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Questioning the Definition of Cinema: From Artistic Production to Discursive Practice

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Abstract

The current article traces the conceptual transformations of cinema. It begins by problematizing the historical genesis of cinema and the major role culture plays in both its emergence and development. The role of culture is further illustrated through the shifts that cinema has undergone from a site of spectacle to a means of expression; from cinema of attraction to cinema of narrative integration. Within the debate of cinematic development and conceptualizations, this study comprehensively discusses two broad and almost overlapped definitions: cinema as an art and cinema as an ideology. The aesthetic aspects of cinema, along with their challenges and defenses, are discussed in terms of the artistically external and internal characteristics, while the ideological features are investigated in relation to the sociopolitical orientation of cinematic content and the ideological manipulation of the formal elements. To account for the complex debate about cinema, we conclude by defining it within the framework of discourse to recognize the possibilities of the articulation of resistance and agency.

Keywords: Cinema and context; Genesis of cinema; Early cinema; Transitional cinema; Cinema as an art; Cinema as an ideology; Cinema as a discourse.

1. Introduction

The definition of cinema has been very important for film theorists and philosophers and it has continued to be debated and widely approached since the earliest discussions of cinema and up to now. The diverse approaches to cinema signify its complexity and dynamism which stem basically from the profound shifts that cinema has been witnessing due to the technological evolutions and cultural transformations. So, to define cinema, it seems necessary to delineate its historical genesis and the course of its subsequent development since, as David Bordwell states, "any film theory, classic or modern which ignores the history of the medium is likely to blind itself to counterexamples and plausible alternatives." (Bordwell, 1996). Studying the genesis of cinema problematizes the question of whether cinema can be considered as a technological advancement or a culmination of multicultural as well as technical factors.

It is no doubt that culture plays a significant role in deriving cinema from the trend of attraction to that of narration. Thus, cinema has to be defined in relation to the culture that secretes it and the context from which it emerges. Setting from this background, the current study brings into the discussion two major definitions of cinema. The first concerns with the definition of cinema as an art and the second deals with its ideological implications. Thoroughly understanding these two definitions require knowing the answers to the following questions: What are the features that make cinema an art? And how can we refute the challenges that rule out cinema from its artistic status? Being produced by social agents who might use it to promote open or latent ideological messages, the subsequent questions are: How does cinema function and how it can be politically oriented? On which ground has cinema been seen as an ideology? Because the definition of cinema as an ideology devotes much focus on the operation of power rather than on the articulation of resistance, we shall look for more working definition which read the aesthetic signification of cinema within the frame of power and resistance in the sense that power cannot be possessed or absolutely controlled, but rather questioned, challenged and even changed. All what have been problematized are comprehensively investigated in the following pages.

2. Problematizing the Genesis of Cinema

From its inception, cinema seems to defy straightforward description. This can be seen in the running debates over the beginning of cinema history. In this regard, there are a lot of authors who date it back to the late 19th century, indicating that the first public screenings were organized by the two prominent French technicians, Lumiere Brothers, in 1895 (Anton, 1990; Christian, 1974; Deac, 1995). In his discussion of the earliest film screenings, Erkki Huhtamo states that "the 1890s were, it was generally agreed, the period that gave birth to moving images." (Erkki, 2011). These authors approach the genesis of cinema from a technologically deterministic perspective that sees first films as forms of mechanized spectacle.

However, there are some others who contradict this view point and criticize the idea of determining discrete moment of cinema arrival. These authors travel back further to argue that "the invention of the cinema was a 'long

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march' which lasted for several centuries." (Laurent, 2000). This means that the emergence of cinema was a culmination of many years of work. Thus, determining discrete moment of cinema arrival seems to reduce cinema to a mere technological advance without taking into considerations the historical and social contexts in which previous arts had played in the emergence of cinema. Besides, this determination seems to be compatible with the below-refuted charge that sees cinema as a mere mechanical reproduction of reality in the sense that it leaves no room for human intervention.

