

Cinematic Discourse Power in Revolutionary Film: Conceptual, Theoretical, and Computational Perspectives

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Abstract:

This article provides a critical-pragmatic analysis of the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary film, examining how film constructs, transmits, and negotiates symbolic authority through aesthetic, narrative, and ideological mechanisms. Drawing on discourse theory (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995), symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), semiotics (Barthes, 1977; Stam, 2000), and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), the study offers a conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding the role of cinematic discourse in shaping identity, memory, and historical narrative within revolutionary cinema.

Structured around four interrelated axes, the study begins with a conceptual framework defining cinematic discourse power, followed by a theoretical review of key approaches to cinematic discourse, a comparative analysis of related film genres (war, historical, biopic, documentary, revolutionary), and a critical evaluation of discursive strategies used in revolutionary film to construct authority through cinematic techniques. Furthermore, the article highlights the potential for integrating contemporary analytical tools and methods to enhance the study of cinematic discourse, opening new applied research horizons that bridge critical analysis with digital approaches.

By bridging conceptual, theoretical, and computational perspectives, this article contributes to expanding the methodological toolkit of film studies and discourse analysis, offering a critical lens to investigate how revolutionary films function as symbolic spaces for negotiating power, identity, and historical memory.

Keywords: Cinematic discourse, revolutionary film, symbolic power, multimodal discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, semiotics, film studies.

Introduction

The concept of “**discourse**” has always occupied a central place in contemporary philosophical, linguistic, and social discussions, where it is no longer understood as merely a linguistic means of communication, but has come to be regarded as an **epistemological–power structure** that produces meaning, reshapes reality, and grants legitimacy to systems of thought and representation. **Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes**, and others have contributed to the development of the concept of discourse to become a **strategic tool** through which **soft power** exercises its symbolic presence within the public sphere, and manifests itself through cultural and artistic media, foremost among them **cinema**.

Cinema, as an audiovisual art par excellence, does not merely convey stories or depict events; rather, it forms a broad space for **producing meanings, re-presenting identity, and constructing**

collective memory. It is not a naïve mirror that reflects reality, but an **intelligent mirror** that polishes it, selects its angles, and rearranges it according to an **aesthetic–narrative–political logic**, making it a discourse with a **dual symbolic nature**: on one hand, it addresses the senses and emotions; and on the other hand, it addresses cognition, and influences the structure of **collective consciousness.**

Building on this perspective, this study seeks to approach the power of cinematic discourse through the revolutionary film in general, given its high symbolic and historical load, as is the case with the most prominent Algerian cinematic productions that engaged with the narrative of resistance and the liberation struggle against French colonialism, in a poetic visual style that rewrites history through the eyes of the victorious national self. The film does not present a historical documentary record; rather, it produces a symbolic–artistic discourse that reshapes collective consciousness about the memory of struggle, through a dense aesthetic synthesis of image, montage, music, and the use of color and lighting in forming a visually narrated story laden with meanings.

This type of film is situated within the system of postcolonial cinematic discourses, where the Algerian revolution, through it, represents a pivotal liberation model that inspired resistance movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, making Algerian cinema at the time a tool for exporting resistant consciousness on a global level, not merely a local one. Its discourse transcends the national dimension to become a cinematic embodiment of the narrative of global struggle against colonialism and domination.

In this context, the film “Patrol to the East” is considered one of the best Algerian revolutionary cinematic works that represent this approach. As for the film “Lotus Flower” (1999) by director Ammar El Askeri, it was selected as a model of a subsequent cinematic discourse, reflecting a transformation in the representation of national identity in the post-independence context, when questions became centered on the self, belonging, and the reinterpretation of culture and history. The film addresses the issue of belonging and reconciliation from a symbolic–social perspective, moving toward questioning the national self from within, but from the perspective of the different other who, due to intertwined contexts, found himself participating in the liberation revolution alongside the other who differs in language, culture, history, and society; yet the common element was liberation from the colonizer—all within a narrative space where the revolutionary intertwines with the emotional, memory, identity, and destiny.

As for the film “Chronicle of the Years of Fire” (1975) by director Lakhdar Hamina, due to its high symbolic and historical load, it represents an added narrative value to the type of revolutionary film through which the power of cinematic discourse presents that liberating voice embedded deep within society prior to the actual stage of the liberation revolution—a stage that constitutes the formation of the emotional and liberating consciousness that will produce the generation that will bear the responsibility of the liberation act and the determination of destiny. It represents that type of film that focuses on the causes and motives behind the formation of the stream of consciousness deep within a society under colonialism.

These three types or directions in revolutionary cinematic works provide a profound comparison of how cinematic discourse has transformed from an external tool of resistance to an internal tool of self-questioning; from glorifying heroism to critiquing fragility; and from a fervent revolutionary discourse to a postcolonial discourse that re-questions the narratives of identity and independence. This allows for tracing the dynamics of symbolic power in the representations of the Algerian image across three stages of political, revolutionary, and emotional history, within a dialectical

framework oscillating between the legacy of liberation and the existential anxiety of the post-liberation period.

This points to the core of the problematic of the subject we are discussing and attempting to decode, as implied in the title above. Moreover, it opens a discussion that goes beyond the traditional form of the cinematic film, especially the revolutionary film, which some classify under the category of war films without highlighting the fine distinguishing thread between the revolutionary film—driven by causes and motives different from those that constitute the conceptual background and theoretical framework of the war film. This is on one hand. On the other hand, the question arises regarding considering the film as a reference or historical document: Can the revolutionary film be relied upon in official and academic historical writing? And to what extent does it contribute to shaping collective memory within the broader debate around history, self, identity, and destiny?

This study aims to provide a theoretical framework for the concept of cinematic discourse as a discourse with symbolic power, and to analyze the mechanisms through which this discourse operates in representing identity and resistance.

To achieve these objectives, the study adopts an analytical and pragmatic methodology, drawing on the approaches of discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995), pragmatics (Leech, 1983; Mey, 2001), and postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). It seeks to deconstruct the foundational concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical and applicative methods concerning the power of cinematic discourse in general, and particularly that of the revolutionary film.

