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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the image of the revolutionary woman in the Algerian cinema through a semiological approach applied to selected scenes from the film titled "The Battle of Algiers", directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. This analysis was carried out through the selection of six (6) pivotal scenes from film, treated through a semiological approaches based on the frameworks analyses of Roland Barthes and Christian Metz. The scenes were subject a two-tiered decoding: denotative (literal) and connotative (symbolic/implied) levels of meaning. Through this methodology, several key findings emerged:

- The woman appears in diverse symbolic roles: as a strategy of camouflage, as a mediator in negotiations...*
- The Algerian revolutionary woman in the film emerges as a symbol of memory and identity-an extension of the cultural heritage of the Casbah.*
- The woman's presence in the film marks a break with dominant stereotypes, a rupture expressed through various semantic levels.*

Keywords: Revolutionary Woman; Algerian Cinema; "The Battle of Algiers"; Semiological Method; Cinematic Representation of the Revolutionary Woman.

الملخص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل صورة المرأة الثورية في السينما الجزائرية من خلال مقارنة سيميولوجية مطبقة على مشاهد مختارة من فيلم "معركة الجزائر" للمخرج جيلو بونتيكورفو. وقد نُجز هذا التحليل من خلال اختيار ستة (6) مشاهد محورية من الفيلم، تمت معالجتها وفق مقاربات سيميولوجية تستند إلى الأطر التحليلية لكل من Roland Barthes و Christian Metz. وخضعت هذه المشاهد لعملية تفكيك دلالي على مستويين: المستوى التعييني (الحرفي)، والمستوى التضميني (الرمزي أو الإيحائي) (للمعنى). ومن خلال هذه المنهجية، توصلت الدراسة إلى مجموعة من النتائج الرئيسة، أبرزها:

- تظهر المرأة في الفيلم في أدوار رمزية متعددة، بوصفها وسيلة للتمويه، ووسيط في المفاوضات، وغيرها من الوظائف الدلالية.
- تتجلى المرأة الجزائرية الثورية في الفيلم بوصفها رمزا للذاكرة والهوية، وامتدادا للتراث الثقافي لحي القصبية.
- يشكل حضور المرأة في الفيلم قطيعة مع الصور النمطية السائدة، وهي قطيعة تتجسد عبر مستويات دلالية متعددة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة الثورية؛ السينما الجزائرية؛ «معركة الجزائر»؛ المنهج السيميولوجي؛ التمثيل السينمائي

للمرأة الثورية.

1. Introduction

The period of the French colonization in Algeria extended from 1830 to 1962, during which the country experienced a profound social and political changement and upheavals. Although French expansion in Algeria was initially driven by strategic and economic objectives, it was also fueled by imperial ambitions and a desire to control the vast resources and strategic location of North Africa. The Algerian rejection of the French rule was met with severe repression, as Algerian nationalists and fighters "Mujahidin "began organizing armed uprisings against the colonial domination. The outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence in 1954 marked the culmination of a long struggle against colonialism and violence, ultimately leading to Algeria's independence from France on July 5, 1962. This revolution was characterized by armed attacks in the mountains and also by bombings in cities carried out by civilian revolutionaries, whom France was unable to combat or identify. The Casbah in Algiers served as a refuge for many civilians and secret organizations led by Algerian revolutionaries. Subsequently, women were strategically employed in this war due to their ability to disguise themselves and blend in with European appearance to pass through security checkpoints, their capacity to hide weapons under traditional garments, and their role in transporting messages between fighters and executing bombings in public places. Simultaneously, women played critical roles in rural and mountainous areas by supplying revolutionaries with food, nursing the wounded, carrying weapons, and relaying messages. These efforts were part of the broader armed struggle in the mountains and what France referred to as urban guerrilla warfare in cities.

The memoir of Zohra Drif, published in 2014 in French titled *Mémoires d'une combattante de l'ALN: Zone Autonome d'Alger* (Memoirs of a National Liberation Front Fighter: Autonomous Zone of Algiers), narrates her journey from a rural "Muslim" schoolgirl to her pivotal role in the 1956 milk bar attacks. Drif shares stories of women who actively participated in the armed resistance, emphasizing the vital and comprehensive role women played in the struggle for independence. (The Marginalization of Women in Master Narratives on the Algerian War of Independence:, p. 132).

Since the Algerian revolution was propelled by the revolutionary actions of both its men and women, symbolic spaces also contributed to this movement regarding cinema. Films played a significant role during and after the revolution

in reconstructing national identity and reinforcing the historical narrative of the revolution. In this context, the revolutionary woman was portrayed in many films, particularly in the first phase of the Algerian cinema, such as "The Battle of Algiers" (1966) and "The Winds of the Aurès" (1966). However, this image was not static; it evolved with changing political and social contexts and according to the directors' visions and the dominant discourse of each period.

The film "The Battle of Algiers", directed by the Italian Gillo Pontecorvo in 1966, stands out as a cinematic work of high expressive power, especially in its depiction of the revolutionary woman as a striking and central figure. Although the director employed tools of political realism and documentary style to convey the dynamics and events of the Algerian revolution, cinema remains a symbolic medium for reproducing meaning and shaping reality through a system of visual and symbolic signs. Ultimately, the process necessitates an analysis of the image and presence of the revolutionary woman in the film, which cannot be separated from the tools of semiotic interpretation concerned with decoding meaning through signs.

From this standpoint, we raise the following central question: **How is the Algerian woman depicted in the film titled "The Battle of Algiers"?**

Sub-questions:

- What are the implicit and symbolic connotations of the presence of the revolutionary woman as a militant?
- How is the Algerian woman socially represented within the film?
- What are the representations of the revolutionary woman and the dimensions of her human presence?
- What are the cultural and symbolic connotation reflected by the presence of the Algerian revolutionary woman in the film?
- To what extent did the film succeed in breaking the prevailing stereotypes about the Algerian women?

2. Study Methodology

2.1.The Semiological method: The semiotic method, within the scope of descriptive communication studies, focuses on symbolic content rather than the manifest meaning of the message. It is concerned with the use of implicit and semantic meanings in various mediated messages (Laramie, 2009, pp. 247-248). We have relied on cinematic semiology as part of the film theory, which examines the structure and meaning of signs used in films, communication processes of transmission and reception, and the relationship between films and

their cultural context. According to Nevena Djukovic, cinematic semiology emerged as part of cultural studies, considering the film as a cultural text within a specific context. Her interests evolved in the second phase, within the framework of post-structuralism, focusing on the ideological, social, political, and psychological dimensions of the film along with the context, and communication processes involved in film production and reception (Neven Obradović, 2017, p. 42).

From this overview, it is evident that cinematic semiology views the film as a communicative unit encompassing linguistic and visual signs with psychological, social, and political dimensions. It also contains both an explicit and an implicit content. Therefore, its analysis operates on two levels:

- **Denotative Level:** What appears directly in the film.
- **Connotative Level:** The cultural, social, and political connotations carried by the film.

The denotation and connotation levels were previously employed by Roland Barthes in his semiological analysis of images and later adapted by Christian Metz, the founder of cinematic semiology, in his analytical approach to the film. Metz presented these levels differently to suit the cinematic context of his time, referring to the perceptual level (Perçu), which involves identifying the significations and components of the filmic variables (Variables filmiques) for study. These elements form the basis that determines the second level of study, the named level (Nommé), where the film's final signified—its meaning and the external context linked to it—is established. (Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard, 2025, p. 4)

From this standpoint, we will employ the semiological analysis of the cinematic film as a comprehensive method and framework for analyzing any visual work. By "film analysis," we mean breaking down the structure into its fundamental components, then reconstructing the objectives serving the analysis. After dissection, connections between isolated elements are established, thus, making film analysis synonymous with interpretation (Yakhlef, 2005, p. 8). We will analyze the film descriptively at the denotative level and then at the connotative level by searching for symbolic and cultural connotations and the presence of the revolutionary woman in the film subject to study, which will become clearer through the subsequent film analysis steps that we will address later.

