

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

WAR/FILM JUNKIES: THE HOLLYWOODIZATION OF THE
LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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In this project, I intend to explore some of the Lebanese Civil War militiamen's war texts produced during the war that dissolve with Post-Vietnam American War films as amplified versions of hyper-masculinity. I argue that these war texts represent intensely Herculean war/film junkies or street stars –in highly visible and re-configured heterotopic-like settings of war, that underscore their hyper-masculine performances. With varying degrees, these war texts or visual representations of war signify hard-body militiamen who transform in Lacanian processes of identification and transmogrify to become the film heroes themselves, in displays of self-aggrandizement. All this suggests a revelatory idea: Post-Vietnam American war films, among other timely factors, led to the Hollywoodization of the Lebanese Civil War, which turned out to be its possible sequel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
ILLUSTRATIONS	5
CHAPTER I. LACANIAN PROCESSES OF IDENTIFICATION/ DISPLAYS OF SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT	6
CHAPTER II. THE RISE OF WAR/FILM JUNKIES: STREET STARS OVER METALLIC STALLIONS	13
CHAPTER III. HARD BODIES: HOLLYWOOD MASCULINITY AND FREE-TICKET CINEMA	35
CHAPTER IV. EMPTY, SHELL-SCARRED PANOPTICON OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR (1976) / THE CITY-MILIEU AS WEAPON.....	63
CHAPTER V. THE HOLLYWOODIZATION OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR	96
APPENDIX	100
FILMOGRAPHY	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1. Painting of Soldier	15
2. Mural, Lebanese Civil War	19
3. Palestinian Fighter training in Beirut	20
4. Palestinian fighters training in Beirut	21
5. Christian Phalange Gunmen in Holiday Inn	67
6. The Holiday Inn in Its Ruinous state	68
7. The Holiday Inn with Khoury's Signature	70
8. The Holiday Inn	71
9. The destroyed commercial Section of Beirut	72
10. An Old Palestinian Couple	77

Photos

1. Arliss Howard as Private Cowboy	17
2. The Cowboy.....	25
3. The Godfather	28
4. Marlon Brando as Vito Corleone	31
5. Ernst Stavro Blofeld	34
6. The Lebanese Rambo I	46
7. The Lebanese Rambo II	47
8. The Lebanese Rambo III	50
9. The Lebanese Rambo	52
10. Sigourney Weaver	53
11. Robert Hatem	60
12. Robert Hatem	61
13. Robert Hatem	61

Posters

1. First Blood	48
2. First Blood Part II	48

CHAPTER I

LACANIAN PROCESSES OF IDENTIFICATION/ DISPLAYS OF SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT

*“Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates life”
-Oscar Wilde. The Decay of Lying (1889)*

“A man’s got to have a code, a creed to live by, no matter his job.” –John Wayne

During the mid-80s, some Lebanese Civil War militiamen did not look ordinary: They exhibited an excessive masculine distinctiveness that set them apart from the rest. These men who belong to different factions and their highly-visible masculinity, seem to have been the drivers of the violence. Some war/film junkies or street stars –as I choose to call them, had in fact seen Post-Vietnam American war films, during that time and went through a gradual process of physical alteration to the extent they suffered what I call transmogrification -magical transformation or body morphing. In this project, I intend to explore some of the Lebanese Civil War militiamen’s war texts produced during the Lebanese Civil War, that dissolve with Post-Vietnam American War films, as amplified versions of hyper-masculinity.

Such war texts (and by war texts I mean visual texts, or photographs, some staged military training videos, now available on Youtube, the forbidden memoirs of a militiamen, and even architecture) represent Herculean war film junkies or street stars – in highly visible and re-configured heterotopic-like settings of war, that underscore their hyper-masculine performances and violence. War/film junkies or street stars, I argue, are peculiar militiamen of the Lebanese Civil war who display hard bodies and become militarized due to external influences such as exposure to war films, for instance, or more specifically, Post-Vietnam American War films that were produced during the

same period, which in turn represented hard body heroes as a spectacle/construct, that these militiamen, for distinct reasons, sought avidly to imitate, to copy.

With varying degrees, these war texts or visual representations of war signify hard-body militiamen who transform in Lacanian processes of identification and transmogrify to become the film heroes themselves, in displays of self-aggrandizement. These individual, physical adaptations scrutinized in the war texts, along with a sudden interruption of war activities in 1981, led to “moments” of Hollywoodization of the Lebanese Civil War.

War/film Junkies or Street Stars of the Lebanese Civil War are peculiar militiamen who watched war films, during their spare time, imitated the *heroes*, acted out parts, and threw out lines. They talked like them, walked like them and copied their war/film act in the real war, and a few were even named after them to the extent they became the film heroes, themselves. Curiously, they displayed guns/weaponry that articulated their hyper-masculine dominance and viciousness, in an attempt to transform both physically and mentally: Sune Haugbolle suggests “Guns in hands, boys become men.” (Haugbolle 120) and “men become soldiers when they put on a uniform.” (Fig.1) (Sokolowska-Paryz 21) It is immediately identifiable that the male body is much more than just a body. It is a becoming. “[A] vehicle of display of musculature, of beauty, of physical feats and a gritty toughness.” (Jeffords, 1993, 245) Once the gun is added, it ultimately becomes an extension: A phallus, so to speak.

I conduct a semiotic analysis of the photographs of the Cowboy, the Godfather, the Lebanese Rambo, Cobra-HK and parts of his controversial book: *From Israel to Damascus*, as well as two YouTube videos of the Lebanese Rambo produced during the war. Such War/film junkies or street stars “become” hyper-masculine in a gradual

process; a sociological term denoting exaggerated forms of masculinity, virility and physicality (Encyclopedia Britannica).

My intent in this research paper is to deconstruct the relationship between Lebanese Civil War militiamen's war texts and Post-Vietnam American war films, and to study them as amplified visual representations of war. As I go forward with this research, I will be asking the following questions: What are the texts about? Who produced them? What do they have in common as narrative? How do they amplify hyper-masculinity? I will look at war film, gender studies, and semiology to cognize such dynamics. Why did some of the Lebanese Civil War (LCW) militiamen name themselves after Post-Vietnam war films heroes and how did war/texts contribute to the Hollywoodization of the Lebanese Civil War itself? are two important questions I address here.

The main purpose of this study is to examine such war texts or visual representations of war which somehow acquire a certain potentiality to become, as a collective body of texts, icons of hyper-masculinity within the dissolve of Post-Vietnam American war films and the Lebanese Civil War. I suggest that some war/film junkies or street stars had undeniably seen such films, and underwent a gradual process of Lacanian identification, then physical alteration to the extent they experienced what I call transmogrification or magical transformation /body morphing. Not only did they watch American war films, or take part in real war battles, but they played "themselves" in some cultural productions early on during the Civil War. They were avid participants within the mentioned dissolve and further articulate their hyper masculinity once they had transmuted corporally in ways unheard of and unseen before. They combine gym workout and military training to achieve these extreme physical alterations.

I also suggest that the spaces these war/film junkies or street stars dwell and occupy for different reasons as well, are *heterotopic-like* because they are somehow re-configured as disturbing, transforming and unwieldy: Foucauldian parallel-spaces that seem real and unreal at the same time and lend themselves to both the real war and its counter-narratives. At the very start of the war, militiamen from different warring factions even sought to capture the high-rise towers in the hotel district: To go up means to capture the city. Paradoxically, the Holiday Inn Hotel stood as the watchtower of the Panopticon of the Lebanese Civil war, during the Battle of the Hotels in the two-years war. (October 1975- March 1976). Borrowing from Bentham, a panopticon is a form of architecture that makes possible a mind-over-mind-type of power. –Only war/film junkies used it for tactical/military purposes. It is a ring-shaped building in the middle of which there is a yard with a tower at the center. The ring is divided into little cells that face the interior and the exterior alike. In each of these little cells there is, depending on the purpose of the institution, a madman living his madness.

There is a shortage of academic literature on Lebanese Civil War militiamen, let alone militiamen who had been influenced by Post-Vietnam American War films specifically. I do not claim that this research will provide an undisputed understanding to how this interaction occurs, but that it will contribute to the body of literature that is yet to grow in this undiscovered territory. This means that the present research will also be filling a gap in the literature about the relation between Lebanese Civil War militiamen and Post-Vietnam American War films and consequent heroes.

Chapter two provides an overview of the Lebanese Civil War militiamen –as a broader concept, within the context of war. Right before the war, a grim reality was unremitting, and this reality accentuated “significant gaps between the haves and have-

nots.” According to Lina Khatib, different classes came to display dissimilar standards. “While there were plenty of empty luxury apartments in Beirut in this period, the suburbs were full of poor migrants living in shantytowns, forming a poverty belt around the city.” (Khatib 8) Primarily, class struggle had precipitated the violent conflicts of the mid-seventies that led to a full-blown war. And yet several questions must be asked:

Where do these peculiar militiamen come from? And how do they seek personal and communal status within these war settings, as hyper-masculinity and war violence traverse? Some war/film junkies or street stars abandon their enclaves, and seek individuality in a new collective that offers a new identity. I examine two street stars, The Cowboy and the Godfather, as substantial war/texts evidence to support my argument. Furthermore, I survey some commentary on the concept as well as some responses from actual perpetrators of war. Later on, some re-emerge within cultural narratives (The film *Circle of Deceit*, for instance,) that re-articulate their hyper-masculine identities as such.

In Chapter three, I take my cue from Mark Taylor and Suzan Jeffords (1993-2004) and survey the Reaganite re-masculinization of America during the 80s as a *point de depart*. Upon the Vietnam defeat, America – which had been *effeminized* (according to Jeffords, 1993) needed some sort of *vindication* and so the Hollywood films catered to that. The need to go back and free POWs creates a sense of hope and renewed hyper masculinity. John Wayne is discussed as an imminent “pre-war” hero. Rambo becomes a film sensation overnight. Reagan himself comments on it. I scrutinize the Lebanese Rambo, a megalomaniac gym addict who combines gym workout and military training to copy Stallone’s character John Rambo in *Rambo: First Blood Part*

II, and Cobra-HK, a brutal war-time thug, as substantial war/texts data to sustain my argument.

In Chapter four, I explore an aspect of war/film that acts as a unifying force in such visual representations of war: the city-milieu. The city –itself, goes through a process of conversion of its own. At the very start of the war, some militiamen even seek to capture the high-rise towers in the hotel district during the infamous “war of the hotels” in (1976 onwards): To go up means to capture the city. I study the Holiday Inn, as space/trope, a point of fortification for the militia that articulates their military supremacy, might and power. In this context, I take a closer look at two films: Volker Schlöndorff’s *Circle of Deceit* (1981) and Maroun Baghdadi’s *Hors La Vie* (1991) as substantial war/texts-markers that additionally support my argument. In *Circle of Deceit* (1981), the blending of reality and the imaginary is a visible fundamental within a physical/contextual setting. For a moment, it gets very confusing: Real actors who are fighters by default playing the parts of militiamen of a war that is fake and yet as it happens. *Hors La Vie*, (1991) or *Outside Life* -in turn, articulates the idea that ex-militiamen were exploited “as victims of clientelism, poverty and limited opportunity in the Lebanese political economy.” (Haughbolle 126 in Picard 1999, 39)

Beirut or the city-milieu in both Lebanese and foreign cinema is not a mere backdrop space. “It is another character with its own story to tell.” (Khatib 60) Georg Lachen in *Circle of Deceit* (1981) seems to run through the city as running through himself. Perrault in *Hors La Vie* (1991) is a French photographer who is kidnapped in war-torn Beirut and attempts to make sense of a senseless life as he tries to maintain his personal dignity in the face of torture and brainwashing while at it. Both narratives depict *outsiders* gradually consumed by the war that surrounds them and broken in its

very spatial deixis by its overwhelming violence. Paradoxically, sites of war become the sets of the films.

Chapter five summarizes the findings of this research, and I project a distinctive idea by way of conclusion. If Post-Vietnam American war films had a huge impact on *perpetrators of war*, supported by substantial evidence of visual representations and war texts that articulate hyper-masculinity and violence; then such war films -Post-Vietnam American war films specifically, must have had an impression on the Lebanese Civil war as a whole, with transformative effects.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF WAR/FILM JUNKIES: STREET STARS OVER METALLIC STALLIONS

“Soldiering is the coward’s art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm’s way when you are weak.”

–George Bernard Shaw (Arms and the Man, 1894)

“An extremely relaxed militiaman on a rooftop points out his rifle and shoots down innocent people on a random street of the city. His nephew wonders about the reasons for such a bloody exercise. The man replies: “I’m shooting people.” His perplexed nephew asks: “But why?” [] “They pay me twenty five Lebanese Pounds (for the head) for every person I kill.” ... [] “How do they know how many you’ve killed?” his nephew asks again. At that point, the man gets upset, because of his nephew’s disrespectful remarks and drops his rifle: “Ain’t I an honest man?” (Abu el Rich 236 / Translated by the author.)

According to the American Psychological Association, Western culture defines specific characteristics to fit the patriarchal ideal masculine construct: “The socialization of masculine ideals starts at a young age and defines ideal masculinity as related to toughness, stoicism, heterosexism, self-sufficient attitudes and lack of emotional sensitivity.” (Wall & Kristjanson, 2005) In this chapter I explore the Lebanese Civil War militiamen –as a broader concept, within the context of war. Several questions must be asked. Where do these peculiar militiamen come from? And how do they seek personal and communal status within these settings, as hyper-masculinity and war violence traverse? Some war/film junkies or street stars abandon their enclaves, and seek individuality in a new collective that offers a new identity.

I examine the Cowboy and the Godfather as substantial war/texts evidence to support my main argument. I survey some commentary on the concept as well as some responses from actual perpetrators of war first; then I present some argumentation to

support that. Later, some re-emerge within cultural narratives (*Circle of Deceit*, for instance,) that re-articulate their hyper-masculine identities as such.

The army as a new collective order, functions as a stepping stone to manliness, “defined as the ability to protect the mother nation and to subordinate women and other men –the conventional stereotype of Middle Eastern ‘honor and shame’ in which manly men defend collective honor in the public realm.” (Haugbolle 120 in Armbrust, 2000, 199) What strikes me most about war films is the violence that it depicts. “War is itself a gendering activity, one of the few remaining true masculine experiences in our society. If war is a true masculine experience, then violence is often the single most evident marker of manhood.” (Khatib 105) When we think about war, we are often thinking hyper-masculinity.

Until February 6, 1984 greater Beirut was under the control of the government. On that day, the Lebanese army was forced to withdraw from West Beirut, which again came under the control of militias and political organizations opposed to the government. (Makdisi et al 21) I recall such an incident: I was at home in Beirut. Militiamen around West Beirut were a spectacle not to be missed. For some reason, they adopted identifiable sub-practices of their own. Their appearance and attire were distinct, tailored for a purpose. The French words of Patrick Baz, a prominent war time photographer, and producer of the Lebanese Rambo image I discuss in depth in Chapter III, best describe some of them/their spectacle: *Ski nautique* (French for water skiing!) - as he labels their jeeps-riding and roaming places at random moments. Ziad Abou Absi, a media scholar, in turn, felt as if they were ‘riding horses.’ Their daily rituals comprised life as it “happened on the eve of the end of the world.” (Baz) You could easily see with naked eyes their constant physical-visual adjustments.

All this evokes one of my earliest memories of war: A graffiti stamped across the bridge wall facing my apartment building in (West) Beirut at the time. Written in classic Arabic, it read: *Sanaj'aal Min' Al Janoub Vietnam Okhra*. (We will make out of the South, [Of Lebanon] another Vietnam!)

This was a clear reference to the fate of the American invaders in the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula, in Southeast Asia, during that seemingly endless war: the Vietnam War, which ended in the same month the Lebanese Civil war started. It's worth mentioning here that the USS New Jersey is the only U.S battleship that provided gunfire support during the Vietnam War; and it also took part in U.S operations during the Lebanese Civil War in 1983. Today, this graffiti, has been amended on an adjacent wall: *Darayeb Mish Rah Nid'faa* (We will not pay taxes!) It is a timely predicament that evokes similar psycho-social paradigms during that period in war-zone Beirut.



Fig. 1- Painting of Soldier (Semaan Khawam / Source: <https://observers.france24.com/en/2010406-lebanese-artist-risks-jail-time-graffiti-soldiers-lebanon-civil-war-christians-muslims-censorship-beirut>)

The Cowboy, I recall, however, from childhood –as I moved back to Lebanon in the early 1980s, was a Lebanese war militia boss of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) whose histrionic stories of killing and muscle you could not do without during war-time in West Beirut. It is important to stress that hyper-masculinity is often times discussed in relation to criminality or violence as an intensification-amplification of hegemonic conceptualization of what constitutes a real man.

The Cowboy or Youssef Fakhr was a Durzi commander in the PSP, from the town of Deir Koubel, “whose membership structure was almost exclusively reserved for the Druze community of the Chouf, Aley and the Upper Metn -had recruited up to 5000 militiamen in the 1980s.” (Picard 9) The PSP had ultimately emerged victorious from the war. The Cowboy left Lebanon many years ago. Upon his return, he was taken into custody and remained in the Military Tribunal, for at least one year. I tried several times to face him for an interview, but to no avail. On May 12, 2017, I sent an official letter to the head of the tribunal requesting an interview with him. After numerous phone communications with a random officer and several visits, I finally received no for an answer, on July 29 of the same year. It was expected. The Cowboy was in legal jeopardy. And I was entangled in a Sisyphean cycle of never-ending waiting. I was fortunate enough to learn that he was released on December 10th, of the same year. And yet my hopes to face him vanished soon. I was never able to track the Cowboy down or make him sit for an interview.

In film, a cowboy is always loaded with guns on a rampant horse. John Wayne is the best example. A highly visual reference-character in my hometown during the 70s as well. Ralph R. Donald (1992) argues that, “for males over the age of 35, the cowboy was one of their earliest images: “the rugged ‘he-man,’ strong, resilient,

resourceful, capable of coping with overwhelming odds,” (Balswick & Peek, 1976) and subsequently visually engaging.

There are so many specimens. Another mighty cowboy that I recall is Robert Duval’s character in Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*. Lieutenant Colonel William ‘Bill’ Kilgore’s lines speak volumes: “Son! Nothing else in the world smells like that. I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed, for 12 hours.”



Photo 1: Arliss Howard as Private Cowboy in Stanley Kubrik’s *Full Metal Jacket*. (1987)
(Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin>)

Arliss Howard as Private Cowboy in Stanley Kubrik’s *Full Metal Jacket*. (1987) is another prominent example. (Photo 1) This cowboy is an upgraded, virile, American version. A Hyper-Masculinity Inventory was even developed by D.L Mosher and M. Sirkin (1984) to measure a macho personality constellation consisting of three components: (a) calloused sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, and (c)

danger as exciting. (Mosher et al.) And this transformative process is gradual, intense and significant.

In *Violence and Masculinity in Maroun Baghdadi's Lebanese War Films*, Lina Khatib (2007) shows how three films use male characters to comment on the non-rational nature of the war, focusing on the representation of violence in the films. Violence is discussed as a condition of masculinity, but also as a performance aiming at the assertion of one's identity.

