

Figurations of Solidarity

Movements of the Political in Minor Cinema

tfm Institut für Theater-, Film- und Medienwissenschaft & Research Platform Mobile Cultures & Societies

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Abstracts

1. Archives of Missing | Les Archives du Manquant | Archive des Vermisssens

Daho Djerbal (Université d'Alger II): *De la représentation du sujet colonial à la représentation du sujet libéré. Le cinéma algérien au défi de l'indépendance*

L'histoire que je voudrais conter est celle du difficile enfantement du cinéma algérien. et de ses tribulations tout au long du passage de la domination coloniale à la naissance d'une Algérie indépendante.

Elle porte tout d'abord sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler le point Zéro de la production cinématographique proprement algérienne et autochtone qui, faut-il le préciser, n'existait pas en tant que telle dans l'ordre colonial.

A l'appel du FLN à la grève générale des cours en février 1956, un groupe d'étudiants et quelques autres techniciens algériens au service du Gouvernement Général français en Algérie se concertent sur la voie à suivre. Ils décident de gagner les maquis en groupe mais après s'être munis, individuellement, d'un matériel cinématographique complet de prise de vues et de sons pour de petites équipes cinématographiques autonomes. Ils dévalisent les dépôts de matériel cinématographique de la télévision européenne à Alger et disparaissent (pour se consacrer) à l'action libératrice.

La montée au maquis (et donc le recours aux armes) avec un matériel dérobé aux institutions coloniales (par effraction) pour produire des images constitue la seconde rupture d'avec les maîtres des lieux. Celle-là est radicale et sans retour possible.

Le long et étroit chemin de la tradition cinématographique algérienne s'ouvrait donc sur un futur mythique d'une libération nationale. Encore fallait-il élaborer une pensée de la libération et une représentation cinématographique qui puissent être en adéquation avec la volonté libératrice du peuple algérien.

Libération par les armes et libération par l'image telle est la problématique nouvelle pour les pionniers du cinéma algérien au cœur même des maquis.

Tout à coup, le sujet colonial libéré de la domination de l'occupant étranger se trouve mis en demeure de s'exprimer par l'image en tant que sujet pensant et agissant par lui-même et développant les représentations de soi qu'il juge les plus adéquates à son être au monde. Le retour au pays de ceux qui avaient pris le maquis ou qui avaient été emprisonnés, de ceux qui vivaient en exil à l'étranger dans les pays de l'Est ou au Moyen Orient, ou ceux qui travaillaient dans les institutions françaises métropolitaines va poser, dès les premières rencontres la question des différences dans la conception, les contenus et les formes dans lesquelles devait s'exprimer l'art cinématographique naissant.

*From the representation of the colonial subject to the representation of the freed subject.
Algerian Cinema facing independence.*

The story I would like to tell is the story of the difficult birth of Algerian cinema and its tribulations during its passage from colonial domination towards national independence. This story, first of all, has to deal with what one could call the point zero of a truly Algerian and 'native' cinematographic production, which, obviously, did not have the right to exist as such in the colonial world.

Following the FLN's call for a general strike in February 1956, a group of students and a few Algerian technicians serving the French General Government in Algeria got together and discussed future paths. They decided to join the armed resistance collectively, forming small autonomous groups of

filmmakers after having armed themselves individually with cinematographic material, fully equipped with image and sound technology. Raiding the depot of film equipment of the European TV stations in Algiers, the group disappeared, committed to liberating action.

The mere act of joining the *maquis* (which always also means taking up arms) with stolen material—stolen from colonial institutions by way of intrusion—in order to produce images, constitutes the second rupture with the “masters” of the premises. This time, the rupture is radical and beyond return. The long and steadfast journey of the Algerian cinematographic tradition hence opens a mythic future of national liberation. Thinking in terms of liberation and a related form of cinematographic representation which would correspond to the liberating will of the Algerian people had yet to be developed.

At the very center of the *maquis*, liberation through armed resistance and liberation through image-making became crucial for the pioneers of Algerian cinema. Suddenly, the colonial subject, freed from being oppressed by the foreign settler, finds her/himself prompted to express her/himself through pictures as a self-determined thinking and acting subject, developing those figurations of self-representation that s/he judges to be most adequate in relation to her/his being in the world.

The return of those who joined the liberation army and had been imprisoned, of those who lived in exile in foreign countries in the East and the Middle East, or of those who were working in French metropolitan institutions raises the question of differences in conception, content, and form of this emergent art from the very beginning.

