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The Militant Image A Ciné-Geography Editors' Introduction

Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray

How is the militant image to be understood at this moment in this special issue that assembles research from London, Buenos Aires, Paris, New York and Lisbon? Expansively, capaciously, exorbitantly: the militant image comprises any form of image or sound – from essay film to fiction feature, from observational documentary to found-footage ciné-pamphlet, from newsreel to agitational reworkings of colonial film production – produced in and through film-making practices dedicated to the liberation struggles and revolutions of the late twentieth century. This special issue on the ciné-geography of the militant image revisits the archives of these moments in order to reconstitute necessarily partial examples of the most contested and the most influential as well as the most overlooked formulations of the militant image that were proposed throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. The former include Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's notion of Third Cinema; the latter, Getino's notion of militant cinema as an internal category of Third Cinema and Edouard de Laurot's notion of *cinéma engagé*.¹

Within the multiple contexts of Tricontinental militancy, how is the term ciné-geography to be understood?² What does the term help to make thinkable? Ciné-geography designates situated cinecultural practices in an expanded sense, and the connections – individual, institutional, aesthetic and political – that link them transnationally to other situations of urgent struggle. It refers not just to individual films but also to the new modes of production, exhibition, distribution, pedagogy and training made possible by forms of political organisation and affiliation. A critical component is the invention of discursive platforms such as gatherings, meetings, festivals, screenings, classes and groups founded by a range of students, activists, workers, film-makers, artists, critics, editors, teachers and many others at decisive moments in order to mobilise collective strategies that may have been evolving for some time. It includes the speeches, statements, essays, poems, declarations, manifestos and anthologies in which the aspirations of this transnational network of affiliated movements were

1. As formulated in 'Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World', first published in *Tricontinental*, 13 October 1969, and republished in *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, ed Michael Chanan, British Film Institute and Channel Four Television, 1983, pp 17–27.
2. The term Tricontinental derives from the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, held in Havana in January, 1966. As Robert J C Young argues, this conference can be understood as the 'formal initiation of a space of international resistance of which the field of postcolonial theory would be a product'. Robert J C Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p 213.

clarified and articulated. And it refers to the medial circuits of dissemination through which these texts and films travelled and were (mis)translated in order to multiply the ways and places in which cinema could be ‘instrumentalised’, to use Getino’s term, as a tool of radical social change in processes of decolonisation and revolution. Lastly, the term ciné-geography designates the afterlives of the militant image, the digital platforms, formats, applications, files, torrents and burns through which it continues to circulate as a fourth-, fifth- and sixth-generation travelling image; a fragmented sonimage that operates as a material index of social relations, capable, at unexpected moments and in tangential ways, of reanimating intense moments of upheaval.

The notion of geography deployed by this special issue draws upon Irit Rogoff’s notion of ‘relational geography’ in which objectivities and subjectivities that may at first appear antagonistic or isolated are brought into close proximity through a practice of mapping that acknowledges its own partiality. Relational geography, according to Rogoff, does not operate, as does classical geography, from:

... a single principle that maps everything in an outward-bound motion with itself at the centre. Instead, it is cumulative, it lurches sideways, it is constructed out of chance meetings in cafés, of shared reading groups at universities, of childhood deprivations that could speak to one another, of snatches of music on transistor radios, of intense rages, of glimmers of hope offered by ideas that enabled imagining a better world.³

Ciné-geography indicates an interdisciplinary practice of mapping the affinities, proximities and affiliations of ciné-cultures that emerged from and participated in the conflictual and connective militant politics of anti-colonial struggle and revolutionary decolonisation in the late twentieth century.

What is assembled here are episodes from contemporary research that aspires to track the trajectories between specific films, that draws points of contact between film-making practices, that excavates certain theoretical concepts in order to reconstruct the ciné-political geographies that these concepts and practices helped to produce. The contributions return to the multiple formulations of the militant image in order to explore the aesthetic strategies that were made thinkable and possible in these singular historical conjunctures. Returning to the archives of this moment obliges contemporary thinkers to confront the accreted condescension that the present, in all its accumulated superiority, bears towards the recent yet distant pasts of Tricontinental militancy. Such a project involves a series of encounters with practices and formulations that are often deemed embarrassing and foolhardy, if not altogether discredited by contemporary historiography.

The inherited effect of such cautions and warnings against revisiting Tricontinentalist culture has been, until recently, to steer contemporary research away from this field. Accordingly, the construction of this special issue has continually confronted its editors with the extent of their ignorance. It has obliged them to face their lack of knowledge of militant ciné-production, its demands for democratisation, its circuits of distribution and exhibition, its modes of discussion, its passion for pedagogy, its styles of communist friendship. Such ignorance can be partly attributed to the sustained pedagogies of what might be called the

3. Rogoff proposes a practice of mapping that is ‘composed of aggregates of intensities, of insurgencies that link and empathise and spark off each other, of generational loyalties that cross boundaries, histories and languages’. Irit Rogoff, ‘Engendering Terror’, in *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*, ed Ursula Biemann, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2003, p 56.

