

## Art, Ideology and Scientific Knowledge: Louis Althusser's Philosophical Approach to the Film Analysis: The Battle of Algiers 1966

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This study discusses the historical accuracy of the film and its portrayal of the battle of Algiers far away from the European and western egocentrism, evaluating the scenes and images and their non-linear narrative structure and effectiveness in capturing different ideological perspectives when compared to documentary footage and factual depictions, in order to create a sense of objectivity and realism.

**Methods:** Philosophical analysis is used through constructing and deconstructing concepts of the film. Louis Althusser's theory of ideology is applied in this research paper to better comprehend how ideology affects the dynamics of power and social institutions. Additionally, the recorded records from the archives of the liberation of Algeria are utilised.

**Results:** Althusser's notion of social formation, as a construction, is presented as a construction emerging from roles and central positions. This moving away from the egocentric vision, with no regulating concept, no starting seed, no united whole contradicted to the use of ideology as seeking for completion and wholeness. In brief, despite attempts to utilize what they claim to be scientific knowledge, the endeavor to harness these possibilities led to new technological and scientific analysis. However, its utilization within the framework of state apparatus ideology and social formation bifurcated the film into two levels: film analysis and post-film analysis.

**Conclusions:** linking science to art has become established by means of linking both reality and philosophical fiction. So the distinction between the concepts of science and meta-science, art and meta-art, ideology and meta-ideology became necessary.

**Keywords:** Ideology, facts, objectivity, Algeria, Battle, Algiers.

### الفن، الايديولوجيا والمعرفة العلمية: مقارنة لويس التوسر الفلسفية لفيلم معركة الجزائر 1966

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#### ملخص

**الأهداف:** تتمثل أهداف التحليل في مناقشة الدقة التاريخية للفيلم وتصويره لمعركة الجزائر بعيداً عن المركزية الأوروبية والغربية؛ حيث يتم تقييم المشاهد والصور وهيكلها السردى غير المتسلسل، وفعاليتها في التقاط مختلف المنظورات الإيديولوجية. مقارنة بالتصوير الوثائقي والحقائق لخلق إحساس بالموضوعية والواقعية.

**المنهجية:** تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهجية التحليل الفلسفي المعتمد على تفكيك المفاهيم وإعادة تركيبها؛ وقد تم تطبيق نظرية التوسر للإيديولوجية في ورقة البحث هذه لفهم أفضل لكيفية تأثير الإيديولوجية على ديناميكية السلطة والمؤسسات الاجتماعية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فقد تم استخدام وثائق الأرشيف المسجلة الخاصة بتاريخ حركة التحرير في الجزائر.

**النتائج:** وتبين النتائج أن مفهوم التوسر للتشكل الاجتماعي، كبناء يتم عرضه من الدور والوضعية المركزية؛ حيث أن الابتعاد عن الرؤية المركزية، بدون مفهوم تنظيمي، ولا بداية، ولا كل متحد يناقض استخدام الإيديولوجية كسعي من أجل الاكتمال والكلية. وباختصار، ورغم أن محاولات التوسر استخدام ما يدعي أنه معرفة علمية فتحت إمكانيات تقنية وعلمية جديدة لمزيد من التحليل، فإن استخدامه لنظرية اديولوجية أجهزة الدولة والتشكل الاجتماعي جعل الفيلم على مستويين: تحليل الفيلم وتحليل ما بعد الفيلم.

**الخلاصة:** بينت الدراسة أن ربط العلم بالفن أصبح قائماً عن طريق الربط بين الواقع والخيال الفلسفي. لذا أصبح التمييز بين مفاهيم العلم وما بعد العلم والفن وما بعد الفن، والايديولوجيا وما بعد الايديولوجيا مطلباً قائماً في هذا النوع من الدراسة. الكلمات الدالة: الجزائر، ايدولوجيا، وقائع، التوسر، معركة الجزائر.

## 1. Introduction

The task of my study has two main objectives. First, it aims to depict the images and events represented in the film by referring to the corresponding historical facts. Second, it seeks to elucidate the central ideas of these images by breaking down the facts (images) into their components, which constitutes the analysis. This analysis is guided by Louis Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses, applying his framework to scrutinize the film images through various levels. My goal is to evaluate the different ideologies reflected in the filmmaker's representation of historical facts, as translated from the original text. To minimize subjectivity and reduce ideological biases, the film analysis will adhere closely to historical data and factual reporting. Ultimately, this study aims to pave the way for further analysis and suggestions to restore a scientific perspective on Algerian cinema, rather than an ideological one. It will also open a new debate on the possibility of what might be termed the end of the age of ideology in the writing, acting, and interpretation of historical films.