2.2. Tools of Film Analysis

"It should be noted that the use of the word 'tools' in the context of film analysis imparts the impression that it is a systematic scientific process, requiring objective procedures that are describable and reproducible " (Bouchahit, p. 96).

Unit of Film Analysis: According to Robert Stam in his book titled "Film Theory", it is impossible to say everything about any film. Consequently, many analyses focus on parts that represent the whole part, relying on a detailed analytical framework (Daliou, 2020, p. 434).

Therefore, we decided to select scenes featuring the Algerian revolutionary woman by breaking down the scenes into units of meaning that constitute the film, then linking these units to each other and uncovering the meanings and connotations through which the image of the woman in the film subject to study is analyzed. Hence, the number of selected scenes was limited to six (6) segments.

Accordingly, we adopted the shot as a unit for constructing meaning. The analysis of shots by shot was defined by both Francis Vanoye and Giulio Lietti as follows: Analysis based on the shot and its components involves studying the shot's duration, camera angle, camera movement, framing, and the shot's position in relation to editing and the cinematic work as a whole. This is done using a table consisting of two main sections addressing the components of image and sound.

1.2.1. Final Analytical Framework: Building on the above, a systematic analytical plan can be formulated and regarded as a synthesize to the work and a reflection on the subject, adapting the study to its primary goal: exploring the impressions and perceptions conveyed in the film about the revolutionary woman in her formal, psychological, social, political, cultural, and symbolic dimensions.

- **First: Technical Data Sheet of the Film:** This includes the film's title, production year, country of production, crew, film genre, actors/actresses, film duration, and a link to the film and **Film Synopsis:** A brief presentation of the film's events without making analytical judgments.
- **Second: Denotative Analysis:** This is the first level of analysis and pertains to what appears directly on the screen-that is, what we see and hear explicitly without symbolic interpretation. This involves describing

the following: characters appearing in the scene, filming location, events, lighting (natural or artificial), camera angle, accompanying sounds, and music (if any).

- **Third: Connotative Analysis:** This is the second level of semiological analysis of the scene, focusing on the indirect or symbolic meanings carried by the visual and auditory signs in the film. It involves deconstructing the image of the revolutionary woman to uncover the cultural, political, psychological, and ideological connotations conveyed through the scene, thereby shaping her image.

This also interprets the director's technical choices regarding the discourse and the scene as a whole: camera angles and lighting constitute a cinematic language that conveys meanings and connotations. These meanings do not appear directly to the viewer but are inferred from context, requiring providing evidences and comparison with analyses, studies, and information external to the film to ensure scientific rigor and objectivity to these analyses.

2.3. Study Population and Sample: The study population consists of all cinematic films whose primary theme is the revolution and in which female characters and their roles in the revolution are prominent. Since it is impossible to analyze all films from that period, we adopted purposive sampling as the method of selection, and we choose "Battle of Algiers" for the following reasons:

- It is a feature-length narrative film addressing the theme of the revolution and highlighting the contributions of the Algerian women, making it responsive to the study's objectives.
- "The Battle of Algiers" is one of the most referenced and historically significant films about the Algerian revolution in both Algerian and global cinema history. It has been ranked among the top fifty films of all time and is considered a reference point for peoples worldwide. As noted by Bernice Solinas, "The Battle of Algiers" provided a model for other struggles and revolutions." In Cuba, among other places, the film was screened during a retrospective on the Global South organized by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) under the leadership of Alfredo Guevara. (Perett, 2023, p. 52)
- The film received several international awards, including the title of Best Film at the Venice Film Festival in 1966, the Critics' Prize at the Cannes

Film Festival the same year, and it was nominated for three Academy Awards: Best Film, Best Director, and Best Screenplay.

- It serves as a historical document depicting events of the revolution. "The Battle of Algiers" is frequently screened on national holidays and commemorative occasions, and scenes from the film are often cited when discussing the liberation struggle in the capital. Even foreign history broadcasts use shots from this film when covering the Algerian revolution.
- **Prominent Female Presence within the Revolutionary Context:** Although the film revolves around the armed struggle against French colonialism, women appear as central actors within the revolutionary system. This qualitative presence allows for an analysis of how the Algerian women are represented and the significance of this representation in the context of political and social conflict.
- **The Film's Semi-Documentary Nature Enhances Symbolic Credibility:** The film adopts a realistic (semi-documentary) visual style, utilizing archival sources previously unavailable, was shot on the actual historical locations, and largely features non-professional actors. The reputation of the Italian filmmakers in neorealism (Peretti, 2023, p. 53). adds a double credibility to the depiction of women, portraying a convincing representation of reality. This renders the analysis of the image of women in the film significant beyond cinema, extending into social and cultural fields.

"The Battle of Algiers" is a product of an Algerian-Italian partnership, directed by a professional film crew, which endowed the film with a precise visual composition. It employs symbols, signs, and audiovisual allusions to convey profound meanings that transcend the superficial narrative. Elements such as imagery, lighting, camera angles, and character movement all carry connotations that contribute to constructing meaning and establish an integrated visual discourse.

3. Semiological Analysis

3.1. Technical Data Sheet of the Film:

- **Title:** The Battle of Algiers .
- **Format:** Black and white.
- **Director:** Gillo Pontecorvo.

- **Screenplay:** Gillo Pontecorvo, Franco Solinas, based on the ideas and memories of Saadi Yacef.
- **Cinematography:** Marcello Gatti
- **Editing:** Mario Morra, Mario Serandrei
- **Music:** Ennio Morricone
- **Production:** Antonio Morricone, Saadi Yacef
- **Year of Release:** 1966
- **Duration:** 2:01:28
- **Film Link:** <https://youtube.com/watch?v=Nmqw0XFR6eU&si=AMk-taQo8roR2wAw>.

3.2. Film Synopsis:

The 1966 Algerian-Italian film directed by Gillo Pontecorvo focuses on a symbolic and central era in Algeria's struggle for independence from France: the battle that took place in the capital city of Algiers between 1954 and 1957, fought between the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and the French army. Most of the film is narrated through flashbacks, beginning when French paratroopers discover Ali Lapoint's hideout in the Casbah. Ali, along with several Mujahideen, is shown in a state of tension accompanied by a female fighter, affirming her presence from the very first scene. However, they refuse to surrender. Without directly revealing their fate, the narrative shifts back to the past to recount the events that led to this moment, including:

- Ali Lapoint's decision to join the National Liberation Front after witnessing the French army when they executed civilians by guillotine on suspicion of participating in the revolution.
- Highlighting the organizational and logistical logic of the national cells, which relied on employing men, women, and even children to carry out operations.
- The role of women was determined in transporting messages and weapons, breaching checkpoints and reenacting the bombings of the famous café -three of the most renowned female militants: Djamila Bouhired, Samia Lakhdari, and Zohra Drif, on September 30, 1956.
- The counter-revolution efforts led by Colonel Mathieu (a composite character based on several counterinsurgency officers, such as Jacques Massu), who commands the operation to take control of the Casbah, infiltrate it, and subsequently bomb it.

