CINÉ-ARCHIVISTES AND THE METALEPTIC ARCHIVE OF LEBANESE CINEMA

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Abstract | The article considers three Lebanese films – *Il était une fois, Beyrouth* (1995) by Jocelyne Saab, the short *Le Liban à travers le cinéma* (2003) and the documentary *Cinéma de guerre au Liban* (2003), both by Hady Zaccak – to explore the archival impulse in their composition. We will suggest that this impulse takes two major forms: the use of a montage of sequences of Lebanese films, or films about Lebanon, and crossovers between narrative thresholds and between fact and fiction. We draw on Gérard Genette's version of metalepsis to analyse the nature of these crossovers and the notion of 'survivance' proposed by Georges Didi-Huberman to examine the multiple traces of the archive in each film. We will also suggest that, by forcing different films to interact with each other – not unlike Jean-Luc Godard's treatment of the film archive in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* – Saab and Zaccak compose new narratives and therefore act themselves, self-consciously, as *ciné-archivistes* reflecting on the memory of Lebanese cinema while highlighting its silences.

Keywords | Archive – *Ciné-Archivistes* – Metalepsis – Narrative – Montage – Memory.

Abstract | Cet article porte sur trois films libanais : *Il était une fois, Beyrouth* (1995) de Jocelyne Saab, *Le Liban à travers le cinéma* (2003), un court-métrage de Hady Zaccak, et *Cinéma de guerre au Liban* (2003), un documentaire de Zaccak également. Ces trois films ont en commun une composition singulière centrée sur une pulsion d'archive. Nous suggérons que ce mouvement vers l'archive prend deux formes majeures : l'utilisation d'un montage de séquences de films libanais, ou de films sur le Liban, et des croisements de différents seuils narratifs et entre réalité et fiction. Nous nous appuyons sur la définition de la métalepse

par Gérard Genette pour analyser la nature de ces croisements et sur la notion de « survivance » proposée par Georges Didi-Huberman pour examiner les multiples traces de l'archive dans chaque film. Nous proposons également qu'en amenant différents films à interagir les uns avec les autres – tout comme les archives cinématographiques dans *Histoire(s) du cinéma* de Jean-Luc Godard – Saab et Zaccak composent de nouveaux récits et agissent donc eux-mêmes, consciemment, en ciné-archivistes réfléchissant tant à la mémoire du cinéma libanais qu'à ses silences.

Mots-clés | Archive – Ciné-Archivistes libanais – Métalepse – Récit – Montage – Mémoire.

Numerous obstacles face archival projects in Lebanon. A contested past, censorship, politicians who would prefer to keep things which challenge their impunity out of public discourse, especially material that touches on the civil war (1975-c.1990), all stand in the way of building such a resource. Cinema, however, is one domain where some individuals have indeed attempted to construct an archive, one that that they have had to chart themselves as part of a process of post-war reconstruction[1]. Engaging with cinephilia and the formation of a corpus of film that can be understood as Lebanese, both of the directors we discuss here – Jocelyne Saab and Hady Zaccak – were involved in the establishment of a *cinémathèque libanaise* (modelled on the French version)[2]. Indeed, Saab's *Il était une fois, Beyrouth, histoire d'une star* (hereafter *Il était une fois*) was one part of a much larger project, *Beyrouth, Mille et une images*, which she started in 1993, to collate all the films made in Beirut by both Lebanese and foreign directors[3]. Saab and Zaccak have sought ways to document the history of Lebanese cinema, from its origins and early successes, such as Georges Nasser's *Vers l'inconnu* (1957) with its recognition at Cannes, to the recent past[4]. There have been other projects too: since 1998, Nadi Lekol Nas (*Film for allî*) 'has been documenting [and archiving] independent cinematographic and musical productions from the Arab region, including works dating back to 1930'[5]. In the same way, under the auspices of UMAM Documentation and Research, Lokman Slim and Monika Borgmann have rescued abandoned studio archives in an attempt to preserve the traces of Lebanese filmmaking[6]. Scholarly works such as Lina Khatib's 2007 study, *Lebanese Cinema*, have mapped a national corpus of work—although Khatib's focus is more or less exclusively on the civil war[7]. As part of a larger project to document abandoned buildings in Beirut, the artist Gregory Buchakjian has mapped scenes from films concerned with the war onto their locations in the city, forming a sort of cinematic route map of the war's representation[8]. Finally, in 2020, partly in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and the closure of theatres, independent production house Abbout began streaming some of their back catalogue. As a development of this, the online platform Aflamuna is, with