### 1.2. Literature Review

Almost all previous studies focus on uncovering a period of Algerian revolutionary history through the lens of cinematography, with "The Battle of Algiers" often cited as a prime example. While commitment to factual accuracy and objectivity is crucial in film studies, it becomes problematic when researchers claim that the selected images in the film accurately reflect historical reality. As a result, viewers are limited to experiencing only what the filmmaker chooses to present as selective facts. This issue is compounded by the ideological convictions and cultural affiliations of the filmmaker, actors, and screenwriters.

Kellner's discourse analysis theory provides insight into this issue by comparing two foreign films to demonstrate how capitalism's ideological patterns shift over time. Qijun Ye argues that filmmakers, like other individuals, invent rather than discover the properties of the world (or ideology). In other words, they create unrealistic or idealistic speculations that underpin economic and political theories (Qijun Ye, 2012: 12). This study builds on the notion that previous research often concentrates on depicting historical periods rather than critically assessing the ideological constructs within cinematic representations.

Matthew Crombs (2013), in his work *Modern French Cinema and the Algerian War*, indicates that French cinema tends to represent the Algerian liberation struggle within specific social and cultural contexts. He argues that the depiction of the Algerian revolution often emphasizes violence, evoking intense feelings of fear, shock, and sometimes disgust. Filmmakers highlight the horrors of colonization and its tragic impact, aiming to provoke a sense of horror and consternation among viewers regarding the colonial policies in Algeria during the war of liberation, when the primary objective of the colonial authorities was to maintain control over Algeria (Crombs, 2013: 7). Crombs also examines the role of communists in supporting the Algerian liberation war and their efforts to challenge colonial ideology (ibid). To summarize, this study focuses on the left-bank filmmakers of the 1950s and 1960s, who, driven by their communist ideological convictions, sought to support the Algerian liberation struggle.

Chiera Belguellaoui, in her book *Contemporary Algerian Filmmaking: From 'Cinema Naturel' to 'Cinema de l'Urgence'*, explores various elements of cinematography, such as film production policies, audience reception, distribution and exhibition practices, the impact on different audiences, language use, and the extent to which filmmakers adhere to their texts. She also analyzes the director's loyalty to their cultural, social, and political context, and the support and allegiance the film may generate (Belguellaoui, 2007: 8).

While Belguellaoui's study employs effective techniques for analyzing cinema, it focuses on the 1980s and 1990s, a period characterized by a shift from resistance cinema to crisis cinema. She aims to review this historical period from a specific perspective that may not align with the editor's view. This era, marked by uncertainty and a sense of insecurity regarding Algerian identity due to new cultural patterns, led to shifts in societal roles and expectations. These changes resulted in new boundaries defining the scope of cultural and national debates (Belguellaoui, 2007: 7). In this context, film ideology is framed as variable and overlapping with other ideologies. Thus, the ideology presented in each film is not static but rather a dynamic blend, and the film's events may be based on historical facts or fictionalized accounts.

Michael O'Riley's *The Age of Terror, North Africa Victimization, and Colonial History* (2010) presents an ideologically driven perspective, particularly reflecting a capitalist ideology in opposition to leftist views (O'Riley, 2010: 6). Despite this, the film's support of leftist political views categorizes it as a leftist film (O'Riley, 2010: 5-6). The study examines the resurgence of Algerian revolutionary cinematography, which seeks to reveal the security strategies that portrayed FLN militants and sympathizers as suspects under surveillance by military intelligence, aiming to suppress their resistance to colonialism. It argues that there is vital importance in re-evaluating the cinematography of the revolution and addressing the questions of how colonial authorities were victimized (O'Riley, 2010: 6). This analysis aims to reconstruct the narratives of who is truly responsible for torture and who is the victim, and to foster a serious discussion about what is referred to as "third cinema" in the context of revolution, colonialism, and their aftermaths on cinema, with a particular focus on terrorism (O'Riley, 2010: 7).

In his article, "Cinema and the Algerian War: Discussion of *The Battle of Algiers*," Gy Austin explores the film's representation of historical truths about the Algerian liberation war. He argues that the film serves not only as a historical document but also as a source of information for resistance and counter-resistance strategies, illustrating the severe pain inflicted on victims through brutal torture (Carnegie, 2012: 3). Austin accuses the film of harboring ideological prejudices, claiming it was used as a guide for revolutionary groups like the Black Panthers in Argentina and Palestinian volunteers, who undertook training to resist their colonizers, labeling these revolutionary organizations as "terror groups." This study raises questions about the legitimacy of violence in achieving independence and whether it is possible to justify torture in exceptional cases, such as during war (Carnegie, 2012: 4).

Madeline Ullrich's dissertation, *Impartial Vision: Remediation of the Algerian Veil in Film and Scholarship After Fanon* (2017), discusses the depiction of the Algerian veil (hayek) in *The Battle of Algiers*. Ullrich explores how the process of veiling and unveiling is portrayed in this realist film, highlighting the veil's prominent role in allowing Algerians to carry bombs undetected (Ullrich, 2017: 1).

