

ABSTRACTS

Victor BARBAT

A Statilian Cinema of Agitprop.

Mobile Newsrooms at the Time of the Great Break 1931-1933

In 1932, the news department of the Soyuzkino state trust launched “mobile newsroom” film teams throughout a large part of the USSR. Their objective was to produce small short films and show them to workers of the major sites of the five-year plan. This original and unprecedented enterprise was part of the Stalinist policy of the Great Break, leading the country on a forced march towards collectivisation and industrialisation. As spearheads of the film industry, the films resulting from the programme were supposed to be instruments of change in the hands of the authorities. They contributed to what was commonly called the “construction of Socialism” by bringing cinema to the most remote regions of the country. This paper considers the evolution of Soviet newsreel cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, and analyses the strategy and propaganda work of the mobile newsrooms based on the reports that the Cinema Committee produced following the first pan-Russian meeting of news operators in December 1932.

Hélène BEAUCHAMP

**An Agitprop Troupe During the Spanish Civil War.
The Eclectic Experiments of *Altavoz del Frente***

This paper considers concrete performances by an agitprop troupe during the Spanish Civil War, called *Altavoz del Frente*. It emphasises the multidisciplinary approach of this group, which used all sorts of propaganda tools (theatre, movies, political speeches, poetry recitals, exhibitions...), and scrutinises the variety of its drama poetics. The paper explores two more theoretical questions related to agitprop art. First, agitprop as a place to experiment at the junction of different arts; secondly, the paradoxical nature of agitprop theatrical fiction, which calls for the destruction of boundaries between art and life, while using a wide range of theatrical forms.

Éliane BEAUFILS

Agitating Performances in the Fight Against Global Warming

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of urban performances aimed at alerting people to the climate emergency. Activists use various agitative strategies independently from demonstrations, and they elaborate very different ways in which they appeal to audiences. This article looks at three art-activist registers: a hard activism, as well as a mournful and dramaturgical one. The performances play on different, though still troubled, emotions and emphasise sometimes more collective, sometimes more subjective perspectives. Although not as explicit as agitprop, the call for a radical change in ways of living is becoming increasingly eloquent.

Léonor DELAUNAY

**Worker's Correspondence on Stage.
Reports and Performances from the Industrial World
in the Theatre in the 1920s and 1930s**

This article presents some examples of the new forms of theatrical reportage-fiction that grew during the interwar years when authors, reporters and photographers produced articles, poems, photographs,

novels and plays experimenting with a Marxist reading of production and workers struggles. In this perspective, a double movement seemed to be taking shape: worker-reporters and militant reporters (who were not from the working class) dramatised their reports and crossed paths with authors of literature and theatre who, in turn, tried to write and show the reality of the working class to new audiences.

Sylvain DREYER

**Vertov, Godard, Mao. Reactivation of Agitprop Cinema
in France After May 68**

The films made by the militant collectives around May 68 and later—the most famous of which is the Dziga Vertov Group initiated by Jean-Luc Godard—seem to propose a reactivation of the Soviet agitprop and represent in the history of art and cinema one of the last updates to the avant-garde project of the 1920s. In order to study these similarities and differences and in order to determine in what way militant cinema around May 68 can be seen as an heir of the Soviet agitprop, we first consider issues of reception, trying to define the influence of Soviet agitprop cinema by examining the copies and texts available in France at the time. The analysis of the film forms then makes it possible to question the repercussions of these texts and films in France on the Dziga Vertov Group—whose very name indicates the will to act as heir of the Soviet filmmaker—but also the contradictions and the differences between the films of these two periods.

David FAROULT

***Don't Touch the White Woman!* (Marco Ferreri, France, 1974) :
A Cross Between a "Leftist" Western and an Agitprop Farce**

This children's Western transposes the historic battle of Little Big Horn to the colossal and controversial destruction of the Paris Les Halles food market in order to treat its characters in a farcical way. This initial anachronism elevates its protagonists to the grotesque abstraction of their function, turning the historical fable into a narrative of political agitation that illustrates the possibility of the oppressed

defeating their oppressors when they unite and organise themselves collectively. The film thereby responds to the belief that a “leftist Western” was impossible. This is what Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin had declared in *Wind from the East* (1969), of which Ferreri was a producer.

Lucie KEMPF

Agitprop Theatre in the the Soviet Union (1918-1930)

This paper recounts the creative enthusiasm that accompanied the development of agitprop theatre in the aftermath of the October Revolution. As a part of the cultural arsenal in charge of imagining and spreading the utopic idea of the New Man in the Soviet Union, agitprop theatre developed original forms of drama and staging. These were influenced by the avant-gardes (Meyerhold, for example) and theatrical tradition (the melodrama among them), but also created completely new forms such as living newspapers, trial plays or life-size reenactments of historical events. The originality of this type of agitprop equally lies in the emergence of “self-active” art (in which the creative process extends to the whole workers’ community), where the boundaries between life and art tend to disappear. Although the regime increasingly sought to instrumentalise it, Soviet agitprop theatre appears as a powerful melting-pot for artistic experiments.

