the Ruins of Ba'albak* (1936) for cinema. Mikhā'īl Nu'aymah in *Fathers and Sons* addressed the conflict between the old and new generations. This theme was also the focus of Karam Bustānī's 1936 screenplay *In the Ruins of Ba'albak*. Both of these movements in the theater and the cinema were influenced by social realism. They portrayed social and cultural issues relevant to the Lebanese society, however, at different levels of sophistication.

Because of the discontinuity in the time line of the social relevancy in Lebanese films, there is no information available at this time to study the continuity of social realism in the films of al-'Aris in relation to Lebanese theater. However, with available documentation on George Naṣr's film *Where to?* and Michael Hārūn's film *Red Flowers*, it is evident that social realism had a major influence on the work of these two filmmakers. Next to "entertainment" cinema, social realism is the most evident genre in Lebanese filmmaking. This genre is represented in the serious work of filmmakers, such as Naṣr, Hārūn, Ma'āṣri, 'Alawīyah and Baghdādī. However, it is premature to determine the origins of this influence, whether it was the result of the influence of Exile Literature (*Adab al-Mahjar*), the local theater, or the realism genres in Western filmmaking, i.e. Soviet Union, United States and Italy among others. This issue represents a vast field of study that calls for further research in order to better understand the development of film in relation to theater and literary movements.
Egyptian Influence

The answer to the question whether Egyptian film industry influenced Lebanese cinema is now, perhaps, clearer after the close examination of the Egyptian film operations in Lebanon. This research traced two levels of Egyptian influence on the Lebanese film industry: the first level was created by the Egyptian milieu, and the second level was created by the Egyptian operation in Lebanon. Before the arrival of the Egyptian operations to Lebanon, a melodramatic/musical movement of filmmaking started to take place by filmmaker Muhammad Salmān, a graduate of the Egyptian film industry. In imitation of Egyptian entertainment films, Salmān started his filmmaking career in Lebanon with his first film, *The First Melody* (1957), following the footsteps of the private Egyptian “commercial” film milieu. This step was emulated by other Lebanese filmmakers, such as George Qā‘ī, Antoine Remī, Rida Myassar, and Fārūq ‘Ajramah, thereby creating a pattern of films concerned with entertaining the public, yet void of cinematic innovation and thematic maturity. Therefore, the influence of one of the leading characteristics in Egyptian cinema - the melodramatic/musical entertainment milieu - had already been sown in Lebanon before the formal arrival of the Egyptian film operations to Lebanon in 1962.

The second level of Egyptian influence started with the establishment of the Egyptian film operations in Beirut (1962-1974). These operations, as discussed earlier in this chapter, changed the Lebanese filmmaking industry from a small industry into a large industry bringing in its wake various structural changes and requirements for such an industry (Chapters 5 & 6).
Key Figures in the Development of Lebanese Cinema

The early stages of Lebanese cinema witnessed very few people who were interested to work in this field: Jordano Pidutti, Rashid 'Ali Sha'bān, Herta Garghūr, George Costi, and 'Ali al-'Aris. Jurdano Pidutti is considered the father of Lebanese cinema. All available documents denote Pidutti as the first person to make a film in Lebanon, *The Adventures of Elias Mabrūk* (1929). The importance of Pidutti’s contribution to Lebanese filmmaking lies in introducing the art and process of filmmaking to Lebanon, and also in creating an interest in this field among several Lebanese personalities, such as Rashid 'Ali Sha'bān - the producer and co-director of *The Adventures of Abu 'Abd* - and Pidutti’s friends who helped him in the making of *The Adventures of Elias Mabrūk*.

If Jordano Pidutti is the father of Lebanese cinema, Rashid 'Ali Sha'bān is the father of local popular cinema [*al-sinima al-sha 'b^ali*] because he was the first Lebanese to bring local, working class tales and theme to the movies in *The Adventures of Abu 'Abd* (1931). In addition to developing the film’s idea and working closely with Pidutti in making the film, Sha'bān introduced the concept of film producing to Lebanon by financing the film.

