

Abstract

The film *Red Line* and accompanying thesis revisit the documentary *Torre Bela* (1975) by Thomas Harlan and its memory, reflecting upon the role cinema played in revolutionary process in Portugal in 1975 and its enduring significance to the collective memory of this event. It makes a forensic investigation of the context for this documentary, examining not only the history of the occupation of the Torre Bela estate in central Portugal, but also the wider unfolding of the PREC [Processo Revolucionário em Curso/"on-going revolutionary period], the history of documentaries produced during this period and their critical reception.

The case of *Torre Bela* troubles categories such as observational cinema and direct cinema. By examining the production, circulation and screening of the film, the research leads to the proposition that the act of filming and the acts that produced the occupation did not exist on a separate plane, but rather were two sides of the same coin. Despite the filmic conventions deployed to suggest transparency in Harlan's documentary, the film crew participated in the very process of occupation and the construction of the cooperative.

This thesis suggests that Harlan's interventionist filmmaking needs to be viewed on the same political horizon as the revolutionary events themselves. Both sought to subvert power relations and social hierarchies so as to produce new political subjectivities that would participate in the construction of a new collective.

Since the earliest forms of revolutionary filmmaking, cinema has been theorized as a medium that has the capacity to establish new relationships between different subjects and worlds, to amplify perceptions, to privilege certain protagonists and situations and give form to particular affects and experiences. The making of the film *Torre Bela* forged new relationships between different worlds (intellectuals and occupiers, soldiers and occupiers, foreign or urban revolutionaries and rural workers) and provided a forum for new protagonists who had never before expressed themselves politically in the past, in keeping with the revolutionary ideal of the Carnation Revolution.

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Acknowledgements

My utmost gratitude goes to my supervisors, Mark Nash, Ros Gray and Al Rees for their support and encouragement. Ros Gray's advice was indispensable to make real what was an ancient aspiration of combining reflection and filmmaking in a practice-based PhD. From the earliest stages of this research Mark Nash believed in this project and I am grateful for his trust and guidance.

I should mention the contributions of Ros Gray, Kodwo Eshun and The Otolith Group for providing valuable opportunities for my work to be presented and discussed in public. Also thanks to Luis Trindade and Tiago Avó for their insightful discussions.

I am grateful to all the crew members and Terratrema films for providing the necessary infrastructure to produce the film. I would like to pay particular thanks to Pedro Pinho who helped me in the first steps of field research and filming, João Braz in the stage of editing and Ana Isabel Strindberg for her precious support throughout the whole process.

I owe my deepest gratitude to the inhabitants of Maçussa and Manique, and specially Wilson Filipe, Herculano Martins, Fátima and Paulo. I will never forget the help of José Rabaça and Eduarda Rosa who allowed me to research their personal archives.

A big thank you goes to Harriet Edwards for helping me with English, to Olga Fernández, Maria José, Margaret Glover, David Retamero, David Fulford, for their friendship and support while I was in London.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial support of Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.

This thesis is dedicated to Thomas Harlan, who generously and courageously responded to my perplexities in his last stage of life.

Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

José Filipe Costa

November 2011

Introduction

One of the most memorable images of the film *Torre Bela* (1977), by the German director Thomas Harlan, is a scene in the palace that has just been occupied by peasants from the surrounding area. A bearded man tries on a velvet jacket belonging to the Duke of Lafões. He adjusts the jacket's lapels, then twirls around and shouts "olé" with a flourish, as though it was a bullfight. Two or three men watch him attentively. Irrespective of whether one views this as merely a theatrical gesture or as an act of transgression, these images encapsulate many of the questions that will be examined over the following pages.

When between January and August 1975, Harlan's international crew filmed many of the events that marked the revolutionary process in Portugal, he had not yet envisaged making only a documentary about the occupation of the Lafões estate, situated about 70 km north of Lisbon.¹ Nor had he imagined that this documentary would become an important component of the symbolic and mythological narrative pertaining to the 25th April Revolution of 1974, in which the aforesaid sequence of the man in the jacket would play a fundamental role. The legitimacy of this gesture by this occupier who wore clothes that did not belong to him in a space he did not own can be viewed in the context of a so-called revolutionary legitimacy, rooted in principles derived from a popular uprising against a system of social and economic repression.

¹ *Torre Bela* was presented for the first time at the Cannes Film Festival 1977. It was only released commercially in a Portuguese theatre in 2007, although a DVD version had been circulated in 2004 as part of a cinema collection promoted by *Publico*, a leading Portuguese national newspaper. The rights for the film were sold to Italian, French and German TV channels. Footage from *Torre Bela* can be found in at least two other Portuguese films, *Bom Povo Português* ["The Law of the Land"] (1980) and *Lei da Terra* (1977) ["The Law of the Land"].

This gesture is a stumbling block when viewed from the present. It was precisely the way in which these images captured this gesture and its energy that drove this research. One broad question thus permeates this entire work: how can one revisit and re-examine these images from the present, deconstructing how they worked, reconstructing the history of the film's production, revealing its multiple conditioning factors and potential? One can examine this broader question in more specific and precise components: How was an image of the past formed by means of the dissemination of the film *Torre Bela* and the uses and interpretations of its images? How did the process of making and exhibiting the film effect its protagonists? How can one look at this film and integrate it into a discussion about reality (the passion for the real that permeates the 20th century, according to Žižek) and into the issues raised by the history of the documentary?² More specifically: what does it mean to return to what has already been filmed and to interrogate images that have crystallised in individual and collective memory? What dialogue can I establish between my practice as a filmmaker and the practices that guided the making of that film?

The film *Linha Vermelha* [Red Line], which I researched and directed as the practical component of a Ph.D. by project, revisits and reanalyses this memory. It was the making of this film that made it possible to delve into the density of the sounds and images, to contact and record living eyewitnesses who were once again presented with the experiences and memory of Torre Bela. The fieldwork and filming are what moulded the questions that form the main nucleus of this thesis. These questions were closely associated with ethical concerns and a political stance highlighting an urgent need to revisit the memory of an effervescent period of energy and new possibilities in Portugal's recent history: the on-going revolutionary process [*Processo Revolucionário em Curso* or PREC] between 1974 and 1976.

The history of my relationship with Harlan's film dates further back in time. It can be traced back to the moment when I became interested not just in this

² Žižek affirms: "The ultimate and defining moment of the twentieth century was the direct experience of the Real as opposed to everyday social reality – the Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality". (Žižek, 2002:5-6)

particular historical time, but also in the way in which moving images built a certain mental image of that period. I can recall that I experienced an almost epiphany-like moment during the gestation of my interest in the cinema produced during the Carnation Revolution: when I emerged from the dark screening room of the Portuguese Cinema Institute (the very same institute that had been occupied by a group of filmmakers in the days after the 25 April 1974 Revolution in Portugal) after having watched the film *Brandos Costumes* [Gentle Costume] (1974) by Alberto Seixas Santos, the faces I saw on the streets of Lisbon no longer seemed the same. They seemed more marked by their history, by the 48 years of dictatorship, by the colonial war and by the revolutionary years between 1974 and 1976. There was a strength and a strangeness that were released in this shock resulting from a comparison of these images – the images seen in the darkened theatre and the images of the crowd I saw in the late evening light in Lisbon. A lot still remained to be understood and identified in the gaps in this shock. It was still a kind of nebulous field that one had to return to and explore. Everyday life could be better understood if seen in the light of those images pieced together at the dawn of the revolution, but paradoxically, this everyday life appeared to wish to avoid this comparison.

In the years after I graduated from my BA in Communications, part of this disquietude induced me to research the policies that were debated and implemented in relation to Portuguese cinema during the revolutionary period.³ The research presented herein is one more step in facing this strangeness, but this time with an incursion filmed on-site, cross-referencing people and memories with the images, cross-referencing life stories with a concrete object that galvanised a moment in time.

To be more precise, the film – its mode of presentation and the questions it posed – gained form through the editing of concrete visual and audio documents (other films made during the period, photographs, sounds and music) or through what the protagonists allowed themselves to say in the interviews that I filmed. This enabled a reflexive and performative posture about the construction of images

³ This research resulted in my book *O cinema ao poder!*, Hugin, Lisbon, 2002.

themselves – not just Harlan’s film but the kinds of image produced in the heat of a revolution – playing with their kinesthetic qualities, isolating and highlighting certain aspects through, for example, camera framing and movements, speeding up and slowing down the image or modulating the sound.

Cinema is “material not formed linguistically”, as Deleuze postulated, but “a *signaletic material* which includes all kinds of modulation features, sensory (visual and sound), kinetic, intensive, affective, rhythmic, tonal and even verbal (oral and written) features (Deleuze 1985:43). Keeping this in mind, the written thesis intertwines with the project, by once again taking up these questions posed in a non-linguistic and sensorial form to contextualise them in a dialogue with authors, theories and other documents, inserting them into the perspective of the history of documental cinema and isolating certain conceptual fulcrums that shed light on them.

In truth, the film itself was conceived as an integral part of the thesis and in this sense can be envisaged within the lineage of a film-essay. In its turn, the thesis was written in consonance with practices: the questions framed in it and its “narrative” are based on queries and perplexities that emerged during the field work, shooting, editing and the first screenings in theatres (IndieLisboa Festival, April 2011).

This research made it possible to cross-reference the dimensions of cinematographic practice and reflection that in some way are inherent to the very activity of making a film. Looking back at the early history of cinema one finds indispensable figures such as Sergei Eisenstein (1987 and 1990) or Jean Epstein (1946 and 1964), who conceptualised solid principles that shaped their practices.

I sought to achieve this encounter between reflection and practices in other projects in which I was involved, above all in the documentary *Entre Muros*, which I directed in 2002.⁴ But it was only the context of a Ph.D. by project that provided the

⁴ *Entre Muros* (2002) was co-directed with João Ribeiro and follows the lives of Sergei and Eduard, illegal Ukrainian immigrants in Portugal, who worked on construction sites on the outskirts of Lisbon. The film describes the final months of a voluntary exile in the context of a growing desire to return to their homes in Ukraine. *Entre*

temporal and institutional delimitations for this exercise, making it possible to revisit something that I had identified as being in urgent need of reassessment and that, I believe, demanded far wider attention: a memory that circulates in the form of images and sounds, which has yet to be explored in all its potential, so that this memory can be projected in the future.

The conceptual tools used to engage with memory were derived, above all, from a theoretical space in which names such as Maurice Halbwachs (2006) and Paul Connerton (1999) stand out, who conceived memory as a continuous narrative construction of isolated facts. The images from the present and from the past influence each other mutually. The perception of the past is rooted in present-day experiences and perceptions. In its turn, the present is organised according to the way in which the past is interpreted and presented. Needless to say, this past can very often be re-imagined to legitimise actions done in the present, in the shadow of a given social order. The past can be subject to forms of use and control, interlaced into the hierarchies that gestate and reproduce power.

The relationship between memory and the object-film *Torre Bela* can be interpreted at this crossroads. Harlan's film became the focus of this research since it proved to be a metaphor and a metonym for this revolutionary period (see chapter 3), like no other of the many documentaries viewed while conducting this research. This idea progressively took shape insofar as the universe of films to be analysed was compared with the way in which they were catalogued and contextualised by critical discourses and the history of Portuguese cinema. Over the course of time, what at first glance appeared merely to be a film became increasingly complex and multifaceted: this was not just "one" film, even if one based this affirmation simply on the number of different versions of the work that existed (I have identified four different versions!). Apart from this, the matter in question became increasingly

Muros circulated in national and international screenings and festivals (including *Cinema du Réel*, France, *Festival dei Popoli*, Italy, *Zinebi Doc*, Spain).

I also directed *Chapa 23*, a video-installation conceived for the Immigration Forum, held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The video sets out from photographs taken at the Institute for Legal Medicine of corpses that died a violent death, to draw attention to the issue of illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe in Portugal, who in their death maintained the conditions in which they lived of being uprooted and unidentified beings.

broader in various senses and angles of approach.⁵ The film's production history transverse various geographical contexts over an extended period of rapid political change and indeed reversals. By the time Harlan edited his film its potential political impact had already lapsed. In other words, the underlying ideas behind Harlan's project of filming those images had to do with showcasing popular power and its importance in the genesis of a new nation. After late-1975 this had to contend with the resistance posed by the process of democratic normalisation. From this period onwards, the politics that had erupted into the streets after the military coup of 25 April 1974 had once again returned to the realm of official politics, having been entrusted to elected representatives, the so-called political class.

Harlan's work in Portugal and his militancy were inextricably intertwined. His direct involvement with the Italian political movement *Lotta Continua* was reflected in promoting and organising a visit of the movement's activists to the FIAT factory in Portugal, likewise filmed by his crew. At the time, Harlan already enjoyed a privileged access to the military headquarters in Lisbon, where he had filmed various hours of footage about the formation of the soldiers' councils. In June 1975, he and his crew accompanied the Portuguese delegation headed by the then prime-minister, Vasco Gonçalves, during Mozambique's independence ceremonies in Lourenço Marques (modern-day Maputo).⁶

The mythic narrative that endured about this tour by Harlan was always marked by the way in which he "entered" into some spheres that were off-limits to other filmmakers, with inherent direct access to some protagonists of the revolutionary process. This (perhaps mythical) idea that became disseminated of

⁵ The first version identified was about 82 minutes long and was released as a DVD distributed with the *Público* newspaper in 2004. In 2007, when the film was released commercially at the King theatre in Lisbon the version was about 106 minutes long, with some editing differences. Two other versions are preserved at the National Archives of Moving Images – Portuguese Cinema Museum (*Cinemateca Portuguesa*), one is 107 minutes long and the other is 140 minutes in duration. These versions have sequences that were not circulated publicly such as a scene included in *Red Line* in which a woman complains about the conditions in the cooperative's improvised kitchen.

⁶ The delegation also included Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, a prominent figure in the 25 April coup, Álvaro Cunhal, the secretary-general of the Portuguese Communist Party and Mário Soares, the secretary-general of the Socialist Party. The footage from this trip would have begun to be edited by the crew's cameraman, Russel Parker, in the studios in Italy where *Torre Bela* was also edited. To date, vestiges of this edited version or the raw footage have not been traced.

privileged access to the upper echelons of the revolutionary vanguard can be seen on the same plane as the discourse of the history of Portuguese cinema that consecrates the film *Torre Bela* as a singular case in the documentary history of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this critical itinerary, it is fundamental to review the film in the light of the formulations and categories that question, since the 1960s and 1970s, the documentary cinema built on the mythology of the real, such as those proposed by Bill Nichols (1991), and similarly compare them with the new ethical suggestions that conceive of self-reflexive cinema as a response that lives up to this mythology (Fernão Ramos, 2005). Reflections on the aesthetics of reality and documentary by authors such as Slavoj Žižek (2002 and 2008) and Jacques Rancière (2010a and 2010b) were also fundamental elements for a critique of the model of realism that so greatly influences and can sometimes blind the spectator's critical relationship with the film.

The filmic dimension of my research included deconstructing the "reality" transmitted by Harlan's film. This implied contextualising the crew's actions in forming these realistic images and describing how what was in question involved both documenting the events of the birth of a popular unity as well as participated in the gestation of this unity.

Red Line was made in the shadow of the memory instigated by Harlan's film. This is an uneasy memory, sometimes tired, at other times conflict-ridden and at yet other times waiting for a kind of redemption. This was the tension that served as the backdrop for the research and filming processes. Meeting the most direct protagonists of the experiment was a fundamental step, along with other individuals living in the villages around Torre Bela who had only heard about what happened in that hot summer of 1975. The resistance and the silence of some, or the mystifications repeated incessantly by others resulted in a reformulation of key questions and the directions to be followed.

These reformulations translated into different points of views transmitted by

the editing of the filmed footage into clips that were presented in the interim exams successively in 2009 and 2010. The first clip *People United – Working in Progress* was also screened as part of “An Exhibition of Proposals for a Socialist Colony” (March 27 – June 19, 2010) organised by the Skydive Art Space, in Houston, and it was selected for the 2010 edition of the Viennale – Vienna International Film Festival.

The personal documents generously shared by José Rabaça and Eduarda Rosa, which included a diary of their experiences as members of the cooperative in Torre Bela, enriched the horizons of this research, providing a backstage view at a microscopic and first-person level. By means of the lines penned in the heat of the events as they unfolded it was possible to glimpse the gaps and the friction caused by the encounters between the various protagonists of that collective project and how conditions were created in this environment to wrench identities away from the rigidity of predefined scripts, in much the same manner as happened in May 1968. A reading of the work by Kristin Ross (2002) pertaining to May 1968 helped answer two essential questions. Firstly, it short-circuited a simply factual and party-politics analysis, the most common approach when producing a discourse about the Portuguese revolution. Secondly, it provided a framework within which to ponder the ruptures, dislocations and new social ties in which Harlan’s crew ended up by playing a crucial role during the early days of the occupation. In this sense, the subversion of social roles, the transformation of temporality and spatial conceptions will be examined herein along with cinema’s capacity for mobilisation, which is also capable of decentralising, dislocating, subverting and recomposing.

In order to understand the reach of this social and cinematographic mobilisation it was important to chalk out in the first chapter the notion of a “Portuguese world” that was shattered by the revolution and to provide a broad overview of the political movements that unfolded after 25 April 1974, in articulation with the micro-history of Torre Bela. To this end, I consulted the historiographical reinterpretation by Maria Inácia Rezola about the period between 1974 and 1976 and the impressive descriptions recorded in the book *Torre Bela – Todos temos direito a ter uma vida* (1978) [Torre Bela – Everyone is Entitled to a Livelihood] about

the experiences of Francis Pisani, a French journalist who lived in the cooperative for some months.⁷

I strove to ensure that this puzzle encompassed a series of varied documents, journals, diaries, images and photos, which could help reconstruct the images of *Torre Bela*. In the final phases of this research, viewing the materials donated by Thomas Harlan to the Portuguese cinema museum (*Cinemateca Portuguesa*) was absolutely crucial for axial shifts in the issues and methodologies to pursue.

Finally, one of the main inspirations for a critical interpretation of *Torre Bela* was Thomas Harlan himself. He was the one who, in one of the early interviews conducted for this research, began by supplying some keys that help unlock his work process. I would never have been able to delve so deep if he hadn't articulated in words a reflection that he laboriously produced about his own practices.

⁷ Pisani's book is a translation of the original French title *Torre Bela: on a tous le droit d'avoir une vie*, Paris, J.C. Simoën, 1977.

Chapter 1

To talk about interpersonal relations here, in this summer of 1975 in Portugal, is like trying to ascertain the diverse ingredients of a soup boiling away on the fire. Little is known about what there was on the different and well separated shelves; castes and classes that were barely touchable submitted to a hidden but severe code of distance. Here, just like there. Everything changed, nothing changed.

Maria Velho da Costa, "A gente" (July 1975)

The task in hand

The memory of the events at Torre Bela is inextricably intertwined with the memory of the 25 April 1974 Revolution and the most intense years of the on-going revolutionary process. Over the following pages I will trace the context of the occupation and how the cooperative was formed, highlighting key moments that allow a better understanding of the emergence of that structure and its first great setback, as described in the final credits of Harlan's film. When one watches *Torre Bela* today one is also "watching" these key moments, symbolic dates that serve to anchor a collective mindset: the revolution, the ongoing revolutionary process and its normalisation. This will be articulated with the most recent historic research, which has benefited from the availability of new sources and has embraced a more microscopic analysis of popular movements (as is the case with Rezola [2007] and Cerezales [2003]).

In this dialogue I have also included more personal reminiscences of a number of protagonists in these events', written in the heat of the moment during everyday life at the cooperative by Pisani, Rabaça and Eduarda (see biographical notes). These

provide a more intimate look at the flux of events and contribute towards constructing a small narrative about Torre Bela.

On the morning of 23 April 1975, one year after the so-called “Carnation Revolution”, about a hundred people gathered at Manique do Intendente, a village situated some 70 km north of Lisbon. Their objective was to occupy the neighbouring estate of Torre Bela, which covered a vast expanse of 1700 hectares, the property of the Dukes of Lafões, members of the House of Braganza, part of the Portuguese royal family. The small crowd mainly comprised agricultural wage labourers from adjacent villages, veterans of the Portuguese colonial wars, many of whom were unemployed.

The “agitator” of the crowd was Wilson (see biographical notes), described “as a troublemaker of the worst kind, a pimp, a bank robber” by Pisani. These views were ironically echoed by the future detractors of the occupation of Torre Bela (Pisani, 1978:67). Even though he did not witness the early days of the occupation, the way in which Pisani narrated the events, based on testimonies that he collected later, played an important role in moulding the image that gradually evolved about the specific nature of the cooperative – an unparalleled case in the wave of collectivisation that swept across Portugal after the 25 April 1974 Revolution. To summarise events:

They set out. Nobody had any arms. The moment they entered the duke’s lands they discarded all political badges. “It is the people who are occupying this land and the people are not a party”, said one. They entered from the rear boundary of the property, close to Manique and Maçussa. The palace lay four or five km distant. Everybody was talking. They were all a bit excited. Slightly uneasy. Truly happy (Pisani, 1978:75).

In this epic description of the occupiers’ march, Pisani underscored the moment when they discarded all political badges. His emphasis on this gesture is quite understandable: unlike the majority of occupations carried out under the strong influence of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), such as those that

occurred, for example, further south, in the Alentejo region, the occupation of Torre Bela was not directly supported by a political or party-based apparatus.⁸ This autonomy would endure in the history of the PREC, as the distinctive hallmark of the Torre Bela experiment.

The events of 23 April 1975 at Torre Bela were the culmination of a process that had included a series of efforts and meetings promoted by Wilson amongst the population of the villages of Manique and Maçussa. Almost all the residents of the surrounding villages had been directly or indirectly linked to the estate in the past. Many adolescents had begun their working lives there. Others had relatives who sustained their households thanks to salaries earned from the estate. The Torre Bela estate had a prominent place in the region's geography and landscape. From some points in these villages or the surrounding lands, the roughly 17 km long boundary wall that surrounded Torre Bela had a great impact on the visual field of anyone who sought to penetrate its limits.

The criticism used to justify the occupation of the estate included, above all, a less than optimum use of arable lands, which implied fewer jobs for agricultural workers in the region: only eight, according to the numbers cited in the brochure that was published on the occasion of the first anniversary of the estate's occupation.⁹ When the group of occupiers from Manique and Maçussa presented this argument to the Duke of Lafões, the latter rejected its legitimacy outright. In the heated climate of conversations between the occupiers and the duke, Wilson addressed him as "Mr. Miguel". The duke replied: "Don't call me Mister, call me Sir". Wilson replied: "I don't know anyone who deserves to be called Sir." (Pisani, 1978:76) Open hostility ensued and dragged on for several days.

⁸ The influence of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) in the period after the 25 April Revolution must be understood in the context of its strong presence in resisting the previous dictatorial regime. Founded in 1921, it was outlawed in the late 1920s. During the revolutionary period it was the most organised clandestine party, ready to lead the way during the course of events. See, for example, the importance of the PCP in mobilising the population for the occupations that took place in the council area of Avis, in the Alentejo region, analysed in detail by Maria Antónia Almeida Pires (Pires, 2006:23).

⁹ Leaflet "Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela", 23 April 1976. Personal archive of José Rabaça.

The duke refused to give up a “sacred right” and hand over his lands to those who continued to gather at the estate; the crowd eventually swelled to some 1500 people (Pisani, 1978:79). But the occupiers refused to leave the estate, sleeping in the open or in makeshift shacks, alternating in shifts. In the meanwhile, they elected a workers’ committee and prepared the provisional statutes for a cooperative. The die was now cast for the creation of a collective structure, which was to be called the *Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela* [Popular Agrarian Cooperative of Torre Bela].

It is necessary to go back to the by now mythical history of the events of the early hours of 25 April 1974 to understand what was at stake in the film *Torre Bela* and in much of Portuguese cinema that was produced at the time during subsequent years. There is an opening sequence in the film by Rui Simões, *Bom Povo Português* [“The Good Portuguese People”] (1980), which helps metaphorically to understand the expectations that were generated by the chain of events that took place on that April morning: we see a woman in labour and we can hear the encouraging voices of the nurses who are tending to her. And then, suddenly, we catch a glimpse of a baby’s head amidst a confusion of blood and flesh, struggling to see the light of day. There is no mistaking the suffering of the two beings in this common process of giving birth, reflecting the image of a nation struggling to emerge from the obscurity of 48 years of a dictatorship.

These “labour pains” had long wracked Portugal. However, the most visible and decisive events, already enshrined in historiography, which unleashed an intense social movement from which emerged the events at Torre Bela, took place at dawn on 25 April 1974. This was when a group of soldiers implemented the “Captains’ Movement”. These military officials occupied essential positions, such as the RTP television station, the national radio channel and the Portuguese Radio Club, Portela Airport in Lisbon and the Portuguese Central Bank. Despite the warnings issued over the radio advising the populace to remain at home, a crowd began to gather in the Largo do Carmo, the square in front of the Carmo military headquarters, where Marcelo Caetano, President of the Council of Ministers, had taken refuge, urging him

to surrender to the revolutionary forces.¹⁰ This was where the first cinematographers and film crews also began to gather, such as the Matos Silva brothers, António Cunha Telles, Acácio de Almeida and cinema students from the National Conservatory, names immortalised by the *Cinéfilo* cinema magazine, which described in epic terms the “sounds and images that would forever document the fall of the Fascist regime.”¹¹

A Portuguese World

So what exactly was falling? Against what regime and what kind of “world” was this Revolution fighting, which these sounds and images would document? This was a single party regime - the National Union, which revolved around the cult of a single leader. Oliveira Salazar, the central figure of the regime, who governed Portugal between 1932 and 1968, is even today recognised by some sectors as the “architect of the Nation”.¹² With the approval of the Constitution in 1933, Salazar created the “Estado Novo” or *New State*, based on the “comfort of great certainties” and shunning modern relativism.¹³

¹⁰ In 1968, Marcelo Caetano substituted Salazar, who gave up his position as President of the Council of Ministers owing to ill health.

¹¹ Fernando Matos Silva and João Matos Silva are both directors. Acácio de Almeida is a cinematographer, having worked on films by João César Monteiro, Manoel de Oliveira and Paulo Rocha. António Cunha Teles is also a director and by then had already produced two emblematic films of the so-called Portuguese New Cinema: *Os Verdes Anos (1963)* [The Green Years] by Paulo Rocha and *Belarmino (1964)* by Fernando Lopes. “Não à Censura” – *Cinéfilo*, 31 May 1974, p.4.

¹² Salazar, the architect of the Nation, is in fact the name of a website that lauds the figure of the dictator: <http://www.oliveirasalazar.org/> [Accessed 12 July 2011]

¹³ Thus spoke Oliveira Salazar in a speech broadcast on the radio in 1936: “We have sought to restore the comfort of great certainties to souls dilacerated by doubt and the negativism of the century. We do not deny God and virtue; we do not deny the Homeland and its history; we do not deny authority and its prestige; we do not deny family and its morals; we do not deny the glory of work and its duty.” It is possible to hear part of this speech at the following website: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEliE46A3rw>

The motto of “God, Homeland and Family, the trilogy of national education” appeared in an illustrated poster that was part of a set of posters published in 1938 to be distributed throughout all the primary schools in the country. Under the heading of “The Lesson by Salazar” this poster contains a very suggestive image of the fundamentals of the “Estado Novo”, which is worth examining in detail.