This study is structured around four interrelated axes, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the power of cinematic discourse. The first axis provides a conceptual framework for understanding “the power of cinematic discourse,” drawing on the theoretical insights of Foucault (1972) and Fairclough (1995), whose works have established discourse as a site of knowledge and power. Building on this foundation, the second axis offers a foundational analysis of the revolutionary film, examining its conceptual intersections and divergences from related genres such as the war film, the documentary film, and the historical film (Ponzanesi & Waller, 2012; Stam & Shohat, 1994).

The third axis undertakes a critical analysis of the major theoretical approaches to cinematic discourse, with particular attention to the symbolic power of the image as articulated by postcolonial theorists like Bhabha (1994) and Said (1978). Finally, the fourth axis provides a critical review of the existing literature that maps the diverse contextual and epistemic frameworks surrounding cinematic discourse, while also evaluating their applicability to the study of revolutionary cinema (Spivak, 1988; Mey, 2001).

Furthermore, this study seeks to bridge theoretical and practical dimensions by proposing an innovative computational analytical system capable of processing and analyzing specialized concepts and theories concerning the power of cinematic discourse (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995; Ponzanesi & Waller, 2012). Such a system aspires to predict future trends in cinematic productions that engage with the representation of cinematic discourse power in revolutionary films (Stam & Shohat, 1994; Bhabha, 1994). However, his work remained more technical than discursive or sociological in its analysis.

Among these scholars, only Robert Stam (2000), in *Film Theory: An Introduction*, attempted to integrate multiple analytical tools—semiotic, postcolonial, and pragmatic—in analyzing cinematic

discourse. However, his study remained general in scope and did not address the transformations of such discourse within its specific historical contexts.

Applied Literature Review

In the same context, there are studies that address the applied dimension which this research seeks to establish—namely, the development of a computational analytical system for analyzing the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary films. Among these attempts is the work of Nick Redfern (2022), whose book *Computational Film Analysis with R* offers a comprehensive guide to applying computational methods to the analysis of form and style in cinema using the R programming language. His work covers topics such as sound analysis, color, editing, cinematography, and textual analysis, making it a foundational reference in this field (Redfern, 2022).

Similarly, Miłosz Stelmach's (2024) *Cinema Counts: The Computational Turn and Quantitative Methods in Film Studies* provides a critical analysis of current developments and potential applications of quantitative methods in film studies, focusing on methodological foundations, historical developments, and key achievements of statistical, experimental, and digital humanities tools in audiovisual research.

Marc Lafia and Fang-Yu Lin's (2006) computational reinterpretation of *The Battle of Algiers* represents another innovative approach, where they employed algorithmic processes to rearrange scenes of the film randomly in each screening, creating a unique viewing experience every time (Lafia & Lin, 2006). Likewise, Lev Manovich's (2013) *Visualizing Vertov* project utilized digital visualization techniques to analyze the films of Dziga Vertov, such as *Man with a Movie Camera*, enabling a deeper understanding of the visual structures of these revolutionary works.

Other computational tools include Chunfang Li et al.'s (2024) *PyCinematics: Computational Film Studies Tool Based on Deep Learning and PySide2*, which provides five functionalities that employ deep learning and PySide2 to deconstruct the visual style of films, enabling detailed analysis of visual elements such as color, motion, and composition. Finally, the study by Jianbin Zhu and Linling Huang (2023), *Multi-modal Discourse Analysis of the Movie "The Tea House"*, applies functional linguistics and visual grammar theory to analyze cinematic discourse from a multimodal perspective, offering a model for understanding cinematic discourse across multiple semiotic modes.

Collectively, these theoretical and applied contributions highlight both the richness and the limitations of current approaches to cinematic discourse analysis, especially in relation to revolutionary cinema. While these studies have advanced our understanding of cinematic discourse through diverse theoretical frameworks and computational tools, none has specifically developed a dedicated computational analytical system tailored to examining the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary films. This research seeks to fill this gap by proposing an original computational model designed to analyze, visualize, and predict the dynamics of discourse power within the unique narrative and aesthetic context of revolutionary cinema.

Building on these observations, this study positions itself from a distinct critical standpoint. It seeks to offer an integrated pragmatic-semiotic analysis of the power of cinematic discourse by applying the analytical tools of Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes, and Stam to the revolutionary film model. This study is distinguished by its synthesis of aesthetic and artistic dimensions with a sociological analysis of power, deliberately avoiding the traditional separation between form and content. Moreover, it proposes a theoretical framework for understanding how mechanisms of discourse

power contribute to the reconfiguration of identity, memory, history, and destiny—an underlying process embedded within the depths of cinematic discourse, which only manifests through the film's technical elements (such as visual composition, camera angles, music, rhythm), that is, the audiovisual aesthetic structure.

Research Positioning

Collectively, these theoretical and applied contributions highlight both the richness and the limitations of current approaches to cinematic discourse analysis, especially in relation to revolutionary cinema. While these studies have advanced our understanding of cinematic discourse through diverse theoretical frameworks and computational tools, none has specifically developed a dedicated computational analytical system tailored to examining the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary films. This research seeks to fill this gap by proposing an original computational model designed to analyze, visualize, and predict the dynamics of discourse power within the unique narrative and aesthetic context of revolutionary cinema.

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Methodology

To achieve these objectives, the study adopts an analytical and pragmatic methodology, drawing on the approaches of discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995), pragmatics (Leech, 1983; Mey, 2001), and postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). It seeks to deconstruct the foundational concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical and applicative methods concerning the power of cinematic discourse in general, and particularly that of the revolutionary film.

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Objectives

Building upon these questions and reflections, this study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

To analyze the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary films by integrating a pragmatic–semiotic approach that draws on the theoretical tools of Foucault (1972), Bourdieu (1991), Barthes (1977), and Stam (2000).

To explore how cinematic discourse constructs identity, memory, history, and destiny through the audiovisual aesthetic structure.