1- Mathilde Rouxel and Stefanie van der Peer, 'Introduction: A Synthesis and Testimony of Jocelyne Saab's Life and Work', in Mathilde Rouxel and Stefanie van der Peer eds, *Refocus: The Films of Jocelyne Saab: Films, Artworks and Cultural Events for the Arab World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 1-16, p. 5.

2- We are grateful to Mathilde Rouxel for access to papers from Jocelyne Saab's archive.

3- See Mathilde Rouxel, *Jocelyne Saab, la mémoire indomptée* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2016). On Saab's documentary practice, see Stefanie van der Peer, *Negotiating Dissidence: The Pioneering Women of Arab Documentary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017) and Rouxel and van der Peer eds, *Refocus: The Films of Jocelyne Saab.*

4- On Saab, see above; on Hady Zaccak. see 'Petites et grandes guerres : Une filmographie des longs métrages tournés au Liban pendant la guerre civile (1975-1990)', *Regards – Revue Des Arts Du Spectacle*, (24), 2020, pp. 141-155. (https://journals.usj.edu.lb/regards/article/view/488) and *Le Cinéma libanais: itinéraire d'un cinéma vers l'inconnu* (1929-1996), Beirut: Dar-el-Machreq, 1997.

5- See https://nadilekolnas.org/archiving/, accessed on 26/7/2021

6- See Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim, *Sur les Studios de Baalbeck et autres lieux de mémoire au Liban* (Beirut : UMAM D&R, 2013).

7- Lina Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond* (London: IB Tauris, 2008).

8- See https://www.buchakjian.net/installation/where-do-filmmakers-go/index.html

Cinémathèque Beirut-Metropolis, freely disseminating a corpus of Lebanese cinema. This involves invited curators choosing at least one film per month online as part of an exploration of 'cult, contemporary, classic and independent Arab films'[9].

Against this backdrop, our focus in this article is on three films that, we believe, constitute a significant attempt to construct an archive of Lebanese film around the turn of the millennium: Jocelyne Saab's *Il était une fois, Beyrouth, histoire d'une star* (1994) and Hady Zaccak's *Le Liban à travers le cinéma* (2003) and *Cinéma de guerre au Liban* (2003) (henceforth *Le Liban* and *Cinéma de guerre* respectively). Saab's film combines humour and political satire in recounting the story of Beirut through the stories that have been told of Beirut in film. Saab places her compilation of clips from numerous films in the context of the aftermath of the civil war, which has seemingly effaced everything, and with the critical interventions of the two young female protagonists, Leila and Yasmine, whose exploration of this hidden cinematic past takes place in the cinema and film library of M. Farouk ('la mémoire vivante de Beyrouth', as he is described in the film). Zaccak's two short documentaries are also a compilation of film clips from numerous films – one dealing with representations of Lebanon in general (*Le Liban*), the other more specifically representations of the civil war (*Cinéma de guerre*). As with Saab's film, these are pioneering attempts to create a cinematic archive when none exists.

We argue that Saab and Zaccak self-consciously take on the roles of *ciné-archivistes*, a term we employ to denote the directors' acknowledgement of the drive, impulse or 'pulsion' to collect and to organise a lost cinematic past in the full knowledge of the problems posed by any such enterprise[10]. We will suggest that this impulse takes two major inter-connecting forms: crossovers between narrative thresholds and between fact and fiction, and the use of montage of diverse sequences of Lebanese films, or films about Lebanon. We will draw on Gérard Genette's version of metalepsis to analyse the nature of these crossovers and the notion of 'survivance' proposed by Georges Didi-Huberman (following Aby Warburg) to examine the multiple traces of the archive in each film. We will also suggest that, by forcing different films to interact with each other through montage – not unlike Jean-Luc Godard's treatment of the film archive in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* – Saab and Zaccak make new connections, compose new narratives and, thus, transform a record of the past into a performative act in the present. While what we identify is an archival desire – a fever even, in Jacques Derrida's terms – what results is incomplete, partial and performative: an anti – or impossible archive[11].