1. A Lição de Salazar [Salazar’s lesson].

It shows the interior of a rural, rustic, humble and welcoming house with warm colours, which is the home of a happy family. Here we can see a mother and her two children looking at their father who has just returned from work (this is the fundamental element of the Family and its moral). The poster embodies “the glory of work” and the feeling of a duty fulfilled, but also personifies the head of the Family and the incarnation of authority (the father). A crucifix signifying the authority of the Catholic Church can be seen on a chest, while there is an open window slightly to the side, which affords a glimpse of a castle flying the national flag (the fundamental element of the Homeland and its History).

The continued existence of this “world”, based on the pillars of “God, Homeland and Family”, was guaranteed by a hefty and rigid State authority, while the Catholic Church was an influential institutional ally.¹⁴ The “Portuguese Youth”, an entity that was somewhat similar to contemporary structures under other authoritarian regimes, promoted the necessary indoctrination of younger sections of society. In its turn, the creation of the National Secretariat for Propaganda in 1933 was aimed at disseminating the government’s actions and instilling the country with the “moral fibre that should guide the Nation”. The repressive face that guaranteed the maintenance of this system was commonly known as the PIDE – Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado [International and State Police], which did not hesitate to resort to torturing and imprisoning suspected political agents, assisted by a network of informants scattered throughout Portuguese society. In this context, the rights of freedom of expression and the freedom of the press were strongly curtailed and were subjected to the scrutiny of prior censorship.

When, in 1968, Marcelo Caetano substituted Salazar, nothing changed substantially in terms of the government’s position with regard to the serious situation of the colonial war that had been fought since 1961 on three crucial fronts in Africa, namely, in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.¹⁵ Despite the growing clamour of condemnation on the part of the international community, especially from the UN, Caetano continued to pursue a policy of isolation, reflected in the famous phrase coined by Salazar “proudly alone”, personifying a redoubtable position with regard to the freedom movements in the Portuguese colonies, who were committed to independence. The war was fought by appealing to the notion of the Homeland, so much so that the objective of maintaining this entity even fuelled suicidal behaviour: “A land that has been soaked in blood will flourish”, was one of the surprising statements that Marcelo Caetano uttered before the cameras in one of

¹⁴ After the 25 April Revolution Rui Simões directed a film entitled *Deus, Pátria e Autoridade* (1975) [“God, Homeland and Authority”], which debunked the foundations of this Salazarist trilogy in the light of new events and revolutionary ideals.

¹⁵ At the time of the revolution the colonies of São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde and Macao were also part of the Portuguese empire.

the speeches that he regularly proffered to the nation via television.¹⁶ It was in this sense that Stewart Lloyd-Jones would say that during this period, “Portugal existed in a world of its own construction”, far from the Communism that reigned supreme in the East but likewise far removed from the capitalism of the United States, which Salazar believed to be a threat to a rural and stable Portugal, rooted in Catholic morality.¹⁷

The 1974 coup not only put an end to a political regime. Something more profound was at stake: a certain Portuguese “world” that had been built by the regime. I propose to henceforth use the expression “Portuguese world” here as a concept that encapsulates a system or a constellation of possibilities of a way of life delimited by the political, social and religious authorities and fuelled by the institutions of the “Estado Novo”. It must be emphasised that this concept does not just refer to a social and political structure, but also encompasses, for example, forms of experience that are normally attributed to the spheres of morality and religion. The “Portuguese world” that celebrated the regime was not just to be found in the speeches of the governing authorities, nor only in posters or panels mounted on public buildings, but also touched the very perception that the collective whole and individuals had of themselves.

On the other hand, the concept of the “Portuguese world” invokes the very image that Salazar’s Portugal wished to project of itself: a way of being and a culture that went beyond the physical limits of Portugal’s European territory to encompass the overseas colonies. This notion of the Portuguese World was reflected in the title of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, an event that was held in Lisbon with great pomp in 1940.¹⁸

¹⁶ Excerpt from a speech by Marcelo Caetano reproduced in the documentary entitled *Adeus, até ao meu regresso* (1975) [“Farewell, Until I Return”], by António Pedro Vasconcelos.

¹⁷ Stewart Lloyd-Jones, *Portugal’s History since 1974*, available from: www1.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/media/Textos/portugal-since-1974.pdf [Accessed 12 July 2011].

¹⁸ The Exhibition of the Portuguese World was aimed at commemorating the dates of the foundation of the Portuguese nation state in 1140 and the restoration of independence in 1640. This Expo

The idea of the Portuguese World can also be read in a type of cinema that reached its zenith in the 1940s, essentially comprising the categories of historic-literary films and the famous “Portuguese comedies” or “Lisbon comedies”. The latter were normally set in typical neighbourhoods in Lisbon, where the urban characters live like villagers, whose “great certainties” are not shaken by the “doubts” and “negativism” that was then fermenting in the modern urban milieu of other countries during the 20th century.¹⁹

I believe that by appropriating and critically exploring the notion of a “Portuguese world”, which was interrogated by the 1974 revolution, rather than only limiting ourselves to the idea of a political and social system in decline, we can better understand what was at stake during the Torre Bela experiment and the lives of those who participated in it. Moreover, it is also essential to understand the expectations and the ambition reposed in the role that cinema played in national life after the revolution: that of a dynamo that would introduce changes in mentalities and a political and social transformation; a vanguard sector that, by its very nature, would reach not just the most remote areas of rural Portugal, but also the minds of those who did not have access to as basic an instrument for aggregation and civic evolution as literacy.²⁰

The Portuguese World in a Portuguese Village

This notion of the “Portuguese World” and the way in which it was questioned by the 1974 revolution can now be interpreted at the more concrete level of the social sphere of the settlements around Torre Bela. In other words, I propose

celebrated precisely the idea of a Portuguese world that extended to its colonial empire – from “Minho to Timor” (i.e. from Minho, a district in European mainland Portugal to the now independent nation of Timor in Asia).

¹⁹ See Baptista, Tiago – *A invenção do cinema português*, Lisbon, Tinta da China, 2008 (pp. 9-18 and pp. 36-55)

²⁰ In Portugal, the rate of illiteracy recorded in 1970 was about 33%.

to examine this world at a microscopic level, not from a rigid perspective that redeems a kind of fixed image of the time of the “Estado Novo”, but instead from the point of view of the critical discourses that emerged from the revolution. This point of view is embodied in the form of a metaphor in the part of Harlan’s film which shows the ducal palace, just before the sequence in which it is occupied: here we can see ghostly halls shrouded in shadows, without any human presence, full of portraits of aristocratic faces, religious figures and Popes – relics from another age.

In order to describe village life during the Salazarist period, which continued even after the military coup, I will rely on Harlan’s film, the accounts Pisani provides in his book, the writings of the personal archive of Rabaça, and first-hand accounts obtained from the inhabitants of the villages around Torre Bela. All these narratives are reconstructed memories, rooted in the social and political framework of the moment in which they were proffered. They could reflect the need to confer order upon the past, using the present as a point of reference, as well as an urgent need to reformulate and construct the present based on a new narrative about the past. Here, I follow the theories of Maurice Halbwachs (2006) and Paul Connerton (1999) about how memory works within societies, in a continuous process of generation, reconstruction and circulation.²¹

If one compares the figure of the father as depicted in the poster with the three pillars of national education “God, Homeland and Family” (plate 1) with the figure of the father constructed on the basis of data obtained from documentation and fieldwork, one can conclude that the typical image of a father resident in the Torre Bela region is far removed from the Salazarian vision of an idealised father. Instead of a caring and hardworking father, we find an illiterate, exploited father, often suffering from alcoholism or from the ghosts of the colonial war from which he had just emerged, or even an unemployed or absent father who had emigrated abroad struggling to achieve better living conditions.

²¹ Maurice Halbwachs described the collective memory as a distinct concept from individual memory. Halbwachs argues that memory is acquired in a social context that permeates the formation of the images of the past, see his book *On Collective Memory* (1992). Paul Connerton expanded this notion, drawing attention to the role of the body and ritual performance in the construction and perpetuation of social memory, see *How Societies Remember* (1989).

Between the beginning of the colonial wars in Africa and the 1974 Revolution rural Portugal witnessed mass emigration to various parts of the globe – about 1.3 million Portuguese. Only those who were weak, elderly or otherwise incapable of emigrating as agricultural labour stayed behind. Dozens of inhabitants left from villages around Torre Bela, emigrating to the south of France, in the area of Antibes, where they worked as agricultural labour or in the construction industry.

It was not just emigration that strongly influenced the lives of those who occupied Torre Bela and established the cooperative. Many of them had been part of the contingent of about 150,000 soldiers who fought in the colonial war, a figure calculated towards the late 1960s.²² Signs of their participation in this conflict are visible in the film by Thomas Harlan, particularly in the uniforms and military symbols or in conversations between the protagonists.

Today, some of the occupiers of Torre Bela cite the role that the period of military service played in their political views, such as, for example, José Ramalho, José Rodrigues or Rabaça (see biographical notes). It was in Africa that for the first time they came across the oppression of the colonisers over the colonised. Their discourse has parallels with the conscience of a former soldier in the film *Adeus, até ao meu regresso*, (1974) [“Farewell, Until I Return”], by António Pedro Vasconcelos: “They saw those people living in misery. The war in Guinea was the making of many men.”²³

Another peculiarity of the Portuguese World described herein was the organisation of the labour market according to a feudal logic. Every morning, labourers would go to the squares of each of the villages hoping to be hired by a small landowner or by the foreman of a large landowner, as was the case with the Duke of Lafões. This market was unpredictable: labourers were hired only when

²² Numbers cited in Stewart Lloyd-Jones, *Portugal's History since 1974*, available from: www1.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/media/Textos/portugal-since-1974.pdf [Accessed 12 July 2011].

²³ In this film, other former soldiers were interviewed against the backdrop of the sky and Lisbon airport, where planes coming from “our overseas provinces” would land - as explained by an off-screen voice - perhaps bringing more soldiers or the so called “returnees”. This scenario was very eloquent in the context of closing a chapter of the country's history.

climatic conditions were suitable and were not hired if they were not strong and healthy. The weaker labourers were at a clear disadvantage with regard to the stronger workers and if, by some chance, weaker labourers were hired they earned far less.

When observers or journalists involved with the cooperative from outside the villages, such as Pisani and Rabaça, saw this situation, they were outraged to find that a system they had believed to be extinct was flourishing at the heart of the Portuguese countryside. Rabaça narrates how, while driving the cooperative's truck, he suddenly realised the significance of the concentration of people in the village squares:

It is what they do everywhere. In Ereira, in Lapa, in Casais da Lapa, in Maçussa, in Manique...there is always a square. (...) On the third or fourth day I asked about it and sought an explanation and tried to deny that this was a real and visible fact that was part of the everyday lives of these villages. I closed my eyes and opened them to convince myself that I wasn't dreaming and I ran my fingers through my beard to wake up... – It's a square!!! And I stayed silent for the first three days. I couldn't even comment. No, we were not living in a pre-historic period, nor in the Middle Ages. (...) When I heard the word SQUARE, my dictionary functioned in terms of buying and selling agricultural produce, fruit. But this was a SQUARE FOR TRANSACTING MEN!!!²⁴

In his turn, in his book, Pisani argued that this system of commercialising their bodies enslaved men to the point of making them “sub-proletariat”, placing them at the level of animals (Pisani, 1978:100-106). In order to express the far-reaching impact of this life experience, Pisani described the life of 22 year old João Meiodia, a member of the cooperative, “who lives 2 hours away from Paris by airplane and 70 km away from Lisbon”. João Meiodia, an illiterate labourer, stood in the square on

²⁴ José Rabaça's personal archive, volume I, p. 110.

many occasions. He was intimately acquainted with hunger and was described as being amongst the poorest of the poor, living in an old house that measured 5 x 7 metres, which looked more “like a stable than a house”. His father was so dependent on alcohol that it prevented him from providing the necessary means of sustenance for his family (Pisani, 1978:101).

To a greater or lesser degree, alcohol was the oil that ensured that the wheels of this social system functioned. It was both a kind of social tie that cemented solidarity but also caused disruptions in this social framework. Within the cooperative, some members denounced alcohol as an instrument to control and manipulate workers, used by those who were higher on the social scale. Alcohol as a “bond” and as a disruptive element played an important role in the history of the cooperative and of the film.²⁵

For Pisani this dependence on alcohol was yet another element of a system “based on the father, the doctor, the weight of tradition, isolation from cities, illiteracy, alcoholism, the complicity of the National Republican Guard...” (Pisani, 1978:17) The Torre Bela estate when owned by Lafões’ family was another of the pieces that comprised this “puzzle”. It was a crossroads at which power relations were intertwined and maintained both in the clerical sphere as well as in civil society. Torre Bela not only hosted representatives of local power, the archbishop of the diocese himself and President of the Council of Ministers Marcelo Caetano, were frequent guests at the estate, as corroborated by photographs found in the palace archives (Pisani, 1978: 17). The Duke of Lafões embodied the more visible face of oppressive power in the discourses of those who occupied Torre Bela - a “feudal lord”.²⁶

In Harlan’s film the Duke’s figure embodies a distancing effect that needed to be created and reproduced between classes. This need to physically distance the

²⁵ In *Red Line* Harlan states: “Drunkenness played a role, as we can see in the film. Alcohol ended up by betraying them.”

²⁶ He is referred to as such in a brochure entitled “Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela” published on the occasion of its first anniversary on 23 April 1976. Personal archive of José Rabaça.

upper classes from the lower classes was patently evident in the very geography of the Torre Bela estate: according to Wilson, there were two separate systems of pathways, one used by the Lafões family and the other by labourers.²⁷ The organisation of the space literally reproduced the social organisation. The family would interact with the lower classes when they attended religious services at the church in Manique do Intendente or when younger members of the family got together with village youths to play a game of football. The matrix of this distancing was deeply rooted in society, as can be deduced from an episode described by João Filipe, Wilson's father, who was influenced by his son to become a member of the cooperative. João Filipe worked at the duke's estate from age 16 to 22:

We rarely used to see the duke, who would remain inside the palace. He did not mix with the workers. I remember that when we used to have lunch and there wasn't sufficient wine, those who were less afraid decided to go ask for some from Dom Segismundo, the father of the present duke. When we would climb up the hill if, by chance, we came across him on the path, we would say: Pardon, Your Excellency and we would take off our hats. Note, that was important. You always needed to hold your hat in your hands. (...) And there was more. We didn't dare raise our eyes to look up. We always looked at the ground. And we felt ashamed to see his beautiful shoes while wearing our muddy clogs (Pisani, 1978:91).

A world of differences emerged in the presentation and choreography of the bodies. These signs and codes were part of a repertoire incorporated over the course of the history of each class and, in this sense, instilled by usage and repetition. The social movement that was inherent to the occupation of Torre Bela brought into the public arena a criticism and awareness of this repertoire that had been created by habit. What was accepted as being natural, never voiced or discussed in public, now became the object of criticism:

²⁷ Interview with Wilson, Manique do Intendente, March 2009.

We spent a long life under the yoke of obeying. But it wasn't just our intelligence, our head that was under this yoke. It was also our blood: our blood was politicised in the old fashioned way. It pulled us down. Our blood made us like this and caused us to have the mentality of a slave. It was like this because of the alcohol" (Pisani, 1978:98).

What was so deeply rooted in their "blood" created automatic and uncontrollable reactions. This rooted memory can be understood as habit-memories as formulated by Paul Connerton (Connerton, 1999): social gestures and poses inscribed in the body, acquired by perpetual repetition, which thus emerge in daily life with no prior self-consciousness.²⁸ At this point, one should ask what forces resulted in something that was in their blood to be named and criticised? What was it that unleashed a rupture in the chains of these habit-memories?

From a Military Coup to a Popular Revolution: The "fever"

The new order that emerged after the military coup on 25 April 1974 was founded on the basis of the programme of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). During the transition, the country was governed by a National Salvation Junta, until the first provisional government took power, on 16 May, with General António de Spínola as the President of the Republic.²⁹ After the new order was installed the bodies and institutions of the "Estado Novo" were dismantled, the political police was abolished and political prisoners were released. Exiles were allowed to return (including Mário Soares, secretary-general of the PS and Álvaro Cunhal, secretary-

²⁸ In *How Societies Remember* (1989) Connerton examines the processes – rituals and performances - by which habit-memories permeate the social order.

²⁹ António de Spínola (1910-1996) had been the military governor of Guinea-Bissau in 1968 and 1972. In February 1974 he published a book entitled *Portugal e o Futuro*, in which he defended a political solution to resolve the conflicts in the Portuguese colonies, recognising the "right of people to self-determination" (Rezola, 2007:43).

general of the PCP) and political parties and trade unions were allowed to function freely once more.

The MFA programme was aimed at the so-called three “D”s: “Democracy, Decolonisation, Development”. With regard to the first of these, the programme stipulated that free elections were to be held within a year, with a universal, direct and secret suffrage, to create a Constituent Assembly, which would be responsible for preparing a new Constitution. The document sought to establish a new economic and social policy, with an emphasis on favouring the interests of the “most underprivileged sections of society” and “defending the interests of the working class”. Another central element of this new scenario that emerged from the Revolution was the “recognition that the solution for the wars in Africa was political and not military” with a view to establishing peace (Rezola, 2007:63).

25 April 1974 was followed by 1 May, Labour Day, which was celebrated with expressive mass mobilisations on the streets, especially in Lisbon – the crowds were said to have included a million people. This public support, which is today viewed as public caution to temper the actions of the soldiers who had begun the military coup, can be seen in the film *As Armas e o Povo* [“Arms and the People”], (1975) a collective production by a film union, which brought together directors and technicians at the time. In order to make this documentary, about ten teams fanned out over various locations of the Portuguese capital to film the 1 May celebrations. These included filmmakers linked to the Portuguese “New Cinema”, such as Fernando Lopes and António Pedro Vasconcelos, along with the Brazilian Glauber Rocha.³⁰ For the first time in many years, the voice of citizens was captured in the streets without

³⁰ Portuguese New Cinema is characterised by a series of changes in terms of themes, styles and production schemes as compared to cinema produced during the 1940s and 1950s. Many of the young filmmakers and technicians who had studied abroad with scholarships came together at the time to form a cinema cooperative, the Portuguese Cinema Centre. The works sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation provided a glimpse of another country, far removed from the Lisbon courtyards portrayed in sweet family dramas. For example, the two films that are considered to have inaugurated this movement, *Verdes Anos* (1963) by Paulo Rocha and *Belarmino* (1964) by Fernando Lopes, revolve around characters who are marginal figures or out of place in their urban or suburban setting. With regard to Portuguese New Cinema, see the contributions by Paulo Filipe Monteiro (2000) and Tiago Baptista (2008).

being subject to the scrutiny of censorship. To the question posed by Glauber Rocha, “Do you want the war to continue or to end?” everybody answers that the war should end. In the background you can hear the slogan “Death to the PIDES”. The impressive concentration of people on the streets hints at an explosion of latent popular energy that would sweep across the country in the near future. This mood was perfectly summarised by an expression that I heard from a resident of Manique do Intendente: it was a “fever” that had swept through the country, contagious and electrifying, palpable in the streets, which then extended into almost daily strikes and protests. This contagion resulted in the occupation of Torre Bela.

The strong popular mobilisation was one of the features of this phase of “revolutionary transition”, which extended from 1974 to 1976, according to a time frame proposed by Vital Moreira. The so-called phase of democratic normalisation began in 1976, when parliamentary and presidential elections were held and the Constitution for the post-Estado Novo era was approved. Up until then, a pro-socialist line of transformation was dominant, but it was not linear and unequivocal. Different ramifications and inflections can be seen during this period, since different interpretations of socialism were at play: would it be inspired by the models in vogue in the Soviet bloc, founded on a centralised state? Would it be popular socialism, installed by means of a revolution? Or would it be a form of socialism derived from electoral measures and rooted in a parliamentary regime? These questions did not prevent diverse combinations from being conceived.

The interaction between the various political, military and social agents during this period was very complex. Describing this intricate web is beyond the purview of this thesis. I will only highlight the events and issues that will help shed light on the history of Torre Bela and on the narrative structure of Harlan’s film, especially emphasising two dates: 11 March, the date of an attempted coup d’état which precipitated the wide social movement that fuelled the occupation of Torre Bela and 25 November, the beginning of the end of this movement.

Historians are virtually unanimous that 11 March 1975 witnessed an attempted coup d’état on the part of a group of soldiers who wanted to see António

Spínola reacquire the power that he had once wielded as President of the Republic but had lost to other institutions (Rezola, 2005:126). After 11 March, given the possibility of the nation veering towards the right, the left became increasingly prominent and, as a result, orders were issued nationalising the banking and insurance sectors. The National Salvation Junta was abolished and the Revolution Council was created. In May the MFA Assembly discussed the possibility of instituting a revolutionary path moving towards socialism. A wave of demands was manifested in organised protests, strikes, the occupation of work sites, the creation of workers' committees and the expulsion of managers. About one thousand labour related conflicts were recorded in the country (Rezola, 2005:214). Popular action also translated into the occupation of buildings and the formation of residents' committees, especially in the Greater Lisbon and Greater Porto areas. Crèches, children's parks or health centres (known as people's clinics) were created in some of these occupied buildings.

In the agrarian world the first instances of land being forcefully occupied were recorded at the end of 1974 and early 1975. Given the ambiguous position of the ruling authorities, this movement, which occurred especially in Southern Portugal, was very often supported or framed by trade unions, by the PCP or other extreme-left parties or some groups of MFA soldiers (Rezola, 2005:214). Some of these occupations that resulted in the formation of cooperatives and collective units for production ended up by being legitimised by new legislation published in July 1975.³¹ The aim was to implement Agrarian Reforms, although no consensus had yet been reached about the model to be used. What had begun as a military coup d'état rapidly became a popular revolution.

³¹ This is how the movement translated into numbers: "Thus, if about 130,000 hectares of land had been occupied until July 1975, this figure rose rapidly. The Revolution arrived in full force in the fields of Southern Portugal. In a short span of time about 1 million hectares of land were occupied in the Alentejo region and transformed into collective units for production" (Rezola, 2005:211).

Taking power and appropriating words

This was the context in which the Torre Bela cooperative had to negotiate its existence amidst the diverse centres of political and military power (themselves fragmented internally), which gave contradictory signals with regard to the legitimacy of the occupation. Some military factions supported the occupation and incited them further, as is in fact visible in the sequence of the film showing a meeting between a group of the occupiers and the military police that was held in the military headquarters in Lisbon. The reluctance and mistrust of other factions was reflected, for example, in a raid on the cooperative carried out by officials of the Santarém Cavalry School, searching for illegal arms on 1 December 1975 (see below). The Torre Bela experiment never managed to break free of a state of limbo between illegality and semi-illegality, a status that had an indelible impact on the collective memory and on the lives of the protagonists.

When Harlan and his team reached the estate the process of occupation was already well underway. At the time, this director, who had recently arrived from Chile, had been in Portugal for a few weeks, filming what he called “suicide by the Portuguese army”.³² On 11 March he was filming at the Lisbon Artillery Regiment (RAL, later called RALIS). It was while he was at this regiment that he learnt about the occupation of Torre Bela.³³ Harlan’s team started filming on the estate when negotiations took place between the Duke and the occupiers, as can be deduced from the film’s early sequences. In one of these scenes, Vitória brings news about the

³² “I spent various weeks at the RAL 1 regiment, to slowly observe how soldiers’ committees were formed, the destitution of the officials and how political parties entered the barracks”. Interview with Thomas Harlan, Schönau, Germany, June 2008.

³³ Harlan enthusiastically described this episode while being interviewed by Paulo Branco, Serge Daney and Thérèse Giraud: “During one of the assemblies at the RAL I, a soldier who had been assigned to the units of the Santarém cavalry school, the birthplace of the “Carnation Revolution”, presented a report about a peasant movement in that area: He announced the imminent occupation of the estates of the Braganza royal family in Torre Bela, with Zabu heading the movement (...). The crew quickly stopped filming at the barracks, where they had been working for 40 days already, and went to Torre Bela.” Daney, Serge *et al.* (1979).

progress of the talks to a group of occupiers who await the outcome of the meeting. It grows late. An artificial light illuminates the occupiers, who gather together in a semicircle, speaking to each other, aware of the presence of the camera. They speak looking right at the camera and towards the source of the light, as though they were in an arena, expressing their idea of justice. They trip over their words.

Russel Parker's camera scans the faces of the small crowd in long sequence shots. And it is right here that one can observe the first of many manifestations of a dynamic that was created between the team and the small crowds that gathered during those initial days of the occupation of the estate. Very often the camera changed direction from one speaker to another according to the shifts in the tones and volumes of the voices, seeking out the face behind the most inflamed voice, that which sought to dominate the other voices in the group. In their turn, when the speakers perceive this movement of the device, which placed them at the centre of attention – centre stage so to speak –, they become even more assertive, raising their voice even further or gesturing more emphatically. This attention by the camera would have an effect on the unfolding of events, as shall be seen shortly.

These cues deduced from their body language were a reference for the cameraman Russel Parker, who did not speak Portuguese and was thus unable to understand the contents of the conversations. However, he reacted to the volume of the individuals' voices and the gestures of the occupiers. Along with the rest of the team he stayed in Torre Bela for some months, more precisely for 101 days, from 23 April to 2 August 1975, according to the information in the final credits of one of the versions of *Torre Bela* preserved at the National Archive of Moving Images, at the Portuguese Cinema Museum [*Cinemateca Portuguesa*]. He filmed about 32 hours with 16mm film, apparently without any budgetary constraints limiting the use of considerable quantities of film stock.³⁴

In one of the first sequences of the film one can also see Camilo Mortágua, former head of the League for Unity and Revolutionary Action (LUAR) (see

³⁴ Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau am Königssee, Germany. There are different figures concerning the number of hours of rushes.

biographical notes) urging an audience listening to him at the estate to mobilise themselves: “It is not right that there are empty estates here, when the villages in the area are in dire need [of sustenance].” When Camilo arrived there in July 1975, at a time when he bid farewell to the LUAR, he still had his doubts as to whether it had been a rational decision: disorganisation was rampant, the *occupiers* were leading “a life of guerrillas without combat (without danger?), with the support of the people and, above all, of wine” (Pisani, 1978:124). In this context, one of the most pressing tasks was to organise a canteen and communal meals and to ration the quantities of alcohol served during meals.³⁵ It is therefore no wonder that Camilo referred to the canteen as “the only nucleus from which we could recreate the collective spirit”. In these early stages of a collective existence a workers’ committee was elected (which never had a very stable composition) and statutes were prepared for the cooperative.³⁶ At a more concrete level, a system was chalked out distributing tasks and shifts and the accounting was organised.

Initially, the cooperative had about 40 members, chosen according to the following criteria: “the most needy; those who had been unemployed the longest; those who were abandoned since they had no family; those who were most frequently rejected and scorned when they offered their labour in the square.”³⁷

However, this number was by no means fixed and varied over the course of the cooperative’s existence. For example, in May 1976 it had 50 members.³⁸ With the passage of time diverse sectors were organised within the cooperative for specific agricultural and livestock activities, each of which had its own team: vineyards, olive oil and olive groves, large nurseries, a large-scale vegetable garden,

³⁵ This is one of the priorities mentioned in the brochure entitled “Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela”, undated, personal archive of José Rabaça.

³⁶ For example, in the course of 6 weeks there were 3 or 4 changes to the composition of the workers’ committee (Pisani, 1978:128).

³⁷ Information provided in the brochure “Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela” undated, personal archive of José Rabaça.