Elizabeth Knutson's article, *Teaching Difficult Topics: The Example of the Algerian War*, examines the characteristics of modern Algerian cinematography through a systematic inquiry into the concept of national cinema and its contested nature. Knutson questions, "Is Algerian filmmaking distinct from post-colonial cinema?" (Knutson, 2012: 5).

Philip Roberts, in his book *The Battle of Algiers*, claims that the film has inspired and provided a technical basis for many revolutionary movements. Roberts considers the film a simulation of terrorism and counter-terrorism, arguing that it reflects an egocentric European capitalist ideology from an Italian researcher's perspective (Roberts, 2006: 1).

Shireen Janmohamed, in her book *Ideological Analysis and Cinema Fiction*, argues that "a purely ideological analysis is inadequate for interpreting contemporary political cinema texts" (Janmohamed, 2011: 1). She suggests that Foucauldian concepts of power and power relations are essential for a detailed examination of the ideological convictions within the movie. According to Janmohamed, these Marxist concepts within Foucault's theory are used as complementary elements for explanation and interpretation in the broader context of political and ideological power relations (Janmohamed, 2011: 1).

For studying the film, I align with Susan Hayward's view that the film's text, which produces meaning, varies at different stages. This chain of signifiers shows that authorship becomes dispersed. Hayward emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between "The basic text, the adapted text, the film text, the director's text, the star text, the production context, and finally, the various intertexts" (Hayward, ? : 6). Therefore, we must consider the ideological implications of the original text, the adapted text by the filmmaker, and the text of the protagonist. What are the main messages and values conveyed through the images and events in the film? (WJECCbac, 2016: 3). The text changes as it moves from one stage to another until it reaches the viewer, who interprets it from their own perspective. Different visions and ideas may emerge through various ideologies.

Some of the studies mentioned have significant implications for broader cinematographic analysis. However, others, despite their detailed analysis, do not engage with Althusser's analytical approach to the selected film. Additionally, the

lack of academic works by Algerian researchers limits the effectiveness and objectivity of these studies, as some rely on the questionable assumption that their ideology equates to an accurate interpretation of historical facts.

A closer examination reveals that these studies often lack consistency with their objectives. While I agree with some of their techniques and goals, I strongly disagree with the notion that Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* reports purely historical facts. On the other hand, Pontecorvo's film is highly significant as it illuminates the Algerian revolution during the period 1957-1962, particularly focusing on the capital, Algiers.

### 1.3 Definition of Ideology

At the outset, the title of the film contains two key concepts. First, "the battle" refers to the conflict between the Algerians, represented in the film by the main heroes—Ali, Yacef, Hassiba, Amar, and Larbi Benmehidi—and the French colonizers, represented by General Massu and his officials. Second, the film's title also includes the proper name "Algiers," which symbolizes a series of historical events associated with the city. Historically, Algiers is notable for the Battle of Bab Eloued in October 1541, when the Spanish fleet invaded the city but was ultimately defeated by the Algerians. This was followed by a prolonged period of colonization lasting 132 years, which only ended after seven years of fighting that resulted in the departure of French troops from the capital (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022: 1). Thus, the name "Algiers" symbolizes enduring resistance and eventual victory despite long-standing struggles.

In the first step of our analysis, we define the term "ideology." The term dates back to ancient Greece and was revealed by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836). It is composed of "ideo," derived from the Greek word for idea, and "logy," meaning theory or science (Harper, 2022: Etymology Dictionary).

Karl Marx defined ideology as a "science of false consciousness." According to Marx, people create their own thoughts, being, and living conditions, which are the outcomes of their real-life mechanisms (Marx: 47). Ideology, therefore, reflects the concerns and benefits of a particular class, which it presents as the prevailing concerns of the entire community, explained in a clear and logical manner. However, being reasonable, cogent, and universal could lead to valid criticism and illustration (Marx: 65). As Hans Bertens notes, Marxist usage of ideology "distorts reality in one way or another and falsely presents as natural and harmonious what is artificial and contradictory" (Bertens, 2014: 71-2).

Additionally, Terry Eagleton outlines three concepts of ideology: first, "the process of production of meanings, signs, and values in social life"; second, "forms of thought motivated by social interests"; and third, "the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure" (Eagleton, 1991: 1-2).

In a book chapter titled "Literature and Culture," ideology is intertwined with culture: "The ideological constructions in which authors live, and which they have internalized, inevitably become part of their work... Cultural materialism reveals how ideology—and thus the existing socio-economic order—tries to maintain itself" (Bertens, 2014: 161). Fredric Jameson describes ideology as highlighting the divergence between two spheres: reality and factual science. Its use effectively and coherently addresses aspects related to history and society (Eagleton, 1991: 354).

