



A Narrative of An Ideological Destruction: Where Do We Go Now?

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Abstract

Lebanese filmmaker, actress, and screenwriter Nadine Labaki's 2011 film *Where Do We Go Now?* is about the ideological manipulation that gradually results in a big conflict among people in a rural Middle Eastern village where Muslims and Christians live in a peaceful existence. Labaki is known for her politically engaged narratives which refer to the recent political past of Lebanese whilst centralizing strong female figures. *Where Do We Go Now?* is no exception, and thus, reflects the director's general cinematic style and political attitude. Labaki invites her audience through the comedy to question ideology which interpellates and thus constructs the individual as a subject by revealing the ways ideology creates differences, separation, and conflict among people. In this context, this article strives to analyze the film *Where Do We Go Now?* employing critical discourse analysis with references to Althusser's conceptualization of ideology and Subject-subject formation.

Keywords: Lebanese cinema; Nadine Labaki; *Where do we go now?*; ideology; female empowerment



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Introduction

The concept of ideology includes many intersecting and incompatible meanings. Hence is the difficulty in terms of making a single, accurate and comprehensive definition. Eagleton (1991) underlines this ambiguity by stating that: “the word 'ideology', one might say, is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands” (Eagleton, 1991, p.17). Bearing this in mind, the concept of "ideology" within the scope of this article is limited to the conjecture of discourse and power, based on the theory of the Marxist French philosopher Louis Althusser. Althusser considers the concept of ideology as a way of arranging practices that transform human beings from individuals to social subjects and that reproduce the lived relations by connecting these subjects to the dominant relations of production in the society (Eagleton, p. 41). Slovenian Žižek (1989) presents the most basic definition of ideology with reference to Karl Marx's *Capital*: “Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es / They do not know but they do” (Marx, 1867, as cited in Žižek, 1989). This concept, being discussed extensively towards the end of the 18th century, has proved to be the main component in breaking the “real” in the formation process of social reality. While Louis Althusser (1970) treats ideology as an imaginary relationship between individuals and their real conditions of existence, he precisely underlines this rupture from reality. The film *Where Do We Go Now?*, directed by Lebanese director and actress Nadine Labaki in 2011, narrating the story of an unnamed Arab village co-inhabited by Muslims and Christians, creates a fundamental debate in this context.

The Lebanese film industry has gone through different periods of recess and collapse in parallel with the Lebanese history of civil wars and colonization. By the end of the 1990s, the Lebanese film industry entered a new era which is addressed as the "beginning of the renaissance", and Nadine Labaki is considered to be one of the most significant representatives of this period (Khatib, 2008, p. 21). It is inevitable to detect traces of her childhood in Labaki's films for she grew up during the Lebanese civil war. In an interview, she underlines the power of cinema to create a change through people: "Sometimes, a line in a film, or a scene, makes you think about yourself, about your decisions. By touching your heart, films can offer hope more than politics" (Salem, 2012; Labaki, 2012). This reminds us of Antonio Gramsci's famous theorization of "organic intellectuals", whereby he talks about the responsibility every true intellectual should have in terms of "their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 131). Complying with this, Labaki seems to be aware of her class affiliation as well as her position as a woman filmmaker, consistently creating narratives that focus on female empowerment. Labaki's breakthrough came with *Caramel* (2007), which tells the story of five Lebanese women working in a Beirut beauty salon. While both *Where Do We Go Now?* and *Caramel* received lots of awards, *Capernaum* (2018), which provides a poignant narrative about the pressing refugee problem, made her internationally well-known. She generally uses non-professional actors in her films. It would not be wrong to say that the most important source of authenticity in her films is the cultural, ethnic, and political structure of her country, Lebanon. In said interview at Cannes, she precisely indicated this source of inspiration by emphasizing that she rejected offers from other countries because of fear of losing her authentic language (Labaki, 2012).

One important aspect of Labaki's cinema is the fact that she deliberately deconstructs the female figure as represented in mainstream cinema. That is why her films lend themselves well to feminist critical perspectives. As opposed to mainstream cinema, where women are usually passive, women in Labaki's films are generally active, combative, and solution-generating subjects (Aşlıoğlu & Işık, 2020). *Where Do We Go Now?* epitomizes such female figures. Despite some controversial scenes whereby women appear to internalize the dynamics of a patriarchal society, all in all, the film reconstructs the common view on women (Kokko, 2012). For instance, one of the actions taken by women to stop the violence in the village is to bring Ukrainian strippers to the village. Here the sexual objectification of women's bodies is seemingly reproduced and reinforced by women. Yet, in the wider discursive context of the film, this can be read as they understand and play by the rules of patriarchal society. Because they do this only to stop the violence. They reject to be "women left in the hands of fate" and instead take an active stance.

