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16. **MARIANO MESTMAN**

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University of Buenos Aires-CONICET

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22. ***I dannati della terra:***

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25. **The Italian left facing the**

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28. **Third World on the eve of 1968**

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35. **ABSTRACT**

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The Italian film I dannati della terra (The Damned of the Earth) (Orsini and Filippi 1968) is a prominent example of the connection between the European cinema of intervention and the Third World struggles of the 1960s. Set as a 'film within a film', the movie tells the story of a leftist filmmaker, Fausto Morelli, who faces the challenge of finishing a film about the liberation struggles of sub-Saharan Africa by building on the documentary footage that was bequeathed to him by his student and friend, the young Abramo Malonga, an African (Bantu). This article recovers overlooked and little-known documents about the film to show that it is the expression of an active cinematic Third Worldism forged in previous years between the legacy of the Resistenza Partigiana (Italian Resistance) and the Third World struggles of the 1960s. At the same time, the article analyses the ways in which the film 'dialogues' with experimental trends of the contemporary avant-garde artistic scene in order to challenge the viewer to debate the 'open ideological hypothesis' of the film and take an active part in the political struggles of the time.

35. **KEYWORDS**

1968

global 1960s

Guinea Bissau

political cinema

Italian Resistance

Third World

Alberto Filippi

Valentino Orsini

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the original Spanish are by Christian Pageau. I am especially grateful to Flavia Laviosa and the journal team for their detailed editing work.

The Italian film *I dannati della terra* (*The Damned of the Earth*) (*The Damned*, hereafter) (Valentino Orsini and Alberto Filippi 1968) is a prominent example of the connection between the European cinema of intervention and the Third World struggles of the 1960s, as is evident from the title's homage to Frantz Fanon's well-known eponymous book (1961).¹ While it is now a little-remembered film, when it premiered, it did not go unnoticed. For Guido Aristarco, it was 'one of the most ideologically and politically advanced and mature films' made in Italy during those years (1978: 233). Mino Argentieri considered it 'problematic, exciting and courageous', with a 'consequently classist and revolutionary' perspective that 'opened a "passage" in the national political film landscape' (1969: 77). Lino Micciché spoke of a film 'of great honesty and generosity [...] destined to be unique in its kind' (1975: 219).

The film tells the story of a leftist filmmaker trained by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Fausto Morelli, who faces the challenge of finishing a film about the liberation struggles of sub-Saharan Africa by building on documentary footage that was bequeathed to him following the death of his student and friend, the young Abramo Malonga, an African (Bantu). Set as a 'film within a film', the movie alternates scenes from Fausto's work with others about the memories of his past and his friendship with Abramo, a young disciple of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, an institution where Orsini was a teacher and where Latin American and African filmmakers have been educated since the 1950s.

As critics pointed out at the time of its release, the structure of this testimonial fiction is complex, not only because it constantly utilizes documentary footage and employs a variety of cinematic forms and artistic procedures but also because it continuously problematizes the issues and arguments it exposes. While its narrative core is set in the present and revolves around the daily work of Fausto and the (aesthetic and political) dilemmas he faces while trying to finish his friend's film, the strategy of the 'film within a film' serves to present testimonial images of African reality (bequeathed by Abramo), which Fausto analyses with his collaborators. These African sequences come from documentary recordings of Guinea Bissau guerrillas taken by Valentino Orsini and Alberto Filippi, from footage of European archives on colonialism and from re-created scenes, fictionalized by actors. This structure becomes more complex in the last part of the film, called 'the labyrinth of violence', a 'utopian-realist' ending that allegorizes the nature of international violence and challenges the viewers about their commitment to the revolution.