To apply the analytical tools of Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes, and Stam to deconstruct the audiovisual strategies that generate power and meaning.

To critically review existing literature and computational tools related to cinematic discourse analysis.

To propose an innovative computational analytical system capable of analyzing, visualizing, and predicting the dynamics of discourse power in revolutionary films.

To demonstrate how the film’s technical elements—such as visual composition, camera angles, music, and rhythm—mediate the construction of discourse power.

2. First Axis: Conceptual Framework of the Power of Cinematic Discourse

1.1. Discourse: From Philosophical Concept to Artistic Expression

The concept of “discourse” (*discours*) has been among the most debated and widely circulated notions in modern knowledge fields. Since the twentieth century, it has transcended its narrow linguistic domain to become a major deconstructive tool in philosophy, sociology, cultural criticism, and visual studies. While structuralist linguistics, as in Saussure, defined discourse within the relations between signifier and signified in a closed linguistic system, post-structuralist shifts reformulated the concept as a nexus of power and knowledge. French contemporary philosophy—especially through Michel Foucault—played a pioneering role in this transformation. His structural–archaeological approach to discourse, as articulated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *The Order of Discourse* (1971), showed that discourses do not express free individual consciousness but emerge within epistemic and power systems that regulate what can be said and who has the “right to speak” (Foucault, 1969/1971).

In this context, discourse becomes an instrument for producing “truth” and distributing power, rather than a mere channel of expression. Jacques Derrida extended this perspective through his concept of “deconstruction” (*déconstruction*), asserting that meaning is never stable but constructed within an endless chain of semantic differences (*différance*), making every discourse open to reinterpretation and multiple readings (Derrida, 1967). Jean-François Lyotard deepened this view in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), proclaiming the “end of grand narratives” and noting that contemporary discourse has become polyphonic, fragmented, and skeptical of absolutes (Lyotard, 1979).

Accordingly, artistic discourse—and cinematic discourse at its forefront—can be seen as an extension of this deconstructive vision, where symbols intensify and narrative–sensory dimensions intertwine to form a multilayered discourse that continually re-represents reality and shapes collective consciousness through image, rhythm, temporality, and montage.

Building on this conceptual evolution, the cinematic discourse emerges as a privileged site where these philosophical and critical shifts materialize, transforming the film medium into a dynamic field of symbolic, aesthetic, and ideological negotiation. This necessitates a closer examination of

how cinema—as an audiovisual narrative form—constructs its own discourse of power through visual and sensory codes.

1.2. Power: From Domination to Symbolic Authority

The concept of power (*le pouvoir*) constitutes a foundational axis in understanding discourse, particularly when power is not exercised directly or coercively, but rather through symbols and cultural representations that legitimize systems of domination. Pierre Bourdieu is among the foremost scholars who addressed this dimension. In his work *Ce que parler veut dire* (1982), he argues that language is never used outside structures of power but is exercised as symbolic authority recognized within a specific social space, thus enabling it to exert influence without violence (Bourdieu, 1982). In this framework, domination does not appear as explicit oppression but as an internally accepted symbolic system, wherein dominant discourses are presented as natural and neutral, while in reality they are conditioned by power relations and social positioning.

In this sense, cinema, as a mass medium, represents an ideal field for the exercise of symbolic power through the construction of representations, the shaping of consciousness, and the orientation of collective perception. This conception intersects with the notion of “soft power” articulated by Joseph Nye, referring to the capacity for non-coercive influence exercised by states or elites through culture, imagery, art, and language (Nye, 2004). Cinema falls within this framework as a representational–symbolic tool capable of transmitting social, political, and ideological discourses without direct resistance, through the logic of aesthetic persuasion rather than authoritarian coercion.

Within this theoretical landscape, cinematic discourse emerges as a privileged space where symbolic power operates through audiovisual representations, mobilizing narrative, aesthetic, and sensory strategies to naturalize ideological positions and shape collective perceptions—thereby necessitating a deeper investigation of how power manifests and circulates within the cinematic medium.

1.3. Cinematic Discourse: Structure, Features, and Meaning-Making Devices

Cinematic discourse constitutes a highly complex semiotic structure, transcending its function as mere visual storytelling or narrative imagery to become a symbolic space where aesthetic and technical tools interact with social and cultural structures, thereby producing representations laden with meaning and power. This discourse can only be understood as a dynamic integration of stylistic elements that collectively shape meaning and generate aesthetic and ideological effects on the viewer.

Foremost among these elements is the cinematic image (*l’image*), the primary visual medium through which reality is reconstructed rather than simply depicted. As Roland Barthes explains, the image does not merely reflect the world but infuses it with pre-existing meanings, selecting its angles according to a charged symbolic perspective (Barthes, 1977). It is a representation embedded within a cultural system that reproduces power through what it shows and what it omits.

Complementing this is cinematic rhythm (*le rythme*), produced through the sequencing of shots and the manipulation of temporal flow, generating a unique rhythm that governs the positioning of emotions and produces a calculated affective impact (Chion, 1994). Rhythm transforms the film into a temporal–psychological experience that shapes the viewer’s affect and reconfigures their perception of movement and narrative progression.

Montage (*le montage*) serves as the quintessential narrative construction device, wherein individual shots lack inherent meaning but acquire significance through their placement within a sequence, and through relations of juxtaposition, repetition, and discontinuity. As theorists like Kuleshov and Eisenstein argue, montage functions as a rhetorical technique that persuades the viewer through sequencing alone (Stam, 2000).

This function is further reinforced by camera angles (*angles de caméra*), which dictate the viewer's perspective, positioning them cognitively within the scene and shaping their relationship to characters and events—indeed, constructing narrative bias itself (Monaco, 2000). Camera angle operates as a rhetorical act framing the scene within a specific visual reading.

Visual composition (*la composition visuelle*) is equally central, encompassing the arrangement of elements within the frame according to a symbolic geometry that encodes layered meanings: lighting, color, depth, character positioning—all contribute to articulating the unspoken and condensing meaning within the static and moving image (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013).

