

# ***Days of Glory and Outside the Law: Counter-Historical Remembrances*<sup>1</sup>**

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## INTRODUCTION

French mainstream cinema has always celebrated and memorialized the resistance and heroism of white French soldiers and citizens, overlooking the decisive and vital contributions of the colonized to the independence of France and Europe in general from the Nazi regime. This erasure of the subaltern is the product of a Eurocentric History (with capital H) that “Appropriates the cultural and material production of non-Europeans while denying both their achievements and its own appropriation.” (Shohat and Stam 1994: pp 2, 3) Yet, via their films, French-Maghrebi filmmakers challenge and deconstruct such Eurocentric History through counter-filmmaking, screening a revisionist programme of alternative remembrance. This article will examine the ways Maghrebi diasporas in France through the example of *Days of Glory* and *Outside the Law* by Rachid Bouchareb re-represents and visualize their reality within France before and after its independence from the Nazi regime. The article will, thus, have three major sections. The first section revisits current debates on the rapport film, history and memory. It introduces the notion of historical remembrance in an attempt to depart from the dichotomy of memory/history. The second one examines French cinema in the occupation period; the purpose throughout is to illustrate the occultation of the Maghrebi soldiers and Africans in general from these narratives. The last section underlines the rewriting of History by French-Maghrebi filmmakers through the example of Rachid Bouchareb *Days of Glory and Outside the Law*.

## FROM MEMORY TO HISTORICAL REMEMBRANCE:

Film theory and criticism have inherited the kind of questions and debates that characterized the other six arts; the relationship between artistic and historical narratives was-and is still-a major issue in these discussions. It was the Greek philosopher Aristotle that first examined the difference between poetry and history. He believed that “Poetry is finer and more philosophical than history; for poetry expresses the universal, and history only the particular.” (Aristotle: *Poetics*) While Aristotle privileged poetry over history some of the twentieth century historians are skeptical towards the ability of art to capture the past as better illustrated by the example of cinema. In his essay “Seeing Through Movies,” the philosopher C. Jarvie downplays film’s ability to articulate historical events in the same way written documents do. He starts his essay by a short review of enthusiastic attempts of some historians to prove the status of film as a historical document or as a “window” on the world. He then goes on to refute these endeavors through his emphasis on what he calls “the

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Historian Robert Rosenstone for his insightful comments on the text.

information load” of filmic shots. Jarvie’s argument reflects what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls “Logocentric discourse,” a discourse that prioritizes one element over the other. While Derrida limited his discussion of logocentrism and phonocentrism to logic and language, his theory could be extended to that of the rapport word/image, resulting in a Graphocentrism. The image, as illustrated by Jarvie’s argument, is constructed and understood as a supplement to the written word:

Film is a very poor and very clumsy medium for presenting argument...the main reason for the primacy of paper is that written language is the best medium for rational discussion...Writing is vastly superior as a discursive medium...Film is not the material of history. Documents are the material of history...At best film is a visual aid. It is very nice to see and hear dead people, see places as they were, the state of technology, and so on; film may be a useful check on interpretation, but it is not essential and not necessarily enlightening. For one thing, such small detail indicates what a very poor information load a film can carry. (Jarvie, 4, 5)

Other scholars such as François de la Brethèque, for instance, expressed a dismissive attitude towards historical films for the latter “follows the recipe of the historical novel.” (Guynn 2006: p 3) Similar attitude was expressed by historian Michel de Certeau for whom “Filmic representations of history depend, in the main, on narrative ordering and cannot help but project onto the trace signs of the past a structure that betrays the past’s otherness.” (Guynn 2006: p 4). The devaluation of films on the basis of their narrative structure has been problematized and questioned by narratologists and postmodern historians who emphasize the narrative dimension of history itself. Through his metahistory, historian Hayden White argues that historical narratives are more closely linked with literature than the sciences not because historical narratives are fictional but because historical narratives employ tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) to configure historical events in ways that the audience can relate to. Historians, White maintains, “reemplot,” redescribe, or recode past events so contemporary cultures can make sense of their past. Histories, then, are “similar to fiction because figurative language is used in both genres to help us come to know the actual by contrasting it with or likening it to the imaginable;” (Simond, John. D 1994: p2) thus both historical narratives and fiction use similar strategies while constructing their narrative.