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Greg Thomas (Tufts University, Medford): *Missing George Jackson's Knife and Haile Gerima's Missing Wig: Intifada Archives of Solidarity, Kinship or Complicity -- Beyond the Media Spectacle of Hashtags*

The main character of Haile Gerima's *BUSH MAMA* (1975) is a woman named Dorothy who stares at on an iconic MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) poster -- every day -- till the film's climax when she returns home after work to find a white cop in her apartment trying to rape her young daughter, Luann. Suddenly we witness Dorothy explode into what Fanon would term “counter-violence.” She jumps on the cop's chest and commences to knife him to death with an umbrella, shrieking her fury and her release as a kind of soundtrack to her graphic Black resistance. Later, she proclaims: “The wig is off my head.”

Here, Gerima seems to evoke a film-ready statement from Fanon's *LES DAMNÉS DE LA TERRE* (1961): “Every spectator is a coward or a traitor.” The filmmaker shoots this scene with extreme deliberation: *BUSH MAMA* invites us not only to side with Dorothy cerebrally, but to identify with her completely --in ecstasy. It tests the nature of any “solidarity” proclaimed with her by supposed sympathizers -- without erotic identification and eventual collaboration in the flesh.

The counter-revolution of “History” would like us to forget all of this and the fact that Gerima's *BUSH MAMA* exists in a trilogy of Gerima films in dialogue with George Jackson. That caged Black Panther made a signature out of the slogan “War to the Knife” in *BLOOD IN MY EYE* (1972). His knife came back to life last year in the West Bank, if *nouveau* agents of “solidarity” (on the left) much prefer the rock and the slingshot. Both Fanon and “Comrade George” theorize the knife in an *intifada* practice of revolutionary self-determination. But they remain “unarchived” by the ignorance and amnesia of *nouveau* agents of “solidarity” (on social media) -- between Blacks and Palestine in particular.

Hence, this talk will recall Haile Gerima's “missing wig” in a new day when hashtag-activism would only recall the consumer “history” that is handed to them by “Enemies of the Sun.” This talk will also narrate why George Jackson's knife is missing from today's safe caricature of civil rights liberalism that effaces global Black Power critiques of everything. Finally, this talk will consequently rethink the politics of “solidarity” of terms of political complicity, kinship and complicity or revolutionary collaboration now that the language of “solidarity” has been commercialized for simple rhetorical statements devoid of serious revolutionary praxis on Planet Earth.

2. The Event of the Minoritarian | L'Évènement du Minoritaire | Das Ereignis des Minoritären

Marc Röllli (Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig): *Mikropolitik oder Die Kunst des Minoritär-Werdens*

Die Begriffe der „Mikropolitik“ und des „Minoritär-Werdens“ prägen Félix Guattari und Gilles Deleuze im Rahmen ihrer Kooperationen in den 1970er Jahren. Mit dem ‚Kleinen‘ und ‚Minderen‘ rufen sie Semantiken auf, die zeitgleich auch in Foucaults „Mikrophysik der Macht“ anklingen. Im Zentrum der Mikropolitik steht das Minoritär-Werden, das in die Repräsentation der Machtverhältnisse interveniert. Minoritäten scheint etwas Wesentliches zu fehlen, weil sie sich in einem makropolitischen System etablierter Ordnungen nicht angemessen repräsentiert finden. Für Guattari und Deleuze liegt in diesem Verfehlen der Identität – oder in der Zuschreibung eines Anderseins – ein differentielles Potential, das allerdings nur immanent aus sich heraus entfaltet werden kann. Dies gelingt, wenn die Identitätskonstruktionen von Mehrheiten und Minderheiten in mikropolitischen Prozessen transformiert werden. Ihre hierarchische, asymmetrisch fest gefügte Begründung wird dabei aufs Spiel gesetzt, indem sie sich im Element einer ungewissen Zukunft aufeinander beziehen.