The film revolves around the ideological construction of two religions: Christianity and Islam. Nadine Labaki opens the film with a dance choreography. Women in black, who are impossible to distinguish from each other, who seem to be almost identical, walk and dance with lament. As they finally scatter to the graves they want to visit, they are divided into two lines: one towards the sign of the cross, the other towards the crescent. The narrative begins with a statement: "This is the story of those who fast, of prayers, of a lonely village surrounded by mines, of two groups whose hearts were broken under the hot sun, of blooded hands for a cross or a crescent, of this lonely place whose past has chosen peace surrounded by barbed wire and weapons". Confrontation of these ideologies is the pinnacle of the narrative whilst the spatial and temporal references are left unclear, meaning there is absolutely no clue as to when and where this story took place. Thus, the narrative becomes anonymous as a fable. Owing to the uncertainty of the context, it can easily be

generalized; it does not matter what religion we are talking about, what matters is the fact that material conditions formed around these religions have created the conflict. Labaki explains the lack of spatial and temporal signposts in the film as follows; “this war between two faiths is a universal theme. It could just as easily be happening between Sunnis and Shiites, between black and white, between two parties, two clans, two brothers, two families or two villages...” (Labaki, 2012).

Religion is presented in the form of a shapeshifting ideology in the film. While it is initially manifested only as a mark of difference, it is transformed into a contradiction, exacerbated by the discriminative influence of the media. However, when this contradiction is rejected by women, it loses its value and disappears. In this context, the discourse of the film ties in well with Althusser’s postulation that “there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects” (Althusser, 1970, p. 37). The film eventually forces the viewer to ask the quintessential question: “*Where do we go now?*” The spatial design, in particular, reinforces this question as it is the same in the opening and closing scenes of the film: In the first scene, women walk divided into two lines based on their religious positionings. In the last scene, however, all the villagers are walking towards the cemetery together, unable to choose their direction.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of ideology was first introduced by Destutt de Tracy and colleagues as the formation of ideas (-ideo) of theory (-logy) (Althusser, 1970, p. 6). They used it to express the science of ideas (ideology) to reveal the sources of conscious thoughts and ideas (Sucu, 2012). Fifty years after this, along with the way Marx reconsidered ideology, it has acquired completely different meanings and dimensions. The issues of class and class order, which constitute the basis of Marxist

approaches, redefine the domain of ideology, and the ideas of the ruling class are the decisive preconditions in said class order. “The camera obscura metaphor” as used by Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasizes that ideologies are a system of deceptive ideas or a mystification tool that serves class interests (Marx & Engels, 1968, p. 9). By defining ideology as pure illusion, pure dream, that is as nothingness, in *The German Ideology* (1968), they kept all reality outside. In other words, ideology for Marx is an imaginary institution that produces individuals’ existence materially. Althusser draws attention to the absence of the time dimension in the definition of ideology by reading Marx’s account in relation to Freud's discourse regarding "the unconscious being eternal" (Althusser, 1970, p. 29). While doing this, Althusser revisits Marx's remark that "ideology has no history", and argues that its history is not external to it; rather, it has entirely no history (Marx & Engels, 1968, pp. 16-23). In other words, Althusser promotes the idea that ideology is not historical and has always existed before and after (Althusser, 1970, p. 29).

In order to understand the relation between ideology and reality, a general picture of the relation the subject establishes with reality must be drawn. The reason for using “the subject” instead of the individual here stems from Althusser's statement that "individuals are already-always subjects" and ideology forms the generation of this subject through interpellation (Althusser, 1970, p. 41). In searching for an answer to the question “how ideology actually functions”, Althusser (1970) takes the Christian ideology as an example and examines how this ideology works on and through masses. In the Christian ideology, this interpellation takes place through God's appeal to the individual, which is constantly voiced in the practices, rituals, and ceremonies of religious ideology. Through this appeal, individual gains an identity. In this way, s/he accepts the conditions in which s/he exists, the geography in which they live, and their economic class through their identity. They also submit as a (free) subject, to be judged as good or “perverse” over the practices