While the image is seen, sound and music (*le son et la musique*) are felt and perceived emotionally; meaning is incomplete without the accompanying soundscape, which deepens affect, directs the film's internal rhythm, or reshapes tension. Michel Chion shows that the relationship between sound and image is dialectical, producing a dual discourse that may be consonant or dissonant (Chion, 1994).

Also integral is visual symbolism, grounded in the works of Roland Barthes and David Bordwell, who view the cinematic image not as a transparent representation of reality but as an encoded semiotic system reproducing cultural and ideological representations. In *Image, Music, Text* (1977), Barthes emphasizes that the image is not neutral but “charged with meaning,” functioning to conceal structures of power behind what appears self-evident (Barthes, 1977). Bordwell, in *Film Art: An Introduction*, argues that the cinematic image produces symbolic discourse through lighting, color, depth, point of view, and spatial arrangement—a process he terms “visual coding” of meaning (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013).

A final key concept is the ideological positioning of the camera, situated within film theory under “the gaze” and “point of view”—concepts explored by theorists such as Christian Metz, Jonathan Cullin, and Bordwell. These approaches suggest that the camera does not capture reality from an innocent vantage point but signifies a semiotic positioning that generates a specific vision: a high-angle shot implies domination, while a low-angle shot suggests vulnerability—practices that construct a “visual power” over the viewer (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013; Stam, 2000). Robert Stam notes in *Film Theory* that visual positioning in film follows precise discursive–ideological choices that determine how an event is to be seen or understood, within the logic of symbolic power (Stam, 2000).

When integrated, all these elements constitute a cinematic discourse built not solely on what is said, but on what is seen, heard, and felt—and on how these sensory channels are orchestrated within cinematic temporality. Discourse here is not merely verbal or linguistic, but a composite discourse where perception, representation, and interpretation coalesce to reshape the relationship between self and reality, between art and power.

Grounded in this conceptual and structural understanding of cinematic discourse, the next section turns to the revolutionary film as a specific cinematic model, examining its distinctive features, historical and ideological underpinnings, and its intersections with other cinematic genres.

1.4. The Film as a Visual Discourse

In contemporary film studies, the film is no longer viewed merely as a medium of entertainment or a documentary record that transmits reality; rather, it is understood as a complex symbolic discourse that generates meaning through an intricate network of visual, auditory, and temporal media. The film is an audiovisual product constructed through a narrative–temporal architecture that employs tools such as image, movement, sound, rhythm, and montage to shape a semantic world that re-represents reality through aesthetic and ideological lenses (Monaco, 2000; Bordwell & Thompson, 2013).

The film does not present reality “as it is”; instead, this “reality” undergoes an interpretive reconstruction shaped by the director’s choices, production vision, and reception contexts. In this sense, the film produces a visual symbolic discourse that reflects societal representations of self and other, identity, power, and history within an aesthetic construction that may conceal political or ideological intentions.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson affirm that the film does not function as a mirror of reality but as a compositional field that frames the viewer’s perceptual experience through a “visual–temporal framing system” that directs perception and meaning via governed narrative and compositional strategies (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013).

Within this framework, cinematic discourses vary according to the nature of their narrative construction and their level of reference to reality. Among the most prominent types of cinematic discourse are:

Within this framework, cinematic discourse varies according to its narrative construction and its level of reference to reality. Building on this conceptualization, it becomes possible to distinguish between several prominent types of cinematic discourse, each characterized by specific aesthetic, narrative, and ideological features. Among these types are:

Fictional Film

The most widespread form, the fictional film constructs an autonomous imaginary world (diegesis) populated by invented characters and events. Yet despite its fictional nature, it often embeds coded representations of contemporary issues within a symbolic structure. Monaco (2000) notes that fictional cinema “renders the invisible plausible and ideologizes reality through fiction.”

Documentary Film

This genre seeks to present reality—not as an objective neutral mirror, but through “a discourse that reconstructs reality within a particular directorial perspective,” as Bill Nichols famously defines:

“Documentary is a discourse that does not merely depict reality but constructs it through a perspective, a voice, and a mode of address.” (Nichols, 2010, p. 34)

For Nichols, the documentary does not offer absolute truth but builds it from an interpretive position infused with ideology, distinguishing it from journalism or direct recordings.

Biopic / Autobiographical Cinema

The biopic represents a cinematic genre where biography and artistic representation intersect, reconstructing the life of a real figure (political, cultural, religious) through a selective dramatic lens. While it may appear documentary-like, it does not present “truth” as is, but reconstructs the

self through symbolic narration, imbuing the individual experience with collective and social dimensions.

George F. Custen, in his seminal *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (1992), argues that biopics do not reflect reality but “construct it” according to narrative and personal needs, describing the cinematic biography as “a cultural construction of heroism” that intersects with the social context of its telling.

Historical Film

The historical film does not aim to document the past as it happened but rather reimagines it through cinematic tools that blend visual storytelling, drama, and symbolism, producing an “alternative history” articulated in the language of images. Film historian Robert A. Rosenstone emphasizes in *Visions of the Past* that the historical film reconstructs memory not as documentation but as an artistic practice that offers a symbolic vision alternative to academic writing.

He asserts that film does not reproduce history but “reimagines the past in order to speak to the present,” creating an affective–aesthetic history that reshapes the relationship between the individual, the collective, and time.

Additional sub-genres branch out from historical, documentary, or biographical cinema, generating conceptual and functional debates. Among these are sub-genres directly related to the central topic of this study:

War Film: The Aesthetic Construction of Armed Conflict

The war film stands among the genres most capable of representing the human experience in its most extreme states. It does not merely depict battles or reenact historical events; rather, it delves into the structure of conflict in its military, psychological, cultural, and existential dimensions. Thus, the war film is not understood solely as a reenactment but as a cinematic discourse transforming war into a complex dramatic experience that deconstructs heroism, fear, sacrifice, and vulnerability.

James Chapman, in his authoritative *War and Film* (2008), argues that the war film does not simply recreate historical events but “forms a narrative shape that embodies human experience within the moment of conflict,” emphasizing that war is not a mere narrative backdrop but the structural axis around which drama, imagery, and symbolism revolve (Chapman, 2008, p. 12).