Micropolitics or the Art of Becoming-Minor

The terms “micropolitics” and “becoming-minor” were coined by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in the context of their collaborations during the 1970s. Referring to the ‘small’ and the ‘minor,’ they invoke a semantics that simultaneously surfaces in Foucault’s “Microphysics of Power.” The process of becoming-minor as an intervention into representational forms of power relations is at the center of micropolitics. Minorities do not see themselves adequately represented in the macropolitical system of the established order and hence seem to be defined via this lack. According to Guattari and Deleuze, such a lack of identity – or the ascription of being-other – reveals a differential potential, which can only unfold immanently from inside itself. This unfolding succeeds only if constructions of identities are transformed through micropolitical processes both of majorities and minorities. Their hierarchical, asymmetrical, and solid grounding is jeopardized because both groups relate to each other in an uncertain future.

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Petra Löffler (Humboldt Universität Berlin): *Genealogien des Minoritär-Werdens: Das Kino als ‚kleine Kunst‘*

1975 stellen Gilles Deleuze und Félix Guattari ihre Überlegungen zu einer ‚littérature mineure‘ anhand von Kafkas Erzählungen und Romanen vor. Nur ein Jahr später spricht Guattari in einem Interview vom Kino als einer ‚kleinen Kunst‘, die sich denjenigen verpflichtet, die eine Minderheit bilden. Wiederum zwei Jahre später, 1978, schreibt Deleuze in einem Carmelo Bene gewidmeten Antimanifest über das Theater und seine Minderheiten sowie dessen Methode des Minorisierens. Darin bestimmt er das Minoritär-Werden als „ein Ziel, das jeden betrifft“. Als politische Agenda scheint dieser Gedanke in Deleuzes 1985 erschienenem zweitem Kino-Buch wieder auf und wird dort dezidiert auf das Erbe von Kolonialismus, Ausbeutung und Unterdrückung bezogen, mit dem das politische Kino der Länder Afrikas und Südamerikas zu kämpfen hat. Der Vortrag wird diese Fährten aufnehmen und das Minoritär-Werden auf Figurationen der Solidarität im algerischen Kino beziehen.

Genealogies of Becoming-Minor. Cinema as ‚minor art‘

In 1975, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari presented their thoughts on a ‘minor literature’ based on Kafka’s stories and novels. Only one year later, Guattari referred to cinema as a ‘minor art’ in an interview, an art committed to social minorities. Another two years later, in 1978, Deleuze writes in an anti-manifesto dedicated to Carmelo Bene about theater, its minorities, and his method of ‘minoritizing’. In this text, he defines the process of becoming-minor as a “goal that concerns

everybody”. As a political program, this idea resurfaces in his second book on cinema, explicitly referring to the legacy of colonialism, exploitation, and oppression that the political cinema of African and South-American countries is struggling with. This talk will take up these traces and relate the process of becoming-minor to figurations of solidarity in Algerian cinema.

3. In the Territorial Crosshairs: Algeria | Dans le Collimateur Territorial: l’Algérie | Im territorialen Fadenkreuz: Algerien

Yasmina Dekkar (Goldsmiths University of London): *The Algiers Cinémathèque: a Space of (Post)Revolutionary Solidarity?*

The Cinémathèque Algérienne was founded in January 1965, shortly after Algeria had gained independence from France. It quickly developed into an institution of international renown, a –relative autonomous- space for the passionate debate about ideas, esthetics and politics alike. The Algerian writer Luc Chaulet describes this highly politicized post-independence time of the 1960s and the combative vitality of the Cinémathèque by pointing to the crucial contribution that this institution made to the connecting of Algerian subjects to national and international cinema: “It was a genuinely fascinating time, when Algeria was a light-house in the Third World. The Algiers Cinémathèque hosted all the filmmakers in the world. Our political discourse was not only founded in the Algerian experience, we followed the struggles taking place in Brazil, Mexico as well as Africa. They were all springboards we used to develop an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, feminist discourse, our militancy. The Algiers Cinémathèque allowed thousands of students, including myself, to familiarize ourselves with Jean Luc Godard, Orson Welles, Frederico Fellini, Wim Wenders’ early work, Souleymane Cissé, Jean Rouch, Désiré Ecaré... “¹

The boundaries between nations were, it seemed, becoming blurred: since its inception the Cinémathèque Algérienne was supported by Henri Langlois, the founder of the French Cinémathèque, who sent Jean Michel Arnold to Algiers who gathered an international team around him. Film stocks from France and Russia, alongside many donations by international film makers contributed to the growth of the Cinémathèque’s precious archive.

What was the nature of this international solidarity?