Pidutti and Sha'bān are the only known film pioneers from the era of Lebanese silent cinema. They were successful in initiating a film production atmosphere that was soon after continued by Herta Garghūr in 1933 who, in cooperation with film exhibitors Niqūla Qattān and George Haddād, established Lumnar Film Company, the first Lebanese film production company. By establishing Lumnar Film, Garghūr laid the foundation for the film industry in Lebanon, a foundation based on the three basic sectors
of film business: production, distribution, and exhibition. Garghūr recognized the importance of these three sectors by incorporating the mentioned film exhibitors as investors in the production company. In this manner, the exhibition of Lumnar’s production could always be guaranteed. Upon the production of the company’s first and only long feature film, Lumnar exhibited the film at Empire Cinema, which was conveniently owned by Qaṭṭān and Ḥaddād.

Herta Garghūr also recognized the necessity of skilled personnel in the field of filmmaking who could take charge of the technical aspect of Lumnar’s film productions. The company sent George Costi to a six month workshop at the Pathé Studios in Paris to study and train in all aspects of filmmaking. Costi was the first Lebanese to study filmmaking and to work outside Lebanon. He was in charge of the developing, processing and editing of In the Ruins of Baʿalbak.

In the fifties, three key figures - George Naṣr, Muḥammad Salmān, and Michael Hārūn - moved Lebanese cinema into three different directions. Salmān pushed Lebanese cinema toward commercialism by founding a strong production trend in the footsteps of the Egyptian melodramatic/musical, entertainment milieu. George Naṣr directed Lebanese cinema toward a higher plane of production incorporating artistic and thematic distinction founded on social and political realism. Naṣr, the most influential contributor to Lebanese cinema, introduced the realism genre to Lebanese filmmaking in 1957 with his film debut, Where To?. In addition, he was the first Lebanese filmmaker to participate in international film competitions, such as Cannes and Moscow’s film festivals. His film education in the United States, coupled with his training in Paris and
in the United States, contributed immensely to his creative cinematic talent. In the other corner, Hârün represented a midway direction compared to Salmân and Nasr. Hârün attempted to lead Lebanese cinema in a more socially responsible, melodramatic direction. Hârün’s contribution lies in asserting the Lebanese identity of Lebanese cinema by introducing the Lebanese local dialect in his film Red Flowers as opposed to using the classical Arabic which was customary at the time.

In the seventies, the two young filmmakers, Burhân ‘Alawîyah and Mârün Baghdâdî, were the most influential and major contributors to the Lebanese cinema. Both filmmakers rediscovered political cinema, each in his own way representative of their own political and social backgrounds. While ‘Alawîyah reinforced the Arab identity of Lebanon and the solidarity with the Palestinian cause in his film Kafr Qâsim (1974), Baghdâdî in Beirut, Beirut (1975) dissected the inauspicious Lebanese social structure with emphasis on its religious and political contradictions. ‘Alawîyah and Baghdâdî were successful in marrying artistic excellence with mature social and political commentary. Similarly, Munîr Ma’âsri’s contribution to Lebanese cinema was in the demonstration of his superior acting abilities and his filmmaking sensitivity. His sole film, The Destiny (1972), was not less important than any other “serious” film made in the history of Lebanese cinema. His film adaptation of John Steinbeck’s The Pearl signified the dramatic maturity and sophistication of Ma’âsri.

It is important to mention at this juncture that the major contributors to “serious” direction in Lebanese cinema, starting from the fifties, were young filmmakers who studied filmmaking in Western institutes, such as UCLA (George Nasr), the IDHEC...
(Baghdâdî), and INSAS (‘Alawîyah) or studied related dramatic arts, such as Ma‘âṣri who studied theater. Moreover, ‘Alawîyah and Baghdâdî represented, to a great extent, the mentality of the student class that was forming in Lebanon toward the late sixties. This background, as seen in their films, helped them look beneath the surface of the status quo in Lebanese politics and social life.

Recommendations for Further Studies

In addition to the necessity of research in the aesthetic history of Lebanese cinema which this research was unable to decipher, several issues arose from the discourse of this research that caught my attention. These issues can be the focus of further research that may ultimately lead to the understanding of Lebanese film as an art form and a social form of expression. The following is a list of these issues:

1) The representation of women in film and its correspondence with the stature of women within the Lebanese society.

2) The issue of dialect in Lebanese films. A study of the use of the Lebanese dialect versus the classical Arabic in respect to their limitations and relevancy to the Lebanese society and the rest of the Arab countries. How can a Lebanese film be true to its society when it speaks a foreign dialect?