Federico LANCIALONGA

**Theatre and *di strada* Cinema in Post-1968 Italy:
Gian Maria Volonté’s Agitprop**

In 1968, the actor Gian Maria Volonté met a group of street-performing actors called “Teatro di Strada” in a square in downtown Rome, where they were improvising a performance. As a follow-up to this encounter, several “politically provocative” theatre groups were born. As a main character in films by Elio Petri, Giuliano Montaldo, and Francesco Rosi, Volonté became an icon of Italian political cinema, however he devoted a lot of time to the organisation of agitprop projects in working-class neighbourhoods to oppose the eviction of many proletarian families, in occupied factories and in support of

workers' strikes. Between 1968 and 1972, Volonté and the actors of the "Teatro di Strada" carried out about thirty actions of *agitation* and *propaganda*, and took part in several militant films, with the aim of creating an "alternative culture" made by and for the proletarian masses.

Sébastien LAYERLE

**"Enriching Forms of Struggle Through Imagination".
The Participatory Activism of the Scotcheuses
in Notre-Dame-des-Landes**

Since 2013, The Scotcheuses have been making and distributing Super 8 films related to citizen mobilisations and occupation movements. The approach of this filmmaking group belongs to a form of mediactivism that emerged in the 2000s with the development of alter-globalization mobilisations and the rise of internet activism. Its members revive the practices of 1970s intervention cinema but differ in that they bring out the fiction in reality to approach the concrete aspects of activism in a new way. This article proposes to question the recent reactivation of the principles inherited from agitprop through the example of The Scotcheuses, their collective production and distribution practices, and the films made within the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

Joaquín MANZI

**Three Forms of Cinematographic Agitprop
in the Americas in 1968**

Starting from a famous work made by L. Ferrari in 1965, this paper deals with some films released in 1968 in the Americas. While M. Handler, F. Solanas and S. Álvarez chose militant forms, the underground bias endorsed by J. Rodríguez Soltero allows us to identify some common figures among the former. Their anti-imperialism found political, cultural or media targets embodied by the United States president, L. B. Johnson. Their artistic collaborations created successful experiments which catalysed the many contradictions expressed during this rebellious and incandescent year.

Muriel PLANA & Karine SAROH
Ambivalent Update to the Agitprop
in Contemporary Feminist Circus: *Contra* by Laura Murphy and
***Les Petits Bonnets* by Pascaline Herveet**

This paper deals with the ambivalence of agitprop in contemporary feminist circus. Agitprop is defined here aesthetically and politically as a form inherited from the historical practice and theatre theory of Piscator. By comparing *Contra* by Laura Murphy and *Les Petits Bonnets* by Pascaline Herveet, we demonstrate that the political meaning of agitprop and its effects on the audience are quite different in each one of these recent feminist productions. As a form directly recycled for being performative and efficient, it can produce a typical thetic post-modernist art (*Contra*). As a form which is distanced and dialogically related to other forms and devices such as fiction, it can nourish a contemporary political feminist and queer circus (*Les Petits Bonnets*).

Anne PELLUS
Caught in the Crossfire.
Modernism and Activism of the New Dance Group
in the United States of America

1930s America saw the emergence of many radical dance groups due to the development of agitprop within the Communist Party (CPUSA), which was very powerful in the country at the time. Among these militant groups, the New Dance Group (NDG), founded in New York in 1932, set itself apart because of its close links with the modern dance movement, with which the group founders were deeply connected—reason why NDG had a reputation for being professional. Combining political activism and aesthetic experimentation, NDG attempted to associate new dance's creative principles (interiority, singularity of gesture, abstraction) with agitprop practices aimed at mobilising the working class and bringing about a socialist revolution. This paper intends to revisit the first years of the 1930s during which NDG was caught in the “crossfire” of two revolutions, regarded as hard to reconcile by supporters of both sides.

Marion POIRSON-DECHONNE
**The Beginning of Animated Film in Soviet Union,
between Propaganda and Artistic Approach**

The Soviet government used animation to disseminate the ideas of Marx and Lenin in the context of agitprop. The films offered a negative vision of tsarism and the capitalist world, as opposed to the bright future of the Revolution that was destined to be exported both on Earth and in the cosmos. They used an aggressive and militant rhetoric, that nevertheless did not exclude the artistic dimension, because most of the directors had studied in art schools. This allowed these films to stand the test of time, not solely as historical documents.

Delphine RUMEAU
Whitman Agitprop in Petrograd

The American poet Walt Whitman was very much used by Soviet propaganda in the years following the October Revolution of 1917. The forms of this appropriation were varied. First of all, the poems were selected, translated, published and distributed in various media (revolutionary anthologies, large placards or leaflets). But they were also turned into agitprop material: an installation during the celebrations of October 1918, a pantomime, and especially the staging of poems by the Proletkult in a show first performed in Petrograd and then on tour. This article focuses on this show and its reception. It also considers the presence of Whitman in the films of Eisenstein and Vertov. This case study reveals some features of agitprop going from poetry to theatre and the visual arts.