Indeed, until recently historians began to take films seriously, arguing for their ability to recover the past’s liveliness. Marc Ferro one of the first historians to develop a positive approach towards historical films, argued that “the film, like any other cultural product, can become a rich resource of information on the period in which it was made” (Guynn, 2006: p 3), providing a Counter analysis of Society. Yet it is the work of historian Robert A Rosenstone that first drew attention to the distinct representational modes of the word and image. In his 1988 essay published in *American Historical Association*, Rosenstone distinguished history in Images and history in Words. Following his argument, each medium has a unique mode of representation:

Film lets us see landscapes, hear sounds, witness strong emotions as they are expressed with body and face, or view physical conflict between individuals and groups. Without denigrating the power of the written word, one can claim for each medium unique powers of representation. It seems, indeed, no exaggeration to insist that for a mass audience (and I suspect for an academic elite as well) film can most directly render the look and feel of all sorts of historical particulars and situations—farm workers dwarfed by immense western prairies and mountains, or miners struggling in the darkness of their pits, or millworkers moving to the rhythms of their machines, or

civilians sitting hopelessly in the bombed-out streets of cities. Film can plunge us into the drama of confrontations in courtroom or legislature, the simultaneous, overlapping realities of war and revolution, the intense confusion of men in battle. Yet, in doing all this, in favoring the visual and emotional data while simultaneously playing down the analytical, the motion picture is subtly-and in ways we do not yet know how to measure or describe-altering our very sense of the past ( *the American Historical Association*, 1988)

Rosenstone's duality goes beyond discourses of denigration that while highlight one mode of representation exclude the other. He instead urges historians not to judge history on films "solely by the standards of the written;" a view shared by the historian Haden White who like Rosenstone distinguished two forms of historical representations, namely "historiography" and "Historiophoty." While the former refers to written documents, the latter refers the representation of history in verbal images. Indeed, "history in image" has succeeded in fuelling intense public debates on some historical events, ranging from the Holocaust, the assassination of JFK to other major events.

Films have also succeeded in bringing together a long established and under-theorised animosity between official history and memory. The study of memory as an 'authentic' source for historical knowledge has almost been ignored by historians for whom memory, with its tendency to privilege the personal experiences of subjects tends to mingle history and fantasy. As Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone put it in their influential book *Regimes of Memory* "its (memory) relation to historical 'events' is complex and mediated, involving fantasy and wish rather than simply recording what happens." On his comment on memory, Schacter notes that memory is not photographic, producing snapshots of the past; it is rather a recreation and reconstruction of "our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them. Sometimes in the process of reconstructing we add feelings, beliefs, or even knowledge we obtained after the experience. In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we acquired after the event." (Winter, 2006, p: 4)

This denigration of memory and privileging of the written document either ignore or overlook the bias often involved when writing history. It is also the result of a simultaneous objectification of memory and subjectification of history through an emphasis on the thing remembered in the former and the agent (historian) who remembers in the second. In order to avoid this under-theorised distinction of history and memory, which in fact works side by side rather than excludes its other, the term remembrance is employed as an alternative concept that brings history and memory together by insisting on agency and the way h/she remembers through oral memory or written document. Remembrance as a process invokes not only individual or collective memories but written historical documents as well. Thus, historical remembrance is a way of interpreting the past which draws on both the written and oral versions of history, that is documented narratives about the past and on the statements of those who lived through them.