3) The issue of sexuality and its representation in Lebanese films.

4) The role of censorship and its effect on the filmmaker’s freedom of expression?

5) The influence of film genres and Western thought on Lebanese filmmakers and their films, and especially those filmmakers who studied in Western film schools.

6) The role of religious life in the Lebanese society and its relation to the filmmaking industry.
7) The nature of documentary filmmaking in Lebanon and the circumstances and environment under which this trend of filmmaking evolved and developed to become a major portion of Lebanese cinema.

8) Present marketing strategies developed by filmmakers in terms of film content and appeal to widen the circulation of Lebanese films in Europe and the United States.

9) The nature of the video culture in Lebanon and its effects on the Lebanese film industry.

10) The contribution of film and video school programs found in Lebanon to filmmaking and the video culture.

11) The issue of television and its effect on the film industry especially under the present increase in the number of television stations in Lebanon.

Reflection

In my view, the ability for a small film industry, such as Lebanon’s, to become a successful art and entertainment industry depends upon the level of governmental and public involvement and the government’s will to nurture such an industry. This could be done through the initiation of funding programs that would enable independent filmmakers to produce “good” films, not necessarily “serious” in this sense of their tragic rigidity, rather films that are not under the mercy and pressure of their private investors/ producers most of whom are motivated by generating monetary profit. This governmental practice has proven successful in other Arab countries where the governments supported their respective film industries, such as the case in Algeria, Morocco, Syria, and especially Egypt in the early sixties, by establishing public film sectors where the state provided the funds for film productions.
The experience in filmmaking for Lebanon was somehow different than that of other Arab countries with major film industries. This experience, nonetheless, was the result of the difference in the economical and socio-political life Lebanon lived. In the sixties, the Lebanese film industry burgeoned with the flourishing of Lebanon’s economy. While, in the seventies, this industry suffered financially because of the economy’s deterioration as a result of the political awakening and instability. However, this decade witnessed the formation of a cinematic front that was concerned with Lebanon’s social environment and its political structure, giving way to a number of talented filmmakers producing a number of quality, socially constructive films (Ma‘āṣri’s *The Destiny*, ‘Alawīyah’s *Kafr Qāsim*, and Baghdādi’s *Beirut, Beirut*).

The Lebanese government has never shown interest in supporting the country’s film industry. This disinterest is, perhaps, best explained as a reflection of the country’s system of free economy where everyone is to make his own way. However, the concept of free economy does not prohibit governmental support to the arts. Western countries with capitalist systems are exemplary in their support to the arts where millions of dollars are annually given in support of the different fields and art forms including film and video making.

The Lebanese film industry could be improved by establishing a vigorous program for the support of the arts, in general. Such a program could be best accomplished if initiated by a governmental institution, such as the National Center for Cinema and Television or something similar to the National Endowment to the Arts present in the United States. The program’s budget could be allocated from income taxes, film ticket
sales taxes, and other resources the government possesses. Public institutions and large companies could also be very helpful in providing financial support of this program. Lebanon should be responsible for the sponsoring of its own filmmakers instead of leaving them at the door steps of European Arts Agencies mainly in France, Belgium, England and, to a lesser degree, the United States.

In my view, the disinterest in supporting filmmaking in Lebanon rises from the lack of appreciation of this art by both the governmental institutions and the public. I believe that the dilemma of the Lebanese film industry is a financial dilemma representing a cultural phenomenon of the public’s disinterest in supporting artistic expressions. The arts are ways people, nations, and civilizations express themselves. When an art form suffers in a society due to a deficiency in funding, this signifies the society’s inappreciation and apathy of that art form; thus, the fundamental fabric of that society is weakened.
APPENDIX A
THE LEBANESE FILMOGRAPHY
NARRATIVE FILMS
1929 - 1980

208
The Adventures of Elias Mabrûk  Mughâmârât Elias Mabrûk (1929) مغامرات إلياس مبروك

The Adventures of Abu 'Abd  Mughâmârât Abu 'Abd (1931) مغامرات أبو العبد

In the Ruins of Ba‘ibak  Baynâ Hayâkil Ba‘abalb (1936) بين هياكل بعلبك

The Florist / Bâ’i‘at al-Ward (1943) بائعة الورد

Kawkab: Princess of the Desert / Kawkab Amrât al-Sahra’ (1946) كوكب أميرة الصحراء

Summer in Lebanon / Al-Sayf fî Lubnân (1946) الصيف في لبنان
Directed by Salâh Badrakhân. B/W

Summer Season in Lebanon / Al-Istiyaf fî Lubnan (1947) الأعتصاف في لبنان
Directed by Bisharah Wakîm.