³⁸ Personal documentation of José Rabaça, Dossier AZAGRO/Torre Bela, 21/9/75 to April 1977, Vol. II (p. 243)

horticulture, forestry and livestock, as well as a sector for socio-cultural activities. A crèche was also created. In the daily life of the cooperative, general assemblies were held one after the other.³⁹

The general assemblies and the meetings, often held informally, constituted vital spaces to ensure that the cooperative functioned. Learning how to speak in public and organising things so that everyone could have a say were some of the main challenges facing a structure which was rooted in the idea of discussion and debate.

At the beginning we didn't even know how to hold a meeting. We all wanted to speak at the same time, nobody got along. "Wait for my turn to speak?! I have been forbidden to speak for so long and now I can't talk when I want to? That's a laugh".⁴⁰

It is precisely this question of appropriating the word that is present throughout Harlan's film, amidst a chaos of voices and gestures, clearly reflecting the idea that the Revolution unleashed a series of latent tensions. This is evident, for example, in the final sequence of the documentary, when they are discussing the occupation of the palace and absenteeism from work, at a point when a heated physical clash seems imminent between some members of the cooperative.

³⁹ During certain periods a general assembly was held once a day. Everything had to be discussed. This could include a central question such as equal wages for men and women, or apparently trivial aspects, such as the need to "not have a bath with muddy feet because it clogs up the pipes". This mechanism proved to be important for the smooth functioning of a collective structure (PISANI, 1978:128).

⁴⁰ This is the way in which the cooperative projected its image, imagining itself in the first person in a text probably written by Camilo himself included in the brochure "Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela", personal archive of José Rabaça.

“Between a rock and a hard place”

The cooperative was precarious, but the internal tensions inherent to a collective structure are not enough to explain the sense of threat hanging over its existence. The famed walls of Torre Bela were not enough to keep out the “outside world”. On the contrary, if it had been this “outside world” that had created the space for this possibility it was now the same “outside world” that held the key to its destiny.

During the “Hot Summer” of 1975 the tension between leftist and rightist groups reached a breaking point and a wide-spread anti-communist violence made civil war seem imminent. In July 1975, not very far from Torre Bela, in Rio Maior, a crowd attacked the PCP centre and the headquarters of the Popular Socialist Front. At the heart of Portugal, this act marked the beginning of a wave of attacks on the headquarters of political parties and trade unions, which soon encompassed all of Northern Portugal. As Cerezales comments, “Rio Maior became the symbolic frontier between Southern and Northern Portugal, that of the ‘revolution’ and that of the ‘reaction’ (Cerezales, 2003:1127).⁴¹ Torre Bela was situated precisely on this frontier, at the point where opposing forces collided, “between a rock and a hard place”, in Pisani’s words (Pisani, 1978:17).⁴² (See appendix 1)

⁴¹ It is worth examining the numbers and the description of such actions, summarised by Diego Cerezales, which help shed light on the dimensions of this wave of violence: about 80 offices of the PCP, trade unions and other small parties known for their revolutionary inclinations were surrounded and attacked, another 50 or so were targeted for bomb attacks, nocturnal assaults and arson. Likewise according to Cerezales, sometimes up to 3000 individuals came together in these acts, which often involved long sieges and shootouts with militant communists. The retreat of the red flag with its hammer and sickle was followed by the “purifying bonfire of all ‘communist’ material” (Cerezales, 2003:1127).

⁴² Ribatejo was a frontier region between Northern Portugal, associated more with rightist sentiments, with a more segmented ownership structure, including tenants and small landowners, and Southern Portugal, associated with leftist elements, large landholdings and daily-wage agricultural labour.

On 25 November, at the Tancos base a set of military officials identified with the revolutionary left set military operations in motion that ended up in the occupation of some air force bases. The more moderate military faction implemented a plan that even contemplated the possibility of installing an alternative government in Porto and the consequent division of the country into two parts.

For those who participated in the cooperative it was a landmark date that weakened the dynamics of the project and turned existing political references upside down. “Yesterday we were heroes and today we are bandits”, one of the cooperative members confided to Pisani. And he continued, “Up to now everyone was in favour of the MFA, COPCON, Saraiva de Carvalho. We have been cut off from Lisbon overnight. The radio is tuned to the fascists from Porto” (Pisani, 1978:62).⁴³ Outside the walls of the estate there was an “enemy” who “turned the population against cooperatives and especially against Torre Bela” (Pisani, 1978:148).

In some people’s view, 25 November represented the beginning of the end for the cooperative. This was also because shortly after 25 November Torre Bela was raided by military officials from the Santarém Cavalry School, who were ostensibly looking for weapons in the cooperative. During the operation, which took place on 1 December 1975, seven hunting rifles, one 18th century lance and a pistol were found. Some members of the cooperative, including members of the workers’ committee, were taken to be interrogated (including Pisani himself) and were arrested. When Pisani returned to Torre Bela, he found some five hundred people who “were shouting in front of the entrance gate that they had come from Rio Maior, that they were from the PPD”⁴⁴ (Pisani, 1978:57).

The raid that took place on 1 December and the subsequent imprisonment of members of the workers’ committee are succinctly evoked in the final credits of at

⁴³ The COPCON, or the Operational Command for Mainland Portugal, headed by Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, was created by the MFA to ensure that the measures that were progressively adopted after the 25 April coup were implemented. It was abolished after 25 November 1975.

⁴⁴ PPD is the abbreviation for the People’s Democratic Party, which tends to be right of the Socialist Party.

least two versions of the film *Torre Bela*.⁴⁵ Harlan ended the text that was inserted there with the phrase, “The Carnation Revolution came to an end”, using the events that occurred at the cooperative metonymically to suggest the end of the revolution, as though the Torre Bela project alone condensed all the ideals of the 25 April revolution.

The fact is that the cooperative continued to function beyond December 1975 and even gained a second wind. In a letter sent to a commander of the Santarém Cavalry School who had attacked them in the columns of a newspaper called *A Luta*, the members of the cooperative mention numbers that attested to the productivity of this structure in 1976.⁴⁶ Even today this is still a bone of contention between the supporters and detractors of the cooperative during discussions in cafés in villages near the estate: more than the historical relevance and the validity of the political project, they assess the effectiveness of the cooperative as a productive agricultural enterprise.

Between the inside and outside of Torre Bela: Traffic and connections

The physical and symbolical division between the interior and the exterior of the cooperative of Torre Bela is an underlying element to understand the complexity of this communal experience and its engagement in the making of the film. On the one hand, there is the “interior” of Torre Bela, its project and its micro-history. On the other hand, there is the outside world, i.e. the nation and its social and political movements, viewed at a macroscopic level. The dual perspective that is used here reflects the way in which Pisani narrates his experiences at Torre Bela, divided between the inside and outside world. To make this distinction, Pisani re-

⁴⁵ Namely the shorter version published as a DVD that was circulated with the *Público* newspaper and the longer version that was screened at the King Cinema in Lisbon in August 2007.

⁴⁶ In that letter, they listed the existence of a flock of 120 goats, 2 milk cows, 50 pigs and about 100 chickens. They also highlighted the continuation of the cereal nurseries and the renovation of the mechanical workshop.

appropriated the mythic figure of the estate's vast wall and reconstructed it. This dividing line created both mystery and isolation, as well as underscored the feeling of a threat coming from "outside", from the "enemy", while simultaneously representing a source of hope and life.⁴⁷

In April 1975, the "exterior" invaded Torre Bela: it was inundated with film crews – not just Harlan's – journalists, artists, students, teachers, union representatives, citizens expressing their solidarity or the merely curious who came from various parts of the country, especially from Lisbon, and from abroad.⁴⁸ In some sequences from Harlan's film it is possible to glimpse elements holding cameras and microphones in the midst of the crowd, along with the singers Zeca Afonso, Vitorino and José Fanhais singing *Grândola Vila Morena* to a large audience who gathered at the estate to hear them sing despite the pouring rain.⁴⁹

Later, when the cooperative was functioning in full swing and it was almost harvesting time, volunteers came from Lisbon and from abroad to work there for periods of time that ranged from a weekend to several months, mainly during the summer. Some of those who came from "outside" were sarcastically called "revolutionary tourists" or "weekend revolutionaries" (Pisani, 1978: 201).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Pisani describes the feeling of the opposition between the interior and exterior of the cooperative in these terms: "I used to feel this every time that I returned from Lisbon during December [1975]. Outside [Torre Bela] the counter-revolution had triumphed, the delirium of an authorised press. Against everything there was to the left, especially against popular power. Of course it was also against the leaders, but, above all, it was against concrete experiments, against the base (...). For many of us, who used to discuss such matters in cafés, Torre Bela was the realisation of the Revolution, as we had dreamt it to be. It was only after traversing that wall many times that I understood the difference between discourse and reality. To go back to Torre Bela was to find life again, to leave it was to go back to the discourse" (Pisani, 1978: 214-215).

⁴⁸ Portugal was a territory that could be reached relatively easily by many Europeans who wished to see a revolution first hand in all its glory after the 1959 Cuban revolution and May 1968 in France. Francis Pisani cites an expression that was often used at the time to describe the accessibility of a revolution that was taking place at the "end of the southward-bound highway".

⁴⁹ The song "Grândola Vila Morena" ["Grândola, Dark Town"] was one of the musical cues used by the Armed Forces Movement to confirm that the military operations of 25 April 1974 had been set in motion.

⁵⁰ In his book, Pisani describes the story of Óscar, "the Colombian", one of these "revolutionary tourists" that later became a member of the cooperative. Óscar first came to Torre Bela after hitching a ride from Lisbon. Despite the recommendation of the military officials that the cooperative should

The cooperative proved to be the setting for a sort of laboratory for social experimentation, where people from diverse social and professional backgrounds, with varied experiences, could mingle together, and there were people with diverse degrees of kinship. Within the cooperative there were members who had lived all their lives in the region, others who had travelled more or come from abroad (Óscar, the Colombian) or exiles (Camilo), and yet others who had been through the former Portuguese colonies in Africa (José Rodrigues, Herculano). On the other hand, there were members who were first-degree relatives (Wilson's family or that of João and Celestina, the cook at the cooperative), others had no family members at all there and very little family support outside the cooperative (e.g. João Meio-dia). The brief panorama described herein conveys an idea of the complexity of this community, owing to the mingling of various social identities in a single space, for which it was necessary to reinvent a new range of relations.

Behind this intermingling and social experimentation lay innumerable conflicts, friction and disappointments. The clash between the interior and the exterior was not just due to the various concepts of organisation. It sometimes included different standards of clothing and behaviour that were perceived by some members of the cooperative or by neighbouring villages as being threatening or disruptive of good habits. This was the context in which there emerged a myth of liberal "foreign girls", which persists even today in villages.⁵¹

Some of the relationships that began at the time between local members of the cooperative who had been born in the area and foreign women, although sometimes repressed in the context of the group, ended up in marriage. Amongst these couples were José Rodrigues and Angelika, currently residing in Germany, whom we filmed when they were spending their holidays in Maçussa.

not receive foreigners (Pisani, 1978:303) Óscar was one of those who remained there for the most time.

⁵¹ Pisani gives an account of this myth: "There are foreign boys and girls behind those walls, and the foreign girls are the worst of all" – it was said in the village. "The boys, if you can call them boys, with their long hair, do drugs. As for the girls, they walk around naked, sleep with the men and drive them wild. At least that is what was said" (Pisani, 1978:214).

The “foreigners” or the Portuguese who were not from local villages in the vicinity of the estate were simultaneously a strange and dissolute “exterior” as well as an emancipative element and a guarantee that helped legitimise the existence of the cooperative. Camilo, Rabaça and Eduarda certainly had the necessary knowledge to serve as a bridge with institutions, and were thus elected to represent the structure in meetings with state and trade union bodies, to prepare documents and submit applications for government funding or funding from foundations.

Urged by Camilo to join the cooperative, Rabaça and Eduarda left Germany, where they had married, to form the socio-cultural group, which was to focus especially on initiatives to promote literacy. According to the figures cited by Rabaça, “In the villages around Azambuja the average rate of illiteracy was 40%, (...), amongst 20 members of the cooperative 12 have already asked to be enrolled in a course.”⁵² The socio-cultural group was linked to all the work teams (vineyards, horticulture, livestock, forestry, etc.) since “all forms of work should lead to a critical reflection and social transformation.”⁵³

The Rabaças engaged in an anthropological survey of the rural area in which they were working while simultaneously developing awareness drives and publicity campaigns, which included calling theatre companies from Lisbon, like the Comuna and Barraca to present shows at Torre Bela or in neighbouring cooperatives and showing slides and films at Torre Bela and nearby cooperatives.⁵⁴ This pedagogical action was based on the theories and methods learnt from Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher and pedagogue whom they had met in Paris and Geneva.

⁵² AZAGRO socio-cultural dossier, p. 115, archive of José Rabaça.

⁵³ Brochure “Cooperativa Agrícola Popular da Torre Bela”, undated, personal archive of José Rabaça.

⁵⁴ The activities of Eduarda and Rabaça extended to the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Azambuja (AZAGRO), a structure that grouped together the Torre Bela People’s Agricultural Cooperative, the Aveiras de Cima Agricultural Cooperative, the Ameixoeira-Ferraria Agricultural Cooperative and the Agricultural and Productive Cooperative of Marquesa, registered on 1 April 1976 (Dossier AZAGRO/Torre Bela 21/9/75 to April 1977, Vol. II, p. 263). Shows were staged in some of the cooperatives, such as *Bão*, by João Mota or *Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, by Bertolt Brecht. Interview with Eduarda Rosa and José Rabaça, March 2010.

During the course of their stay at the cooperative the Rabaças compiled a substantial set of songs, legends and popular sayings, along with stories and concrete episodes from the lives of the peasants in order to build bridges with those who did not have social visibility or who found it difficult to express themselves since they did not have a formal education.

However, in this case too, social differences were managed in an ambiguous and complex manner in the context of daily life at the cooperative. Sometimes the members of the cooperative from the surrounding villages understood that the specific nature of the Rabaças' activities was related more to organisation, teaching, writing and cultural initiatives while at other times they criticised them for not participating shoulder to shoulder with them during daily agricultural chores.⁵⁵ In a certain way, by joining the cooperative everyone offered to or was encouraged to diverge from, reconsider and reformulate their social roles. This was true both in the case of the local peasants who had never experienced participatory forms of organisation as well as those who were from outside the villages, who had to "prove" their involvement in the agricultural activities. The clash between these different worlds obliged individuals to leave the security and comfort of a particular social role, thus creating new forms of social relations.

Conclusions: De-territorialisation and a dilution of Frontiers

While deciphering what was interior and exterior to the cooperative and the surrounding villages – the so-called "natural environment" of the occupiers (Pisani, 1978) – I am positioning myself in the space from which I look at these events and the way in which they were moulded by Harlan's film. However, I am also considering

⁵⁵ Rabaça described how he used to go with Camilo to meetings in Lisbon or Azambuja that extended far into the night. The next day, "If we were not harvesting maize or doing something else at 6 or 8 in the morning, we were dubbed bourgeoisie, because we were sluggards staying in bed". Eduarda added that, "People did not really perceive cultural work, which is understandable." Interview with Eduarda Rosa and José Rabaça, March 2010.

the panorama that gave rise to the militant cinema associated with the April Revolution: as a way of “going to the people”, leaving the “city” and previous cinematographic forms and practices, with all the ambivalence that this movement embodied.

The great lacuna of Harlan’s film, or in other words the fundamental off-screen action of Harlan’s film (thus using a suggestive cinematographic expression) is what enabled the social movement that was Torre Bela - an “exterior” that ended up by being transformed into an inherent “interior” element of that dynamic. It is this exterior world that names and gives form to the suffering of the workers, which confers gravity to something that was deeply rooted in their life experiences and was thus deemed to be unquestionable. It is in this context that one should understand the descriptions of the condition of the occupiers during the “Estado Novo” regime as drawn by Rabaça and Pisani, particularly the way they described the “square full of men offering their labour” and its system of subjection. When one reads these descriptions today they suggest the role these chroniclers played in the lives of the occupiers with whom they lived, engaging in the daily activities of the cooperative: as though they were mirrors that reflected their image of being oppressed by a system that needed to be challenged and destroyed.⁵⁶ The subjection, oppression and suffering caused by the colonial war, toil and their duties could now be named.

It is possible to draw parallels between the actions of these elements and the impact of the presence of Harlan’s film crew on the scene during the occupation. Filming those events and those protagonists, giving them a voice and articulating them into a chain of images is a way of legitimisation, thus creating a space for visibility that showcases their actions in the “exterior” world. It is also a way of giving them a new identity and a new narrative. If, on the one hand, the images projected of the occupiers represent them as oppressed subjects – that is what they “say” to the camera right at the beginning of Harlan’s film, “because we have been subjugated, me, my parents, my grandparents” – on the other hand, these images

⁵⁶ “These men are amongst the most miserable in all of Europe” – is the way in which Pisani summed up the condition of these villagers in a single sentence (Pisani, 1978:15).

also raise them to a new plane: they are now active subjects who are demanding their rights and who celebrate having conquered a new power.

This movement, which highlighted the oppression and aspirations of the occupiers in a written (Pisani) and cinematographic form (Harlan), was inextricably linked to a reformulation of their social stature in a new chain, which is no longer the old hierarchy of social reproduction with its traditional distribution of powers. The idea of a profound social transformation is implicit to Camilo's convictions. He believed it to be a central element of the process: "If the human relations between them are not transformed then no progress will be made" (Pisani, 1978:131).

This is, thus, one of the fundamental off-screen elements of Harlan's film – that which, in the ultimate instance, made it possible to observe that reality and publicise it to the outside world, thus enabling the very existence of the film and all the discourses that have been produced with regard to the event. In other words, one of the crucial off-screen elements was the relationships that were forged there between diverse actors, from Portugal and abroad, peasants and intellectuals, which implied the dilution of rigid spatial and social frontiers in a highly compartmentalised society. In this context one can recall the two separate paths – one for the workers, another for the masters – that were an integral element of the estate's geography, a metaphor for this rigidity and social insulation. Unlike this separation, the cooperative's existence was forged by the intersection of social identities that were earlier restricted to certain circles, according to different social, cultural and professional statuses.

When seen in retrospect, this permeability and social intersection was a fundamental trait of the Torre Bela experiment. During recent contacts with leading figures of the cooperative I noticed that while it is important to note their return to more traditional roles, it is no longer in the same way nor with the same rigidity. Could this be one of the characteristics of a revolution catalyzed by the presence of a film crew – that of being a centrifugal force that turned existing social arrangements upside down?

The analysis and thoughts of Kristin Ross, with regard to May 1968, are useful in understanding this collective experiment:

The movement took the form of political experiments in *declassification*, in disrupting the natural “given-ness” of places; it consisted of displacements that took students outside of the university, meetings that brought farmers and workers together, or students to the countryside (...) It was an event, in the sense that Alain Badiou has given the term: something that arrives in excess, beyond all calculation, something that displaces people and places, that proposes an entirely new situation for thought. It was an event in the sense that thousands – even millions – of people were led infinitely farther than their education, their social situation, their initial vocation would have allowed them to foresee; an event in the sense that real participation – much more than a vague, formal solidarity, much more even than shared ideas – altered the course of lives” (Ross, 2002:25-26).

These “displacements” were hard to inscribe in the occupiers’ prior worldview and caused tensions and strong conflicts. An intersection of differences in the same space did not imply a peaceful coexistence and pure harmony between everyone, as is sometimes inherent to utopian projections of such collective structures. On the contrary, the space was a hotbed of pressures, conflicts and ruptures. This is not an idyllic reality, but a convulsive and sometimes explosive one. Considering the intensity of the events that took place at the time it is also possible to frame this experiment in the context of what Alain Badiou said happened during May 1968: “People reached their limits” (Badiou, 1998:11). When the occupiers, in the initial stages of the movement, began to create a cooperative there was no formal and recognisable authority. Not even the ways of living together that were implicit to constituting a collective structure were similar to those that prevailed before: that of a traditional family living in the confined space of an inhabited house – recall the Salazarist poster described earlier.

The cooperative was a group that struggled to understand how to reorganise itself into a new model of a community, how to articulate their experiences as a traditional family with new forms of interaction. This is, in fact, the backdrop against which one should consider the discussions that are shown in the film *Torre Bela* about the organisation of the dining hall or the need to occupy the palace to provide accommodation for those who did not have a home or were unmarried. On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that the cooperative itself was the result of a subversion of the political and social order, in an overall panorama where norms and hierarchies were thrown to the wind. Its existence was inextricably intertwined with the pressures that were manifested in the surrounding villages and it was viewed with mistrust by the political and military authorities. In other words, the cooperative was forged in the shadow of uncertainty and amidst imponderable and unpredictable odds. The orderly image of the Portuguese world projected by the cinematography of the “Estado Novo” that had prevailed up until then was thus abruptly shattered in cooperative new world. Harlan’s film reflected the social chaos of that experience, thus opening up the occupiers’ compartmentalised and closed sphere while simultaneously circulating their gestures and words.

“Going to the people” – was one of the primary impetuses that drove the cinema that was produced during the revolutionary period, a mission that made it essential to restructure the sectors of the production, screening and distribution of films (see below). It is thus important to go even further and discover the genealogy of this cinema and, especially, that of the film *Torre Bela* by Thomas Harlan. In 1974 and 1975, cinema descended to the streets and fields, convinced that moving images had the power to transform reality. So how was this ambition realised? What production methods and practices did cinematographers employ?

Chapter 2

*Let's go see the people
Let's go see the people
Aren't they beautiful?
Let's go see the people
Show me your feet!
Let's go see the people
Hop-la!
Let's go see the people
Here you are*

Mário Cesariny
Nobilíssima Visão
1959

Are we actors or occupiers? If we're going to open it let's open it now. If we are actors, we're actors.

(occupant of Torre Bela before entering the Palace)

“Going to the people”

Between 1974 and 1976, using cinema to showcase the people without the media standards moulded by “Estado Novo”, implied abolishing censorship and reformulating the entire institutional structure of cinema. A new law that limited the monopoly of cinema from Hollywood in Portuguese theatres and which collectivised the production, screening and distribution structures was the new horizon. Heated

debates about the nature of the collectivisation of means of production and the way in which to build a new Portuguese cinema free from the shackles of US imperialism informed the entire period. Cooperatives were created that encompassed directors and technicians, such as Cinequanon, Cinequipa, Grupo Zero or Virver. At the same time, production units dependent on the Portuguese Cinema Institute (IPC) were formed, bringing together directors such as Eduardo Geda, João César Monteiro or Luís Filipe Costa. Despite having diverse political affiliations and organisational philosophies, some principles served to unite the production units and the sphere of cooperatives. Amongst many such principles, one predominated: the belief that moving images had the power to transform the country, reflected from the outset in the programme that was released by a renewed Cinema Professionals' Union a few days after the 25 April revolution.

This programme was centred around the “cultural and political promotion” of the “popular classes”, “on pain of losing one of the most powerful means of expression and mass communication”.⁵⁷ This preoccupation with promoting the people by means of cinema included making sure that cinema reached every region of the country and was accessible to the most disempowered social classes, from the factories of the industrial belts in the Greater Lisbon area to social housing neighbourhoods and remote villages in the interior, by creating Cinema Action and Entertainment Groups.⁵⁸ These groups were never created, but some of their functions were incorporated into the Cultural Campaigns of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA).

At the heart of this militant cinematographic movement was the idea of ‘going to the people’ (or, as it was sometimes expressed, “giving voice to the

⁵⁷ This programme of cinematographic policy was prepared by the Portuguese directors Fonseca e Costa and Luis Galvão Teles for the Ministry of Mass Communications and was republished in the *Cinéfilo* magazine (*Cinéfilo*, 34, 1/6/74, p.14).

⁵⁸ Each group, consisting of a director, an assistant director, cameraman, sound technician, assistant cameraman, sets-lighting technician and an officer from the MFA travelled around the country, screening “films whose cinematographic language was suited for a broad popular audience, but with carefully selected contents” (*Cinéfilo*, 34, 1/6/74, p.14). At the same time, the group would film these places and the images could later be screened for local residents or were used to portray reality in other parts of Portugal.

people”), a notion that was treated pejoratively by some critics a few years later.⁵⁹ The expression encapsulated a series of concerns, practices and experiences, suggesting not just the geographic movement of means and people but also the social upheavals and intersections described in the previous chapter. Films such as *Deus, Pátria e Autoridade* (1976) and *São Pedro da Cova* (1976), by Rui Simões, can be viewed in the context of this movement. The first film was projected in remote places across Portugal, screened both for the workers of the Lisnave naval shipyards, where there had been an intense social and political tumult, for politicised rural labourers in the Alentejo region. Sometimes the projectionists even used the whitewashed walls of churches as screens. The latter was filmed with the participation of the inhabitants of a mining town in Northern Portugal for whom it was later screened in sessions that included debates.

Very often the cinema crews would go to filming sites transporting emblematic films from the history of cinema that they later screened for the communities they were filming. This was what happened during the period when *A Lei da Terra* (1977), by Alberto Seixas Santos, was filmed. The crew filmed during the day and at night they screened *The General Line* by Eisenstein in barns – using projectors and 16 mm copies – followed by debates.

This circularity between filming the people in action and showing them political or educational films, between producing and screening, marks the type of cinematographic experiment that they wished to create in a social milieu bubbling with change.⁶⁰ Harlan’s project at Torre Bela can be viewed against the backdrop of this kind of experimentation. On the one hand, the crew sought to capture on film an

⁵⁹ The expression “to go to the people” was used by the Portuguese director António Pedro Vasconcelos in a scathing criticism of revolutionary militant cinema (Vasconcelos, 1977).

⁶⁰ This type of action by film crews appears to echo the concept of an active spectator, who, by participating in a cinema session, becomes transformed into an actor, as described by Fernando Solanas and Octávio Getino in the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema*, in 1969: “This person was no longer a spectator; on the contrary, from the moment he decided to attend the showing, from the moment he lined himself up on this side by taking risks and contributing his living experience to the meeting, he became an actor, a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the films.” Solanas Fernando and Octávio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*. Available at: <http://documentaryisneverneutral.com/words/camasgun.html> [Last accessed 16 August 2011].

occupation to later disseminate the motivating image of a community in the process of being emancipated in other villages in Portugal or in other places around the world.⁶¹ On the other hand, he also wished to show the people being filmed their actions recorded by the camera during the filming process. In an interview with Serge Daney, Paulo Branco and Thérèse Giraud, Harlan stated that the material filmed was sent every week to the LTC laboratory in Paris to later be seen in “the villages in the area”. However, Harlan admitted that despite wanting “everyone to see [those images], in other countries, villages and cooperatives”, this was not possible due to logistical impediments. In a period during which “events took place at a breathtaking pace”, there was no way of expanding the elements of the crew and hiring more vehicles so as to screen the footage.⁶²

As for the projection of rushes for the occupiers who were being filmed, Harlan recalled that this had occurred at least once. His statements, perhaps repeated in debates held after the film was screened, ended up by fuelling a reading that was rooted in the mystique of the “empowerment” promoted by the camera. Harlan said in his conversation with *Cahiers* that the projection of rushes contributed towards arousing the occupiers’ awareness of the power conquered by their actions. The images being viewed acted as “a shock in the sense that the viewer-actor understood everything at one go, through the cinema that existed in that reality, which played a role in that reality.”⁶³ The echo of Harlan’s discourse surely shaped Fredric Jameson’s canonical interpretation:

At this point, we are told, the crew [of *Torre Bela*] began to follow the revolutionary process with a vengeance, screening the rushes once a week so that the peasants could themselves observe their own praxis and comment on it, as well as on its representation. What happened was that, with such exposure, the “peasants” now

⁶¹ Harlan affirmed that initially his objective “was not to film to make a film”, but rather to show in other parts of Portugal how the revolution was taking shape in the cooperative. *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner.