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Todd Shepard (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore): *Fear, Sex, and the Algerian War*

“Sexual Orientalism” quickly re-emerged in post-decolonization French politics and discussions. Over the course of the 1960s and ‘70s, “sex talk” around questions such as far right politics, May ’68, prostitution, the “white slave trade,” gay rights, sexual libertinism, the act of sodomy, and rape explicitly grappled with questions of empire, the Algerian war, colonial violence, and post-decolonization racism. This talk focuses on films such as *LAST TANGO IN PARIS* (1972), *THE AMBASSADORS* (1975), and *DIABOLO MENTHE* (1977) to indicate the ways that invocations of “Arab men” and Algeria played a key role in French discussions about sex in the 1970s.

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1 ZELIG, O. (2008) Dispatch from Omar Zelig. *ArteEast - Art and Cultures of the Middle East and its Diasporas*. New York. <http://www.arteeast.org/pages/artenews/cineclub-feature/146/>

Christoph Kalter (Freie Universität Berlin): *Libération Afrique. Algiers, Paris, and the Failure of the French Radical Left to Mobilize against Portuguese Colonialism*

Between 1972 and 1976, French activists in Paris edited *Libération Afrique*, a review that supported liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, but also ran articles on Rhodesia, South Africa, and Namibia. Interestingly therefore, while the focus was on Portuguese colonial rule, the review went beyond Lusophone Africa and placed Portugal's imperial endgame within a broader regional context of white minority regimes in Southern Africa. Although a small and short-lived publication, the review is relevant: It shows the strengths, but also the weaknesses of transnational, anticolonial solidarity movements in the 'long 1960s'.

First, *Libération Afrique* exemplifies the transnational ramifications and the mobilizing power of Third World solidarity in France, but also within the so-called Third World itself. Michel Capron, first an opponent of the Algerian War, then a member of the left-socialist party PSU and a development consultant for the Algerian government, and finally the founder of *Libération Afrique*, based the review on his years in Algiers. At the time, the city was considered a 'mecca of Third World revolution,' and it was there that Capron met representatives of the MPLA, PAIGC, and FRELIMO. These personal contacts provided the organizational bedrock for the review.

Second, however, *Libération Afrique* also reveals the limitations of transnational Third World solidarity. It was a constant frustration for *Libération Afrique* that the struggles in Southern Africa failed to mobilize large numbers of French activists. While this frustration is understandable, *Libération Afrique*'s relative failure can help us reflect on the specificity of Portuguese decolonization, on the economics of attention in media and social movements, and on the ups and downs of Third World activism in France and the West more generally.

Libération Afrique, which Capron turned into a propaganda instrument at the service of the liberation movements, failed because, faced with the "belated" and seemingly "marginal" case of Portuguese decolonization, the review reproduced a panoply of anticolonial discourses that had mobilized massively just a few years earlier with regard to Algeria, Cuba, or Vietnam, but that now failed to do the trick. Portuguese Africa was out of sync with the concerns of most leftists in France at the time—a cruel irony in light of the enthusiasm that the Carnation Revolution, itself a direct consequence of Portugal's colonial wars, sparked among the French left after 1974.

4. Broken Choreographies: Revolution | Chorégraphies brisées: Révolution | Gebrochene Choreographien: Revolution

Atef Botros Al Attar (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies): *Political Prisoners and Cultural Resistance in Contemporary Egypt: Visuality, Iconicity and Materiality*

Since January 2011 revolutionary events and spectacles occurred on the streets and squares in Egypt. For a while it seemed as though the public space had been appropriated by people. However, since July 2013, the military regime has forbidden any protests or demonstrations and jailed thousands of people who tried to challenge their order. The public space was closed but resistance is still going on.

For the activists, the battle is not only about rights and justice but it is also about contested spaces, about having a stage, agency and voice (Rancière). I will argue that the stage of resistance against political power has been shifted to the prison, a negative place (Bachelard) in which Sisi's regime tried to dissolve political activists and dissents to keep their resistant voices silent. But, in fact, the prison has now become the new stage of resistance. Letters, memoirs, stories, poems, photos or paintings from, about or to political detainees are published and circulated in the social media regularly denouncing the violent, repressive and illegal practices of the Egyptian state.

These materials on the prison function as a counter archive to the regime's official narrative. Texts written by political detainees cross the walls to the outside world to tell about the inside world of

prisons, and about the precarious political and social realities in Egypt today. These cultural productions thus depict a new mode of resistance. Analysing materials produced by or about prisoners between 2013 and 2016, I will demonstrate how these daily streams of words and images create a virtual presence of those who are physically isolated and banned. Resistance figures that are supposed to be forgotten thus acquire a voice and agency through their new stage behind the prison bars.