The Bride of Lebanon / ‘Arûs Lubnân (1951) عروس لبنان
Directed by Husayn Fawzî. Produced by Tura Film (Lebanon). Cast: Husayn Fawzî, Muhammad Salmân, Muhammad Shâmil, Hanân, Hasan Fâyiq (E), and Hâjar (E).

Remorse / Adhâb al-Datrir (1953) عذاب الضمير

Red Flowers / Zuhâr Hamrâ’a (1957) زهور حمراء
The First Melody Al-Lahn al-Awwal (1957)
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān. Produced by Ṣabbāh and Fawwāz Brothers. Starring Najāh Salām.

Where to? 'Ilā Ayn? (1957)

Love Festival Mahrajān al-Hubb (1958)

Memories Dhikrayāt (1958)

For Whom Does the Sun Rise? Līman Tushriq al-Shams (1958)

Appointment with the Conscience Mawʿid maʿ al-Damir (1958)

The Melodies of My Sweetheart Anghām Habībatī (1959)
Directed and Screenplay by Muḥammad Salmān. Starring Najāh Salām.

The Rock of Love ʿAḥmat al-Hubb (1959)

Days of My Life Ayyām min ʿUmṛ (1959)

Two Hearts and One Body Qalbān wa ʿAṣād (1959)
The Judgement of Destiny / Hukm al-Qadar (1959)

I Am Not Guilty / Lastu Mudhnibah (1960)
Directed by Ibrâhim Taqqûsh. Starring: Nawal Farîd.

Fire in Her Heart / Fi Qalbihâ Nâr (1960)
Directed by Ahmad al-Tukhî.

The Killing Necklace / Al-‘Aqd al-Qatîl (1960)
Directed by Ibrâhim Taqqûsh.

The Birth of the Messenger / Mawlid al-Rasul (1961)
Directed by Ahmad al-Tukhî.

The Temple of Love / Ma’bad al-Hubb (1961)

White Poison / Al-Samm al-Abbyad (1961)
Directed by George Qât. Cast: Nazhah Yûnus, Ihsân Sâdiq, and Nawal Farîd.

Stranger in the House / Fi al-Dar Gharîbah (1961)
Directed by Joseph Fahdah. Starring Nawal Farid

The Knight and the Bandit / Al-Faris wa al-Shaqî (1961)

The Little Stranger / Al-Ghanb al-Sagîr (1961)

Greetings to Love / Marhaba Ayyuha al-Hubb (1962)

Abu Salîm in the City / Abu Salîm fî al-Madîna (1962)
Directed by HORT Shams. Starring Salâh Tizāni (Abu Salîm).
The Devil's Chariot / 'Arabat al-Shaytān (1962)
Directed by George Qā'ī. Starring Nazhah Yūnus and Ihsān Sādiq.

Lebanon at Night / Lubnān fī al-Layl (1963)
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān

Love Story / Hikāyat Gharām (1963)

The Wonders of Love / Yā Salām al-Hubb (1963)
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān

The Watchful Eye / Al-‘Ayn al-Sāhirah (1963)
Directed by Garabidīan.

Shaṣṣū and the Million / Shaṣṣū wa al-Malyūn (1963)

Master Craftsman Lattūf / Al-Mu‘allim Lattūf (1963)
Directed by Kāmil Qustandi

The Bedouin Woman in Love / Al-Badawiyah al-‘Àshiqah (1963)

The Messenger of Love / Rasūl al-Gharām (1963)
Directed by Yūsuf Ma‘lūf.

You Are My Life / Anta 'Umri (1964)
Directed by George Qā’ī and Muḥammad Salmān. Screenplay by Muḥammad Salmān. Adapted from George Cukor’s film Let’s Make Love (1960).