9- See https://aflamuna.online/home, accessed on 16.5.2021.
10- We take the term 'archival impulse' from Hal Foster's article 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, pp. 3-22.
11- Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive, Une impression freudienne*, Paris: Galilée, 1995.

Metalepsis and the transgression of boundaries

According to Gérard Genette, metalepsis blurs the lines between narration and story, transgressing the frontier, 'mouvante mais sacrée', which separates two worlds, 'celui où l'on raconte, celui que l'on raconte'[12]. Its foregrounding in any archival practice inevitably deflects attention from a verifiable past to the process of storytelling in the present. As is clear from the title of *Il était une fois* and the subsequent references to Sheherezade, the film must be seen under the sign of telling stories. Yet storytelling is no frivolous activity; it is an ongoing existential quest. First, by inserting themselves in different guises into the film clips that they have collated, Leila and Yasmine actively engage as agents with, rather than simply recipients of, a past that is illusory ('une vertigineuse enfilade de clichés', as Yasmine says to M. Farouk), and yet profoundly real in terms of their search for identity. Second, they have brought two reels of film with them to M. Farouk's cinema-library, one of which is the compilation of film-clips that we are shown, while the other has been left in the taxi that has brought them to M. Farouk's, and only reappears at the end. The first reel is therefore incomplete as it is doubled, or shadowed, by the missing second reel, the reconstituted past of Beirut in film (its memory) thus haunted by what is forgotten and untold[13]. In *Cinéma de guerre*, Zaccak also plays with the cinema reel, taking us backwards and forwards as well as demonstrably stopping film. The opening and ending are the same clips run first backwards then forwards. In *Le Liban* cameras are also ubiquitous. The slippages in these films between the two worlds of the story and its telling thus highlight not only the technological mediation of the past (Figure 1), and the selection and exclusion of details that that involves, but also how the drive to tell and retell is an ongoing, performative and life-confirming engagement with mapping the stories of the past onto present lives, as it is, of course, for Shéhérazade who only preserves her life through the telling of stories.

Metaleptic slippages between story and narration are paralleled by slippages between what is seen/shown and the act of seeing/showing. In the opening sequence of *Le Liban* a figure calling himself De Niro says to a blindfolded man that he is directing a film in which the blindfolded man will be brilliant. Shortly after we see a man with a balaclava standing next to a camera. (Figure 2) At the end, one of three men in balaclavas with a camera says 'nous arrêtons le tournage' because of 'un problème de caméra'. In the opening sequence of *Il était une fois*, Leila and Yasmine are also blindfolded in the taxi (Figure 3) as it makes its way through bombed-out streets to M. Farouk's dream factory, while *Cinéma de guerre* opens and closes with the words 'ouvre les yeux' (Figure 4). In *Le Liban,* cameras are shown pointing back at the camera filming them – and

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12- Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, Paris : Seuil (Coll. « Poétique »), 1972, p. 244.
13- The opening quotation from Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) clearly situates *Il était une fois* in the field of memory and forgetting.

therefore at the viewing spectator – hence further confusing the 'different' fields of seeing and seen, actor and spectator and subject and object. In his discussion of metalepsis, Genette shows how fictional characters becoming readers or spectators can be doubled by a reverse process by which (and here Genette is quoting Jorge Luis Borges) 'nous, leurs lecteurs ou spectateurs, pouvons être des personnages fictifs'[14]. Beyond the subtle political references in these films to the ways in which war 'blindfolds' us to the past, and hence to the question of seeing and censorship, the devices around spectatorship also question the nature of seeing and acting in a broader phenomenological sense. Constructing an archive is therefore caught within the interchangeability of subject/object relations as well as the tension between the visible and the invisible.