Although academic literature has hardly referred to *The Damned*, in recent years, it was recovered within the framework of studies on Third Worldism in 1960s Italy. Federica Colleoni (2015) analysed the subject of violence in three of Orsini's films, with special attention given to this film. Colleoni's article and chapter 10 of her doctoral thesis (2010) are the most widely cited sources in the few subsequent works that tackle the film, such as Rosario Giordano's references to parts of the film in his essay on Patrice Lumumba's figure in Italian drawings, photographs and films (2020). Neelam Srivastava – who heavily researched Fanon's influences on Italy (2015, 2017, 2018b) – includes an extensive analysis of *The Damned* in her book *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970* (2018a). She examines the film (alongside other Italian works of the period) as part of the 'resistance aesthetics' associated with Third Worldism and African decolonization. In a recent work, Luca Carminati (forthcoming 2021) included *The Damned* among other 'open structures' and 'non-canonical revolutionary art films' in order to highlight a

1. network of Italian filmmakers interested in decolonial and anti-imperialist
2. struggles during the 1960s and 1970s.

3. In this article, I recover overlooked and little-known documents about the
4. film to contribute to these and other studies on Italian Third Worldism during
5. the 1960s.² I try to show that *The Damned* is not a product of the European
6. 1968 (although almost all critics date it to 1969) but rather the expression of an
7. active cinematic Third Worldism forged in previous years. In this article's first
8. section, after an account of the origin of the film and the encounter between
9. Orisini and Filippi in Rome, I examine their virtually unknown trip to film
10. the struggles for liberation in Guinea Bissau within a network of solidarity
11. and internationalism that connected them with other films against Portuguese
12. colonialism made in previous years. I go on to analyse the treatment of the
13. Guinea Bissau liberation struggles and other anticolonial historical manifes-
14. tations in the 'African part' of the film. In the next section, I show how the
15. 'Italian part' of the film explores the contemporary issues on political compro-
16. mise and the crisis of the European left, by combining Third Worldism with
17. a complex, ambivalent political-affective sensibility in regard to the past and
18. present of the PCI. I argue that *The Damned* builds a strong link between the
19. legacy of the Resistenza Partigiana (Italian Resistance) and Third World strug-
20. gles. Finally, I analyse the 'labyrinth of violence', the last part of the film, to
21. elucidate the ways it dialogues with experimental avant-garde trends of the
22. time and how such dialogue is deployed in order to awaken in the viewer a
23. desire to debate the 'open ideological hypothesis' of the film and take an active
24. part in the political struggles of the time.

26. ROME, MID-1960S

27. The origin of *The Damned* project takes us back to the encounter of Alberto
28. Filippi and Valentino Orsini in the mid-1960s in Rome. Filippi was born in
29. Padua but migrated at a very young age with his parents to Venezuela, where
30. he had his first militant experiences in the student uprisings of the Lyceum
31. against the dictatorship of General Pérez Jiménez (which was overthrown in
32. 1958). As a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV), Filippi was
33. persecuted, imprisoned and then exiled to Italy in February 1962. There he
34. continued his studies in philosophy and was one of the representatives of the
35. Frente de Liberación Nacional of Venezuela in Europe. After arriving in
36. Rome, he maintained contact with PCI leaders and intellectuals and their
37. circles. Through them, and as a member of a Venezuelan delegation, he trav-
38. elled to the World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace in Moscow
39. (1962) where he met Jean-Paul Sartre, who was promoting his famous preface
40. to Fanon's book. Inspired by Sartre and Fanon, Filippi attempted to make a
41. documentary on the fight for Venezuelan liberation. While the project failed,
42. Filippi's fascination with Fanon's book was such that he became interested in
43. a film set somewhere else in the Third World.³

44. As a young man, Valentino Orsini, on the other hand, had participated
45. in the final months of the Resistance against Nazi Fascism in Pisa. There, in
46. the 1950s, he began his theatrical activity and made several short films with
47. Vittorio and Paolo Taviani. Since the end of that decade, Orsini had devel-
48. oped a prolific and award-winning career in industrial films, among which
49. was the film *L'Italia non è un paese povero (Italy Is Not a Poor Country)* (1960),
50. made together with the Taviani Brothers and Tino Brass under the direction
51. of Joris Ivens for the Italian Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) presided by
52.

2. In previous works, I have discussed other links between the Italian left and the Third World or between new Latin American cinema and Third World cinema since 1956 to 1974 (Mestman 2011, 2014, 2017). This article is part of a large research project I began two years ago with Alberto Filippi that recovers *The Damned* and other graphic and visual documents. It would be published in 2021 in Buenos Aires.
3. Filippi (2018–19) interviews with M. Mestman, Buenos Aires.