The Broken Wings / Al-Ajnīnah al-Mutakassirah (1964)
The Pearl Necklace / ʿUqḍ al-Lūṭī (1964)

The Desert Beauty / Ḥasnāʾ al-Bādiyah (1964)
Directed by Sayf al-Dīn Shawkat

A Bedouin Woman in Paris / Badawīyah fī Paris (1964)

O Night / Yā Layl (1964)
Directed by Gary Garabidian. Starring Philip ʿAqiql.

Beloved of All / Ḥābībat al-Kull (1964)
Directed by Rida Myassar

The Idol of the Crowds / Fātīnāt al-Janālīr (1964)
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān

ʿAntar's Daughter / Bint ʿAntar (1964)

The Mountain Singer / Shādiyāt al-Jabal (1964)
Directed by Ahmad Dīyāʾ al-Dīn.

The Joys of Youth / Afrāḥ al-Shabāb (1964)
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān.

The Bank / Al-Bank (1965)

The Ring Seller / Bayyāʾal-Khawātim (1965)

213
A Bedouin Woman in Rome / Badawiyyah fi Roma (1965)

The Colossi / Al-Jabâbirah (1965)
Directed by Ħasîb Shams. Cast: John Sa‘âdah, Andre Sa‘âdah, Ţarûb and Ghassân Matar. B/W.

I Am Born Again / Wulidtu min JadM (1965)

The Bitter Honey / Al-‘Asal al-Murr (1965)

Youth and Beauty / Al-Sibâ wa al-Jarrô (1965)

The Black Jaguar / Al-Jakwar al-Sawdâ’ (1965)

At the Service of Love / Bi-amr al-Hubb (1965)

Abu Salîm in Africa / Abu Salîm fi Afrikiyyah (1965)

Gâro / Gæro (1965)

Nights of the Orient / Laylîl-al-Sharq (1965)

Naked Without Sin / ‘Ariyat bila Khati’ah (1965)
Directed by Alexander Costanov. (Lebanon-Syria).
The Body's Fire / Lahib al-Jasad (1965)

The Nun / Al-Râhibah (1965)

The Millionairess / Al-Milionerah (1965)

Reproof / 'Itâb (1965)

The Spoiled One / Al-Dallû'âh (1965)

Youth in the Sun / Shabab Taht al-Shams (1965)
Directed by Sanîr Nâsîri. Cast: Munâ Sa'd, Rene Hilû and Walîd Khâtir. B/W;

Sultana / Sultanah (1965)

I Confess / Inm A 'tarif (1965)
Directed by Gary Garabidian. Cast: Nazhah Yunus and Munîr Ma'âsri. B/W.

Beautiful Nights / Al-LayaE al-Hulwah (1965)

The Hostage / Al-Ra'hânah (1966)
For Women Only / Lil-Nisā' Faqat (1966)

Farwell to Poverty / Wadâ‘an Ayyuhâ al-Faqr (1966)

Directed by Hasîb Shams. Cast: Târûb and Ghassân Maṭâr. (Lebanon-Italy).

The Adventures of Shushu / Mughâmatât Shüshü (1966)

Room No. 7 / Al-Ghurfah Raqûm Sab’ah (1966)

Golden Sand / Rimâl min Dhahab (1966)

Valley of Death / Wâdî al-Mawt (1966)

The Conquerors / Al-Qâhirûn (1966)

The Misty Avenue / Shâ‘rî‘ al-Dabâb (1966)
Beirut Zero II / Bayrût Sifr II (1966)

Mawal / Mawwâl al-Aqdâm al-Dhahabîyâh (1966)

Goodbye Lebanon / Wâdâ'an yâ Lubnân (1966)

Love in Istanbul / Gharâm fî Istanbul (1966)

The Wanderers / Al-Sharîdân (1966)

Meeting in Tadmur / Liqâ’ fî Tadmûr (1966)

The Fire of Love / Nâr al-Hubb (1967)

Safar Barlik / Safar Barlik (1967)

217
Father Shirb il Al-Abb Shirb il (1967)
Directed by Nqülā Abu Samah.

The Game of Fortune : Lu 'bat al-Haζ (1967)
Directed by Fârüq 'Ajramah. Story by Fârüq 'Ajramah.
Cinematography by Mas 'ûd 'Isá. Produced by Adib Jabir and Fârüq 'Ajramah. Fann Film Production. Cast: Fāridah Hātimā (Iran), 'Abd Allah Būtimār (Iran), Nâdyā Jamāl, Ibrāhīm Khān (Sudan), Joseph Nano, 'Umar al-Ḥarīrī (Egypt), Samīrah Lāmā, Buthāynah Sālim, and Sayyid Mughrabī.