of ideology. The most important phenomenon that occurs in this example is the presence of the “central Other Subject”. The absolute condition for ideology to mobilize the masses is the existence of an "Other Subject", that is, God (Althusser, 1970, p. 44). Althusser (1970) explains this distinction as Subject (capital S) and subject. Another distinction that should be emphasized at this point is the distinction between Ideology and ideologies. God's being the central Subject is valid for the Christian ideology (religious ideologies). However, the need for Ideology for Other Subject in subject generation is valid for all ideologies. The name of Subject changes, but its position and function do not change. This is a structural requirement of ideology.

The subject's relation to the real conditions of existence must be illusory. While Marx treats this relationship as alienation from the material condition of the individual, Althusser understands people's relationship to the conditions of existence as represented for them, not as the real conditions of existence (Althusser, 1970, pp. 30-33). And ideology is defined at this moment of representation. That is to say, ideology functions as a mirror that reflects reality by distorting the subject's relationship with reality. This imaginary relational representation also has a material existence. Material existence is at this point grounded in the practices of the ideological apparatus. Althusser exemplifies this practice as follows:

If he believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents, and so on. If he believes in Duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices according to the correct principles. If he believes in Justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in a demonstration, etc. (Althusser, 1970, p. 34)

Ideological state apparatuses are the most important parts of Althusser's theorization. He develops the explanation of the Marxist term “state apparatuses” by dividing it into two. He conceptualizes “state apparatus” as “repressive” and separates it from the ideological state apparatus. The main

difference between the two arises from how they function. While violence is the premise of the repressive apparatus, the ideological state apparatus functions through ideology. Examples of these apparatuses are the religious ISA (the system of the different churches), the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio, and television, etc.) and the cultural ISA (Althusser, 1970, p. 14).

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis has been employed as the analysis framework here. “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged from the school of critical linguistics (Kress & Hodge, 1979; Fowler et al., 1979) which drew upon Halliday’s (1978, 1985) systemic functional linguistics and theories of ideologies (Fairclough, 1993; Rogers, 2003)” (Jahedi et al., 2014, p. 28). Today, as rightly put by Una Dirks (2006), “CDA has become an umbrella term for widely recognized approaches to the study of oral or written texts”. There have been three main approaches commonly mentioned in the literature regarding CDA: “Fairclough’s critical approach, Wodak’s discourse-historical approach, and Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach” (Jahedi et al., 2014, p. 28). All in all, regardless of which particular approach is taken, at the heart of it is the fact that it considers language and representation in relation to social context and the concomitant power relations. In other words, “[CDA] offers routes into the study of meanings, a way of investigating the back-and-forth dialogues which constitute social action, along with the patterns of signification and representation which constitute culture” (Wetherell et al., 2001). This also ties in very well with Althusser’s theorizations because it is argued that “Althusser’s (1971) Marxist theory of ideology

has influenced critical discourse analysis which views ideologies not as a nebulous realm of ideas but as tied to material practices embedded in social institutions (how teaching is organized in classrooms, for instance)” (Jahedi et al., 2014, p. 28).

This article appropriates the basic principles of CDA as clarified by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (1997):

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned... Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258)

Accordingly, employing critical discourse analysis, this article strives to analyze the film *Where Do We Go Now?* with specific reference to the concepts of “illusion” and “allusion”, which Althusser employs to define the relationship between ideology and reality (Althusser, 1970, p. 30). First, the concept of ideology, its generation, and its distinctive position in terms of distorted reality will be analyzed. In this specific context, the ways ideology creates reality will be explored. Since the breaking point of the narrative occurs when the village interacts with the outside environment via media, Althusser's discussion of ideological state apparatuses proves to be a useful conceptual framework for the analysis. In addition, Althusser's “subject/Subject” formulation will be guiding for the interpretation.