The war film is not directly a sub-genre of the biopic except in cases where the narrative centers on a key historical figure central to a war, as in *Patton* or *Lawrence of Arabia*. In such cases, the war film intersects with biography within a narrative that reconstructs the figure through the context of battle.

In relation to the historical film, the war film is often classified as a thematic narrative branch within historical discourse, grounded in real temporal events such as the Algerian Revolution, World War II, or the Vietnam War. Yet it differs from the historical film in that it does not focus solely on broad socio-political transformations but places the battle itself—with its symbolic and dramatic weight—at the center of the narrative, granting it an independent identity in form and function.

The aesthetic structure of the war film is marked by features distinguishing it from other genres. It places battle at the heart of the narrative—not as an incidental scene but as a dynamic mechanism activating dramatic time. The “enemy versus hero” duality is often used to portray an ideological confrontation beyond mere military clash, constructing the enemy as a representation of an opposing civilization or system threatening the values symbolized by the hero, thus transforming the confrontation into a broader symbolic struggle.

Visually, the war film employs intense audiovisual effects to depict the violence of war, explosions, psychological breakdowns, and to create audience immersion simulating terror and heroism simultaneously. Soundtracks, silence, rhythm, and the alternation of short and long shots orchestrate the spectacle of war as an organized chaos—a sensory reality where instinct intersects with memory.

Frequently, the war film participates in re-historicizing events within a mythical or nationalistic frame, turning battle into a “national myth” or “political discourse” expressing the identity of a people, a narrative of a state, or a justification or condemnation of war. As Bordwell and Thompson (2013) observe, the war film is not merely a representation of conflict but a symbolic contribution to shaping public discourse on war, identity, and destiny.

The Revolutionary Film: Discourse of Resistance Between History, War, and Biography

In light of theoretical shifts in cinematic discourse analysis, the revolutionary film (Revolutionary Film) emerges as one of the key genres where aesthetic symbolism intersects with political and liberatory function. It is not classified technically as an independent mode like the war film, historical film, or biopic; rather, it is approached primarily through its symbolic position within the ideological and cultural structure of cinematic discourse. In other words, what makes a film “revolutionary” is not merely its content but how it represents power, resistance, and collective identity through a visual narrative that stimulates both political and aesthetic consciousness.

As recent critical studies indicate, the revolutionary film is not merely concerned with documenting an armed struggle; it goes beyond documentation to offer a symbolic reimagining of revolution, where battle becomes a metaphor, the character a symbolic representation of the collective, and defeat a form of consciousness. Rosenstone (1995) emphasizes that films about revolution do not present history as factual events but as “reimagining the past in order to speak to the present,” making the revolutionary film engaged in a symbolic writing of identity and destiny. Thus, the revolutionary film does not simply re-present events but reshapes the relationship between power, self, and society within a visual–narrative construction that re-encodes memory.

The revolutionary film cannot be confined within the war film, despite sharing some superficial features, because war here is not an end but a symbolic means to represent liberatory consciousness; victory is not measured by military outcome but by the emotional and political transformation of collective awareness. Similarly, it is not simply a historical film, although it often begins from historical events; rather, it works to “explode” meaning from within the historical moment, transforming it into symbolic structures rather than a cold chronological sequence (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). Its intersection with the biopic is limited—it does not portray the life of a specific individual unless the revolution is embodied through a charismatic figure, as seen in films about Che Guevara or Nelson Mandela, where the individual becomes a representation of collective memory (Custen, 1992; Nichols, 2010).

The uniqueness of the revolutionary film lies in its capacity to deconstruct power through aesthetics, where technical elements (image, camera angles, rhythm, montage, music, silence)

become symbolic tools that produce resistant meanings not explicitly stated but understood through a complex visual system. The narrative construction in such films does not revolve around an individual but around the collective as a historical subject participating in shaping destiny. Nichols (2010) argues that the cinematic discourse of documentary or resistant films does not encompass the event from outside but creates it from within through an interpretive angle saturated with stance, position, and vision. The aesthetic structure serves the ideological purpose through visual strategies such as dialectical montage, counter-composition, and the use of silence and music as rhetorical sonic arguments—a point emphasized by Bordwell & Thompson (2013) in their analysis of cinematic language in political cinema.

In this sense, the revolutionary film stands at the intersection of major cinematic genres yet remains distinct as a discourse infused with political–symbolic meaning rather than merely documentary representation, necessitating an analysis that combines semiotic, pragmatic, and sociological tools.

5. Mechanisms of Cinematic Discourse Power – Integrated Version

Before delving into the specific mechanisms by which cinematic discourse exercises its power over the viewer, it is crucial to recognize that this power is not exerted through direct tools or overt slogans but through subtle representations constructed by image, sound, time, and movement within a narrative and visual network that simultaneously engages the senses and the intellect.

Consider, for example, a long take from *Chronicle of the Years of Fire*, where the camera slowly moves among the exhausted faces of peasants, accompanied by a faint, gradually intensifying funeral dirge, while a voiceover narrates the story of the land that “bears both death and life.” There are no overt revolutionary slogans or explicit symbols, yet the scene constructs a complete narrative about colonialism, resistance, and collective identity without stating it directly. Here, the cinematic shot itself becomes a discourse, no less effective than any political or media speech (Bazin, 1967).

Cinematic discourse exercises its power not through domination but through symbolic seduction. The image seduces; sound unsettles; rhythm directs attention; and the visual text persuades without convincing. Cinema exerts its power not by forcing the viewer to believe, but by convincing them that what they see is truth—or at least, a possible truth (Metz, 1982).

This sensory complicity between viewer and film, formed in the silent moment of reception within the theater, is the ideal space for activating the power of discourse. It is a power not imposed but established through emotion, empathy, and interpretation (Eco, 1989).

Accordingly, the mechanisms of cinematic discourse power can be classified into four interrelated central axes: the power of the image, the power of sound, the power of narrative, and the power of directorial vision.