4. Orsini (2000), interview with M. Mestman, September, Cerveteri, Italy.
5. *Il mestiere di dipingere* ('The craft of painting') (1966), about the Scottish-Italian painter Louis Del Pizzo.
6. As I will show, this historical situation – which Micciché reads in *The Subversives* as a 'liberating and distressing' moment, since a certain guarantee of 'tranquillity' disappears and the characters experience some 'precariousness' before freeing themselves 'from the fear of mistakes' – is very similar to the feeling of *The Damned's* protagonist (Fausto) in the face of the crisis of the political left.

Enrico Mattei. Shortly after, the well-known feature films *Un uomo da bruciare* (*A Man for Burning*) (1962) and *I fuorilegge del matrimonio* (*Outlaws of Love*) (1963) were released, made by Orsini and the Taviani Brothers and produced by Giuliani De Negri.

In the mid-1960s, despite having become an 'ex-communist' at odds with the PCI's political positions,⁴ Orsini still maintained close ties to the political and cultural environment of the PCI, as did Filippi while denouncing the repression in Venezuela. But both Orsini and Filippi were trying to find Third-Worldist political orientations when they found each other. It was during this time that Mario Alicata and Carlo Lizzani contacted Filippi, Orsini and De Negri. This coincided with the dissolution of the cinematic collaborative career of the Taviani Brothers with Orsini, as the brothers turned to making *I sovversivi* (*The Subversives*) (1967), while Orsini and Filippi made *The Damned*; the two projects, both within the framework of a cooperative partnership with De Negri and his production company Ager Film, were almost parallel. As part of that partnership, Filippi participated in *The Subversives* as a supporting character and inspired the characterization of one of its four protagonists, Ettore, the Venezuelan exile.

Between July and August 1966, Filippi and Orsini (with the collaboration of Vincenzo Cerami) began writing the script of *The Damned* in Rome. Amid a growing bond of cordiality, friendship and feverish activity, they produced a short joint artistic documentary⁵ and participated at cultural and film events such as the *Columbianum's Terzo Mondo e Comunità Mondiale* (Third World and World Community) conference, the *Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema di Pesaro*, and the *Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero di Porretta Terme*, among many others. In the papers they presented there, between 1965 and 1968, Filippi and Orsini discussed everything, from the *Nouvelles Vagues* of 1960s cinema to the crisis of international communist policies (of the URSS and other communist parties in the world) and the ongoing decolonization process.

This meant that during the making of *The Damned* (1966–68), Orsini and Filippi knew the latest European and international 'new cinemas' and their stylistic innovations, as well as a rich variety of political cinemas. In addition to the historical classics of revolutionary world cinema, the new Latin American cinema attracted their interest; the political commitment and expressive richness of Brazil's *Cinema Novo*, as demonstrated by the poetic strength of *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (*Black God, White Devil*) by Glauber Rocha (1964), especially impacted them. Rocha was a figure the duo admired and had met at the *Columbianum* of Genoa (January 1965), where the Brazilian presented his manifesto 'The aesthetics of hunger' (also known as 'Aesthetics of violence'). Filippi and Orsini would maintain a certain bond with Rocha, who then began a period of 'tricontinental cinema' (Cardoso 2017), and at the same time they established close ties with the Argentinian Fernando Birri and other Latin American filmmakers, especially those of Cuban cinema and Argentinian Third Cinema (Solanas and Getino). In Italy, among Filippi and Orsini's more or less frequent links with filmmakers involved in the political and cultural left, their link with the Taviani Brothers was undoubtedly the most established one. Lino Micciché (1975) revealed how the production contexts of *The Subversives* and *The Damned* were influenced by the sudden death of Palmiro Togliatti in August 1964. Although this circumstance is at the core of the Taviani's film (which also documented the massive funerals) and only indirectly alluded to in *The Damned*, their common affinity in regard to the theme of 'goodbye to the father' represented by this event is remarkable;⁶ the political