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Stefanie Diekmann (Universität Hildesheim): *Plätze in Städten oder: Revolution filmen. Sergej Loznitsa, MAIDAN (2014), und Jehane Noujaim, THE SQUARE (2013)*

In kurzem Abstand entstanden und hinsichtlich des Sujets zunächst vergleichbar, sind Sergej Loznitsas Dokumentation MAIDAN, die zwischen November 2013 und Januar 2014 auf dem gleichnamigen Platz gefilmt wurde, und Jehane Noujaims THE SQUARE, der das revolutionäre und konterrevolutionäre Geschehen auf dem Tahrir Platz in Kairo im Verlauf des Jahres 2011 dokumentiert, de facto zwei sehr unterschiedliche Formen, sich filmisch zu Ereignissen zu positionieren, die mit der Bezeichnung "Revolution" intelligibel und klassifizierbar gemacht werden sollen.

Während Loznitsa und seine zwei Kameramänner mit langen Einstellungen operieren, die erkennbar am Modell des Historienbildes orientiert sind, anders als dieses aber keine Protagonisten und noch weniger eine identifizierbare Führer-Figur kennen, probt Noujaims die teils mimetische Annäherung an die digitalen Bewegtbilder mobiler Endgeräte, von denen die internationale Wahrnehmung politischer Konflikte in den letzten Jahren zunehmend bestimmt ist, und organisiert das Narrativ ihrer Dokumentation außerdem um klar identifizierbare Hauptfiguren, die in einer Erzählung von Aufbruch, Konflikt, Widerstand und Resignation agieren.

Die offensichtliche Verschiedenheit beider Dokumentationen ändert jedoch nichts daran, dass sie von vergleichbaren Fragen grundiert sind: nach dem Verhältnis des dokumentarischen Bildes zu anderen Bildern und Bildmotiven, nach der Organisation und Gestaltung des dokumentarischen Bildes in einem Szenario des Desorganisation sowie nach einer adäquaten Repräsentation von revolutionären Akteuren jenseits der tradierten Schemata; aber auch danach, ob und wie Geschichte, 'in statu nascendi', eigentlich filmisch zu fassen wäre, wo und wie sie als Geschichte in Erscheinung tritt, und welche Bedeutung dabei den Apparaten und Akteuren der Dokumentation zukommt, die das revolutionäre Geschehen aus mehr oder weniger großer Nähe verfolgen.

The Square and the People. Sergej Loznitsa, MAIDAN (2014), and Jehane Noujaim, THE SQUARE (2013)

Sergej Loznitsa's documentary MAIDAN – filmed between November 2013 and January 2014 in the square of the same name – and Jehane Noujaims THE SQUARE, documenting the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary events on Tahrir Square in Cairo over the course of 2011, seem comparable insofar as they were filmed within a short period of time and are concerned with similar subject matters. As a matter of fact, however, the two films represent two very different ways to take a filmic position regarding events which were classified and made intelligible through the term „revolution."

Loznitsa and his two cameramen are operating with extreme long shots, resembling historical paintings, but without showing any protagonists or identifiable 'leaders', whereas Noujaim explores, in a partly mimetic manner, the moving images taken with mobile devices which have come to dominate the international perception of political events in recent years. Furthermore, she organizes the documentary's narrative around clearly identifiable characters who act within a story about awakening, conflict, opposition, and resignation.

Although using different visual styles, both documentaries ask comparable questions: about the relation of the documentary picture in contrast to other pictures and motives, about the organization

and composition of the documentary picture incorporated in a scenario of transition and disorientation, and about the adequate representation of revolutionary actors beyond conventional schemes. Other questions include if and how history 'in statu nascendi' ('in the moment of birth') can be captured on film, where and how history emerges, and which particular relevance should be attributed to the apparatus and to the agents of filmic documentation, who follow the revolutionary events in greater or lesser proximity.