By conflating story and narration and seeing and seen, the above slippages disrupt the 'homogeneous empty time' of the archive[15]. In *Cinéma de guerre*, clips on the war are, on one level, treated in chronological fashion, progressing from the earliest, *Beyrouth ya Beyrouth* by Maroun Bagdadi (1975), through the war to its aftermath. On another level, however, interviews with actors and directors of the films shown undercut linear time and establish an opposite trajectory, projecting backwards from the present to the past. We noted above how Zaccak self-consciously dramatizes this backwards/forwards movement by playing with the reels of film, but also by filming through the front windscreen of a car to include his own reflection in the rear-view mirror[16].

In *Le Liban*, Zaccak uses a slightly different technique but achieves a similar disturbance of past and present. The selected clips – from films spanning the period 1957-2000 and photos between 1943-2000 – are recomposed in the present of the film so that chronology gives way to what Gilles Deleuze describes, in the cinema of Alain Resnais, as 'la coexistence des nappes de passé'[17]. Temporal ordering is, in fact, replaced by a thematic ordering. In between the opening and closing clips of cameras and ways of seeing/not seeing (which itself suggests a circular rather than linear structure), clips are grouped according to the following themes: *arrival* in Lebanon from abroad (planes landing, passengers descending the steps on to the tarmac), *adventure* (crime,

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14- Genette, p. 244. In her discussion of this technique in *Il était une fois*, Mathilde Rouxel notes that it breaks the fourth wall: 'Les personnages semblent interagir avec le film, ou le film interagir avec les personnages ; par sa mise en scène, Jocelyne Saab brise dans son film le quatrième mur' ('Jocelyne Saab, cinéaste témoin de la cinéphilie libanaise', in Jean-Paul Aubert, Cyril Laverger, Christel Taillibert (dir.), *Les Représentations de la cinéphilie*, Cycnos vol. 34, n° 1 (2018), 111-127, p. 120).

15- Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, [1940] in *Illuminations* (ed. Hannah Arendt), New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 253-264 (Thesis XV 111, p. 264).

16- Zaccak frequently uses the car metaphorically or allegorically. Many of the interviews in *Cinéma de guerre* with actors and directors take place in cars and Zaccak would later go on to make the film *Marcedes* (2011), which recounts the history of Lebanon through the Mercedes 'Ponton' (formerly, the taxi of choice in Beirut). As a character says of Beirut in *Le Liban*, '(t)oute la ville est comme une voiture déglinguée. Un jour elle roule, le lendemain elle tombe en panne.'

17- Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-Temps*, Paris : Minuit, 1985, p. 160.

sports cars), *village life* (traditional singing and dancing), *Beirut* (night-life, sex and the exotic, gangsters), *war* (shooting, suffering, the disappeared, bombed-out streets), and *post-war reconstruction* (demolition and the new speculators). Even the 'homogeneity' of these thematic groupings, however, is undercut by other *motifs* that run across thematic boundaries: cameras, cars, western influence, tradition and modernity, weapons and violence, and so on. Images are, thus, uncoupled from a linear sequence to constitute a collage of different traces across time and space, (re)composed in the present (as we shall see in the following section). The archival practice of both Saab and Zaccak transforms a focus on a chronology of the past (what Walter Benjamin calls 'historicism') into a performative process of *bricolage* in the present. As Mary-Ann Doane argues (in a general sense), cinema thus has the potential to de-stratify the time of the archive and restore its indeterminacy through the performance of time in the present of its projection[18]. This 'new' time of the present/past is captured in *Il était une fois* by the story-telling figure of Shéhérazade (and Saab herself), whose construction of stories —and of memory— is a prolongation of present time ('durée) which amplifies and extends life.