5.1. Power of the Image: Visual Composition, Framing, Color, Symbolism

The cinematic image is never neutral; it represents, excludes, directs, and ideologizes. As Roland Barthes asserts, every image is “an encoded message” that presents reality not as it is, but as its creator wants it to be seen (Barthes, 1977).

The frame exercises power by determining what is shown and what is excluded; the camera angle defines the point of view: a high-angle shot may suggest dominance, while a low-angle shot conveys submission. Visual composition arranges characters, objects, light, and shadow in ways that generate implicit symbolic meanings.

Colors function as an implicit, suggestion-laden language: warm colors may connote hope or nostalgia, while cool tones evoke isolation or oppression. For example, in *The Lotus Flower*, the use of grayish blue symbolizes defeat, while red appears in scenes of confrontation and emotional intensity.

5.2. Power of Sound: Music, Effects, Silence, Dialogue

Sound is not merely complementary to the image; it is an independent partner in meaning-making. As Michel Chion notes, “sound does not complement the image but complicates it, sometimes contradicts it, sometimes enhances it” (Chion, 1994).

The film score guides emotion and provides the scene with deep emotional–cognitive resonance. Silence, too, is not absence but a pressing presence expressing impotence, threat, or contemplation. Sound effects enrich perception and anchor sensory impressions of time and space. Dialogue is among the most powerful tools for shaping discursive authority through rhythm, linguistic choice, and tone.

5.3. Power of Narrative: Structure, Narrator, Cinematic Time

Narrative in cinema is not only about what is told but how it is told and by whom. The construction of the narrator—whether external or implicit—determines who holds the authority to tell the story and who is excluded from the narrative space.

Time in film does not flow as it does in reality but is reordered through devices like flashbacks or ellipses, allowing memory and history to be rearranged according to a semantic perspective. As Sarah Kofman emphasizes, “narrative is not the transmission of events but their interpretation” (Kofman, 1999).

5.4. Power of Directorial Vision: The Director as Discourse Producer

The director does not merely present a film but offers an interpretation of the world through their visual, narrative, and editorial choices. As Robert Stam observes, “the director is the ultimate mediator between reality and representation” because they determine the point of view, the mode of reception, and the viewer’s position within the discursive structure (Stam, 2000).

In Algerian cinema, this directorial dimension is strongly evident in the works of Hamina and Allouache, who do not simply tell stories but reconstruct a symbolic national discourse that shapes consciousness and extends into collective memory.

In conclusion, the power of cinematic discourse is not exercised through a single mechanism but is built through an organic interconnection between visual composition, sound design, narrative structure, and directorial vision. Each element complements the others, collectively crafting a hidden symbolic discourse that convinces the viewer without declaring its authority, reshaping reality in a way that mimics truth without replicating it.

Thus, cinema is not a mirror of reality but a tool for interpretive reproduction, engaging with the present and establishing a visual–emotional memory that transcends both word and image. This underscores the critical importance of studying the mechanisms of discursive power in cinema, as they are the key to understanding how image becomes power, sound becomes guidance, narrative becomes discourse, and the director becomes a producer of meaning.

Third Axis: A Critical Pragmatic Analysis of Theories of Cinematic Discourse Power

The theorization of cinematic discourse power has traversed multiple critical trajectories, positioning cinema as a complex site of meaning-making, ideological encoding, and cultural negotiation. Drawing from seminal frameworks developed by theorists such as Christian Metz, Robert Stam, David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Laura Mulvey, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, this axis offers a critical-pragmatic analysis of how cinematic discourse functions as a mechanism of symbolic power. It examines the theoretical underpinnings of cinematic discourse and explores how these frameworks converge in understanding the intersection of image, power, and identity within film.

Christian Metz (1982), integrating semiotic and psychoanalytic paradigms, conceptualizes cinema as a system of signs that constructs a seamless illusion of reality, wherein ideological operations are naturalized beneath aesthetic conventions. His notion of “cinematic identification” foregrounds the affective alignment between viewer and narrative space as a key mechanism of cinematic discourse power.

Robert Stam (2000) advances a dialogical and intertextual reading of cinematic discourse, highlighting the multiplicity of ideological voices embedded within filmic texts. He critiques formalist tendencies that treat the cinematic text as a closed system, advocating instead for an understanding of film as a socio-historically situated discourse negotiated between image, context, and spectator.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2013), through a cognitive-formalist lens, shift attention to the perceptual mechanics of cinematic discourse, emphasizing how narrative structure, editing rhythms, and visual framing guide viewer attention and inference-making. Their approach underscores the subtle control cinema exerts in orchestrating perception and interpretation.

Laura Mulvey (1975) provides a feminist intervention by theorizing the “male gaze,” exposing how classical cinematic apparatuses encode patriarchal authority by positioning women as objects of visual pleasure within voyeuristic and fetishistic frameworks.

Roland Barthes (1977) situates the cinematic image as an “encoded message” layered with cultural codes that shape interpretation. His semiotic analysis reveals how images operate as sites of ideological negotiation rather than transparent reflections of reality.

Michel Foucault’s (1972) discourse theory emphasizes the productive nature of discourse as constituting power and knowledge, delineating the boundaries of what can be shown, said, or imagined within a cultural field. Cinema, in this Foucauldian frame, becomes a discursive apparatus that shapes not only representation but perception and social consciousness.

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) introduces the notion of symbolic power, positing that cultural forms like cinema legitimize social hierarchies through symbolic practices embedded in aesthetic choices and narrative structures. This symbolic authority operates subtly, normalizing dominant ideologies through what appears natural or self-evident.

These theoretical insights collectively articulate cinema as a multilayered discursive system where power is mediated across narrative, visual, auditory, and structural dimensions. Building on this critical foundation, the analysis turns to explore how these theoretical principles materialize within cinematic practice, particularly in the aesthetic and narrative mechanisms through which cinematic discourse exercises its symbolic authority.