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Tobias Hering (Curator/ Writer/ Researcher, Berlin): *Je suis venu pour vous tuer. Schatten-Duelle des Algerienkriegs in Filmen von Jean-Marie Straub, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard und Michael Haneke.*

Der Versuch, aus dem wiederkehrenden Scheitern einer filmischen Konstellation (oder *Figuration*?) zum/über/um den Algerienkrieg eine politische Lektion zu gewinnen. Der Faden, der dabei durch einige Filme gesponnen wird, hängt zunächst nur an einer Ähnlichkeit zwischen zwei kurzen Szenen in zwei Filmen, MURIEL OU LE TEMPS D'UN RÉTOUR (Alain Resnais, 1963) und LA GUERRE D'ALGÉRIE! (Jean-Marie Straub, 2014). Eine Gegenüberstellung zweier Männer, die eine geteilte Erfahrung aus dem Algerienkrieg verbindet und gleichzeitig spaltet, und zwischen denen es (nun, noch einmal) "um Leben und Tod geht". Die paradigmatische Konstellation des Duells wird zwar herbeizitiert, um sie dann jedoch als Erklärungsmuster für den Konflikt merkwürdig scheitern zu lassen. Merkwürdig an diesem Scheitern ist u.a., dass es sich als *Unentschlossenheit* zeigt und dass es in der Rede stattfindet. Signifikant wird das Scheitern, weil es *neben* den Kontrahenten die Figur eines *Dritten* erscheinen lässt, sei es auch nur als eine zu besetzende, aber bereits konturierte Leerstelle, oder als eine Forderung, die sich wie aus einer nicht-aufgehenden Gleichung ergibt. In der Ethik Emmanuel Lévinas' figuriert "die Rede" prominent als "die nicht-allergische Beziehung mit der Andersheit", und der Forderung nach dem Dritten entspricht bei ihm die nach der Gerechtigkeit, denn der Dritte ist die "Blöße", die verhindert, dass die Dichotomie zu einem Pakt wird, der alle anderen ausschließt. Was aber haben *alle anderen* damit zu tun? "Im Namen von wem und im Namen wovon sind wir hier überhaupt versammelt?" (Jacques Derrida in *Partei ergreifen für Algerien*).

Je suis venu pour vous tuer ("I came to kill you"). Shadow duels of the Algerian war in films by Jean-Marie Straub, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard and Michael Haneke.

The attempt to learn a political lesson from the recurring failure of a cinematic constellation (or *figuration*?) about / through the Algerian war. The thread I will spin through a number of films at first merely depends on the similarity between two short scenes in two films, MURIEL OU LE TEMPS D'UN RÉTOUR (1961) and LA GUERRE D'ALGÉRIE! (Jean-Marie Straub, 2014): A confrontation of two men, connected and divided by a shared experience during the Algerian war, and reconnected (again) by a life-and-death situation. The paradigmatic constellation of the duel between them is cited, but only to see it fail as a model for the explanation of the conflict in a strange manner. What is strange in this failure is, among other things, that it shows itself as *indecisiveness* and that it takes place through speech. This failure is significant because, in addition to the opponents, it makes the figure of a *third* appear, be it as an already contoured vacancy to be filled or as a claim that could result from an unsolvable equation. In the ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas, speech figures prominently as "the non-allergic relationship with otherness," and the demand for the third corresponds, according to him, with justice: because the third is the "bareness" which prevents that the dichotomy becomes a pact excluding all others.

But what do *all the others* have to do with it? "In the name of whom and in whose name are we gathered here at all?" (Jacques Derrida in *Taking A Stand for Algeria*).

5. Operations of Figuration | Opérations de la Figuration | Operationen der Figuration

Sudeep Dasgupta (Universiteit van Amsterdam): *Relations and Disconnections: The Fragility of Thinking and the Obtuseness of the Aesthetic in Cinematic Experience*

Figurations are aesthetically composed provocations for relating the sensorially registered to the cognitively understood dimensions of human experience.² Aesthetic figurations of community, as one form of relationality, harbour the potential for provoking a dissensual politics. In cinematic experience, the relation of sensory to cognitive experience is produced through forms of relations and disconnections of sound and image for sensing and understanding community and solidarity. Cinematic experience, however, is marked by an inherent instability between sound and image, sensing and sense-making. As Adorno argues, the "obtuse reality" Rancière describes³, can be counter-intuitively registered when the subject "convulsed by art" can have "real experiences" registered in the "aesthetic shudder"⁴. How can cinematic experience intimate figurations of relations through disconnections?