To avoid redundancy, the definition of ideology can be summarized as follows: "Ideology refers to a systematic 'worldview' that defines our concepts of self and the relations of the self to the state or any form of collectivism" (SPC, 2021: 01). This definition contributes to both individual and collective community understanding. Despite various interpretations, the common view is that ideology is a creation of the human mind, leading to diverse ideologies throughout history. Film ideology can thus be represented within the cultural circuit. As Anne Mungai states, "This social reproduction through film is essentially a reproduction of ideologies" (Mungai, 2008: 12). Consequently, film ideology can be classified into three main categories: First, the filmmaker's ideology; second, the characters' ideology; and third, the audience's ideology, with a focus on cultural and social contexts: "Ideology is also a series of social, moral, political, and economic laws that can be classified as a conservative ideology" (Eagleton, 1991: 32).

## 2 Historical Context

### 2.1 French colonial policy

The first question to address is: Why did Algerians declare war against France? In 1830, the French invaded Algeria,

successfully capturing the capital port city of Algiers. By 1834, Algeria was annexed as a colony of France (Marxist History: 01). French domination led to the suppression of most of the native population through armed operations up to 1871. The tribal system disintegrated, resulting in drastic cultural consequences (Meynier, 1999: 49). Under these circumstances, Algerians were brutally treated, with their valuable possessions seized, reducing them to a status similar to that of slaves, and portraying them as unskilled and backward farmers (Marxist History: 01). As a result, many farmers lived in abject poverty, which forced many to migrate (Stora, 2001: 36). By 1881, 1.2 million hectares of land were predominantly controlled by the French (Ruedy, 2005: 60). The process of land deprivation began with illegal land purchases and eventually led to the confiscation of land from the entire native population (Rahal, 2013: 06).

## **2.2 Algerian popular resistance**

The Algerians responded to the French armed landing with what is historically known as popular resistance. This included notable figures such as Amir Abd al-Qadir, who led armed resistance in the 1830s and 40s, organizing guerrilla warfare for over a decade. Other leaders included Bachagha El Moukrani, who led the 1871 uprising, and Sheikh Bouamama, who led the 1881-1908 insurrection. Resistance in Kabylia and Constantine was led by Chiekh Elhaddad and Mohammed El Mokrani. These resistances failed not due to a lack of bravery but because of the material and technical superiority of the French army (Benkhada, 2004: 23).

After four years of the deadliest global conflict, World War II ended with the creation of the League of Nations, whose main principle was the right of peoples to self-rule, independence, and freedom (Marxist History, 2022: 02). This development opened new opportunities for Algerian liberation movements.

During World War II, France promised Algerians independence if they fought alongside the French against the Nazis. After the war ended, Algerians celebrated the surrender of Nazi Germany. However, archives indicate that from May 8 to 17, 1945, in an act of retaliation, many Algerians were killed as the French army exacted bloody reprisals. European historians estimate between 15,000 and 20,000 deaths, while Algerian historians claim that 45,000 were killed (Reuters, 2005: 34).

## **2.3 The foundation of the front of national liberation FLN**

Ahmed Messali El Hadj worked tirelessly to pave the way for resistance movements aimed at ending colonial rule in Algeria. By World War II, Ferhat Abbas and Messali had agreed to found the Friends of Manifesto and Liberty Party (source needed). In 1956, the UGTA (General Union of Algerian Workers), linked to the FLN, was established (Rahal, 2013: 22). On November 1, 1954, the FLN began organizing attacks on French military and police headquarters (History of Algerian Workers, 2022: 02). Consequently, all previous resistance movements, including the earlier popular resistance, inevitably led to the outbreak of the liberation war.

# **3. The Theoretical Context**

## **3.1 Althusser's theory of ideology**

The use of Althusser's theory of ideology provides a methodological approach to distinguish facts from their ideological implications in the analysis of *The Battle of Algiers*. As noted by Raman Selden, Althusser describes social formation as a structure that is "removed from the central role and position," lacking a unifying principle or originating cause, and acting with a degree of autonomy. This formation consists of several interconnected parts with complex relations, including internal contradictions and conflicts (Selden et al., 2005: 97).

Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses includes institutions such as religion, the legal and political systems, organized workers' associations, education, and mass communication (Althusser, 1971: 158). He suggests that ideology functions by recruiting individuals or transforming them into subjects through a process he terms "interpellation" or "hailing," which can be likened to the everyday call of "Hey, you there!" (Althusser, 1970: 40/52).

Althusser argues against the notion that art is a straightforward representation of ideology. In "A Letter on Art," he places art between ideology and scientific knowledge, defining ideology as "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Art constructs meaning while simultaneously masking

and obscuring real ties and attachments (Selden, 2005: 79-80). Althusser asserts that art maintains a 'retreat' or fictional distance from the ideology that influences it (Selden, 2005: 99). Thus, his critique aims to reveal the 'cracks' and hidden aspects of ideology, interpreting them symptomatically and setting boundaries to the established ideology (Selden, 2005: 99).