Analysis of the Film

The fable style of narrative in *Where Do We Go Now?* exhibits a structure that overlaps with the idea of the eternity of ideology. The classic "once upon a time" discourse of fairy tale narration

is embedded in the film via various methods. The film begins with the voice of a poetic narrator in which the surrounding of the village is framed. Here, in fact, the feature of (fairy)tales to give anonymity to time, place, and individuals (characters/subjects of the film) has been skillfully incorporated into the narrative. It is very difficult to fit the film into a time frame, even if you are familiar with the history of the Lebanese civil war. Because throughout the story, no specific historical event the audience can refer to is mentioned. To this end, the geographical location of the village also offers an advantage. The choice of a place that is isolated from its surroundings and has a very weak connection with the outside world facilitates the sense of isolation in time. The color scheme and texture of the costumes also leave the audience clueless in terms of time. In the interview given by Nadine Labaki at the Cannes Film Festival, she consciously emphasizes that she did not want to set the story in a precise period, hence is such choice of clothing (Labaki, 2012). Another element of the fairy-tale narrative is the dance choreographies throughout the film and the accompanying poetic music composed by the musician and the filmmaker's husband Khaled Mouzanar.

In the hypothetical geography of the film, Muslims and Christians live together and sustain peaceful neighborly relations. The spatial configuration of the film reinforces this serene co-habitation. The location of the church and the mosque side by side underlines the possibility of tranquil existence between the seemingly different religious establishments. Before the peace in the village broke down, Muslims and Christians only differ in their practices. Apart from the mosque and the church where the practices are performed, there are no other places where they were separated spatially. While the Christian village people pray at the church on Sunday rituals, the Muslims go to the mosque accompanied by the azan. Labaki frames children from both faiths playing ball in the square that is located in front of the mosque and the church. Also, people who

leave the church and the mosque meet in the square. Based on the peaceful environment shown in the earlier scenes of the film, one can easily argue that the ideology of religion is a process of creating an illusion for the people of the village through practices that differ only at an individual scale. This isolation of the film's hypothetical geography is in fact an obstacle to the ideology of religion in terms of creating a division. Adopting Althusser's terminology, ideology has not yet turned into an ideological apparatus at this point in the film. The fact that the bridge which connects the village to surrounding villages was destroyed from the beginning can be considered as a structural metaphor underlining the village's disconnection from the outside world.

In the first scenes of the film, Labaki frames children looking for radio signals because the mayor of the village wants to bring television to the village people. Ultimately, the signal is found, the only television in the village is repaired and placed in the receiving area. The people of the village get ready with excitement and meet in the evening. This environment is reflected like a feasting place; the people of the village, dressed in their most elegant clothes, take their seats located in front of the small television, and a random channel is watched. This collective act alters the disconnected position of the village irrevocably. When they meet again the next evening, the people of the village become aware of the civil war that broke out between Muslims and Christians in their geographical region. Even though said civil war is somewhere far away, it is enough to ignite unrest between the villagers. The scene explicates how the communication ISA's work as Althusser depicts them.

From this moment onwards, the church and the mosque, and concomitantly, their symbols the cross and the crescent, take on a new meaning, on a new dimension. Accidental breaking of the church cross and goats entering the mosque and staining the carpets initiate a process that leads to the men of the village to take up arms against each other. It is clear here that religion, originally

defined only as an ideological distinction, has now turned into an ideological apparatus, and this transformation has increased their attachment to the symbols that provide the illusion of their affiliation or actual representation. At this point, it can be argued that symbols have begun to distort reality. For the women of the village, the process of transformation of ideology into an ideological apparatus could not take place because their common destiny and basic motives bring them together. Women have lost their husbands, children, and siblings due to the war. This common plight prevents ideologies from distorting the reality(ies). At this point, a duality arises in the film. It starts with the following sentence: “this story is the story of women left in the hand of fate”. Contrary to this statement, throughout the film, we do not witness passive women who have surrendered to their fate, but active agents who can choose and shape their own fate (Aşılıoğlu & Işık, 2020). Yet, the reason behind the active stance of these women is portrayed as their common destiny.

In order to interpret the attacks at the breaking point of the film better, one should understand what these attacks happened against and how they mobilized the subjects. In Althusser's conceptualization of ideology, the relation between ideology and the subject is an important phenomenon. The film *Where Do We Go Now?* proves to be a concrete example of how Ideology functions in the same way although ideologies are different. While there are two different ideologies in the film, just one Ideology exists. As stated above, before the unfolding of the ideological conflict in the film, the ideologies of Christianity and Islam merely marked a differentiation via the representation of their dissociated symbols and the real conditions of existence of the subjects. The second level occurs because of the perceived separation between those who believe in these ideologies. Accordingly, the villagers are located on an axis of inclusion-exclusion. The subject, as a free subject, creates her/his real representation through its