The Mechanisms of Cinematic Discourse Power: A Theoretical-Analytical Integration

Before delving into specific mechanisms, it is essential to recognize that cinematic discourse power does not operate through direct slogans or explicit commands but through subtle representations embedded in image, sound, time, and movement within a narrative-visual network engaging both sensory and cognitive faculties.

Consider, for instance, a long take in *Chronicle of the Years of Fire*, where the camera slowly moves among the weary faces of peasants, accompanied by a faint, gradually intensifying funeral dirge, while a voiceover recounts the land “bearing both death and life.” There are no overt revolutionary slogans or direct symbols, yet the scene constructs a complete narrative of colonialism, resistance, and collective identity without explicitly articulating them. Here, the cinematic shot itself functions as a discourse, no less potent than any political speech (Bazin, 1967).

Cinematic discourse power operates not through domination but symbolic seduction: the image seduces, sound unsettles, rhythm directs attention, and the visual text persuades without declaring persuasion. Cinema exerts its authority not by coercing belief but by convincing viewers that what they see is truth—or at least a plausible truth (Metz, 1982).

This sensory complicity between viewer and film, formed in the silent moment of reception, constitutes the ideal terrain for activating cinematic discourse power. It is a power not imposed but established through affect, empathy, and interpretation (Eco, 1989). Accordingly, the mechanisms of cinematic discourse power can be classified into four interrelated axes: the power of the image, the power of sound, the power of narrative, and the power of directorial vision.

1. Power of the Image: Visual Composition, Framing, Color, Symbolism

The image in cinema is never neutral; it represents, excludes, directs, and ideologizes. Barthes (1977) asserts that every image is “an encoded message” presenting reality not as it is but as its creator intends it to be seen. Framing determines inclusion and exclusion; camera angles establish perspectives—high angles connote domination, low angles imply vulnerability. Visual composition arranges characters, objects, light, and shadow in ways that generate implicit symbolic meanings. Color functions as an implicit language imbued with affective resonances: warm tones evoke hope or nostalgia; cool tones signify isolation or oppression, as exemplified in *The Lotus Flower*, where grayish blue symbolizes defeat and red marks confrontation.

2. Power of Sound: Music, Effects, Silence, Dialogue

Sound is not a mere complement to the image but an independent co-producer of meaning. Chion (1994) observes that “sound does not complement the image but complicates it, sometimes contradicting, sometimes enhancing it.” The film score guides emotional engagement; silence is not absence but a pressing presence signifying impotence, threat, or reflection. Sound effects anchor sensory impressions of temporality and space. Dialogue serves as a primary instrument of discursive authority through rhythm, linguistic choice, and vocal tone.

3. Power of Narrative: Structure, Narrator, Cinematic Time

Narrative is not merely about what is told but how it is told and by whom. The narrator’s position—external or implicit—defines who holds narrative authority and who is silenced. Cinematic time is reordered through devices such as flashback or ellipsis, enabling memory and history to be restructured semantically. Kofman (1999) affirms, “narrative is not the transmission of events but their interpretation.”

4. Power of Directorial Vision: The Director as Discourse Producer

The director does not simply present a film but offers an interpretation of the world through visual, narrative, and editorial choices. Stam (2000) contends that “the director is the ultimate mediator between reality and representation,” shaping viewpoint, reception, and audience positioning within the discursive structure. In Algerian cinema, this directorial dimension is vividly exemplified in the works of Hamina and Allouache, who reconstruct a symbolic national discourse shaping collective memory and consciousness.

These four mechanisms—visual, auditory, narrative, and directorial—are not isolated technical devices but enactments of theoretical perspectives articulated by Barthes, Foucault, Bourdieu, Chion, Bordwell & Thompson, and Stam, each contributing to the layered production of symbolic cinematic power. Together, they illustrate how cinematic discourse embeds ideology, mobilizes affect, and negotiates meaning within a cultural and historical framework.

Fourth Axis: Critical Review of Literature and Applied Models

The study of cinematic discourse power has witnessed diverse theoretical and applied contributions across film studies, cultural criticism, and digital humanities. This axis critically reviews the existing literature that has addressed the power of cinematic discourse, with particular attention to works that have theorized or operationalized mechanisms of cinematic authority, representation, and ideological encoding. It also evaluates computational models and applied frameworks that attempt to analyze cinema as a discursive and symbolic system. This review situates the present research within these intellectual trajectories while identifying the gaps it seeks to address.

1. Theoretical Literature: Conceptualizing Cinematic Discourse Power

The theoretical landscape of cinematic discourse power is shaped by seminal contributions from theorists such as Michel Foucault (1972), Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Roland Barthes (1977), Christian Metz (1982), Robert Stam (2000), David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2013), Laura Mulvey (1975), and Homi Bhabha (1994). These works provide complementary yet distinct perspectives on how cinema operates as a system of symbolic authority.

Foucault’s (1972) discourse theory posits that discourse is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a constitutive force that regulates knowledge and power within cultural fields. In the cinematic context, discourse structures the conditions under which visual narratives are produced, circulated, and consumed. Bourdieu (1991) extends this analysis by emphasizing symbolic power as a subtle yet pervasive mechanism through which cultural products like cinema legitimize social hierarchies.

Barthes (1977) reframes the cinematic image as an “encoded message,” embedding ideological codes within ostensibly neutral representations. Metz (1982) foregrounds the psycho-semiotic operations of cinematic identification, showing how film sutures viewers into ideological positions through affective alignment. Mulvey’s (1975) concept of the male gaze exposes gendered structures of visual pleasure, while Bhabha (1994) interrogates cinema’s role in mediating colonial and postcolonial identities through ambivalence and hybridity.

Stam (2000) synthesizes semiotics, postcolonial theory, and dialogism to argue for cinema as an intertextual discursive space, where multiple ideological voices negotiate meaning. Bordwell and Thompson (2013) adopt a cognitive-formalist lens, highlighting how cinematic form guides perception and narrative inference, subtly shaping audience interpretation.

Together, these theoretical contributions underscore cinema's function as a site where power, identity, and ideology intersect through narrative, visual, auditory, and structural mechanisms.