In this regard, one can realize that the rise of cinema was not simply a result of technical innovation, but also of historical, artistic and cultural factors. In his preface to the 1995 edition, Laurent Mannoni writes, "the dream of being able to project moving illuminated images on a wall or screen is almost as old, in the history of humanity, as the dream of flight." (Laurent, 2000). Concerning the relation of cinema to the artistic and cultural context, Mannoni indicates that "the medium did not arise out of the blue; it was related to photography, which had been around for decades." (Nanna, 2006). Moreover, Mannoni resists the dominant story that attributes cinema invention to particular nations or specific inventors. He provides an alternative story that recognizes the multiple efforts in the emergence of cinema. In his search for the historical archeology of cinema, Mannoni states that "there was no single-handed inventor of the technique, spectacle and art of cinematography, but a long chain made up of many generations of researchers, all dependent on each other." (Mannoni). He adds, "Louis Lumière was only one of the links in the long cinematographic chain, which included many other researchers." (Mannoni). Robert Pearson affirms this, saying that "the cinema…has no precise originating moment and owes it birth to no particular country and no particular person." (Robert, 1996c).

We come up with the conclusion that cinema is a cultural mode of production and exhibition from its beginning which can never be restricted to mere technical devices or sudden inventions. This introductory debate about the problematic genesis of cinema calls us to trespass the definition of cinema by its technological dimension since, as André Bazin says, "any account of cinema that was drawn merely from the technical inventions that made it possible would be a poor one indeed." (André B., 2005). Logically speaking, the technical devices are invented within the social contexts and are therefore controlled by them. So, cinema is to be understood in its relation to the culture that secretes it and the context from which it emerges. This can be best illustrated through the cultural pressure that governs the shifts of cinema.

3. Developmental Shift of Cinema: From Attraction to Narrative Integration

Cinema has been undergoing massive changes. Within the first two decades, "films themselves developed from being short 'attractions', only a couple of minutes long, to the feature length that has dominated the world's screens up to the present day." (Geoffrey, 1996). In their article "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning span the period of early cinema from 1895 until about 1914-1915. They describe two successive overlapping modes of film practice which cover this period. They call the former "the system of monstrative attractions", or what Gunning refers to elsewhere as "the cinema of attractions," (Tom Gunning) and the latter "the system of narrative integration." They believe that the first system dominated the period of 1895 to about 1906-1907 and the latter extended from 1908 to nearly 1914 or so. In spite that there are no clear-cut distinctions between the two modes since the domination of one does not necessarily indicate an exclusion of the other, Gaudreault and Gunning emphasize that the first mode was so much characterized by an exhibition of spectacle or display. This mode mainly features curiosities or novelties through one or more shots whose connection were restricted to minimum. By contrast, the second mode is more concerned with the process of narration or telling a coherent story. Though the editing by which the filmmakers make connection between shots was of less importance to the first mode, the cinematic elements, like close-up, high-angle shot, tracking shot and "editing" were generally used to serve the mode of attraction. However, the function of the cinematic elements has changed, in the second mode, to serve narrative coherence (André G. and Tom Gunning, 2006). In his rethinking of cinema during the two early decades, Robert Pearson points out that "many scholars have accepted Tom Gunning's distinction between the early cinema as a 'cinema of attractions' and the transitional cinema as a 'cinema of narrative integration'." (Robert, 1996b).

In another article entitled "The Cinema of Attraction," Gunning provides more detail about the first mode referred to, here, as "the cinema of attraction," as the title suggests. In this article, Gunning acknowledges that "there is the extremely important role that actuality film plays in the early film production" (Gunning) in comparison to the fictional film due to the "tradition in which realism was valued largely for its uncanny effects." (Tom, 1989). However, he sees that both actualities and fictions were produced to mainly incite viewer curiosity and excite his visual pleasure or to draw his attention to narrative detail through a thrilling display. So, he uses the term "cinema of attraction" to convey that early cinema, whether actuality or non-actuality films, was concerned with "presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power…and exoticism." (Gunning) This evidences that early cinema was swayed by the impulse of spectatorship "from the novelty period until the dominance of longer narrative films, around 1906-1907." (Tom Gunning, 2006).

This popular mode of production was later spoiled and driven underground because it was not recognized as an art. "Art," as Scruton illustrates, "is fundamentally serious; it cannot rest content with the gratification of mere fantasy, nor can it dwell on what fascinates us while avoiding al-together the question of its meaning." (Roger, 1981a). This means that cinema started to be perceived not merely as entertainment and spectacle, but as an expressive art. So, there was a cultural pressure under which the cinema of attractions has tremendously been transformed. William Guynn elaborates:

"Early cinema, with its direct appeal to the working-class spectator's desire to see cinematographic reproductions of celebrities, curiosities, attractive human bodies, comic gags, exotic locations, special effects, chases, and so on, was considered to be "vulgar" and "lowbrow": it was devalued the way we today might devalue supermarket tabloids or reality TV (William, 2011).