4. For the philosophical formulations of neoliberalism see Michel Foucault, 'The Model of Homo Oeconomicus', in *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978–79*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008, pp 267–89. For its political strategies see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 2008. For its specifically British variant see Andy Beckett, *From Pinochet in Picadilly: Britain and Chile's Hidden History*, Faber & Faber, London, 2003. For its contemporary British impact, see Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, Hampshire, 2009.
5. See Peter Hallward, 'The Will of the People: Notes Towards a Dialectical Voluntarism', *Radical Philosophy*, 155, May/June 2009, pp 19–20.
6. See *Documenta 11: Platform 5*, exhibition catalogue, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002, and Okwui Enwezor, ed, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*, Prestel, Munich and London, 2003. See also artist Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc's installation display of the *Tricontinental* journal and design of a new poster for the continuous screening of Sarah Maldoror's debut film *Monangambee* (1969) at 'Manifesta 8: The European Biennial of Contemporary Art', Murcia, 2010. On the graphic design and militant imagery of *Tricontinental*, see Babak Radboy, 'Revolution by Design', *Bidouin: Arts and Culture From the Middle East*, Library 22, Autumn 2010, pp 162–77. Other cultural and artistic projects that have contributed to this turn include Petra Bauer and Dan Kidner's screening programme 'Visions, Divisions and Revisions: Political Film and Film

neoliberal project, which in all of its multiple forms has sought to consign the idea of militancy to the trash icon of history in the name of a contemporaneity that Alain Badiou has recently described as one of Restoration.⁴ Simultaneously, successive philosophical critiques of the general will have critiqued, often convincingly, the capacity of voluntarism that informed the modes of collectivity through which Tricontinental militancy assumed its force.⁵

What defines the present moment, then, is the ambition to understand the militant image as a form of newness that is distinct from that of contemporaneity. This aspiration, carried out against the normalisation of neoliberalism and in full recognition of the critiques of the will mounted by contemporary philosophical thought, participates in and is informed by the artistic turn towards research into militant cultural production that emerged in the wake of the exhibitions 'Documenta 11' and 'The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994' curated by Okwui Enwezor.⁶ In their scope and their scale, these exhibition projects proposed platforms and constructed contexts that amounted to nothing less than a revision of the historiographies of the present; from these multiple perspectives, it became possible to articulate modes of admiration for the ways in which militant film-making actualised the potentialities of the visible and the audible against the odds.

The aspiration specific to this special issue should therefore be situated within the recent histories of critical encounters with militant cinematic practices. In 'A Closer Look at Third Cinema' Jonathan Buchsbaum argued that an Anglo-American context of arrested translation had separated the initial formulation of Third Cinema from its contexts of Argentinian political practice.⁷ Within the emergent discipline of English-language film studies, translators, editors and critics had, with the best of intentions, isolated Solanas and Getino's essay from its subsequent revisions, thereby underdeveloping it as a theoretical concept while simultaneously elevating it to a point of ossification. In a journal such as *Afterimage*, the English translation of 'Towards a Third Cinema' was framed and introduced as a 'manifesto' even though Getino and Solanas had taken pains to describe their statement as just one of a series of texts that attempted to theorise a practice that was inherently speculative. By reconstructing the continual revisions carried out across a series of collaboratively written texts, published in response to and in anticipation of the political urgencies of Argentina from 1968 onwards, and by resituating 'Towards a Third Cinema' within this context of sustained volatility, Buchsbaum restored the idea of the manifesto as a conditional speech act to the extent that the very idea of the manifesto could be rethought as the 'sketch of an hypothesis' that Solanas and Getino initially suggested.

Conjunctural complexity implies the renewed scrutiny of received historiographies of theoretical readings of translated texts as formulated during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Much of the scholarship on militant film carried out in the 1980s and 1990s could be characterised by its desire to extend the precincts of Third Cinema towards previously overlooked national cinemas such as those of the Philippines or Nicaragua. The search, then, was for films, film-makers and film-making practices that could be appointed heir apparent to Third Cinema. The purpose was to ensure succession into the present. The quest to locate contemporary

Theory in the 1970s and 1980s' in the group exhibition 'A History of Irritated Material', Raven Row, 2010, Florian Zeyfang's co-curatorial project '4D—4Dimensions, 4 Decades', conceived for the 8th Habana Bienal and anthologised in Lisa Schmidt-Colinet, Alex Schmoeger, Eugenio Valdes Figueroa and Florian Zeyfang, eds, *Pabellón Cuba: Art, Architecture and Film in Cuba after the Revolution*, b_books, Berlin, 2008, The Otolith Group's curatorial project 'The Ghosts of Songs: A Retrospective of the Black Audio Film Collective', 2007, and the publication in Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, eds, *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2007 and the publication by Sarah White, Roxy Harris and Sharmila Beezmohun, eds, *A Meeting of the Continents: The International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books Revisited: History, Memories, Organisation and Programmes 1982–1995*, New Beacon Books and George Padmore Institute, London, 2005. Films that have contributed to this turn include *November* (2004), directed by Hito Steyerl and *The Otolith Trilogy* (2003–2009) by the Otolith Group. See Marius Babias and Sophie Goltz, eds, *Hito Steyerl*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein/Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 2010 and Emily Pethick and Anna Colin, eds, *A Long Time Between Suns*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2009. This contemporary tendency was prefigured in works by the artist Renée Green such as 'Partially Buried in Three Parts' (1995–1997). See Nicole Schweizer, ed, *Renée Green: Ongoing Becomings, Retrospective 1989–2009*, JRP Ringier, Zürich, 2009.