As the war threatens to usurp people's humanity and sense of self, the male characters in the films struggle with their own masculinities. Baghdadi goes beyond dominant representations of masculinity as spectacle, to highlight the fragile side of the masculinities on display in the films. Khatib argues that the films, viewed in chronological order, show how the Civil War results in a gradual descent into dehumanization in general, and increasingly brings masculinities under threat in particular. She argues that Baghdadi deviates from the classical representations of male heroes depicting instead “a fractured masculinity, a masculinity that is under pressure, that has been found wanting. [] A masculinity that is both the result of war and a catalyst for it. [] While war is presented as a space for the performance of masculinity men derive erotic ecstasy from combat.” (Khatib 73)

Drawing on Stephen Frosh's Lacanian explanation of racism –for instance, Johnson argues that racists (and this applies to war junkies or streets stars who fought against the other, and everything they represented) or ethnic nationalists – “experience ‘immense terror’ when confronted with someone who is so different by virtue of colour, language or culture. They perceive an undermining threat to their ‘precarious sense of ego-integrity’ that is already fragile because of ‘the fragmentation that is central to the

experience of infancy and, indeed, to the experience of modernity itself.” For Johnson, it is the visibility of difference that undermines the abstract sense of homogeneity which so shakily supports the ego The actual image of the ‘other’ is a ‘container’ for their ‘internal otherness.’ (Frosh 1989: 241 in Johnson 175)

Lebanese Civil War militiamen were stubborn and determined fighters, adept at employing guerilla tactics in urban areas. “One Maronite militiaman said in 1979, ‘I think I liquidated in one day all my problems of identity. At the very moment, I got behind the barricade, I became perfectly integrated, totally together.’ Another told how the fighting meant ‘taking one’s future into one’s own hands and forgetting family conventions. And in the same year, a Shi’a militiaman spoke of how he and his comrades fought against ‘the feeling of being cast offs of the Arabs. All that was swept away with the first cartridges I fired. On my mind, it was surely against all this nauseating rottenness that runs through this town: this war purified the country. As a Christian militiaman claimed in 1984, “we are not fighting other Lebanese. We are fighting the Palestinians, the Syrians, the Libyans and all the stupid fanatics of the Third World. [] We’re going to kill them all.” (Fig.2) (Haugbolle 202)



Fig. 2.- Mural, Lebanese Civil War (Color photo) / Tripoli, Lebanon / © Gerard Degeorge / The Bridgeman Art Library. (Item #9851889) Source: <https://www.allposters.com/-sp/Mural-Lebanese-Civil-War Posters>)

Haugbolle asserts that this assembled groups offered an identity (to reckon with,) [and] “provide him with a sense of power and control. (Fig. 3-4) Such feelings are enhanced in fighting the other –as it can be illustrated by testimonies of fighters themselves.” (Haugbolle 202 in Malarkey 1988: 291 and 297; also see Baghdadi and de Freige; ferea 198s.) One fighter in 1979 talked about “the impression of having gone too far. You know, like when you fire a rocket and you hear the cries of children afterward. At the end, I was completely out of touch with everything.” (Haugbolle 203)



Fig. 3- Palestinian Fighters Training in Beirut (1976) Photo © Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-palestinian-fighter-training-in-beirut>)

Another said: “When I think about it, I see myself vomiting gobs. I felt this incomprehensible need to go confess myself afterwards. But I couldn’t tell the priest anything, nothing.” (Haugbolle 203)

Haugbolle claims that “in the heat of battle, however, many fighters experienced elation and a sense of purpose and integration. The fighting was cathartic and

everything permissible: “Raping girls, castrating men, killing children, and cutting open the wombs of pregnant women.” [] As a Shi’a militiaman said in 1984, “war is my only friend. It’s like my wife. I love it. In peace, I feel afraid.” (Haugbolle 203 quoted in Malarkey 1988: 291)



Fig. 4- Palestinian Fighters Training in Beirut (1976) Photo © Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-palestinians-training-in-west-beirut>)

Paradoxically, there is always a need to perform violence as if to emphasize your own existence: “Rape in war, as in many other ethnosexual settings, is best understood as a transaction between men, where women are the currency used in the exchange. [] Women are completely dehumanized, to the point of being nothing more than commodities for trade between men. This is the most extreme representation of

the hegemonic hierarchy of the male, where men are the traders and women are the “currency” (Moore 10)

In *The (Little) Militia Man: Memory and Militarized Masculinity in Lebanon*, Haugbolle (2012) takes a look at militiamen of the Lebanese Civil War as an abstract, iconic signifier in public culture, and specifically how it comes to shape contemporary debates about masculinity. He examines how they are ostracized as villains, and yet may stand for military-masculine virtues of strength and courage; celebrated mnemonically in rituals of public commemoration. Haugbolle analyses three different texts: A series of interviews with former militiamen published in the *Al-Nahar* Newspaper (1998); Yussuf Bazzi’s autobiographical novel, *Yasser Arafat Looked at Me and Smiled* (2007); and Rabih Mroue’s play: *How Nancy Wished That It Was All An April Fools’ Joke*. They involve the life stories of former militiamen in examination of the way in which public culture’s engagement with memories of civil war violence and militia warfare has contributed to the subversion of hegemonic masculinity. While some artists have contributed to common *demonization* of militiamen in an attempt to exonerate the wider population from sectarian violence committed during the war, others have shown how these ‘*perpetrators*’ of war (sometimes repentant) were conditioned by economic and political circumstances. Such cultural producers adopted different ways of attempting to deconstruct militarized identities and point to the persistence of sectarian parties and cults of dead leaders that eulogize past violence.

These texts essentially represent the ‘little’ militia man, in a way, feminized, compared to the militarized, heroic wartime counterpart: A narrative that tries to alleviate a gap between masculinity and fragmented confessional culture that depicts violence as performative and redemptive. Haugbolle makes everlasting impressions

about the war, its peculiarities in a country not so hard to understand in spite of its complex system of confessions. He manages to make insightful claims, drawing on Butler's Speech-act theory he argues that *norms are constituted through repeated patterns of social behavior and speech*. He approaches the task with scrutinizing arguments and drawing on sociological claims. This perspective allows him to analyze the manners in which these very representations and self-representations of militiamen in Lebanon produce specific logics about memory, self and nation. His associations of guns and men and army and *manliness* are particularly insightful: He goes beyond the visible and the obvious to point out other dimensions, such as Middle Eastern 'honor and shame' in which manly men defend collective honor in the public realm.

In turn, Najib Hourani, (2008) in his *The Militiaman Icon: Cinema, Memory, and the Lebanese Civil Wars* argues that the "performative making of the nation" is articulated through three narrations of war. It is only by establishing otherness – a constitutive outside- that the modern nation comes into being. Such narratives put forward social diagrams, divide peoples into typologies, suggest correlations, wed social processes to causal factors, and hide others from view. Filmic treatments draw truth value from conventional histories. –Add to all this the marginalization not only of the poor, but of the average Lebanese from the very nation these films narrate. *The performative making* of the nation is a process in which the nation is not to be taken as the author of narrative memory; instead it is the unstable product of multiple and sometimes contradictory narratives that cohere through a process of "making-other" – defining which groups, behavior and beliefs belong to the nation and which are excluded, marginalized or to be guarded against.

Hourani clearly points to the contrasts and discrepancies that unfold through various dimensions, or layers, through these distinct narratives. The Lebanese want to forget, and yet reality informs otherwise. The marginalization of some elite, or implicit or explicit interpretations of narratives also must in addition be exercised not regardless of the genre and its consequent dramatic ingredients, but rather taking these genres into consideration and how their structure determines certain components and substructures to be exhibited and dealt with. He admits that such narrations are but hybrid documents that contain elements of realities or even “recombinant histories” that “*weave together ‘diverse transnational memories, knowledge formations, and certain logics of representation.’*” (Schwenkel 5) These narratives address a nation, unable to forget, resisting state-sponsored amnesia, clearly evoking scenes from a remote past and an array of circumstances that require aesthetic approach and further processing and consequent interpretations. Both the artists and the public want to pursue their creative limitations with a performance that can help them heal and cleanse.

The films are post-war reconstructions in a post-war urban setting that struggles to develop just like the characters –or the iconic figures – in them. These narratives articulate the artists as humanists unbound by the restriction of the past, and prevented from fulfilling their potential by the onset of the post-war’ combination of amnesia/forgetfulness sentiments and the desires to overcome the burden of cruel memories and physical trauma and consequent quest for sustainable survival. There is an element of endurance that reigns paramount in them.

Moreover, and drawing on the conceptual aspect of war representation, Gillian Rose (2001) claims that in street photography –the photographer has to be there. [In the street,] “tough enough to survive, tough enough to overcome the threats posed by the

street. There is a kind of macho power being celebrated in that account of street photography, in its reiteration of 'toughness.'" (Rose 22) For some reason, toughness applies even to the producers of such images or cultural productions, since it was "tough" to see, to make and most importantly to draw meaning from. Toughness to perform and toughness to produce such performance correlate.

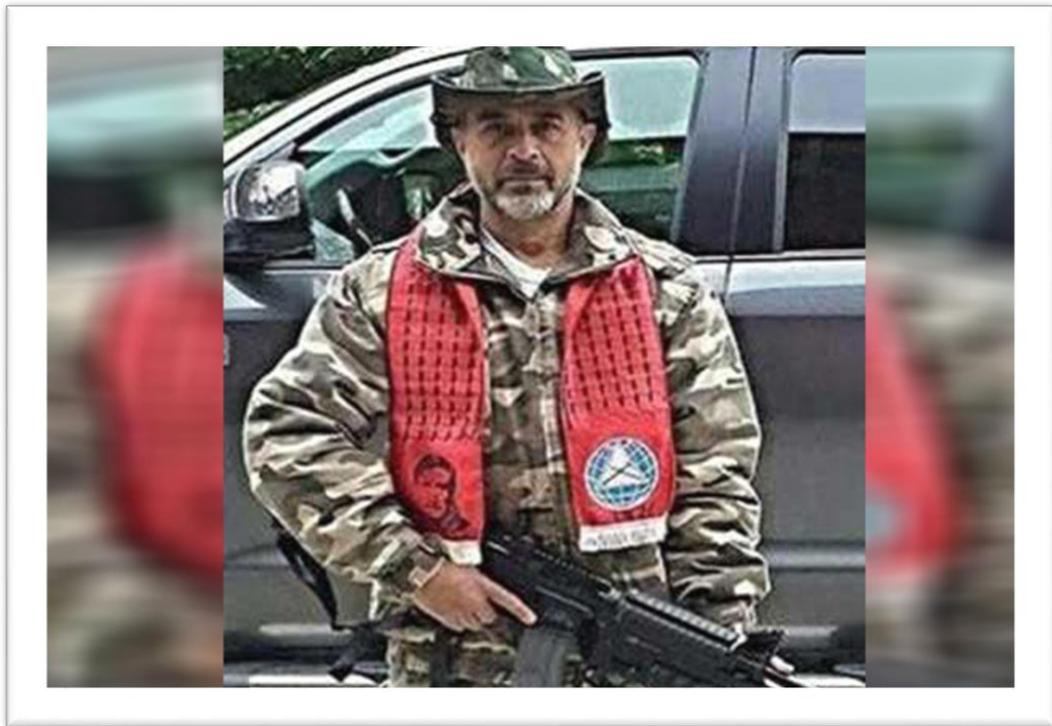


Photo 2. -The Cowboy (Source: <https://www.lebanese-forces.com/2017/06/24/cow-boy/>)

Photo 2 – The Cowboy

In this image, we have a first war/film junkie or street star I have identified: Youssef Fakher, or the "Cowboy" -so called for the traditional hat and trigger-happy posture. Basically, a part of his anatomy, the gun rests just below his navel pointed downwards. His stance may be at ease, but he is one trigger away from firing his weapon, though he may not be so reckless given the fact that his finger is not on the actual trigger. The subject in the photograph is facing the camera. He is looking

straight at the lens. He is emitting confidence with a relaxed military posture that cannot be reversed:

He is wearing a 'Cowboy' hat and hence the alias. He is wearing a jacket and a white t-shirt under it. A red, party-identifying scarf falls on his shoulders with the icons of Kamal Joumlatt on the right side, and the symbol/insignia of the PSP on the left side. Kamal Joumlatt's image depicts him wearing an Arab koufiyya. It is the depiction of a well-known portrait of the Druze leader. "The uniform conceals trauma and, implicitly, it also covers the true nature of combat. [] The hero never takes off his uniform, even when there is not much left of it. Heroes fight and die in uniforms. The uniform legitimates the cause. Yet, soldiers whose minds have been shattered by war desire an escape from the uniform. (Sokolowska-Paryz 30). The subject is carrying a machine gun. What a cowboy's pistol, in the hands of a modern, civil-war time, militarized cowboy should look like. *Taxi Driver's* Travis' khaki jacket with his battalion insignia comes to mind. [A] recurring feature of his wardrobe. It appears in his first scene, as he enters the taxi office in slow motion, and the camera watches him do a half spin toward the personnel man, to the sound of portentous music by Bernard Herrmann. (Corkin 146) Travis, himself, in the film, was a war veteran who was attempting to re-adjust to civilian life with dire consequences.

The Cowboy's face shows ambiguity and rebellion in his frozen act. His back to a parked vehicle with windows closed. The car behind him act as a barrier, a fence, that protects him from the stray bullets. For some reason, the image is split in three parts: the two side-parts of this image are distorted, defocused parts of the actual image of the cowboy. This split reflects his own identity-split: name/alias etc. It conveys the idea of haziness/fogginess that surrounds him or someone like him.

His long hair hides under his hat, (possibly) and yet his white beard reflects age/maturity. You can tell he is assuming his authoritative role even for this random image. His right hand's index finger rests on the machine gun magazine and not on the trigger. His relative facial unresponsiveness does not translate into composure. This image communicates hyper-masculinity and power represented by this legendary militia boss of a Lebanese warring faction. While Fakher's gaze is calm and neutral, there are a lot of facial cues that point to immense fatigue, no doubt a token of war. He has clearly seen combat and is tired of it. Yet, despite his semi-worn-down presentation, he seems alert still, almost painstakingly so. What stands out to me the most is the explicit contrast between our cowboy's camouflage-heavy uniform that is meant to conceal him from view and the boisterous red scarf that asserts a clear bias and pleas for attention. Once again, this man's masculinity is upholstered by the spectacle factor of performance. To quote Judith Butler, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender ... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler, 1990).

A second war/film junkie or street star I have identified is The Godfather. (Photo 3) Aline Manoukian's photograph depicts a Palestinian fighter who holds a kitten in the refugee camp of Bourj Al Barajneh near Beirut airport. It was taken on July 8, 1988, a day after pro-Syrian Abu Mussa's fighters ousted the PLO from the refugee camp, Arafat's last stronghold in Beirut. He clearly exhibits hyper masculine qualities as he attempts to imitate the prominent Marlon Brando's Don Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972) Every image has a number of formal components. [] Some of these components will be caused by the technologies used to make, reproduce or display the image. (Rose 23) In the case of the Godfather, the homochromous aspect of the

photograph and consequent desaturation remove the non-essential from the visuality and keep the most indispensable aspect of virility. It is by all means what Rose calls a “tough” photograph.

And *tough* meant it was an uncompromising image, something that came from your gut, out of instinct, raw, of the moment, something that couldn't be described in any other way. Tough to like, tough to see, tough to make, tough to understand. The tougher they were the more beautiful they became. (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994: 2 – 3 in Rose 21 22) This *toughness* somehow contradicts with Aline Manoukian not taken so seriously when she first began taking photos. (Al Jazeera) “I started to be a war photographer by mistake.” She was in her twenties when she returned to Lebanon, after having studied the history of photography in the U.S. “No one took me seriously at the beginning, even if I was taking the same risks as the men.” She was the first female photographer in Lebanon. (Al Jazeera) She claims to have landed her first photo scoop in 1984 in the Beirut neighborhood of Ras Al Nabaa, “at a time when it was under lockdown, completely surrounded by snipers.” (Al Jazeera)

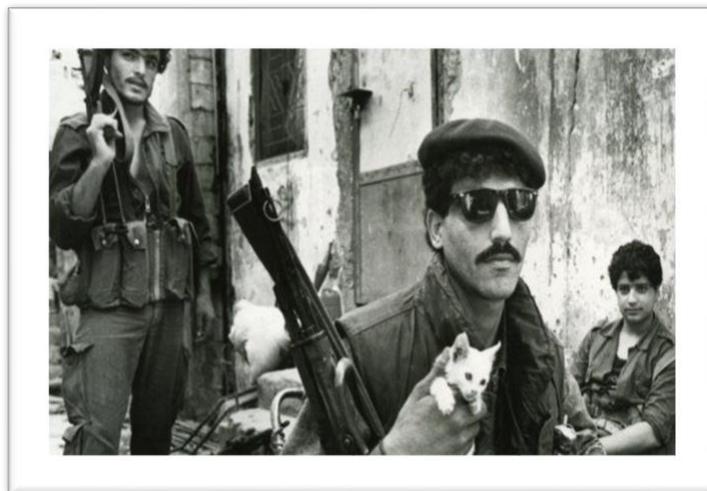


Photo 3. - The Godfather / Photographer: © Aline Manoukian (Source: <https://twitter.com/ajenglish/status>)

Photo 3 – The Godfather

The main character sits between two low-ranking officers or (soldiers). They look like ancillaries. He is wearing black shades and a black beret, crowning his head, which provides him with immediate identifying qualities: He is an enigmatic commander. His face seems expressionless due to his props, yet masculinized by his obvious mustache. A gendered trope. The focal point of this image is the white kitten he holds with his right hand. He does not seem to care for the animal. He simply carries it with cold passiveness. He is framed at the foreground of the image, with the kitten occupying an even lower position. His physical position in relation to the others emphasizes his authority. His black beret (and black because it is a desaturated black and white image,) marks further his authority. The color cannot be fully defined.)

The militiaman who stands to his right looks away. Showing disinterest or confusion. He carries a machine gun pointing upward. He wears a military uniform with magazine holders strapped all around him. His flexed right arm differs from the left arm that rests by his standing body. On the opposite left side of the commander, there sits another militiaman who gazes straight at him.

He is more interested it seems on the commander's next act. They both are positioned in the middle ground of the image to emphasize their military occupation and serve as protectors in a moment of truce.

I can read Roland Barthes' punctum in this image. He appears to be copying Marlon Brando's opening scene in *Godfather* (1972): An image I have added for comparative purposes. (And hence the title I have given to this particular image.) The commander looks older than the back-standing militiamen.

They are all in uniform in a near-battle field/zone position. They are dressed for war, but not enacting it. They look masculine and yet the kitten adds the softness of Brando's character in this specific re-interpretation, which is by no means intended.

The producer of the image herself did not know whether the commander was trying to imitate "The Godfather" character or not. She said she did not know. The house in the background reflects the living conditions of its inhabitants. It is a relaxed moment; a break from the exhaustive instants of combat. They are all facing the camera somehow. The commander is surrounded by his guards. They look at him or the people around him for security reasons. The image communicates hyper-masculinity represented in the commander's unintentional pursuit of conflating his military might with that of a mafia boss. He pretends to demystify him somehow by acting out a "real" version of a representational power.

Rumor has it that the cat held by Marlon Brando (Photo 4), that serves as a comparative/reference to the Godfather image by Aline Manoukian, in the opening scene of Godfather (1972) "was a stray, the actor found while on the lot at Paramount, and was not originally called for in the script. So content was the cat, that its purring muffled some of Brando's dialogue, and, as a result, most of his lines had to be looped."
(imgur.com)

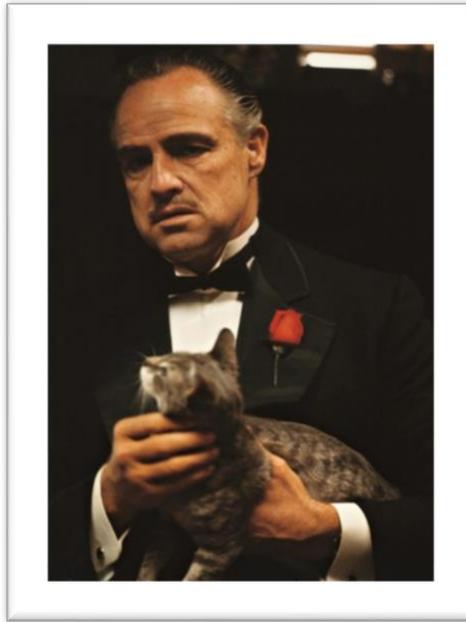


Photo 4: Marlon Brando as Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972) (Source: <https://godfather.fandom.com/wiki/Vito>)

Mieke Bal (1991 158-60) argues that the relations of looks between them [who can see what and how] can tell us much about how the image works to catch our looks. For if an external focalizer [a spectator] can look in the same way at the same things as a focalizer in the picture, then the spectator's identification with the image will be strong. (Rose 45)

When Manoukian took her photos to a 'local newspaper', the "editors looked at her in shock: "How did you manage to get in?" They asked. "No one has access to that area now!" She even recalls having "[a] few close calls. Once I witnessed a surprise execution right next to me. I had the person's blood all over my face," said Manoukian. (Al Jazeera)

The text of the *Godfather* by Manoukian shows three-armed war veterans whose placements clearly exemplify the power dynamics at play. The one in the center is decidedly the head of the group surrounded by two subordinate officers who, while

authoritative, rank lower than him or at least submit to him. One is looking vacantly into the far left of the camera in slight amusement. The other henchman is seated on the bottom right of the frame looking directly at the head of the leader as if awaiting his signal, his every beck and call. The hierarchy is very blatant here.