1. gambles and resolutions to the 'crises' lived by the characters of the respective films, however, are very different. It is also worth mentioning that while
 2. Filippi and Orsini had a special interest in Pier Paolo Pasolini's films since the
 3. beginning of the decade,⁷ they disagreed with his representation of the Third
 4. World because they saw it as an exaltation of a primitive, pre-modern world
 5. distant from the problems of the 'present'. Pasolini's perspective, they thought,
 6. hindered the connection between decolonization struggles and struggles of
 7. the western working class. Perhaps the closest antecedent in Italian political
 8. cinema to the authors of *The Damned's* search for Third World representation
 9. was the Italian-Algerian co-production *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle*
 10. *of Algiers*) (Pontecorvo 1966), which had won the Golden Lion at the Venice
 11. Film Festival in 1966 and enjoyed huge international success. Beyond its obvious
 12. affinity with Fanon's work, however, Pontecorvo and Solinas' remarkable
 13. film still represented a narrative form that Orsini and Filippi intended to overcome.
 14. While *The Battle of Algiers* proposed a closed narrative story about a
 15. historical event that had already occurred – the beginnings of the Algerian
 16. fight for independence – *The Damned* explores an open narrative in order to
 17. represent the ongoing insurrection in sub-Saharan Africa and discuss the reality
 18. of revolution in the present.

21. GUINEA BISSAU, APRIL 1967

22. In the 1960s, the militant cinema and the 'cinema of intervention' included both
 23. films for movie theatres and films intended to be a tool of counter-information
 24. in an alternative and militant distribution network. Orsini and Filippi's cinema
 25. of intervention experience began filming in Guinea Bissau in both ways. On
 26. the one hand, they obtained the first shootings for *The Damned*, which is a
 27. fiction film, a testimonial and ultimately 'authorial' film built on the political
 28. and aesthetic concerns of its authors. On the other hand, they recorded images
 29. for an almost unknown documentary, a 'report' on the facts, a recording of the
 30. African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) guer-
 31. rillas in Guinea Bissau, and an interview with their leader, Amílcar Cabral.
 32. The fiction film (*The Damned*) was made by the small independent produc-
 33. tion company Ager Film, headed by Gaetano 'Giuliani' De Negri, who was an
 34. active communist militant from Liguria and a partisan leader involved in the
 35. liberation of Genoa. Despite being a singular producer, De Negri remained
 36. within the framework of the industry. The documentary project on the libera-
 37. tion struggle was promoted by Unitefilm, a PCI film production company
 38. led by Mario Benocci, another former partisan, at the time. Towards the end
 39. of the 1960s, Unitefilm, which had emerged in 1963 as an audio-visual tool
 40. for mass diffusion, extended its national activity of production and dissemina-
 41. tion of militant cinema until, with some autonomy from the party, its inter-
 42. national relations reached the Third World liberation movements (Taviani
 43. 2001, 2008). In this context, one of the first projects supported by Unitefilm
 44. was Orsini and Filippi's journey to film the fight against Portuguese colonial-
 45. ism in Guinea Bissau in March and April 1967, where they were accompa-
 46. nied by two experienced professionals, Giuseppe Pinori (camera) and Eugenio
 47. Bentivoglio (general assistant and sound). Their itinerary included the cities of
 48. Lagos (Nigeria), Dakar (Senegal) and Conakry (Republic of Guinea), where
 49. they were greeted by President Sekou Touré.⁸ (See Figure 1 illustrating Orsini
 50. and Filippi's presence in Guinea Bissau.) The Italian team's ten-day jour-
 51. ney through the liberated territories of Guinean Bissau was mentioned in a

7. In a conference at the Barbaro Library, Orsini (1966: 18–19) explicitly adheres to the sense of 'closure of an epoch' that Pasolini attributes to the death of Togliatti in *Uccellacci e uccellini* (*The Hawks and the Sparrows*) (Pasolini 1965).
8. As part of the travel financing, Orsini and Filippi made a commercial documentary about building a road in Nigeria for the company Stirling-Astaldi. At the Dakar Municipal School of Theatre and Film, Orsini and Filippi found the Senegalese actor who would play Abramo Malonga in the movie: Serigne NDiayn Gonsales.