7. Jonathan Buchsbaum, 'A Closer Look at Third

equivalents for Third Cinema has preoccupied English-speaking film studies since the 1980s when the demise of many Leftist and anti-imperialist mass movements around the world coincided with the possibilities that were opening up in Britain with the advent of Channel Four.⁸

In 1982 Teshome Gabriel's *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*⁹ reworked Solanas and Getino's notion of Third Cinema by mapping it onto Frantz Fanon's theorisation of the three stages of cultural production during the process of decolonisation. Gabriel's notion of Third Cinema was taken up at the 40th Edinburgh International Film Festival from 11 to 13 August 1986 which hosted 'Third Cinema: Theories and Practices', a 'three day conference addressing theories and practices associated with the notion of Third Cinema'.¹⁰ This event marked the resurgence of Anglo-American film scholarship's engagement with Third Cinema. Gabriel's rereading enabled Third Cinema to operate as a category generous enough to allow essayistic film-maker theorists from Britain such as Black Audio Film Collective, *Screen* journal critics such as Paul Willemen and scholars based in the American academy such as Gabriel himself to insist upon its potential as a concept even as it was open to revision and qualification.¹¹ By the 1990s, the term Third Cinema tended to refer to films directed by a range of Third World film-makers such as Jorge Sanjinés, Ousmane Sembène and Souleyman Cissé. The notion of Third Cinema was reconfigured so that it now encompassed films that articulated what might be understood, in Deleuzian terms, as a 'collective utterance' expressive of the local communities in which the films were made, even though their production practices were far closer to an auteurist model of film-making than to the militant collectives such as Newsreel that Solanas and Getino had cited.

One way of characterising this special issue would be to note its preoccupation with the production of historical distances rather than with the investment in contemporaneity to be found in previous decades of scholarship. By constructing a historical distance from the certitudes of the present, the geography of those conjunctures becomes apparent. In 'One, Two... Third Cinema', Buchsbaum returns to the simultaneous publication of 'Towards a Third Cinema' in Spanish, French, English and Italian in *Tricontinental* 13, October 1969. The multilingual form of the *Tricontinental* journal was understood as an intervention into the languages of colonial Europe in order to forge new solidarities with Third World internationalism. Through a comparative analysis of the differences between the original Spanish version, its English version and subsequent Spanish revisions that were not translated into English, each of which re-elaborated its previous formulation, what emerges is the biography of a concept, a mapping of a volatile discursive terrain that was 'changing in subtle ways in response to the rapidly changing political situation on the ground in Argentina'.

Mariano Mestman's essay, 'Third Cinema/Militant Cinema: At the Origins of the Argentinian Experience (1968–1971)', situates Cine Liberación's newly translated essay 'Militant Cinema: An Internal Category of Third Cinema' (1971) within the volatile milieu of the era, providing a sense of how Cine Liberación, the collective formed by Getino, Gerardo Vallejo, Nemesio Juárez, Solanas and others, positioned themselves in relation to other collectives of the time and in relation to

Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 21:2, 2001, pp 153–66.

8. As Michael Chanan points out, Channel Four had a remit to produce so-called minority-interest programmes that provided new opportunities for broadcasting films and videos from the Third World while its formal recognition of the Workshop Declaration, which included the experimental and militant film-making workshops formed in the 1970s as well as the then newly established Black and Asian film and video collectives, allowed for a brief efflorescence of cultural practice that might be characterised as one of Third Television. See Michael Chanan, 'The Changing Geography of Third Cinema', *Screen*, 38:4, 1997, p 384.
9. Teshome Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982.
10. An event documented and disseminated by David Wills in 'Edinburgh Film Festival, 1986', *Framework* 32/33, 1986, and subsequently anthologised in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds, *Questions of Third Cinema*, British Film Institute, London, 1989.
11. See Jim Pines, Preface, *ibid*, p viii, in which Gabriel is argued to have 'effectively globalised' the concept of Third Cinema. See also Paul Willemen, 'The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflection', *ibid*, p 15.
12. Most recently and influentially by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Routledge, London, 2003, pp 260–71.
13. See 'Traitement du Lumpenprolétariat par le cinéma d'avant-garde', the fluctuating political context. The essay clarifies the specific form of Solanas and Getino's support for Perón's National Justicialista Movement, the Peronist theses formulated in Part 3 of *La hora de los hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces* that were often criticised by European and American supporters of Third Cinema.¹² 'Militant Cinema: An Internal Category of Third Cinema' looks back to the second half of 1969 and the start of 1970, when students from film schools in Santa Fé, Buenos Aires and La Plata formed screening groups to project *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) in political meetings. These groups connected to each other and, in doing so, formed circuits of distribution, exhibition and discussion that were in turn documented in the pages of catalogues of alternative distributors that informed the decisions concerning the kinds of films that were screened and discussed throughout Europe. What emerges from Mestman's text is a detailed picture of the 'instrumentalisation of film in the process of liberation'.

It is this 'instrumentalisation of film in the process of liberation' that Getino elaborates in 'Militant Cinema: An Internal Category of Third Cinema'. To instrumentalise militant cinema was not to organise a screening but to organise a 'film event', a screening with discussion situated within the context of a political event. For Getino, the 'moment of communication (the film-event) is a terrain still new, but full of possibilities' that required 'organisers who know how to liberate the screening space, developing the critical feature of collective decision and participation'.