The act of remembrance also involves the context and the timing of remembrance; the same thing would be remembered differently across time and space as is illustrated below through the example of French cinema in the occupation period. It may involve bias and exclusion, hence the rise of counter-remembrances that add the erased and silenced aspects. To better understand the partiality and relativity of remembrance, the sections below examine two different remembrances, the mainstream and counter one of the occupation period in France. This period has been of interest for many historians and critics as reflected in the variety of academic works on the subject. The purpose here is not to reiterate all of these but

highlight the fluidity, relativity, and conflictual aspects of the act of remembrance. Screening this period was not an easy task for French filmmakers, for while it was easy for American filmmakers to revisit the Vietnam War critically, it was difficult for their French counterparts to emulate them in their films on the occupation period in France. Such inability to deal with this period during the 1950s and 1960s is mainly attributed to the censorship that characterised French cinema in the aftermath of the war as it is detailed below.

## FRENCH CINEMA UNDER AND AFTER OCCUPATION: MINSTREAM REMEMBRANCE

The occupation period, that is the German presence in France during the Second World War, is one of the highly controversial moments of French history. Indeed, as Peter Davies maintains, it is “a short but intriguing era: one that is constantly being revisited by historians and one that has an enduring appeal for students. It is a period that keeps throwing up important debates and one that refuses to go away.” (Davis 2001:p1) The occupation began with the fall of the Third Republic and the coming to power of Marshal Philippe Pétain who moved the French government to Vichy, hence the Vichy Government, under the German control. As an opposition to Vichy government, de Gaulle, resisting from outside France, urged French citizens to resist the German occupation, which culminated in a myriad of ways, ranging from “the highly organised Communist Party, through an array of smaller political organisations, to the anarchic and terroristic Maquis movement and to individuals up and down the country who expressed their dissatisfaction, hurt and anger at the German occupation in many and various ways.” (Davis 2001:p1) The literature and films on this period were “not unnaturally, highly politicized,” incorporating a fascinating array of themes such as fascism, war, collaboration, resistance and civil war. As far as cinema is concerned, films on the occupation period could be categorized into three major categories, respectively those made during this period, particularly the pro-Nazi propaganda films made in France; then films made after independence, highlighting French resistance. Finally, the 1970s heralded new interest in this period, especially after a significant opening-up of official archives. This latter period juxtaposed the “Myth of resisters” with that of “collaborators,” hence, revisiting and deconstructing a former remembrance. To better understand this shifting and changing filmic remembrances of the same event, the section below examines some films from the three periods.

During the post-1940 period, French cinema has witnessed tremendous changes at all levels. At the level of state regulation, the Vichy government in the “free zone” along the German occupier introduced new censoring bodies, affecting filmic outputs. As a result, some leading French filmmakers such as Max Ophüls, René Clair, Jean Renoir, Julien Duvivier, Léonide Moguy and others exiled themselves to the United States of America as it was the situation with German filmmakers who took refuge in Hollywood. Other filmmakers like Robert Bresson, Jacques Becker, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Marcel Carné and Jean Grémillon stayed in France, hence worked under occupation. In her work *French National Cinema (2005)*, Professor Susan Hayward maintains that the films of this period “reflect the effect of censorship in that, with a few exceptions, most of them are far removed from reality, dealing mostly with melodramas (including historical melodramas)” (p: 36) some of the major French films produced in this period include *Children of Paradise* (Les Enfants du paradis) by Marcel Carné, *The Raven* (Le Corbeau) by Henri-Georges Clouzot, *The Devil's Envoy* (Les Visiteurs du soir) by Marcel Carné, *The Light of Summer* (Lumière d'été) by Jean Grémillon, *The Sky Is Yours* (Le Ciel est à vous) by Jean Grémillon. Yet, through the remarkable vision of some of these films, particularly those mentioned above, the French film industry produced a body of work that, despite censorship, managed to convey anti-Nazi

messages through allusions; *Lumière d'été* (1943) by Jean Grémillon is a case in point. Through the story of Michèle, a young woman who becomes tired of the decadence and low moral standards of her fiancé, a drunken artist Roland, and his entourage, Grémillon makes a veiled attack on the Vichy régime, which explains both why the film was banned by the authorities and why it proved to be so popular with the French people.