- 9. In Archivio Istituto Luce, <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000042423/2/cinema-nella-boscaglia.html>. Accessed 12 May 2020.
- 10. I am especially grateful to Paola Scarnati, Claudio Olivieri, Letizia Courtini, Aurora Palandrani and Antonio Medici of the AAMOD for their great help with my research work.

short film bulletin titled *Cinema nella boscaglia* ('Cinema in the woods'), which appeared in the Italian newsreel *Sette G* in June 1967.⁹

Unitefilm documents now preserved at the Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico di Roma (AAMOD)¹⁰ show that the initial agreement (between the company and Orsini) foresaw the production of two documentary films provisionally titled *Come nasce una nazione* ('How a nation is born'), to be filmed in Guinea Conakry, and *Guinea combatte* ('Guinea fights'), filmed in Guinea Bissau. Although these documentaries were never finished, AAMOD still retains the footage shot (25 minutes unedited and without sound), in which the camera follows PAIGC fighters on their trek

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Figure 1: Valentino Orsini and Alberto Filippi in a PAIGC barrack or warfare camp in Guinea Bissau. Alberto Filippi Archive.

1. through the territories; at the crossroads of a river, they encounter areas of
 2. houses destroyed by Portuguese shelling and small guerrilla warfare camps.
 3. Several sequences show the discipline and military organization of the popular
 4. army's women and men: they are uniformed – several are nearly children
 5. – and they perform physical exercises and handle weapons together with the
 6. instructors. However, they are also shown organizing merchandise exchanges,
 7. distributing water and medicine, teaching basic health issues to the people,
 8. mostly women, and attending guerrilla schools, an activity that occupies an
 9. important place in the footage and alludes to an extensive educational experience
 10. associated with the project of building a new state during liberation
 11. (Borges 2019). This experience refers to the programme of agronomist Amílcar
 12. Cabral, one of the most important leaders and intellectuals of sub-Saharan
 13. African independence struggles. Orsini and Filippi filmed an interview with
 14. Cabral, which was conducted by the journalist and PCI leader Romano Ledda,
 15. who was present for part of the trip (see Figure 2 illustrating his trek with
 16. the PAIGC fighters there). Ledda belonged to the PCI's foreign affairs section,
 17. which was the direct institutional supervisor of Unitelefilm. As an expert on
 18. Africa, Ledda promoted the party's discussion of Third World areas, in particular
 19. Algeria, the Maghreb (broadly conceived) and sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹ His
 20. link to the struggle in Guinea Bissau was reflected in several notes for the
 21. PCI journal *L'Unità*, where he mentioned his meeting with Orsini and Filippi
 22. (*L'Unità*, 16 April 1967) and published his interview with Cabral (*L'Unità*, 30
 23. April 1967). Marco Galeazzi (2011: 67, 177, 201–04) spoke of the importance
 24. of Ledda's writings, especially his interviews with Cabral and Lumumba, to
 25. promote/foster the PCI's support of the sub-Saharan African liberation movements.
 26. As Filippi recalls, those writings and conversations with Ledda influenced how
 27. the figures of Lumumba and Cabral were treated in *The Damned*.
 28. But before I turn to this part of the film, it will be useful to place Orsini and
 29. Filippi's Guinea Bissau experience in the context of the internationalist political
 30. cinema collaborations of the period.

31. Guinea Bissau's national cinema developed after Independence in 1974
 32. (Cunha and Laranjeiro 2016; César 2017), but Cabral was interested in cinema
 33. as a communication tool before then. More specifically, he was aware of the
 34. role media could play in international propaganda (Duarte Marthino 2017).
 35. In their book on visual interventions against Portuguese colonialism, Maria
 36. do Carmo Piçarra and Teresa Castro (2017) recall Cabral's interest in cinema
 37. and remark on his efforts to send four young Guineans to the Cuban Film
 38. Institute–ICAIC between 1967 and 1972 (Flora Gomes, Sana Na N'Hada,
 39. Josefina Crato and José Bolama Cobumba) to train with Santiago Alvarez,
 40. in the context of his cinematic newsreel, *the Noticiero ICAIC Latinomaericano*,
 41. in order to produce their own films. Also other scholars wrote on this and
 42. other cinematic relations between Cuba and Guinea Bissau (Cesar 2017; de
 43. Sousa and Silva 2018; particularly Laranjeiro 2019) that were framed in the
 44. previous and early Cuban political support, in terms of human and material
 45. resources, for the armed independence struggle, which, in addition to Che
 46. Guevara's failed experience in Congo in 1965, was presumably the first Cuban
 47. incursion into sub-Saharan Africa. It is an expression of the type of radicalization
 48. promoted via the creation of the Organisation of Solidarity with the
 49. People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) and the Tricontinental
 50. Conference of Havana (January 1966); it is the rejection of 'peaceful coexistence'
 51. in exchange for support of armed struggle (Glejjeses 2002). This context
 52. facilitated the early dissemination of Cuban films in neighbouring Guinea