This significant quote explains how the cultural context in which early cinema emerged relegated these types of films to secondary position. In the cultural context of early cinema, the artistic status of cinema was challenged since early cinema was seen as attractions rather than a communication of thought. This is best exemplified in the earliest Biograph films of D. W. Griffith where he "did not dare put his name on the credits, lest his name in the legitimate theatre be undermined by his low-life escapades with celluloid." (Berys, 2004). This means that filmmakers, at the early stage, could not think of their films as works of art.

Therefore, the trend has then moved towards the process of developing the mode of narrative integration, illustrated above by Gunning. Here, the filmmaker, as a creative artist, has become more interested in the aesthetic and creative aspects of cinema. "In 1912," Pearson writes, "literary intellectuals became interested in the by then predominant fiction film, urging adherence to aesthetic standards to elevate the story film to art rather than 'mere' amusement." (Robert, 1996a). They gradually come to think that "cinema is first and foremost an artistic medium before being a means of entertainment or a commercial, money-making business." (Hatem, 1995). This introduces us to the definition of cinema as an art which has been a crucial issue for filmmakers, film theorists and philosophers. In this respect, a lot of authors do agree with the definition of cinema as an art, but the question to be raised, here, is: what are the characteristics that make cinema an art?

4. Cinema as an Art

Within the space of art, cinema can likely be discussed in terms of external and internal characteristics. This means that the perception of cinema as an art derives partly from the intertextual relationship between cinema and other art forms and partly from the technological aspect that is more closely linked to the cinematic form, represented mainly in editing. This calls us to deal with the artistic features of cinema both thematically and formally; to take into account the significant relations between film and other traditional art forms such as painting, literature and drama and to also pay special attention to the cinematic elements that represent a strong basis of film as an art form.

The external aesthetics of film is related to the connection between the subject-matter of film and other arts like novels, drama and poetry. In this regard, filmmakers have tried to elevate the aesthetic position of cinema "by borrowing the prestige of those arts via literary and theatrical adaptations." (Guynn, 2011). If one maps the history of cinema, from its beginning throughout, with its relation to the previous arts, he/she actually finds out that cinema is interdisciplinary art in which theatre, and literature have been integrated for commercial and cultural reasons. In his discussion of Kamal al-Reyahi's research: "Cinema and Literary Text," Muhrez al-Garawi sees that

the adaptation appeared in the history of cinema for two reasons: First, investing the success and popularity of narration to make films based on novels that had an admiring audience. Second, through the adaptation, cinema tried to gain a status at the eyes of the cultural elites similar to that gained by literature as an art and a means of expression (Muhrez al-Garawi, 2014).

The cinematic adaptation of literary works is manifested in a lot of films that have been based on novels written by famous writers. For example, "Many of Abu Seif's films are based on novels written by Naguib Mahfouz, Ihsan 'Abdel Quddus, Yusuf al-Siba'i, Yusuf al-Qa'id among others." (Hashem al-Nahhas, 1995). The acquisition of aesthetics through adaptation is seen as external aesthetics. Thus, the question to posted, here, is: what are the internal structure and the cinematic techniques that make film an art?

The answer could be manifested in the seemingly well-grounded and defended argument held by several authors, especially classical film theorists, who argue that "cinema, despite its mechanical, photographic basis, is an art form." (Gaut). The prominent classical film theorist Rudolf Arnheim, In his *Film as an Art*, strongly defends the idea of silent film as an art through his systematic refutation of the claim that "Film cannot be art, for it does nothing but reproduce reality mechanically," (Rudolf, 1957). He sees the refutation of the challenge that rules out cinema from its artistic status as "an excellent method of getting to understand the nature of film art (Rudolf, 1957). This challenge has been premised from an analogy between painting and photography. It is reasoned in this way:

In painting, the way from reality to the picture lies via the artist's eye and nervous system, his hand and, finally, the brush that puts strokes on canvas. The process is not mechanical as that of photography, in which the light rays reflected from the object are collected by a system of lenses and are then directed onto a sensitive plate where they produce chemical changes." (Rudolf, 1957).