The commander, being the main mantelpiece of this scene, deserves more attention. His face is cold and gives nothing away which is mostly attributed to his dark tinted glasses. As the eyes are the windows to the soul, this accessory is a very strategic affront on the mere possibility of conveying emotion. This captain has taken all of the precautions to shield himself from being perceived as anything but masculine. He is a lean, mean fighting machine that will not have anything be used to his disadvantage. According to normative definitions of masculinity, men ought to be “strong” and impenetrable. In other words, there is no room for lesser sensations like empathy, regret, fear, and or sorrow that may compromise the meticulous resolve that has been so carefully cultivated (Connell, 2001)

The alley in this photograph, a clear relic of the war, looks dulled and disheveled. The photographed men emulate an almost exact level of run-down quality. And yet, they still have some very vague luster or spirit to them. This could be the sense of power they feel entitled to with their massive guns slinging from their shoulders ensuring them a position of supremacy. In that regard, Aline Manoukian has perfectly captured the essence of warfare, a collective many stripped of humanity but content over the scraps of authority they forcefully take or are bestowed.

The cat in this shot is very significant. The way the main fighter holds the kitten is domineering, almost like a chokehold, a threat. This serves the purpose of making

him seem uncaring and hardened by the war. This is a power move that is even more amplified by the presence of his goons at his sides.

You can easily draw parallels between this image and the opening scene of *The Godfather* (1972) where the ever-imperious mob boss, Don Corleone, pets a cat in his lap while antagonizing one of his devotees. In that scene, he is almost fenced by ‘goons’ ready to take out adversaries at his command.

While the two shots have emblematic similarities, they differ greatly in context. The cat in Corleone’s lap is meant to soften his otherwise austere presentation: To show duality between a cold-hearted mobster and a devoted family man as exhibited by how mindfully he caresses his kitten. The officer in Manoukian’s portrait, on the other hand, is not stroking the cat, he is grabbing it. I think that setup is more reminiscent of the typical iconography of Bond villains.

Originator of the *cat stroking* trope, Bond villain, Ernest Stavro Blofeld (played by Donald Pleasence) (Photo 5), has an infamous scene where he pets a white cat as he delightedly muses about his plans for world domination to his long-time rival in *You Only Live Twice* (1967).

How this differs from The Godfather connotation is that Bond villains, including Blofeld, are unsympathetic and irredeemable, so this trope is used to illustrate the wickedness of the character in possession of the feline. This makes sense as throughout history, cats have captured human curiosity but not in a good way.

Due to their enigmatic nature, they’ve been associated with gods in the times of Ancient Egypt and witches in the Middle Ages. While there’s certainly a barrage of “cat people” out there, the consensus about this species is more unfavorable than not as demonstrated in literature and especially in film.

Even in children’s content like *Cats & Dogs* (2001), *Stuart Little* (1999), and *Pinocchio* (1940), cats are depicted as malicious or untrustworthy. So naturally, having a villain bond with an equally devious “ally” is tonally cohesive and sends a clear message to the audience.

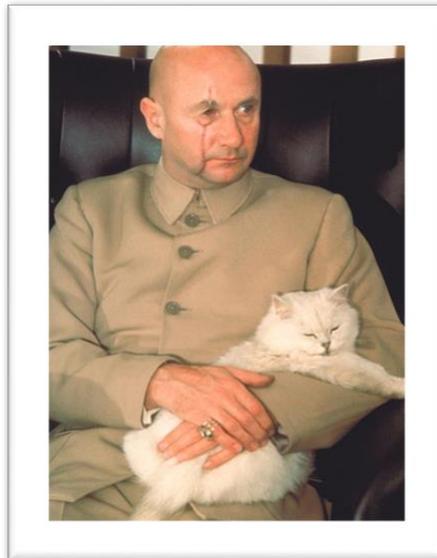


Photo 5: - The Iconic Shot of Ernst Stavro Blofeld With a Kitten in His Lap, 1967 (Source: Villains Wiki)

While this soldier may have indeed wanted to replicate what he saw in *The Godfather* in an attempt to resemble a powerful mob boss, he did not succeed at coming across the same way.

The Lebanese Civil War militiamen were stubborn and determined fighters, adept at employing guerilla tactics in urban areas. Such assembled groups offered them an identity to reckon with, and provide[d] [them] with a sense of power and control. Outside the war they felt ‘ostracized’. Understandably, the fighting was cathartic and everything permissible: The violence was clearly a marker of their manhood. The Cowboy –or the first war/film junkie or street star, was a highly visual reference-

character a la *John Wayne* in War-time Beirut. “A rugged he-man, strong, resilient, resourceful, capable of coping with overwhelming odds.” (Balswick & Peek, 1976)

In this chapter I argue that the Godfather or second war/film junkie I scrutinize via a war/text by Manoukian, is a commander, who exhibits a cold face and gives nothing away which is mostly attributed to his dark tinted glasses. There is no room for lesser sensations like empathy, regret, fear, and or sorrow that may compromise the meticulous resolve that has been so carefully cultivated (Connell, 2001) Finally, the alley in this photograph, a clear relic of the war, looks dulled and disheveled. The photographed men emulate an almost exact level of run-down quality. And yet, they still have some very vague luster or spirit to them. This could be the sense of power they feel entitled to with their massive guns slinging from their shoulders ensuring them a position of supremacy. In that regard, Aline Manoukian has perfectly captured the essence of warfare, a collective many stripped of humanity but content over the scraps of authority they forcefully take or are bestowed.

Sylvester Stallone never performed in a film in Lebanon. You might be therefore surprised to see his look-a-like strolling the streets of war time Beirut in full armor, and chased by local photographers who were after the headline and the consequent story.

CHAPTER III

HARD BODIES: HOLLYWOOD MASCULINITY AND FREE-TICKET CINEMA

“Is it better for a man to have chosen evil than to have good imposed upon him?” –Anthony Burgess (A Clockwork Orange)

“The theater,” says Baudelaire, “is a crystal chandelier.” If one were called upon to offer in comparison a symbol other than this artificial crystal-like object, brilliant, intricate, and circular, which refracts the light which plays around its center and holds us prisoners of its aureole, we might say of the cinema that it is the little flashlight of the usher, moving like an uncertain comet across the night of our waking dream, the diffuse space without shape or frontiers that surrounds the screen.” (Cohen et al. (2009) p. 383)

In this chapter, I am going to be looking at another two street stars or war/film junkies: Missak Donanian or the Lebanese Rambo and Robert Hatem, alias the Cobra-HK. I will be exploring via a semiotic approach various texts (mainly several photographs, two Youtube videos)—produced at the time, and *From Israel to Damascus*, a book/text that depicts brutal violence as a marker of hyper-masculinity.

The Lebanese Rambo’s resemblance to John Rambo (of *First Blood Part II*) is uncanny and his transformation unique and flabbergasting. His hyper masculinity is both performative and a spectacle/construct. Cobra-HK, on the other hand, is in it for completely different reasons: In his book, he seems to articulate a macho violence, for the mere pleasure of killing. Both examinations aim to demonstrate that some peculiar war/film junkies or street stars were actually influenced by post-Vietnam American war films, or to be more precise what I call Hollywood masculinity as it unfolded.

On a Monday 16, January, 2017 I got in my car and drove to Jdeideh, in the Metn area. I made a few stops along the way, enquiring about Rambo, showing his photo at best. I was instructed on how to get to the area. I finally arrived and began my enquiry: Have you seen this young man before? My innocent questions drew a curious crowd from the shops I entered. They all gazed at the Rambo photograph. One employee told me that he had seen him in the Ghobayre area in Southern Beirut. I moved on and entered a burger joint a few minutes later. Jihad Gerdak, the owner, sort of smiled at me, and it didn't take him long before he pointed at a shawarma joint across the street. "Right there! His 'Brother' owns that place." I was in Sad el Bauchrieh. I wasn't sure of the information but all had indicated that I was near to hitting bottom. I drove further and stopped the car and walked into the place. I asked for Mike and he came to the rescue. After a short chat, I showed him and several of his friends, Rambo's photograph. They all laughed at the striking Rambo posture. Mike said: "That's my brother! He is in the U.S" Setrak, Missak's older brother, attempted to undermine his brother's war involvement. He felt Missak was not that immersed in the Forces or the war and his resemblance with Stallone's character made him notorious.

But after a while, he admitted to his brief intrusion with the Lebanese forces who controlled the area. Missak Dononyan was the second of four brothers: Setrak, Mike, Ara and him, and four sisters. Missak used to work as a butcher, and his physique was due to considerable time spent at the gym, building muscle. Mike, a second brother of Missak, told me that he would spend time between work, the gym and the Forces.

Setrak, on the other hand, told me that many news agencies were interested in Missak. They came from all over the place to see him: To cover his resemblance to the

Hero of *First Blood*. (The film had just come out and had made a huge cultural impact all over.) Such encounters were numerous and were repeated in distinct locations. I also learned that Setrak used to train the Lebanese Forces militiamen in his area, and took active part in the Civil War. They both acknowledge their brother's resemblance to Sylvester Stallone's film character. He was a Rambo look-a-like. Mike even implied that he was hoping he would get some media buzz, and maybe grab the attention of some film producer, who would be interested in casting him in a role for a film spin off. Setrak confirmed that Missak hoped he could at least attention-grab some cinema producer/s, at the time. He was a local celebrity in his own right, and his story was all over the news media. Journalist and photographers searched for him over a substantial period during street skirmishes. Missak had sent tens of photos as Rambo, but his original intention did not materialize.

Setrak told me that Missak even travelled to the U.S on an occasion and succeeded to spot Stallone himself, somewhere, and who unexpectedly warned him "Not to come here!" Stallone might have felt flabbergasted by his uncanny resemblance and thought this could have negative repercussions. He felt an immediate threat, that Missak was, perhaps, an opportunist in search of fortune. Stallone had denied Missak "direct access!" He was allegedly asked by Stallone's lawyer to stay out, and was cautioned not to use Stallone's name or even his physical resemblance for own gain. In the case of the Lebanese Rambo, the *makeover* is more than evident and clear indication that Post-Vietnam American War films – (specifically Rambo films of 1980s) made a huge impression to the extent he (and possibly others) eventually transformed into Rambo/s himself. Missak Donanian did not like or fancy Rambo, rather

he *became* Rambo. A rare case of a man who becomes another. A copy of an original, so to speak, who is eventually rejected!

Setrak said that if Missak had lived his war experience during the social media boom, he would be an international celebrity/sensation today. He had no doubt about that. I can easily imagine his Instagram account or even his trending photos on Pinterest. Both Setrak and Mike promised to assist me in the process of collecting images of Missak, during that epoch, and they would assist me to the best of their abilities in the process of research, interviewing Missak, if possible etc. and they would see to it, that I would meet Rambo, the soonest. I had his image and that was massive. I had to play by their rules, especially since Missak, allegedly had suffered some serious health mishaps and was in some kind of dispute with his wife, who had left him, taking property and money.

Paradoxically, Patrick Baz, a prominent war time photographer, and producer of the Lebanese Rambo image I discuss in depth, identified with civil war militiamen, or war/film junkies as personas. He felt he had to because he was protected and safe around them. He had confessed that he had intervened as a novice fighter in the early years of war but then shifted to photography, making him a Rambo-like photographer in his own fashion. “When you do these things, it’s like the fighters, it’s like .. you believe that you’re invincible, you believe that you’re protected by your camera, you believe, you know ..” He described himself as a war junkie, playing war games when not watching movies or out on assignment.

Baz had collected bullet canisters on the roofs but changed his status from fighter to photographer early on as he found out that he couldn’t just kill the *others*. Baz, like most of the war photographers at the time, was looking for a scoop: It wasn’t

hard to find Rambo at the time, “I searched for him, I knew where he was .. somewhere in Bourj Hammoud, I remember we went to Bourj Hammoud, we searched for him, and we were two, three other photographers, anyway. You need to understand how we work. When you feed the media, and we’re talking 80s, your audience starts getting bored with the same images, like Aleppo; how many images of kids being pulled from the rubble, we’re gonna look at ... so you start searching for different images, a different approach, different stories, and so we were looking for a different story .. [] You want to sell, how are you going to sell? you have to get something new ... so, we heard about this guy ...” (Baz)

Baz thought it was a spectacle, at least infused with some humor: The Lebanese Rambo had this funny approach, he said: “Rambo fights in the films, I, on the other hand, am real.” And he worked on it. It was Rambo films’ posters all over his room at his place. War photographs [are] frozen moments in war-time. For Baz, that freeze “[is] very subjective. Because I freeze what I see. It’s not what you see. It’s what I see. It’s my truth. It’s not the truth. It’s my eye. It’s the way I saw it with a specific lens, with a specific light. You wouldn’t have seen it the same way.” (Baz) Of course, add to that your own interpretation, and the meaning subsequently transforms.

We cannot scrutinize The Lebanese Rambo (as a war/film junkie) without understanding the roles of Ronald Reagan and John Wayne more specifically as an imminent “pre-war” hero. There is a looming connection that starts way before the war/s (Both Vietnam’s and Lebanon’s Civil) and continues much after. It is also important to note that the Reagan era as such, was an era “of bodies,” as per Jeffords (2004). Reagan himself worked on his own persona. He even promoted it. “–Chopping wood at his ranch, riding horses, standing tall at the presidential podium –his was one of

these hard bodies, a body not subject to disease, fatigue, or aging in his faded denim shirt, leather gloves, scuffed boots and cowboy hat, he looked fit and even young.”

Jeffords claims. The truth is American society was experiencing various spectacles: Feminism was on the rise, America had been defeated, and so the American psyche as a collective was seeking an obvious consequent vindication. Hollywood catered to that. The need to go back and free POWs creates a sense of hope and renewed hyper masculinity. *First Blood: Part II* becomes a film sensation overnight.

I take my cue from Mark Taylor and Suzan Jeffords (1993) to suggest that the Hollywood hard body hero is a spectacle/construct. With the male’ body itself becoming “[a] *vehicle of display* of musculature, of beauty, of physical feats, and a gritty toughness.” (Jeffords, 1993, 245) Mark Taylor (2004) –contends that the entire assemblage of Rambo as a cultural project was meant to re-arm an entire society with components of masculinity: During the 1980s the image of the veteran was deployed to influence Americans to look at the war in a more positive way. Reagan contended that America’s defeat in Vietnam had been a consequence of the timidity of its leaders rather than the fault of its veterans. He argued that Americans “must not repeat the mistake of sending ‘young men to fight and possibly die in a war our government is afraid to win.’” (Taylor 141) The president’s words were underscored by the assembly of multiple pictures during that period that promoted the idea of rescue of American soldiers imprisoned in Vietnam after the end of the war, as an act of exoneration.

Sylvester Stallone’s return as John Rambo in George P. Cosmatos’ *Rambo: First Blood Part II* was the most successful of these pictures. Earning fifty-seven million dollars in the first fortnight of its release in 1985 and prompting the president to remark: “Boy, I saw Rambo last night. Now I know what to do the next time.” (Taylor 144)

Reagan –himself- tried to imitate (John) Wayne, on and off the screen. (Wills 13) For Wills, Wayne’s walk is the most obvious element of his physical performance. No doubt he is the American hero by default: For his stamina, not only in film, but also as an all-time American icon.

Wills calls it an *air of invincibility*, which Reagan happens to project. “It was finally believable that this fat old drunk could face down an entire gang. Touch that gun and I’ll kill ya! was a typical catchphrase (Wills 18-20). The films were the most elaborate tool to do so. Reagan was the perfect icon-instigator and the “remasculinization” process was put in march. This hard body became for Reaganism what Jurgen Link has called a “collective symbol,” what he defines as “collective pictures that are culturally ‘anchored’ in the most literal sense and that act as carriers of symbolic meaning.” (Jeffords 25) Hyper-masculinity as a Lebanese war phenomenon as such, manufactured via exposure to such cultural American constructs, is fashioned as a collective frame of meaning.

Suzan Jeffords (1993) claims that it is impossible to discuss the success of the Hollywood films of the 80s without discussing Reagan. In short, Ronald Reagan –The Hollywood star, became the premiere masculine archetype for the 1980s. (Jeffords 11) John Rambo associates Reagan and his bloated masculinity to some of the Lebanese street stars or war/film junkies unintentionally. As such, The Lebanese Rambo’s hyper-masculinity becomes ultimately an articulation of supremacy and power within the context of the Lebanese Civil War.

Garry Wills asserts that Hollywood, “[in terms of symbols,] underwent a reversion to *radical individualism*. And this is manifested via the Rambo films. He contends that it is significant that gender studies of movie masculinity have added a

third item to their treatment of naked gods and troubled boys –the “hard bodies” of the Vietnam era, men engaged in revenge fantasies. Rambo goes after the abandoned relics of empire in Vietnam. (Wills 25) In *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, John Rambo returns with his commanding officer, Colonel Samuel Trautman (Richard Crenna), to Vietnam, to the very prison camp where Rambo himself previously survived as a prisoner of war. Rambo manages to escape, not before leaving his signature marks on the camp. At the end, Rambo stays in the wild, appalled with the American way of doing business. (Gish 2) His physical prowess is complemented by his rationale and foresight. No doubt Missak Donanian –or the Lebanese Rambo saw the films, and proof of that are the posters he has on his room wall. I now turn to both Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage (1949) and Christian Metz (1992) cinema identification to conceptualize further on the Lebanese Rambo image.

With varying degrees, this war text (The Lebanese Rambo) or visual representation of war signify a hard-body militiaman who transforms in Lacanian processes of identification and transmogrify to become the film hero (Rambo) himself in a display of self-aggrandizement. I believe that this process had started long ago. Jacques Lacan (1949) argues that the first phase in the creation of the ego comes before the development of language and is the ‘mirror stage’ when the baby child receives an external sense of a unified self from his or her reflection. It is –according to Johnson, (2001) “a misrecognition, and the image of integrated wholeness does not correspond to the child’s experience of its fragmented bodily drives and desires. Even before language and social interaction the ego has been set on a ‘fictional direction’, built as it is on an *imaginary identification*. And, when it develops, although the ego acts as a defense against fragmentation it is always threatened by disintegration and collapse.”

(Frosh 1989: 241 in Johnson 175) This misrecognition defines The Lebanese Rambo' 'fictional direction'.

Christian Metz, (1992) in turn, asks a crucial question: With What does the spectator (In this case, Missak Donanian) *identify* during the projection of the film? He argues that [he] can identify with both the character (of the fiction), or John Rambo, and the actor of the film, or Sylvester Stallone. [] Even when identification occurs –argues Metz, “It still tells us nothing about the place of the spectator’s ego in the inauguration of the signifier. He wonders where is it during the projection of the film. (The true primary identification, that of the mirror, forms the ego, but all other identifications presuppose, on the contrary that it has been formed and can be “exchanged” for the object or the fellow object). (Mast et al 733 734)

Metz claims that the spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror, he cannot identify with himself as an object, but only with objects which are there without him. In this sense, the screen is not a mirror. The perceived, this time, is entirely on the side of the object, and there is no longer any equivalent of the own image, of that unique mix of perceived and subject (of other and I) which was precisely the figure necessary to disengage the other from the other. The “All-perceiving” [is] entirely on the side of the perceiving instance: absent from the screen, but certainly present in the auditorium. This for Metz constitutes the cinema signifier. (Mast et al. 734) Misak Donanian, or the Lebanese Rambo, as cinema signifier identified with both the actor and the character in *First Blood (Part II)*.

I have several enclosed photos of the Lebanese Rambo (Missak Donanian), a Christian-Armenian militiaman from the Lebanese Forces that I call a War/film junkie

or street star. He's a known Stallone look-a-like which he exploits here by donning the iconic Rambo attire with its supplementary props.

In one photograph, he's lounging in his bedroom, and in another he's posing among the bushes. In a more prominent one, he is showing off his new *persona*. What's specifically noteworthy to bring up here is that in some of these photographs, he's still in character, though in varying degrees. This suggests that maybe Donanian, in his embodiment of this identity, has adopted it in his everyday life. If he's not Rambo all the time, he's definitely influenced by him as illustrated by the evidence. Despite not wearing the iconic shredded V neck, Donanian still feels like he's playing a role. That is to say, the shadow of Rambo, alongside some posters and framed pictures, still looms over his character. This seems like a case of admiration taken to a Para-social level. There are photos plastered on the walls and two framed photos on his night stand. He's built himself a shrine of some sort of Stallone's promotional posters that he presumably looks at a lot in the privacy of his own bedroom. This space comes off like a place of worship where he can mentally immerse himself into the persona before he physically does so with his now signature gestures and costumes.