11. The activity of Ledda in relation to the Third World was extensive (see Galeazzi 2011: 67–69, 87, 96, 124–25, 233; Pappagallo 2009: 60–62).



Figure 2: Romano Ledda (the second one), Valentino Orsini (the last one) and Alberto Filippi (out of image) with the PAIGC fighters in their trek through the liberated territories of Guinea Bissau. Courtesy Paola Scarnati.

12. See the chronicle of that journey by Massip (1969: 76–81) and the testimony of Pastor Espinosa (Alvarez Diaz 2012: 183). See also de Sousa and Silva (2018) and Laranjeiro (2019).

Conakry, as well as the activity of Cuban filmmakers in the liberated territories of Guinea Bissau. In fact, in April 1967, while they were staying at the famous Camayenne Hotel in Conakry and waiting to enter Guinea Bissau, Orsini and Filippi participated in the first Cuban Film Week in Conakry. In those very same days, Cuban filmmaker José Massip was marching towards Madina with cameraman Derbis Pastor Espinosa, escorted by Guinean guerrillas across the plains of Boé to film what would become the half-show *Madina Boé* (1968), directed by Massip and produced by ICAIC and OSPAAAL.¹²

A year earlier, another filmmaker from the Italian left, Piero Nelli, had also filmed PAIGC's experience in *Labanta negro* (*Stand Up, Negro*) (1966), a film used by the United Nations Committee on Decolonization (Algiers, June 1966) as testimonial evidence of colonialism in the region. This documentary was made by the production company Reiac Film, founded in 1962 by Nelli and Ansano Giannarelli. Researcher Antonio Medici recovered Nelli and Giannarelli's joint journey to Senegal, which they undertook in order to shoot documentaries and provide journalistic services to RAI (2017). After splitting into two groups, Nelli headed to Guinea Bissau in February 1966, where he filmed the guerrillas commanded by Luis Cabral, the half-brother of Amílcar and one of the founders of PAIGC (Amílcar was murdered in January 1973, and Luis Cabral became the country's first post-Independence president in

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1. 1974). Using those images, Nelli edited *Stand Up, Negro*, which Orsini and
 2. Filippi saw at the end of that year, just before asking Ledda and Unitefilm
 3. to travel to the area. This militant film takes the form of a chronicle or diary,
 4. whereby the director presents everyday events contextualized with intertitles
 5. that indicate dates and places. The film also includes the testimony of Luis
 6. Cabral and a confrontation with a patrol of Portuguese soldiers. With the
 7. exception of this latter sequence, the film shows some similarity to the foot-
 8. age shot a year later by Orsini and Filippi. Giannarelli and Nelli also toured
 9. the same countries (both Guineas, Nigeria, Senegal) as Orsini and Filippi and
 10. were accompanied by the same professionals (Pinori and Bentivoglio) who
 11. would later join the authors of *The Damned* project.

12. With regard to such affinities in European cinematic internationalism, it
 13. is interesting to observe that within the first ten minutes of *Stand Up, Negro*,
 14. Nelli recalls his encounter on the banks of a river with 'a Frenchman and a
 15. Spaniard'. The images show him with Mario Marret and Isidro Romero, who
 16. had previously filmed the PAIGC's liberation struggle in two documentaries
 17. that were finished in France: *Lala quema (Lala Burn)* (Marret 1964–65) and
 18. *Nossa Terra* (Marret 1966, assisted by Romero). Several documents account
 19. for the pioneering role of these films in aiding the region's struggle as well
 20. as the importance given to this type of internationalist militant collabora-
 21. tion.¹³ Banned in France, *Lala Burn* premiered in Guinea Conakry in February
 22. 1965 in the presence of President Sekou Touré and the leaders of PAIGC. In
 23. January 1966, the film received wide recognition at Havana's Tricontinental
 24. Conference, where Cabral played a prominent role.