This quote explains that painting differs from photography in the sense that painter is given possibilities to convey his intentions through his capacities to artistically manipulate painting, while photographer has no room to express his intentions because the photograph is simply a mechanical reproduction of reality. Arnheim refutes the idea that photography and film are mere mechanical reproduction of reality through demonstrating that there are "significant divergences between the image that the camera makes of reality and that which the human eye sees." (Rudolf, 1957). In painting, the painter is allowed "to get as far away from nature as is necessary to convey his artistic intention." (Rudolf, 1957). Likewise, Arnheim sees that "it is just these differences that provide film with its artistic resources." (Rudolf, 1957).

For Arnheim, such divergences between the object and its representation pave the way for artistic manipulation that allows for the expression of film director's intention or the communication of thoughts about the world. He provides several examples of such deviations between the two images that are utilized by film director for artistic

purposes. The camera perspectives, the absence of space-time continuum, and the lack of color and sound are some of the examples he provided to show how these formative tools make silent filmic representation deviate from the reality filmed. A long shot, for example, can make an object appear small and vague in a way that differs from reality, while close-up can make the object appear enormous and clear in a way that also diverges from reality. In film art, such change in position of the camera is artistically used to signify something. Also, the lack of space-time continuum allows the artist to use the artistic potentialities of montage, by which film"[joins] together shots of situations that occur at different times and in different places." (Rudolf, 1957). The film director takes a hand in the process of filmmaking and creatively makes film differ from what is filmed.

In addition, by the reduction of color to white and black, "[the film artist] is offered particularly vivid and impressive effects." (Rudolf, 1957). The question of sound is like that of color in that gestures, as a means of visual expressions, are seen more effective and expressive than if the sound is actually heard. Arnheim states, "If one does not hear what is said, the meaning becomes indirectly clear and is artistically interpreted by muscles of the face, of the limbs, of the body." (Rudolf, 1957). For Arnheim, all the above-mentioned techniques are intentionally used by the film artist to communicate specific signification since, as he affirms, "things which have no significance have no place in a work of art." (Rudolf, 1957). Tewfik Saleh affirms this point by stating: "The image in cinema is not flat, but dense with significances. The mastery of the director lies in orienting the spectator toward a proper interpretation of the film and a reading of its inner structure." (Tewfik, 1995).

It is worth mentioning that Arnheim puts the main working principle of film art represented in its capacity to communicate thoughts about its subject. However, he relatively imprisons such artistic capacity of cinema within the circle of divergences between the filmic representation and the reality filmed which he generally attributes to the limitations of the medium. He states, the "artistic effect is bound up with the limitations of the medium." (Arnheim, 1957). So, he considers the sound film, which tries to make a perfect image of reality, artistically inferior to the silent one because he assumes that the more the film is closer to reality, the more it loses its artistic effects. From Arnheim's point of view, the evolution of cinematic technologies manifested in the introduction of color and sound is considered as a more reduction of the artistic status of cinema than an evolution to the definition of cinema as an art.

In a similar vein, the famous philosopher, Gaut, profoundly support Arnheim's defense of cinema as an art. However, he differs from him with regard to the features that enable cinema to convey thoughts about the world; to be an expressive medium. Unlike Arnhiem who returns the artistic effect of cinema to the limitations of film's recording that lead to the deviation of filmed image from reality, Gaut sees that artistic feature emerges from the capacities of medium to record realities in different ways. He writes: "It is by the virtue not of the limitations of the medium, but by the virtue of the medium's capacities to record reality in different ways that film can possess expressive properties, can communicate thoughts" (Gaut). In so doing, Gaut refutes the challenge that sees cinema as a mechanical reproduction of reality as well as Arnheim's position that restrict the artistry of cinema to silent film. He proves that the artistic possibilities are greater in the case of digital cinema than that of traditional one because "digital cinema need not be photographic at all (images can be and sometimes are entirely hand drawn using image editing software)." (Gaut). This means that digital cinema provides filmmaker with a greater range of ways by which he/she can manipulate the cinematic images like the possibilities of changing the colors and shapes and the addition of sound effects and voice-over narration.