Althusser's materialist concept of ideology is known as "Ideological State Apparatuses" (Selden, 2005: 99). He poses the question of how ideology can obscure genuine reality from our view. According to Althusser, the first thesis of ideology symbolizes the unreal ties of individuals to their real conditions of existence, while the second thesis connects human ideology as a social being requiring companionship within a hierarchical system with complex communication (Althusser, 1971: 153). His theory establishes a hierarchical view of ideologies.

### **3.2 *Ideological state Apparatus as a tool for Analysis***

A small part of the ideological apparatus is the real existence of individuals within their social environment (Althusser, 1971: 158). Thus, the subject or individual acts and behaves according to the social mechanisms in place (Althusser, 1971: 159). Consequently, those who benefit from this system are often as blind to its effects as everyone else (Bertens, 2014: 73). Althusser argues that the way ideology is presented to us shapes the various subject positions we occupy and experience. Ideology is not merely a set of political principles; it also provides coherence and unity, supported by a consistent economic and social system. It fosters self-esteem, convincing us that we are whole and real, and that we are the 'concrete subjects' we aspire to be (Bertens, 2014: 73-74). As Althusser notes in his "Letter on Art": "Art makes us see, in a distant way, the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes" (Althusser, 1971: 204).

In practical terms, Louis Althusser's theory of ideology can be divided into two forms: deconstruction and construction. This theory highlights the contradictory internal connections within historical facts, incorporating Hegelian dialectics, where thesis and antithesis lead to the emergence of a new proposition. This process occurs at the economic level (the infrastructure), while its reflections manifest in the superstructure, such as cinematography and art. These forms enable the interpretation of facts by clarifying the cultural, historical, and ideological sources of meaning and assumptions through the deconstruction of images and discourse.

## **4 *Film Analysis***

The film received an award at the Cannes Film Festival for its historical accuracy regarding the Algerian revolution. It has reached a worldwide audience from diverse communities and ideologies (Carnegie, 2012: 21). This audience can be divided into two sub-groups: Algerians and non-Algerians. The first group primarily consists of conservatives with some socialist influences; for instance, the FLN's directives reflect its conservative ideology. The second group encompasses various ideological doctrines, including capitalism and communism.

The film narrates and depicts the events of the battle that took place in the capital of Algeria between 1956 and 1962. It portrays Algiers, the most populous city in Africa during the 1950s, as a vibrant capital inhabited by both Algerians and Europeans. The French established advanced headquarters and infrastructure, while the native Algerians were confined to the Kasbah. Another area, like Bab El Oued, showed a mix of ethnicities (Calcada, 2012: 53).

Analyzing the film involves three steps: reporting facts, describing the corresponding images, and conducting analysis. In the first step, facts are reported from reliable sources, such as archives and documents. In the second step, the images and discourse are described. In the third step, we separate elements that might carry ideological implications. By reconstructing the meaning of the images, we identify the overlap of ideology with the narrative, leading to both ideological and historical analysis. In summary, the criterion for accurate judgment is based on avoiding contradictions and subjectivity (Document of Film Ideology, 2021: 01). As an art form, the film can be positioned as Louis Althusser suggests: "Somewhere between ideology and scientific knowledge" (Selden, 2005: 94).

#### 4.1 Scenes of torture



On the subject of torture, dreadful facts are reported. On January 7, 1957, the Prefect of Algiers conferred police powers on General Massu, who then called on Captain Aussaresses to eradicate 'terrorism' in Algiers (Principal Dates and Timeline of Algeria: 42/59). Another incident reaffirming the French authorities' use of torture occurred on March 29, when Paul Teltgen, Secretary General of the Algiers district, announced his resignation in protest of the French authorities' policy toward Algerian detainees who had been brutally treated (42/59). Furthermore, General Massu, in his book *The True Battle of Algiers*, asserts that the parachute regiment systematically used torture during interrogations to obtain information from suspected FLN members (Massu, 1972: 166-70). Alistair Horne also cites evidence that electrocution, simulated drowning, and other forms of abuse were frequently used. Those who disobeyed often died under torture, a practice publicly known as "work in the woods" (Horne, 2006: 201-16).

In the first image, the film evokes a profound sense of sorrow and pain. The scene depicts a captured FLN member being tortured with his bare chest exposed. The elderly man is hung with his hands bound, surrounded by two French soldiers who use a pointed metal stick to extract information from him. The second image shows a French soldier interrogating a young FLN fighter captured by military intelligence. The teenager is about to be killed by having his face submerged in boiling, electrified water. His face, pale and yellowed, reveals intense fear, anxiety, and pain. This severe physical and mental suffering culminates in his being forced to wear a French soldier's uniform for a military operation in the Kasbah.