The narrative concludes with images of national demonstrations led by women and men, reminding the viewer that although France achieved a major tactical victory during the Battle of Algiers, it would lose the Algerian War just five years later.

3.4. Technical Analysis of the segments:

3.4.1. Segment One:



- The Denotative Level:

Exterior scene, daytime, filmed in one of the alleys of the Casbah. The scene begins at 13:56 with a static shot (Static Shot) at a medium wide angle (Medium Wide Shot) showing a narrow alley flanked by high walls. On the left side of the frame, a woman wearing a traditional veil (Haik) stands close to the wall, while another woman walks deeper into the alley with her back to the camera. In the background of the visual field, a man (Ali Lapoint) dressed in a traditional white robe (qashabiya) observes the scene.

The background sound consists of diegetic sounds: children's voices, a street vendor, footsteps, and an Algerian folk music in the background heard alongside, reflecting the sense of daily life atmosphere within the Casbah.

A close-up shot (Close-up) focuses on Ali Lapoint's face, his eyes following a police officer crossing the alley. The edit (Cut) shifts to the officer walking, shown in a medium back shot (Medium Back Shot). The cut returns to Ali's face, then to the woman standing beside him. He looks at her; she steps forward, and he begins to walk behind her. Continuity editing (Continuity Editing) is used to accompany the movement of the two characters in the alley. The camera alternates between static shots and varying angles, ranging from medium to long shots (Medium to Long Shots), with handheld camera footage

in moments of crowding, to convey a sense of motion and immersion within the crowd.

As the characters walked with a gathering of pedestrians -men and women walking side by side -the camera cuts to a close-up on the woman's hand as she opens her cloak and pulls out a small pistol. Ali Lapoint passes her and swiftly advances toward the police officer. A low-angle shot (Low Angle) highlights his determination. The woman places her hand on his shirt from behind, attempting to stop him. The camera captures this moment in a close-up on his hand as it slips free from her grip.

Ali confronts the officer face to face. A medium shot (Medium Shot) displays the direct confrontation. Ali draws the gun and pulls the trigger; no sound is heard. A close-up on his face reveals his hesitation, followed by a shot of his hand lowering the weapon. He steps forward and strikes the officer with his hand. A shaky handheld camera shot shows the officer falling to the ground. The woman quickly withdraws, with the camera panning right to follow her movement. Ali runs after her, grabbing her arm. A close-up captures their movement; the background remains unclear due to the narrowness of the alley. They debate without making noises quietly, in a rapid movements rapid, and head toward a small door. The scene cuts to a relatively dark interior with dim lighting coming from a small window. They enter a house within the Casbah. The woman places the gun at her waist, covering it with her veil (Haik). Ali removes his Qashabiya. No music is present, only the sound of breathing and dialogue. A close-up on the woman's face shows her saying that she will take him to the official. The scene ends with a two-shot (Two-Shot) of the two characters.

- **The Connotative Level:**

- **The Woman as a Strategy of Camouflage:** At the beginning of the scene, the camera adopts a static, neutral gaze, observing the space as if it were a monitoring eye. The woman standing against the wall remains motionless, appearing as a passive observer. However, behind this stillness lies a revolutionary act-quiet yet poised for explosion. This embodies revolutionary action itself, through which the camera attempts to camouflage what women conceal beneath the Haik. The Haik-a garment capable of covering both face and body-acts as a mask of disguise; behind it does not hide merely the female body but a weapon. Using the basket, an everyday simple tool, as a

carrier for the pistol, the scene embeds a visual metaphor transforming her from a "housewife" into a "fighter." Her movement through the crowd signifies the use of popular masses as a cover for revolutionary operations that cannot be easily distinguished. The revolution in the Casbah is difficult to trace in terms of its instigators, unlike the revolution in the mountains, a fact explicitly acknowledged by the French officer himself in the film.

- **The Woman as a Guide and a Leader:** Although the woman does not carry out the operation herself, but rather guides Ali Lapoint, this makes her role more pivotal. She demonstrates caution and leadership capabilities. When Ali exceeds the tactical objective, she attempts to physically restrain him (grabbing his shirt) but fails. After Ali strikes the soldier, she quickly retrieves the pistol and becomes the leader of the moment: she flees with the weapon, confronts Ali, and invites him to a safe house, promising him access to the command. These actions illustrate her composure and ability to manage difficult situations effectively.
- **The Woman as a Participant in the Revolutionary Act Alongside the Man:** The use of cross-cutting between Ali and the woman reveals that decision-making and action are inseparable between male and female roles. While Ali confronts the officer, the woman retreats carrying the weapon; she later rejoins him and regains control of the situation. This interplay becomes evident within the crowd, where men and women appear together. The gun passes from hand to hand -from woman to man, from emptiness to fullness- demonstrating an unstable relationship between gender and combat roles.
- **The Revolutionary Woman as an Identity of Algeria:** She serves as a cultural symbol of the Casbah region, embodying revolutionary roles while maintaining her traditional attire and modesty. Similarly, Ali Lapoint's clothing reflects the preservation of identity and authenticity as a core value. The woman's presence in male-dominated spaces and her cooperation with the man do not erase boundaries of modesty and propriety between them. The woman standing motionless by the wall blends into the background, as if part of the Casbah itself. The ambient sounds-mixed with music and the street vendor's voice -constitute the soundscape of the Casbah, of which the woman is an integral element.
- **The Revolutionary Woman as a Fighter but Not a Heroine:** The film's philosophy adopts the premise that the hero is an ordinary person from ordinary people; Ali Lapoint is simply a man from the populace, and the

female characters share this ordinariness. Their portrayal lacks exceptional awareness, culture, or heroism, but they carry a faith in their cause, experience fear, and face danger. Consequently, the camera neither adopts a low angle (which would confer heroism) nor a high angle (which would weaken the character). Instead, most shots remain at eye-level, producing visual neutrality and emotional participation with the audience without overt emotional guidance. This effects is echoed by the natural diegetic soundscape, which excludes loud music, lending the scene a realistic dimension. Close-up shots focusing on the face and hand movements further enhance intimacy with the character, allowing the viewer to understand her fears and courage within the scene.

3.4.2. Segment two:



- The Denotative Level:

In an interior scene, at minute 44:35 of the film's runtime, in a modest room lit by natural light, three women appear (two young, one older). In a medium shot -frontal angle -with a static camera, the three women are seemingly scattered across the room, each occupied with preparing herself. In the background, a continuous buzzing sound can be heard, resembling either the whirring of a sewing machine or an old metal fan; its source remains unseen.

The first woman stands on the left, her back slightly turned, and begins to remove her Haik slowly and quietly, whereas, The second woman approaches a square mirror hanging on the wall and starts to comb her hair. Meanwhile, the third woman (the eldest) was sitting, removing her earrings with a heavy gesture.

In a rapid cross-cut montage -the camera moves across the bodies without fully revealing any faces -in an extreme close-up (ECU): a hand grips a braid of hair, a pair of scissors opens and closes slowly, the hesitation in the motion is

visible in the pause before cutting. The sound of metal pressing against the hair is heard. No music -only the persistent buzzing in the background. A close-up (CU): a finger carefully applies lipstick to the lips. Another shot: a hairbrush moves slowly through freshly dyed strands.

A swift change of clothing follows, shown in a medium wide shot (MWS) -45-degree angle, slightly from above. The three women move quickly, taking off their dressing and replacing them with French-style garments. The auditory rhythm accelerates; the buzzing sound continues but is now more subdued. There is no dialogue, only the sound of rustling fabric and soft footsteps on the floor. In a static shot, the women appear in their European attire: two of them are standing - their features have changed entirely: uncovered hair, lipstick, small handbags. The third woman sits on a chair, looking toward the door.