He seems to be looking vacantly into the distance maybe to project serious contemplation or starry daydreaming. He doesn't seem to be smiling in any of his vanity shots. This is doubtlessly a result of the popularization of the sulking rogue who "plays by his own rules". While this sort of pouty appearance was already a Hollywood staple, it was especially popularized in the '80s era of blatantly bloated masculinity. In all of the referenced texts, Donanian appears to be expertly and consistently mimicking what he's seen on television, film (or even VHS), something all boys in the '80s did. Donanian just made a name for himself doing it.

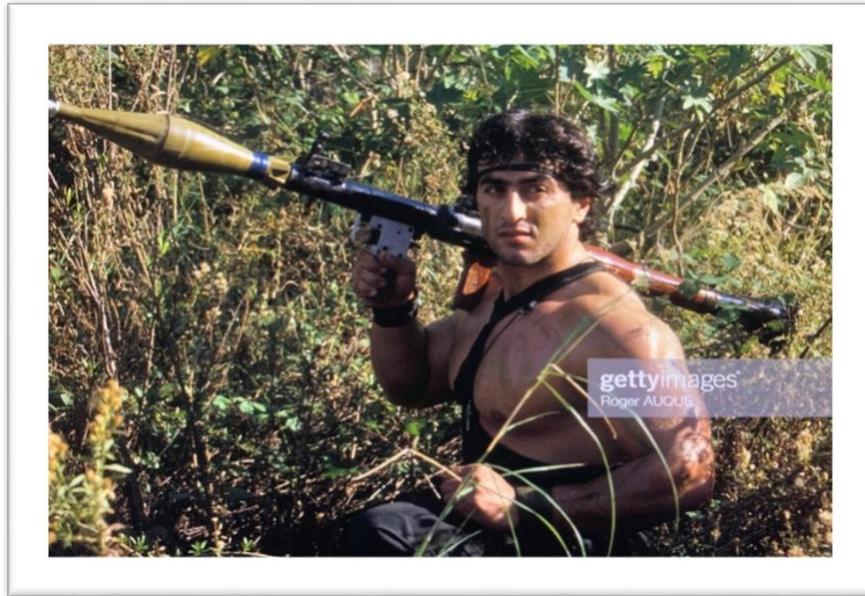


Photo 6. - The Lebanese Rambo I /Photographer: Roger Auque (Getty Images)

Photo 6 – The Lebanese Rambo I

The Lebanese Rambo is squatting in the wilderness with his bazooka in hand also looking into the abyss assumedly in search of potential trespassers to exterminate. He is not looking at the camera lens. For some reason, he is asked to shy away from it. (A photographer's classic trick.) The RPG looks much smaller in his right hand and right shoulder. His right hands' finger is clearly seen on the trigger. His face is half lit by the key source of illumination: The sun in what appears to be a selected *nam-like* corner of war-time Beirut. A dissolve of spaces that re-configure Missak within a more familiar Rambo-jungle-setting-of-war. The fact that he is not looking in the same direction of the bazooka, explains the spectacle' intention of this image.

The light shown in an image is clearly related to both its colors and its spaces. [The type of light] will clearly affect the saturation and value of its hues. And the illusion that geometrical perspective realistically represents three-dimensional space can

be enhanced or called into question by the use of light sources. Light can also be used to highlight certain elements of a painting, as we have seen in the case of the Rembrandt portraits. (Rose 46)

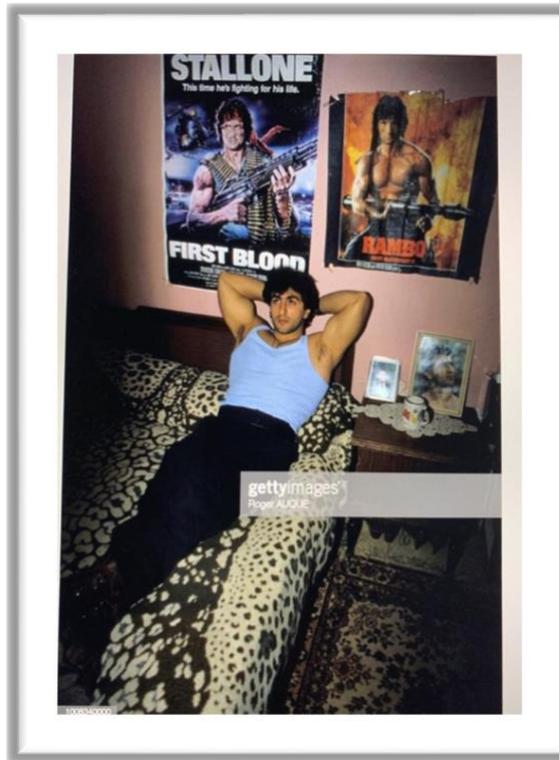
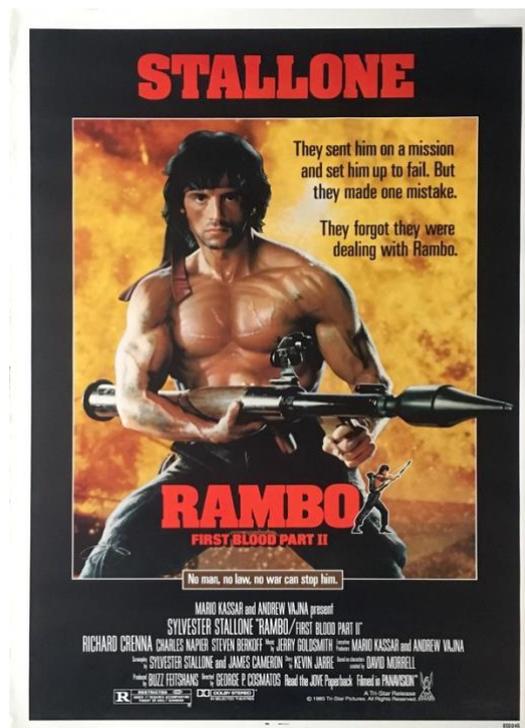


Photo 7. The Lebanese Rambo II /Photographer: Roger Auque (Getty Images)

Photo 7 – The Lebanese Rambo II

Missak Donanian lies down in bed wearing a blue tank, black camouflage trousers (fatigues) and black military boots. His body lies completely on the bed. His head tilted, and his glance resting on the ceiling most probably. He is leaning his head on the wall. Both arms are flexed behind his head. The pink wall displays posters from Stallone's Rambo films as follows:



Poster.1-Rambo: First Blood (Source: <https://www.mauvais-genres.com/en/film-posters/21948-rambo-first-blood-original-movie-poster>)

Poster.2-Rambo: First Blood Part II (Source: <https://www.mauvais-genres.com/en/us-movie-posters/19754-rambo-first-blood-part-ii-movie-poster>)

The first poster on Missak's upper right is *Rambo: First Blood* (1982): An American action film. Co-Written by David Morrell and Sylvester Stallone. The film is based on the 1972 novel of the same name by David Morrell and directed by Ted Kotcheff. *First Blood* was released in the United States on October 22, 1982. The film's is about John J. Rambo, a former United States Special Forces soldier who fought in Vietnam and won the Congressional Medal of Honor, but his time in Vietnam still haunts him. He escapes from the county jail and goes on a rampage through the forest to try to escape from the sheriffs who want to kill him. Then, as Rambo's commanding officer, Colonel Samuel Trautman tries to save both the Sheriff's department and Rambo before the situation gets out of hand.

The second poster on Missak's upper left is *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985): The *First Blood* sequel. Co-written by James Cameron and Sylvester Stallone. And directed by George P. Cosmatos. *First Blood Part II* was released in the United States on May 22, 1985. The sequel film is about John Rambo as he is removed from prison by his former superior, Colonel Samuel Troutman, for a top-secret operation to bring back POW's still held in Vietnam. Rambo's assignment is to only take pictures of where the POWs are being held, but Rambo wants to get the POWs out of Vietnam. Rambo starts killing every enemy in sight while still focusing on his intentions to rescue the POWs.

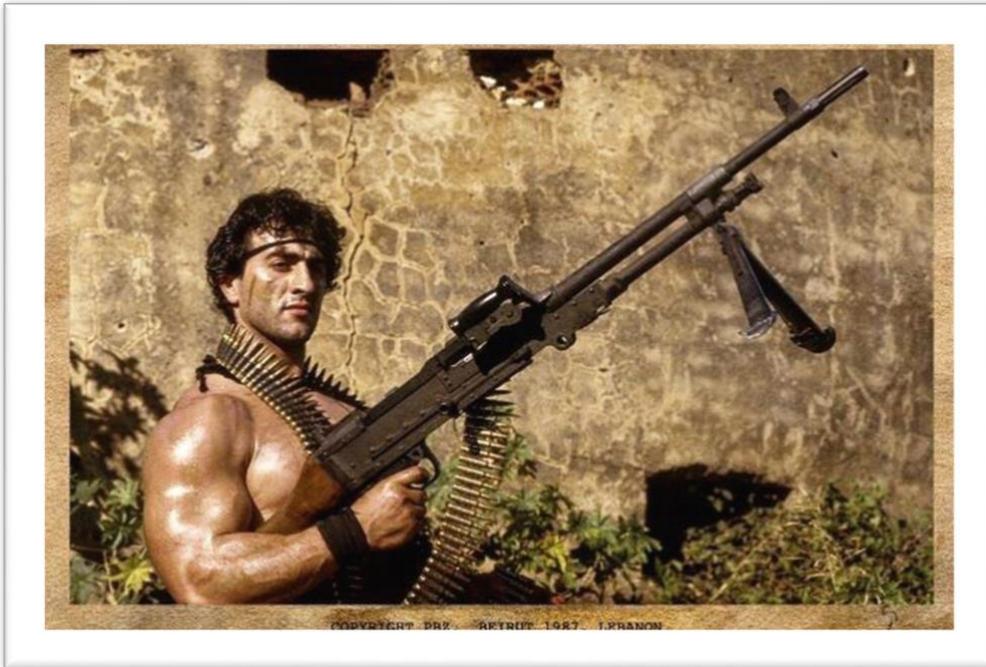


Photo 8. The Lebanese Rambo III / Photographer: Patrick Baz 1987 (Source: <http://www.lebanoninapicture.com/pictures/good-morning-beirut-1987-rambo>)

Photo 8 depicts a Herculean-like character that looks robust, broad-shouldered and extremely serious. It took a year or so later to complete the puzzle of this very photograph. All I knew at first is that it was taken by PBZ in 1987, none other than an accomplished war photographer named Patrick Baz. He was in Beirut when I got hold of him, on his way to Paris, but said he would be back. We met in a tranquil café in Achrafieh, for almost one hour and he said he was a War Junkie. Missak Donanian was associated with one of the most important (if not the most important) of the Maronite militias that arose in the early 1970s: The Lebanese Forces (*al-quwwat al-lubnaniyya*) led by Bashir Gemayel. Bashir and his circle were more radical than the old guard. They were willing to secure and expand the Maronite sanctuary even if it meant physically eliminating the opposition. Bashir's programme thus first called for the removal of foreigners and opponents from Maronite areas. This occurred when the

Lebanese Front (the umbrella organisation which consolidated all the Christian forces) emptied and razed the Palestinian camps in East Beirut and Karantina. (Harik 9 10)

Missak Donanian did what John Wayne did in his films: “To create a ‘self’ so real to others that he could disappear into it.” (Wills 27).

Photo 8 – The Lebanese Rambo III

In this photograph, a hard-body white male of no more than 25 years, with an Italian flare, carries a heavy-weight machine gun, with a black wrist-band, around his right hand, and a black head-band around his head. His right-hand finger rests on the trigger. He is proudly wrapped in bullets, and unassisted. His head tilted and eyes shy away from the camera lens, and he appears to be in a war zone. He exhibits Wayne’s Touch-that-gun-and-I’ll-kill-ya-kind of an attitude. You can immediately grasp his excessive resemblance to Sylvester Stallone himself, (in Rocky! For some reason.)

You can directly attest to his physical adjustment. He must have spent plenty of time and effort to look like that. He is also standing motionless, no one is holding him. Most of the image is occupied by the machine gun. “Only people with muscles like his can carry and fire such a thing. I know, I’ve been with marines in Afghanistan, in Iraq and they only give it to the tough guy. To the muscle man.” (Baz.)

The gun somehow traverses diatonically the image, dividing it into two. We can easily apply the rule of the golden triangle to this image (Photo 9): The concept derives from the Golden Section which mathematicians, architects and artists have discovered to be the ideal ratio for design, which is 1:1.618. They have found this ratio throughout nature, man-made objects, buildings, and other forms of classical art. (Photoblog)

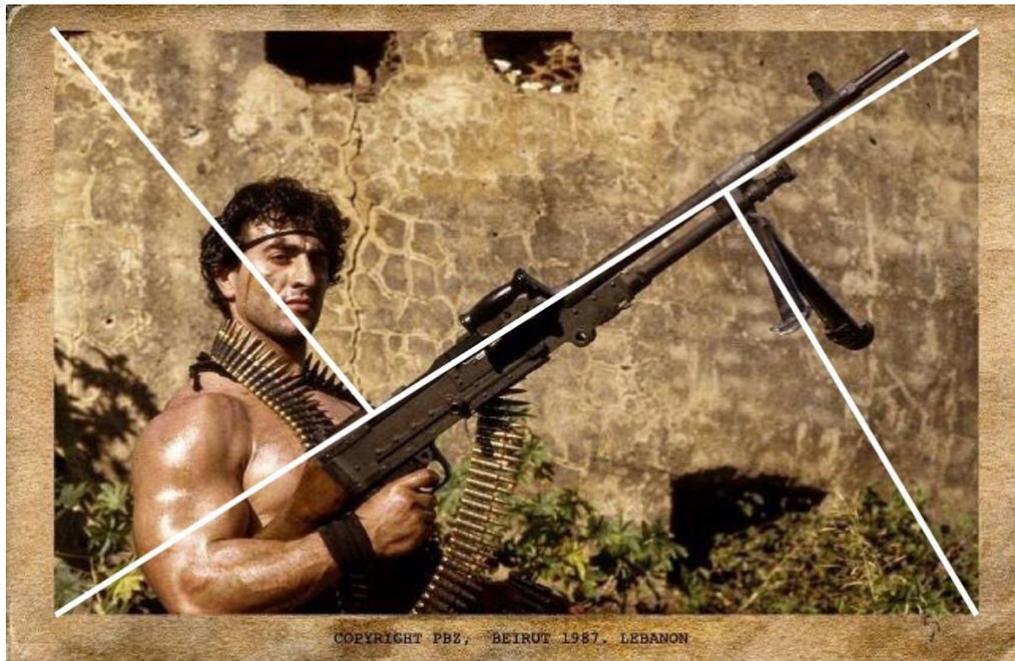


Photo 9. The Lebanese Rambo/ The Rule of the Golden Triangle applied to it (Photographer: Patrick Baz 1987 (Source: <http://www.lebanoninapicture.com/pictures/good-morning-beirut-1987-rambo>)

It goes like this (Photo 9): You draw a diagonal line from the bottom-left of the frame to the top-right. Then draw another diagonal line that intersects the first line at a 90-degree angle. It's called the perpendicular line. You can do this the other way around. Put the object/s deserving attention in the intersection points or let their outlines follow the imaginary lines we just drew. (Photoblog) For Rose, “compositional interpretation remains a useful method because it does offer a way of looking very carefully at the content and form of images.” (Rose 37)

When looking at an image for itself, a starting point could be its content. What does the image actually show? This might seem a very obvious question not worth spending much time on. (Rose 38) For some reason his right arm and part of his face and chest look greasy and oily transmitting a sense of what in food photography is known as *specular highlight* to them: the light is hitting the arm and bouncing back its reflections.

What first draws your eye is Donanian’s voyeuristic presentation. Every single element in the picture is strategically positioned to convey a specific persona, that of a self-proclaimed “bad boy” or “enfant terrible”. First, his bulging muscles, made to glisten with body oil, are flexing at the camera while he’s drenched in display ornaments. Even his stare just barely grazes the camera almost breaking the fourth wall. What’s more, there is something arrogant about his gaze but more specifically there’s defiance, like the rules don’t apply to him. This sort of entitlement is not uncommon among men of stature which he perfectly encompasses here. Then, there’s his gun. Contextually a recurrent euphemism for phallus, his firearm is massive, erect, and presumably pointing at his target that he wishes to dominate whichever way that may manifest. Even the bullets around his neck serve more for aesthetics than practicality, further supporting the performative function as suggested by Judith Butler. To further cement this notion, I’d like to draw a comparison between Donanian’s stern aesthetic and that of Sigourney Weaver in Ridley Scott’s *Alien* (Photo 10) (1979)



Photo 10: Sigourney Weaver in Ridley Scot’s *Alien* (1979) (Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/174233079318654066>)

While the two photos have glaring similarities, they are very diverging in their respective subtexts. Both are holding a rifle, but one is almost flailing it around in a grandiose sort of fashion, while Weaver's Ripley keeps the gun close to her hip. There is something conservative about how she's gripping it almost to suggest that the weapon is an instrument of self-defense to be used only as a last result. Furthermore, Ripley is holding a child. This explains her intentions and reinforces what the gun signifies as mentioned earlier.

As far as posture and appearance go, Ripley is of athletic build but not nearly to the "ripped" extent of the Lebanese Rambo. Her attire is more modest and functional too. Her face is alert in the face of threat but is also soft with concern for the little girl and for herself (in that order). Her male counterpart, on the other hand, exhibits a haughty look of indifference. It suggests he's in it for the thrills and not much else.

These differences are crucial in painting a vivid picture of how men and women, even within the same capacity, are conditioned to perform very dissimilarly. Men in the framework of war seem wired to invade and conquer with glory being the primary objective. The key takeaway is that none of these displays bear any significance if there is no audience to play to. Therefore, this persona of masculinity is a distinctly relational concept that cannot stand on its own.

Deleuze argues that, "a body must be understood not in terms of a form or functions, but with reference instead to its relations of speed and slowness (longitude) and to what it can *do*, by its capacity to affect and to be affected (latitude) A body is not a 'thing,' but a *becoming*, a series of processes (movements, intensities, and flows.) The Lebanese Rambo is but "a mobile assemblage of connections which might be extended, but which might equally be severed." (Fraser Greco 44 45) Spinoza, in

addition maintains that, “A body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality. For him, bodies and minds are modes. (A mode is a complex relation of speed and slowness, in the body but also in the thought. [And so] bodies and [thoughts] are “capacities for affecting and being affected.”] (Fraser 58 59) And so the John Rambo –as a mode must have affected the Lebanese Rambo as he developed this identification trope, and let me just add that John Rambo does not stand alone as the hard body of the Reagan era (Jeffords 52) Missak Donanian, as the Lebanese Rambo, or war/film junkie, does as well, in a remote war setting.

Marwan Khoury, a Lebanese blogger wrote on 21 December 1985:

Beirut can now boast its own real-life “Rambo. In front of a poster of his hero, movie star Sylvester Stallone, the young Lebanese Christian –who refuses to reveal his identity --grooms himself, posing in the image of Stallone’s famous hero Rambo, the action man of two blockbuster movies, ‘First Blood’ and ‘Rambo.’ Next step in the transformation is the outfit and weapons. With camouflage grease on his face, grenades slung around his body and an M-16 rifle over his shoulders, ‘Rambo’ is ready for action on Beirut’s Green Line, which divides Christian and Muslim sectors of the city. After firing several dozen rounds in the empty buildings, a quick burst on a heavy machine gun and a shot with a rocket-propelled grenade into an already bombed-out building, ‘Rambo’ calls it a day. This ‘Rambo’ is a local

celebrity, with his pictures appearing in Beirut magazines.”

(Khoury)

In this particular Youtube video, there is both fantasmaticization of an objective reality (images, sounds, colors) and of an objective reality which, limiting its powers of constraint, seems equally to augment the possibilities or the power of the subject. The image will always be the image *of* something; it must result from a deliberate act of consciousness [visee intentionelle.] – Baudry claims that “[intentionality] signifies nothing other than this peculiarity that consciousness has of being consciousness *of* something, of carrying in its quality of ego its cogitatum within itself.”