Though French got rid of the Nazi regime in 1945 with the help of both the United States and its colonies (while the former's contribution is emphasized that of the latter is erased from all these filmic narratives), such censorial measures would remain and in some cases (Algerian war) would intensify. Indeed, most of post war films were highly politicized, centering their narratives either on the absurdity of the war or the Gaullist 'resistance myth,' following which France was portrayed as a nation of "resisters." René Clément's film *Jeux interdits* (1952), for instance, proffers a strong anti-war statement, by showing its effect on young children. The film is about two children, namely Paulette and Michel. Paulette is a young girl who has just seen her parents shot dead, along with her small dog. She hurries after her dead dog when someone throws it into the river, and manages to recover it. While caressing the dead puppy, a young boy named Michel, about five years her senior, appears and makes friends with her. He takes her back with him to his farm home, where he persuades his parents to allow the young orphan to stay with them. Michel helps Paulette to cope with her grief by helping her to bury her dead dog in the grounds of a run-down water mill. Unhappy that her dog is alone, the two children assemble other dead animals and start to build a cemetery for animals, stealing crosses from the local graveyard. Indeed, it is through the eyes of these two children that the atrocities and absurdity of the war are revealed. Films such as *La Vache et le prisonnier* by Henri Verneuil (1959), *Les Honneurs de la guerre* by Jean Dewever (1960), *Le Silence de la mer* by Jean-Pierre Melville (1949) and others follow the same tendency through their emphasis on the atrocities and the folly of the war. As for films celebrating resistance and heroism, examples abound. Jean-Pierre Melville's film *L'Armée des ombres* (*Army in the Shadows*, 1969), for instance, commemorates French resistance during the Nazi occupation of France. It depicts the heroism of Philippe Gerbier, a chief in the French Resistance. Betrayed by his colleague, he is arrested and sent to a prison camp. After his escape from this camp, he executes the traitor and moves to London to receive decorations from General de Gaulle. There they learn of the imprisonment of Felix another key Resistance figure. Gerbier and his allies, thus, return to France to rescue Felix.

This myth of "resistance" was revisited during the 1970s through critical films with a new curiosity. As Paxton (Davis 2001:p2) argues, this era was characterized by the emergence of new historical enquiries, especially the works of Hoffman (Vichy), Kedward (the Resistance), Halls (Vichy youth movements), Kuisel (the economy), Marrus and Paxton (the Jews), Collins Weitz (women), Burrin (the Occupation) and Rousso (Vichy and memory). Marcel Ophuls's great 1971 *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a documentary film which challenged, in an explicit fashion, the validity of the "Gaullist myth"—appeared at the start of the decade. This film focuses on a single French town — Clermont- Ferrand — and interviewed those residents who remembered, and who would speak, as well as government officials, writers, artists, and a German veteran or two. What Ophuls found has problematized modern history, and changed forever the way we think of and understand the issues of collaboration and resistance, specifically as they apply to one particular nation at one particular moment in time. *The Sorrow and the Pity* is a documentary, four-and-a-half hours long, that conveys a very real sense of what it must have been like to have lived through the Occupation. What these examples illustrate is the ability of films both fiction and documentary to constantly revisit written documents and memory through survivors of the war, offering new understandings and versions of these past

events. They also illustrate how remembrance is a changing act that interacts with both space and time. The social and political changes that took place in the 1970s made it possible for filmmakers to remember the occupation period differently, giving voice to the silenced, particularly the question of collaboration. Yet, regardless of its fluidity and constant change, this remembrance of the occupation period by French filmmakers serves the interest of the French Universalist and republican model that stresses unity and homogeneity. It neglected and overlooked other memories and histories such as those of African soldiers that contributed to the liberation of France and other European countries from the Nazi dominance. Certainly, all of the films discussed above overlooked this historical dimension; it is in the works of African diaspora in France that these aspects are rendered visible through counter-remembrances.