25. Until now, I have focused my attention only on films about the struggles in
 26. Guinea Bissau made before *The Damned*.¹⁴ However, many films concentrating
 27. on the same region were made in later years, as well as others that contested
 28. Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique and imperialist, colonial
 29. and neo-colonial powers in Africa, Asian, Latin America and elsewhere.¹⁵ I
 30. wish to highlight this because, while the little-known trip to Guinea Bissau
 31. is at the origin of the filming for *The Damned*, its Third-Worldist counter-
 32. discourse concerns not only the PAIGC programme and the images filmed in
 33. the region but also – in a broader revolutionary perspective – Cabral's think-
 34. ing, Fanon and the Algerian experience, Lumumba and the Congo experience,
 35. and Che Guevara and Cuba, but also his tricontinental project. This all takes
 36. place in the midst of the debates and crises of the European left, as part of a
 37. dense and complex plot that I will now explore.

38. 39. **LUMUMBA, FANON, CABRAL... AGAINST EUROPEAN COLONIALISM** 40. **(THE AFRICAN PART)**

41. The beginning of *The Damned* presents the themes of colonialism, racism and
 42. violence in their political, cultural and everyday dimensions. From a narra-
 43. tive point of view, the first sequences correspond to Abramo's unfinished film,
 44. accompanied by notes he left when he died, which Fausto reviews with his
 45. collaborators. This first part centres on the tension between the peaceful strug-
 46. gle for independence (represented by the figure of Lumumba) and the armed
 47. Fanonian revolution (represented by Cabral and the Guinea Bissau fighters).
 48. Sartre's words about Lumumba and Fanon resound here: 'clearly these two
 49. figures represent the independence avatars of the African continent'. Despite
 50. being 'two fierce adversaries', Fanon regards Lumumba as a 'brother in arms'
 51. (1964: 141). Sartre writes:
 52.

13. See the notes and letters preserved in the archives of the Mario Soares Foundation, as well as the Unitefilm and Redialc collections at AAMOD.

14. Orsini and Filippi's documentaries for Unitefilm were never finished. In early 1969, this generated tensions between Unitefilm, Orsini, Ager Film and the State Cinematography of Guinea Conakry. However, the footage was shown under the title *Materiali sulla Guinea Bissau* ('Materials on Guinea Bissau') during the cycle *Documentari cinematografici sulla guerriglia* ('Documentary films on guerrilla'), which was organized during the Porretta Terme exhibition in December 1969.

15. Olivier Hadouchi (2012, 2017) uses the term 'tricontinental cinema' to refer to a constellation of films made between 1965 and 1975, thus underlining their close link with the Havana Tricontinental Conference, among other events of the period.

16. The issue of racism is problematized from Fanon's perspective (1952, 1961), in several scenes through Eurocentrism, condescending looks (denoting superiority) towards the 'exotic', prejudices and built-in imaginaries, for example.
17. This part of the film (among others) dialogues closely with *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*) (Solanas and Getino 1968), which was being edited during the same weeks as *The Damned* on a neighbouring Ager Film moviola (Mestman 2017).

Those two men, far from fighting each other, knew each other and loved each other. Fanon spoke to me frequently about Lumumba. [...] He reproached him only, and it is guessed with much affection, for his unalterable trust in man, which constituted his loss and his greatness.

(1964: 141)

The film treats Lumumba in this apparently paradoxical way: it critiques his pacifist 'naivety' and, at the same time, proposes a tribute to the 'martyr' of pan-Africanism without turning him into a hero (Sartre 1964: 181). In fact, the notes Abramo left for Fausto assume such a Fanonian/Sartrean point of view: 'I have reread Lumumba's speeches. Defeat is already implicit in his political thinking. I did well to introduce the example of his sacrifice into the film. Let my love and disagreement with him be clear'.