Metaleptic crossovers in all three films ultimately blur the distinction between fiction and the real. On a literal level, Saab achieves this through combining clips from fiction films and documentaries. In a more complex way, however, Leila and Yasmine's playful interventions in the film sequences that make up their first reel of film have a double effect: Beirut's past of fairy-tale ('il était une fois') and the cinematic ('histoire d'une star') is demythologised by being confronted with the contemporary experience of two young women for whom war is their only reality; while, on the other hand, the reality of their lived experience, devoid of memory because of the war, is reenchanted through its encounter with the orientalised fables from the 1920s, the stories of the civilising mission of French colonial rule before independence in 1943, the influence of Egyptian cinema, and the western spy and thriller films of the 1960s which used Beirut as exotic backdrop. In this way, Leila and Yasmine (and we as spectators) oscillate between the imagined and the real and between the positions of spectator and actor and self and other.

Zaccak creates a similar tension in *Cinéma de guerre* through alternating between talking head interviews – with directors (Borhane Alaouié, Georges Chamchoum, Jean Chamoun, Layla Assaf, Randa Chahal Sabbag, Mohamed Soueid, Ghassan Salhab) and actors (Joseph bou Nasser, Elie Adabachi, Khaled el Sayed, Carmen Lebbos) – and showing clips from the fictional films in which they participated, frequently blurring the lines between the two. Zaccak talks of the task of transforming 'histoires réelles en films de fiction' and records the times when filming got caught up in real-life gunfights and sniper incidents (for example,

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18- Mary-Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

when Jean Chamoun turned his camera on victims of a bomb explosion while he was filming *Sous les décombres* (1983), or when Borhane Alaouié filmed in the midst of a bombardment, or when Fouad Charafeddine used weapons that he obtained from military leaders). Zaccak also films himself in different settings (for example, walking through partially-destroyed buildings, or seated in the back of a car while interviewing), so that he too is on both sides of the camera and occupies different subject positions, as director connecting archival fragments and retrospective views, as spectator and narrator of the films presented, and as actor seeking out the past in the film that he is making[19]. In the same vein, Saab was motivated to create 'an imaginary site of cultural preservation'. Describing her shift from documentary to fiction, Saab, who was first trained as a journalist, observed, 'I make images. First, they were war images, and then I started to invent them, because when everything was destroyed in front of my eyes, I couldn't collect the real anymore. I had to reinvent everything. This is how I moved into fiction'[20].

The confusion of different fields in these films renders the truth of the archive highly unstable. *Il était une fois* ends satirically with the reappearance of the second reel of film (left in the taxi) which, instead of filling in the gaps of the first reel, consists of clips (from *Goha le simple*, 1958) in which 'wise elders' contradict each other as to what is truth and a boy says truth is a monkey. Zaccak's documentaries are no more conclusive. Yet metaleptic slippages between different fields are harnessed, in these films, to a different dynamic in which archival practice is no longer the recording of the truths of the past but a fraught yet creative and open-ended process of composition of traces in the present. It is this re-narrativisation of the archive through montage which constitutes the archival impulse of these films.

Montage, 'l'image fantôme' and 'la mémoire vivante'

Metalepses in these films that blur the frontiers between 'different' fields (of voice, vision, time and the real) are the product of the primary process of montage. Montage of sequences from different films, drawn in to the film-making process in the present, creates connections across time, space and subject-positions. The specific type of montage that interests us here – and, we feel, is particularly relevant to the dynamic of archival practice that these films exemplify – is the montage that the French art and film critic and historian Georges Didi-Huberman describes in his book *L'Image survivante* on the

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19- In a recent interview Zaccak stated, 'Le réalisateur peut être présent pour poser un regard subjectif. Il y a parfois un mélange des genres, on a tendance à briser certaines frontières ou à combiner la fiction et le documentaire…' ('Hady Zaccak: Le Documentaire se porte aujourd'hui mieux que la fiction', *Al-Ahram* (en ligne), no. 369, semaine du 7 au 13 avril 2021).