#### *DAYS OF GLORY AND OUTSIDE THE LAW: THE NORTH AFRICAN BETWEEN SUBMISSION AND RESISTANCE*

After *Camp de Thiaroye* (1987 by Senegalese Director Sembène Ousmane) which is about a regiment of the French West African army who has been massacred by French soldiers for demanding their rights as their French counterparts, it was the turn of *Les Indigènes (Days of Glory)* to bring into screen the contribution of North African army in the liberation of France from the Nazis. The word “indigenes” (natives) was used by the French colonial authority to refer to North African colonial soldiers. Rachid Bouchareb used the same word as a title for his film that foregrounds the participation of African soldiers, particularly North African ones, in the liberation of France from the Nazi regime. In fact, towards the ends of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, soldiers from France’s colonies played momentous role in France’s military operations. The “African Army” was the name given to these troops that were sent to fight outside Africa whenever France engaged its troops in military conflicts such as the Italian Campaign, and the Indochina war. During the First World War many soldiers, 290 000, from North Africa were mobilized; and in 1943, 233,000 “North Africans” were mobilized or volunteered to reinforce French fighting troops. They joined the 363,000 North African soldiers already under military authority.

All these historical information are either erased or overlooked in French mainstream cinema, for in all French films that address both the first and Second World War there is no mention or even an allusion to the contributions of the “African army” to the independence of France. Hence, *Days of Glory* deconstructs and de-eurocentrizes the French mainstream remembrance of the war. This counter-historical remembrance, as suggested by one of the veterans who at the end of the movie visits the cemetery of those North Africans who died for France’s freedom, pushed Jacques Chirac, the president of the republic, to improve the situation of these veterans, particularly their pension. The latter were “frozen” in December 1959, resulting in considerable inequality and feelings of bitterness among ex-servicemen from Africa, whose pension were up to ten times less than those of French ex-servicemen. This injustice and inferiority encountered by African soldiers seem to mirror what is happening currently in France. While the fathers and grandfathers were welcomed as liberators, their posterity is denied the rights for citizenship and equality. Bouchareb’s film is not only an exploration of the war period, but a comment on the present situation as well. The evocation of pastness (the memory of the war) emphasizes the participation of immigrants in the construction of the nation, thus, the legitimate belonging of their children (Rachid Bouchareb being one of them) to the French nation.

What makes *Les Indigènes* well received in France is not its subject in itself but the way these events are remembered. Certainly, the reception of this film by French politicians,

including president Chirac, and war veterans, illustrates the extent to which remembrance is an act that involves past, present and future. Some critics and politicians praised the film for its reconciliatory tone which emphasized allegiance to France, thus submission over resistance which Rachid Bouchareb will later foreground in his film *Outside the Law*, causing the fury of politicians who while accept the first film, vehemently criticize the second as illustrated below. It is through this remembrance that Bouchareb claims the rights of immigrants and minority groups to live side by side with the “French-de-Souche.”

The film opens in both Algeria and Morocco with the scenes where North Africans, including Said, are being recruited, leaving their families behind them as elucidated by their patriotic song in Setif:

We're the men of Africa  
We come here from afar  
We've come from the colonies  
To save the fatherland  
We've left behind our families and homes  
And our hearts are full of invincible fervour  
For we wish to bear high and proud  
The cherished flag of sweet France  
Should someone try to part us  
We're here to die at her feet