I identify two modes of aesthetic experience which help grapple with an obtuse reality often ideologically stabilized into competing and conflicting groups thus foreclosing the possibility of counter-intuitive relationalities. The first mode of figuration emphatically enables *sensing presences and connecting extremes*. At stake here is the sensorial apprehension of spaces Deleuze termed "any-space-whatevers" where the tension between "image as a cipher of history...and as obtuse reality, impeding history and meaning"(Rancière) produce disturbing forms of *intermittent adjacencies*. These forms outline a relational and sensorial mode of approaching the possibility of community where space is the location "of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible".⁵ The second mode of figuration concatenates *apparently disconnected presences into counter-intuitive relationalities*. Where the former figuration produces connections through minimal explanation and fleeting sensorial presencing in the construction of relational spaces, the second form of figuration is less indirect, explicitly constructing forms of community. At stake in this form of figuration is the refusal to accept the inherently separatist, conflictual forms of identity politics that stymie thinking alliances and solidarity. Instead, cinematic experience here deploys the power of sound (music, songs) to articulate specific political interests audiovisually by figuratively and politically connecting seemingly too different and necessarily opposed groups toward forms of being-together which construct dissensual figurations of solidarity.

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Kathrin Peters (Universität der Künste Berlin). *Psyche und Politik. Zu Kader Attias Interviewprojekt REASON'S OXYMORONS*

Der algerisch-französische Künstler Kader Attia unternimmt seit einiger Zeit ein Interviewprojekt, das sich auf die Suche nach "nicht-westlichen" Beschäftigungen mit dem Psychischem begibt. Es kommen dabei Denkweisen, Repräsentationen und Theorien zum Vorschein, die auffordern, das Psychische in Zusammenhang mit Politiken von Migration und Post-/Kolonialität zu denken. Ich möchte mich mit einzelnen Beiträgen vom afrikanischen Kontinent befassen, die selten zu hörende Stimmen zu Wort kommen lassen. Dabei geht es auch um Konzept und Gestaltung der von Attia als Videobibliothek projektierten Aufnahmen, die trotz der zunehmenden Bekanntheit des Künstlers im "westlichen" Kunstkontext, als kleines Kino zu bezeichnen sein könnten.

² Gillian Rose, *Love's Work* (New York: New York Review Books, 2011), p. 105.

³ J. Rancière, *Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 11-12.

⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997), p.269.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (London: Athlone press, 1986), p. 109.

Psyche and Politics. On Kader Attia's interview-project REASON'S OXYMORONS

For quite some time, the French-Algerian artist Kader Attia has been carrying out an interview project in search of “non-western” discussions of the psyche. His project reveals ways of thinking, forms of representation, and theories, all of them urging us to conceptualize psychic life in relation to the politics of migration and the post/colonial. In my talk, I intend to examine individual contributions to Attia's project from the African continent which present voices rarely heard. I will also discuss the concept and design of the recordings, planned by Attia as a video-library, and argue that the project might be called ‘small cinema’ despite the recent fame of the artist's work in the “Western” art world.

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Réda Bensmaïa (Brown University, Providence): *‘La vraie vie est ailleurs.’ The Figure of the Migrant and the Harraga Phenomenon in Film and Literature*

For over two decades now, the issue of migration is up almost permanently on the media and the political agendas. It now holds the lead of the news in many parts of the world, and particularly in the Euro-mediterranean area. That has led a certain number of researchers to advance the idea that the Twenty-First Century will be the ‘century of the migrant’: a ‘figure’ that comprises the homeless, the stateless, the nomad, the immigrant, the emigrant but also the refugee, the vagrant, and the undocumented. As it has been said, “these are different mobile figures in political history that are not always and in every circumstances identical to the figure of the migrant” (Th. Nail).

This paper will concentrate on an analysis of the figure of the Harragas phenomenon, which is the movement of thousands and thousands of African men, women and children who try, in very difficult and dangerous circumstances, to reach a European shore. In trying to better understand the ‘nature’ of this new form of immigration I will be led to ask the following questions: Is the Harragas phenomenon always determined by economic poverty, lack of opportunities, or repressive political context? What is the role of the cultural, social and political determinants? What this new form of migration teaches us about the relations between so-called post-colonial societies and Europe?

Mobilizing key concepts of Guy Debord's *The Society of Spectacle* on the power of the image and excerpts from film documentaries, this paper tries to show that the ‘phenomenon’ in question may have more complex and unsettling motivations than the one put forward by mainstream political analysts.