In addition to the above-refuted reproduction challenge, there is also another related challenge to the status of cinema as an art. In his article, "Photography and Representation, Roger Scruton problematizes the question of cinema as an art because of its photographic basis. He argues that "A film is a photograph of a dramatic representation; it is not, because it cannot be, a photographic representation." (Roger, 1981b). Here, he sees representation as a fundamental marker of cinematic art. He conceptualizes representation in terms of the artist's capacity to communicate thoughts about a subject. He writes, "It is precisely when we have the communication of thoughts about a subject that the concept of representation becomes applicable; and therefore literature and painting are representational in the same sense." (Roger, 1981b). Like the reproduction challenge refuted above, this challenge is also based on an analogy between painting and photography. Unlike painting which has a representational capacity because of standing in intentional relation to its subject, Scruton views that photography, and thereby cinema, is not qualified to be a representational art because it stands in causal relation to its subject. The causal relation requires the existence of the subject of a photograph and the resemblance of its appearance. Thus, he sees that photography does not pave the space for photographer to express his intentions or communicate thoughts about what is photographed (Roger, 1981b).

This signifies that aesthetic interest in painting is in the realization of the thoughts it conveys and how such thoughts are intentionally communicated by the painter regardless of whether the subject of painting is exist or not. In this regard, Scruton clearly states, "[t]he interest is not in representation for the sake of its subject but in representation for its own sake. And it is such an interest that forms the core of the aesthetic experience of pictorial art." (Roger, 1981b). In contrast, the interest in photography derives from the appearance and features of its subject. "If the photograph is interesting," Scruton writes, "it is only because what it portrays is interesting and not because of the manner in which the portrayal is effected." (Roger, 1981b). In other words, photography lacks the possibilities of "aesthetic transformation," to use Scruton's terminology. Scruton generalizes his argument about the incapacity of photography to be a representational art to cinema because of being causally generated. As stated before, he defines film as "a photograph of dramatic representation," which at its best "might record the artistry displayed by the actors who performed in front of the camera." (Berys, 2004). This claim lays itself open to refutations that profoundly disprove it and foregrounds the artistic features of cinema.

In addition to his response, along with Arnheim, to the above-mentioned reproduction challenge, Gaut also thoroughly refutes Scruton's challenge to cinema as an art. He notes that "even if Scruton is correct about photography's representational incapacity, his argument does not generalise to cinema." (Gaut). Cinema has non-photographic techniques by which film director can communicate thoughts about the world. Scruton acknowledges that photography can become a representational art by adopting non-photographic properties, like photomontage, which move it away from the ideal of photography toward the ideal of painting. (Scruton). In Parallel, Gaut affirms that "montage (editing) is one of the central features of cinema…and it certainly cannot be regarded as a non-cinematic technique." (Gaut). Noel Carroll also significantly states that "[editing] is a means of communication within the social institution of world cinema. It provides a means of articulation whose practice enables filmmakers to convey stories, metaphors and even theories to spectators." (Noel, 1996). Thus, cinema is an art by its own non-photographic techniques that brings it closer to painting especially in the case of digital images where "one can manipulate them within graphics editing applications, changing their colors, shapes and so on." (Gaut).

To go beyond the restriction of artistry of cinema to the editing and to account for the artistry of photographic techniques that cinema employ, Gaut strives to prove that photography, the essence of cinema, is also an art. He explains that photography has formal artistic features that actually make it an art form. He states:

"Photography […] can convey a similarly rich set of thoughts as painting … through the choice, posing, and dressing of subjects, the adoption of means of lighting and printing, the selection of lenses, the building-up of an artistic *persona* across a multiplicity of photographs, in the light of which we interpret the photographer's individual images, and so on (Gaut).

Here, Guat refutes the charge that photography cannot be a representational art, explaining that photography can communicate thoughts about its subjects through various ways of photographic techniques which provides us not only with the visual properties of the subject, but also with interpretation of it; enable us to go beyond what it is looked to the way it is seen. So, photography, and therefore cinema, is a representational art.