The 'cine-acción' or 'cinema event' was theorised as an encounter capable of catalysing the latent potentialities of the spectator, presumed passive, into the active 'protagonist' of the cine-event; this protagonist bore the same relationship to cinema as the militant actor to political process. What is striking is the unguaranteed and tentative nature of this process. Getino admitted that there 'still persists during the projections of militant cinema the attitude that one is "in front of a film" and not a political event'. Instrumentalisation, as it was formulated in 1970 in Argentina, is quite distinct from contemporary understandings of the term; here, it denotes an entire range of practices that amount to what Jacques Rancière calls the 'principle of representation' specific to the militant ciné-culture of the era. The forms that this culture could take become evident in the inventory provided by Getino that describes the aesthetic approaches and collective uses of the strategic cinema essay, the tactical cinema essay, informational cinema or the cinema of denunciation and pamphlet cinema or the cinema of agitation.

Getino's inventory points to the forms and functions of the militant image. The theorisation, excavation and programming of its unknown terrain have been the project of the film theorist Nicole Brenez, whose research has informed the editorial thinking of this issue from the outset.¹³ In the essay 'À propos de Nice and the Extremely Necessary, Permanent Invention of the Cinematic Pamphlet' (2005),¹⁴ Brenez formulates a genealogy for the form of the ciné-pamphlet or the documentary tract that is specific to militant cinema throughout the twentieth century; this genealogy is elaborated into the tradition designated the Grand International Revolutionary Style.¹⁵ Brenez's thinking is exemplified by her essay 'Edouard de Laurot: Engagement as Prolepsis', which introduces and recontextualises the overlooked films and essays

Séguier, Paris, 2007, 'Cinemas d'avant-garde', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 2007, 'For an Insubordinate (or Rebellious) History of Cinema', accessed at *Framework: the Journal of Cinema and Media* at <http://www.frameworkonline.com/Issue50/502nb.html>

14. Accessed at rouge.com on 11 October 2010, at http://www.rouge.com.au/7/propos_de_nice.html

15. See Nicole Brenez, ed, *Abel Ferrara*, Adrian Martin, trans, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, p 54.

16. See *Cinéaste*, IV:3, winter 1970/1971. De Laurot featured on the front cover of *Cinéaste*, IV:2, autumn 1970.

17. See John Mowitt, *Re-takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005.

18. See http://www.rouge.com.au/7/propos_de_nice.html

19. Klein's portrait of Eldridge Cleaver, filmed in Algiers in 1970, can be productively situated in relation to his essay-film on the First Pan-African Festival of Algiers analysed by Olivier Hadouchi in this issue.

20. Three films that elaborate upon the implications of the 'guerrilla imaginary' in specific ways are Harun Farocki's *Some Problems of Anti-Authoritarian and Anti-Imperialist Urban Warfare in the Case of West Berlin or: Their Newspapers* (1968) Robert Kramer's *Ice* (1969) and Ivan Dixon's *The Spook that Sat by the Door* (1973). See also Martha Rosler's series of collages, *Bringing the War Home* (1967–1972).

of the film-maker, critic and theorist Edouard de Laurot. Brenez points out that 'Towards a Third Cinema' entered American film discourse in 1971 through its publication in a special issue of *Cinéaste* on Latin American Cinema.¹⁶ 'Towards a Third Cinema' was not an isolated manifesto but existed in dialogue with texts written by de Laurot, under the name of Yves de Laurot, and by the Bolivian film-maker Jorge Sanjinés. While John Mowitt has recently re-engaged with Sanjinés's films,¹⁷ de Laurot's formulation of *cinéma engagé*, articulated in his 1965 manifesto and exemplified in films such as *The Wager* (1965) made by the *Cinéma Engagé* collective, has disappeared from contemporary critical discourse despite its prominent role within East Coast *ciné-culture*.

Brenez traces the development of de Laurot's Sartrean aesthetic of engagement through an analysis of the film *Black Liberation* (1967), an expressionist evocation of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense that envisioned New York transformed by a 'field of manoeuvres belonging to the urban guerilla'.¹⁸ *Black Liberation's* dramatic scenography stood in counterpoint to subsequent documentaries on the Black Panthers directed by the Newsreel Collective such as *Off the Pig* (1968) and *Mayday* (1969), Agnès Varda's *Black Panthers* (1968) and William Klein's *Eldridge Cleaver* (1970),¹⁹ each of which sought to capture the contingencies set in motion by the volatile presence of a revolutionary movement. Brenez goes on to situate de Laurot's essay 'Composing as the Praxis of Revolution: The Third World and the USA' (1970–1971), re-published here for the first time, within the context of five theoretical texts written by de Laurot and published by *Cinéaste* between 1970 and 1971. Throughout his essay, de Laurot draws on examples from the screenplay of *Listen, America!* (1968), his recently completed film that advocated a clandestine 'Second Front' composed of covert groups, inspired by Che Guevara's 'foco' theory of revolution by means of guerrilla warfare and modelled on the North Vietnamese peasant whose collective presence could combat American imperialism 'from within'. The 'guerrilla imaginary' of *Listen America!* drew on the newly formulated homology between the revolutionary struggle of Third World nations against the American military industrialist empire and the struggle of 'urban guerrillas' located within the metropole of the 'principal enemy'. As theorised by the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, this homology was widely taken up within militant circles, providing the point of departure for the formation of the Weather Underground, whose bombings and communiqués provided the inspiration for the screenplay of *Listen, America!*²⁰