20- In Cinema Scope: "Death of Cinema: Missives from the End of the World: Jocelyne Saab (1948-2019) https://cinema-scope.com/columns/deaths-of-cinema-missives-from-the-end-of-the-world-jocelyne-saab-1948-2019/

analytic method of the art historian Aby Warburg. Using a blend of art history, psychoanalysis and anthropology (amongst other disciplines), Didi-Huberman defines Warburg's distinctive approach as one that reads images not in terms of chronology and periodisation, nor of aesthetics, and least of all of meaning, but symptomatically in terms of the traces of past cultures that 'survive' and 'haunt' the image and provide its archaeological sub-strata[21]. We will suggest that Saab and Zaccak pursue a similar excavation of what is latent but repressed in the image (a symptomatic exploration of its underground or unconscious, one might say) and that this method converts the archive into a performative 'mémoire vivante'.

The opening of Saab's film is a good illustration of this method of 'archaeological excavation' beneath the ruins of the present[22]. The taxi transporting Leila and Yasmine to M. Farouk's cinema is filmed from a high-angle shot descending into the ruins of Beirut, signalling the movement towards M. Farouk's underground world and his archive of Lebanese film. Saab therefore represents the archival impulse in terms of a journey underground. In Beirut, the underground is associated with the shelter (to which we will return) as well as the place for sequestered torture[23]. The opening sequence therefore connects the present of war-torn Beirut with the unearthed magical 'treasures' of the archive – 'chemin secret', 'mystérieuse retraite', 'caverne d'Ali-Baba remplie de trésors', as the characters describe M. Farouk's film library – to construct a sort of palimpsest of superimposed traces and a sense of images haunted by other images in a psychic retrieval of buried remains.

This type of montage, that establishes the metaleptic crossovers we discussed earlier, is also poetically illustrated in *Il était une fois* in a scene in which Leila and Yasmine are in costume in the dressing room of the cinema theatre, somewhere in the depths of M. Farouk's cave (see Figure 5). Dressed as characters from the film that is being projected (*Badawiya fi Paris* dir. M. Salman, 1964), the two girls share the scene with a Bedouin woman who disguises herself as a bourgeois Parisienne with the aim of seducing a rich cheese magnate. It is precisely the moment when the Bedouin woman reveals her true identity to

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21- According to Didi-Huberman, the Warburgian project therefore reads the image in terms of 'sa nature de *fantôme* et sa capacité de revenance, de hantise (…) sa structure de *symptôme* où se mêlent latences et crises, mémoire et désir, répétitions et différences, refoulements et après-coups', Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante, histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris : Minuit, 2002, back cover).

22- In an interview in 2018, Saab describes the process of her 'opération-cinémathèque' (scouring the city with her interns, collecting 400 VHS cassettes) in terms of an archeological dig to unearth what had been effaced ('Once upon a time in Beirut : Jocelyne Saab Retrospective, Jocelyne Saab in conversation with Wafa Ghermani (La Cinémathèque française) and Myrna Maakaron', 15.4.2018 at the DFF cinema. Accessed at https://www.dff.film/en/video/werkschau-jocelyne-saab-gespraech-mit-jocelyne-saab-zu-il-etait-une-fois-beyrouth/on 14.5.2021.).

23- Rana Eid's feature *Panoptic* (2017) explores several undergrounds in Beirut, including immigration detention centres (under an overpass) and the lower floors of the notorious Hotel Beau Rivage which was the headquarters of the Syrian occupation forces for many years.

her lover, throwing off her disguise and her wig and refusing to continue to take part in the game of appearances (she says in Arabic 'appearances have created distance between us'), that triggers the discussion between Leila and Yasmine about dressing up in the shelter during the civil war. As Leila says, 'C'est tout ça qui me fait penser. Marc s'était déguisé en fille. Depuis sa mort cette image ne me quitte plus'. A complex interplay is at work here in which film and traumatic lived experience, truth and disguise, and love and death are profoundly intertwined, crossovers that are emphasised by the fact that the space of the dressing room is split and doubled by the reflection in the mirror (which also implicates the spectator in the multiple encounters of the 'image fantôme')[24]. What is particularly significant, however, from the point of view of the mechanism of montage at play here, is the way in which the weaving together and overlaying of different fields (time, vision, fiction/real and so on) is a performative and creative act, recalling Godard's famous observation that 'le montage […], c'est ce qui fait voir'[25]. In Proustian fashion, the act of (fictional) dressing up in the underground space of the cinema library allows the (personal and traumatic) memory of dressing up in the underground shelter during the war to come flooding back. It is only in the construction of a composite image, similar to Walter Benjamin's 'constellation' or 'dialectical image', that the past can flash up in the moment of the now, merging history and (repressed and forgotten) lived experience. The superimposition of diverse traces that makes up this image acts as a sort of 'mise en abyme' of the film as a whole: by way of montage, the archival impulse converts archaeological excavation into 'a mémoire vivante'.