⁶² Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau, Germany.

⁶³ Daney, Serge et al. (1979).

became recognizable individuals, whom the camera began to follow selectively lingering on the more dramatic or the more photogenic, and also on the more articulate – now thereby lifted up formally to the status of “spokespeople” and ideologues.” (Jameson, 1992:189)

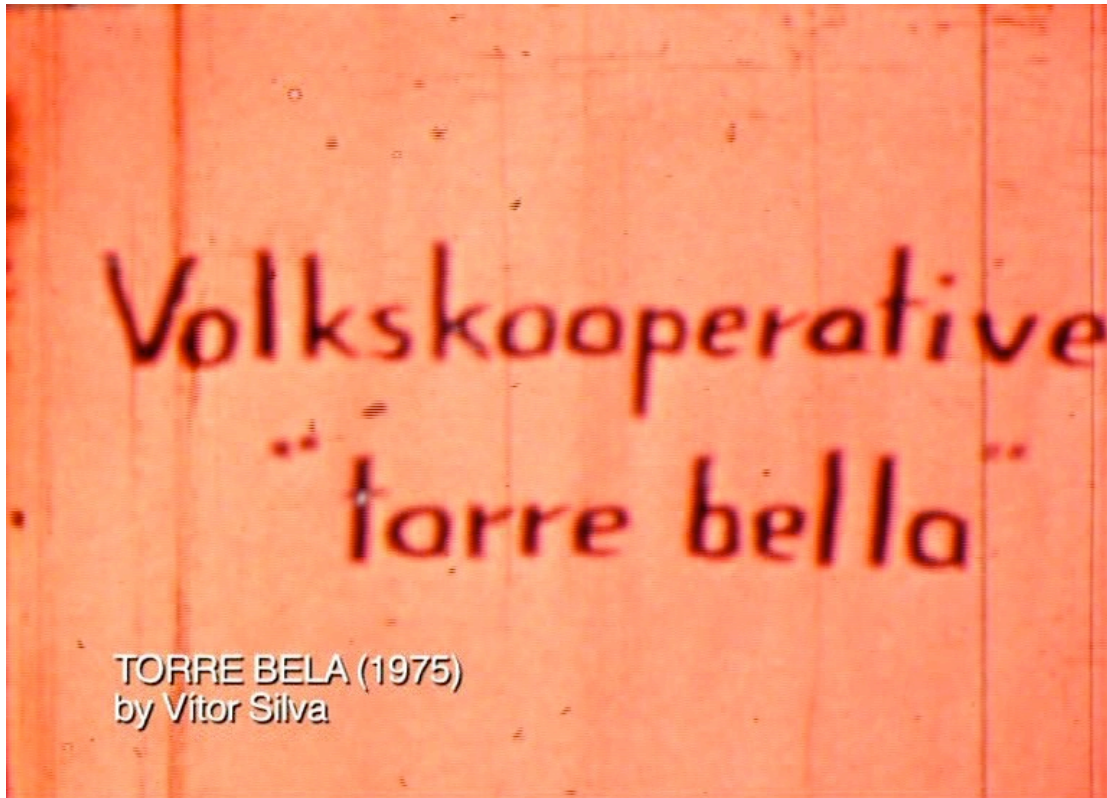
When questioned about the systematic projection of this material none of the former occupiers confirmed it. However, more than ascertaining if it did, in fact, occur, it would be pertinent to retain the key idea of an empowerment by cinema promoted from the outset by the continuous presence of a camera in that context. What is interesting is that this empowerment is not just related to the presence of Harlan’s film crew.

In the diaries of the two members of the cooperative, José Rabaça and Eduarda, who were in charge of its socio-cultural group, there are very suggestive references about viewing cinema both in a reflexive role and as a pedagogical tool and an instrument for mobilisation in Torre Bela and other cooperatives and in neighbouring villages. For example, another documentary about Torre Bela filmed in Super 8 by Vítor Silva was screened various times in the cooperative and in the adjoining villages of Ereira, Maçussa and Manique in February 1976.⁶⁴

Apart from this, after Harlan’s crew had left, the socio-cultural group formed a video group consisting of Pedro d’Orey and Isabel Chaves, who recorded everyday life on the farm using Philips equipment, which was cutting edge technology at the time.⁶⁵ The work by Harlan’s crew can thus be seen against this broader backdrop of militant mobilisation, which viewed cinema as a driver for a collective cause and not

⁶⁴ Extracts of this film by Victor Silva were used in *Red Line*.

⁶⁵ According to Pedro d’Orey this filmed material deteriorated with time. The video equipment was also used by Pedro d’Orey and Isabel Chaves to cover Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho’s campaign when he was a candidate for the elections held to elect the President of the Portuguese Republic in June 1976.



2. *Torre Bela* (1975), by Vitor Silva shows what was probably a poster written in German in the cooperative.

just as a tool that served as a documental record. In this context it was constituted as an instrument that promoted the visibility of those who, until then, could be considered to have been “overlooked by history” (Sobral, 2007). But this idea of circularity between filming and showing what has been filmed contains another more profound and complex idea: that the revolutionary actor/viewer, by acting and seeing that action, reinforces their motivation and enthusiasm to continue their struggle in a continuous movement fuelled by cinema.

The crew as occupiers

From the moment they arrived in Torre Bela Harlan and his crew did not limit themselves merely to being observers recording images. Harlan became a facilitator

of the occupation process, with concrete actions in the everyday scenarios of the occupiers' struggles. Thus, for example, he lent them the car used by the crew, went "into town to deal with their problems with the Institute for Agrarian Reform (IRA)", and made enquiries with banks for obtaining credit, which had been greatly hindered by the fact that the occupation was situated outside the Agrarian Reform Intervention Zone (ZIRA), which was more concentrated towards Southern Portugal. In this context, according to Harlan, they communicated – keeping in mind that the crew did not speak Portuguese fluently – by means of actions: "Action was sometimes a substitute for dialogue".⁶⁶

Such actions were interwoven in the relations between the occupiers themselves and between the occupiers and outside institutions. In the words of José Pedro Andrade dos Santos, credited as the production director of the film, Harlan had a seductive personality and was skilled at "managing the vanities of the various protagonists."⁶⁷ This skill came to characterise all his actions at Torre Bela.

In terms of observation, even if the camera was apparently passive it ended up by being a source of power. During a collective meeting or event, a given interlocutor to the detriment of others, and by focusing on person legitimised and gave weight to their behaviour and discourse. One must keep in mind that crew members such as Russell Parker remained there for three months and ended up by being integrated into the process itself. After all, as Harlan stated, "ninety percent of the [crew's] time was spent worrying about people and not filming them". And this resulted in the creation of a mutual "affection".⁶⁸ When he filmed, Russel worked "for two hours at a stretch with only a few obligatory technical interruptions", very often, "routine actions, or non-events".⁶⁹ This behaviour by the crew would have resulted in their being a virtually invisible presence amongst the occupiers. Time and

⁶⁶ Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau, Germany.

⁶⁷ Interview with José Pedro Andrade dos Santos, Bucelas, February 2011.

⁶⁸ *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen, (DVD).

⁶⁹ Daney, Serge et al. (1979)

proximity transformed the figure of the camera into a “comrade”,⁷⁰ as Harlan called it, or into a work tool, “just like a tractor or a shovel” according to Mortágua.⁷¹

The way in which Wilson’s filmed character and public persona were simultaneously built by the camera before his occupier colleagues provides a glimpse of Harlan’s role in managing affection and disaffection within the cooperative that was taking shape. At first, the camera’s “affection” focused more intensely on the initial leader of the occupation, Wilson, “making others fall silent in favour of what Wilson said”.⁷² It particularly silenced the politically more experienced informal leader who came from the outside, Camilo Mortágua, who had a participation and symbolic weight in the cooperative (especially a media aura) that far surpassed his presence in the film. According to the film’s editor, Roberto Perpignani, the fact that the camera closely followed the persona of Wilson instead of Camilo was due to Wilson’s more dramatic and catalysing personality as compared to the latter.⁷³

However, in this editing the movement of the camera did not always promote Wilson. In Harlan’s retrospective analysis, the decisive turning point occurred when the director revealed to the other occupants something about which they had been unaware: even before the group occupied the ducal palace, with the consent of the soldiers, Wilson had entered there and slept (with a “girl”) in the Duke’s room, having also purloined some “silver”.⁷⁴ In Harlan’s view, this denouncement led to the collective’s changed opinion about Wilson, which is reflected in the later sequences of the film, when his face is transfigured with the forlornness of a fallen hero. Taking a more detailed look at one of these sequences, in which one can see a heated discussion about the occupation of the palace – in which, for example, regarding missing contents or who would be entitled to sleep in the space earmarked for a

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Interview with Camilo Mortágua, November 2008, Lisbon.

⁷² Daney, Serge et al. (1979)

⁷³ Interview with Roberto Perpignani, August 2010.

⁷⁴ *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen, (DVD).

future cultural centre – Wilson is shown in an attitude of prostration, protesting that, “They cannot see me as the boss.” This dramatic effect that gave an impression of decadence was achieved by editing. There was a lot of filmed material about Wilson, but according to Harlan, nine-tenths of it was cut during the process of editing. And he further explained:

It was necessary for Wilson to ride the Duke’s white donkey and sleep in his bed for a balance to be re-established and for the film to acquire another dimension. His end was immediately nigh from that moment onwards. He, who presumed to speak on everyone’s behalf, spoke, for the last time, to the military police. The following day, during the occupation of the palace, he kept quiet. He did not participate anymore except on the sidelines to prepare a new workers’ committee in which he did not play any role.⁷⁵

With this discourse Harlan inextricably linked the history of the Torre Bela cooperative to the narrative constructed by his own film, an idea that will be examined in further detail shortly. In fact, even though Wilson lost his dramatic prominence in the film, he continued to play an important role in life within that collective structure, holding leadership roles as a member of the workers’ committee and its representative to the outside world.

Harlan and his crew can thus be viewed as networkers and influential players, not only weaving themselves into the social web that was created within the cooperative, but also serving as a transmitting link between the cooperative and the outside world, especially with the military sphere. In this regard, Harlan viewed the support of the soldiers as being a fundamental element for the success of the Torre Bela experiment – after all the Armed Forces Movement had given rise to the military coup, setting the ensuing revolutionary movement in motion. Its narration of events at the cooperative supports that idea:

⁷⁵ Daney, Serge et al. (1979)

That army was expected at Torre Bela: the peasants of Manique had not dared to invade the property precisely because they were waiting for immediate support from the soldiers of two neighbouring regions, i.e. the cavalry school in Santarém and the air base in Ota. But this assistance never arrived. As the security police and the republican guards had both been disarmed, the occupiers did not encounter any resistance, but they also did not find their presumed friends, the soldiers. They ended up by only finding us.”⁷⁶

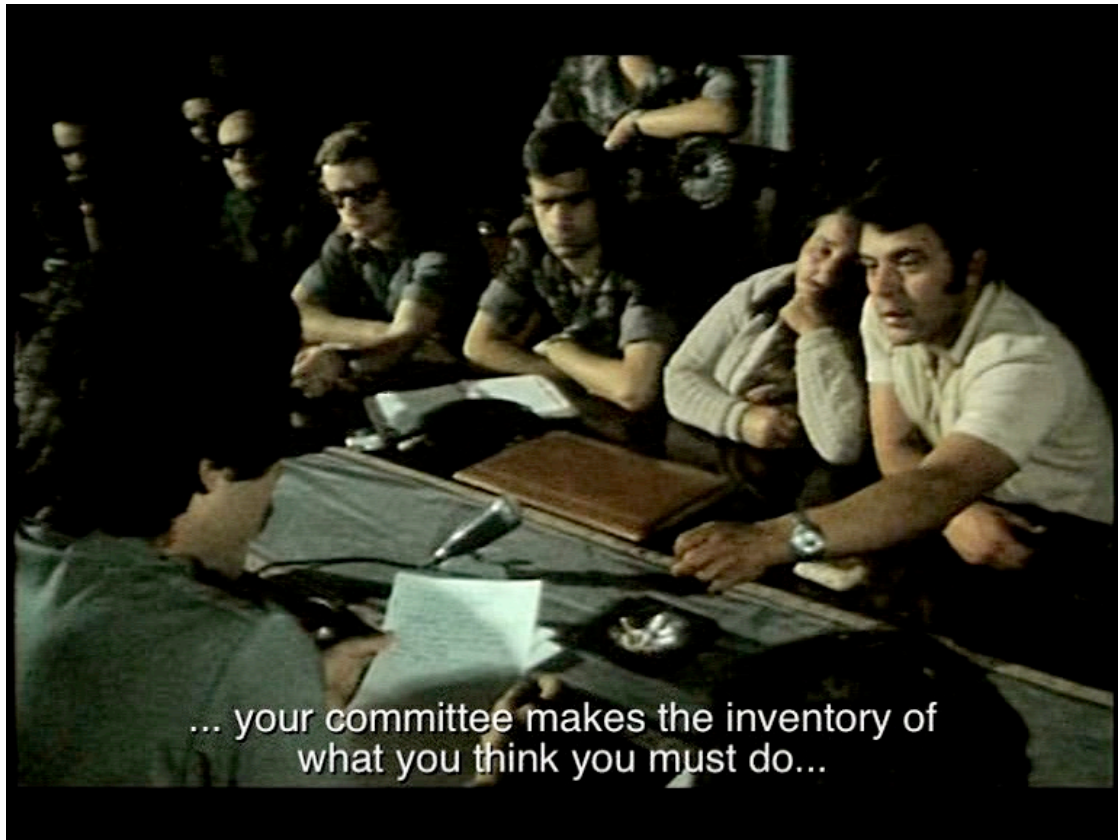
The director sought army assistance from the military faction that was politically more aligned to the left, which defended the penetration of popular power in the nation’s new political life and had a significant presence in the regiment of the Military Police stationed in Lisbon.⁷⁷ Harlan who had already filmed there in the months preceding the occupation of the estate, had privileged connections with its prominent representatives, Mário Tomé and Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. The most visible way in which this support actually took place can be seen in the sequence in which a committee of occupiers, including Wilson and Maria Vitória, meet with the soldiers at the barracks of the Military Police, in the Ajuda neighbourhood in Lisbon (plate 3). Although Harlan was satisfied with the results of the meeting, he always envisaged a more pro-active role on the part of the soldiers, beyond the commitment to inventory the contents of the palace so that these contents were not lost in the chaos of the occupation: “I had what was probably a slightly idiotic idea that if the military police would perhaps indirectly supply arms, the cooperative could be maintained for a longer time.”⁷⁸

One of the controversial questions that were intensely discussed during the Hot Summer of 1975, when Harlan and his crew were at the estate, was precisely that of handing over arms to civilians. This issue was broached in the sequence of the

⁷⁶ *idem.*

⁷⁷ The Military Police was part of the Mainland Portugal Operational Command (COPCON).

⁷⁸ Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau, Germany.



3. Still from *Torre Bela* (1975)

discussion that was filmed in the barracks in Lisbon, when one of the soldiers mentioned the need to create revolutionary workers' councils, within the scope of a "more advanced defence system with weapons", and not the "sticks and clubs" used by guards defending the estate. This ambition never came to pass.

Within the palace: The "sought after" occupation

The logic proposed by the film's editing leads viewers, by means of a cut, from the meeting at the Lisbon barracks to the estate of Torre Bela, where one finds Captain Luís Banazol talking to an occupier. In this articulation one can read the sub-text that the soldiers are already with the people *in loco* in the inexorable process of occupation.

It is a useful exercise to view the film *Torre Bela* as a narrative construction, which used codes commonly employed in the more classic forms of narrative. It had characters that acquired a more or less leading role at a given point in time, a causal chain of actions and reactions, conflicts and climaxes. The occupation of the palace is a key sequence that solved a problem and a desire that had been installed over the course of the film. This desire can be glimpsed in Camilo's speech right at the beginning of the film: "you need these properties! (...) We do not know when, but if you stand firm and united the rest will follow! The "rest" came with the acquiescence of the soldiers. This was how one of the important dramatic flashpoints of the film and of collective desire came about.

We enter the palace by means of a long sequence of shots of the empty interiors of various rooms. The entry of a camera into a palace, as the residence of the dominant power, is equivalent from the outset to the conquering of a space that had previously been off limits to an outside gaze. By doing so it is almost as though it takes possession of this space, in a mix of voyeurism and the revelation of riches that had hitherto been hidden from the public eye.⁷⁹ The objects in the palace at Torre Bela embark upon a new chain of meanings in Perpignani's editing: sometimes luxurious, sometimes curious, sometimes laughable or outdated, they are part of a playful visual and audio game. In this sequence, particular care was taken with the sound, with overlaid layers of voices, notes from a piano, laughter and slogans. The sounds begin by announcing what is outside the field of vision and which later appears under the crew's floodlights: the occupiers while they make an inventory of the contents, touch the piano, open the drawers and try on the clothes. Amongst the cries of discovery and delight, one of the occupiers exclaims "We could all be sent to jail!".

Was the camera inside the palace before the "actors" entered? After the film was screened some filmmakers accused Harlan of positioning the camera inside the

⁷⁹ A similar attitude on the part of a camera can be detected in some shots of the short documentary entitled *Herdade Zambujal*, (1975) by the No. 1 Cinematographic Production Unit, which shows the interiors of an occupied aristocratic house, with its lingering traces of the luxury, parties and hunting trophies of its erstwhile owners.

palace before the ‘actors’ entered, suggesting that his crew had orchestrated the entire operation.⁸⁰ It would be interesting to imagine the team giving concrete directions to the “actors”, in the sense of performing the actions shown in the film: a pipe found by chance at the bottom of a drawer by one of the occupiers, who exclaimed: “Look! A cigar!” Or the dialogue between a young girl and a supposed former employee of the duke, in which she asks the latter in amazement whether he had ever been “there”, inside the palace. He says no and the girl announces indignantly, “He was never given permission to enter the palace.” Would the camera be capable of obtaining this level of “naturalness” seen in the questions and hesitation of such dialogues if they had been staged in a literal sense?

When I accompanied Alexandra Lucas Coelho, a journalist preparing a report for the *Público* newspaper about the commercial release of *Torre Bela* in 2007, the doubt that many viewers expressed after watching that scene was clearly evident in the questions later posed to the protagonists: was this sequence staged? They all answered in the negative, including Herculano Valada (today the president of the parish council of the town of Manique do Intendente) who, in that noteworthy sequence in the film, makes the sign of the cross while wearing a priest’s raiment. The suspicion that it was staged was raised by Andrade who, even though he was not present on the day that famous sequence was filmed, asserts that:⁸¹

It was purely staged by Harlan. The occupiers were not entering. It was a known fact, just like in the Alentejo. He undoubtedly convinced the people to enter the house. The film is manipulated. It is a fictional documentary.⁸²

⁸⁰ Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau, Germany.

⁸¹ José Pedro Andrade, at that time associated with the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), wrote reports about the occupation of Torre Bela for the party, since the “PCP considered this occupation to be illegal (...) It was outside the area demarcated for the agrarian reforms.” (*Público*, 3 August 2007)

⁸² Coelho, Alexandra Lucas (2007) “Torre Bela, o que é feito da nossa revolução selvagem?,” *Público*, 3 August 2007, available at cincartaz.publico.pt/noticias.asp?id=179867 [Accessed 5 January 2009].

The editor of the film, Roberto Perpignani, characterised this sequence as being “vitiated” and “dangerous”, because it was “piloted”.⁸³ But why would this sequence be “dangerous”? Why so much concern about whether the situation was genuine or not? And what was the significance of this idea of piloting? Roberto Perpignani’s long contact with this material in the editing room made him aware of something that he had not detected immediately during the first viewings:

There was a kind of predisposition [of the occupiers]. Then this predisposition was facilitated by the camera, by the lighting, which, accompanying the people as they move, resulted in being equivalent to direction.⁸⁴

When one looks at the shots carefully we can see a trail of light moving in space, which draws attention while illuminating, indicating and locating objects and people. The crew’s lights can partially be viewed as serving a choreographic purpose: the actors tended to move to or concentrate in the spaces that were illuminated by the lights. However, they are not the only elements that direct or *choreograph* their movements. Instead I see them as participants who build a show, in which various elements interact and blur a kind of frontier between an “authentic” real and a “filmed” real.

This dichotomy – the “authentic” real and the “filmed” real - appears to be inherently assumed by those who reduce this entire sequence to a pure staging that deprives it of all its depth, validity and authenticity: on the one hand there is a pure ‘reality’ of the first order, which would be the one in which people would perform all those actions without the interference of the camera and, on the other hand, a “filmed” real, of a secondary and fabricated nature, which is a pallid platonic copy of the authentic “reality” and which is hence forged, false, bereft of all its force. In my view, this appears to be a completely distorted assumption. In the context of a permanent interaction between the crew and the group, the camera’s presence had already merged with the behavioural dynamics of the occupiers. Seeking to separate

⁸³ Interview with Roberto Perpignani and Sandro Petica, August 2010, Rome.

⁸⁴ *Idem.*

the cinematographic device from the situation experienced by the occupiers is a useless task. One could instead say that this cinematographic device does not stage that situation in the most literal and mechanical sense of the word, but embarks upon a game of representation in which the occupiers and the crew participate: an immense revolutionary *jouissance*, which, in the eyes of cinema connoisseurs has Buñuel-like contours, as though the “real” itself is contained a fictional configuration.

The Real and the Staged: A Game of Mirrors

One can consider a more complex and profound way of looking at this sequence. In this context, reflections on the “real” by Slavov Zizek could provide some parameters for this dialogue:

If our social reality is based on a symbolic fiction or fantasy, the ultimate consummation of the cinematographic art is not to recreate reality within narrative fiction, to seduce us to see a fiction as reality, but on the contrary, to make us recognise the fictional aspect, to feel reality as fiction (Zizek, 2008: 15).

Zizek sets out from the principle that our reality has an intrinsically fictional component, or in other words, it has a fictional armour. Following this challenge it is then pertinent to ask how the camera at Torre Bela helped configure that “reality” (a space integrated into a stratified social system with rigidly assigned places) like a work of fiction (possibility of creating another community, which implied the subversion of power distribution categories and notions of propriety). In this sense, cinema offered a place in which rural wage labour could play roles that existed as projections of a script for a revolution.

We have already seen how Harlan was an invisible maestro in promoting a meeting between the soldiers and occupiers. But the crew and the general context of

the nation itself (revolution; occupations in other parts of the country; the consent of the soldiers) provided the conditions to create what the occupiers had not had until then: a new stage, on which they pretend to be characters that they are not, assisted by new props and costumes, in a path that, in an ultimate analysis, led to the transformation of identities.

In this process, the occupiers played a double role of actors in a film and actors in a revolution. This is the sense in which we can interpret a statement by one of them, who, along with his group of companions, was about to break down the doors of the palace in June 1975: “Are we actors or occupiers? If we are going to open these doors let’s do it right now. If we are actors, we are actors” (plate 4).⁸⁵



4. Still from *Red Line* (2011).

This line is recorded in one of the sound recordings that was not used in the final edited version of the film (the corresponding visual material was destroyed) and

⁸⁵ This recording is included in *Red Line*.

suggests a choreography that links the group and the film crew that we cannot see but rather we sense: this occupier appears to be complaining about the wait due to the finalisation of operations that were necessary for the filming process, impatiently indicating that if they were going to enter they should do so right away. He implied that awaiting the crew's instructions would cast them in the role of actors.

Despite the prominent role played by the crew, it is overly simplistic to affirm that the occupiers were simply acting for the camera or being manipulated by it, as though it were possible for them to establish a distance between a revolutionary character created for the purpose of *appearing* and a subject who behaves emotionally on the threshold of something completely new. Inside the palace, when an occupier wore a jacket belonging to the aristocrat and twirls around for the others, yelling "I almost look like a duke", he perhaps does so for the camera but he also does so for the others and, at the end of the day, for himself as well. In fact the "new duke" utters a phrase under his breath as though talking to himself – "I wish" – providing a glimpse of the more intimate side of the act. Right at the end of the sequence, when the occupiers are in the chapel, looking at the liturgical paraphernalia, one of them puts on the priest's raiment and recites the beginning of a prayer, cupping his hands together. They all appear to be acting/performing more or less *naturally* for the camera. In fact, I would say that they act or perform not because of the fact that they follow instructions uttered by Harlan the "stager", but because they are performing for each other and for themselves. One could say that they act/perform the seizing of power over that space, seeing themselves in a different light amidst those objects and wearing the clothes of other "characters".

Is this not a theatrical element that also frees the power of symbols? The scene staged there by the workers appears to indicate that an object, a piece of clothing, which attributes a given status to someone on the social scale, could become significant without its content, empty and hence transmutable and liable to be circulated: using the objects taken from their original owner could strip the sanctity of class symbols and thus result in some power, even if only symbolically. Or, in other words, objects are removed from the network of usual and fixed relations to be inserted into new relationships, profaning them. The term profanation is used

here in the sense of the rationale suggested by Giorgio Agamben (2005), as the possibility to subtract what was limited to a given sacred sphere in order to be introduced into common use.⁸⁶

The perturbation that is sometimes evident in some behaviours, interpreted together with a highly revealing statement – “we will all be arrested” – indicates that by getting involved in these processes the occupiers also had to deal with a confrontation with the dominant power and with fear of this power.⁸⁷ Curiously, in the documentary *Candidinha* (1975), by António Macedo, filmed during the height of the 1975 occupations, it is possible to see a sequence in which this same seizure of symbolic power resonates. This documentary, which was produced by the Cinequanon cinema cooperative for the Portuguese public television channel RTP, shows an haute couture workshop managed by the employees during the summer of 1975 in Lisbon, after, “two managing partners fled and the third refused to fulfil their obligations with regard to the employees”.⁸⁸ In one of the final sequences, the seamstresses wear the clothes they stitched for families that were part of Portuguese high society, such as the Quina, Melo or Champalimaud families, and paraded down an improvised catwalk in the workshop. This situation, purposely created for the camera, gave rise to some misgivings amongst some of the seamstresses, who, caught off guard, tried to run away from the camera. One model-seamstress was an exception. Comfortable in her new role, she looks directly at the camera for a few moments. Alongside the fashion show, the documentary voiced the concerns and

⁸⁶ The idea of profanation implies the subversion of relations between two worlds that are habitually separated – profanation “in Roman law, indicated the act by which what had been separated into the sphere of religion and the sacred was once again allowed to be freely used by men” (Agamben, 2005).

⁸⁷ This was not the only situation in which this playacting occurred. Later, when Eduarda reached the cooperative to work there, she asked her then husband José Rabaça to photograph her while she posed wearing the priest’s raiment. However, she felt a bit uncomfortable and sensed disapproval of her act in the gaze of some members of the cooperative. A few kilometres from there, in Aveiras de Cima, a similar scene unfolded while a mansion was being occupied. According to João Castanha, a former member of the cooperative, a camera recorded the moment when an occupier wore liturgical vestments. However, in this case the film was rigorously kept away from the public gaze, for fear of wounding sensibilities.

⁸⁸ This documentary is part of the series entitled “Artes e Ofícios”, filmed in 16 mm, between 1974 and 1975, produced by Cinequanon for RTP.

labour rights sought by the seamstresses, now that they were in charge of managing and controlling the production of the workshop.