As the two men enter the room, the camera captures a medium shot, moving slowly with their entrance. One of them, a leader in the organization (previously seen in earlier scenes), steps in. A heavy silence dominates the space. He begins to speak in a low, deliberate voice:

"These are three bombs... each of you takes one... time is limited... Go to the places where the French are... leave it and walk away."

While he speaks, the camera captures the women exchanging silent glances -no words are uttered.

The oldest woman breaks the silence: "Can I take my son with me?" A close-up on her face -her eyes are fixed, unwavering. He responds with a brief nod, without hesitation: "Yes."

In a tracking shot -the camera follows the women from behind -they exit one by one, shaking hands with the man as they leave.

- **The Connotative Level:**

This segment breaks decisively with the stereotypical image of the woman: the female body is not presented as an object of desire, but rather as an instrument of resistance, a battle yard in its own right. The hand cutting the braid signifies a symbolic rupture with conventional femininity -redefining beauty as an act of sacrifice. The gestures of removing the Haik, combing hair, and applying lipstick can be read semiotically as a symbolic undressing of the female body from its cultural codes and original identity. This act is not driven by a desire for embellishment, but functions as a rite of passage from a certain social status to another; .ie. from a traditional Algerian woman to a "disguised bomb".

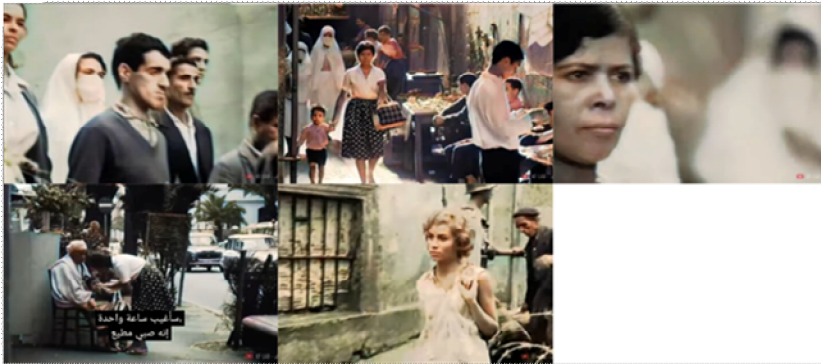
Moreover, the scene disrupts the conventional cinematic portrayal of the Algerian women in revolutionary narratives, which often focus on widows, mothers, and young women bearing the burden of preserving family and society in the absence of men -typically cast as passive victims of colonial violence or patriarchal dominance. Here, the woman emerges as a central agent of resistance. She is a strategic being, an active subject infiltrating the enemy profoundly through a deceptive appearance. Her visual presence establishes a new representation of the female body: not one that seduces, nor one that submits -but one that surprises. It is a temporary body, programmed for action, leaving the room as a timing bomb wrapped in a false colonial identity.

- **Adopting an Alternative Identity:** Within a confined space (a modest, unadorned room), and in the absence of any spoken dialogue, we observe three women meticulously transforming their bodies into tools of camouflage. This transformation is based on the erasure of local identity and the adoption of symbols of Western femininity: removing the Haik, dyeing the hair, cutting the braid, applying lipstick. The camera here employs a strict visual language, relying on extreme close-ups that fragment the female body into discrete signs: a hand cutting, a mouth being colored and an ear stripped of its adornments. This visual segmentation does not objectify the body, as classical cinema often does, but instead reconfigures it as a semiotic code - deconstructed and then reconstructed within the context of a revolutionary function. In this framework, the act of adornment is not interpreted as aesthetic, but as an implicit military procedure -a meaning that is completed by the cessation of the machine's sound, a sonic element that accompanies the entire scene. The machine's hum is not merely background noise; it constitutes the auditory marker of a process of "producing an alternative identity, "transforming the woman into a body ready to ignite and explode within the colonial space. This transformation is visually reflected in the shift from extreme close-ups to a medium shot in which the women appear in European dress -no longer just women, but disguised combatants, transitioning from self to mask.
- **Reinvesting the tools of the Other to demolish it profoundly:** Lipstick, dyed hair, the small handbag -all become instruments of concealment and deception, stripped of their aesthetic connotations and charged with political and military significance. These visual markers become signs of strategic

misdirection, where colonial culture is itself weaponized and turned against the colonizer himself. The woman masters the performance of the European model in order to infiltrate it from within.

- **Preserving Identity:** Despite the roles that women are assuming, they remain attached to their original identities. Accordingly, The hesitation before cutting the braid signifies a hesitation to relinquish one's native identity, even when doing so serves a political cause. The elder woman's contemplation of her motherhood -even in the midst of performing a militant role -reflects a profound duality: the mother here is not only a fighter, but also a bearer of an internal conflict between her natural role (as mother) and her revolutionary role (as a potential martyr). This moment opens a symbolic space for questioning the revolution and its human limits.

3.4.3. Segmen three:



- The Denotative Level:

The camera follows three Algerian women as they pass through a French checkpoint in the heart of the Casbah to carry out resistance operations. These are the same women seen earlier preparing in a private room. The **first woman**, shown in an **exterior scene**, appears in a **high wide shot**, descending a staircase amidst a dense crowd. She wears modern clothing with her hair uncovered. In the background, human noise -shouting, commands- is prominent. She observes Algerians being searched harshly while French citizens pass easily. A **tracking medium shot** follows her as she walks forward speaking in French. She crosses the checkpoint without difficulty, treated politely.

In the **next shot**, a **second, older woman** is seen cautiously walking down the street holding her child's hand. She speaks to him in Arabic and looks

visibly nervous as she approaches the checkpoint. The camera captures her rigid expression in a **close-up**, accompanied by tense, drum-like music. She then crosses the barrier calmly and leaves her child with an elderly man seated on a chair, before continuing on her way.

The **third woman**, with **short blond hair**, moves lightly and carries a small shoulder bag. A **slow circular panoramic shot** follows her graceful movement, suggesting she is merely going for a stroll. She passes the French police, one of whom smiles flirtatiously and offers to accompany her to the beach. She politely declines, implying she is already meeting someone else. This moment is captured in an **over-the-shoulder medium shot** from the soldier's perspective as she walks away.

- The Connotative Level:

Diversity in appearance, unity in purpose: The Algerian woman is portrayed in three distinct forms: a young woman in European dress, a mother, and a lively, uncovered young woman. This visual diversity underscores the adaptability of outward appearance as a **strategic tool**, reflecting the diversity of resistance tactics. Yet, the mission remains singular-liberation. The absence of personal names or backgrounds reinforces this unity of purpose, presenting the women not as individuals but as collective embodiments of the Algerian revolutionary cause.

- **The Algerian woman as a symbol of the land-mother:** The second woman's presence with her child serves as a metaphor for Algeria as a nurturing yet threatened homeland.
- **Women as agents of soft resistance:** The women are unarmed at this stage, yet their passage through the checkpoint is in itself a "**silent bullet**" in the heart of colonial authority. Their resistance relies not on physical strength but on **symbolism, subtlety, and strategic performance**. Here, the Algerian woman is not a passive figure but a **political agent** operating in a space where intelligence and appearance become tools of warfare. **Where they engage in struggle through unconventional means: speaking French, with elegance, through motherhood...** This indicates that resistance is not merely a physical conflict but a battle of symbols and meanings.
- **Subverting the colonial discourse about women:** France sought to portray Algerian women as victims needing "liberation" from their religion and culture. However, this scene explosively contradicts that image, presenting

the woman as a liberator rather than the liberated.