Zaccak's montage in *Cinéma de guerre* shows us not only that the traces of the past shadow the present but that they point to their own demolition in the future. Zaccak as narrator tells us that the war started in the same year that Maroun Bagdadi completed *Beyrouth ya Beyrouth* (1975). He then cuts, first to archivist Zafer Henri Azar from the Centre national du Cinéma, who finds the dossier of the film which contains various film clips, and then to an interview with the lead actor in the film, Joseph bou Nasser, who, while driving through Beirut, recounts that Bagdadi subsequently sought to disown the film and claimed it had been lost (whereas, in reality, it was in his basement). This strange sequence both points to a 'lost' but latent past shadowing the present but also, as film critic Emile Chahine later observes, the way Bagdadi's film was like a premonition of the disaster to come which would destroy any sense of preservation. Archival excavation here retrieves both traces of the past and the effacing of culture that was about to take place because of the disaster, a process that Jalal Toufic

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24- A later scene in the film also overlays a 'commentaire' by Leila in the present with an image of Beirut in ruins in the past (figure 6). The tones of black and grey of this scene (which resemble those of a negative photographic image) are in contrast to the opening image of the film of the red taxi entering the ruined city (see Figure 7), as if the later scene is the spectral or phantom image shadowing the earlier one.

25- Jean-Luc Godard, 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort' in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 1, 1980, p. 415.

elaborates in his notion of 'surpassing disaster'[26]. This double aspect of the archival impulse, by which creation is always undercut by destruction (and that Derrida points up as the death drive characteristic of archival fever), parallels a similar process that we noted in *Il était une fois* with the two reels of film: the presence of the retrieved past is always shadowed by absence, the visible is shadowed by the invisible, and the retold narrative gestures to its own silence and incompleteness.

Ultimately, the archival impulse in these films blurs the frontier between personal (psychic and affective) space and public (political, historical and cultural) space through transitions in physical space. In Zaccak's *Cinéma de guerre*, the testimonies of actors or directors on the cinema of the war are often presented in cars moving through the city, tying the personal story-telling with the story of the city itself, the intimate space of the car merging with the public space of the city. In *Il était une fois* the reel left in the taxi travels through the city as if it were threading its different spaces and stories as it goes. Moreover, the movement of these cars (themselves acting as a sort of storytelling device) is also connected, through the metaleptic structure, to the film-clips of car scenes that are prominent in all three films. In this way, intimate and public spaces are overlaid by the slippages between fiction and the real so that these journeys/ modes of story-telling in the city slide between the real and the phantasmagoric, just as the city itself hovers in a liminal space between creation and destruction[27]. Camera movement and tracking shots at the beginning of *Il était une fois* and *Cinéma de guerre* implicate the spectator in this spatial dramatisation of memory, so that we become active participants in, rather than simply passive observers of, the performance of the archive[28].

Conclusion

Aby Warburg's 'Mnemosyne Atlas' is itself an impossible project of combining diverse cultural artefacts in an exploration of the hidden traces latent in the image. We have argued that the journeys undertaken by Saab and Zaccak in their 'archival' films follow a similar trajectory, and that metaleptic crossings of different fields (past/present/, here/there/, narration/story, seeing/seen, real/

26- Jalal Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (Beirut: Forthcoming Books, 2009).