Welcome to Love / Ahlan bi-al-Ḥubb (1967)

Revenge of the Bedouin Woman / Intiqâm al-Badawīyah (1967)

The Fugitive / Al-Tarāl (1967)


Take Your Hands Off My Wife / 'Idak 'an Mirātī (1967)

The Cavalier of Love / Fursān al-Gharām (1967)
Kingdom of the Impoverished / Mamlikat al-Fuqarā' (1967)

The Victory of the Defeated / Intisār al-Munhazim (1967)

I am ‘Antar / Anā ’Antar (1967)

The Dumb and Love / Al-Akhras wa al-Hubb (1967)


The Road of Sins / Tarīq al-Khatfā (1968)

Blood Triangle / Al-Muthallath al-Dāmī (1968)

The Middle East Is Burning / Al-Sharq al-Awsat Yahtariq (1968)
Trip of Happiness / Rihlat al-Sa ‘ïdah (1968)

The Hawk of Arabs / Saqr al-‘Arab (1968)
Directed by Rida Myassar.

The Night Guard’s Daughter / Bint al-Hâris (1968)

Endless Road / Tarîq Bilâñahîyah (1968)

Thief of the Millions / Sâriq al-Malâym (1968)

The Women Gang / ‘Isâbat al-Nisa’ (1968)

The Cursed / Al-Mal ‘âm (1968)

Sinful Mary / Maryam al-KhSti ‘ah (1968)
The Handsome Thief / Al-Liss al-Zarif (1968)

The Meeting of Strangers / Liqa' al-Ghuraba' (1968)

Great Love / Al-Hubb al-Kabir (1968)

The Blind / Al-'Amya' (1969)

We're All Fedayeen / Kullun Fidaiyyin (1969)

The Rebellious Palestinian / Al-Filistin al-Thair (1969)

For Your Sake Palestine / Min Ajliki Filistin (1969)
The Devil / Al-Shaytān (1969)

Heroes and Women / Abtāl wa Nisā’ (1969)


The Desert Blind / A‘mā al-Bādiyā (1969)

Ladies Taylor / Khayyāt lil-Sayyidât (1969)

Longing Fire / Nār al-Shawq (1969)

I’m Not Negligent / Lastu Mustahtirah (1969)

222
The Hotel of Happiness  Fundūq al-Sa‘ādah (1970)

The Bells of Return / Ajrās al-‘Awdah (1970)

Misguidance / Al-Dayā‘ (1970)

Women Without Future / Nisā’ Bilā Ghad (1970)

Nada / Nadā (1971)

End of the Road / Àkhir al-Tarij (1971)

The Best Days of My Life / Ajmal Ayyām Ḥayātī (1971)

Waves / Amwāj (1971)
Paris and Love / Paris wa al-Hubb (1971)

Directed by Muhammad Salmân. Screenplay by Muhammad 'Uthmân. Adapted from La Sauvage, a play written by Jean Aniou. Cinematography by Rober Tambã. Cast: Sabâh, Şalâh dhû al-Fuqâr, Yüsuf Sha'bân, and Muhammed Rida.

Peace After Death / Al-Salâm ba' da al-Mawt (1971)


Black Moons' Lady / Sayyidat al-Aqmûr al-Sawdâ' (1971)


Teenager's Madness / Junmûn al-Murâhîqût (1971)


Hundred Faces for One Day / Mi'at Wajh li Yawm Wahad (1972)


My Wife Is a Hippy / Zawjâtî min al-Hippiz (1972)


Wolves That Don't Eat Meat / Dhi 'âb lâ Ta'kul al-Lahm (1972)

Love and Money / Al-Hubb wa al-Fulūs (1972) 

The World's Greatest Child / ʿAm Tīfī al-ʿĀlam (1972) 

Hamra Street Cats / Qitāt Shariʿ al-Hamra (1972) 

A Bedouin in Beirut / Badawīyah fī Bayrūt (1972) 

Destiny / Al-Qadar (1972) 

The Queen of Love / Malikat al-Hubb (1973) 

The Guitar of Love / Gītār al-Hubb (1973) 

The Queen and I / Al-Malikah wa Anā (1973) 

Words in Love / Kalām fī al-Hubb (1973) 
Directed by Muḥammad Salmān.