De Laurot's 'Composing as the Praxis of Revolution: The Third World and the USA' focuses upon the artistic methodology of prolepsis as a political discourse. For de Laurot, prolepsis is to be understood as the 'power to perceive futurity within the present'. For cinema to project the power of the 'imaginary desirable', which can only emerge through conflict with what exists, cinema must be understood relationally as a 'rapprochement' between film production and revolutionary praxis. The collectivity of production and the collectivity of becoming revolutionary are to be understood as phases in a 'dialectical mode of composition' whose aim is to bring 'figures on the screen' into existence through the

21. Hito Steyerl, 'The Articulation of Protest', 09 2002, <http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/0303/steyerl/en>
22. SLON stands for the Société de Lancement des Œuvres Nouvelles or Society for Launching New Work.
23. See Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, Reaktion Books, London, pp 109–47.
24. In December 1967, Marker and Mario Marret filmed a second strike by workers at another Rhodiaceta textile factory in Lyon that formed the basis of the film *A bientôt, j'espère/Hope to See You Soon* (1968). At a screening for workers in April 1968, workers who criticised the film were encouraged to constitute themselves as a cine-collective called Groupe Medvedkine de Besançon, in order to decide on film form for themselves. See Lupton, *op cit*, pp 115–19.
25. Although the *Cinetracts* were anonymous, the styles of Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Philippe Garrel and Jackie Raynal remain clearly discernible.
26. See Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture*, British Film Institute, London, 1978, pp 27–33. Alberto Toscano argues that for Marker and his 'comrades in the collective and worker led cinema groups, like the Groupes Medvedkine and the production unit SLON, the destructive creation of new forms... is inseparable from the generation of new communist social relations'. Alberto Toscano, 'Destructive Creation, or the Communism of the Senses', in Grant Watson, Gerrie van Noord and Gavin Everall, eds, *Make Everything New: A Project on Communism*, Bookworks/Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 2006, p 127
27. SLON's *Maspero: Words Have a Meaning/On vous parle de Paris: Maspero, les mots ont un sens* (1970)

confrontation with the present understood as a condition of lacunae. It is from this perspective that de Laurot criticised *The Hour of the Furnaces* for its depiction of peasants victimised by imperialism in contrast with the proleptic principle that evokes 'what will be as already existent-yet metaphorically'.

What links and divides de Laurot with Getino and Solanas, with Chris Marker, William Klein and Thomas Harlan is the aspiration to formulate what Hito Steyerl calls a 'montage of the political'²¹ through the production of what Vertov named 'optical connections'. In 'The Elephants at the End of the World: Chris Marker and Third Cinema', François Lecoïnte traces Marker's participation, as facilitator, producer and editor, within the co-operative structure of SLON,²² the militant collective that aimed to challenge the organisational hierarchy of the French film industry.²³ The title of *Loin du Vietnam/Far from Vietnam* (1967), SLON's first film, pointed to the distant proximities forged between the 'here' of France and the 'elsewhere' of the Vietnamese Liberation Front's armed struggle against the USA. *Far from Vietnam* was premiered at the Rhodiaceta textile factory in Besançon, South-Eastern France, in October 1967; this decision stemmed from the close relationship forged between the technicians who worked on *Far from Vietnam* and the workers at Rhodiaceta during the filming of their month-long strike and occupation in February and March 1967.²⁴ Footage from the Rhodiaceta strike was integrated into *Far from Vietnam*, directly inserting industrial militancy into the context of anti-imperialism. Lecoïnte traces the new modes of production, exhibition and distribution enacted by the *Nouvelle Société/New Society* series directed by the Groupes Medvedkine workers' collectives, SLON's *On vous parle/Speaking to You* (1968–1973) counter-information films and the anonymous series of silent black-and-white sixteen-millimetre negative stock *Cinetracts* released during the general strike of May 1968,²⁵ all of which constituted specific modes of cine-communist alliance.²⁶ SLON's films, like the Petite Collection Maspero book series that commissioned and published translations of Võ Nguyễn Giáp's *People's War People's Army* (1961), Ernesto Che Guevara's *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (1965) and Mao Tse-tung's *Selected Writings I, II, III* (1967), among others,²⁷ thus helped to transpose what Kristin Ross described as the 'geography' of the 'vast international and distant struggle' of 'the North/South axis' onto the 'lived geographies, the daily itineraries, of students and intellectuals' in Paris from the early 1960s through to the late 1970s.²⁸

Olivier Hadouchi's re-reading of William Klein's essay-film *Pan-African Festival of Algiers* (1969) in his article 'African Culture Will Be Revolutionary or Will Not Be' demonstrates how the militant essay-film both enables and embodies a geographical reconfiguration and realignment. Hadouchi points out that Klein's film holds much in common with *The Hour of the Furnaces*; both films: '... synthesise, rethink, radicalise and dialecticise that which came before in terms of militant cinema in relation to a given situation and space, in this case, Africa and Latin America, in order to inscribe it within a new history that is both cinematic and political.' The tactics of détournement – of subverting and inverting colonialism's visual apparatus of maps and newsreel – combine with images and sounds of African

documented François Maspero, the editor, publisher and bookstore owner. See Bruno Guichard, Julien Hage and Alain Léger, eds, *François Maspero et les paysages humains*, A plus d'un titre, 2009, pp 161–200, pp 211–51 for the catalogue of Cahiers Libres, 1959–1982.