- **The woman between strength and fragility:** The scene reveals the woman's strength and determination to cross despite her fear and hesitation, which underscores her human fragility, lending the viewer a realistic dimension. They are neither stronger than the mission nor weaker than it. This is emphasized by the tracking medium shots accompanying the women's progress towards the checkpoint. The camera walks with them-not ahead or above-granting the viewer a sense of participation and emotional complicity, shrinking the distance between the spectator and revolutionary act. The characters' stillness also masks some of their emotions, which the camera seeks to capture in order to emphasize the human fragility. Close-ups, especially those focusing on the mother's facial expressions, reveal rigidity, fear, and silent resolve. The military drum music accompanying the second woman mimics the sound of a frightened heart or the impending war. Silence is sometimes used during the crossing, representing a suspended moment between life and death, suggesting the heaviness of the mission. Meanwhile, the diegetic sounds-shouts and commands-openly express the oppressive authority imposed on Algerians, heightening the tension experienced by the female characters as potential victims if the mission fails.
- **The female militants "Fidai "were tasked with carrying weapons through the city.**
From this perspective, the three women appearing in Pontecorvo's film enact a triple transgression against colonialism from a socio-spatial viewpoint:
 - First, from the confined space of the Casbah to the wide streets featuring neoclassical architecture in the settler neighborhood.
 - Second, from the private domestic space to the masculine public sphere of the street (known in Islam as Al-umma).
 - Third, from the hidden state of wearing the Hijab (a form of spatial confinement akin to a threshold between private and public space) to a state of revolutionary physical freedom and visibility. However, in the latter half of the scene, this image flips from familiarity and passivity:
 - First, by revealing that these women are capable and ready to transcend the confines of domestic space (contrary to the traditional colonial Harem model of women);
 - Second, through the increased use of subjective shots (point-of-view shots), encouraging viewers to support

the women's mission—not necessarily out of political sympathy but through mechanisms of cinematic identification.

3.4.4. Segment four:



- The Denotative Level:

This segment, complementing the previous scenes, highlights how three Algerian young women simultaneously carry out bombing operations in public places frequented by the French.

The scene begins in a small hideout near the market, where the three girls stand waiting for the bombs to be prepared by setting their timers, carried out by a man named Taleb. The room is dimly lit, dominated by a soft light focused on the faces, accompanied by faint mechanical sounds indicating the precise adjustment of the timing devices. The camera moves with close-up shots on the girls' faces, then shifts to a static shot of Taleb's face filled with concentration and tension, lending the scene a realistic, documentary feel. One of the girls steps forward to take a bomb after it has been set, while the others silently bid farewell, with the ticking timer sound continuing in the background, intensifying the sense of accelerating time—especially as the remaining time to place the bombs at the target locations must not exceed half an hour.

The visual narrative then shifts to the first girl, who enters a crowded European-style café. She approaches the waiter's table, places her bag on the floor, sits on a chair beside a French man, and orders a cola. She sips it in small doses while anxiously observing the surroundings. The camera focuses on very close shots: a child licking an ice cream, lovers exchanging glances, and ordinary side conversations. She looks at her watch, then quietly pushes the bag (which contains the bomb) under the table with her foot and leaves.

In this segment, the second girl -with short blonde hair -appears in a youth club. The camera turns around the dancers, capturing faces laughing and

dancing to loud European music. She joins the dance, swaying with others, momentarily blending into the crowd, but at a fleeting moment, she leaves the bag and exits unnoticed.

The third woman, who is older (the mother of the child), enters a waiting hall in a civilian airport. The announcement voice informs of a delayed flight, while people engage in spontaneous conversations. The woman sits holding a magazine on the table, quietly places the bag by her feet, then pushes it with her foot beneath the adjacent chair. Subsequently, the bombs explode in the café and the club.

- The Connotative Level:

This segment reinforces the symbolic structure previously established by the film regarding the positioning of the revolutionary woman as an active political agent:

- **The Woman as an Active individual:** In this segment, the Algerian woman appears as an active participant at the heart of the political and military event, not merely as a victim or a narrative backdrop. Here, she transcends the colonial and nationalist recurring images of the “protected woman,” the “raped woman,” or the “woman defended by others,” to become an integral part of the organizational structure of the resistance and a decision-maker. Despite the limited dialogue given to women in the film overall, and especially in this scene, their visual presence goes beyond verbal communication; looks, gestures, and tension silence. All function as parallel narratives that confirm their actual presence.
- **Woman’s Infiltration of Enemy Spaces:** Her presence in enemy spaces (the café, the club, the airport) redraws the political geography. She penetrates the “colonial system” disguised in its symbols without losing her pivotal role. The female body, often presumed “weak” or “excluded,” becomes a means of breaching the colonial patriarchal system and a tool for destabilizing it from the roots
- **The disguised Femininity as a Resistance Strategy:** The three women adopt the appearance of “European women”: modern hairstyles, civilian clothing, and behaviorally engaging with the public scene (ordering a cola, dancing, reading a magazine). This adoption is not mere camouflage but a symbolic strategy. It reflects acute awareness of the colonial stereotypes portraying the “Muslim woman” as veiled, retracted, and marginalized. Through this reversal, the girls demonstrate awareness

of the colonial visual surveillance mechanisms and redirect them against the colonial regime itself.

- **Woman Raises an Ethical Question About the Legitimacy of Revolutionary Action:** In the scene where the girl sees a child licking ice cream and people engaged in everyday conversations, she distances herself emotionally; hesitation and questions about the legitimacy of the revolutionary act may arise for a moment. However, she ultimately chooses to continue her mission.

3.4.5. Segment five:



- The Denotative Level:

The scene started with a date that appears on the screen: September 27, 1957. Through this, director Gillo Pontecorvo reconstructs a pivotal moment related to the arrest of one of the leading figures of the revolution, known in the film as Jaafar.

The scene begins with a dark interior shot illuminated by a focused beam of light on the faces of Jaafar and the woman accompanying him, who was one of the girls assigned to the task of bombing. The close-up shot is used here to emphasize the characters' faces, which display signs of tension. Soon Jaafar instructs her to burn all the documents.

The camera then moves outside, where the place is besieged by General Matteo and his soldiers. This marks a transition from the private space to the public domain of military authority. The director employs medium shots and wide shots in this segment.

Matteo uses a neighboring woman to negotiate with Jaafar. She ascends the stairs where she sees the heads of Jaafar and his wife through a window against a black background. A Dutch angle shot is used as the woman conveys General Matteo's threat to Jaafar: "Surrender or the entire street will be blown up". Jaafar refuses to surrender despite the woman's attempts to appeal to him, responding decisively and instructing her to go downstairs. The woman, named Zakia, descends and informs the soldiers of Jaafar's decision.

The camera returns to Jaafar and the young militant woman with him as they continue burning the documents inside the hideout. The camera relies on extreme close-up shots of the trembling hands tearing the papers. The papers are torn and thrown into the fire. A loud gunshot is heard from outside, depicted by the camera from a low-angle interior shot.

Jaafar and the woman move toward the window, with the camera following them in a slow tracking shot. It then cuts to an over-the-shoulder shot showing what Jaafar sees: a woman watching the burning fuse with terrified eyes. A close-up of the woman's face is used, with shallow focus to darken the background and draw attention exclusively to her expression without distraction. The sound effects here emphasize the accelerating ignition of the fuse (Foley).