In short, the image’s mode of operation has to constitute this something as meaning.

(Baudry 43) The Lebanese Rambo video was released on Youtube in 2016. I broke the piece in two parts which I call Youtube video#1 and Youtube video#2.

YOUTUBE VIDEO # 1 – The Lebanese Rambo Part –I–

In the first video, (00:21- 01:05) he’s in his “battle gear” reenacting a war-like scenario as he runs around and flexes at the camera. The whole time, he’s shooting his gun in the air presumably at intruders or enemies. This entire routine feels very staged as it lacks any element of authenticity. There is no real danger, that’s not real military attire, and that is not the real Missak Donanian, so to speak. From his posture to the way he enunciates in the manner of Stallone, he is playing a character. Through a very calculated set of premeditations, he has perfectly replicated Stallone’s whole essence, specifically his portrayal of Rambo.

One could make the argument that this video is an homage to the lavish displays of heroism depicted by war films of that era. That theory would have been admissible

because it's plain to see the explicit allure of the omnipotent man swooping in to save the day, except for the fact that Donanian seems rather earnest about his character.

Much like a kid on Halloween, he believes he is one with the costume the only difference being that come November first, the kid takes off the mask. The question is, does he? I'm inclined to say no based on the contents of the second YouTube video. In that, he's being interviewed about Lebanese captives.

YOUTUBE VIDEO # 2 – The Lebanese Rambo Part –II–

Asked if U.S President Reagan had called on him to save the U.S hostages being held in Lebanon, (01:20- 02:07) he said he was capable of this, but qualified his statement by saying “everything in due time. The two giveaways are what he says and how it's framed. First, he mutters some things that are not particularly insightful or informed. One can quickly infer that these are not the musings of someone dialed into politics, but rather the proclamations of a thrill-seeking anarchist.

Second, the visuals. While it's unclear whether the interviewer is the one holding the camera or whether there's a third-party camera operator, the visual direction seems very intentional. Ten seconds into the interview, the camera operator slowly zooms out to reveal a ripped “Rambo” in an equally ripped tank top. Before the video cuts out, the camera zooms back into Donanian's hands to show that he is squeezing a gripper.

This reveals so much about the dynamic at play here. The camera lens doesn't care about what he has to say, it just wants to see the flavor of the week in action. Donanian wants to be perceived as a “tough guy” in every sense of the word and the public, embodied here by the interviewer and cameraman, is more than willing to

comply with those wishes. It's a vicious cycle of codependency between spectator and spectacle bred by garish iconography taken sincerely.

Robert Hatem – Cobra HK

Another War/film junkie I would like to introduce is Robert Hatem, alias “Cobra-HK” whose alias I assumed at first came from the film *Cobra*, (1986) directed by the very same director of the successful Rambo film, George P. Cosmatos, and written by Sylvester Stallone himself, who also played the main title role. The film is loosely based on a novel *Fair Game* by Paula Gosling. The film is now a cult classic in spite of negative reviews at the time.

But what about his *nom de guerre*? He had a cobra tattoo on his left arm, and hence his alias. And yet according to the online edition of *La Revue Du Liban* (Issue#3698 of 1999), early on in the war, and upon joining Christians militias in order to “defend the nation”, he had carried permanently a “Colt Cobra” revolver from which the alias derived. A fact to which he himself had attested to in his infamous book. (Cobra 4) He was according to a source, “a ruthless killer of over 400 individuals, who enjoyed seeing his victims cry and beg for their lives.” His criminal tactic consisted of one-shot-to-the-head style of murder. He admits having taken part in the infamous Sabra and Shatila massacre on the 16 of September, 1982.

Elie Hobeika, a prominent war-time commander of the Lebanese Forces, in turn [had] disputed that “the ‘Cobra’ is an illiterate ex-drug addict whom he fired in 1985, and his book an Israeli plot. [] It was written, he told the Arabic language daily *Sharq Al-Awsat*, by ‘an American journalist of Jewish origin who had previously played a role in the Lebanese war’ - an apparent reference to the American writer who told of her affair with the former militiaman and doomed president-elect Bashir Gemayel. As for

the stories of mistresses galore, Mr. Hobeika says, these constitute ‘the most dangerous part of the book because it intrudes upon the dignities of families and people through unsubstantiated tales of relationships I had with a number of Lebanese ladies’ ”. (Fisk)

Robert Hatem had been living in Paris since 1997. He was Sharon’s personal bodyguard while in Beirut. Sharon felt safe with him around. (Al Anka about March 2005) Hatem writes:

We arrived in Beirut, high-minded and haughty. Our blood was up. We had earned a reputation and were known as the “Special Force.”

This hyper-masculinity coupled with his unsurpassed rage/violence categorizes him as a war/film junkie as well:

We loved to show off. The tense situation in the Christian regions was aggravating. The Syrian troops sought to humiliate us and break us down openly to prove a point. While as high spirited as we were, we started ticking the Syrian troops on the sly, then defied them overtly at the checkpoints. (Cobra 9)

“We were zombies,” he says. (Another possible reference to the film *Cobra*, 1986 – where Stallone’s character Marion Cobretti was a member of the agency’s elite division known as the “Zombie Squad.” [] In another part, he states: “Elie Hobeika’s voice dictated strict orders throughout [the] assault. I was hypnotized. I was doing what I was told, throwing people out of upper-story windows. Shooting others in the swimming pool. It was kill or die, and we had no time for reflection or moods.” (Hattem 13) This reveals to what extent he was brain-washed and possibly manipulated, in addition to his tough qualities of a machine-like man devised to kill.

Paradoxically, In the *Shootist*, a grim tale of violence, Wayne’s character J.B Books is a “Man who enjoys killing. It gives him a *frisson* nothing else can equal. Books shoots in the stomach a man who is trying to rob him, then offers to shoot him in the head if the man does not want to suffer more. [] Books wants the pleasure of killing him on the spot.” (Wills 299) Cobra-HK implies similar thrills throughout his narrative.



Photo 11. -Robert Hatem (Cobra-H. K) (Source: http://www.alankabout.com/lebanon_news/34317.html)

The narrative of *From Israel To Damascus* is buttressed with tension and strain projecting an extremely violent, enigmatic and dangerous man, who kills for the mere pleasure of killing without any shred of remorse or emotion.

Photo 11 - Semiotic Analysis

Robert Hatem does not look human. He looks like a cyborg. An almost-fictional character whose abilities (in this case criminal) extend beyond normal human limitation

by what looks like almost- mechanical elements built into his body. His head round and his eye piece diffuses further his locked eyes. The entire image is a copy of a copy, a scumbled copy, printed on what looks like a worn-out newspaper cover or tabloid. Colour is another crucial component of an image's compositionality. It offers three ways of describing the colours of an image: The actual colors of this particular image of Robert Hatem (hue) are pallid. Saturation is not pure at all, it is extremely low. No primary colors whatsoever. His name on the image in red indicates who he is. The red represents blood. No image value whatsoever for this rare image of Cobra. His secret life entails the impossibility of finding accessible and reliable sources/ imagery.



Photo 12: Robert Hatem a.k.a. Cobra (Source: Revue) Photo 13: Robert Hatem - Cobra-H.K. (Source: Alankabout)

In contrast to the more well-known, doctored photo of Robert Hatem, a.k.a. Cobra (right), an alternative, albeit low res, snapshot (Photo 6-A/ left) that paints a more candid view of the man, is examined. In the promotional shot, he looks like a “final boss” in a videogame, cold-blooded and malicious. The colors in the image are cool and

-muted, a fine parallel to what he's projecting in his gaze and in his book. In the unposed snap, however, he looks out of place and out of focus, almost harmless even.

One could argue that that is a face of a man ground by the inhumane drudgery of war and reduced to a shell of his former self. That may be so, but given the context of his sordid past and his unmoved reflection of it in his book, that description no longer feels applicable. Many have deemed this book to be more of a scandalous tell-all akin to Mean Girls' *Burn Book* that intends to foil follies and name names rather than absolve the heinous crimes of a supposedly repentant man.

This instantly undermines the sorrowful sentiments articulated by the "Cobra" that are meant to paint himself and his fellow war criminals as powerless pawns forced into barbaric acts as a gallant stride to save Lebanon from ruin. For the first time, he speaks of the "kidnapping of the three Iranian diplomats - Mohsen Moussawi, Ahmed Kussliane and Kazem Anuam - and their driver, Taki Rastakar, in 1982." (Fisk)

Most chilling of all –according to Fisk, is his account of two of [the Iranian's] torturers, codenamed "Abu Tony" and "Al Abouna" [] "Abu Tony" was a tough, cruel and ruthless fellow in charge of prisoners, writes the Cobra. "He was the terrifying warden. He interrogated them and applied his most sophisticated torture techniques on them ... Al Abouna in his spare time participated in the torture sessions. [] All four Iranians died under torture and were buried with dozens of other murder victims in ditches close to the port in East Beirut. They were buried at the foot of eucalyptus trees and covered with limestone to speed up the decomposition of the cadavers. (Fisk)

Robert Fisk claims that "Everyone thought the doors of Lebanon's terrible civil war had been firmly closed, the corpses forever interred, the hatred quietly rotting in the earth. From Israel to Damascus has dug up ancient graves." [] Anwar al-Khalil, the

Lebanese information minister, back then, [had] formally banned the book “under Resolution 79 of Decree 4 pursuant to press law (Article 50) of 1963. No one, after all, suspected that a snake might emerge from the graveyard.” (Fisk)

In short, we cannot scrutinize *The Lebanese Rambo* (as a war/film junkie) without Reagan and Wayne. There is a looming connection that starts way before the war/s (Both Vietnam’s and Lebanon’s Civil) and continues much after. It is also important to note that the Reagan era as such, was an era “of bodies,” as per Jeffords (2004). Reagan himself worked on his own persona. Feminism was on the rise, America had been defeated, and so the American psyche as a collective was seeking an obvious consequent vindication. Ultimately, the films were the most elaborate tool to cater for a Reagan who was the perfect icon-instigator of the “remasculinization” process that was put in march. This hard body became for Reaganism what Jurgen Link has called a “collective symbol,” what he defines as “collective pictures that are culturally ‘anchored’ in the most literal sense and that act as carriers of symbolic meaning.” (Jeffords 25) Cobra-HK, on the other hand, describes himself as a Zombie, who had lost his ‘identity’: Who loved to show off, in spite of being hypnotized, brain-washed and manipulated. He was enacting what he was told to do, under strictly dictated orders. He was a killing-machine, or a machine-like man devised to kill. Hobeika was the brains, he was the muscle. (The words of Baz come to surface again when “Only people with muscles like he has can carry and fire such a thing.” (Baz.)

Now, I turn to a different kind of text/structure, and in the next chapter I will discuss the way architecture (a hotel-building, more specifically) can come to be represented as a hyper masculine icon of the Lebanese Civil War.

CHAPTER IV

EMPTY, SHELL-SCARRED PANOPTICON OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR (1976) / THE CITY-MILIEU AS WEAPON

“There are eyes everywhere. No blind spot left. What shall we dream of when everything becomes visible? We'll dream of being blind.” – Paul Virilio

In this chapter I am going to be looking at an aspect of war/film that acts as a unifying force in such visual representations of war: that of the city-milieu. The city itself where war/film junkies or street stars come to perform their hyper masculinity. Or where cultural productions unfold. The city-milieu goes through a process of conversion of its own first and then somehow serves as a war setting for both the real/war and the film/war. I explore The Holiday Inn Hotel as a prominent example. I also will be looking at two cultural productions that make extensive use of such city-milieu: Volker Schlöndorff's *Circle of Deceit* (1981) and Maroun Baghdadi's *Hors La vie* (1991), in which some war/film junkies or street stars re-emerge within the dissolve of two wars. One real (the actual on-going Lebanese Civil War) and one imagined (the war in the narrative which made extensive use of real street fighters) and with superimposing tropes. Paradoxically, sites of war become the sets of the films.

At the very start of the war, militiamen from different warring factions seek to capture the high-rise towers in the hotel district: To go up means to capture the city, and for obvious reasons: They seek high visibility, and a new identity in a Foucauldian “elsewhere,” or a land of guns. Such dynamics cater to their hyper masculine act. The Holiday Inn hotel stood as the watchtower of the Panopticon of the Lebanese Civil war, during the Battle of the Hotels in the two-years war. (October 1975- March 1976). For Michel Foucault, a panopticon is a form of architecture that makes possible a mind-

over-mind type of power. It is a ring-shaped building in the middle of which there is a yard with a tower at the center. The ring is divided into little cells that face the interior and the exterior alike. In each of these little cells there is, depending on the purpose of the institution, a madman living his madness. In the central tower, there is an observer. Since each cell faces both the inside and the outside, the observer's gaze can traverse the whole cell; there is no dimly lit space, so everything the individual does is exposed to the gaze of an observer who watches through shuttered windows or spy holes in such a way as to be able to see everything without anyone being able to hide from him. A utopia, so to speak. (Foucault 58) The occupying militiamen – or war/film junkies consequently used it to engage targets from its positions of concealment, by means of their high-precision rifles.

As far as the cultural productions are concerned, both of their protagonists Laschen (in *Circle of Deceit*, 1981) and Perrault (in *Hors La Vie*, 1991) evolve within their narratives: Both happen to be *Outsiders* who had sought change, inner and outward. They have suffered inner traumas in a similar fashion -that possibly had started way before the narratives. Both Laschen and Perrault share analogous anguish as the war/narratives unfold. They attempt to make sense of a senseless war, in vain. Both Laschen and Perrault go through this peculiar adjustment. A rebirth, so to speak, whether they intend it or not. Both within the same, shared setting of war ten years or so apart.

For a moment, in the case of *Circle* (1981), it gets very confusing: Real actors who are fighters by default playing the parts of militiamen of a war that is fake and yet as it happens. For Eisenstein, film was ultimately an “act of juxtaposition.” (McLuhan 388) Khaled Essayed –a prominent Lebanese militiaman-turned-actor had to alternate

between two occupations as he took on a role, back then. That of a real commander with The Mourabitoun in war-time Beirut and that of the part he was to play in *Circle of Deceit* (1981).

Baghdadi's Outside Life, in turn, articulates the idea that “ex-militiamen can be seen as victims of clientelism, poverty and limited opportunity in the Lebanese political economy. Their marginal position in Lebanese society proves that they gained nothing from the war, unlike their enriched seniors. While some managed to find jobs in the transportation and security sectors or the army, many felt *ostracized* in a society where it was not “*comme il faut* to have been a militia. [] It is often said in Lebanon that your taxi driver probably was a militiaman during the war.” (Haughbolle 126 in Picard 1999, 39)

Former militiamen remember the structure of the Holiday Inn as a tower of death that acted as a makeshift landmark dividing East from West. “They chased us from one floor to the next, from room to room, from column to column two comrades and I were the last to leave before the hotel was taken over by the Palestinians and their allies we waited till dawn, and put on keffiyeh (traditional Palestinian) scarves we took from dead Palestinian fighters, he said, adding that their disguise allowed them to make a clean escape.” Said Milad, an ex-fighter from the Phalange, the main Christian party at the time, told AFP (Daou Your Middle East) His brother-in-arms, Sassine, remembers how the hotel’s chairs and tables were converted into barriers. (Fig. 5) and how fires devastated the woodwork in the rooms. Palestinian ex-fighter Abu Riad said: “The battle of the hotels was one of the fiercest, and it cost us dozens of killed and injured.” (Daou Your Middle East)

The sight of the interior of the hotel spoke loudly. Light bulbs hanging down off the wall, wires, chairs smashed up, a piano that more or less survived, the chandelier is all like this broken, as if it's looking bizarrely like Gargoyles staring down of what humanity have done to itself below. (Dimbleby Al Jazeera)



Fig. 5- Christian Phalange Gunmen in the Holiday Inn Hotel, Beirut (1976) Photo by: Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-christian-phalange-gunmen-in-the-holiday-inn-hotel-beirut>)

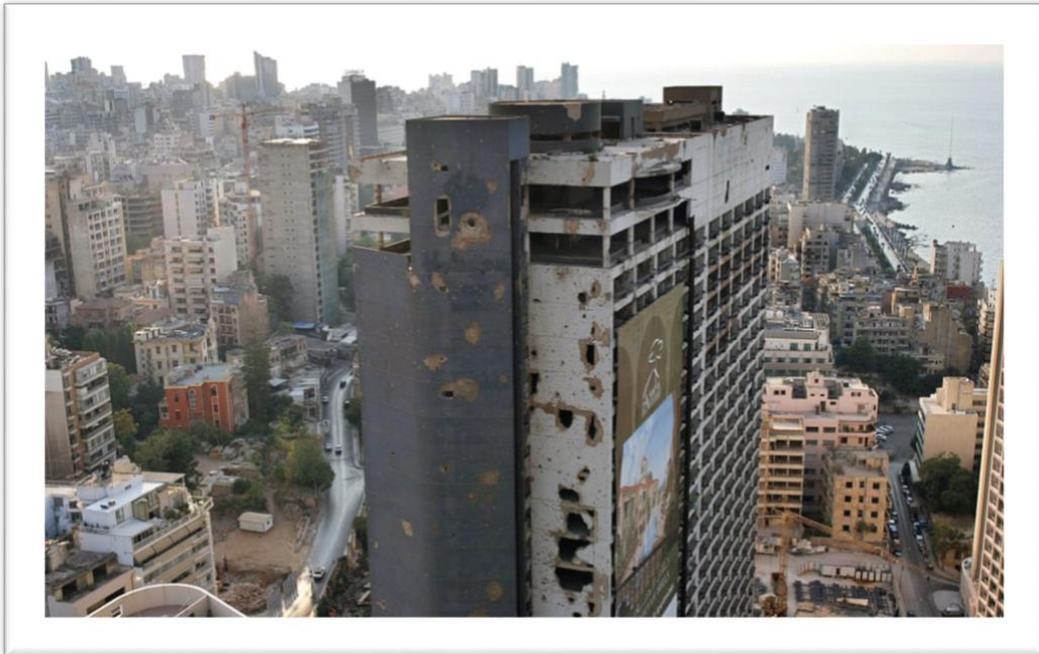


Fig. 6 -The Holiday Inn in its ruinous state. (2005) Photo by: © dpa - picture alliance archive/Alamy. (Source: The Guardian)

The hotel, (Fig.6) -I also suggest- signifies what Marshal McLuhan calls “[a] collective shield or plate armor, an extension of the castle of our very skin. [] Like a ship, is a collective extension of our individual skins, even as clothing is an extension of our individual skins.” (McLuhan 455)

In 2015, a Lebanese artist, Jad Khoury, who goes by the alias Potato Nose wanted to minimize the looming impact that the building has over the surrounding residents. After acquiring permission from the ministry of defense, he entered the “carcass” with the intent of doodling over it and adding some color. This gesture prompted a public outrage with people bemoaning his work as desecrating what they consider to be sacred. On the other side of public discourse, there’s an opposing perspective by people who feel very negatively about what the building represents, an ugly case of fratricide that claimed countless lives. That said, however, they too don’t improve of the artistic liberties that Khoury took because to them, it reads as an attempt

to “dress up” history and make it more palatable which defeats the reflective purpose that memories, especially bloody ones, ought to have (Malek, n.d.).

Fellow classmate of Khoury and interior design student, Lina Hassoun, expresses her disdain for the structure. “It was a tool that killed many people,” she told Al Jazeera. “I don't see anything sacred or holy in it. We cannot compare this building to monuments after World War II, for example ... I took pictures of it for a project, and when I pass by it, I feel the negative energy.” (Malek, n.d.) Naturally, the sketches were painted over (Fig. 7), but in their short-lived debut, they sparked a conversation. The various reactions that sprouted in response illustrate how the Lebanese public views its troubled history. Some want to “paint over it”, some prefer shunning it, while others take pride in it.

Despite the sensitivity of the Holiday Inn and all it represents, according to sources, this decaying site makes for a fun scene for underground parties where dance patrons rub shoulders in a memorial of death. “On a Saturday night in 1998, many Lebanese mingled in the same building where 23 years earlier their parents had fought each other. I was one of the revelers: we snuck out of our parents’ homes and drank and danced until the early hours on a site still vividly synonymous with the 15-year civil war.” (Nayel, 2015).