225
Pants and Mini Skirt 'Shirwāl wa Minī Joup (1973)

Kafr Qāsim 'Kafr Qāsim (1974)

My Love / Hābhatī (1974)

Melody in My Life / Nagham fī Hayātī (1974)

The Prisoner / Al-Asrāh (1974)

One Man Is Wanted / Al-Matlūb Raju’ Wāhad (1974)

The Great Prize / Al-Jā’izah al-Kubrā (1974)


Bye Bye Sweetie / Bay Bay yā Ḥilwah (1974)
Directed by ‘Ātīf Sālim.
Beirut, Beirut: Bayrûtya Bayrut (1975)

The Steadfast Man Al-Rajul al-Sâmid (1975)

Earth’s Wedding / Urs al-Ard (1978)

Difficult Women / Fatayât al-Raqm al-Sâ‘ib (1978)

The Beauty and the Giants / Hasnâ’ wa ‘Amâliqah (1979)

The Last Passage / Al-Mamar al-Akhs- (1980)

End of the Summer / Akhir al-Sayf (1980)

The Shelter / Al-Malja’ (1980/81)
APPENDIX B

FILM STILLS OF LEBANESE NARRATIVE FILMS

1929 - 1978
Figure 2. A scene from Jordano Pidutti's first film *The Adventures of Elias Mabnîk* (1929). Elias Mabnîk (Müstafa Qlaylât) and his wife (Malibo Casnipo) - standing in the middle - watch two men performing a folklore dance at the *Ghlayînî* cafe in Beirut.

Figure 3. A scene from Michael Harûn's *Red Flowers* (1957) the first Lebanese film in Lebanese local dialect.
Figure 4. From right: Shakîb Khûrî (Sa‘îd), Lûr ‘Âzâr, and Nazhah Yûnus in a scene from George Naṣr’s Where To? (1957), the first Lebanese film to represent Lebanon at an international film festival - Cannes Film Festival, 1957.

Figure 5. Tony Ni‘mah (left) and Lucyanne Harb in a scene from George Qâ‘î’s film, Memories (1958).
Figure 6. Director George Nasr and cinematographer Ibrāhīm Shāmāt during the filming of *The Little Stranger* (1961)

Figure 7. Nazhah Yūnus (right) in George Qā'ī's *The Devil's Chariot* (1962)
Figure 8. Pierre Salâmah (right) and Nidâl al-Ashqar (left) in Yusuf Ma‘lûf’s *The Broken Wings* (1964).

Figure 9. Durayd Lahhâm (left) and Nihâd Qal‘î (right) in Yusuf Ma‘lûf’s *‘Uqd al- Lûlû* (1964).
Figure 10. Nasrî Shamms al-Dîn (left) and Fayrûz (to his left) in Yûsuf Shâhîn’s *The Ring Seller* (1965)

Figure 11. Samîrah Tawfiq and Amâl Murâd (front) in Fârüq ‘Ajramah’s *The Conquerors* (1966)
Figure 12. Sabāh (right) in Muhammad Salmān’s *Mawwāl* (1966)

Figure 13. Tarūb (left) and Ibrāhīm Khān (right) in Fārūq ‘Ajramah’s *Farwell to Poverty* (1966)
Figure 14. İhsan Sädiq (left) and Fayrûz (right) in Henri Barakât’s Safar Barlik (1967)

Figure 15. Fayrûz (left) and Marcelle Marînä (right) in Henri Barakât’s The Night Guard’s Daughter (1968)
Figure 16. Maryam Fakhr al-Dîn (left) and Fahd Ballân (right) in Alber Najîb’s *Where is My Love?* (1967)

Figure 17. Munâ Sa‘id (left) and Sâmi ‘Aţtâr (right) in Samîr Nasrî’s *The Victory of the Loser* (1967)
Figure 18. ‘Āydh Hilâl (right) in Simon Şâlih’s Sinful Mary (1968)

Figure 19. Fâtin Hamâmah (left) and Farîd al-Âtrash (right) in Henri Barakât’s Great Love (1968)
Figure 20. Akram (Ghassān Matar) under interrogation by Israeli soldiers in Riḍa Myассar’s *The Rebellious Palestinian* (1969)