Both images occupy a space between scientific facts and ideology: the ideology of capitalism, images of torture, and the historical facts of torture. From a higher level to a lower one: Capitalist order → ruling ideology → ideological state apparatuses → sub-ideologies. Torture, in Althusser's Marxist context, represents the imaginary relationship carried in the minds of French soldiers who surround the victim, reflecting their economic conditions (real conditions of existence) (Althusser, 1971:153). This sub-ideology of torture serves the ruling ideology, distorting their view of the true conditions of existence. The state is not neutral but upholds the capitalist order through ideological state apparatuses, including religion, media, and education. Thus, torture functions as a material practice reflecting capitalist ideology; these elements of social formation transform individuals into subjects, who then become concrete individuals, interpellated to be unique and irreplaceable. In this context of torture, two victims appear: a concrete individual (an old man) and another concrete individual (a young teenager).

The torturer (the guilty) opposes the tortured (the victim); captured FLN members. The ideology of torture has two levels: First, it is the imaginary relationship between French army officers and their state and capitalist order, with the officers acting as elements or apparatuses of the French state. This ideology is perpetuated through the law and political system. Second, this ideology, which permeates torture as a remaining means, is connected to its social sources (capitalist system). The film functions as a small part of that apparatus and as an element within the social formation. The economic organization of the French state generates social relations that condition the cultural superstructure. Thus, torture becomes a related tactic, a method used to achieve the overall purpose.

#### 4.2 *Scenes of the armed resistance*



(3)



(4)

Ali Amar, or Ali la Pointe, is depicted by historians as a prominent figure in the Battle of Algiers. According to Yacef Saadi, the writer of the memoirs and the FLN leader, Ali's first armed action took place at the beginning of 1956. This action was directed against a police informer. He was also the first to suggest to Yacef the idea of secret passages that, in case of alert, would allow rapid access to the terraces of houses near the hideout. At that time, the Kasbah was considered impenetrable, much like the mountains (Yacef, 1962:1/4). After escaping from prison, Ali la Pointe contacted Yacef Saadi, who then made him his assistant (Marxist History:12/59).

Image 3 shows Ali la Pointe stabbing a French officer who is trying to remove his gun. Ali is wearing traditional men's clothing, a 'Kachabia,' in which he hides his weapon. In Image 4, Ali, along with two FLN companions in the Kasbah, is wearing 'El Hayek,' traditional women's clothing, to deceive the French forces. When the French army becomes suspicious, an ambush begins in the Kasbah.

The 'subject position' that Ali occupies varies according to his real conditions of existence—poverty, imprisonment, injustice, and revolt. He is interpellated as a hero, lawbreaker, humanist, man, Arab, Algerian, and Muslim. The ideology of revolution addresses the hero and his companions, creating their subject positions. For instance, French officers are familiar with the subjects because they are part of their known world. Ali la Pointe, as a subject position, is transformed through material practices into the concrete subject he aspires to be.

The implications of these two images can be summarized as follows: belief in armed revolution and the noble values of freedom and justice—recognized as human values even by the colonizers—convince him that stabbing and disarming the police officer is not only an essential means but the only means left. The act of striking and disarming the police officer symbolizes the struggle between two ideologies: capitalist and socialist. This struggle or the inner contradictions within the elements of social formation are represented through thesis and antithesis, resulting in a new proposition or synthesis. Such a material practice will lead to a new state of freedom.

#### 4.3 *Scenes of the public objection to French colonial policy and the resulted damage*



(5)



(6)

French intervention intensified after January 9, 1957, with the appointment of General Massu as the director of the security office for Algiers. Over the next nine months, the French arrested 24,000 men, 3,000 of whom disappeared while in detention due to their counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics (Chalk, 2007:19). By February 1, the French army in Algeria numbered 396,000 men, reaching almost 500,000 troops by the end of 1957 (Principal Dates, 2022:42/59). Massu acted upon the declaration of Interior Minister François Mitterrand: "Algeria is France. And who amongst you... would hesitate to employ all methods to preserve France?" (Journal Officiel, 1954:165).

Image 5 shows General Jacques Massu walking during a military parade, adorned with distinguished medals and military honors under the French flag. The assembled spectators express their strong approval through enthusiastic applause, demonstrating their loyalty and support. Image 6 depicts Massu standing in front of a blackboard covered with a diagram, marked with symbols and numerals from 1 to 7. He had developed a detailed military plan for dismantling the FLN armed groups, explaining to his soldiers how the FLN operates and constantly renews itself like a tapeworm: "If the head remains, it reproduces itself" (Pontecorvo, 1965:149).

Images 7 and 8 are closely connected. The first symbolizes the power of France, while the second shows General Massu, who, endowed with power, plans to destroy the FLN organization by any means necessary. The act of explaining the diagram also highlights the extent of the FLN's organizational sophistication and resilience.