Moreover, Gaut enhances his view of the artistic status of cinema by arguing that photographs, like paintings, "have the capacity for aesthetic transformation." (Gaut). He notes that "photograph of a crucifixion might be serene, where the scene is shown from a great distance, set against a pure blue, tranquil sky." (Gaut). Taking aesthetic transformation as a marker of representation, Gaut concludes that "nothing it seems prevents us from concluding that photography (and cinema) is a representational art." (Gaut).

The above debate shows us that the definition of cinema as an art form acquires its status from the employment of the formal elements, be they photographic or cinematic techniques. Such formal elements are artistically used to convey the artist's intentions or communicate some thoughts about the world. In this respect, cinema can be considered as a mode of expression or a means of visual communication. The vision of cinema as an art has also been stressed by Arab intellectuals and film directors who have been influenced by the social realist school. For instance, in an interview about cinema, the internationally known Syrian director, Muhammad Malas, states that "cinema is the most expressive medium for rendering an intended idea." (Muhammad and Marwan, 1995). He also firmly writes: "I don't believe there is any other medium that has the multiplicities of modes of communication as the cinema." (Muhammad and Marwan, 1995). In this regard, film makers express their ideas and thoughts through the aesthetically complex juxtaposition of cinematic codes. The question to be raised here is: how does such communication function? This question gives a hint takes us to the socio-political orientation of film art.

5. Cinema as an Ideology

The aesthetic dimension appears to be very significant in the definition of cinema. However, such aesthetic definition of cinema neglects the idea that films can be ideologically coded and socio-politically oriented because of being produced by social agents who might use them to propagate open or latent ideological messages of the dominant political power. This consideration impels many theorists, like Marxists and feminists, to take cinema from the arena of art to the realm of ideology. For example, Marxists view that cinema has been exploited by capitalists and social elites not only to for financial investments, but also for serving the ideological purposes of the dominant groups. Feminists also see that cinema, as cultural mode of production, conforms to the patriarchal ideology that tries to create gender differentiation and reinforce male dominance. Here, it seems significant to pause a little on how ideology has been defined by cultural theorists especially Marxists and feminists in order to understand the ground upon which cinema has been seen as an ideology.

In their *German ideology*, Karl Marx and Engels define ideology as a system of ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class. They write: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas." (Karl and Friedrich, 1998). They also mention that the domination of economic structure enables the ruling class to control the means of cultural production. They states:

"The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships." (Karl and Friedrich, 1998).

Here, Marx and Engels's understanding of ideology seem to leave no room for resistance because, in the capitalist system, the dominated group lacks the economic bases that can enable them to produce or disseminate a counter alternative discourse. This means that the cultural modes of production, like cinema and literature, are determined by those who control the economic structure. The best example that can clarify this point is the marked absence of Arab anti-colonial films during the colonial era.

The well-known Italian Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci provides a broader definition of ideology. Gramsci sees that the ideological mode of production is determined not only by the economic structure as Marx sees, but also by the dominant social relations. Gramsci conceptualize ideology as a terrain upon which the dominant groups try to maintain their power through a combination of what he calls "civil society" and "political society". (Antonio, 1971). That is, the dominant powers attempt to sustain their ideological control through two interrelated levels: consent and coercion; cultural hegemony and state domination. For him, "the more complex is the cultural world," (Antonio, 1971) in which the intellectuals operate.

Influenced by Gramsci's perspective of ideology, Louise Althusser also defines ideology as a system of representations by which the dominant group tries to enforce its control through two interrelated types of apparatuses: "Repressive State Apparatus plus Ideological State Apparatuses." (Louis, 2014). The repressive state apparatus is represented in the repressive network which "comprises, in 'Marxist theory', the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons." (Louis, 2014). By contrast, the ideological state apparatuses are embodied in the ideological institutions or the channels of communication through which the dominant powers try to legitimize and disseminate their ideology. These apparatuses include schools, universities, religious institutions, parliament, presses, media, literature, theater, archives and so on (Louis, 2014). Most importantly, Althusser argues that "ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects," (Louis, 2014) in order to make them accept the role assigned to them by the dominant group. Thus, they can freely accept their subjection. In other words, the mechanism of interpellation "makes individuals 'act all by themselves', without there being any need to post a policeman behind each and every one of them." (Louis, 2014). Viewed in this light, cinema can be defined as one mode of the ideological state apparatuses by which social agents, like film directors, cinema's entrepreneurs and intellectuals attempt to socialize the subject in the interests of the ruling system.