These soldiers are taken first to Italy, where after some very basic training, they find themselves integrated among French soldiers, scaling a hill to take out their German attackers. The film focuses on the seventh battalion, commanded by the tough Sergeant Roger Martinez (Bernard Blancan), which includes the soldier Abdelkader (Sami Bouajila) who seeks promotion and recognition from the command, Said Otmari (Jamel Debbouze) who is a servile and illiterate private, happy in serving his sergeant, Messaoud Souni (Roschdy Zem) who is the sniper of the group and has fallen in a corresponded love with the French Irène (Auréliette Eltvedt), and Yassir (Samy Naceri) who is fighting together with his brother to raise some money. Along the campaign in Italy, France and Alsace, these colonial soldiers fight side by side with their French comrades, but the two sides never seem truly equal. While French soldiers are promoted, have better food and have leaves to visit their families, the Arab ones are shamefully discriminated and treated like second ranking soldiers. Even within the ranks, the caste system highly operates; cases in point are the black soldiers who are denied tomato as a food. To this situation, corporal Abdelkader publicly protests to Sergeant Martinez (Bernard Blancan) by stomping on a crate of tomatoes. All these indignities against African soldiers challenge and question the French slogan of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.”

Though the film proffers a counter-remembrance that highlights the injustices towards colonial soldiers, including North African and sub-Saharan, it over-emphasizes their submissiveness through a focus on their willingness and eagerness to fight side by side with French soldiers, overlooking coercion and compulsion involved in such recruitment. The film

opens with the scene of North Africans, including children, young and old men responding to the call of a man who urges them to participate in the liberation of France. In other scenes the North African is represented as a loyal defender of France (la mere patrie/ the mother nation); these same soldiers go further to express their desire to stay in France when the war is over. It is this collaborative and cooperative spirit that drives French politicians and critics to praise the reconciliatory tone of the film.

In *Days of Glory*, Bouchareb makes a passing reference to the partiality and bias of the act of remembering through two scenes in the film. The first is set in Italy where after a brutal battle that caused the death of a number of soldiers most of whom are Muslims a journalist, who was recording this massacre, interviews the French colonel about the number of dead soldiers. Quite the opposite, the colonel asks him to focus on victory, hence overshadowing the massacre. The second moment is masterly articulated towards the end of the film where French cameras focus only on French soldiers while Maghrebi ones walks behind the camera. In both scenes, the act of remembrance is questioned and deconstructed through a meta-discourse that offers a counter remembrance.

As mentioned above, the act of remembrance brings together the two under-theorized concepts of memory and history. In *Days of Glory*, both written documents and memory are conjured up in the construction of this counter historical remembrance as Bouchareb himself maintains:

Olivier Lorelle, my co-screenwriter and I did over a year of research. We started off going through the army documentation department. I even found Defence Ministry documents in the names of Nacéri and Debbouze, who were the ancestors of the ones we all know today. We also worked in libraries but above all, we met with people who had lived through the period. We wanted to hear what they had to say. We went to Bordeaux, Marseilles and Nantes as well as Senegal, Morocco and Algeria. We fed off their experiences and feelings. This was when I realized the film could not be the story of one man. It had to encompass the African continent. (Dossier de Press)

While *Les Indigènes* was highly acclaimed in France, *Outside de Law* was rejected on the basis of its “anti-France thesis.” Released in 2010, *Outside the Law*, a Franco-Algerian film, caused plethora of criticisms and diatribes in France. Following its selection and screening at Cannes Film Festival 2010, French politicians and war veterans organized a number of demonstrations against the film, arguing against its “manipulation and falsification” of history as maintained by Gabriel Anglade during the manifestation. French parliamentary member Lionel Luca went further to describe the film as “sordid, caricatural, partisan and pro FLN.” The film details a period in French-Algerian history from the end of the Second World War to Algerian independence. It follows the itinerary of three Algerian brothers who move to France and take completely different paths. Messaoud (Roschdy Zem), the eldest, joins the French army fighting in Indochina; Abdelkader (Sami Bouajila) is captured and jailed, and upon his release, becomes a leader in the underground revolution for Algeria; Said (Jamel Debbouze), the youngest, as a pimp, opens a club and sponsors boxing matches. All of them are eventually brought together in the unified cause of Algerian independence and equal rights.