Many directors and crews, not just Thomas Harlan, faced this complex game, in which it is not possible to ascertain who is acting or staging something, in the broadest sense of these terms. Based on his experience of filming many hours of footage during the revolution, Rui Simões summed up this game in the following words: “When people are in a revolution and have a camera in front of them they are acting out the revolution itself. They aren’t just participating in a revolution.”⁸⁹

These “representations” are fuelled by references that are very often derived from cinema, as Rui Simões stated: “We have no idea what seizing power is, we get this idea from cinema.” He points out the example of the Soviet school of cinema: “Our notion of a revolution was the idea transmitted by Eisenstein: seizing power, the winter palace, the battleship, descending the stairs, etc.”⁹⁰ In this regard one can note that *The Battleship Potemkin* was screened soon after 25 April and the abolition of censorship, being warmly received by the public in Lisbon. The commercial premiere in the vast hall of the Império theatre on 1 May 1974 was attended by the secretary-general of the PCP Álvaro Cunhal in a session during which “there was pin drop silence in the hall”, recalls António Cunha Telles, who distributed the film.⁹¹

Directors did not build a visual political repertoire that oriented their visual universe just on the basis of cinematographic images. Books or travels also provided reference points for revolutionary actions. For example, Harlan had travelled in the USSR and had made a film in Chile before going to Portugal. In his own words, his references for the experience he witnessed in Portugal were derived from “the

⁸⁹ Interview with Rui Simões, Lisbon, September 2008

⁹⁰ *Idem.*

⁹¹ António Cunha Telles still recalls a crowd clapping when the poster for Eisenstein’s film, screened at the Império cinema, was displayed at the Mayday parade held on the Almirante Reis avenue, in Lisbon (plate 5). Interview with António Cunha Telles, October 2010, Lisbon.

history of the Communist Party and the history of social revolutions and the constitution of the soviets.”⁹²



5. Still from *As Armas e o Povo* (1975) [“Arms and the People”] (see footnote 90)

Having reached this point, one could exaggerate to an extreme the metaphor of the revolution in front of the camera as a representation to better understand what was at stake in the film *Torre Bela* and in some of the cinema that was made at the time: one could say that the crews of these films were, by their presence, dynamos for the construction of a stage where these *scenes* were played out, encouraging, in one case, the peasants of Torre Bela and, in another instance, the seamstresses of Candidinha to take on the guise of occupiers, or in other words, of actors in a revolution that was underway. In this sense, the presence of the camera served to temper this need to camouflage identities and subvert the ways of representing power. By denaturalising who was who, even if in jest and in a light-hearted manner, it shattered the rigidity of social roles, in a process entailing the emergence and reinvention of political aspects. Harlan described these new developments in the following manner:

⁹² Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Schönau, Germany.

At Torre Bela we saw things that we had never seen before, or ever dreamt of seeing. And there is no doubt that the inhabitants of Torre Bela could say the same: they did things that they had undoubtedly never thought of doing before. (...) It was essential for both us and them to invent the day-to-day happenings.⁹³

Implementing the revolution implied creating new situations and connections, in other words, bringing new actors on to the stage who would perform new social roles with hitherto unfamiliar codes. In the process of constituting the cooperative, Harlan was one of the players who created opportunities for these new connections to emerge between individuals who did not have a voice prior to this – the formerly isolated villagers of Manique do Intendente and surrounding areas, who did not have a bank of knowledge to fall back upon – and those who were the most advanced agents of the revolution, who were concentrated in some institutions in the capital, such as the military police. Harlan related the creation of reality or the provocation of the *staged* or fictional dimension of reality to the possibility of generating encounters and relationships:

The big difference between this and what could be called a documentary record is that most of what happened would not have happened if we had not been there (...) Thus we encouraged action and just like the construction of a plot, the film did not emerge from a script but first and foremost what emerged was reality. The reality was provoked, intentionally created; a reality that would not have existed otherwise. It was created by means of meetings instigated between people who did not know each other and by debates, evidence and counter-evidence, meetings and the results of the meetings, which could be extraordinary. A soldier meets with a peasant who wants something from him. The soldier ponders whether that is allowed and says, “Lets go discuss this at the barracks”. The elected delegation

⁹³ Daney, Serge et al. (1979)

then goes there and a revolutionary council of the military police is organised.⁹⁴

When Harlan emphasises what distinguishes his way of working from what is known as a “documental record”, he becomes an interlocutor in a familiar question in the history of cinema, which differentiates between cinema that interferes with the subject it is filming and cinema which only impassively observes and records the subject.

In an interview Harlan mentions how during *Torre Bela*'s significant circulation in certain alternative circuits, there were “great conflicts in fantastic discussions in the USA, in which highly qualified people accused me of pulling the wool over everybody's eyes, because we are never seen working behind the scenes.”⁹⁵ The genesis of this criticism is the aforesaid central question of the ethical debate that has fuelled the discussion about the representation of reality in moving images from the 1960s onwards. In order to understand this discussion it is essential to consider the conventional classification of documentaries. One of the axes running through these classifications is the positioning of the subject, who enounces, and the viewer to whom this enunciation is directed.

One can start by citing the relatively consensual classification proposed by Bill Nichols, which lists six forms of representation within the documentary genre: observational, expository, participatory, reflexive, performative and poetic.⁹⁶ Without

⁹⁴ In these latter sentences Harlan is referring to the sequence in which Captain Luís Banazol addressed the delegation from Torre Bela and told them: “You should not wait until a decree is legally issued saying that you can occupy. You go ahead and occupy it and the law will follow.” *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen, (DVD).

⁹⁵ *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen, (DVD).

⁹⁶ Observational documentaries encompass films in which the image and synchronous sound are edited so as to create spatial-temporal units, which allow situations and the everyday actions of the protagonists to be seen as a kind of immediate and continuous “present” and felt to be such by the viewer. The diminutive or invisible marks of the presence of the director in observational cinema are more evident in the participatory, reflexive, performative and poetic formats. In the participatory format, the process of interaction between the person filming and being filmed is brought into the very construction of the documentary, with a variable visibility, playing a structural role for the narrative (as in the films by Ross McElwee). In its turn, the reflexive documentary questions these

going into a detailed description of the characteristics and limits of each of these groups, nor the way in which Nichols constantly readjusted them, it is worth focusing on the observational, participatory and reflexive categories.⁹⁷

At first glance, *Torre Bela* could be placed within the observational category, in the tradition of direct cinema. This tradition is rooted in what Fernão Pessoa Ramos has called the ethics of “stepping back from the subject” (Ramos, 2005:174-177) in relation to the reality represented, as compared to educational and propaganda documentaries – normally expository - which produce a closed argument about the world (this includes many of the documentaries made under the ideological urge of educating the masses). The camera at *Torre Bela* is a kind of fly-on-the-wall, providing space for actions to flow in takes with long sequence-shots with direct sound. This *happening* in its nascent state is reworked during the editing stage, in spatial-temporal units organised according to a chain of actions-reactions.

In recent decades, documentary theory and practice have denounced the impossibility of this “stepping back from the subject” and the mistaken illusion created by observational or direct cinema that everything takes place “naturally” in front of the camera in a kind of continuous present. It was this aspect that was an element of the criticism of viewers who debated about *Torre Bela* after it was screened: in fact, it seems that we are “there” with the actors, without the mediation of a team and the camera – keeping the viewer in the enchantment of an untouched and non-fabricated reality – precisely when this mediation had been so important in the process of occupation itself. And it is not just this: the way in which *Torre Bela* was constructed focuses the viewer’s attention on interpreting what is happening in the shot and not on the way that material was selected and articulated to present the events.

processes of negotiation and the way in which what is seen on screen is represented, as well as the reach and limits of this representation. The reflexive format is, by nature, a meta-commentary of the very process of fabricating an image (or *meta-documentary*), setting out from the assumption that what we see on the screen is more a construction, involving codes and conventions, than a part of “reality”.

⁹⁷ To this end, see the analysis by Paul Ward in *Documentary, The Margins of Reality*, Wallflower, London and New York, 2005, p.13-22.

This criticism of an illusionary “stepping back” by the film crew has to do with a new articulated ethic underlying a set of documentaries that have been grouped in the category of participatory and reflexive or participatory-reflexive (Ramos, 2000: 177-184). In this regard, setting out from the principle that since this “stepping back” is impossible, the documentary maker should leave traces of their work behind the scenes in the film itself, even including a reflection about the role of the camera’s presence throughout the process and even the political dimension of recording and disseminating these images.⁹⁸

In his extra-film comments Harlan stated with startling lucidity that his work at Torre Bela was “objectively”, a “model of manipulation”. Harlan stated that the crew did not give express instructions to the occupiers regarding what to do, but urged them “to see correctly”, in the mould of “delegate commissioners acting surreptitiously”.⁹⁹ What is the meaning of this manipulation? How should one interpret here the notion of manipulation, which is inextricably intertwined with the informative-journalistic foundation that it has gained in our public sphere?

If, for the purposes of this analysis, one considers not just what is seen in the film *Torre Bela* on the screen, but also its production history, then the “observational” category does not cover all the complexity that was at play at the time. In fact, the categories about the ways things could be represented in documentaries always fall short of the objects that they should supposedly examine and explain. Even more so in this particular case.

⁹⁸ The contestation of the “direct” capturing of reality is accompanied by the statement that all documentaries are, in an ultimate analysis, “performative documentaries”, (Stella Bruzzi, 2000). The reality “offered” in the documentary emerges from the triangular encounter between the person filming, what is filmed and the viewers and is not something that can be captured by the camera outside this relationship.

⁹⁹ Daney, Serge et al. (1979).

The Reception of Torre Bela: Myths and Memory

Ironically, it was this observational quality that ensured that *Torre Bela* acquired a special place in the history of Portuguese cinema. From the outset, the critical discourse elected it as the pivot of a key debate about the way in which cinema interacted with the historical events of the revolutionary period. Ten years after the revolution, the Portuguese Cinema Museum organised the cycle entitled *Images of April*, which, apart from screening a set of films related to the April revolution, resulted in a catalogue with a variety of analytical and critical texts. One aspect stands out from amongst the discussion between historians, programmers and critics recorded in this catalogue: the fact that the cinema related to the April revolution is not very *cinematographic*, coupled as it was with an urgent need to create a political conscience in keeping with the nation's political situation. *Torre Bela* stands out, in this panorama, as a film that escaped "the rhetoric of most militant cinema", in the words of the critic João Lopes, recording events "live, in all their diversity and complexity."¹⁰⁰

When the film was screened for the first time in a commercial theatre in Portugal, in August 2007, it was considered "the event of the greatest symbolic importance at the end of this Summer" by the same critic.¹⁰¹ José Manuel Costa, programmer of the 1984 cycle, who is nowadays the deputy director of the Portuguese Cinema Museum, described it as "a great document of the age" and explained:

All the contradictions that were being experienced within the [occupying] group itself are in the film and are not subjugated by a

¹⁰⁰ Lopes, João, n.d.- "Torre Bela" – *Folhas da Cinemateca Portuguesa*. Available at www.atalantafilmes.pt/PDFs/torre_bela.pdf [Accessed 19 March 2011]
idem

¹⁰¹ At the time the press showered the film with epithets: "The most revealing and disconcerting documentary about our profound On Going Revolutionary Process (P.R.E.C.)" in the words of the journalist Ana Margarida Carvalho; "The film that best portrays the post-25 April revolution period" according to the critic Francisco Ferreira, available from http://sigarra.up.pt/up/noticias_geral.ver_noticia?P_NR=4311, [Accessed 5 January 2009].

discourse that tries to immediately interpret or read what was happening. This gave the film a timeless and universal value that many films shot at that time do not have.¹⁰²

This critical appraisal went beyond borders. In the view of the critic Serge Daney “Portuguese filmmakers were not able to speak effectively and pertinently about the 25 April Revolution”, emphasising that *Torre Bela* was, “The best document about that age, (...) made by Thomas Harlan, a foreigner”.¹⁰³ On the critical horizon of these discourses are films such as *As Armas e o Povo* (1975) [“Arms and the People”], collectively made by the Trade Union of Cinema and television Production Workers, *A Lei da Terra* (1977) [“The Law of the Land”], by Grupo Zero and *Barronhos: quem teve medo do poder popular?* (1976) [“Barronhos: Who’s Afraid of Popular Power?”], directed by Luís Filipe Rocha.

However, it is important to analyse the way in which consensus was crystallised around *Torre Bela*. To this end, one can compare the film by Harlan with another documentary on the same theme: *Cooperativa Agrícola Torre-Bela* (1975), by Luís Galvão Teles. The documentary by Galvão Teles was part of a series produced for RTP by the Cinequanon cooperative in the context of “making films for television for social and political intervention”, with a view to corresponding to the “urgent needs” of a historic period. While its production context was different, its style and the logic behind its construction are also different. It features interviews that alternate with a voiceover that puts forward an argument. Its political position is indicated at the outset: “Socialism is forged not by votes but by practical application”, as shown by “the peasants of Massuça, Manique do Intendente and surrounding areas”.

There is also a crucial difference in production schedules. Harlan’s documentary was filmed over the course of some months in 1975 and was screened

¹⁰² Coelho, Alexandra Lucas (2007) “Torre Bela, o que é feito da nossa revolução selvagem?” *Público* newspaper, 3 August 2007, available from cincartaz.publico.pt/noticias.asp?id=179867 [Accessed 5 January 2009].

¹⁰³ Cited in Grilo, (2003), available from <http://ncinport.wordpress.com/2009/10/05/alem-fronteiras-por-joao-mario-grilo/> [Accessed 19 March 2011].

in 1977, after a long maturity period on the editing table. Luís Galvão Teles' film was shot quickly owing to the urgent pressure of being inserted in a television programme schedule that had been delineated beforehand. While in the first film the crew itself became occupiers at the estate, in the latter the crew does not appear to have participated in the collective that was formed there. This sensation of a body behind the camera that is surrounded by the everyday flow of things is one of the reasons why Harlan's film transmits the feeling of witnessing an emerging and tense state of events in a micro-cosmos. In other words, it is as though the film did not just weave together a series of micro historic events, but also partially shaped the *happening* itself, which unfolds with all its contrary and dissonant elements and does not appear to have been tamed to fit into a given framework of linear political interpretation. Could any sequence be a more suggestive example of this than that which depicts an argument about a shovel?

When in the film one of the occupiers, Zé Quelhas, expresses his doubts to Wilson regarding the collectivisation of one of his tools, to be used on a "piece of land" that he has, it shakes the guiding words emanating from the cooperative. Here, we are introduced to a rupture in the relationship between the two occupiers as well as to the friction inherent to anything in a nascent state – events at the heart of a community that is questioning itself and seeking its essence in the process of its formation: what does forming a cooperative imply? What does it mean to give up private property and what feelings of individual loss/gain does this involve? What is "mine", what is "ours"?

The fact that *Torre Bela* does not gloss over this conflict-ridden nature of the collective, unlike in the case of other militant cinema, has often been overlooked by critics and by history. The film's openness to doubt and to the questioning of what was happening can help explain why it got a lukewarm reception at the time, as

described by the Portuguese director Rui Simões, who interacted closely with Harlan:¹⁰⁴

There were screenings in which he (Harlan) was accused of being a fascist, at others he was accused of being an anarchist. He was accused of spreading counter-propaganda, against the working class, because it shows workers in a miserable state, their degradation, in dialogues between them.¹⁰⁵

It was precisely these occasionally tense dialogues with violent exchanges of accusations that generated some discomfort the first time the images of the occupiers were “returned” to them. On an as yet unknown date, Harlan screened a rough-cut edited version of the film for the first time to cooperative members in Aveiras de Cima a place near Torre Bela.¹⁰⁶ Camilo finds it hard to recall that crucial moment of confrontation, lamenting that there is no cinematographic record today of the reactions of the audience-participants of the film. Only Harlan’s own impressions of this pivotal episode remain:¹⁰⁷

Initially they were very disappointed: perhaps they were not expecting a propaganda film, but were instead hoping for something more optimistic, more mobilising. They realised that they had been the objects of a reflection, about the story, which was not easy for them. Namely: the interest in showing, with every cruel detail, all the basic conflicts that existed within their commune. Their first reaction was to

¹⁰⁴ Rui Simões was present at screenings in the USA, along with Harlan, apart from having included some images shot by Russel Parker in his film *Bom Povo Português* [The Good Portuguese People] (1980).

¹⁰⁵ *25 Abril imagens*, Cinemateca Portuguesa, Lisbon, 1984, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Camilo Mortágua, Alvito, November 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Were Mortágua and Harlan speaking of the same screening? There is no evidence that would allow one to unequivocally ascertain this. Harlan mentions a screening in which members of the Military Police were present, including Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. Faced with doubts by members of the cooperative about their image in the film, Harlan recalled that Otelo got up from his place and praised them as the “treasure of humanity and of a nascent democracy” (Interview to Harlan by José Manuel Costa, Shonau, 2006, ANIM – Cinemateca Portuguesa).

scream that it was a massacre; that there was no need for people to see how they were at that time, that when people saw the film they would believe the occupiers did not merit support, and that now it was very different, that there was no longer any duke around, the male chauvinists no longer banished the women to the kitchen, etc.¹⁰⁸

In fact, this first rough-cut captured the initial stages of the cooperative's formation, which the cooperative members no longer appeared to identify with. Proving sensitive to these outraged reactions, Harlan stated that he regrouped some sequences in a future edited version and also included a text written by the occupiers in the final credits of the Portuguese version.¹⁰⁹ This text was later published in a brochure launched on the occasion of the cooperative's first anniversary, expressing a self-critical awareness on the part of the members of the cooperative, whose voice emerged in the form of a "we": "We workers (...) are fighting against feudalism, capitalism, the landholding bourgeoisie and our own flaws." It continued in an invocatory tone: "May the lands we have recovered give us the means for our own human and social recovery." The text appears to reflect a self-critical attitude, which could also have been triggered by the film's screening, which serves as a mirror amplifying the behaviour of the members of the cooperative, and could also have corresponded in Camilo's view, to a "scream by a violated virgin (...). That is all very pure and we cannot understand why our purity should shock so many people."¹¹⁰

In the eyes of many viewers the sequence of the occupation of the palace expressed a collective impulse and curiosity, revealing the social gulf between the holders of wealth and those who admired them. For others it was an image that epitomised anarchy and was not convenient for the revolutionary process underway, only serving to provide the political right with fuel for their arguments. The film's production head, Andrade, a Communist Party militant who reported on the team's activities on the estate to the cinema cell to which he belonged, today says he

¹⁰⁸ Daney, Serge et al. (1979).

¹⁰⁹ To date I have not been able to find any version of the film which includes this text.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Camilo Mortágua, Alvito, November 2009.

disagreed with the impetus that Harlan gave to the occupation of the palace. Andrade affirmed that this difference of views was the reason why he was “strategically” sent to another site on the day this occupation was filmed.¹¹¹ Andrade’s position can be better understood in the context of Communist Party directives that only defended the occupation of land and not of houses. It is necessary to keep in mind that the epithet of a “savage” occupation was always associated with Torre Bela and that it was this failure to align with a party structure that probably allowed Harlan’s project to flourish, along with its room for manoeuvre. It is very plausible that Harlan could have been prevented from filming “an inside view” of an occupation of lands, which, under the aegis of the PCP, should have conformed to revolutionary legality. In Andrade’s view disseminating images of chaos and people rifling through the house signified fuelling hatred towards the revolution’s cause, spurred by medium and large landholders.

According to Harlan, the way in which the film attributed space to behaviours frowned upon by some party elements induced António Cunha Telles - an influential film producer who headed the Portuguese Cinema Institute (IPC)¹¹² - to view the film as the affirmation of a “savage Portugal”.¹¹³ In Serge Trefaut’s documentary *Outro País* (1999), Harlan described a supposed attempt by a director of the IPC (very probably Cunha Telles) to withdraw Portuguese nationality from the film, saying that it embodied a negative and animal-like representation of the occupiers’ conduct.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Interview with José Andrade dos Santos, Bucelas, February 2011.

¹¹² António Cunha Telles produced some of the most significant films of Portuguese new wave cinema, including *Os Verdes Anos* (1963) by Paulo Rocha and *Belarmino* (1964) by Fernando Lopes. *O Cerco* (1970) was his first feature film as a director. After having founded the distributor Animatógrafo in 1972, he was responsible for the dissemination of films by Bernardo Bertolucci, Nagasa Oshima, Allan Tanner, Robert Bresson, Sergei Eisenstein, Glauber Rocha, Jean Vigo and Karmitz in Portuguese cinema halls, many of which had been censored during the regime of the *Estado Novo*. He was part of the board of the Portuguese Cinema Institute (IPC) in 1979 and held various senior positions in the Tóbis Portuguesa cinema laboratories between 1978 and 1982.

¹¹³ Daney, Serge et al. (1979)

¹¹⁴ In Tréfaut’s documentary, Harlan does not directly mention Cunha Telles. The inference is achieved by cross-referencing various factors. It was Alberto Seixas Santos, a director and a friend of Harlan, who decided to attribute Portuguese nationality to *Torre Bela* while he was heading the IPC,

Concern had already been voiced about the use of the material filmed by Harlan in Portugal (not just in Torre Bela) well before this alleged incident and a curious and dramatic episode was purported to have taken place. When the crew was still filming in Portugal, Harlan stated that Captain Loureiro called him to a military barracks to apprise him of instructions from superiors to confiscate all the material that had been filmed, since it was feared that this could harm the country's image. When Harlan refused to hand over the footage, the captain fired against the walls of the site where this conversation took place.¹¹⁵

The way in which the film portrayed the occupiers was, in fact, a sensitive issue discussed during the post-production that took place in Rome, first at the La Safa Palatino studios and then at the International Records studios. In this phase, according to the sound engineer Sandro Petica, the crew spent a long time in meetings, which absorbed long hours of work, probably immersed in topics proposed by Harlan, who dedicated himself to "games of logical possibilities", since he was a "master in abstract dialectics".¹¹⁶ Noémia Delgado recalls that Harlan himself expressed reservations about the inclusion of the images in the final editing, of one of the occupiers, Herculano Valada, wearing the vestments of the chaplain of Torre Bela, as though masquerading.¹¹⁷

The film's editor, Roberto Perpignani, describes an episode from the history of *Torre Bela's* production that allows one to relate the editing decisions (which involved the durations of the sequences in a related whole) with the political meanings transmitted by the images. According to Perpignani,¹¹⁸ unlike the final

as requested by Harlan. Seixas Santos felt that the film met the necessary criteria. Cunha Telles succeeded him at the IPC, having been appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, David Mourão-Ferreira, and left this office when the government formed by the *Aliança Democrática* centre-right coalition came to power in 1980. Cunha Telles does not recall the events as Harlan described them and stated that he did not like, "Harlan's view of the people he filmed, the way he manipulated them". Interview with Cunha Telles, Lisbon, October 2010.

¹¹⁵ Harlan narrated this event in an interview with José Manuel Costa, Shonau am Königssee, 2006, ANIM-Cinematheca Portuguesa.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Roberto Perpignani and Sandro Petica, Rome, August 2010.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Noémia Delgado, Lisbon, November 2010.

versions, the first alignment of the footage with approximately 4 hours would have contributed towards a more comprehensive portrayal of the cooperative's activities, dissolving, at the same time, the more emotional and conflictual moments of the occupation – as the meeting in the Manique parish council or the assembly that took place after the occupation of the palace, often fuelled by alcohol. While listening to the sound reels that had been deposited in ANIM in the meanwhile, I detected some moments that could have been included in that initial longer and thus textured version. For instance, one can listen to consultations by a doctor who were a regular presence at Torre Bela to treat the members of the cooperative, which once again translates into a link with a community outside the cooperative that legitimised the “savage” occupation. Apart from this, after the filming of the opening of the palace doors and the occupation of the building, one can hear the workers’ meeting that Wilson mentioned in the recording included in *Red Line*:¹¹⁹ At this meeting, Wilson appealed to everyone present to voice their point of view without fear of ridicule and proposed suggestions to ensure that meetings could be held more smoothly. He then proposed that a schedule of tasks be prepared, something that he had already learnt while holding similar meetings.

However, it was not the longer version (which would probably have included more moments such as these) that prevailed. Harlan acquiesced to a proposal by the programmers of the 1977 Cannes Festival, who promised to screen the film in another hall, which was more likely to garner him publicity than the hall that had initially been envisaged, if he shortened the film’s duration. Perpignani disagreed with this operation. The different views regarding the duration of the film and its segments gave rise to a conflict between the editor and the director. Another editor was then hired to reduce the film’s duration (which resulted in the French version of the film that is today preserved at ANIM).

One might think that a positive image of the revolution projected by the film would be controlled in the post-production phase by the presence of Portuguese

¹¹⁸ Interview with Roberto Perpignani and Sandro Petica, Rome, August 2010.

¹¹⁹ Wilson states: “We are going to use this palace that has only been used for (...) the hedonistic orgies that they used to hold here, this palace will today be used for a workers’ meeting.”

supposedly enthused by nationalist zeal. But it was not due to an absence of Portuguese that this highly criticised image of the revolution made the final cut. On the contrary. Noémia Delgado, who directed the film *Máscaras* [Masks] (1976) and who Harlan met in Portugal, was hired to collaborate on editing the film, a process which extended over several months. João Azevedo was another Portuguese who accompanied the editing for a longer period. Azevedo was associated with the Italian *Lotta Continua* movement and he helped Perpignani understand what was being said in the dialogues in the rushes.

Other Portuguese passed through Rome to contribute towards the post-production process at different moments, including Aura Amaral, Pedro d'Orey and Alberto Seixas Santos, who thus legitimised the editing choices, offering indications and references to provide a better context for political events in Portugal. Before the rough-cut editing was presented to the other occupiers even Camilo came to Rome, to view the footage that had been filmed, seated at the editing table side by side with Harlan, Perpignani and Russel, since he “wanted to see how things were going to be edited – it was still that story of distrust.”¹²⁰

Despite the vigilance by Camilo over what would result from the editing, the question is that the various versions of the film did include, on a different scale, the ambiguities, tensions and hesitations of that process, as well as its imminent failure suggested in the final credits. But was it this openness to visceral conflict, disruption and hard to broach incidents that constituted the film's specific and unique nature when compared to other militant cinema of the age? It is perhaps these elements of conflicts and incidents – the chaos of the meetings, the first reactions to the contents of the newly-opened palace, the passionate speeches of a local leader who was later looked at askance by his colleagues – concentrated into a delimited space and time, that attract us into the hesitant inner workings of a nascent collective micro-cosmos. It is this feeling of being “inside” the actions being filmed, typical of observational cinema, that gave rise to the quality of seemingly having a ringside seat to the inner

¹²⁰ Camilo's distrust was rooted in rumours that were circulating at the time affirming that Harlan belonged to the CIA and suspicions about the origin of the vast resources available for the production of the film. Interview with Camilo Mortágua, Alvito, November 2009.

workings of the *historic* events at Torre Bela, greatly lauded by recent critical discourses.

Documentary as social experiment?

The most ironic and disarming aspect of the history of the production and reception of *Torre Bela* is that, despite everything, the way in which the film was made did not follow the canons normally associated with observational cinema, such as, for example, ostensibly being aloof from the subject, which supposes a kind of spontaneity of the events *happening* in front of the camera. In other words, all the elements that are part of the framework of expectations implied in observational cinema, including that of a filmed reality that appears to spring forth untouched, can irrevocably be questioned at second glance. Following this reasoning one could destroy the assumption of the critical discourse of Portuguese cinema that this is a complex document in harmony with the raw energy of a historic *event* that militant cinema was not capable of capturing. In other words, if one interpreted the film in light of what we now know happened behind the scenes, and if one believed in the untouched reality of direct or observational documentaries, one could perhaps say that this was a set-up.