The ideological orientation of cinematic text can be seen in different kinds of cinemas and film genres. In this regard, Hollywood exemplifies a case of the dominant ideological structure of cinema. In her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey criticizes the patriarchal structure of Hollywood cinema in which woman was displayed as sexual object for male desire. She states:

According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense (Laura, 1989).

Here, Mulvey clarifies the Hollywood's illusion of reality in the sense that it structures the film narrative in a way that serves the ideological apparatuses of the patriarchal system. The ruling ideology deploys the mainstream cinema to construct spilt between the active male and passive female and then uses it as a tool to subordinate woman and have an authority over her. As Sara Mills illustrates, "this is a common strategy within sexism whereby women are consigned to a less powerful position, even when they are in fact in an equally powerful position to men" (Sara, 1997).

Reading cinema in relation to the historical and political context within which it has emerged and developed would enhance the perception of cinema as an ideology. If we return back to the genesis of the cinematic medium, we find that it was invented in the zenith of colonialism where films were almost governed by the ideologically imperialist orientation. Even the seemingly entertaining films that appear to be remote from politics might have ideological implications represented in securing new avenues for the capitalist investments and in alienating the masses from the advocacy of their everyday life problems. The ideological orientation of western literary and filmic texts has been advanced by a number of scholars, including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Jack Shaheen, to name just a few.

The ideological orientation has been also an integral part of Arab mainstream cinema. In the Egyptian context, for example, the commercial films have been almost produced and distributed by the capitalist economic system to serve the ideological needs of the regime. These ideological needs might be represented in deviating or distracting people from the discussion of their everyday problems in order not to resist the status quoin favor of progressive social changes. After 1952, Jamal Abdunasser made use of the social-realist trend of cinema to promote pan-Arab ideology in order "to maintain Egypt's position as a hegemonic regional power." (Chiba, 2012). The same would be applied to other Arab contexts, like Morocco and Algeria, where the mainstream filmic texts have been utilized to cement national identity and unity.

What strengthen the argument of cinema as an ideology are the issues of funding and censorship. Governmental funding is almost conditioned by the production of films that go in line with the state ideology. This supports Marx' argument, stated above, with regard to idea that economic structure controls the means of mental production. In addition, the majority of cinematic productions have been almost subjected to censorship before being publically screened. This helps confirm the idea that "Cinema as an institution performs an ideological function; films as particular cultural productions also have a sometimes manifest, always latent ideological content." (Philip, 1993).

What has been said above provides us with a strong ground to define cinema as a juxtaposition of art and ideology, as interplay of aesthetics and politics. As we mentioned above, the artistic features help film director to communicate his intentions or thoughts about the world in aesthetic manner full of symbols and significations. They also create an interest in cinema because of being seen as multiple mode of expression that has representational capacities by both its own internal characteristics and through adaptation. However, film theorists and intellectuals feel compelled to go beyond the artistic capacities of filmmaking in favor of analyzing the ideological function embedded in film form and content. Though the perception of cinema as an ideology calls our attention to critically

read filmic text as an arena of conflict between dominant and subordinate ideologies, it emphasizes on the operation of power rather than on the articulation of resistance. This impels us to go beyond the definition of cinema as a combination of art and ideology to that of discourse.

6. Cinema as a Discourse

To account for the paramount importance of the context within which cinema emerges and develops, it seems quite urgent to look for more working definition of cinema that takes into account not only the workings of power, but also the questions of resistance and agency. In this regard, Michel Foucault's definition of discourse seems to be more useful to explain not only how power operates, but also how it can be challenged and even changed. Foucault writes: "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it." (Quoted in Mills). Here, As Hans Bertens illustrates, "Foucault allows more room for resistance than Althusser" (Hans, 2014).

It is worth noting that Foucault's notion of discourse helps us to analyze the filmic texts within the network of history, politics and ideology. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward Said distinguishes between Derrida's idea of textuality and Foucault's notion of discourse where he rejects the former and opts for the latter. He states:

"Derrida is concerned only with reading a text, and that a text is nothing more than what is in it for the reader…for Foucault the text is important because it inhabits an element of power…even though that power is invisible or implied. Derrida's criticism moves us into the text, Foucault's in and out" (Edward, 1983).