28. Ross, op cit, pp 84–90
29. Amílcar Cabral, *A Arma da Teoria: Unidade e Luta 1*, PAIG and SARL, 1976, p 225
30. Amílcar Cabral was secretary general of PAIGC, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, founded in 1963, which engaged in armed struggle against the Portuguese until 1974. Antonio Agostinho Neto was leader of the MPLA, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, founded in 1961, which engaged in armed combat with the Portuguese until 1975. FRELIMO, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, was founded in 1962. It was initially led by Eduardo Mondlane, then, after his death in 1969, by Samora Machel, who became President when Mozambique gained independence in 1975.
31. See Ros Gray, 'Translating the African Revolution: Portugal's Revolutionary Process', in *Translating the Image*, ed Irit Rogoff, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2011.
32. 'Throughout the 1960s wars of liberation raged across the colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and huge numbers of Portuguese and African men were drafted into the colonial army to defend Portugal's imperial claims. The Portuguese army met fierce and committed resistance from people's armies whose tenacity and eventual success defied their lack of military resources. Increasingly, the fascist regime was out of kilter

armed struggle to present a new vision of militant decolonisation across the Continent.

Klein's involvement serves as another instance of the conjuncture exemplified by *Far from Vietnam*, in which the European avant-garde came to serve a combative mode of anti-imperialism. Like *Far from Vietnam*, the film is a collective project and a polyvocal text. Images and sounds from previous and ongoing armed struggles punctuate the argument that unfolds regarding the militant turn taking place across the Continent in opposition to the versions of Negritude then being promoted as official cultural policy in Léopold Sédar Senghor's Senegal, which involved cooperation with France, the former colonial power. The Pan-African Cultural Festival of Algiers was one of a series of events and gatherings across the African continent during the late 1960s and 1970s that articulated a new idea emerging from the lusophone armed struggles in which liberation was conceived in terms of an 'act of culture' in the words of Amílcar Cabral.²⁹ *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers* forges a political connection between the recent memory of Algeria's battle for independence, the struggle against neo-colonialism by independent African nation-states and the resistance of peoples still dominated by colonial and white-minority rule in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa.

During the 1960s, PAIGC, MPLA and FRELIMO,³⁰ representatives of whom are seen in *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers* alongside members of the Black Panther Party, formed people's armies that had, by the end of the decade, and against tremendous odds, begun to challenge over 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule. The armed struggles in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique began in the early 1960s as former British and French colonies were gaining independence. The political philosophies formed in the contexts of lusophone military struggle resonated with Fanon's insight that independence was not, in itself, sufficient to guarantee liberation for African peoples: instead, a revolution was required that would be initiated within each subject and would catalyse new and revolutionary forms of African modernity. In this conception, culture had a reciprocal relationship to revolution: it was a manifestation and an articulation of the new kinds of singular and collective subjectivities that were emerging through anti-colonial struggle. Culture had the potential to act as an agent of the social transformations that produced these new forms of subjectivity. The ideals that galvanised the lusophone liberation struggles were thus radically anti-essentialist and internationalist. African liberation, Cabral proposed, would contribute to world culture by emancipating humanity from oppression.

From this perspective, José Filipe Costa's essay 'When Cinema Forges the Event: The Case of *Torre Bela*' returns to analyse the radical desires unleashed by the independence movements in lusophone Africa.³¹ *Torre Bela* (1977) is a film made in Portugal by Thomas Harlan during the Carnation Revolution that documented peasant workers, many of whom were illiterate and had not participated in political activity, seizing control of the estate where they worked and transforming the estate into a co-operative. The anti-colonial wars throughout lusophone Africa precipitated, to a large extent, the Carnation Revolution throughout Portugal.³² On 25 April 1974, the army, worn down and radicalised by nearly fifteen

both with international moves towards decolonisation and growing discontent within its army's rank and file. Many young soldiers in the Portuguese army came to identify more with the oppressed peoples they were fighting against than the small-minded and obsolete ideology of Salazar, whose government had underdeveloped rural Portugal and left many of its people impoverished and illiterate. Their experiences in Africa radicalised them and the army became a breeding ground for revolt.' Ros Gray, *ibid*, p.

years of colonial conflict, seized power and ousted the fascist colonial regime, thereby ushering in a period of violent instability. For a time, the Communist Party seemed to be in the ascendant. For a few hundred days, it seemed, at times, as if something thought to be impossible in the late twentieth century might actually happen: a Socialist revolution at the very western tip of Europe.

During this revolutionary period, cinema became a sphere of intense radical activity as film-makers took charge of the national film archive and experimented with different forms of collective organisation.³³ It was a moment when many avant-garde Portuguese film-makers perceived themselves as being in solidarity with the liberation movements: they too were oppressed by the 'cultural and political colonialism' of foreign distribution monopolies; they too needed to harness cinema to a national revolutionary project.³⁴ Harlan's crew was one of many groups of foreign film-makers that sought to document the revolution. They worked alongside the Portuguese 'production units' and film-making co-operatives formed with the aim of making cinema respond to the needs of the Portuguese masses by destroying the folkloric image of a peasantry whose quiescence had enabled a quasi-feudal system of rural labour to persist into the late twentieth century.