ideology. In the first part of the film, where Yvonne (Yvonne Maalouf) describes Sassine (Mounzer Baalbaki) as crazy, the line "Sassine doesn't know even whether he is a Christian or a Muslim" can be given as an example of superficiality or the constructed nature of the separation that takes place in the second stage. The narrative allows us to realize that the ideologies fundamentally work in the same way. Because ideologies here are in the shadow of the Ideology that exists over a central Subject and the subjects around it. In both ideologies, there is God's appeal to individuals through religious rituals. God's house might be in the form of a church, or it might be epitomized as a mosque. Similarly, the sound of the call might be the sound of the church bell or the sound of the *azan*. Regardless of the specificities, the position of the Subject and subject(s) and the relationship between them do not change.

One might ask then; what are the conditions of this relationship between the Subject and subject that is necessary for the existence of Ideology? And how are subjects around the same Subject divided into Christians and Muslims? The existence of the ideology and the subject is mutually conditioned. In other words, as Althusser underlines, "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects" (Althusser, 1970, p. 37). There is a conditioned ontological relationship between ideologies and subjects. For subjects to remain as subjects, the central Subject is needed. In other words, subject needs God because subject only becomes subject thanks to the interpellation of God (Althusser, 1970, p. 44). The well-known saying "men were made in the image of God", which is common in religious ideologies, very well embodies the discourse of the subject being tied to the Subject in ideology (Althusser, 1970, p. 44). It also reveals something else: If men are the reflection of God on earth, the Subject has now become the subject. That is, just as the existence of the subject is tied to the Subject, the existence of the Subject is tied to the subject too. In short, it can be said that "Subject also needs subjects" (Althusser, 1970, pp. 44-45).

Aligning with Althusser's formulation "God as the Subject and the ordinary people as subjects who believe in God", the Subject's need for subjects manifests itself as God's need for prayers. However, the cause of the separation of the subjects across various religious ideologies remains veiled. It is crucial to analyze the process which Althusser characterizes as "subject but Subject" in order to explain this division. "subject but Subject" is God's reflection as men on earth. (Althusser, 1970, p. 44). Althusser (1970) illustrates this with "his Son on Earth" in his examination of the Christian ideology. By extension, this could be interpreted as prophets in all religious ideologies. This separation experienced in the transformation of the Subject into different subjects, the symbols of the ideologies, and therefore, their practices. At the breaking point of the film, there is an attack on these different symbols. While this attack emerges primarily as an attack by Muslim and Christian men on opposite religious symbols, it subsequently performed by women against all symbols.

The first part of the film represents the creation of sacred symbols. While on the Christian side, "Virgin Mary" comes up as "subject but Subject" and her sculpture and the trinket as the symbols, on the Muslim front, the sacred symbols are the mosque and salaah. The villagers' attacks on these symbols result in conflict among people. The relationship between the holy Virgin Mary who is perceived as "subject but Subject" and Takla (Claude Baz Moussawbaa), a Christian woman, can be given as a symbolic one revealing the director's stance in this matter. This relationship contains all the diffractions in the narrative. A Muslim man who perceives the goats entering the mosque as an attack on the sacred destroys the Virgin Mary trinket. Takla, who brings the broken pieces together, kisses the damaged trinket saying, "still very beautiful". This simple act of affection reflects the position of all the women in the village throughout the turmoil.

Women take an active stance against the increasing tension in the village. This stance includes a series of actions to prevent violence. First of all, women stop the radio broadcast, disable the TV set, burn the newspapers so that the village men will be cut off from the conflict outside the village. It is clear that these actions are aimed at undermining the effects of media, which is one of the ideological apparatuses listed by Althusser (1970), because dominant groups with the right to the ownership of media institutions in any given society utilize media for ideological manipulation, social control and for the reproduction of the hegemonic discourse. Later, they bring a group of Ukrainian strippers to the village to enchant the men and to dissipate their occupations, which can be seen as the beginning of the contradictions that emerged in the representation of women as subjects in their religious ideologies. This is an act that goes against the practices on which the Ideology is based. These contradictions, however, eventually become invisible.