The concrete subject position of General Massu plays an ideological role as a model for those who support France, dedicating their time, energy, and lives to protect the interests of the capitalist system. The ideological state apparatuses use Massu as a representative of the material practices executed by an individual. The French ideology, which embodies the core elements of capitalist ideology, involves concrete subjects who reflect this system. To overcome distorted views of reality, these subjects must be deconstructed into smaller components to reach an objective level of understanding [scientific knowledge]. Massu, in his role as a unique concrete subject, embodies this system's practices. These elements of social formation are depicted to viewers as material practices of the ideological state apparatuses. From a higher level to a lower one: capitalist order → ruling ideology → ideological state apparatuses → sub-ideologies. These are all manifested in material practices by concrete subjects such as General Massu and his officers, who perform roles assigned to them by the system.

#### *4.4 Scenes of preparing for operation and the French treatment to the public*



(7)

(8)

The event recorded in the history archives of Algeria took place on October 8, 1957, when soldiers blockaded the hideout of Ali La Pointe, Hassiba Ben Bouali, Mahmoud Bouhamidi, and young Omar in Algiers' Kasbah. Despite their resistance, the French army was unable to convince them to surrender. The paratroopers planted a bomb to destroy the building after the residents had escaped. Consequently, the building collapsed, killing twenty-four people, including five French soldiers (Marxist History, 56/59).

In Image (7), Ali La Pointe is shown preparing a bomb to target French troops. He is seen discussing with his FLN companions, including one who appears behind him in the picture, arguing that they must intensify their attacks. Image (8)

depicts Ali La Pointe, Hassiba, and Omar, who had taken refuge in a small covered place in the Kasbah, fleeing from the French army. They had been betrayed by military intelligence, who obtained information about their secret meeting and shelter through torture, as shown in Image (2).

Ali La Pointe's actions demonstrate his belief that revolution is the only effective means for Algerians to achieve independence. His stance is supported by France's prior reactions to peaceful protests. Ali's material practices reflect his commitment to freedom: preparing bombs to force the French army to leave his country. As a unique and concrete individual, he embodies the model of a freedom fighter with a socialist ideology, blending armed revolution with Islamic values.

#### 4.5 Scenes of protestations



(9)



(10)

On January 28, 1957, the FLN officially announced the beginning of an open strike. This involved surprise raids in the early mornings and at night to force workers and grocers, including cleaners and longshoremen who were forcibly employed at the port to load and unload ships, back to their jobs (44/59). The boycott was later extended to Paris, where more than 400 demonstrators were killed, with some of their bodies found floating in the Seine (Abidor, 1961:1/3). In December 1961, cries of anguish were heard all over Algiers as an expression of support and solidarity. The Algerian flag was prominently displayed, showing that the majority of the Algerian people supported the FLN.

Image (9) depicts an organized public demonstration strongly opposing the actions taken by French authorities in Algeria. The protesters, including men, women, and children, hold flags displaying their support and loyalty to the FLN. In response, French strike forces, equipped with metal sticks and guns, attempt to intimidate the protesters and prevent them from showcasing their demands to the world. Image (10) shows groups of women, children, and men protesting in the streets of Algiers against French colonial policy. In response, French strike forces throw smoke bombs, which, upon exploding, emit a dense smoke screen. Despite this, the protesters remain steadfast, refusing to withdraw. On Monday, December 18, 1961, the 1224th meeting of the First Committee declared: "Throughout the world, there is increasing support for the legitimate demands of the Algerian people. Every nation, including France, has come to realize that Algeria must be independent and free" (US A/C.1/SR.1224).

In both images, ideology interpellates the crowd into different social roles. To avoid anarchy (war and destruction), ideology creates consistency and peace, aligning people with their appropriate socio-economic order (socialism) blended with conservative ideology. This unites people in their quest for completion by bridging gaps and seeking wholeness. Ideology continuously affirms and identifies individuals and different social categories as 'concrete subjects,' as if they are already whole (Barten, 2014:73). Although the French claimed a tactical victory in the Battle of Algiers—since it reduced FLN armed operations in the capital—it was a significant loss for France on the international stage, as it shifted public opinion to sympathize with the FLN's demand for independence. Consequently, President Charles de Gaulle reversed his stance on the issue and promised a referendum on Algeria's independence. On July 5, 1962, Algeria was officially declared an independent nation. The war resulted in a toll of up to 1.5 million deaths, casualties, and injuries, and created millions of refugees.

Economically, the poverty of the Algerian people stemmed from the confiscation of their land and exploitation, which led to armed revolution and, subsequently, French reactions through torture. This social and economic structure, as Althusser described, contains complex and contradictory elements in its internal relations and mutual conflicts.