Against the tendency to read *Torre Bela* in terms of its seeming 'immediacy', Costa's analysis unpicks the affective power that distinguishes it from other militant films produced during the Carnation Revolution. What Costa, in an affirmative sense, calls 'manipulation' operates at multiple levels of the film's making. He reveals the extent to which Harlan, who had previously been in Chile during Allende's popular government and later attempted to film in revolutionary Mozambique, was a key player in enabling the occupation to take place and securing the support of the army. As such, *Torre Bela* embodies the desire that the film-makers not only document the revolution but also, through cinema, become participants in revolution.

In contemporary Portugal, the ascendancy of neoliberalism means that the logic of revolutionary legitimacy that underpins the seizure of private property is both controversial and disquieting. Fragments of *Torre Bela* circulate through the contemporary Portuguese mediascape, frequently appearing uncredited in current affairs programmes, its colours altered to grainy black and white so as to evoke the veracity of newsreel. Functioning as if it could be a transparent window onto the past, *Torre Bela* seems to offer a tantalising glimpse of a euphoric moment of revolutionary tumult, one at times deemed by official Portuguese institutions to be a national embarrassment.

As the revolutionary process in Portugal came to an end in 1976 and the political situation 'normalised', the projects of nation-building in the former colonies were only just beginning. Many of the radical film-makers, photographers and journalists who had gathered in Portugal relocated to Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. A number, including Harlan, were drawn to Mozambique, and it was here, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, that the aspiration to make cinema an agent of revolutionary change began most fully to be realised.

One of the many foreign film-makers who demonstrated a sustained commitment to Mozambique was Margaret Dickinson, who made the documentary *Behind the Lines* (1971) about FRELIMO's armed strug-

33. See José Filipe Costa, *O cinema ao Poder!*, Hugin, Lisbon, 2002

34. José Fonseca e Costa and Luís Galvão Teles, 'O cinema em Portugal na queda do Fascismo', *Cinéfilo*, 33, 25 May 1974. Reprinted in Maria João Madeira, ed, *25 de Abril no Cinema: Antologia de textos*, Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema, Lisbon, 1999, pp 28-9

35. The INC was in many ways the culmination of hopes to decolonise the moving image – its production, distribution and exhibition – that began to be formulated during the armed struggles for independence in Lusophone Africa during the 1960s as film-makers across the Continent organised themselves and called upon the new nation-states to challenge the imperialist hegemony of the moving image. See Ros Gray, Mamadou Diouf and Jinny Prais, eds, 'The Vanguard of the World: Building the Cinematic Presence of the African Revolution', in *Building an African Presence in the World in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2011.

36. See Manthia Diawara's chapter 'Film Production in Lusophone Africa: Toward the Kuxa Kanema in Mozambique', in his book *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992 and his chapter 'Sonimage in Mozambique', in Gareth James and Florian Zeyfang, eds, *I said I love. That is the Promise. The Tvideo Politics of Jean-Luc Godard*, b_books, Berlin, 2003. For more recent research see Ros Gray, 'Ambitions of Cinema: Revolution, Event, Screen', doctoral thesis, 2007, University of London, and forthcoming publications. Margarida Cardoso's documentary *Kuxa Kanema: The Birth of Cinema* (2003) is also very informative and evocative, and includes an impressive range of archival material and interviews with key figures. Dragustin Popovitch made *Nachingwea* (1975), *Venceremos* (1968) and *Do Romuva ao Maputo* (1975); Robert Van Lierop made *A Luta Continua* (1971) and *O Povo Organizado* (1976); Celso and Luccas made *25* in 1975. The project led by Rouch is

gle. After independence, Dickinson worked at the Instituto Nacional de Cinema (INC), which was set up in 1975. Dickinson's article on her experience of training film-makers in 1976 is reprinted here with an introductory essay that contextualises her dedication to decolonisation in relation to the contexts of British ciné-politics and the anti-apartheid movement. By the time of independence, the majority of Mozambicans had no prior experience of the moving image, but cinema was recognised as having a key role in the formation of a national identity constituted during the armed struggle. The INC's mission was thus 'to deliver to the people an image of the people'.³⁵

Dickinson's work in Mozambique should be understood in relation to and in distinction from the projects of other film-makers such as the Yugoslav Dragustin Popovitch, the African-American Robert Van Lierop, the Brazilians José Celso and Celso Luccas, the French Jean Rouch and Jean-Luc Godard, the Cuban Santiago Álvarez and the Mozambican-born Brazilian Ruy Guerra, all of whom made repeated visits to Mozambique during the late 1970s. While Popovitch, Van Lierop, Celso and Luccas were among those who made films about the armed struggle and the moment of independence, Jean Rouch was involved in training students at Eduardo Mondlane University to make 'film-postcards' on Super-8, which were intended to have a function in community development.³⁶ Godard, by contrast, was invited to conduct research that resulted in a speculative proposal to create a liberated form of television production by training local communities to make films on video. The project was rejected and the trauma of this experience seems to have obliquely informed his disquieting video essay *Changer d'Image/To Alter the Image* (1982). Álvarez was part of a Cuban delegation that made a film and trained staff at the INC as part of the Cuban film institute ICAIC's programme of support for African film-makers.³⁷ Guerra first returned to Mozambique in 1976; by the time he made *Mueda: Memória e massacre* (1979) he had become a key adviser to the INC and had a huge influence over its policies during the early 1980s. Various visions of what a liberated, revolutionary moving image might look like thus circulated through Maputo during the heady early years of independence.