The reason why ideological contradictions in women's practices become increasingly invisible is that there is no longer an ideological separation. The event that causes a rupture in the story is the death of a Christian child, Nassim (Kevin Abboud). Nassim's lifeless body, who is shot during the conflict between Muslims and Christians outside the village, is hidden by his mother, Takla, in order not to exacerbate the tension in the village. As a result of this innocent child's death, there is a disruption in the relationship between Takla and the Virgin Mary. This disruption symbolizes a rebellion against the Holy Virgin. Via the fascinating tirade, Takla performs in front of the statue of the Holy Virgin "... You will never see me here again; do you hear me? I will not let you hurt the children anymore", viewers actually witness the destruction of the central Subject by the act of women (Labaki, 2011, 1:07:57). Likewise, in the tirade Amale (Nadine Labaki) performs addressing the village men "... You are tired of both God and this village. Is that the point

of being a man? ", there is a sense of rebellion against the central Subject, that is, God (Labaki, 2011, 0:52:54).

The destruction of the Subject occurs with the extinction of the subjects. Althusser defines the subject as "who submits to a higher authority and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission." (Althusser, 1970, p. 46). Departing from this ideological subject, women of the village have now freedom to rebel against their painful destiny and thus to subvert and deconstruct their conditions. This is how constructed ideological distinctions and the resultant conflict disappear in the film. The planned conversion of religion by women is the last action taken against male violence. Men wake up to a blurry morning, when the religious symbols in their homes and the religious practices (dressing, worship, etc.) of women who were their mothers, siblings, or wives changed. The mere deformation of the symbols was enough to confuse men, and they are no longer sure about whom and what they are against. The resolution of the narrative happens at the moment when the mutually conditioned existential relationship between Subject-subject-Ideology was destroyed. With the disappearance of the ideological separation, spatial distinctions also become meaningless. The cemetery, which is the space of spatial separation based on the ideological separation in the opening scene of the film, is seen once again in the last scene whereby the men carry Nassim's lifeless body. But this time, the disappearance of spatial segregation stands out through the interpellation of the film: "Where do we go now?"

Concluding Remarks

Nadine Labaki films, which constitute an important element of Lebanese cinema, have a peculiar style. The actors she recruits are generally either amateurs or real people living in the geography

of the given narratives. The authentic style, the active and emancipating roles given to women can be listed as common characteristics of her films. The film *Where Do We Go Now?* showcases these qualities, entrenching Labaki's visual and narrative style. Differentiating from her earlier work consisting of the fable style, dance choreographies, and the distinctive soundtrack, *Where Do We Go Now?* instrumentalizes such techniques to create a convenient environment for the film's thematic concerns. The film is bestowed with a sense of omnipresence thanks to the lack of any specific spatial or temporal references. This inevitably creates a perception in the minds of the audience that such a conflict could take place between any group of people in different geographies at different times. The filmmaker simply states that the domination of ideologies over subjects has always existed. However, the overthrow of this hegemony can only be achieved by free individuals. The key to the collapse of hegemony is hidden in the way(s) subjects turn into free individuals, and Labaki sheds light on this transformative path through her powerful female characters.

Employing critical discourse analysis as the core methodological tool, we have discussed *Where Do We Go Now?* with a particular emphasis on Louis Althusser's conceptualization of ideology. How individuals become ideological subjects vis-a-vis an interpellating Subject is examined through the transformation of an idyllic village into a conflict zone as seen in the film. The analysis has presented the configuration of the religion-belief-subject debate through Althusser's formulation of Christian ideology: The peaceful village life at the beginning of the film; the transformation of individuals into subjects through daily practices and religious symbols; the conflict between Muslim and Christian neighbors in the continuation of the film and so on have been examined in relation to the illusory relationship the subjects establish with reality. The film underlines the role of ideological state apparatuses in this shift. The significant role the village

women play in the restoration of peace in the village testifies to the empowerment of female representation in cinematic narratives.

All in all, most scholarly articles that examine Nadine Labaki and her films, both in Turkey and abroad, appear to present themselves as interventions in the feminist and/or queer film theories. This article, therefore, has provided an alternative outlook on her work by centralizing the concept of ideology. Its original contribution to the pertinent literature notwithstanding, the article has focused on a single film, meaning it has been limited in its scope. Future studies can be deepened by increasing the number of films examined. It would be possible to create more comprehensive and fruitful discussions by considering the concept of ideology from a wider perspective and also by including the director's other films in the analysis. Besides, a comparative analysis encompassing other Lebanese filmmakers could too yield interesting results.

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