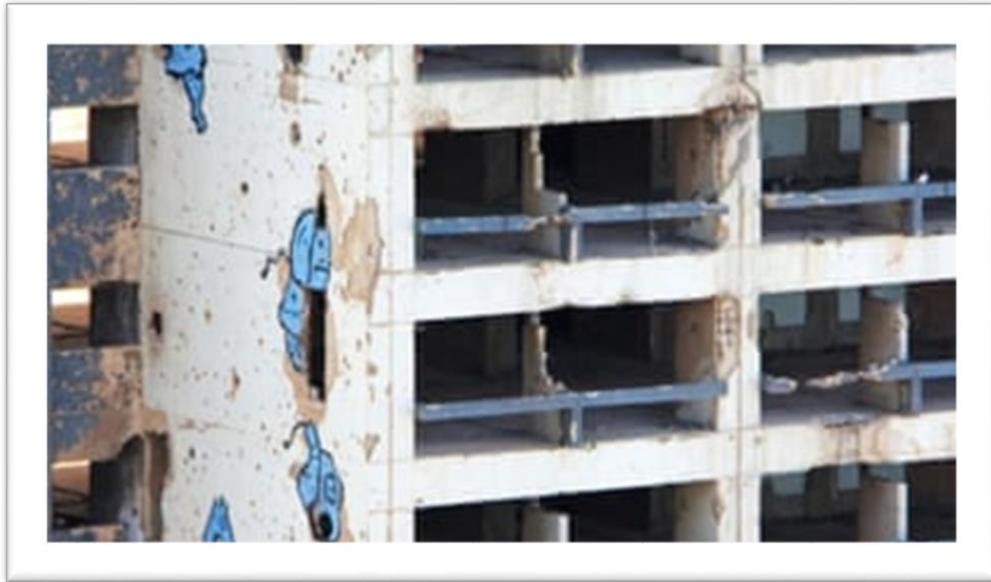


Fig. 7- The Holiday Inn with Khoury's signature cartoons painted over it. Photo courtesy of Jad el-Khoury. (Source: Khazen.org)

Some sites have been saved from demolition by land disputes and ownership complications or by simple inertia, but their future remains unclear. One of these sites is the Egg: An abandoned former cinema along the Green Line in downtown Beirut. With a distinctive shape, it propagated “an unofficial second life: in the 1990s, it became the site of underground rave parties and art exhibitions. Every rumor of plans to redevelop the site drew massive public pushback. For now, the Egg remains largely abandoned.” (Sewell).



Fig. 8- The Holiday Inn /Tom Young Source: <https://www.omvarlden.se/Intervju/intervjuer-2019/tom-young-is-painting-the-war-wounds-in-beirut>)

Some other sites within the down town area have been selected as the actual setting for an unusual narrative (Fig.8). Oscar-winner German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff arrives in Beirut in the early 1980s to scout locations for his next feature film. Schlöndorff's cultural production narrates a kidnapping in war-torn Beirut. War is interrupted. Fighters on both ends of the Green Line get unpaid leave: A surreal kind of vacation. An artistic ceasefire ensues. For some reason, he is able to convince all warring factions to stop the fighting the time he needs to complete his production. It is unclear how he does it. The real and the unreal dissolve though. The settings of war become the sets of the film. This is similar to what Baghdadi does in *Hors La Vie* (1991), as he explores the political economy of the war junkies as well, without having to stop a war.



Fig. 9- The Destroyed Commercial Section of Beirut During the Civil War (1976) Photo by: Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-the-destroyed-commercial-section-of-beirut-during-the-civil-war>)

FILM # 1– Volker Schlöndorff’s *Circle of Deceit* (1981): Reality Interrupted/The Blending of Two or More Wars.

“*War is like love; it always finds a way.*” – Bertolt Brecht

Schlöndorff directs his entire film crew in the midst of the completely devastated city center of Beirut. (Fig.9) (Altaner) Gavin Bell, of *Reuters*, wrote in his article *Making a Film in Beirut: The Bullets May Be Real* that [Schlöndorff had] encountered a few unusual problems when making his latest film. Snipers shooting at his crew and artillery fire blasting his sets. (Schlöndorff 170) For almost three months, the actors and crew ran the gauntlet of sporadic fighting along the notorious “green line” (or dividing line) separating the Christian and Moslem districts of the city While he was filming mock battles in the old commercial district of the city, real

fighting often erupted only two blocks away. (Schlöndorff 170) In order to shoot in such a place, the director met and negotiated an ‘artistic ceasefire’ with all the warring parties. (Altaner) According to New York Times’ John Vinocur he had met [with] “Palestinians, Lebanese Christians and Syrians who said he would be welcome to film in the streets.” Reality is interrupted and two wars blend over.

While shooting in the ruins of the old town, Bruno Ganz -the lead actor, who played the German War Photographer in the film, didn’t just have to focus on the script, but also had to make sure to crouch when passing through intersecting roads so he wouldn’t get hit by snipers. Children who saw plastic body parts lying around on set brought real *human remains* as props the following day. The Lebanese extras who were cast every morning in Beirut insisted on real ammunition, and some of them were also among the ranks of various militia factions at nighttime. (Altaner)

Schlöndorff took local help where he could, and it was a group of Palestinians who served as extras in acting out a Palestinian massacre of Lebanese Christians. They did it free of charge. (Vinocur) Co-producer Eberhard Junkersdorf said he “found the people of Beirut eager to help, sometimes to an embarrassing degree. One day we were filming with dummy corpses and bones, and a bunch of children came up and offered us real ones. It was hard to convince them we preferred fakes. (Schlöndorff 170) And let me call the film a fantasy for the sake of violence codification. A fantasy overridden with violence that “makes it difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is not.” (Monk-Turner 3) Schlöndorff let smoke rise again from the completely destroyed Holiday inn, which was heavily embattled during the so-called ‘Battle of Hotels’ (1975-1976) and is still regarded as a symbol of the Civil War. (Altaner) A battle in which

renowned Lebanese actor Khaled Essayed had played a major role in as an actual military commander of the Mourabitoun forces in the area.

Although the film tells a fictional tale, it very impressively portrays the violence perpetrated by the militias as a part of everyday life. The reason the militias even agreed to an ‘artistic ceasefire, which made filming possible in the first place, was that all the militias saw it as a chance for positive coverage of their group.’ (Altaner) Genuine civil war fighters played the parts of the militiamen in the film, Khaled Essayed was one of them. He portrayed a commander of Palestinian forces:

“I had started acting. When war started I was acting with Chou Chou (Theatre.) I was a military commander of all front trenches of the Mourabitoun in Beirut and Damour. I took part in the Mathaf-Barbir battles, the Israeli invasion. I did not take advantage of my post to hurt anyone. On the contrary, back then it was a Muslim vs. Christian conflict. When I would know of a friend (a Christian friend) who had a relative who had been kidnapped in this area (West Beirut) or they would seek Ibrahim Koleilat, he would –in turn, ask me, and I would solve the problem and free the hostage/s.”

This blending of reality and the imaginary is a visible fundamental of Schlöndorff’s cultural attempt to contrast an *outsider* (Bruno Ganz playing German war reporter Georg Laschen) within the dissolve of two wars: One real (the actual on-going Lebanese Civil War) and one imagined (the war in the narrative which made extensive use of real street fighters) and with superimposing tropes. For a moment, it gets very confusing: Real actors who are fighters by default playing the parts of militiamen of a war that is fake and yet as it happens. For Eisenstein, film was ultimately an “act of

juxtaposition.” (McLuhan 388) Khaled Essayed had to alternate between two occupations. That of a real commander and that of the part/role he was to play:

“As far as the role was concerned, I had separated the two tasks. Or else, I would have stayed in uniform and shot them all. He laughs) I am an actor in the film. I have a part to play. Had to forget I was a real fighter while I was listening to the director’s, assistant director’s or even camera person’s remarks. I had moved from one place to another. The director’s words were my command. The director had it all to win as I performed the role. Since I was already a military commander. The character was clear, easily interpreted and represented. [] I knew that character well: I had acted that role before. For instance: I would leave the trenches and abandon my own post as military commander and go to Greece or Ajman to shoot a series (as an actor) and come back. I would come back, wear my military uniform back and assume back my command. I had a huge responsibility upon my shoulders, you know, on the trenches.” (Essayed)

Antoine Kassabian –A well-known TV personality nowadays, had lived in the area at the time. He told this author: “I recall one thing. They dismantled the mines! This shows to what extent the different factions were collaborating. They even disassembled the mines that were embedded right there in No Man’s Zone. Each faction knew the exact sites of the mines. They came in and shattered them for production purposes.” There was no one at the front line. Kassabian contends. Schlöndorff shot his film in extremely sensitive areas. “The consensus was that he must

have crossed the fine line between genius and madness.” (Schlöndorff 170) Everybody took the time off. Kassabian asserts. “There was a guard of so, maybe, who had nothing to do, except to shy off flies. Every once in a while, someone would replace him. There was total consent on ceasefire.” Kassabian claims.

War/reality was disrupted by a film/fantasy. “The street fighters kept their word, except on one occasion when technicians tried to recover some equipment left behind from the previous day’s filming. Nobody thought to notify the local snipers, who promptly opened fire on the unexpected intruders. Fortunately, no one was injured and the gear was collected later –by appointment.” (Schlöndorff 170) Several days later, crew members had a similar *lucky escape* when a passing Iraqi-embassy car was machine-gunned near them by an assassination squad. (Schlöndorff 170) Essayed said:

“I was cast as an actor, not as a militiaman with field experience. Schlöndorff waited for me. I was shooting a series in Athens. He waited until I returned to Beirut. Most of my part was shot in the Mountains. The PSP (or Progressive Socialist Party) helped as militias, along with Syrian troops. I heard that the skirmishes would stop. Who would stop them? I don’t really know. In order for the filming to take place. I heard that fake battles would take place for production purposes. But I am not sure. My shooting location was Sawfar. As for the script. As for my role: Right after Tal El Zaatar Massacre, and Hay’ el Ghawarne and the Dbayyeh camp, (The Palestinian camp,) the retaliation would be against the Damour. My role was the

Commander of the Palestinian factions who led an attack on Damour to avenge these massacres.” (Essayed)

Essayed is making clear reference to historical battles in the timeline of the Lebanese Civil War, and more so of the two-years war (February 1975-December 1976), the siege of Tal El Zaatar on January 5 (1976) by the Lebanese Front, and, soon after, the Karantina Massacre that took place on January 18, when right-wing Christian forces like the Guardians of the Cedars, the Phalangists and the Tigers Militia took control of the Karantina district. Hundreds of Palestinians were killed and the inhabitants fled before the shantytown was burned and bulldozed. (Fig.10) The Damour Massacre took place on January 20, when enraged and infuriated Palestinian guerillas and the National Movement attacked and destroyed the Christian populated town of Damour, south of Beirut. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands displaced. (Shehabeddine)



Fig. 10- An Old Palestinian Couple Allowed to Leave the Massacre, Karantina, East Beirut. (1976)
Photo by: Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-an-old-palestinian-couple-allowed-to-leave-the-massacre-karantina-east-beirut>)

Essayed distances himself from the atrocities of war: “I did not hurt anyone. And I did not take advantage of my post to impose anything on anyone. I had Arab, Nasserist ideologies with a clear purpose. At the same time, I was an actor. Lots of people would be –let’s say flabbergasted to see me in military uniform. As if a secret was revealed. Everybody took to the streets: There was no problem anymore.” His alias was Abu Louay. (Essayed)

A striking characteristic of this blending of real/unreal is the fusion of sentiments and inner struggles within the fighters themselves, who seek a safer playground for their act of violence. It is ok to play war –since there is no accountability and yet it is more enticing to play within the game of war to escape guilt and to come to terms with oneself. (Fig.16) Schlöndorff faced many setbacks. [Once] he had arrived at a set to continue filming an important scene and found out that it had been hit by shelling during the night. (Schlöndorff 170) “Another unforeseen hazard came from extras hired locally for the battle scenes. ‘We went to a lot of trouble to get back cartridges for their Soviet rifles, but they didn’t like them.’ The director said. ‘Apparently they enjoy the kick from the live rounds. Most of the time we didn’t know whether they were using blanks or real bullets.’ ” (Schlöndorff 170) Essayed had a traumatic encounter of his own as a real fighter:

“I was in Shiyyah. At the very beginning of the war. If I recall well, it was Assaad El Assaad street. There was a counter-sniper in Ain El Remmaneh. He shot down one of ours. I took my rifle and went up to the roof. It was my first reaction. I just sat there waiting. I could not see him. I wanted to shoot someone back.

As an act of vengeance, you know. I looked through the optical scope. The street was empty. Then, I saw a little boy. I tossed the rifle to one side and went down. I couldn't do it. Oh God! You send me a little boy? (He said with obvious regret. Then he sniggered.) This is the war!" (Essayed)

Whether the German filmmaker was able to stop the war or not is irrelevant. Schlöndorff was in the midst of endless shelling, bursts of fire and on-going chaos. Vinocur claims. He wanted very much to avoid any documentary feeling in the film and stayed away from using hand-held cameras to suggest the footage was stolen from reality. [To do it.] He focused on large crane shots and 'almost Wagnerian lighting.' ” (Vinocur)

Circle's protagonist Georg Laschen feels a detectable anguish: In one sequence Georg sits in the solitude of his cold, dimly-lit room, trying to write his story; Greta (back home) holds her child who says: "Finished." "Look!" She says. "There are more photos to look at!" We see black and white negatives of Georg holding his dagger. A premonition. Then we see a minaret and we hear the Muslim call for prayer. Several Muslim fighters perform their ritual. What follows looks like the death line or a visibly destroyed part of the city center. We see the Credit Libanais façade, and its adjacent street. Both abandoned. The scene reflects the horror of war. An old woman walks with a stick in hand, while a man with no legs makes his way in middle of the street. Another walks his barrow in the opposite direction. A bus burns on one side. Smoke covers the scene. Some fighters look on from a higher place. A voice interrupts the moment: "It is usually quiet in the daytime. And all the life that seemed to be dead

comes obstinately out into the sun. The sharpshooters are cleaning their guns. And even the next night's victims have plans. A moment later, Georg walks past a typical Beirut café. A photo of Nasser on the wall. Hookas and smoke cover the place. Old men play table games. A random character is shot in the middle of the street and in cold blood. Another man – who looks like a fighter/vendor offers Georg a gun of his choosing. He refuses to take it. A dream-like sequence presents Georg as a passive character. He is observing the 'life' that is occurring just before him without major contribution of his own. His previous shouts of "lifeless" towards Greta in an earlier scene, could as well reflect his own state: A lifeless character in search of meaning/identity in a ripped city. He might as well attempt to find it in the absurdity of a futile war. Georg says: "Maybe you'd be better off if I disappeared!" For which Greta replies: "When are you ever here!"

Georg makes a needed escape from his own trivial life and marriage to try to find a way to reconnect with them. His unsuccessful attempt to write and even failed love affair in the midst of chaos are not a mere coincidence. He is a faded figure behind the rainy windshield at both ends of the film. Trapped on the *outside* of his life trying to break in. War seems like the perfect method. Hoffman is his opposite. Realistically dull and mechanical. Hoffman predicts wrong: "I bet you are going to have your article ready before we land." Of course, he doesn't. Georg will struggle for the entire narrative to find a reason to be. A pretext to write. In vain.

Hoffman is more preoccupied with the job: "How am I supposed to take a picture? They only fight at night!" Laschen is in it for completely different reasons. Georg is almost a minor figure when viewed against the backdrop Schlöndorff has created: A war tableau so finely observed, and so realistically drawn. (Maslin) For

Brenner, “Fantasy –as a medium, describes the conflict between the real and the imagined. It can be seen as a subset of imagination, and as a mental process whereby the mind creates connections that do not necessarily exist in reality. The medium of fantasy is based in the unreal, a created world. Therefore, it is a process of the mind. Fantasy is described by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a spectral apparition, phantom; an illusory appearance.” (OED) The fantastic can be thought of as the antithesis of reality.” (Brenner Fantasy) Schlöndorff inverts them: “In a ransacked hotel, a masked guerilla plays a piano with a machine gun on top. (A clear figuration of a still photograph taken by Philippe Lapousterle in 1975. See image in Appendix.)

He sees mutilated corpses on a beach of the bodies of a family that had been massacred. A Lebanese child helpfully offers (Hoffman) a dead seagull. ‘He is immediately associating his own history, our history, with it. He feels guilty in some way that he might be responsible for what is going on but he is unable to see a side or a cause where he could participate and get rid of his guilt.’ ” Schlöndorff argues. (Vinocur) Laschen contemplates “Death by the thousands, the mathematics of horror. My horror is the horror of a German gentleman.” This is the spine of the narrative. He is lost as a character. Confused as an actor. A brilliant combination. He admits that his problems with Greta are really problems with himself! Georg bids against a Scandinavian for a set of graphic photographs of war victims, and is told these are “dirty pictures to look at in clean places. Such things show people how well-off they are.” (Maslin) A business in which you have to look at things in the face.

I suggest that Schlöndorff is ultimately trying to show the viewer that the sites Laschen wanders about, the heterotopic-like, destroyed sites of Down Town Beirut, articulate his inner anguish and despair. A versatile trope that persists in the narrative.

And yet it accentuates a subtler character/problematic that is tacit by default. He is broken and bullet-holed like the buildings that surround him. In part for personal and in part for professional motives.

He is absent and yet he is confused. A typical Kafkaesque hero of sorts, in a tragic-and-dystopic space. Fantastic at best. "It is a world where the reality of everyday "history" does not exist. [] Fantasy works against the grain of historicization. It cannot be placed in a specific time or space. Instead it works within the mind of the fantasizer, to bring out the deep desires from within." (Brenner Fantasy) And this is what happens to Georg Laschen. Torn inside-out. Passive and distant. Until one morning when he stands face to face with his own blood-spattered reflection in the mirror, (Schlöndorff summary) "During a shelling of the town, Georg is crammed with many other civilians into a shelter when a Muslim man falls upon him. His immediate reaction is to take out his knife and stab the man, although it is unclear whether this is a deliberate act or whether the man is alive at the time. And according to Moeller and Lellis (2002:202), Georg at last feels real guilt rather than passive bystander guilt. He then returns to his life in Germany, although with many questions unanswered, such as what will happen to his marriage and how will his career progress. (Bywood 89)

It is generally said that without violence there is no story. Often times violence is the pretext for all the consequent action that ensues. The hero is never shielded. Georg also embarks on an odd love affair that cross-cuts with the war. Ariane Nassar (Hanna Schygulla) is a woman Georg knew long ago, now the widow of a wealthy Lebanese. She greets him very warmly, inviting him to her home. When the night's shelling begins, Georg and Ariane dim the lights and begin making love while they crawl to her bedroom like combat soldiers. (Maslin) Afterwards, he accompanies her on

her trip to an orphanage, where she adopts a Lebanese baby and loses all interest in Georg. Ariane is extraordinarily tough. When she first encounters Georg in Beirut, she tells him: “I’ve never thought less about death –I’m never even sick.” She never loses her composure. [] Georg’s desire for a woman like this is an echo of his passion for the battle zone. (Maslin) The closer he is to death, the more alive. Patrick Baz, a prominent war-time photographer, puts it like this:

“Beirut during war was a tiny village. For years I was a war junkie. We always go back. You know. I have this bad feeling. In our profession, we come we take pictures and we leave people behind. It’s not the image. It’s the war that’s ugly. It’s a drug. War is a drug. Once you start you never stop. I had it under my skin for thirty years. It is a drug. The more you go, the more you want. Because life in war is absolutely fantastic. You live the eve of the end of the world. Every day. And you get those fantastic addictions. But you can’t get rid of .. flirting with death. And everything is absolutely fantastic. I mean sex is absolutely gorgeous in war because you’re living it at the extreme. You don’t know what will happen tomorrow. And then you come back, and you see around you, no meaning, people and problems around you have no meaning whatsoever, and life has no meaning.” (Baz)

A peculiar idea: In war, when you leave your home every day, you feel as if there is a bullet behind your head. And this bullet is always behind your head, following you wherever you go.