27- Describing Saab's use of other films as part of her own filmic fabric, Christa Blümlinger talks of the construction of 'une mémoire culturelle qui reflète le statut de l'archive (…) dans sa fonction ambivalente entre faire paraître et laisser se décomposer, entre se souvenir et oublier, incorporer et mortifier' (*Le Cinéma de seconde main: Esthétique du remploi dans l'art du film et des nouveaux médias*, trans Christophe Jouanlanne and Pierre Rusch, Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 2013 [2009], p. 12. In this sense, Saab's filmic exploration of the archive is constructed on the ruins of a city which has not finished burying its war dead. The body of film is like a body that one resuscitates. The archival 'genre' of these films thus embodies the theme of the 'mort-vivant' that is recurrent in much post-war Lebanese cinema and literature.

28- Godard highlights the link between a montage "qui permet de 'faire voir'" and architecture (Jean-Luc Godard, "Le montage, la solitude et la liberté" [1989], *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard. Tome* 2: 1984-1998, Paris, Cahiers du cinéma, 1998, p. 242).

fiction and so on) are the effects of this mapping. As *ciné-archivistes* they are aware of both the necessity of excavating the hidden traces of the past and the dangers involved in any project of this kind. In the words of Hal Foster, describing the similar practice of a different set of artists, this archival impulse is 'concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces', is 'drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects' and operates 'through mutations of connection and disconnection'[29]. This is a far cry from the totalising knowledge of the historicist approach to the archive. Instead, it is a performative construction of a composite 'mémoire vivante', an anti-archive that reimagines past, present and future against a backdrop of the destruction of memory.
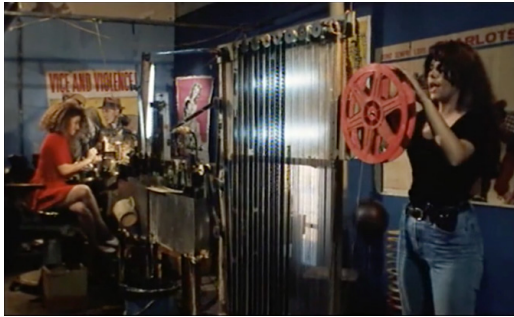
Figures 1 à 7 : il était une fois

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

29- Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', p. 5-6.

Figure 4 :
Cinéma de guerre

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

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ملخص | تبحث المقالة عن الدوافع الأرشيفية في مضامين أفلام لبنانية ثلاث: فيلم لـجوسلين صعب بعنوان "كان يا مكان، بيروت" ((Il était une fois, Beyrouth للعام ١٩٩٥، وفيلمان لهادي زكاك، الأول قصير بعنوان "لبنان عبر السينما" (Le Liban à travers le cinéma) للعام ٢٠٠٣، والثاني وثائقي بعنوان "سينما الحرب في لبنان" (Cinéma de guerre au Liban) للعام ٢٠٠٣.

ونرجّح في هذا الإطار أن هذه الدوافع تتخذ شكلين رئيسيين: المونتاج، أي اختيار وترتيب مقاطع من أفلام لبنانية أو أفلام موضوعها لبنان؛ ثم العبور، أي تخطي حدود السرد للتنقل بين عتباته وبين الواقع والخيال.

ونستعين هنا بداية بتعريف جيرار جينيت للمجاز المرحّل (Metalepsis)، بغية تحليل طبيعة عمليات العبور؛ ثم بمفهوم "البقاء المستدام" (Survivance) الذي اقترحه جورج ديدي-هوبرمان، للغوص في آثار الأرشيف في كل فيلم.

كذلك نعتبر أن كل من صعب وزكاك – أسوة بـمقاربة جان لوك غودار لأرشيف الأفلام في "تاريخ/قصص السينما" (Histoire(s) du cinéma) – يؤلفان روايات جديدة، فيتصرفان بوعي ذاتي كمحافظين لأرشيف السينما، يحييان ذاكرة السينما اللبنانيّة ويسلّطان الضوء على سكونها.

كلمات مفتاحية | أرشيف – أرشيف السينما اللبنانيّة – ميتاليبسيس – روائي – مونتاج – ذاكرة.

Notice biographique

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