Jaafar looks at the woman with him; their exchanged glances are captured through a reverse shot before he announces his decisive decision that such a sacrifice would be futile, and that their surrender would be an opportunity to save civilians. The sound effects gradually rise in intensity, synchronized with the approaching explosion, before abruptly falling silent as Jaafar declares to Matteo that he will come down.

The scene then shifts to inside the car: the shot opens through a wet glass. The realistic sound of rain (diegetic sound) fills the background audio of the scene. The camera is set in a static two-shot showing Jaafar and Matteo in the back seat, while the young militant woman sits in the front seat, turning her head back to follow the conversation. She reacts silently to Matteo's provocations.

When Matteo utters the definitive sentence, "We have crushed the revolution" it is followed by a dramatic silence, which is broken by the woman sharply addressing him in Algerian Arabic dialect: ("Oh lonely hypocrite, you villain, Ali Lapoint is still in Kasbah"). A subtle sound stinger accompanies her words, while the camera slowly zooms in on her face gradually.

- **The Connotative Level:**

The presence of the woman in the scene depicting Jaafar's arrest serves as a complex visual representation loaded with semiological meanings that transcend the character's functional role to embody a symbolic representation of the collective conscience, silent resistance, and moral breakdown in the face of colonial violence.

- **The Woman as a Negotiation Mediator:** A woman named Zakia from the neighborhood, popular among the people, is placed in an extraordinary position where she becomes the "Tongue of the military." This does not reflect her fear from the soldiers, but it was out of concern for the lives of the civilians. This is reflected in her climbing the stairs to negotiate with Jaafar. Visually, the woman is positioned between the inside and the outside, caught between the besieged resistance and the besieging military forces. This positioning endows her with a semiotic significance as a "threshold figure"—a pivotal character in myths and grand narratives who embodies the moment when the hero must make a decisive choice.

The camera frames her face from tilted angles, reflecting the instability of her moral and psychological stance, caught between loyalty to the neighbor/freedom fighter and fear from the oppressive military authority. Her presence is not neutral but charged with ethical tensions and class connotations.

- **The Woman as Partner and Supporter to the Man in the Space of Isolation and Psychological Siege:** The second woman, one of the militants who carried out the bombings, appears in a narrow, dark interior frame symbolizing a dual siege: the geographical siege imposed by the French army, and the symbolic siege related to the role of women within the revolution, even though this role is often invisible but crucial. The use of close-up shots on her trembling, confused face reflects inner tension, yet it is not read as weakness but as a human state poised on heroic action and sacrifice.

The exchanged glances between her and Jaafar transcend a dialogue; they constitute a visual language laden with symbolism. Their gaze exchange is based on equality in decision-making, not subordination. In that moment, the woman transforms from a "supporting" element into a conscious witness and partner in a symbolic fate; she represents the living wing of the revolution, capable of carrying the message after the fall of the leaders. **In the Front Seat**

of the Car: symbolises her leadership position in the struggle's journey. It is affirmed as she silently observes the conversation between Jaafar and Matteo, then breaks the silence with a fiery sentence in Algerian Arabic dialect-marking a moment of semantic explosion in her presence. Here, sound becomes a weapon: the use of her native language, the sharp tone, and the complex phrase. all form a linguistic-cultural counter-sign to colonial power. The fixed camera angle followed by a slow zoom-in emphasizes the escalation of meaning from silence to speech; from subordination to action.

- **Enhancing the Woman's Presence in the Scene While Reducing Some of Her Roles:** Despite her presence as a true partner within the hideout -burning documents, sharing danger, and conscious silence -this portrayal preserves her active participation and effectiveness at a decisive moment. Her presence is affirmed. However, some of her roles are diminished, as evidenced by the absence of a personal name and narrative background comparable to that of Jaafar or Ali Lapoint, which renders her relatively ambiguous within the film's overall context.

She does not make direct decisions as Jaafar is the one who decides to surrender, not the woman. Her presence remains accompanying rather than determining, even though she is a partner in the event.

3.4.6. Segment Six:



- The Denotative level

In an interior scene at 1:45:54 in *The Battle of Algiers*, following the arrest of Jaafar and a woman, Omar enters a room in the Casbah. The shot is framed in a medium angle that emphasizes the depth of the space, showing Omar studying under warm, dim domestic lighting. Ali La Pointe then instructs him to go to sleep to prepare for an early morning mission. In the background of the frame, Habiba appears in a static shot as she prints flyers, then moves

forward as Ali mentions her name. Ali is shown in a close-up shot listing the members of the operation: Omar, Mahmoud, Habiba, and himself.

The four gather around a table where bread and eggs were prepared, captured from a relatively high angle, evoking an atmosphere of camaraderie and collective planning. Ali explains the details of the mission, indicating that a garbage truck driven by Taleb will take them early to the target location. The camera alternates between Omar and Ali, the latter was lying on a couch, filmed from a low side angle depicting the hours spent waiting. Subsequently, the sound of a truck approaching is heard from outside. Ali looks out the window, assuming it is the intended vehicle, then wakes Omar while Mahmoud approaches carrying a tray of coffee. Ali inquires about Habiba, who appears in a close-up shot confirming her readiness for the mission.

Suddenly, sharp gunshots explode, and the background music intensifies dramatically. Everyone rushes into a sealed cement hideout, while Mahmoud's pregnant wife hastily attempts to conceal their presence; she is depicted in a close-up shot removing the eggs and coffee before lying down, feigning sleep. Sounds of breaking, beating, and shouting from outside are amplified through realistic sound effects, without musical accompaniment, heightening the tension. Soldiers enter, and the camera tracks from behind as the woman is dragged outside.

Inside the hideout, the four (Omar the kid, Ali Lapoint, Habiba, and Mahmoud) are shown in fragmented close-ups, breathing heavily. The dim lighting moves in a nearly circular motion over their faces, highlighting the tension and claustrophobia. In the adjacent room, the French commander Mathieu addresses the wall behind Ali and offers them the choice to come out or face detonation. Only their breathing is audible. A close-up on Omar's face is followed by a fixed expression shot of Ali, who gives his comrades permission to leave without looking at them. Habiba quietly asks him in a side shot what he will do. He responds in a central shot that he does not trust the enemy.

The camera moves in a medium shot to the outside, where men and women are gathered in the open space between the houses, reciting Al-Fatiha and reading the Quran with prayers under a faint dawn light within the inner courtyard of the Casbah houses. The French soldiers begin preparing to detonate the site. The camera shifts from a close-up of the bomb fuse to the face of Mahmoud's pregnant wife, then to the crying baby.

Inside the concrete hideout, Ali holds Omar, Habiba turns her face away, and Mahmoud bows his head between his hands. The sound of the explosion reverberates. The shot ends with Mahmoud's wife watching the explosion, while the crying baby remains behind her.

- The Connotative Level:

From Margins to the Center: This sequence in "The Battle of Algiers" film highlights the woman's presence as an active participant in the struggle-not merely as a subordinate or a symbol of national identity, but as a strategic agent integrated within the secret military structure of the resistance. This is embodied in the character "Habiba," who first appears in the background of the frame engaged in printing leaflets in a static shot, then moves forward toward the center as her name is spoken. This shift from the margins to the center symbolically represents the woman's transition from traditional private roles (printing, caregiving) to roles of confrontation and initiative.

This symbolic meaning is also realized through her visual positioning and lighting: initially illuminated by a soft backlight, she soon enters the main lighting as she joins the planning group around the table. The transitional lighting on her face confers a symbolic dimension to her transformation from a "hidden actor" to a "visible active participant" within a male-dominated military space. This directorial movement is not neutral but laden with semiological connotation concerning the redistribution of roles within the discourse of liberation.