In my view this debate is corrupted from the outset by a certain mystification of the codes and conventions of observational cinema and by the way in which the film was articulated with them. Thomas Harlan himself appears to set out by selecting observational cinema as the standard with which his film should be compared. When Harlan states that *Torre Bela* “is the total opposite of what a documentary should be” he is referring to a set manual for direct cinema. He is implying what his film *should be* and not what it is, because the person filming was involved in the events.

Did these practices reduce the film's value as a document? Do they make it less significant or less "revealing" of this historical event? Once again, by raising these questions one is again getting ensnared in the dichotomy between a supposed reality and its "behind-the-scenes". I would say that it is useless/overly simplistic to conceive of the film's behind-the-scenes elements as something that is the film's opposite, its shadow, where a conspiratorial awareness lurked manipulating the behaviour of innocent "actors". It is all far more complex and interconnected.

At this stage, it is important to once again question the concept of "real" associated with documentaries. If any word has been worn out from use it is this word "real". To short-circuit this closed and limiting scheme which elects a sphere dubbed "real", permitting all the spectacular legitimisations of the media and the arts based on a quest for the real, one can cite the reasoning of Jacques Rancière for whom "Reality does not exist in itself, but instead there are configurations of what is presented to us as our reality" (Rancière, 2010a:112) For Rancière reality is the object of fiction, or an organisation, a cut-out, a "construction of the space in which the visible, say-able and do-able mingle together."¹²¹ Both cinema as well as politics are fiction, they are two planes of the same configuration. In light of this is it possible to speak of a real-stage and its inverse, its backstage?

In the case of *Torre Bela*, the movement to make the film is part of the movement to produce the events themselves. They are inextricably intertwined. One does not have, on the one hand, a film crew that constructs something that is aloof from reality, i.e. fiction and, on the other hand, a reality, in which the occupiers act, made of pure events. In other words, there does not exist, on the one hand, a fiction built and produced by Harlan and, on the other hand, an occupiers' reality, the film being a more or less manipulated screen double. The lines and the shots intersect.

¹²¹ Hence, within this logic, Rancière contests the existence of a supposed effect produced by a fictional work – cinema – on a supposed reality, spurning the supposed direct effectiveness of an image on viewers. It is precisely this scheme of cause and effect that sustains the effectiveness of militant cinema or of a certain contemporary art that fuels the belief that an idea or energy can be fictionally unleashed by cinema or by art to be materialised in a political reality.

In order to interpret the film today, it would be more refreshing to follow the interpretation proffered retrospectively by Harlan himself, who opted for the idea of fiction as the standard by which to understand his actions in Torre Bela and in Portugal in 1975. In his own words, “the film is a film that we did not in fact conceive as a film, but as reality”, he was so interested in making “reality” move.¹²² It was not that he determined all the events as though he were a demiurge who could anticipate the effects of his actions – in fact he believed that, “Things were brewing, it was necessary to do something”.¹²³ Sometimes, a word or a gesture would trigger a domino effect on the piece in play, since the atmosphere, the setting had already been delineated. This scenario was Portugal’s general revolutionary context, reflected daily in strikes, protests, the occupation of land and homes and the constitution of bodies based on popular power, shifting power outside its traditional centres. The tectonic plates of society were then undergoing an intense and fracturing movement, after years of oppression in a rigidly stratified society. It was necessary to use the pent-up energy they released. Harlan can thus be seen as a *metteur-en-scène* of the elements that were offered up to him during that occupation. He saw “heroes” in some of the people filmed, as though they were projections of fictional characters freeing themselves from an erstwhile yoke. This was the case of the “heroine” Maria Vitória, whom he often mentioned in his interviews.

This use of a cinematographic vocabulary to interpret what happened in Torre Bela is not inappropriate. To the contrary, one can establish strong parallels and intersections between the act of constructing reality and making a film. As though reality were constituted as though in a film, in which the lines of a script forged in an imagination successively took shape in real life:

Future events increasingly became projections of imagination:
we made a film. Nobody had yet theorised about whether the film

¹²² *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen, (DVD).

¹²³ Interview with Thomas Harlan, June 2008, Shonau am Königssee, Germany.

was, in this case, a sub-product of reality or whether reality was a sub-product of cinema, but the camera became the main character, a camera-commissioner, a camera-selector, a camera-judge.¹²⁴

Even though Harlan's statements reveal colourful, fable-like tones of a retrospective interpretation, they do have the virtue of revealing how it could be productive to subvert the categories of fiction/cinema and reality while analysing what happened at Torre Bela. Not just strictly with regard to the filming itself. At the end of the day, what happened first at Torre Bela: reality or the film? Cinema's references and knack of *making a world* can help us understand the nature of this *happening*: Harlan stated that people who had no idea of the "value" of their image were now more aware of themselves and of their dramatic role in creating that reality by appropriating words before a camera.¹²⁵ This performance did not take place just for the camera, it became political.

In his statements one can also discern the need for fiction to build something that went entirely against the grain of routine and schemes of oppression in a system that many wished to see deposed. It is pertinent to compare this idea with a statement by Ranci re that, "Reality must have an element of fiction in order to be conceived" (Ranci re, 2010b:45). One could go beyond this and push the envelope further, by saying that reality must also have an element of fiction in order to be transformed.

In this sense, I would propose an abstract and light-hearted exercise: look at the film and the events as though they were a social experiment. This can help one piece together and articulate the various dimensions of Torre Bela into a complex whole. Just like in a social experiment, in which the social psychology recreates conditions in a "laboratory" to test given hypotheses about how social interactions work, in Torre Bela too we can identify an abrupt break with a given social, spatial and temporal continuity in the lives of the participants. The occupiers/ cooperative

¹²⁴ Daney, Serge *et al.* (1979)

¹²⁵ *Idem.*

members went from being displaced from the physical and symbolic spaces to which they were confined by their social status, to be in a space with new relationships that reformulated their professional and social coordinates (Torre Bela was a space where activists, trade union leaders, rural workers, social assistants, film crews, artists, etc. all intersected). Apart from this, one can glimpse the pattern of a new temporality, subject to accelerations and inflections that broke with the scheme of a stable and recognisable time. The intensity of the exchanges became accentuated in this context – new forms of discussion and legitimisation (in the name of the people, in the name of the collective) were sought, consensuses were found, new words entered the vocabulary to manage a reality that was quite novel in the beginning.

The aspect of social experimentation and the blurring of the categories of fiction and reality are features of another of Harlan's films, *Wundkanal* (1984) as well as the documentary by Robert Kramer about this film, *Notre Nazi* (1984). *Wundkanal* is supposedly a fictional work about a war criminal, Dr. S., who is kidnapped and confronted with the crimes he practised during the Nazi regime. The person playing Dr. S is not, however, an actor, but was Alfred Filbert, a former SS officer, a real war criminal who was sentenced to prison in 1962 accused of genocide and inciting suicide, released for health reasons in 1977. Amongst various crimes, Filbert was held responsible for executing 11,000 Jews in the region of Vilna-Vitebsk, when he headed the Extermination Kommando 9 unit.¹²⁶

Harlan staged an interrogation of Filbert without the physical presence of his interrogators. One can only hear their voices firing questions at Filbert, through headphones. Everything gets mixed up in this scenario: questions about Filbert's activities are mixed with other invented questions; photos of members of the technical crew are presented as though they were victims to be identified by the accused; excerpts from the film *Immensee* (1943) by Veit Harlan, Thomas Harlan's father are shown to Filbert. In his turn, Kramer in *Notre Nazi* dissects this process of

¹²⁶ For further information about Filbert's life see Joffroi, Pierre – *Filbert, The Living Symbol*, text included in the DVD *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen.

extorting a confession and all the devices involved in the process, the telephones, the microphones, the wires that transport the sound of the inquisitors' husky voices to the accused and the screens showing the faces of Jewish victims of Nazism as well as the faces of members of the *Wundkanal* film crew. The corollary to this experiment was the entry into the studio of Jews (not actors) who had been prisoners in concentration camps. This entrance programmed by Harlan and completely unexpected by Filbert had a devastating effect on the latter. When confronted with the tattoos on the arms of the former prisoners and accused by Harlan of lying in his statements, Filbert tried to leave the studio but was physically prevented from doing so. "I never thought that it would get to this stage", said Filbert.

Kramer's film deconstructs the editing of this extreme experiment, a kind of torture-film, in which the provocation of the character/actor Albert Filbert seeks to create an awareness of the past and to extract a confession of guilt from him. Harlan himself makes this process of cinematographic *judgement* and *execution* visible in his film, showing a small camera pointed at Filbert's head, as though it were a gun. The films by Harlan and Kramer are mirror images reflecting each other, creating a play of reflection between the processes of torture and a kind of cinematographic performing act to extort a confession of guilt.

Torre Bela is far from this degree of performing provocation, but is part of a work conception that Harlan believes reached a high point in *Wundkanal*:

What we did was not cinema. It was a theory that I tested truly for the first time in *Wundkanal*. Doing things, making history. In other words, it is not a film you plan. You plan on being there and intervening in situations as an intermediary, in such a way that the story is produced because of your intervention (...) [You are] someone who provokes it, by the way in which you intervene and act, in a more

or less invisible manner, sometimes manipulating. It is a dirty word, but let us not forget that it is necessary.¹²⁷

In this context the camera can thus be understood as a political instrument for changing reality and not just as a machine aimed at recording it to make a given film. The camera arms the crew with a power inscribing the crew not just in a process of making a film, but also in a context of performance. This is why Harlan can be deemed not just to be a *metteur-en-scène* but also a *metteur-en-situation*, generating and managing situations.

Having reached this point, it is important to question how this posture and praxis clash with the ethical standards that have been constructed by means of the intersection of documentary theories and practices in recent decades. The methodologies that Harlan applied, above all in *Wundkanal*, lead us to reflect upon his contradictory and paradoxical working methods, walking a fine line between the desire to release energies towards emancipation and the desire for absolute control over events, mimicking methods that had been criticised.

The ethical standards inherent to the production and reception of the documentary have emphasised the importance of indicating how a film was constructed in the final version. Here the question is not the fact that reality was provoked, but the way in which the film plays with the expectations produced by certain codes used - in the sense of placing itself in a certain lineage of observational cinema. A passing nod to this tradition is present in the final credits of the French version, which affirmed, “no scene was recreated” (plate 6).

¹²⁷ Interview to Harlan by José Manuel Costa, Shonau am Königssee, 2006, ANIM-Cinemateca Portuguesa



6. Still from *Torre Bela* (1975)

If in fact the scenes were not recreated for the camera (they were generated and induced), the question is that this statement refers to the untouchable horizon of reality associated with certain codes of visual representation that project the possibility of having a direct relationship with the object being filmed, without the interference of the person doing the filming, exactly the opposite of Harlan's role in the entire process.

However, this *mise-en-situation* by Harlan does not detract from the eyewitness value of the film, nor from its inherent quality of transporting a historic reality to the present. *Torre Bela* plays with all the elements that were already "brewing", to paraphrase the director's own expression. In a certain sense, the stage was already set for this to happen. More than ever before, after 50 years of dictatorship, reality witnessed an intense encounter between people, words and ideas that had been inconceivable until then, in a set of villages still marked by the vestiges of a medieval society. One could say that this demiurge-like ability of cinema to "stage" and "re-stage" the world, a certain way of configuring and attributing sense to things, bringing together and intersecting things that are separated by our

natural perception or disconnecting things from their habitual relations to reposition them in new combinations, is identical to centrifugal methods or revolutionary *happenings*, which disorganise what was considered to be the natural order of things: what was far away, could be approached, what was limited to certain spaces could now be mixed.¹²⁸

Making a film and making history appear here to be inseparable in the sense in which they share the same regime of truth, as defined by Rancière:

Writing history and writing stories is something that depends on the same regime of truth. (...) Politics and art, just like knowledge, create “fiction”, i.e. a *material* reassignment of signs and images, of the relations between what we see and what we say, between what we do and what we can do. (Rancière, 2010b:45)

Instead of viewing this film crew as the impetus for implementing a programme of control and manipulation that would lead to a given result – a rigidity that would be impossible given the fluid and unpredictable context in question – one can see here an impetus to co-exist with reality as though it unfolded like a film, as though it were possible to make history whilst making a film. Apart from this, as though it were possible to transform the course of history in the same way that things are transformed in a film, refuting the normality of what appeared naturally in a fascist-dominated regime.

¹²⁸ These new combinations had a social dimension: with regard to the marked gulf between the various social segments, between the cities and villages, Harlan noted the number of Lisbon bourgeoisie who, while watching the film, were “perturbed” by the way in which the occupiers of Torre Bela spoke (Interview to Harlan by José Manuel Costa, Shonau am Königssee, 2006, ANIM-Cinemateca Portuguesa). The citizens who spent weekends working voluntarily at the cooperative would have been equally amazed to hear the stories about the labour square, where foremen would go to hire labour.

Chapter 3

For this reason, the true choice apropos of historical traumas is not the one between remembering or forgetting them: traumas we are not ready or able to remember haunt us all the more forcefully. We should therefore accept the paradox that, in order to really forget an event, we must summon up the strength to remember it properly.

Welcome to the desert of the real, Slavoj Zizek, p. 22

Returning to the scene of the “crime”

In this chapter I will trace the fundamental points of my theoretical and practical research. This account is not a linear chronological description of the stages of my work, although it is based on a temporal perspective. It is not a mere explanation or justification of the choices made during the film component of my research, although it has reflexive elements that only emerged after the editing and screening of the film *Red Line*. Analysis of the more practical component will thus be stronger than in the previous chapters, and will incorporate both my archival and bibliographic research as well as my field work, the filming and editing and some insights derived from screenings of the film. I will thus propose clusters of concepts derived from, for example, the material aspects of cinema and fiction as a point of departure – in which various lines intersect: practices, methodologies, interpretations, feelings, emotions and constraints. I view these clusters as large knots, which correspond to the crystallisation of concepts and ideas and which simultaneously reflect obsessions, points of inversion or spurts, clarifications and awareness. They emerge now as a result of the exercise of a written reflection that views the entire work in retrospect.

The object of this research was constantly redefined as I made progress with my archival research. The greatest clarification corresponded to the period in which I was immersed more consistently in my field work, when I first came into contact with and filmed in the villages adjoining the Torre Bela estate. Before I began filming in January 2009, the objective was to centre the shooting on the perimeter of the localities flanking the estate, seeking out the protagonists who were featured prominently in Harlan's film. With my cameraman, Pedro Pinho, my main interlocutor, we dedicated our time to seeking out the individuals who, contrary to Wilson or Herculano, had not habitually been interviewed or filmed to provide their testimony about the experience. We wanted to find the "story-less" of this story, i.e. those who contributed the least towards the construction of the narrative about Torre Bela, who had not been elected as "representatives" and guardians of the associated memories.¹²⁹

This choice of opting for the less "visible" was linked to another early choice: that of filming in an observational manner, in a space limited to the villages, during a prolonged stretch of time, a methodology that would, as a matter of fact, be in keeping with the practices of Harlan's crew. In this predetermined framework, the film would be a visual and audio document that would serve to juxtapose the past and the present side by side, thus helping to view changes and continuity in the figures being filmed. The intention was to find traces of an experience from the past in the present, learning to discern the memory of that radical rupture in current gestures and behaviours. This implied filming recurrent situations in the lives of these people in the hope of capturing micro-transformations - those almost epiphany-like moments in which the memory of that period would burst forth in an unexpected manner. With this in mind, we filmed Herculano Martins, head of the local municipal authority, in some meetings at the parish council and Fátima Martins, the

¹²⁹ I have adopted the expression used by José Manuel Sobral in his article "The silences of History, the History-less: Social Memory, History and Citizenship", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 8 February 2007 - <http://pt.mondediplo.com/spip.php?article401> [Accessed 27 May 2011].

granddaughter of a member of the cooperative, who lives in Maçussa, in meetings with the other members of the recreational, sports and cultural association of Maçussa.

The former occupiers whom we contacted and filmed during this initial period of my research all have varied trajectories in life. José Ramalho lives in a ramshackle house. He has limited means of subsistence and recounts personal stories marked by violent episodes that appear to be symptomatic of post-traumatic stress triggered by his participation in the colonial war. As a soldier in Angola, he fought on the side of those who were struggling for independence and as a souvenir of that period in his life he cherishes an old rusty arrow used by guerrillas. Before the 1974 Revolution, when he was in France, he became involved in the workers' struggle at the Renault factory. It is possible to catch a glimpse of him in some sequences in *Torre Bela*, with his face semi-covered by a thick beard, angrily pounding his fist on the table to protest against the idea of the occupiers entering the "cultural centre" (at the time the occupiers were discussing the possibility of transforming the palace or part of it into a cultural centre).

Maria do Rosário, a worker who everyone affirmed had been a very active part of the occupation, spends her time taking care of a subsistence kitchen garden. Along with this, she also dedicates her time to religious devotion at the church in Maçussa. She told us about how her children voiced their displeasure about her giving interviews, which she did to a local newspaper. Leonardo Ventura, one of the erstwhile leaders responsible for the livestock group at the cooperative, today takes care of a flock of goats he owns. He was happy to let us film his current activities, about which he is very knowledgeable, but was laconic about his past as a member of the cooperative.

A UFO, silences and embarrassment

In the wake of the meetings with the residents of the villages adjoining the estate, two words appeared in conversations with my cameraman, which clearly indicate how we built our perception about the impact of that experience on their lives: UFO and abduction. Their meaning reflects how the cooperative's experience looks in retrospective as an eruption that was radically different and alien in the everyday lives of the members of the cooperative. It was as though they had been ripped out of the life model that had been ordained for them to go through an experience without any recognisable links to previous patterns. For a brief historical moment they were the protagonists of the vanguard of political and afterwards, they were again brought down to "earth". If this metaphor is perhaps disproportionate and fable-like, it does have the merit of describing my difficulty in relating that unidentifiable "object" with what their models of life are nowadays.

Paradoxically, as we progressed with the filming the traces of the effects of this "abduction" did not appear and what ended up by being omnipresent was the document based on which we approached people: Harlan's film. On the one hand, many participants cited the film to justify a reasoning or to refresh their memory, even if they had been "there" in that time and space depicted in a given sequence – "that was what it was like in that scene; it was just like you can see there", were typical examples of the comments we habitually heard. On the other hand, there were those who hesitated to acknowledge or denied having participated in the occupation, even if they can be seen in the middle of a crowd in the film.

The refusal of some villagers to provide their testimonies can be interpreted as part of the reaction to a kind of social stigma created around Torre Bela, embodied in rumours that circulate amongst neighbours in this region.¹³⁰ Any erstwhile

¹³⁰ In the first few days of filming I asked a female villager who was walking down a street in Maçussa if she had been involved in any way in the 1975 occupation. She immediately replied that she had not and that I should ask that question to another villager who was on the other side of the street. When I asked him, the latter was extremely surprised by his neighbour's denial: since it was even possible to see her in the film, amongst a crowd shouting slogans! Not very long after that, a resident of the

members of the cooperative who again expose themselves to a camera reactivate their visibility in the process and, at the same time, announce their support for the rehabilitation of the memory of the cooperative.

This stigma appears to have infected even elements outside the villages, such as the principal of the school in Manique do Intendente, who belongs to a younger generation of graduates, without any geographical connection with this region. The idea of filming a screening and a debate by a group of students from that school was inspired by a story I had heard about a middle school teacher in this region who, a few years ago, showed Harlan's film to her students. When I suggested to the principal that one could do something similar that day, as part of a history lesson, I sensed some unease and resistance. The principal voiced fears about the reaction of an employee at the school who was recognisable in the film.¹³¹

During the period in which the meetings and discoveries were more intense, I recall having experienced a vague feeling that there was something untouchable, something somewhat blurred but very profound. Perhaps I was dealing with a memory not so related with the revolutionary period, where practices embodying freedom had run rampant, but a more buried memory. I remember a phrase used by a villager who told another villager - "Watch out, they must be from the PIDE [the political police during Salazar's dictatorial regime]" - ironically reflecting our insistence in obtaining answers to questions about the past. "People are still scared to talk about it, even though 34 years have gone by" - said the owner of a restaurant in Alcoentre. This buried memory, a memory-habit (Connerton, 1999:31-32) that can be explained as the incorporation and retention of automatic mechanisms in response

village of Vila Nova de São Pedro, Manuel Colaço, having learnt of the reason for our presence in those villages, said very proudly that nobody from his village had participated in what he considered to be a "crime" and a "scourge", of which he would have been ashamed. The vehement tone of these statements later softened in the conversation between him and Fátima Martins, the granddaughter of a former occupier, recorded on film, part of which has been included in *Red Line*.

¹³¹ One of the school's history teachers, Alda Virgílio, finally broke the impasse, agreeing to include a screening of the film as part of the 9th grade curriculum concerning the 25 April Revolution. Excerpts from the debate with the students after the viewing have been included in *Red Line*.

to certain situations seemed to take shape in the way in which a narrative was constituted about the occupation of Torre Bela, after the 1974 Revolution.

From the film as an instrument to the film as a central object

Even though the necessary conditions for viewing Harlan's film only came about in 1999, when a DVD was distributed for the first time along with the daily newspaper *Público*, the fact is that, before this, those who migrated to Germany or France from the villages adjacent to Torre Bela had the opportunity to see it on TV channels there (aired for example on the Franco-German channel Arte). This explains the circulation of VHS tapes or DVDs containing the film or excerpts from the film well before 1999. The screening of the documentary *Outro País* (2000), by Serge Tréfaut, which included some sequences from *Torre Bela*, on the Portuguese state television channel RTP also contributed towards the dissemination of these images.

The ambiguities and tensions with regard to the cooperative's history can thus be interpreted together with the great driver of the memory of those events – the archive of images and sounds that is *Torre Bela*. The various lines explored in my research - film, memory, archive, history of the PREC – become superimposed and bifurcate to intersect at certain points. One of these points corresponds to cross-referencing the small story of Torre Bela with the macro-history of the PREC and the way in which historic and political discourses were appropriated from it. In other words, the microcosm portrayed in *Torre Bela* is often used metonymically to signify the “excesses” of the PREC (to cite the provocative expression used by Luís Trindade) and to point out the utopian aspects, bankruptcy and impossibility of a given socialist project in Portugal, in the years after the 1974 Revolution (Trindade, 2004).

In current discourses, the PREC is often identified as a project that attempted to constitute a utopian society that would never have worked, an incidental period of excesses on a political path that began with the toppling of Salazar's regime and

which only normalised after 25 November 1975. This period also has some UFO elements in terms of Portugal's recent history, both because it represented a break with the past in terms of the model of civic participation as well as because it represented a break with the projected idea of an atavistic Portuguese society.¹³² It is thus a plot interwoven with meaning (an excess of *meaning*?) that is difficult to understand. In this order of ideas, it is as though Harlan's film, imprisoned in a one-dimensional interpretation, was visual proof of this shortcoming. A commentator with the well-known Portuguese daily newspaper *Público* was peremptory in his assessment, in his weekly column:

Some time ago an acquaintance of mine told me that the film *Torre Bela* should be compulsory viewing in Portuguese schools, since seeing it would put an end to the romanticisation of socialist utopias.¹³³

It was against the backdrop of such views, voiced by some villagers in the Torre Bela region as well as by an opinion-maker with a press column, that some of the concerns that shaped my research and the conception of my film emerged. One of the key questions then became knowing up to what point the images of *Torre Bela* had been summoned to collaborate in building a certain perception of the PREC. There is no doubt that the film is used as an anchor, in the first place because it is an audiovisual record of those events, with the indexical quality that is intrinsically attributed to it. Apart from this, one can add the way in which its style of direct cinema creates a relationship of transparency and immersion in a reality that seems to vibrate in a nascent state, with the consequent association of this aesthetic with a supposed neutrality.

¹³² Trindade discusses the idea presented by some Portuguese thinkers, especially Eduardo Lourenço, of an atavist and immobile society, whose inner nature does not correspond in any way to the exceptional state of the PREC, when society proved to be more participative and combative in the sense of transforming reality (Trindade:2004).

¹³³ Matos, Helena – “O glamour do mundo dos famosos”, *Público*, 13 de Janeiro de 2011. Available at <http://o-povo.blogspot.com/2011/01/o-glamour-do-mundo-dos-famosos.html> (Accessed 1 June 2011)

It is this paradoxical game which reveals the way in which certain people highlighted in the film acquired the quality of being a character invested with a mythical aura. On the other hand, this is also the framework for understanding the significant and central role played by the sequence depicting the occupation of the palace. I thus became increasingly aware that the film and collective memory were inextricably intertwined, even owing to the manner in which it selected events and individuals as being worthy of note. From being a document and an instrument, Harlan's film was progressively transformed in an increasingly more autonomous and central object in my project's approach. It was due to this new logic that I had to turn to the individuals who had actually *made* the object in question, such as the image editor, Roberto Perpignani, and the sound editor, Sandro Petica, in Rome, whom I interviewed in August 2010. I later added the production director, Andrade, to this list of interviewees.

The material aspects of cinema and film transparency

The arrival of the materials donated by Thomas Harlan to ANIM played a definite role in the process of the rediscovery of the material elements of the film and in the decision to explore these visual and audio elements in *Red Line*. A detective works with material clues that are continuously dismantled, reassembled and recombined. I gradually discovered that these were the actions that could intertwine the links between sequences and blocks of subjects in the film: observing, accelerating and slowing down the film on the moviola, seeing and hearing the instruments, the sounds of the reel being stopped and fast forwarded. This would create in *Red Line* the impression that there was a path linking images and different time periods. It suggested a constant activity of scrutinising the materials, in the sense described by Adrian Martin:

In English as in French, the word *essay* implies not only a form, but an activity: to essay, to try out, to test the limits of something. But

of what, exactly? In the tradition of Montaigne, a true essay is one that gives the impression of discovering what it is about as it goes along – as it observes the world, collects data, makes connections and draws associations ... Thus, the true essay must start out without a clear subject, let alone a clear thesis that will be illustrated or confirmed. (Martin, 2006)

The editing of *Red Line* entailed visual and audio associations and disassociations between materials from various sources in visual and audio terms, such as Harlan's original film and the images shot in modern times, recreating this movement of a constant search. This is what happens, for example, when shots of the reels moving on the moviola are placed alongside sequences with long "travelling" shots along the estate's walls. Apart from this, we sometimes jump from frames from the original film as was captured from their screening on the moviola to frames placed in full screen mode, and vice-versa. Sound and image from different sources were juxtaposed in new ways. This is the case, for instance, when we see Wilson in his daily life in the present and we hear his voice giving an impassioned speech to a crowd, as was captured by the sound operator of Harlan's crew.

These visual and audio strategies continuously draw attention to the material aspects of the image that is produced and constructed and, in this sense, to its volatile and manipulable nature, one which always falls short of its supposed potential to tell us everything about something. In other words, the presupposition underlying *Red Line* is that the image possesses a sense of immediacy which outshines its fabricated side and is, therefore, something that needs to be interrogated. It is a related piece of data to be deconstructed, meticulously scrutinised and reinterpreted, time and time again. The visual strategies used in *Red Line* contain in themselves the expectation that viewers will embark upon this game, in the hope that they can experience the feeling of a continuous flux of the reconstruction of memory.

Fiction as a point of departure

The old dichotomy between documentary/fiction in its many nuances, real/fiction, facts/staging, etc., whose parameters have been rendered dreary and sometimes unproductive, ended up by playing a crucial role in my research and in the editing of the film itself. This dichotomy first arose in the way of conceptualising new data by means of some statements by Harlan and by some villagers.