The FLN's philosophy of revolution is expressed in the following quote: "In a word, it is that ensemble of efforts carried forward by the wheel of history guided by the FLN and converging on a single goal: the independence of the country" (El Moudjahid, 1957:2/3). The story recorded in the movie, presented as a set of lived and experienced events, reflects the acts of violence from the French army as a proposition, and the Algerians' reaction (liberation war) as a counter-proposition. This struggle generates a new stage, a new proposition: independence, within Althusser's Marxist context of ideology.

## 5 Conclusion

Pontecorvo's film blends the positions and beliefs of the filmmaker, the actors, and the audience with a feeling confirmed through facts. Thus, ideology can be used, not as Althusser asserts—somewhere between ideology and scientific knowledge—but to relate images, feelings, and reality. As I suggested earlier, Pontecorvo grounds ideology in historical data. He reduces its concepts to facts and makes its conceptions universal and historical. The concepts of socialist ideology, conservatism, and capitalism are introduced; therefore, film ideology becomes a collection of ideologies infused with historical content. Hence, ideology functions through a focus on historical facts and their relation to the director's own interpretation.

Althusser's notion of social formation, as a construction displaced from the central role and position, moves away from the egocentric vision, lacking a regulating concept, originating seed, or united whole. This contradicts the use of ideology as seeking completion and wholeness, which creates consistency and aligns people with a specific political and socio-economic order. What about the economic or basic level—how could it exist without a governing principle, originating seed, or unity?

It seems that while Althusser aimed to distance ideology from art, he actually built ideology on historical materialism. This means that every science has its own ideology. From a post-ideological perspective, he has a Marxist ideology. Thus, linking science to art becomes established by integrating both reality and philosophical fiction through a pursuit of inclusiveness and unity. While science is built from dispersion, it needs ideology to be contained and unified. Therefore, distinguishing between the concepts of science and meta-science, art and meta-art, ideology and meta-ideology could be necessary. In short, although Althusser's attempts to use what he claims to be scientific knowledge opened new technical and scientific possibilities for further analysis, his use of state apparatuses, ideology theory, and social formation rendered the movie at two levels: the movie itself and the meta-analysis of the movie.

## Appendix 1:

IMAGES S	Original SIZE	RELATED LINKS
IMAGE (1)	Height 2.22/ 4.36 width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/75VoZNdSm9HNPUQw6">https://images.app.goo.gl/75VoZNdSm9HNPUQw6</a>
IMAGE (2)	Height 2.25/ 4.32 width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/Fm2xKPFGTQGtQVSr9">https://images.app.goo.gl/Fm2xKPFGTQGtQVSr9</a>
IMAGE (3)	Height 2.33/4.15width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/UMHrmuMSfGPwogSv9">https://images.app.goo.gl/UMHrmuMSfGPwogSv9</a>
IMAGE (4)	Height1.69/4.0 5 width	<a href="https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/local/cache-vignettes/L1200xH617/capture_d_e_cran_2019-04-17_a_16.15.55-65e59.png?1663163090">https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/local/cache-vignettes/L1200xH617/capture_d_e_cran_2019-04-17_a_16.15.55-65e59.png?1663163090</a>
IMAGE (5)	Height 2.92/3.65 width	<a href="https://www.wsws.org/en/media/photos/legacy/2004/boa1-m29.jpg">https://www.wsws.org/en/media/photos/legacy/2004/boa1-m29.jpg</a>

IMAGES S	Original SIZE	RELATED LINKS
IMAGE (6)	Height 2.35/4.15 width	<a href="https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcS-r87EFyhGM2f97Zt8kH2Yr2qH2s6VlimsAwxzPKNVVXEM5pP1xk8mSVKY5g&amp;s">https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcS-r87EFyhGM2f97Zt8kH2Yr2qH2s6VlimsAwxzPKNVVXEM5pP1xk8mSVKY5g&amp;s</a>
IMAGE (7)	Height 3.53/276 width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/uqmJXAXpCcvABZW36">https://images.app.goo.gl/uqmJXAXpCcvABZW36</a>
IMAGE (8)	Height 2.02/5.29 width	<a href="https://filmquarterly.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/fq-2016-70-2-17-unf05.jpg">https://filmquarterly.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/fq-2016-70-2-17-unf05.jpg</a>
IMAGE (9)	Height 2.24/4.33 width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/9nHz3p32G8ZmQ9eW7">https://images.app.goo.gl/9nHz3p32G8ZmQ9eW7</a>
IMAGE (1)	Height 2.22/4.36 width	<a href="https://images.app.goo.gl/rC3C73z4S21KKadca">https://images.app.goo.gl/rC3C73z4S21KKadca</a>

## Appendix 2:

MOVIE	DURATION	RELATED LINK
The Battle of Algiers 1966.	02.h01m	<a href="https://www.youtube.com">https://www.youtube.com</a> <a href="https://youtube/8XTJomI91yo">https://youtube/8XTJomI91yo</a>

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