The Manifestations of Veterans and deputies in Cannes against Hors la Lois



A program for the events in Setif

The film opens with the family first in the Algeria of 1925 when French authorities through the figure of the Caid throw them off the land their ancestors have farmed for generations. It is because of this forced uprootedness that the family has formed lifelong antipathy towards the colonial power. The following scene, which takes place in Paris 8 May 1945, includes inserts of real documentary footage of celebrations of France's independence from the Nazi occupation; an event that is highly memorialized in French cinema as exemplified above. Then, the film cuts to Setif, Algeria with the caption "at the same day" where Algerians are being massacred by French citizens and authorities for claiming their independence in the same way France got its independence from Germany, hence justifying their struggle against colonialism. During this scene thousands of Algerian women, children and men, including the brothers' father were killed without mercy. It is this scene that caused the anger and the dissatisfaction of French politicians, veterans and historians for "it does not" reveal "the other side of the story", that is "the mass killing of French citizens by Algerians during these events" as claimed by Lionel Luca during a program that addressed the massacre of Setif in the third French channel. Indeed, these fierce reactions against the film confirm the reluctance of French politicians and historians to reconsider their past through the flashpoint of postcoloniality.

The handling of the Algerian Front of Liberation by the French authorities is another point of controversy raised by the film. After his release from prison, Abdelkader mobilizes his brother Messaoud and other Algerian immigrants in France to join and sponsor the FLN. To repress the latter, the French officer Col. Faivre (Bernard Blancan), organizes a secret branch of the French police named the Red Hand. He tells those under him that he works on direct orders from the top. To put down the insurgency of Algerians, the Red Hand resorts to terrorism and the assassination of the major figures of the FLN members. This violent encounter between the police and the FLN reached its peak in the vents of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1961 where thousands of Algerians were harshly crushed by French police as the last scene in the metro illustrates. It is this handling of the FLN by French authorities that hundreds of protesters in Cannes find offensive, for it depicts the French police as the Gestapo, the official secret police of Nazi Germany.

Though made by the same filmmaker *Outside the Law* advances a tone out of tune with that of *Days of Glory*. Whilst the latter underlies submission and reconciliation, *Outside the Law* points up the glorious and violent resistance of colonial power. In *Days of Glory*, Messaoud and his companions express their desire to stay in French after the war. In *Outside the Law* the opposite is articulated via a strong attachment to Algeria as better illustrated by the first scene of the film that portrays the three brothers and their parents expelled from their own land. Yet, such switch of tone and perspective is not to be understood as inconsistency on the part of the filmmaker; it is rather the outcome of the contingency of the act of remembrance. However, regardless of the criticism launched against it, the film has succeeded in reopening a long silenced issue in French history. The debates engendered by *Outside the Law* are good signs of the ability of the film to contest and deconstruct official versions of history. It is these counter-memorial acts that bring together *Days of Glory* and *Outside the Law*. Yet like in the former, the journey of Rachid Bouchareb into time does not aim solely at uncovering the real history, or what happened exactly, it also justifies and legitimates the rights of immigrants and their children to live on the French soil.

## CONCLUSION

While French mainstream filmmakers occulted the stories of the subaltern in their films as illustrated above, their North African counterparts, particularly those established in France deconstruct and offer counter-historical analysis of Eurocentric versions of history. What makes Bouchareb's films different from those made by filmmakers from the Maghreb is that they provide what I call diasporic versions of history, that is remembrance from the point of view of diasporas. The latter construct a third history that invokes the past to serve the present and future. Other filmmakers such as Mehdi Charef (*Cartouches Gauloises*) and Abdelatif Kechiche (*Black Venus*) followed the same path by further revisiting other historical events such as the French Algerian war in the case of the former and enslavement in the case of the latter.

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