The villagers described how they had seen or how someone had seen, sometime in 1975, after the occupation, Wilson dressed in the duke's clothes, riding the white horse that had belonged to the aristocrat, in a triumphal procession through the villages. In his turn, Harlan often referred to Wilson as the "new duke" and how, at a certain stage of the development of the cooperative, the other members of the cooperative had turned their backs on Wilson by not choosing him for the workers' committee (Daney et al., 1979). This thus proved to be a scenario with the production of types and characters, to whom easily recognisable and fable-like patterns and traits are attributed. Whenever one enters into a work process about memory in order to give it form for a listener or spectator, the most curious, most dramatic episodes are told and they are given the form of a story, crystallising the data of the memory into patterns that can be shared. One can see this tendency towards the construction of archetypes in the idea of an old/new duke, which is rooted in the temptation to describe the old story of the circulation of power: a duke who is deposed by a community and this ends up giving rise to a new duke, confirming that it is impossible for humans to break out of the traditional circuit of the circulation of power.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ João Menezes Ferreira, a member of the *Era Nova* cooperative, credited as the production company of the film in Portugal, went to Rome to see the footage in the editing room. He recalls images that showed Wilson riding on the duke's horse and how that had fascinated Harlan, who speculated about the transfer of power from one duke to another: the "new" duke. Menezes Ferreira believes that Harlan might have thought of projecting some of these interpretations on to the narrative of the film that he was editing. (Interview to João Menezes Ferreira, November 2010)

The same principles of attributing fictional archetypes – as though certain fictional components could be identifiable in our discourse regarding the world, just like Vladimir Propp did by describing the morphological structure of short stories – can be seen in the conversations with the people I interviewed and in the way in which I ended up by portraying the figure of Harlan in *Red Line*. The imagined letter is an aggregating device (inspired by a similar mechanism used in *Le Tombeau d’Alexandre*, [1993] by Chris Marker) which allows me to go from sequence to sequence while maintaining a certain unity. It also ended up by fuelling a certain mindset created by my encounter with the figure of Harlan, who had a fairly unique life and career, linked to the symbolic production of the grand narrative of the History of the 20th Century (see Biographic notes).

His sojourn in Portugal invariably stoked a series of rumours: who was he working for and what cause was he promoting (a rumour circulated that he was a CIA operative)?¹³⁵ How did he have so many resources to be able to have a crew filming continuously between March and August 1975 in Portugal? This was further compounded by the prolonged period during which the film was edited in Italy, stories that Harlan had sent the footage out of Portugal after an MFA officer had threatened to confiscate it and the fact that he filmed in Mozambique during the nation’s independence ceremonies, although that precious footage was destroyed by the laboratory. The decision to use the sounds of the interviews and not the images of Harlan shot in the Klinikum Berchtesgadener Land in 2008 and 2010, when I went there with my crew, was due to his frail state of health.

From another point of view, I constructed my *fictionalisation* of Harlan’s film in articulation with its own interpretation and, particularly, with what he considered to be a “manipulation”.¹³⁶ As we have seen before, this discourse can only be viewed as scandalous if we set out from the idealised position of a spectator whose

¹³⁵ Interview with Alberto Seixas Santos, Lisbon, November 2009.

¹³⁶ See his statements in *Red Line*: “There was manipulation in the sense of you use them to realise your own convictions. Your convictions can even be perfect and pure but they are always yours. You use them and this happened several times.”

expectations have been frustrated by interpreting the film *Torre Bela* as though it were a translucent transposition of what was filmed. These expectations are not just generated by *Torre Bela*. They are rooted in experiments prior to this film. They are a reflux of a kind of acculturation implemented by the system that produces and circulates images of *reality* whose logic was dismantled by structuralist, psychoanalytical and Marxist-Althusserian analyses applied to cinema in the 1960s and 1970s. It is worth revisiting them, as well as the words by Jean-Louis Comolli:

From another point of view, I constructed my *fictionalisation* of Harlan's film in articulation with its own interpretation and, particularly, with what he considered to be a "manipulation".¹³⁷ As we have seen before, this discourse can only be viewed as scandalous if we set out from the idealised position of a spectator whose expectations have been frustrated by interpreting the film *Torre Bela* as though it were a translucent transposition of what was filmed. These expectations are not just generated by *Torre Bela*. They are rooted in experiments prior to this film. They are a reflux of a kind of acculturation implemented by the system that produces and circulates images of *reality* whose logic was dismantled by structuralist, psychoanalytical and Marxist-Althusserian analyses applied to cinema. It is worth revisiting them, as well as the words by Jean-Louis Comolli:

The fundamental lie of direct cinema is, in truth, that it truly intends to transcribe the truth of life, which we place as testimony and we position cinema as though it were a mechanical recording of facts and things (Comolli, 2010:296).

It is necessary to contrast this ideology with the idea that everything is permeated by some form of intelligible framing or fictional modulation - even a so-called reality - which is supposed to exist irrespective of the cameras that are filming it. Even because "a certain coefficient of 'unrealness', a type of fictional aura clings to the events and facts being filmed" (Comolli, 2010:296). In other words, when

¹³⁷ See his statements in *Red Line*: "There was manipulation in the sense of you use them to realise your own convictions. Your convictions can even be perfect and pure but they are always yours. You use them and this happened several times."

something is filmed and edited it is now invested with a filmic reality, which is added or subtracted at a first level of the perception of reality.

A game of exchanges and inversions is created in direct cinema between what we call the reality effect (the impression of experiencing it, of it being true, etc.) and the fiction effect (evident, for example, at the level of the common assertion: “too beautiful to be true”, etc.). (Comolli, 2010:297)

One can interpret the sequence of the conversation between Wilson and the man with the shovel, or that of the occupation of the palace, on the basis of this game of inversions between the reality effect and the fiction effect. They appear to be so spontaneous, so intense and almost as though they were being witnessed in person (such a heated discussion about a shovel could never have been staged, as Harlan said) that they become *unreal*, acquiring a fictional aura.¹³⁸ They are so suggestive that they evoke archetypes and other scenes from collective cinematographic memory – in the case of the occupation of the palace, *October* (1928) by Eisenstein or *Viridiana* (1961) by Luis Buñuel. They became *film*, anthological scenes, owing to their capacity to go from the particular – the here and now of the event – to the general – the gallery of archetypes and typical characters.

A central character and sequence

The construction of *Red Line* was based on this task of seeking out archetypes generated by the reliving of the memories of *Torre Bela*, in other words, on the ghosts raised when the film is viewed today. In this context, the sequence of the occupation of the palace progressively began to emerge as the key sequence of *Red Line*, radiating a dramatic, argumentative and aesthetic logic that lies beneath the

¹³⁸ *Thomas Harlan – Wandersplitter* (2006) Christoph Hubner, Filmmuseum Munchen, Goethe-Institut Munchen.

surface of my entire film. In other words, this sequence served as the leitmotif and the matrix for the construction of the film since it is the sequence that suggests to viewers what can be seen and hidden in Harlan's film and highlights the issue as to whether the actions of the team and the occupiers were staged, the tenuous line that exists between being a director and being an occupier and being an occupier and being an actor. Apart from this, it is this sequence that calls up the ghosts to respond to a reactionary use of the memory of the revolutionary period, in which the PREC is shown as a blot on recent Portuguese political history.

Wilson's on-screen persona

In February 2009, Wilson agreed to us filming him in his everyday activities. In that preparatory conversation he suggested to us that we accompany him on an itinerary that was similar to one he had done with a Dutch film crew from the TV series *In Europa*:¹³⁹ filming him at the public swimming-pool, accompanying him to his place of work, where he sells trucks, and having lunch. To this, he suggested adding a "guided" visit around the estate and of the building, which now lay in ruins, just as he had done for the *Público* newspaper and for the film *Outro País* (2000), by Serge Tréfaut. Wilson appeared to have already chalked out an itinerary that represented his own daily life for media consumption, given the experience that he had acquired while being interviewed by the press and television crews.

His words and his body language projects a persona inextricably linked to his appearance in a film and the way in which this had had an impact on his life and his own perception of himself. Wilson sometimes seemed to have incarnated the fictional aura that the film conferred upon his figure, to thus continue to perform his filmic character and the historic role that had been assigned to him (plate 7).

¹³⁹ *In Europa* is a documentary series about 20th century Europe, presented by the Dutch writer and presenter Geert Mak, screened for the first time on the Nederland 2 channel, between 2007 and 2009. Wilson's participation was shown in an episode about the 25 April Revolution in Portugal.

Zizek speaks of this “strange superimposition of documentary and fiction” regarding the way in which someone who is filmed by a documentary camera ends up by being encouraged to play their own role, in an imitation of the ideal image that they project of themselves. This philosopher particularly analysed the cases in which this is more perceptible in the documentaries directed by Kieslowski, but his point of view can be extended to encompass documentaries of “reality” in general. It would be impossible to expect a person being filmed to reveal their true self and if this did happen then this would represent, according to Zizek, a “pornographic intrusion” (Zizek, 2008:12-13). We can thus expect that anyone being filmed for a documentary is always “on air”, acting within a framework of expectations and representations that involve both the image that the said individual has of themselves as well as the image he or she thinks that others expect of them.



7. Still from *Red Line* (2011)

Even though the “real” person can be using a mask for the camera, the camera does not cease to impose its authority. The presence of the camera is an

element that represents a break in the *continuum* of everyday life. Even if one feels that someone is hiding behind a representation of themselves, this is in itself revealing. In the case of my project, the possibility of using Harlan's film as a document that compared someone's past and present further reinforced the person's exposure and vulnerability ("see how this person has changed, see how he/she was in the past and how he/she is in the present"). Apart from this, the editing of a film *endows* a person with a character; it always makes people have a life that does not belong entirely to them.

Both Wilson and Harlan are figures that are liable to bring to mind recognisable archetypes, "larger than life" personalities. The former is likely to dovetail with the idea of a romantic revolutionary hero, the latter with the idea of a somewhat manipulative liberator caught in the web of his own contradictions. When Wilson says in *Red Line* that he would have liked to have been an actor after his "performance" in *Torre Bela*, the die has been cast. It is thus important to ask at what point Wilson and also Harlan went from being people to being characters in my work process and how was this negotiated with that which I considered to be the boundaries of their integrity and of justness. This is a minefield and the risks of falling into them are proportional to their voluntarism and good intentions. The questions unfold: to what extent is it a violent act, even if only in a symbolic sense, to place such the person being filmed within a framework of significance – a film – over which they have no control?

In retrospect, I see a series of lines of work that suggest the artificial and staged nature of *Red Line*: this begins by employing the device of an imaginary letter written to Harlan in a subjective voice, it continues in the questions that punctuate my audiovisual enquiry and in the *mise-en-scène* of the situation of exhibiting an object from Torre Bela, "hidden" in someone's house, somewhere in one of the villages. In the case of Wilson, *Red Line* provides a glimpse of his appearances in documentaries in which he personifies his role as an actor. At the time when he is being filmed by Tréfaut's crew it is possible to see the "backstage events", a staging that implies a ritual of instructions with regard to the camera inside the ruined edifice

at Torre Bela: “You can go ahead, Wilson”, indicates Serge Tréfaut. Wilson complies and ended up doing what he summarised thus: “I acted out my own life”.

Entering the palace again: The game of images

As I have already mentioned, considerations of the composition of the image permeated the various stages of my work. Not just of the images from Harlan’s film, but of images in a broad sense. This is the context in which *Red Line* included a sequence with an old iron, provided to us by a female resident of a village near Torre Bela. The iron belongs to the set of the objects “stolen” from the palace. It is an integral part of yet another story, just like the sheets used by a cooperative member left in the yard to dry in the sun. Billowing in the wind, it was possible to discern on them the embroidered mark of their erstwhile owners: the crest of the Lafões family. Irrefutable proof of the “crime”. Another image, another sign, just like the many others that comprise the reliquary of the myths associated with Torre Bela.

The aim of the sequence with the iron was to show this object in the foreground, illuminated on an improvised stage, with the respective technical paraphernalia of the light projectors. The iron is gradually revealed in a ray of light and this *mise-en-scène* thus links its image to the many images of objects that were seen in the sequence when the palace was occupied. This is where the game of correspondence appears, expressed by the off-screen voice in *Red Line*: “By placing the object in centre-stage we are once again conferring relevance upon the occupation of the palace, just like you did.” With the filming, editing and viewing of this iron, we are participating in a voyeuristic and fetishist movement that is also implicit in Harlan’s film. And the question lingers in the air: “If your film had not had that sequence, would Torre Bela have had the same image today?”

The 25 April Revolution can be placed amidst the gallery of contemporary revolutions, in which the intense production of images is intrinsically inherent to the

political and social game. This production is one of the nerve centres for distributing power in a period when it becomes crucial to capture and win over the imagination of viewers and participants. The work by Harlan's crew must be viewed in this perspective instead of being seen as an isolated case. Another crucial moment of *Red Line* is the point when the editing links testimonies with the suggestive power of images and sounds. The aerial photos of the alleged weapons that were rumoured to be hidden on the estate – cannons that turned out to be harmless bullock carts – published in some newspapers (which I was unable to locate) are yet another example of how Harlan was not the only one seeking to use images on the frontline of political combat. T

he cooperative members themselves participated in a game of shadows and appearances that became sufficiently solid to cause worry, instil fear and motivate attacks by the military and political forces that were jostling for supremacy at the time. The raid by soldiers from the Practical Military School in Santarém aimed at seizing weapons at the cooperative is an example of this. When we saw the documentary by Luís Galvão Telles about Torre Bela, we unexpectedly identified an image that we later used in *Red Line*, slowing it down and “freezing” it: a cart full of props, with an improvised antenna, disguised as a cannon, the handiwork of members of the cooperative, who thus applied their imagination to transmit the impression of homespun defensive strategies. Could it be that what was photographed for the newspapers were in fact simple carts that, when viewed in profile, appeared to be cannons (as can be seen in the photographs shown in *Red Line*)? And would these images have inspired the members of the cooperative to stage them? Or did the photographers (perhaps seated in planes flying over the estate or perched on the estate's walls) photograph the carts after they had been disguised? It is hard to reconstitute the imaginative trajectory that resulted in the creation of such a cinematic strategy.

In any case, this more or less mythic episode contributed towards us having an idea of how images could engender various interpretations according to the motivations and interests of the beholder, in a dance that involves both its producers as well as its viewers, as though it were a Rorschach test. The rumours and myths

that circulated about the cooperative can also be framed within this same regime of the production of images: the topless foreign women, the Cuban brigades that trained the members of the cooperative, the machine gun bullets sprayed over the piano. Irrespective of whether these stories were recounted between the four walls of a family's home, in a village café, in the streets, in the vineyards during the harvest or in the national press, they all configured the same figures and forged myths, in the sense expressed by Roland Barthes.¹⁴⁰ In the chain of an unlimited semiosis, the meanings become new meanings imbued with new senses. One could speculate that the emancipated foreign women connoted the idea of an immoral and disorganised revolution and this, in its turn, connoted the failure of a certain model of society.

No meaning is fixed. It is transmutable, but this does not imply that a first impression does not have a concrete effect. At first glance, one could say, the carts looked like cannons. Even if they did not have the destructive power to decimate the opponents of Torre Bela, in truth they were catalysts for events that affected the experience of those who were involved in Torre Bela. My encounter with the object being researched and filmed ended up by revealing the force of that fictional construction of an image. The nucleus of a set of images pertaining to the cooperative at Torre Bela, more or less mouldable – memory is fluid and is constantly being rewritten – was embedded over the course of time. After the screening of *Red Line* at a session organised by a cinema club in Santarém, a city near the Torre Bela estate, a viewer, a militant of the Portuguese Communist Party, recounted a very revealing story in this regard. When this militant was campaigning in the days prior to the legislative elections held on 5 June 2011, after looking at the pamphlets he was distributing a woman questioned him about an outrageous fact: what had happened to the image of a golden Virgin Mary that had been stolen from the palace chapel by the occupiers? There had never been news of the concrete existence of that golden statue, but this seems to have a solid existence in the mythological gallery of Torre Bela.

¹⁴⁰ Barthes, Roland – *Mythologies*, London, Vintage, 2000

How could one leave the “palace”? Images and pitfalls

In this story of images and myths the game of mirrors can be taken to an extreme. The return to the scene of the “crime” by a film crew ended up by contributing towards the construction of a virtual space for a reunion of various protagonists separated by time and geographical space. Some protagonists who had experience with the cooperative and/or Harlan’s film still live in the villages, while others have emigrated, such as José Rodrigues to Germany or João “the goatherd” to the USA. Others are in Rome, such as Roberto Perpignani, or in Holland, such as João Azevedo. The process of making and screening the film thus constituted a new virtual network, with the same effects as what César called a “film-device”:

The use of devices for audiovisual creation is even more efficient when it opens up possibilities of encounters between bodies and objects, creating effects that cannot even be imagined before the device is implemented. It is this creation of imponderable effects, of real events, that gives rise to the invention of worlds that are possible with this audiovisual practice. Worlds that do not constitute themselves as a profound unfolding of what we already know, but which instead amplify and extend the possibilities of the intersection of subjectivity and the potential of invention. (Migliorin; 2005)

If one views Harlan’s film on the basis of these presuppositions then it can be characterized as a film-device, which set a series of movements and connections between actors in motion, thus producing a series of not entirely controllable events. The production of *Red Line* also triggered a set of forces in the field, by listening to the actors, by recounting versions told by different people, by stirring up memories, unearthing documents and photographs and once again questioning the images of the films made about Torre Bela. In this manner, the film participates in a revival of memories and becomes part of a movement to rewrite it. The process becomes even more complete and consolidated by summoning new interlocutors to participate in

this revival of memories: the viewers.

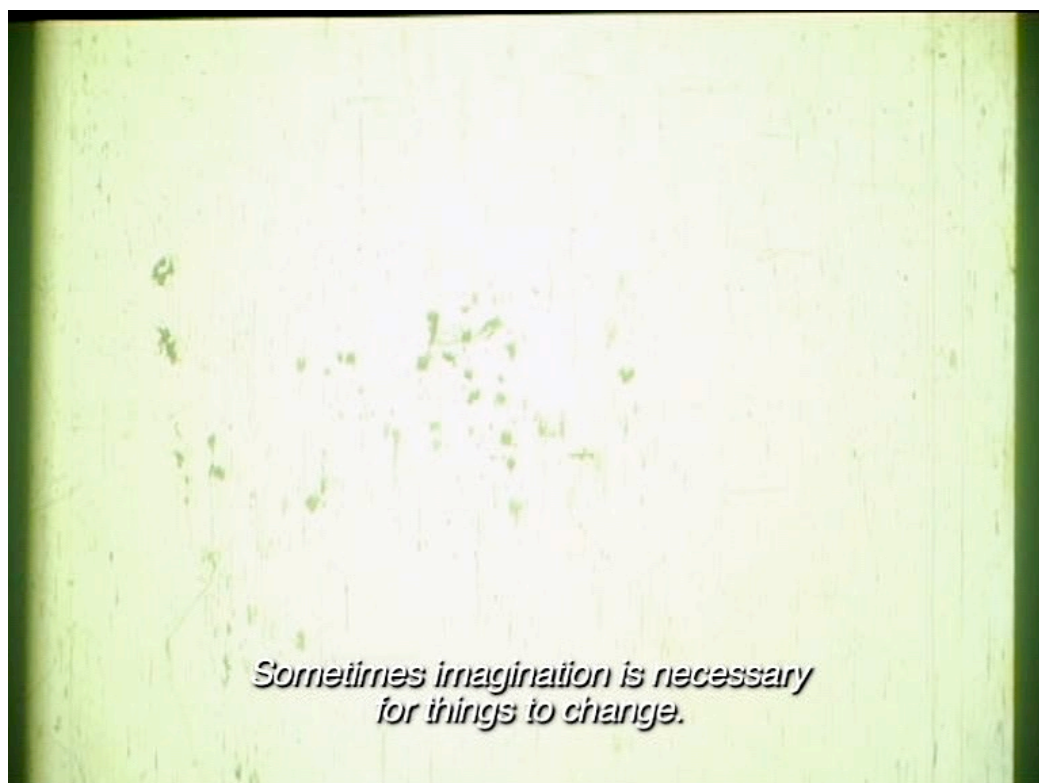
Occupying this position of being a catalyst, I never intended to have a neutral stance or a stance that revealed an absolute truth that the film's images supposedly concealed. When I began to hear the testimonies of the protagonists or the local residents in the Torre Bela region, I felt an almost immediate need to downplay the weight of the stigma. This weight appeared to be due to a reconfiguration of the memory, which deemed that occupation to be an isolated case, out of context from the flow of PREC events. As though it now only isolated the vector of the "estate", its occupation and supposed vandalism. This would indubitably be connected with the interpretations and argumentative uses of the images from Harlan's film.

Many of the protagonists hope that the new written or filmed works about Torre Bela redeem the "positive" aspects of the experiment, thus responding to the pressure brought to bear on the cooperative's history. This is clearly evident, for example, when Camilo and Inês appear in *Red Line*, drawing attention to what is not seen in Harlan's film or what can be seen in Harlan's film suggesting organisation and arduous work: "There are some things that are not really visible in that film, one of them being the fact that very little is said about the internal organisation" – affirmed Camilo. Such statements make it possible to further develop our relationship with what the images appear to reveal and hide and their multiple interpretations. On the other hand, they can also be seen as broader gestures that try to redeem not just what is supposedly not visible in the images but also the memory of the PREC.

This struggle was already present in 1975, in the cooperative's everyday activities and even in the film by the Portuguese director Luís Galvão Teles. It is Teles himself who poses a question to one of the cooperative's members, who happened to be Wilson's father: "But the people outside, even here in this area, they sometimes say that even the cooperatives aren't cultivating the land. Is that true?" Wilson's father and the film by Teles respond with words and images that prove the work, organisation and dedicated and conscientious efforts that were an integral part of the Torre Bela experience. In this documentary one can see images of livestock

being grazed, meals in the canteen and a set of cooperative members who speak of the need to control alcoholism, a scene which has also been included in *Red Line*.

Having said this, exploring the character constructed from the image that provoked the stigma is not equivalent to associating all of Harlan's work with the concept of manipulation in the most common sense of the word. Although it is easier to explain this in a written text, I was concerned about short-circuiting in *Red Line* this idea of the occupiers being manipulated by Harlan's crew. The method of implementing this short circuit was, in broad strokes, that of subverting the standards for interpreting reality and fiction in the films, ensuring that the idea of a profound and intrinsic "fictionality" permeated this binomial of rigid separation. This was the backdrop that framed my work on the text for the off-screen narration, as can be seen at the end of *Red Line*. Here, all the attention is focused on the voice, while the image is a "blank" screen with just the visual "noise" of the film itself seen on the moviola monitor (plate 2011). This is the context in which the off-screen voice asks: "And what if the bullock carts had in fact been cannons? And if an occupier became a duke? And if another became a priest?"



8. Still from *Red Line* (2011)

If all this had indeed happened it is likely that what was deemed to be the natural order of things would be re-questioned and that this questioning would take hold of the people to such an extent that a revolution would be born. In such a scenario the actors would assume other positions and there would be such intense ruptures that reality would have seemed like a film, owing to its speed and compression. In such a scenario, as Harlan himself suggested, what would be necessary would be nothing less than the reinvention of everyday life.

Conclusion

Revisiting Torre Bela means returning to a site of transformation and a continuous negotiation of the memory of the Portuguese revolutionary period. Filming it again, rewriting it and discussing it casts us in the role of interlocutors in this debate. Harlan's film is a powerful driver dynamising this memory. From amongst its many interpretations, I have emphasised herein at least one that surpasses its thematic and territorial limits: the interpretation that takes it as proof of a transgression of values that were shaken to the core during that period, against the backdrop of a socialist political project based on an initiative of popular power, seen by some as failed and impossible to reproduce.

Questioning these images means not accepting them as "archives of reality", but as images that have a context and a history, as opposed to apparently being a translucent translation of events. Hence, they have been framed in articulation with other elements, other images of documentaries produced at the same time, other texts, testaments and audio records. They have been delinked from their apparently unshakeable meanings and have been redeemed from their isolation, seemingly condensing everything that is to be said about the history of an experiment at collectivisation. This textual and filmic research is thus rooted in this idea of montage "as a basic principle of relating with the images of the world" (Lins & Rezende, 2010). Many authors have theorised how montage can be a dynamic centrifugal force that complicates our relationship with the world of images. Without destroying its constituent elements – since it is not synonymous with their fusion, assimilation or destruction – montage unveils the differences and the links with our surroundings (Lins & Rezende, 2010).

Let us return to what has already been discussed often here but articulate it in other ways: it is necessary to note the way in which these images were built on codes of realism, based on the premise of a direct connection between the representation and what was represented. The processes of constructing Torre Bela appear to

underscore a distance on the part of those who produced these images with regard to the events (that happened like this without any intervention by the people making the film) simultaneously with the intensification of a direct relationship with reality (things are exactly as they appear), coupled with the fact that the said filmmakers are masquerading and are thus rendered invisible to viewers' eyes.¹⁴¹ These processes of intensifying reality can both be based on techniques of recording images and sound as well as on editing strategies.

For example, in terms of recording images, the long shots by Russel Parker with his close-ups that isolate individual figures or his panoramic shots that underscore relationships between them (for example, between the wide shot of Wilson with his megaphone and the more general low angle shots of the crowd that had gathered on the estate); or the snatches of additional sounds that are then mixed in polyphonic layers during the editing (see the extremely interesting case of the sequence when the palace is occupied, in which slogans are heard alongside whistles, songs, dialogues, laughter and exclamations of admiration). At the level of the editing, one can note the selection and emphasis of the most captivating or explosive moments from the footage filmed, by cuts in the shots that accelerate the action, the facial gestures and movements (for example, the discussions in the assemblies of cooperative members or in the parish meeting held in Manique do Intendente) or by establishing relationships between blocks of sequences that implicitly affirm relations which would otherwise have passed unnoticed (for example, the sequences that emphasise the alliance between members of the MFA and the cooperative members).

My objective was to deconstruct the apparent naturalness of reality in *Torre Bela*, which was the basis for it being selected as a mythical object of revolutionary documentaries by critical and historical discourses. This was not to denounce a supposed calculated manipulation by a "mastermind", who at the end of the day only

¹⁴¹ Beatriz Jaguaribe speaks of processes intensifying reality that are typical of aesthetic realism, which enable the establishment of a direct relationship between representation and the experience of reality. These processes, which today permeate cinema and the media in general, organise the amorphous and dispersed data of everyday perception in the form of a more intense narrative perceived as being "real" (Jaguaribe, 2006).

filmed the cooperative during a very limited period of its existence, but rather to describe the complexity of a phenomenon and of a more totalising experiment than that which is seen in the film itself.

The process of filming that took place in that space and time was part of the very process of occupation. Just like many other drivers it was a dynamic force for subversion and transformation. One could speak here of an articulation between cinema and life according to a scheme of a reciprocal production (Comolli, 2010:306): the film was produced at the same time that it produced the events.

This reciprocal scheme of production can be read and interpreted at various levels and stages. For example, one could analyse how a film triggers and fuels events and their memory by imprinting a given fictional aura on what is recorded. It is relatively easy to unveil this aura in what has already been filmed, selected and organised according to editing codes and conventions, since it is here that the energy of reality is intensified and underscored and the amorphous and the inert are cast aside. In *Torre Bela*, this aura can be discerned from what appears to happen before our eyes through a textured conjugation between “props”, dialogues and body postures. In this regard, one can recall the low angle shot of the shovel that becomes the focus of Russel’s camera, while two men transform the said tool into an icon of the discussion about collectivisation, or the duke’s jackets, which, when worn by an occupier, transform the subversion of social roles into a light-hearted carnival atmosphere (plate 9).