- **The Decision to Stay: A Sign of Sovereignty over Destiny:** Revolutionary cinema often portrays the man as the ultimate decision-maker, but "The Battle of Algiers" film reverses this convention. Ali grants his comrades freedom of choice but he does not exert any dominance over them. Habiba does not wait his approval but undertakes her decision through silence, her eyes, and the composed expression on her face. She remains where she is, confronting fate alongside her comrades. The final shot before the explosion, where Habiba turns her face away, closes the sequence with a bilateral symbolism: She refuses death, yet she fears it as well. Inside the cement hideout, where the dim lighting concentrates on the faces of the four fighters in close-up shots, the space transforms into a "symbolic womb" of resistance. Within this besieged space, Habiba is liberated from all traditional representations of women: she is neither a mother, lover, nor sister, but rather a calm internal voice at the heart of the storm.

- **The woman preserving memory:** the pregnant wife of the fighter Mahmoud introduces another symbolic dimension to the presence of women, embodying the duality of “fertility/destruction,” “life/martyrdom.” She signals the unending cycle of the revolution’s life, her presence having begun earlier as Mahmoud’s bride with the blessing of Jaafar, the organizer of the covert attacks. Later, she appears alongside Mahmoud as they agree on the baby’s name. She then emerges in this scene transforming from merely a mother and wife into an active participant in the revolution, hastening to erase traces of the resistance act (eggshells, coffee grounds), while physically withdrawing to the bed, feigning sleep. Here, the pregnant woman is presented as a body resisting through evasion rather than direct confrontation. Yet, she remains a witness to violence, watching later as the place is bombed, with a crying baby behind her—a symbolically charged image: the womb of the mother/nation giving birth amidst violence, nourished by the spectacle of martyrdom.

The direction reinforces this symbolism by focusing the camera on her face at the moment of the explosion, while the sound of the baby’s crying in the background intensifies. This audiovisual parallel is intended not only to highlight pain but to assign the woman the role of “preserver of memory”, the last witness to what will later become a heroic narrative. In this sense, the woman appears not as a mere narrative effect but as a collective conscience inhabiting the ruins and transforming them into a deeper symbolic meaning.

- **A dramatic reduction of direct action:** Hasiba is present within the militant group, her name was mentioned, participating in planning and entering the shelter as part of the armed struggle. This acknowledges her presence within the revolutionary framework. However, compared to the character of Ali Lapoint or even Mahmoud, she is not granted extensive dialogue or a clear leadership position. Her reactions remain brief, and the camera frequently places the woman in the background of the scene: Hasiba begins in the background before moving forward. Mahmoud’s pregnant wife embodies the image of the woman as caretaker of the space (hiding evidence, cleaning, feigning sleep). As a witness to violence (watching the explosion, the child crying behind her), this image, despite its emotional power, confines the woman to non-armed supportive roles and keeps her in the role of observer

rather than actor. She does not, for example, fight or openly make decisions but performs a symbolic familial role rather than a political one.

4. Discussion of the Results

- **First Theme: The Implicit and Symbolic connotation of the presence of the Revolutionary as a Fighter: A Diverse Semantic Presence** The film embodies a dense and multifaceted symbolic presence of women in their revolutionary roles, with varying forms and multiple levels of representation. The most prominent features can be summarized in the following points:
- **Women as a Strategy of Camouflage:** The film employs women as a symbolic duality: a revolutionary activist and a camouflage mask. This is illustrated through the use of the traditional veil (Haik) as a double signifier, transforming from a conventional garment used to hide the body into a means that hides weapons. This semantic shift renders the attire a revolutionary symbol opposing colonialism (first segment). Conversely, the film also utilizes women's European-style dress and appearance as tools to infiltrate the colonizer by exploiting French culture against them. This is achieved through the visual reframing of the female body in silent, close-up shots (e.g., dyeing hair, cutting braids, applying makeup), accompanied by the sounds of the hair clipper symbolizing the transformation (segments two, three, and four). It is noted that "a Muslim woman without a veil appeared as if she had chosen to support the French cause, thus, she was less likely to be searched, enabling her to carry messages and supplies to the revolutionaries (Heggoy, Sep 1974, p. 454)."
- **Women as Participants Alongside Men in the Revolutionary Action:** The film highlights women as complementary and equal partners to men in revolutionary activities, rather than mere followers. Through cross-cutting editing between male and female characters, the distinction between gender and combat roles dissolves; guns pass between hands, and revolutionary tasks are alternated among characters regardless of sex (first segment). Women transform into dynamic symbols that transcend stereotypical roles of wife and mother to undertake independent revolutionary actions such as breaching checkpoints, detonating public places, and participating within crowds and hideouts-spaces where traditional role boundaries blur (segments two, three, four, five, and six).

- **Women as Partners and Supporters of Men in spaces of Threat and Siege:** Within the film, women are positioned as symbolic partners in shared fate decisions. They do not merely play supportive or secondary roles but appear as conscious participants bearing the consequences of revolutionary action. This role is exemplified in the fifth segment in the scene where a female fighter shares Jaafar's besieged hideout. Their exchanged looks serve as a visual language that transcends dialogue. The verbal dialogue between the characters establishes a symbolic equivalence in decision-making within the space of threat. This semiotic structure is repeated in the sixth segment, where "Hasiba" shares both the hideout and fate with "Ali Lapoint."
- **Women as Negotiation Mediators:** Women appear in the symbolic role of mediators through the character "Zakiya," who becomes the "tongue of the military" not out of complicity, but motivated by the protection of civilians. Her position on the stairs-between the interior (the resistance) and the exterior (the military force)-grants her the significance of a "Threshold Figure" in grand narratives, representing the pivotal intermediary between two conflicting worlds. The use of tilted camera angles visually expresses the woman's internal tension between loyalty to the resistance and popular belonging, and her fear of repression.
- **Women as Participants but Subject to Gender Hierarchy:** The film's semiological discourse highlights the presence of the Algerian women within the revolutionary act as partners in the resistance: they participate in hideouts, burn documents, consciously maintain silence, and risk their lives. However, despite their positioning in a critical moment, this presence remains constrained within a broader narrative that reinforces male dominance. Women's names, narrative backgrounds, and screen time are minimal; spaces for decision-making are absent, and dialogues are scarce, which diminishes the dramatic impact of their actions. The final acts (surrender, confrontation, leadership) are assigned to men: Jaafar decides to surrender and the female companion follows him; Ali grants Hasiba the freedom to choose, but she follows his decision. Thus, women maintain their presence within the sphere of interaction but not determination. Accordingly, the film operates within a paradoxical duality: it activates the female body in a sacrificial revolutionary

moment, yet withdraws from her the agency -the capacity for free action. Heroic acts become complete only when viewed through the male lens or when serving the male narrative.