Georg Laschen is trapped *outside* in a war he cannot escape to the *inside*. His anguish is inevitable. “Punishment is the very stuff of the narratives.” (Stern, World of Kafka) and the violence that surrounds him, strips him from his real sense of space and time. Pretty much what happens to Patrick Perrault in Baghdadi’s *Hors La Vie*. His privacy is liquidated. He is literally *out of life* when taped up. Cruelty and violence pervade. The war-setting he is in “appears distorted to the point of madness. It is the very temporal, commonplace world which has become infinitely ‘remote, inaccessible, mysterious.’ ” (Anders, Kafka) The ‘hero’ cannot penetrate to its center, for he does not belong there. He is an observer and feels guilt due to his lack of participation. (He cannot do nothing to stop it.) Laschen –just like most of Kafka’s heroes, “may be spiritually non-existent, always arriving but never reaching his destination,” and often times “[arriving] too late: So that life becomes a perpetual scramble from place to place. As soon as he arrives, he is no longer wanted.” (Anders, Kafka)

FILM # 2 – Maroun Baghdadi’s *Hors La Vie* (1991): Breaking In / A Struggle for Identity Search.

“I simply want to live; to cause no evil to anyone but myself.” -Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace.

The Kafka impressions bring Patrick Perrault (Hippolyte Girardot) in *Hors La Vie* (a film by Maroun Baghdadi, 1991) to light. Perrault is a typical victim of this

violence. The film narrates the story of a French photographer (Girardot) (Fig.20) who is kidnapped in war-torn Beirut and attempts to make sense of a senseless life as he tries to maintain his personal dignity in the face of torture and brainwashing while at it. Inspired by true events, it depicts an *outsider* gradually consumed by the war that surrounds him and broken in its very spatial deixis. This very conflation in space and time speaks to Laschen's in *Circle of Deceit*. Perrault finds himself in a reality that keeps alienating him while in it. The war itself, is the mirror, on which he confronts his anguish. His punishment (in this case kidnapping) is an imperative. The *Kafkaesque* nature of *Circle's* Laschen as he struggles in the midst of uncertainty is more apparent with Perrault.

The French war photographer scuffles in a narrative that shows armed men with weapons in hands that in turn articulate their dominance, masculinity and power. "Guns in hand, boys become men." (Haughbolle 120) For McLuhan, such weapons become "extensions of hands, nails, and teeth." (McLuhan 455) Violence as this most *evident marker of manhood* is codified –with tools of its own- and adjusted within the context of the Lebanese Civil War and through its salient characters: Laschen in *Circle* and Perrault in *Hors*. They both become inevitably victimized.

The stories of men, whether as victims or victimizers, act as a reflection of the cruelty of war. The violence inflicted by men on each other highlights the way the war dehumanized the Other as well as the self. (Khatib 125) This process of dehumanization occurs in a total state of *narcosis*. Of course, the narrative of a hostage situation film – otherwise known as a plot device- might slip into the realm of the predictable. (The 10 best) "There's a hero (hostage), a villain (captor), and a collection of damsels (and dudes) in distress, longing for police salvation. There's great films that play within this

blueprint, and those that twist the formula into something new altogether.” (The 10 Best)

The plot is simple: “Patrick Perrault, a photo-journalist covering the war in Beirut in the late 1980s, is himself caught up in the hostilities when one day he is picked up and bundled into a car at gun-point. Blind-folded, he is taken to an unknown location where he discovers that he is being taken hostage by Lebanese guerillas. Robbed of his passport, stripped and forced to change into a pair of damp pajamas, he is locked up in a cell from which there is no escape. And he is told that if he takes off his blindfold to see his captors, he will be shot dead immediately. So, begins his long and brutal nightmare.” (Hors La Vie). The captors are never just faceless villains, but rounded, often sympathetic characters evoking the variety of causes at work in the war. Baghdadi never takes sides or offers easy answers. (Time out)

The film opens with a violent, bloody sequence of war that depicts nothing but a hostile, corrupt environment. Patrick is immediately identified. He is in the middle of it all. He tries to help the wounded. It takes a moment and he is taken by force. The reason seems irrelevant. He cannot come to terms with it: “I have a plane to catch.” He is forced to one location after the other without access to the basics. He attempts to maintain his self-control, and he scuffles to endure his captivity. Moustafa warns him: “Everybody is quiet here, no one shouts, no one gets angry. Don’t make a fuss or call the guards. They know exactly what you need.” (They do it all the time.) Perrault is left in darkness, alone, blind-folded with a candle in his hand. The first time he faces the mirror, he talks to himself. He tries to quiet himself. (A mirror that will be removed later on and elicit further his despair.) One of the captors asks him: “Do you think people pay attention to who’s dying in Beirut?” Patrick replies: “I’m not just

anyone. I'm a journalist, I'm French." The wrong combination in war-torn Beirut in the 1980s. Moustafa –The king of BMW in Beirut, shouts back: "Screw you and France, nobody knows your name." A tactile pattern of candle-lighting, bottle-drinking ensues. Patrick is on survival-mode from this moment onwards. He screams: "I want to drink, I'm thirsty. I want water." One of the captors responds: "Shut your mouth, shut up. The faucet doesn't work at night. You will get water in the morning." He asks: "How many hours till the morning?"

Perrault will be subjected to a painful and humiliating series of acts that will threaten his senses and shake his own sense of self. In one scene, he tries to open a window. He must see the daylight. I suggest that he is "locked up" inside a dark chamber (his own camera, perhaps.) He has become so tiny, he fits in it. He tries in vain to make extensive use of his senses to maintain his humanity, as the tempo races towards imminent climax.

Ahmed "Frankenstein" says: "If you are here; you must have done something wrong." Patrick replies: "What did I do wrong?" Frankenstein responds: "Think! You have nothing else to do!" A moment later, he tries to escape, in vain. He is confronted by Moustafa who tells him that "this" is a razor, that won't cut his throat, but rather will cut his ear. A more brutal act of futile vengeance. All this crescendo of mutilation and despair peaks when his captors tape him. He is placed in a truck and taken away. An action that will replicate several times in the narrative. And yet, for a moment he enjoys a probable release: De Niro promises to let him go. "For a walk, alone, free, no bandage, no guards." De Niro says: "Don't listen to the Devil. He tells you: Take a horse, move the barrier and run. Don't do it man, don't. I am here to protect you

from yourself.” He finds himself on the front line. A white horse runs from one side to the other. It is shot dead. De Niro tells Perrault:

“This is Lebanon, man. Don’t trust your eyes. Things are never the way they look. There’s always a snake behind the rock.”

De Niro’s character in Baghdadi’s *Hors La Vie* (played by actor Hamza Nasrallah) recreates a scene from Martin Scorsese’s iconic film *Taxi Driver* in which Travis (played by Robert De Niro) speaks to himself in the mirror: This blending in turn of two narratives, an intertextuality that recreates even the same lines: “Are you talkin’ to me?” forms what Khatib calls *different levels of signification*. One level is the direct reference to the character of Travis Bickle, where film images act as icons of virility to be emulated. (Cohan in Khatib 119) Travis Bickle is a Pirandello-like character in search of an identity. And he joins the two protagonists Laschen and Perrault as they all battle to belong in a place where they are not wanted.

Ken Page wrote about Scorsese’s character (Travis): “In addressing himself in the mirror Travis Bickle is asserting, questioning, and reshaping his identity and masculinity. He wants to be hard. [] Travis Bickle words reinforce the make-believe image which he is presenting to himself. He combines his loneliness and his crucified maleness into a play-acting performance that connotes an obsessive or narcissistic fixation ... the mirror image presents Travis as both his own antagonist and as his ideal other. Although he is on his own, in the room, Travis is not alone in his imagination because he shapes both images which are under his control and gaze. [] Whilst the mirror serves to complete him, it also divides him. His identity is split, his ‘real me’ is fractured.” (Page in Khatib 119-120)

Pretty much what happened to the youth Narcissus, who mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. “This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image.” (McLuhan 63) Ahmed Frankenstein tells Perrault that he hopes to be his chosen killer. “Deep down you’re bad. You deserve what has happened to you.” Patrick feels the light on his hand, arm. Life, a day are compressed to a small beam of light in motion. Frankenstein will fall a martyr as he fights with “Islam.” He says: “We will change the world, [] But the war doesn’t change.”

A scene that depicts his ordeal: Perrault is handcuffed in a van in the middle of a skirmish. He is yelling: “Philippe, let me out of here.” He has developed a connection with his captors, no doubt. He will call them while having lunch with Isabelle at the end. He has developed a psychological alliance with his *Shiite* captors as a survival strategy during captivity. It results from an “irrational” bond formed between captor and captives during their intimate time together. (Stockholm syndrome)

Speckhard et al. contend that “the Stockholm syndrome bond is enduring often beyond the point of captivity and strong enough that hostages will often act protectively in behalf of their captors.” (Speckhard 10)

Drawing on Oscar Wilde’s theory of anti-mimesis, that “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates life,” another hostage-situation comes to mind, when forty-one armed Chechen terrorists overtook the stage and approximately 800 hostages of the Moscow Dubrovka House of Culture, to demand that Russian forces immediately leave Chechnya. (Speckhard 2) One hostage recalls:

“It happened in the second act, ten minutes after the starting of it.

People in Army uniforms appeared on the stage. It was a musical

about World War II so that was expected. They were in camouflage uniforms and carrying automatic rifles. They shot in the air and shouted, ‘You are hostages!’ We didn’t understand. That was a psychological moment to study. Then they announced who they were. At the first moment, we didn’t believe it. My opinion was that it was a Moscow Theater special effect. I had read the book that the musical is based upon and I was expecting now there will be scenes of the war in 1941. [] Our seats were in the balcony, ... four or five seats from the door. Another soldier appeared there in camouflage also. He shot in the air and shouted, ‘You are hostages! Put your hands up, behind your heads!’ At that moment my wife told me, ‘It’s not a joke, please do it!’ [] The lights were on, the music was still playing and the actors were still on the stage. [] We understood.”

(Speckhard 4)

Reality once more blends with the fantasy. Often times, in most hostage-situations where there is a threat of death, “the ability of the captors to create a non-hysterical environment for the hostages ultimately enhanced the safety of both parties. [] This effect in hostages was first noticed and named after a 1973 robbery of a Stockholm, Sweden bank in which four employees were held captive for about six days during which time they showed positive feelings toward their captors (Spekhard 9)

The Stockholm syndrome is believed to occur when hostage takers have refrained from overly abusive behaviors and have had ongoing personal contact with their hostages. It appears to be an automatic, perhaps unconscious, emotional response

to the trauma of being held captive when death seems likely. It can also be understood as an activation of attachment behaviors under threat.” (Speckhard 9-10)

Several scenes in *Hors La Vie* articulate aspects of haptic visuality. For instance, Perrault is in darkness, holding a candle, drawing on the facing wall. He is seeing. Or when he receives a perfume bottle from Ali/Philippe; he immediately makes use of his smell sense. “Optical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking [–in turn,] tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth. [] It is more inclined to move than to focus. More inclined to graze than to gaze. (Marks 162) *Hors La Vie* presents a series of *haptic images*, as such. One perfect example is Perrault’s play with the beam of light. Marks argues that such images “offer a proliferation of figures that the viewer perceives the texture as much as the objects imaged.” (Marks 163)

Another instance in which a haptic image offers a certain figuration is when Ali/Philippe approaches Perrault with beads in hands. He is gradually walking to the captive. Once close enough to smell them, Perrault exclaims: “I know these beads. It’s made of yellow amber, I bought them in Sanayeh. You’ve been to my house, you’ve been through my stuff. You took my collection of rosaries.”

Privacy has been liquidated. He is literally *out of life* when taped up. Cruelty and violence pervade. Stanley in the *Birthday Party* (A play by Harold Pinter) is similarly a victim of “strangers who invade his private world, accuse him of an unspecified crime, and seek to undo him.” (The *Birthday Party* 18) Martin Esslin argues that Pinter “takes as his starting point man’s confrontation with himself and the nature of his own being, that fundamental anxiety which is nothing less than a living being’s basic awareness of the threat of non-being, of annihilation.” (The *Birthday Party* 19)

Rose suggests that during the course of the play, Stanley is in a way 'reborn.' "Following his inquisition, he no longer seems to be the same person we met at the beginning." (The Birthday 19)

Nabil Ismail –a Lebanese war-time photographer (who coincidentally had played the role of a war-photographer in Baghdadi's *Little Wars* in the early 1980s) disputes that the fighters of zone A and the fighters of zone B resemble each other: I used to move and was a living proof of that. Both sides killed, both sides fell victims, both actually believed the deception as it unfolded. At the start of the war he was happy. "There was war. It was the thing for me, yet tragedy for the others." In one particular photo, he had frozen the moment of a great explosion for which he commented: "I had arrived at the end. An end that cries out: the war is over. We were all defeated. No more war. Let's move on to reconstruction. That particular photo symbolized a sudden transformation, of which I was hopeful. Yet I was disappointed that my hopefulness was in vain." (Ismail)

The city-milieu in both Lebanese and foreign cinema is not a mere backdrop space. "It is another character with its own story to tell." (Khatib 60) In Maroun Baghdadi's *Little Wars* (1982) ending sequence, we see characters "rush through deserted, emptied streets of a sacked city. [] " We see mid-shots of buildings on the verge of collapse and close-ups of others full of bullet holes intercut with wide shots of the city as a whole. The body of Beirut comes to mirror the bodies of its inhabitants." (Khatib 61) Georg Lachen in *Circle of Deceit* (1981) seems to run through the city as running through himself. Perrault in *Hors La Vie* (1991) is a French photographer who is kidnapped in war-torn Beirut and attempts to make sense of a senseless life as he tries to maintain his personal dignity in the face of torture and brainwashing while at it. Both

narratives depict *outsiders* gradually consumed by the war that surrounds them and broken in its very spatial deixis by its overwhelming violence.

Both Laschen and Perrault evolve within their narratives: Both *Outsiders* who had sought change. Inner and outward. They have suffered inner traumas in a similar fashion -that possibly had started way before the narratives. Both Laschen and Perrault share analogous anguish as the war/narratives unfold. They attempt to make sense of a senseless war. The same war. In vain. Both Laschen and Perrault go through this peculiar adjustment. A rebirth, so to speak. Whether they intend it or not.

Laschen in *Circle of Deceit*, admits to exaggerate the events, “so the folks in Hamburg won’t get bored with the war!” Hoffman’s line about the Arabs in the plane early on prefigures their futile routine in the hotel lobby. (Scenes shot in what looks the inside of Casino Du Liban.) Hoffman says: “Who cares about the Arabs anyway? People think: Let them kill each other. So much better.” Moments later we see the Arabs he is referring to in the lobby watching what looks like American television with their backs to the mounted *news room* in the hotel lobby. Indifferent to the *news makers* and careless about the on-going conflict outside. A clear indication of Arabs indifference and their Western-bias. Same goes for the hotel crowd at party who dance to a local rendition with the recurrent trope of life as it happens inside the walls is all that matters.

While war and the killing persist on the outside. The only time someone kills inside is when Georg feels threatened and stabs a man who had fallen all over him in the shelter. Finally, he has his alleged Brechtian-reason to use his own weapon. As soon as the shooting of *Circle of Deceit* wrapped up in 1981, the conflict erupted all

over again, the ceasefire was called off and the militias returned to their daily business. Schlöndorff reacted: “The film is over, reality continues.” (Altaner)

Lastly, Outside Life articulates the idea that “ex-militiamen can be seen as victims of clientelism, poverty and limited opportunity in the Lebanese political economy. Furthermore, their marginal position in Lebanese society proves that they gained nothing from the war, unlike their enriched seniors. While some managed to find jobs in the transportation and security sectors or the army, many felt ostracized in a society where it was not ‘*comme il faut*’ to have been a militia. [] It is often said in Lebanon that your taxi driver probably was a militiaman during the war.’ (Haughbolle 126 in Picard 1999, 39)

Ironically, and within these two narratives, the unvarying population, of this city-milieu simply disappears. They descend to the shelters to protect themselves from shelling, gun-fire, and kidnapping: They become *invisible* under the belly buttons of the city. The war/film junkies or street stars, on the other hand, occupy the city and make themselves highly visible by re-appearing and ‘acting out’ a violence that seems natural and necessary. This physical separation/swapping that doesn’t seem to enforce itself, enacts certain dynamics on both crowds. Both simply trade places. They become enclosed/entangled, in one way or another, through ‘mechanisms of confinement’ (Foucault 258). This dynamic applies to the real war as well.

Paradoxically, the Holiday Inn hotel stood as the watchtower of the Panopticon of the Lebanese Civil war, during the Battle of the Hotels in the two-year war (October 1975- March 1976). A vast structure that provided additional power/mind control -*a la Foucault*, over the city, and the opposing fighters, and served as a setting for both the on-going war and the films. Various militiamen from different warring factions were

able to capture the high-rise towers in the hotel district, including the Holiday Inn, during the early years of the civil war: An act that defined further their hyper masculinity and its performative constructs via the occupying of the physical space and the control of the city below them.

CONCLUSION

THE HOLLYWOODIZATION OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

If I had tears I'd offer them to-night, to every twinkling star and speck of dust; to every gurgling brook and singing katydid; to every violet wafting on the air its fragrant soul; to every racing wind; to every mount and vale; to every tree and every blade of grass – to all the passing peace and beauty of this Night, I'd pour my tears before them as apologies for men's ingratitude and savage ignorance

-Mikha'il Na'ima, The Book of Mirdad (1948)

As this project attempts to examine war texts or visual representations of war which somehow acquire a certain potentiality to become, as a collective body of texts, icons of hyper-masculinity within the dissolve of Post-Vietnam American war films and the Lebanese Civil War, it also intends to deconstruct the relationship between such war texts and Post-Vietnam American war films, and to study them as amplified visual representations of war. It articulates within a contextualized Lebanese war/film reality a new perspective around film and gender studies as they overlap. This project tries to add new knowledge on the myths and realities of the male body and gendered violence with the Lebanese Civil war. An attempt rarely undertaken within the Lebanese context. There will be more attempts at establishing certain connections, efforts at triggering new initiatives that pronounce similar dissolves and analogous realities.

With varying degrees, these war texts or visual representations of war signify hard-body militiamen who transform in Lacanian processes of identification and transmogrify to become the film heroes themselves, in displays of self-aggrandizement. These individual-physical adaptations scrutinized in the war texts, along with a sudden interruption of war activities in 1981, led to “moments” of Hollywoodization of the

Lebanese Civil War. I cannot openly speak of a ‘total war’ being Hollywoodized, rather apparent ‘moments’ of Hollywoodization that fluctuate via these war texts at different intervals of time early on, and that the evidence clearly shows.

The myth of Phoenicia, as juxtaposed to (John) Wayne, the American Cowboy *par excellence*, had been re-appropriated mostly by right-wing Christians in Lebanon whose definition of the Lebanese nation relies on the necessity of believing that they are ancestrally related. (Khatib 4) [A] Lebanese was first a member of this family, then his village, then his religious group, and finally he was Lebanese. (Khatib 7) Michael Johnson (2001) reveals a similar idea when he speaks of men of honor [who] fought for their family, clan, and confession.

Johnson contends that we need not be confused by different cultural explanations for the nastiness of ethnic conflict. (Johnson 174) “[A] sense of fear, on its own, [might] provide an explanation for the general nastiness that accompanies ethnic violence.” (Johnson 178) Militiamen around West Beirut were a spectacle not to be missed. For some reason, they adopted identifiable sub-practices of their own. Their appearance and attire were distinct, tailored for a purpose. Haugbolle claims that in the heat of battle, however, many fighters experienced elation and a sense of purpose and integration. The fighting was cathartic and everything permissible. High wartime unemployment acted as an incentive for young men to join the militias. (Makdisi et al 16)

The Cowboy’s face (In Chapter II) shows ambiguity and rebellion in his frozen act. For some reason, the image is split in three parts: the two side-parts of this image are distorted, defocused parts of the actual image of the cowboy. This split reflects his own identity-split: name/alias etc. It conveys the idea of haziness/fogginess that

surrounds him or someone like him. His long hair hides under his hat, (possibly) and yet his white beard reflects age/maturity. You can tell he is assuming his authoritative role even for this random image. His right hand's index finger rests on the machine gun magazine and not on the trigger. His relative facial unresponsiveness does not translate into composure. This image communicates hyper-masculinity and power represented by this legendary militia boss of a Lebanese warring faction. What stands out to me the most is the explicit contrast between our cowboy's camouflage-heavy uniform that is meant to conceal him from view and the boisterous red scarf that asserts a clear bias and pleas for attention. Once again, this man's masculinity is upholstered by the spectacle factor of performance. To quote Judith Butler, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender ... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler, 1990).