It is more difficult to unravel the way in which this fictional aura can function on the stage of the revolutionary “events”: in moments when images are recorded in which the presence of a film crew creates in the people being filmed a desire or a frisson, to such an extent that this confers a fictional aura upon their own gestures and upon events. At such times, the camera appears to be affirming “you who are being filmed are making history, just like others have done before you and this will be recorded for posterity.” This fictional dimension of the camera’s presence translates into a capacity for triggering the unthinkable and the new, transforming what was



9. Still from *Torre Bela* (1975)

earlier viewed as being a transgression or absurd.

It is in the light of this aura that one can better understand the audio sequence during the entry into the palace, included in *Red Line*: the crew that kept the group waiting until the camera was ready to record made it feasible to confer a “revolutionary legitimacy” on the act of breaking down the doors. The crew demarcated that experience as being significant, transforming that moment into an epiphany, helping break the *taboo* of private property that would result in the symbolic seizure of the space where a meeting of cooperative members would be held. In their movements between the occupation taking place in the Ribatejo region and the filming locations in Lisbon, between the camped out forgotten peasants and the institutions in the Portuguese capital that were at the forefront of the revolution, the crew that made *Torre Bela* created new links between agents, sought alliances and legitimation to create an existence for what emerged there. In this manner it created a space where new identities could mingle together.

At another stage of this entire process, when Harlan's film was circulated, it was commented upon and these comments were reproduced. This fictional aura associated with the memory of events can be incorporated into the bodies and into the gestures of those who are seen in the film to play a relevant role. This is the case with Wilson, who projects himself in his own image of himself and recreates himself as though he were playing his own part, acting according to an ideal image that history and the film have reserved for him.

This entire process does not entail interpreting the film to see if this submits to the verdict of reality, trying to ascertain whether the former is faithful to the latter. What appears to be the most productive and challenging path is to use the film's and cinema's archetypes to interpret all the complexity of the Torre Bela experience. Cinema is often conceived as a privileged supplier of a repertoire of actions typical of a revolution, based on the presupposition that cinema is a powerful instrument to disseminate inspiring political models and the trajectory of political action. It was in the sense of transmitting this repertoire to viewers that the filmic missions of Portuguese filmmakers included taking Eisenstein films to villages and to suburban and rural areas in Portugal. What is proposed herein on the lines of Rancière's formulations is something of another nature (Rancière, 2010a): it is seeing the film as the convocation of a kind of fictional configuration of a rupture with things and a re-editing of things, which is common to politics, to cinema and to art in general. It was, in fact, in this sense that one criticised the reality that appears to shine forth in Harlan's film, as one subsequently discovered that this reality supposedly observed from a distance by the camera was, in fact, permeated by a fiction or by fictions: the fictions of Harlan and his crew and those of the occupiers themselves. Once again keeping in mind the definition of fiction not as, "A pretty story or evil lie, the flipside of reality that people try to pass off for it" - the root of the word "fingere" does not mean "to feign" but "to forge" - as a "system of represented actions, assembled forms, and internally coherent signs."¹⁴² This helps

¹⁴² See Ranciere, Jacques - "Documentary Fiction: Marker and the Fiction of Memory" in *After 1968: On the Notion of the Political in Post-Marxist Theory* available at <http://www.after1968.org/index.php/screenings/view/11> [Accessed 16 August 2011].

one better understand that both cinema and political action are on the same page as systems that traverse the real to fragment reality and multiply it “in a controversial manner.” (Rancière, 2010a: 112)

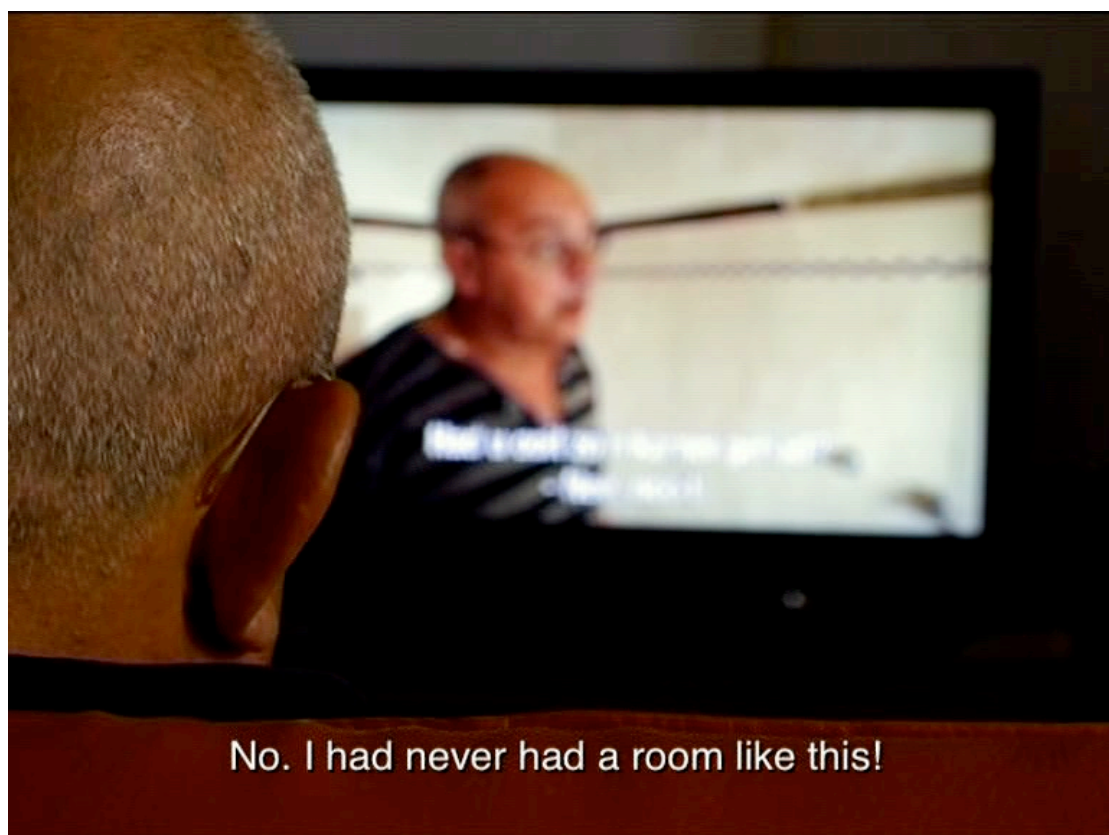
It is films like *Torre Bela* that – by condensing a revolutionary gesture in its multiple changeable aspects – shatter what is accepted as a given and as unquestionable and multiply new possibilities for thought and action, leading us to politics as a fictional configuration. “The task of politics that introduces new objects and another perception of the common data is also a fictional task” (Rancière, 2010a: 113)

The fictional veneer of the film with its “dramatic” plots – a group reinventing itself; a man jesting with the phantasmal images of an official religion, thus relegating its power; a woman who publicly contests the working conditions in the collective kitchen; a military council supporting an occupation – suggests the fictional profile of politics (the *could be* of politics, the possibility of being something else), fuelling the possibility of forming new objects and new political relations.

The continued presence of the film crew on the estate are the visible face of something deeper: attributing a filmic existence to those who were unaware of the value of their image. This gesture introduces fracture lines in the regime of what could be represented as having a capacity for political action; it effectively says that others have the right to assume a prominent and significant place in the public sphere.

These individuals are even today requested to reactivate their story – they, the history-less who became part of political history after the 1974 revolution. Before this, the roles they played in the cinema of the *Estado Novo* were those of women and men, parents and children, neighbours involved in petty sentimental dramas that did not go beyond the frontiers of their domestic space, the courtyards of their city or their village. The rupture caused not only by the occupation itself but by the process of making the film transformed the people it represented into political subjects capable of organising themselves in the creation of power.

Filming them today implies continuing to attribute a place to them, albeit in another context and now profiled in another way, according to new media forms of a popular trans-national culture - Wilson features in a Dutch European television series about the Portuguese revolution, returning to Torre Bela, romantically filmed amidst the ruins of the estate in high-definition (HD), in a 16/9 format (plate 10); the residents of Manique who were once seen shouting freedom slogans are now seen watching a musical number from *Cats* on the stage of the local cultural and recreational association, while they celebrate the anniversary of the 25 April revolution.



10. Still from *Red Line* (2011)

Today, like yesterday, the same fictional motive is still present with its dynamic power to reorganise and re-centre what we are, what we do, how we relate to each other. Harlan said that he was interested in advancing history – here he was referring to the history of events, however, in this statement one can also infer the history of films, indicating the existence of common aspects between the creation of

cinematic forms and the creation of political forms.¹⁴³

Just as with regard to the representations of other revolutionary moments (for example May 1968) the libertarian and transgressive character associated with Torre Bela – seen in the images of the confusion, in the chaos of words and gestures, in the carnival atmosphere that prevailed when the palace space was seized – can be interpreted not just as mere confusion, senseless excesses, bereft of political substance, but were in themselves political acts. In other words, the categories and the compartmentalisation that had once seemed unsurpassable dissolved to give way to new divisions; to the possibility that those who were not meant to appear in the public and media space could now have a place before the camera; to the possibility of appropriating the discourse and openness to discussion (everything can be discussed). The way in which Kristin Ross relates the climate of “exaltation and exhaustion” in May 1968 to the acceleration of time and the compression of space, is equally valid to understand the context of Torre Bela: at the same time that the bureaucratic barriers and social regimentation, along with the division of labour and working hours, were questioned, punctuated by constant meetings to discuss and decide upon matters as they arose and new moments of after-work leisure (moments for collective singing, watching films), another perception was created regarding the speed of the actions amongst the occupiers /actors. In the same manner, the sense that the actions of each individual were connected to the actions of other individuals around the country and around the world, through cinema, which would take their feats to other viewers/ potential revolutionary actors, contributed towards the perception of this compression of space.

In this context, the “transgressions” attributed to the film and to the Torre Bela experience must be re-questioned. The “cinematographic manipulation” and the “staging” associated with interpretations of Harlan’s film do not do justice to the complexity of what took place there. The “staging” was inextricably intertwined with the very process of occupation, the “manipulation” translated into links forged in encounters between various worlds (military, activists, rural).

¹⁴³ In an interview with José Manuel Costa, Shonau, 2006, Cinemateca Portuguesa-ANIM

The “transgressions” of Torre Bela are interlinked with the transgressive images of the PREC in contemporary times: with its “strangeness” (Cruzeiro, 2009) and with the black hole that it represents in understanding Portugal’s recent history, as though it were a kind of opaque excrescence hard to name, ranging from a synonym for a lost opportunity to achieve a perfect and pure revolution to the ideas mooted by conservative political segments which identify it as being responsible for destroying productive structures and the introduction of a social laxity for which the nation is paying even today.

These closed narratives that say more about the dominant values of the present than the legacy of the PREC need to be compared with a history that is not teleological in nature, placed in the ante-chamber of politics and of official history. It is necessary to turn the spotlight on what entered into the universe of politics, the divisions, the use of words, the use of images, which demarcate those who have the right to appear, those who have the right to have a voice and image. It would be opportune to recall here the genealogical approach proposed by Foucault (returning to Nietzsche):

“Genealogy (...) does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us” (Foucault, 1977:146)

It is to this side of the accidental, of the deviations, of the “impure” that Harlan’s film beckons us: its explosive sequences induce us to once again face the chaos of the emergence of the free circulation of words that can be seen in the cooperative meetings, an essential condition for the appearance of a space for discussions and conflicts typical of politics and the irruption of the subjects who were earlier hidden from official representations of a mild Portugal.

This brings us back to the touchstones of this entire work: the emergence of a conflicted political space in areas that had not yet risen to the category of being represented, which had not yet constituted themselves as image and sound and the interactive role of a cinema crew in this movement. As José Gil affirmed, “Politics invaded the innermost areas of individual life and absorbed them, opening them up, projecting them in the great public light of the revolution” (Gil, 1994 cited in Cruzeiro, 2009). This irruption must be related to territorial and class shifts, with a new class awareness, with the “travesties” and the “staging” that the camera helped promote. As Kramer said in a debate with other Portuguese filmmakers (Seixas Santos, António Pedro Vasconcelos and Serge Daney) in 1975 “The people should speak for themselves in our films.” This entailed travelling, going to meet the people, “working and living with them” so that “the sentiments or ways of being of some became known by many”.¹⁴⁴ This generalised idea of mingling with the people was, however, riddled with doubts, friction and ambiguities. Seixas Santos explained in that same debate how from a situation in which they never left their class, intellectuals and filmmakers began to venture forth and step out from the “restricted framework of the bourgeoisie and conduct research in different milieus than the ones in which they had been born” and how these incursions were often difficult when not realised within the context of the PCP.¹⁴⁵

Over the course of the 20th century many viewed cinema as a machine amplifying perceptions and which altered the canons of learning about the world (one can cite Jean Epstein, Hugo Munstemberg or *Filmologia*).¹⁴⁶ Here one can see how in a revolutionary situation this machine can be conceived as something through

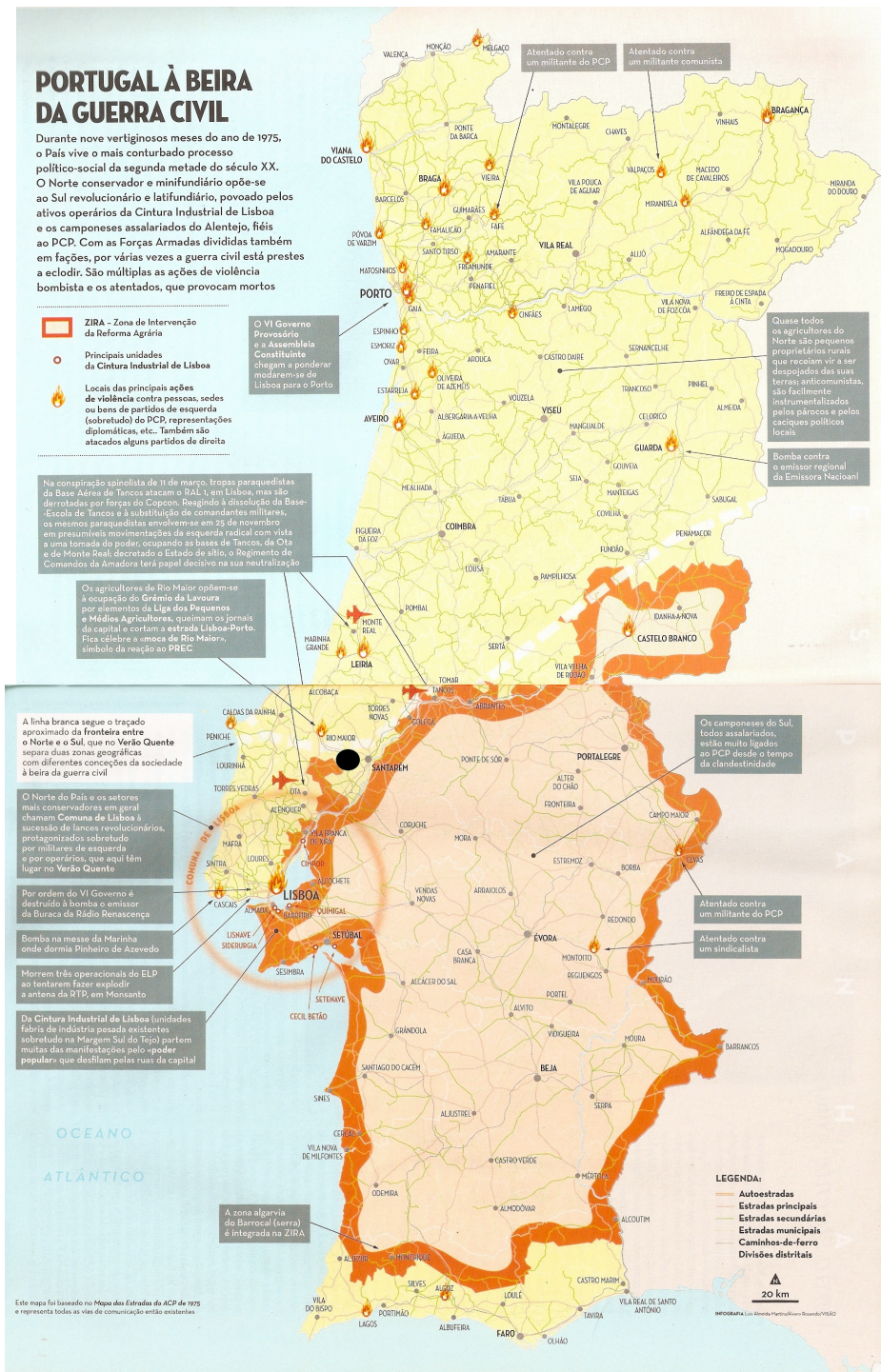
¹⁴⁴ Kramer, Robert *et al.* – “As ideias e a prática de Robert Kramer” in *M -Revista de Cinema*, 2/3, February 1977, p.13

¹⁴⁵ *idem*, p. 15-16

¹⁴⁶ For example, in *The intelligence of a machine [L'Intelligence d'une machine]* Jean Epstein (1897-1953) analyses how cinema functions as an instrument of a new way of learning the real, “in which the form is the function of a variably varied movement” (Epstein 1946:137), thus shredding the categories formed by deduction and by the Cartesian method, presaging the life that traverses all the continuities and discontinuities of given objects in natural perception. I have examined these issues in my Master's thesis *Cinema Total – A experiência cinematográfica e os efeitos espectatoriais a partir da Filmologia*, (2001), Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon.

which one can learn about the world but that it also acts at the level of experiences, transforming ways of being in the world and ways of producing the world.

Appendix 1



“Between a rock and a hard place”:



Torre Bela



Intervention Zone of the Agrarian Reform
(Zona de Intervenção da Reforma Agrária)

Source: *Visão História, 1975 O Verão Quente*, July 2010

Biographical notes

Thomas Harlan

(1929-2010)

Son of Veit Harlan (director of the anti-Semitic film *Jud Süß*) and the actress Hilde Körber. In 1941 he became a Naval Hitler Youth leader. After the Second World War, Harlan moved to Paris, where he studied Mathematics and Philosophy. From 1959 to 1964 he undertook archival research into National Socialist war crimes in Poland, which led to the prosecution of more than 2000 suspects in West Germany. "In 1964 Harlan moved to Italy, where he came into contact with *Lotta Continua*; he later moved to France. Thereafter Harlan continued to travel to areas where anti-colonialist leftist groups were active."¹⁴⁷

Before coming to Portugal in 1975, Harlan filmed a project in Chile, in the context of a study about the Chilean army that he was carrying out in association with an institute researching the migration of labour (EMIM), headquartered in Rome. On the suggestion of Jacques d'Arthuys, who had been the cultural councillor in Valparaíso and was then appointed as cultural attaché at the French embassy in Portugal, Harlan left Chile and came to Lisbon where he stayed with his crew until the middle of 1975.¹⁴⁸ He directed two more films: *Wundkanal. Hinrichtung für vier*

¹⁴⁷ Much of the information compiled for these biographical notes was obtained from the website of the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation, which compiles documentation, "Related to the development of the international labour and socialist movements." It contains documents collected by Thomas Harlan concerning "Nazi activities in occupied Poland between 1942 and 1944 and classified as 'secret' in the archives of the Federal Republic of Germany", available at [http://en.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/feltrinelli-cms/SEARCH Thomas Harlan](http://en.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/feltrinelli-cms/SEARCH%20Thomas%20Harlan) [last accessed 17 August 2011]. Another source was: "Thomas Harlan, 1929-2010", available at "<http://mubi.com/notebook/posts/thomas-harlan-1929-2010> [last accessed 17 August 2011]. A long biographical interview with Harlan was released on DVD in 2006, namely *Thomas Harlan-Wandersplitter*, by Christoph Hübne, Filmmuseum Edition.

¹⁴⁸ Curiously enough, Jacques d'Arthuys' links to the world of cinema did not end there. He was the co-founder of the Varan workshops and was also in Mozambique, where, with Jean Rouch and Jean Luc Godard, he created a singular experiment in the field of cinema and television in post-independence Mozambique (Ros Gray, 2007). Coincidentally or not, Harlan also filmed the ceremony marking Mozambique's independence during June 1975.

Stimmen 1984 (*Wundkanal*, DVD, Filmmuseum Edition, 2009) and *Souvenance* (1991). As a screenwriter, he collaborated with his father on the screenplay of his first post-war film, *Germany Betrayed* (1955). Thomas Harlan also authored the novels *Rosa* (2000) and *Heroes' Cemetery* (2006), as well as *Veit*, published posthumously (March 2011). He lived in a clinic in Schönau am Königsee, Southern Germany, from 2001 until his death in 2010.

Wilson Faustino Filipe

Wilson was born and grew up in Manique do Intendente, a village near Torre Bela, the only child of peasant parents. Also known as Sabú, an African inspired nickname, perhaps because of his “dark skin and thick lips”, to cite Pisani’s words, Wilson enlisted as a volunteer in the navy and fought in the colonial war in Angola and Guinea. When he returned to Portugal he became a “professional of nocturnal life, a pimp” (Pisani, 1978:67). Later, he was involved in a bank robbery in Lisbon, for which he was sentenced to four and a half years in jail. Wilson was released shortly after the 25 April Revolution. When he rose to prominence as the mastermind behind the occupation of Torre Bela, he became a kind of “national star”, according to Francis Pisani and, simultaneously, “the most controversial person at the cooperative in the eyes of the outside world” (Pisani, 1978:67) He still lives in Manique do Intendente and works as a truck seller.

Camilo Mortágua

As a teenager Camilo worked as a baker. He emigrated to Venezuela when he was 17 years old, coming into contact with the activist Henrique Galvão. He later founded the League for Unity and Revolutionary Action (LUAR) along with Emídio Guerreiro (who would later become the general-secretary of the Social Democrat Party) and Palma Inácio (who later became a militant of the Socialist Party).

Camilo was not a local villager from the Torre Bela region. When Wilson phoned him on the day of the occupation asking for his support, Camilo was already well known

as an underground activist against the Salazar dictatorship. His fame had spread due to his participation in an attack on a packet ship named *Santa Maria*, in January 1961, and in a bank robbery in Figueira da Foz in May 1967, acts that were aimed at undermining the Salazarist regime.¹⁴⁹ After the 25 April 1974 Revolution, Camilo also founded ERA NOVA, a cultural cooperative, along with the famed singers of the revolutionary movement José Afonso, Sérgio Godinho, Vitorino, Fausto and Francisco Fanhais.

Between 1979 and 1984, Camilo lived in Mozambique, working as an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, responsible for organising agricultural cooperatives at a national level and for the national executive body for developing rural cooperatives. Camilo dubbed himself the “last romantic revolutionary” in the memoirs that he published in 2009 (Mortágua, 2009).

Roberto Perpignani

Roberto Perpignani studied Fine Art. His career in editing began with Orson Welles. He then worked with Bernardo Bertolucci in several films including *Prima della Rivoluzione* (1964), *Strategia del Ragno* (1970), *Last Tango in Paris* (1972); the Taviani brothers, *Padre Padrone* (1977), *La Notte de San Lorenzo* (1982), *Kaos* (1984) and *Good Morning Babylon* (1987), to name just a few works. He also edited films by Marcho Bellochio, Michael Radford, Susan Sontag and Klaus Gruber, among others. Perpignani has taught the Editing Course at the Centre for Experimental Cinematography in Rome since 1977. He is the author of the book *Sul montaggio e altri scritti*, Falsopiano, 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Operation *Dulcinea*, which was commanded by Captain Henrique Galvão and jointly organised with General Humberto Delgado, involved diverting a Portuguese packet ship called the *Santa Maria*. The objective was to destroy the two Iberian dictatorships. However, the transatlantic ship was intercepted and the operation was aborted. Nevertheless, the attack on the *Santa Maria* was widely covered by the international media and further contributed towards the isolation of the Salazarist regime in the international arena.

José Rabaça

José Rabaça was born in 1938 and is even today known as Father Rabaça by some of the erstwhile occupiers of the estate. He concluded an advanced course in Philosophy and Theology in the town of Guarda, in the interior of Northern Portugal. From 1961 onwards he worked as a priest in various places in the Serra da Estrela mountains, before being summoned for military service in Mozambique and Angola. In Paris, he attended an intensive course in cultural initiatives for literacy and developing communities, along with Paulo Freire, the influential Brazilian educator, author of the book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970). He later worked for four years in services providing support for Portuguese emigrants in Germany, where he taught Portuguese.

After returning to Portugal in 1975 he went to the cooperative along with his wife, Eduarda Rosa, and formed the socio-cultural group.

The objective of the socio-cultural group at Torre Bela was to “promote the cultural level and critical and responsible awareness of the workers, with the workers” (the emphasis is mine), which included the mission to teach the many illiterate adults at the cooperative to read and write.¹⁵⁰ According to Rabaça, “The great dream was to make everyone literate, to get people to discuss issues based on the problems they faced, teaching them how to read them and write them down”, in the wake of Paulo Freire, who advocated that literacy was the making of the social condition of the newly literate individuals, one of the tenets of his pedagogy of liberation.¹⁵¹

In 1976, he became a secondary school teacher and continued in this profession until his retirement in 2000. He has created a website where he has published compilations of poems, stories and music, as well as other texts and photographs related to rural culture.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ AZAGRO socio-cultural dossier, from the personal archives of José Rabaça,

¹⁵¹ Interview with Eduarda Rosa and José Rabaça, March 2010.

¹⁵² The website is named after José Rabaça, available at:
<http://www.zeraga.prosaeverso.net/perfil.php> [last accessed 18 August 2011]

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With

Alda Virgílio and students of Ebi of Manique do Intendente, Angélica Rodrigues, Camilo Mortágua, Eduarda Rosa, Fátima Martins, Herculano Valada Martins, Inês Rodrigues, José Rodrigues, Manuel Colaço, José Rabaça, José Pedro Dos Santos, Roberto Perpignani, Sandro Petica Wilson Filipe and Thomas Harlan

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Special acknowledgements

Mark Nash, Ros Gray e Al Rees, Alexandra Lucas Coelho, Associação Recreativa, Desportiva e

Cultural da Maçussa, Cinemateca Portuguesa-ANIM e todo o pessoal do ANIM, Daniel Rocha, Elke Röhrig-Krop, Fernanda Morais, Herculano Martins and Junta de Freguesia de Manique do Intendente, Isabel Lopes, Klinikum Berchtesgadener Land, João Menezes Ferreira, José Manuel Costa, Leonardo Ventura, Luis Galvão Teles, Pedro Martins, Serge Tréfau, Rosa Gaspar, Universidade da Beira Interior

and

Alberto Seixas Santos, António Cunha Telles, Associação 25 de Abril, CBV Produções Televisivas - Pedro Curto, Inês Fialho Brandão, Isabel Machado, João Azevedo, João Luis dos Santos, Joana Cunha Ferreira, Luis Banazol, Luz Moita, Mário Tomé, Noémia Delgado, Otel Saraiva de Carvalho, Pedro d'Orey, Rui Simões, Rui Sousa, Stefan Droessler, Sigrun Guggenberger, Solveig Nordlund, Vasco Lourenço, and to all habitants of Maçussa and Manique do Intendente

With the support of

Royal College Of Art

Financial Support of

Instituto de Cinema e Audiovisual (ICA)/Ministério da Cultura, Rádio Televisão Portuguesa (RTP) and Goethe Institut