As Mani Sharpe points out, the female presence in “The Winds of the Aures” film always refers to the woman’s relationship to her son, not to her independent self, thereby linking her physical representation to patriarchal power structures—even in the most violent and explicit moments of resistance. Although the symbolic status of women may appear central, it is created as a narrative function rather than an autonomous entity. (Sharpe, 2014, p. 152)

– Second Theme: The Representation of the Algerian Women in Their Social Dimension Within the Film: A Reduction of Roles

A semiological analysis of the representations of women in the revolutionary cinematic discourse reveals the dominance of the militant framework at the expense of social and human roles. Although certain social symbols appear -such as a female fighter portrayed as a mother accompanying her child -motherhood, when invoked, is depicted as an internal conflict between biological and revolutionary roles rather than as an independent value in itself (segment three). As for the woman as a wife (Mahmoud’s spouse), who is a member of the secret organisation, she is presented in a wedding scene that serves primarily to extend the revolutionary narrative, where the marriage’s legitimacy is gained from the blessing of the revolutionary leadership rather than from emotions or personal choices. Even the domestic act she performs, such as hiding food before the French forces operation (segment six), is not read as a daily life feminine action but as part of the revolutionary performance. Despite Algerian cinema’s focus on women’s roles and their contribution to the liberation struggle, it mainly concentrated on the model of the female fighter (fidaiya), and largely failed to present a comprehensive image of the active woman (Ayoubi, 2014/2015, p. 12)

Perhaps one of the few films that succeeded in providing an accurate portrayal of the Algerian women by highlighting the details of their social nature during the revolutionary period is "The Winds of the Aures", a film directed by Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina. (Sharpe, 2014, p. 132) Through its intricately woven cinematic style, the film realistically embodies the details of hardships women endured cause of colonialism regarding their patience, resilience, or the internal and external conflicts they faced alike.

- Third Theme: Representations of the Revolutionary Woman and the Dimensions of Her Human Presence: The Dominance of the Revolutionary Over the Human aspects

- **Reduction of Her Human Presence:** The female body is employed as a militant tool rather than as a self carrying internal tensions. It lacks what F. Jost calls the "internal scenic focus ."The psychological intricacies of her world are hidden from the viewer and reduced to executive scenes that do not accumulate into a coherent dramatic meaning.
- **Absence of Female Characters' Names:** This absence prevents these characters from bearing symbolic connotation despite being based on real archival events. The sole exception is the mention of Hasiba's name, which is incidental, thereby weakening her human and dramatic presence.

While Algerian revolutionary cinema has preserved women's presence as a national symbol, this presence is conditional, stereotyped, and required to serve the collective discourse rather than the individual. Moreover, the cinematic memory -as Marie-Pierre argues -remains vague, fragmented, and lacking a clear vision, constrained by a set of taboos and prohibitions (Marie-Pierre, August/September 201). It excludes the multiplicity and complexity that characterize the female personality and fails to transform the revolutionary woman into an aesthetic or interrogative obsession within the cinematic language. Thus, she is embodied more as an ideological signifier than as a dramatic subject carrying tension and difference. (Schultz, 2021, p. 9)

- Fourth Theme: The Cultural and Symbolic Connotations Reflected by the Presence of the Algerian Revolutionary Woman in the Film: A Symbol of Memory and Identity

The woman is an extension of the cultural heritage of the Casbah: The choice of the Casbah as a visual narrative space reinforces the revolutionary woman's belonging to a cultural continuum. Also, it re-signifies her not only as an armed resistor but also as a bearer of memory. UNESCO classified the Casbah neighborhood as one of the world's most important archaeological sites in 1992 due to its unique architecture and its significant role in many events occurred in Algeria, notably during the Algerian Revolution (Mustafa, July 2011). Her appearance wearing the Haik, leaning against one of the Casbah's street walls, can be considered a semiotic construction equating the woman with

the place, where the architectural background becomes an extension of her. This connotation deepens through the combination of music and the daily sounds of street vendors -as a semiological tool -granting the Casbah a dynamic identity. This presence persists even in moments when women are compelled to disguise themselves in European attire to fulfill their revolutionary tasks. The hesitation in removing the Haik or cutting the braid is read as a symbolic affirmation of identity, framing the Algerian self with an underlying fear.

- **Women as Bearers of Memory and the History of the Revolution:** In the fifth segment, in the fifth scene, Jaafar's female comrade appears after being captured alongside him, where she confronts the French officer Mathieu through an act of linguistic resistance. Her statement in Arabic, affirming the continuity of the revolution, represents a moment of symbolic liberation, redirecting voice as a cultural weapon against the colonizer. She carries the burden of memory and internalizes the ongoing revolutionary action across the levels of body, language, and imagery. Her role as a preserver and a witness of memory is further reinforced through the representation of the fighter Mahmoud's wife, symbolizing a fertile duality: "fertility/destruction", "life/martyrdom ". In the final scene, she appears as a silent witness to the explosion of the hideout and her husband's death, with the sound of a crying infant in the background—an audiovisual image loaded with symbolic density. The womb here transforms into a dual symbol: a generator of life and a chronicler of testimony, granting the woman the position of “guardian of memory” and guarantor of the revolution's continuity.
- **Women as a Collective Conscience Questioning the Legitimacy of Revolutionary Violence:** Women's presence emerges as a visual culture that raises an ethical question about the legitimacy of the revolutionary violence—not as a direct objection, but as a moment of internal reflection expressed by a young woman who pauses before a scene of everyday life (a child licking ice cream, people talking). She takes a symbolic distance from the event before deciding to continue her mission. This pause reintegrates the woman as a collective conscience testing the boundaries and causes of violence. In her 2017 memoir, Drif reflected on her role in killing French colonizers: “The reader today might expect me to regret placing bombs in public places frequented by European civilians. I feel no regret. Because regret would mean covering up the central problem of the settler colonialism

by trying to depict European civilians at that time as (at best) mere tourists visiting Algeria or (at worst) the natural heirs of our land rather than its legitimate children.

- **Fifth Theme: The Image of Women in the Film as a Break with the Prevailing Stereotypes:**

The presence of the Algerian women in the film represents a rupture with dominant stereotypes. This rupture manifests in several forms and semiotic levels:

- **Breaking up with the Image of the Female Body as an Object of Pleasure:** The actions depicted are ornamental or symbolic rites of passage that transition the woman from the space of traditional identity to a disguised offensive identity, where the body is not presented for seduction but for infiltration and surprise. Here, the female body becomes a site of resistance, not desire.
- **Breaking up with the Image of Women as Victims of Colonialism:** The film disrupts the prevailing cinematic trope of women as victims or silent mothers/widows who endure the hardships of occupation and suffer rape regarding the narratives often emphasized in war cinema. Instead, it establishes a new image: a woman who is active, trapping, penetrating the enemy's heart without holding a weapon, relying on symbolic and physical intelligence. She passes checkpoints like a silent bullet—without noise but with a profound impact on the colonial narrative structure.
- **Breaking up with the Stereotypical Representations of Women in the Colonizer's Imagination:** The film refutes the colonial discourse that claims to "liberate the Muslim women," showing instead that these women are capable of liberation, rebellion, action, and infiltration without the need for the Western guidance. This cinematic moment reveals how the colonial visual surveillance tools are transformed into instruments of revolutionary infiltration.

5. Study Conclusion

The semiological analysis of "The Battle of Algiers" film reveals a complex, multidimensional presence of Algerian women that transcends its stereotypical roles, employing them within diverse connotative contexts such as camouflage, resistance, negotiation, and the preservation of a collective memory. However, this presence is not without issues; women remain subject to a gender hierarchy that hinders their symbolic independence, and their bodies are serving as militant tools without granting them a psychological depth or a clear humanitarian character. They lack full representation as independent subjects, which weakens their effectiveness within the narrative structure despite the film's reliance on real female characters.

Conversely, some scenes show a profound symbolic deployment of women as extensions of cultural and historical space and as a critical voice questioning the legitimacy of violence. Thus, creating a rupture with the prevailing stereotypes. Nevertheless, the study insistently emphasizes the need for future researches focusing on audience reception of these representations, especially from a social gender perspective, to understand the extent to which viewers feel representation or marginalization.

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