Figure 21. During the filming of Gary Garabidian’s *We’re All Fedayeen* (1969)
Figure 22. From left: Mahnūd Sa‘īd, Sanā‘ Jamīl and Tal‘at Ḥamdī in Antoine Rime’s *For Your Sake Palestine* (1969)

Figure 23. Nāhid Yusrī (left) and Ḥasan Yūsuf (right) in Nayāzī Muṣṭafā’s *Women Without Future* (1970)
Figure 24. Nāhid Yusrī in Samīr Khūrī’s *Black Moons‘ Lady* (1971)

Figure 25. A scene from Samīr al-Ghusaynī’s film, *Hamra Street Cats* (1972)
Figure 26. Habībah (left) and Munīr Ma'āṣri (right) in Munīr Ma'āṣri’s *The Destiny* (1972)

Figure 27. Huwaydah (right) in ‘Ātif Sālim’s *My Wife is a Hippy* (1972)
Figure 28. A scene from Burhān ‘Alawiyah’s film, *Kafr Qāsim* (1974) where several Kafr Qāsim citizens lie dead after being shot by Israeli soldiers.

Figure 29. Mūray Ma'lūf (left) and 'Izzat al-'Alāyī in Mārun Baghdaḍī’s *Beirut, Beirut* (1975).
Figure 30. A scene from Şubhî Sayf al-Dîn's *The Steadfast Man* (1975)

Figure 31. Hind 'Umrû (left) and Ighrâ' (right) in Şubhî Sayf al-Dîn's *Earth's Wedding* (1978)
Chapter II

1 Salibî (1978) wrote that the term Mount Lebanon in the 18th century was given to the far Northern regions of the mountains inhabited by the Maronites such as, Bishirî, al-Brūnî, and Jubayl.


5 In Al-Naqqâsh, M. (1869). Arzat Lubnân. Beirut: Al-Matba‘ah al-'Umûmîyah, Nqûlû al-Naqqâsh, Mârûn’s brother, states in the introduction of that the play, al-Bakhîl was presented in Beirut in February 1848. The book includes the scripts for Mârûn’s three plays, al-Bakhîl, Abu Hasan al-Mughaffal, and al-Salî al-Hasûd. It is clear from Mârûn’s musical instructions in the script for Al-Bakhîl that this play was an opera.

Chapter VI

1 The massacre of Dir Yassin was committed by the two terrorist societies, Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Sternists, commanded by Menachem Begin against a Palestinian village called Dayr Yâsîn (Dir Yassin) on the 8th of April, 1948, where 254 men, women and children were killed. The massacre was first reported by Monsieur Jacques de Reynier, the Chief Red Cross representative in Palestine on the 10th of April, 1948 when he made the first visit to the village. He documented his observations in. Reynier, M. J. (1969). 1948 A Jérusalem. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière. pp.69-82. See also, Sykes, C. (1973). Crossroads to Israel. Bloomington: Indiana University. pp 351-352.

254
Army service in Israel is mandatory to all youth at the age of eighteen for three consecutive years. After the completion of this term, yearly reserve service commences for all men. Students continuing their education in university programs have to fulfill their three year service after graduation.

Chapter VII


2 The crisis of national identity erupted several times in Lebanon. The most severe incident took place after the defeat of Turky in WWI with the establishment of the short lived Arab Kingdom in Syria by Prince Faisal, and later on with the establishment of Great Lebanon in 1920.

3 Information is obtained from the schedule of film screening in Lebanon published weekly in Film magazine. The specific issue that listed this film is No.19, Feb. 10, 1974.

4 Based on information extracted Beirut cinema’s schedule from Film magazine No’s 20, 21, 22, 23, 23, and 25.

5 The information in Egyptian sources al-Tayyâr (1976) and al-Bandarî (1994) on the cast of the film reported that leading cast of the film were Ghassân Matar and Gladis Abu Jawdah. This information is incorrect. From the documents and photographs furbished by the National Center of Cinema in Lebanon (1972), and the Fourth International Festival of Cinema Days at Cartage (1972) the correct leading cast of the film are Munîr Ma‘âsri, Ḥabībah, Joseph Nâno, and Nâdyâ Jamâl.
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248