2. Applied Literature: Computational and Analytical Models of Cinematic Discourse

Beyond theoretical contributions, a growing body of research has sought to operationalize the analysis of cinematic discourse through computational, multimodal, and digital humanities approaches. This applied scholarship reflects the "computational turn" in film studies, emphasizing the integration of data-driven methods with critical analysis of filmic texts.

Nick Redfern's (2022) *Computational Film Analysis with R* stands as a pioneering work in this domain, offering a systematic guide to applying statistical and computational techniques to analyze cinematic form and style. Redfern's model includes quantitative analyses of sound, color, editing, cinematography, and textual features, providing an empirical foundation for examining aesthetic patterns in cinema.

Similarly, Miłosz Stelmach's (2024) *Cinema Counts: The Computational Turn and Quantitative Methods in Film Studies* provides a critical overview of the methodologies, challenges, and epistemological implications of employing quantitative tools in film research. His work situates computational film analysis within broader debates about objectivity, interpretation, and the role of algorithmic processes in understanding audiovisual media.

Lev Manovich's (2012) *Visualizing Vertov* exemplifies the potential of digital visualization techniques to reveal structural patterns in cinematic works. By mapping shot lengths, camera movements, and compositional features in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, Manovich demonstrates how data visualization can uncover formal properties invisible to conventional analysis.

Marc Lafia and Fang-Yu Lin's (2006) computational reinterpretation of *The Battle of Algiers* represents an experimental intervention into cinematic discourse: through algorithmically rearranging scenes in randomized sequences across screenings, their work interrogates narrative stability and audience reception, turning cinematic structure into a variable discursive experience.

Chunfang Li et al.'s (2024) *PyCinometrics* introduces a deep-learning-based tool for decomposing visual styles in film, enabling granular analysis of color palettes, motion vectors, and compositional dynamics. This tool exemplifies the integration of machine learning and interface design in expanding the analytic repertoire of film studies.

Finally, Jianbin Zhu and Linling Huang's (2023) *Multi-modal Discourse Analysis of the Movie "The Tea House"* applies systemic functional linguistics and visual grammar to examine cinematic discourse as a multimodal phenomenon, integrating linguistic, visual, and auditory semiotics into a unified analytical framework.

Collectively, these applied models demonstrate the expanding toolkit for analyzing cinematic discourse beyond traditional hermeneutic approaches. They also highlight the ongoing challenges of reconciling qualitative interpretation with quantitative and algorithmic techniques in film analysis.

3. Toward an Integrated Model: Bridging Theory and Application

While these studies advance methodological innovation, a critical gap persists: no existing model explicitly integrates discourse theory, symbolic power, and computational analysis tailored to the specific context of revolutionary cinema. The reviewed works contribute valuable tools for analyzing form, style, and multimodal features, yet they fall short of articulating a holistic analytical

system focused on the symbolic authority of cinematic discourse in films of resistance, revolution, and collective struggle.

This research seeks to address this lacuna by proposing an original computational analytical model designed to analyze, visualize, and predict the dynamics of cinematic discourse power in revolutionary films. Building on the theoretical frameworks of Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes, Metz, Stam, and others, the proposed model aims to operationalize key concepts such as visual coding, narrative authority, symbolic framing, and ideological positioning within a computational workflow capable of processing multimodal film data.

By synthesizing theoretical insights and applied methods, this study positions itself at the intersection of critical theory, film analysis, and digital humanities, aspiring to develop a methodological bridge between interpretive critique and computational modeling.

In sum, the critical review of literature and applied models underscores the richness of theoretical and computational approaches to cinematic discourse while revealing the need for an integrated system tailored to the symbolic power dynamics of revolutionary cinema. This study contributes to filling this gap by advancing a computational analytical framework grounded in discourse theory, semiotics, and multimodal analysis, paving the way for both theoretical enrichment and practical application in analyzing cinematic representations of resistance and identity.

Concluding Section: Toward a Computational Analytical System for Cinematic Discourse Power

Building upon the theoretical frameworks and applied models reviewed, this study culminates in proposing an original computational analytical system specifically designed to examine the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary films. This envisioned system aims to integrate discourse theory (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995), semiotics (Barthes, 1977), symbolic power theory (Bourdieu, 1991), and multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) within a computational environment capable of processing filmic data across visual, auditory, and narrative layers.

The proposed system aspires to operationalize key analytic dimensions identified in the theoretical and applied literature, including:

Visual coding: automated extraction and analysis of framing, camera angles, composition, and color palettes to map symbolic positioning.

Narrative structure: modeling temporal sequences, flashbacks, ellipses, and narrative perspective to reveal narrative authority.

Audio-visual interplay: detecting correlations between sound design, music, silence, and image to assess affective and ideological alignments.

Discursive markers: identifying recurring motifs, symbols, and visual metaphors associated with representations of resistance, identity, and collective memory.

Technically, the system will draw on a combination of deep learning (convolutional neural networks for image analysis, natural language processing for dialogue and subtitles), computational stylistics, and visualization tools to translate filmic texts into analyzable multimodal datasets. The objective is not merely descriptive analysis but generating predictive insights about patterns of symbolic power in cinematic discourse.

By bridging critical theory and computational methods, this system seeks to provide scholars with an integrated tool for analyzing how cinematic discourse constructs, mediates, and circulates ideological meanings in revolutionary cinema. It also opens avenues for comparative studies across geopolitical, historical, and aesthetic contexts.

The development of this system constitutes a foundational step toward expanding the methodological repertoire of film studies, positioning computational discourse analysis as a complementary approach to traditional interpretive critique. Future research will focus on prototyping this system, testing it across selected revolutionary films, and refining its analytical modules based on empirical findings.

In conclusion, this study provides a critical exploration of the power of cinematic discourse in revolutionary film, combining conceptual, theoretical, and analytical approaches. By engaging with both traditional and contemporary perspectives, it lays the groundwork for future research that integrates computational, multimodal, and data-driven methods, offering new horizons for applied studies of cinematic discourse in contemporary film criticism.

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