In turn, The Godfather's (in Chapter II) communicates hyper-masculinity represented in the commander's unintentional pursuit of conflating his military might with that of a mafia boss. He pretends to demystify him somehow by acting out a "real" version of a representational power. I can read Roland Barthes' punctum in this image. He appears to be copying Marlon Brando's opening scene in *the Godfather* (1972), an image I have added for comparative purposes. (And hence the title I have given to this particular image: The Godfather.)

Missak Donanian, or The Lebanese Rambo, (in Chapter III) did what John Wayne did in his films: "To create a 'self' so real to others that he could disappear into it." (Wills 27). You can directly attest to his physical adjustment. He must have spent plenty of time and effort to look like that. He is also standing motionless, no one is holding him. Most of the image is occupied by the machine gun. "Only people with

muscles like he has can carry and fire such a thing. I know, I've been with marines in Afghanistan, in Iraq and they only give it to the tough guy. To the muscle man." (Baz.) Rambo does not stand alone as the hard body of the Reagan era (Jeffords 52) Missak Donanian, as the Lebanese Rambo, does as well, within a different war context. From his posture to the way he enunciates in the manner of Stallone, he is playing a character. Through a very calculated set of premeditations, he has perfectly replicated Stallone's whole essence, specifically his portrayal of Rambo. "[The Lebanese Rambo] had this funny approach: 'Rambo fights in the films, I, on the other hand, am real.' " (Photo 4)

The Lebanese Rambo –a major finding, seems a proposed assemblage.

Donanian wants to be perceived as a "tough guy" in every sense of the word and the public, embodied by the interviewer and cameraman, is more than willing to comply with those wishes. It's a vicious cycle of codependency between spectator and spectacle bred by garish iconography taken sincerely. Same goes for Cobra. He does not look human. He looks like a Zombie. An almost-fictional character whose abilities (in this case criminal) extend beyond normal human limitation by what looks like almost-mechanical elements built into his body. He is brain-washed and manipulated to follow strict command. His head round and his eye piece diffuses further his locked eyes. The entire image is a copy of a copy. The image of a war/film junkie who loved to show off.

If Post-Vietnam American war films (1975-1985) had a huge impact on perpetrators of war (and consequently led to iconic representations of war within the context of the Lebanese Civil War) -what I propose in my study, and underpinned aspects of their daily routines, appearance and violent practices, then it must have had a massive impact on the Lebanese Civil War as a whole, with transformative effects:

Post-Vietnam American war films, among other timely factors, led to the Hollywoodization of the Lebanese Civil War, which turned out to be its possible sequel with transformative effects. I project that both war and perpetrators of war will continue to transmogrify via media platforms and traditional warfare will continue to transmute into new forms.

APPENDIX

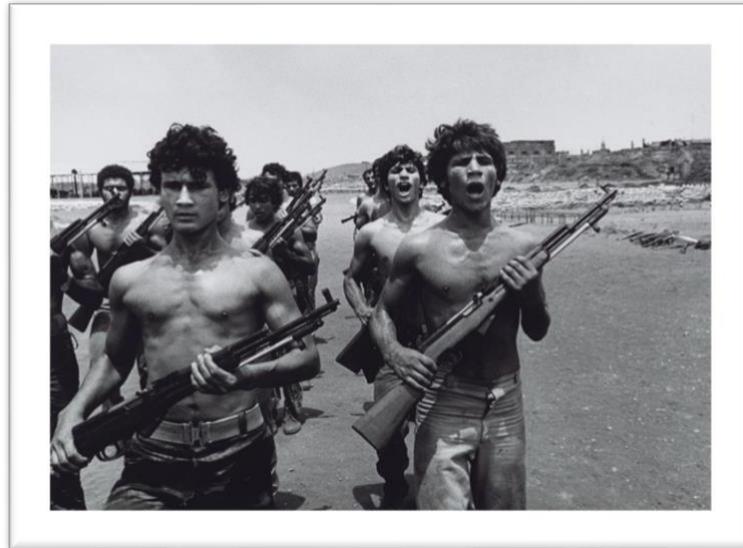


Painting of Soldier (© Semaan Khawam / Source:

<https://observers.france24.com/en/20120406-lebanese-artist-risks-jail-time-graffiti-soldiers-lebanon-civil-war-christians-muslims-censorship-beirut>)



Mural, Lebanese Civil War (Color photo) / Tripoli, Lebanon / © Gerard Degeorge / The Bridgeman Art Library. (Item #9851889) Source: <https://www.allposters.com/-sp/Mural-Lebanese-Civil-War Posters>)



Palestinian Fighter Training in Beirut (1976) Photo By: © Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-palestinian-fighter-training-in-beirut>)



Palestinian Fighter Training in Beirut (1976) Photo By: © Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-palestinians-training-in-west-beirut>)



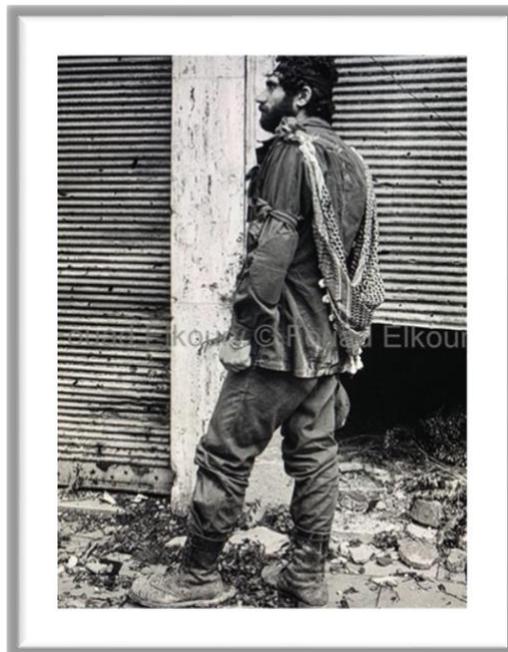
Volker Schlöndorff filming in Beirut (1981) (Source: <https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/669>)



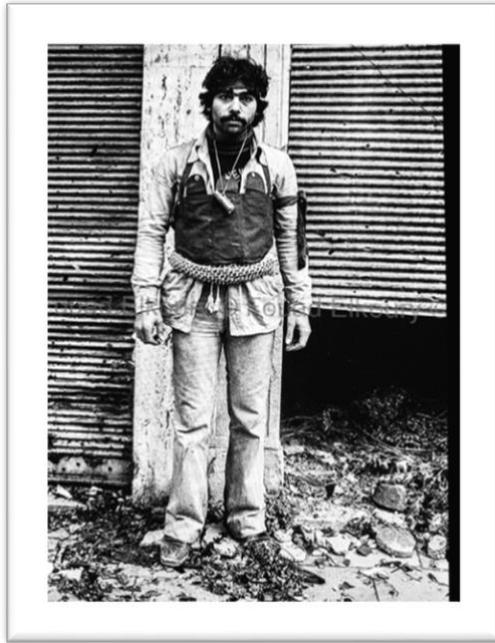
Schlöndorff directing his actors. (Source: <https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/669>)



A scene from Circle of Deceit (On the left: Lebanese actor Khaled Essayed)



Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



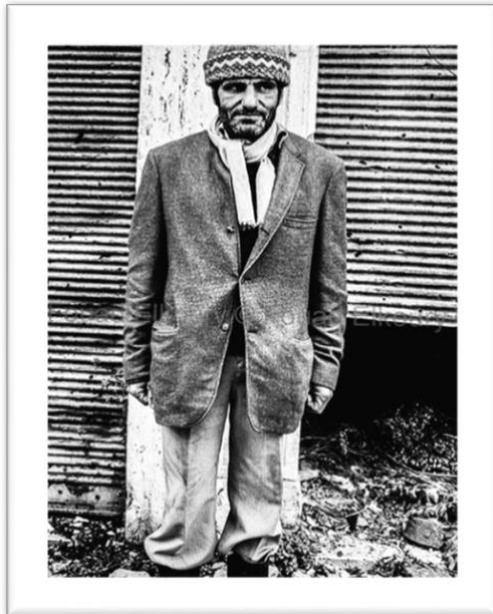
Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



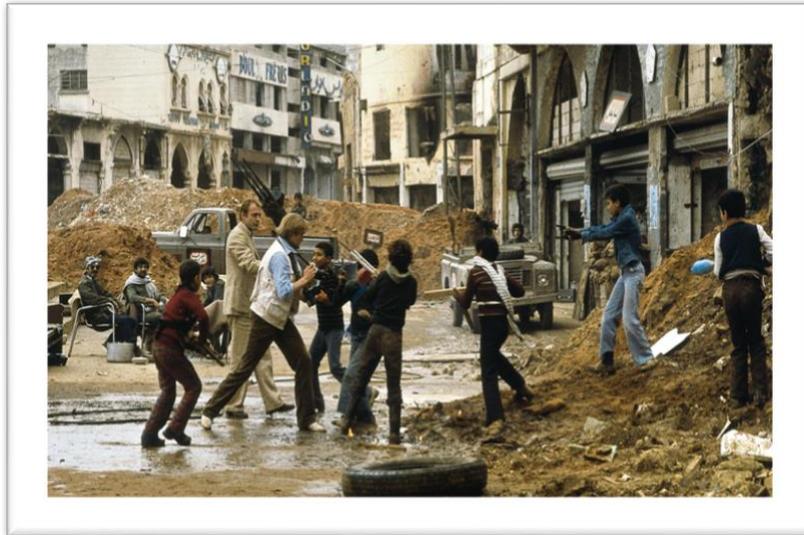
Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



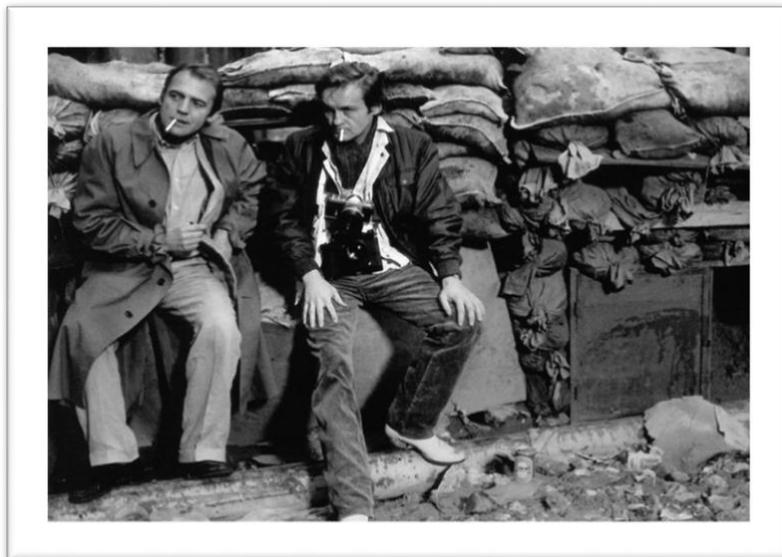
Casting of fighters hired by Schlöndorff to play their real role in his film. (Copyright © Fouad El Khoury. Used with Permission.)



An Old Palestinian Couple Allowed to Leave the Massacre, Karantina, East Beirut. (1976) Photo by: © Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-an-old-palestinian-couple-allowed-to-leave-the-massacre-karantina-east-beirut>)



A scene from *Circle of Deceit* shot in downtown Beirut | © 1981 Eberhard Junkersdorf
(Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082429/mediaviewer>)



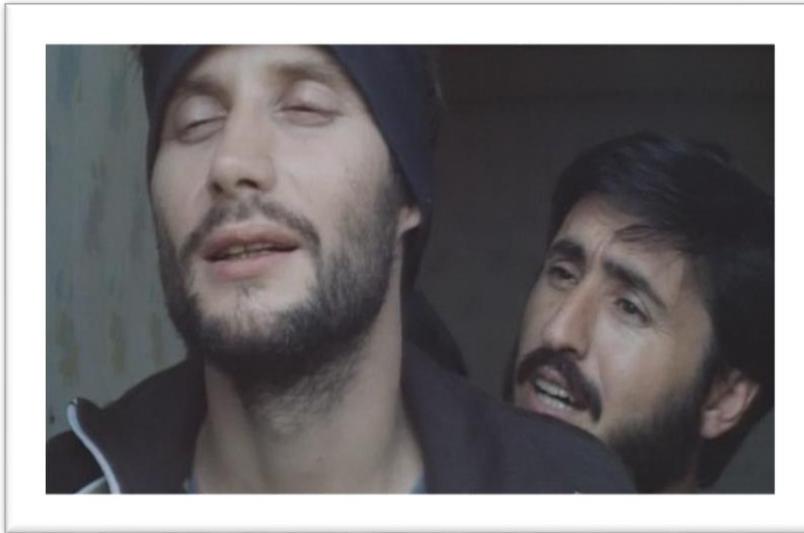
Bruno Ganz (Left) as Georg Laschen and Jerzy Skolimowski(right) as Hoffman in
Circle of Deceit (1981) (Source: <https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/669>)



A masked guerilla plays a piano with a machine gun on top in a bar in the Holiday Inn in Beirut. (© Philippe Lapousterle, November 3, 1975)



Schlöndorff directing his actors. (Source: <https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/669>)



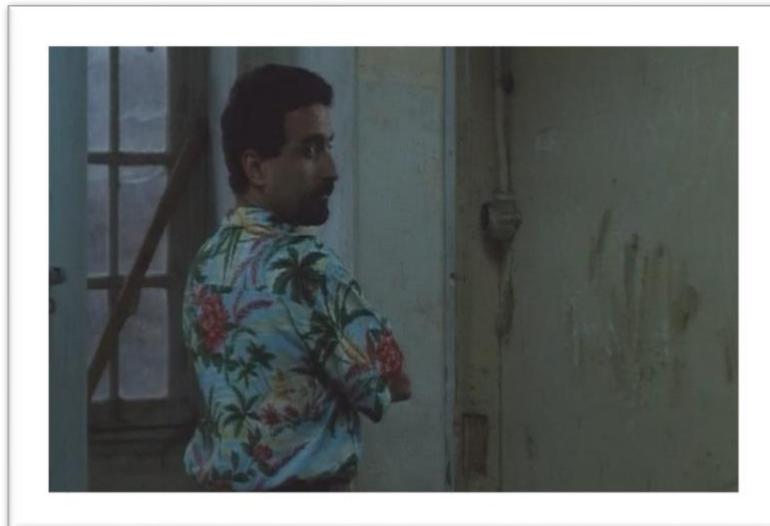
Patrick Perrault (Hippolyte Girardot) in *Hors La Vie* (1991) (Source: <http://rarefilm.net/hors-la-vie-out-of-life-1991>)



Patrick Perrault (Hippolyte Girardot) in *Hors La Vie* (1991) (Source: <http://rarefilm.net/hors-la-vie-out-of-life-1991>)



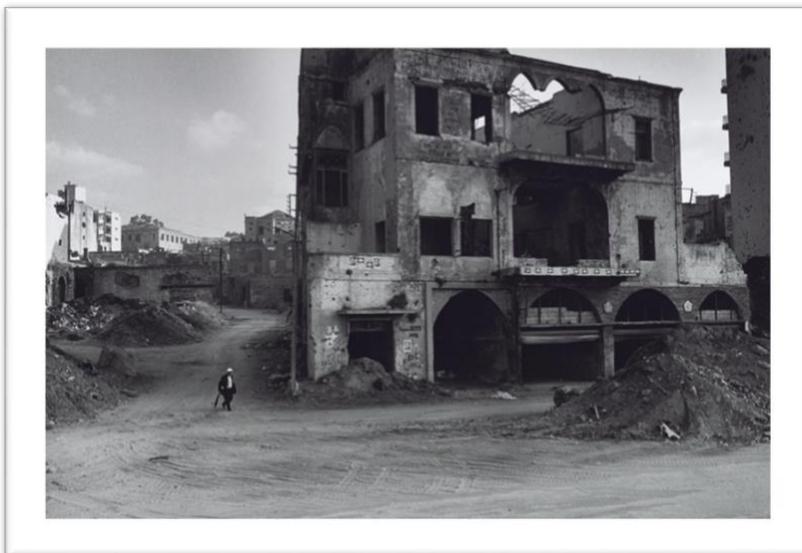
Majdi Machmouchi as Moustapha in *Hors La Vie* (Source: <http://worldscinema.org/2017/03/maroun-bagdadi-hors-la-vie-aka-out-of-life-1991-2/>)



De Niro's Character in Baghdadi's *Hors La Vie* (played by actor Hamza Nasrallah) (Source: <http://rarefilm.net/hors-la-vie-out-of-life-1991>)



Patrick Perrault (Hippolyte Girardot) in *Hors La Vie* (Source: <http://ravepad.com/page/hors-la-vie/images/type/photo>)

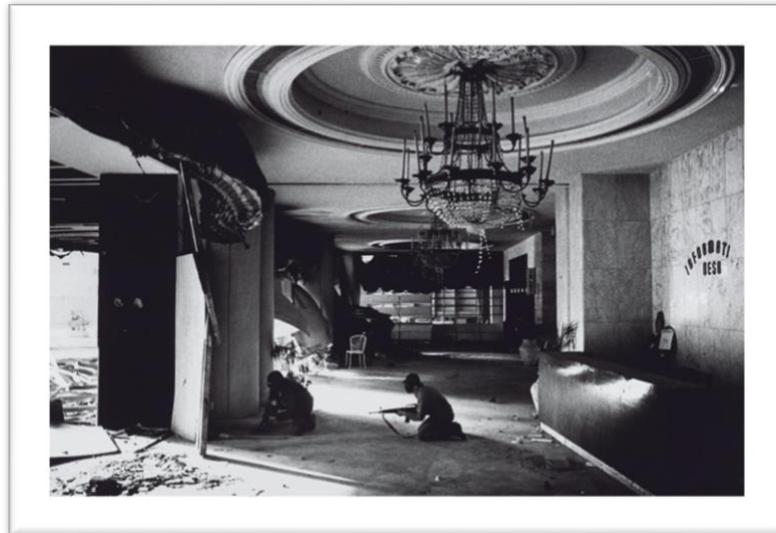


The Destroyed Commercial Section of Beirut During the Civil War (1976) Photo by:

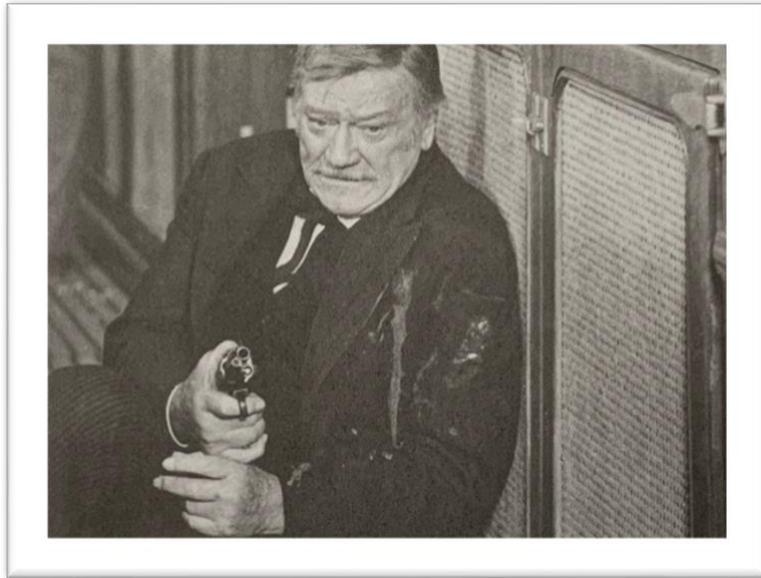
© Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-the-destroyed-commercial-section-of-beirut-during-the-civil-war>)



The Holiday Inn /Tom Young Source: <https://www.omvarlden.se/Intervju/intervjuer-2019/tom-young-is-painting-the-war-wounds-in-beirut>)



Christian Phalange Gunmen in the Holiday Inn Hotel, Beirut (1976) Photo by: Don McCullin (Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mccullin-christian-phalange-gunmen-in-the-holiday-inn-hotel-beirut>)



John Wayne as J.B Books in Don Siegel's 1976 Western, *The Shootist*. (Source: *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, Multimedia: Language, History, Theory* 3rd Edition.)

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