Dickinson situates her own contribution to the INC in the context of the connection that progressive film-making activists made between their struggle within the British film industry and the struggle to decolonise film-making in Africa. In both of these spheres of militant activity, nationalising the film industry was understood to be the most effective strategy for combating the global dominance of American commercial cinema. As Dickinson explains, the INC survived a boycott by the MPEA due to its new system of acquisition that was devised to break Mozambique's position of dependency on American film distributors in order to build a collection of international socialist films that could be used to teach Mozambican audiences about the struggles of oppressed peoples elsewhere.

But it was in her role as a teacher that Dickinson became involved in one of the INC's most socially transformative projects. Under Portuguese colonial rule, Mozambicans were given only menial roles in private production companies. FRELIMO's decision to reverse this situation indicates the extent to which, in the first few years of independence, the Mozambican government was committed to a total overhaul of cinema in

discussed in Jacques d'Arthuys et al, 'Une Expérience de Super 8 au Mozambique', in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 300, 1979.

37. Cuba's support for Mozambique continued through the opportunities it offered to Mozambican film-makers such as João Ribeiro and Orlando Mesquita to train at the ICAIC or Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos in the 1980s.

line with the social transformation taking place across the country. The project to teach film-making to young people with no prior practical or intellectual knowledge of cinema was controversial within the INC, and the end of the project coincided with a move away from the early years of radical experimentation towards a drive to make the INC a more efficient and professional institution through which the State could harness cinema as a tool of information and mobilisation as a precursor to the arrival of television in Mozambique. Through the 1980s, however, the FRELIMO government became increasingly compromised by RENAMO attacks that were sponsored by Rhodesia and by South Africa in retaliation for FRELIMO's support of the African National Congress.³⁸ The death of President Samora Machel in 1986 was followed in 1989 by FRELIMO's formal renunciation of Marxist-Leninism, which paved the way for multi-party elections and the government's embrace of the free market.

Dickinson marks the end of the INC with the fire in 1991 that partly destroyed its building and film archive. In the period prior to the conflagration, the Mozambican government set about demolishing the socialist structures it had attempted to build in order to satisfy international conditions for receiving financial support. At the INC, a new system of management promoted those with higher levels of education to managerial positions, precipitating a racial crisis. One of neoliberalism's first strategies was therefore to reverse the social transformation initiated by the militant pedagogy of the INC in order to restore the previous hierarchies in the name of modernisation.

Today in Mozambique, neoliberalism maintains order through a combination of saturation and amnesia. While commercial cinemas and television screens are dominated by foreign images, the surviving films made by the INC exist in an ambiguous relation to contemporary political conditions. The archive survives but is largely inaccessible. No longer maintained by the State, withdrawn from the public, beyond the reach of those who might wish to view and to restore them, the militant images circulate informally in poor copies, surfacing on rare occasions for specialist audiences.

Does this circulation characterise the afterlife of the militant image? The films examined in this issue were supported, sponsored, produced, exhibited, distributed, conserved and archived by institutions such as ICAIC and the INC that exemplified the policy of nationalised experimentation. After 1981, neoliberal free-market imperatives began to restructure cinema, dismantling state support in favour of privatisation, deregulation and competition. Hito Steyerl's recent essay 'In Defence of the Poor Image' productively examines the archives of the militant image within the digital economy of audiovisual capitalism, bringing to this familiar account a focus upon the implications of this materiality. The poor image, according to Steyerl, can be read in terms of a constellation of specific social forces, as a partial enactment of Julio Garcia Espinosa's manifesto *For an Imperfect Cinema*, written in 1969 and published in 1970. In the absence of state organisations able to maintain a distribution infrastructure or a sixteen millimetre or thirty-five millimetre archive, militant images are anthologised as DVD boxed sets³⁹ and simultaneously circulate outside State structures as poor images on illegal file-sharing platforms.⁴⁰ The artists, film-makers, curators and theo-

38. RENAMO, the anti-Communist Mozambican Resistance Movement/ Resistencia Nacional Mocambique, was founded in 1975 with the support first of the Rhodesian secret services and later the South African government, and led by Afonso Dhlakama.

39. Since 2008, the films of Jorge Sanjinés, Groupe Dziga Vertov, Groupes Medvedkine, Joris Ivens, Harun Farocki and Santiago Álvarez have all been released as DVD boxed sets or as double DVD sets.

40. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defence of the Poor Image', <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/94>

rists currently researching the modalities of the militant image continually negotiate the uncertainties of this compromised, clandestine condition. The re-animation of militancy in contemporary artistic compositions and configurations, often emerging from the informal and institutional spaces of contemporary art, answers to a demand to re-read the present from the perspective of a past that persists into the contemporary world and necessarily reconfigures its relation to history.

This special issue is necessarily partial; it brings together different research projects, conducted under specific conditions, each of which is dedicated to mapping a terrain that has been, and continues to be largely occluded. It seeks to bring together certain episodes from what Steyerl calls the 'historical genealogy of nonconformist information circuits' in order to begin to retrace its relational geographies, its transpositions, its parallel distribution circuits and its given situations and spaces. In doing so, it aims to participate in the turn towards revising and rethinking the capacities and potentialities of the militant image.