This quotation makes it clear that the aesthetic value and pleasure of the film text seem to stem from its implication in the political contexts. For Said, "to read literature outside its political contexts and origins in the name of the aesthetic appreciation produces only false or incomplete readings." (Gauri, 2005). From this perspective, one can argue that readings that try to neglect the impact of the context on the literary or filmic text "turn a blind eye to the vital conjunction between aesthetic and power." (Gauri, 2005). Said, here, uses Michel Foucault's notion of discourse to read the relation between the text and the world.

In the light of what has been said, cinema is to be conceptualized as a dynamic, transformational discourse characterized by artistic creativity and political tendencies. As illustrated above, the cinematic discourse is deeply involved in the historical, spatial and social contexts. This increases its artistic possibilities and makes it open to the operation of power and articulation of resistance. In other words, the cinematic discourse is characterized by its capacities to communicate thoughts and tell stories in an aesthetic manner. Such thoughts and stories are produced and determined by social agents like film directors and intellectuals, and they are necessarily connected to their social struggle.

The definition of cinema within the framework of discourse helps us position cinema in its historical, spatial and socio-political contexts. The juxtaposition of the historical and socio-political contexts in the discussion of the filmic text enables us to study the extent to which and the various ways in which resistance has been articulated in the cinematic texts. This means that the ongoing struggle on the screen is "part of its political and cultural agenda." (Barbara, 1987). Indeed, the relationship between the text, be it literary or cinematic, and the context is the ground upon which Edward Said established his argument of the relation between culture and imperialism and culture and resistance, which represents the core idea of his book *Culture and Imperialism.*

7. Conclusion

Throughout its historical development, cinema appears to be understood as culturally discursive mode of production and reception. The investigation of the historical genesis of cinema proves that it cannot be simply defined by its technological innovation, but rather by its cultural dimension within which the technical, historical, artistic, and ideological factors are incorporated. This is clearly reflected in the criticism and refutation of the deterministic perspective which specifies a discrete moment for cinema arrival and owes its birth to a particular country or person. Such determination is seen to rule out the relation between cinema and its preceding arts and to also reduce cinema to a mere mechanical reproduction of reality in the sense that it leaves no rooms for human intervention. Further, attributing the invention of cinema to a particular nation or specific inventor contradicts the integrative view which sees that cinema came out as a result "of many generations of researchers, all dependent on each other," (Mannoni) as cited before. In fact, the technical devices are invented by social agents and are, therefore, controlled by them on the formal and thematic levels. This is inferred from the massive changes that cinema has undergone with regard to the length of the film and the transformation of the function of the cinematic elements. Under the cultural pressure, cinema shifted during the first two decades from the trend of attraction to that of narrative integration. Put another way, the focus transferred from the exhibition of spectacle or thrilling display and from the screening of celebrities, curiosities, and attractions to the process of narration and signification which still dominates cinema till the present.

Film theorists and, thereby, filmmakers have become more concerned with elevating cinematic works to the space of art. Within the space of art, cinema is seen as interdisciplinary art in which other arts like music, theatre and literature are integrated for commercial and cultural reasons. However, the acquisition of aesthetics through adaptation is seen as external aesthetics. Thus, film theorists have become more interested in demonstrating the internally artistic features of cinema via the refutation of the of the reproduction and representation challenges, as it is thoroughly discussed above. Nevertheless, cultural theorists, like Marxists, feminists and postcolonialists feel compelled to go beyond the artistic capacities of filmmaking in favor of analyzing the ideological function embedded in film form and content. Marxists view that cinema has been exploited by capitalists and social elites not

only to for financial investments, but also for serving the ideological purposes of the dominant groups. Feminists also see that cinema, as cultural mode of production, conforms to the patriarchal ideology that tries to create gender differentiation and reinforce male dominance. Postcolonial theorists go in line with Marxists and feminists in terms of supporting the ideological dimension of cinema as it is obvious in their analysis of the ideological orientation of western literary and filmic texts as well as mainstream national cinema. Though the perception of cinema as an ideology calls our attention to critically read filmic text as an arena of conflict between dominant and subordinate ideologies, it focuses on the operation of power rather than on the articulation of resistance. This pushes us to go beyond the definition of cinema as an ideology or a combination of art and ideology to that of discourse to account for the questions of resistance and agency.

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