This political criticism to Lumumba's way for African Revolution, that match with the deep affective respect ('love') for his figure, is followed in the film's first lengthy episode. This episode is shocking for its detailed references to the 1960 events in Congo (with characters and spaces relating to the coup d'état), and for its careful editing of television images that show Lumumba's arrest and humiliation alongside footage about the cruelty of Belgian colonialism and ad hoc scenes re-created with African actors. The short opening scene, set in an African village, presents a conversation (staged by young African activists) that refers precisely to Congo's experience with the controversial figures of Minister Mpolo and leader Kasavubu and the discussion about tribal betrayals and divisions. Moreover, this scene is followed by others who explore racism in all of its complexity, plus the disjunctions around the use of weapons in the resistance to colonialism and in national liberation struggles. Some scenes are introduced by titles that accompany each situation and display Lumumba's thoughts about the unity of the nation in the face of tribal divisions, the rejection of violence and the condemnation the racism of any kind.¹⁶

However, the film also moves beyond the Congolese context to address the entire African continent. This is because the highly theatrical staging that unfolds in front of the camera (which is recorded in a documentary style) presents prototypical characters, whom the film calls 'African woman' or refers to with names like 'first', 'second', 'third' and 'fourth' African. This is also due to the fact that the footage came from other African countries, such as Guinea Bissau, as recorded in Orsini and Filippi's documentary. The film shows how PAIGC fighters rejected Lumumba's 'pacifist, nonviolent humanism'. For Guinean militiamen, as Abramo explains in his notes to Fausto, 'honesty and integrity consist of the exercise of revolutionary violence'. This initial episode closes with a striking montage of phrases against a black frame, listing a series of options in the face of colonial domination that are accompanied by a drum beat. In the foreground, an intertitle repeats the word 'violence' (revolutionary) and justifies it as follows: 'armed violence [...] sustains neocolonial violence', facilitated by 'pacifism' and 'your complicity' (note the appeal to the viewer). The episode closes with the phrase: 'revolutionary violence is the only language they [the colonialists] understand'.¹⁷

Fausto later defends revolutionary violence in a brief discussion with Abramo's older brother, an African politician, official and revolutionary leader who has turned to 'political realism' after his country's independence. In a scene at Rome's airport, he reaffirms his support for the film, despite the death of his brother. He complains that Abramo had a naive and negative view of

1. independence processes, a view that 'in Africa itself would not be accepted'.
 2. Consequently, he asks Fausto to consider a more politically realistic approach.
 3. Although Fausto defends Abramo's position in this scene, he tries to 'amplify'
 4. Abramo's commitment to armed struggle. As Orsini (1967) explained in a
 5. letter to Guido Aristarco while preparing the film, Fausto thought that 'all
 6. forms of direct and frontal response, from political to ideological' were neces-
 7. sary during revolutionary experiences.

8. This type of counterpoint (between revolutionary tactical and strategic
 9. methods) re-appears throughout the film in the political and aesthetic dilem-
 10. mas that Fausto must face if he wants to finish the film bequeathed to him
 11. by Abramo (the 'film inside the film'). In a sort of passage from what we
 12. might call the 'African part' to the 'Italian part' of *The Damned*, there is a very
 13. Fanonian flashback in which Fausto recalls an encounter with Abramo, who
 14. reveals his pain with open wounds. Deploying both his intelligence and lucid-
 15. ity, Abramo challenges Fausto on the relationship between European well-
 16. being and African exploitation. We see images of Abramo at sea and running
 17. on the beach as he talks about 'not skin issues, but history', questioning his
 18. teacher and friend's 'European' status.¹⁸ Addressing Fausto, Abramo affirms:
 19. 'You (Europeans) have everything. You look back and have histories, certain-
 20. ties. Me, I am who I am. Behind me, what is there?' Framed in the foreground
 21. as he grows increasingly angry, Abramo narrates the death of a friend who
 22. was bombed by a FIAT aircraft. At the same time, Abramo uses a branch to
 23. write the acronym FIAT in the sand (see Figure 3 illustrating this part of the
 24. scene). He adds: 'Portuguese aviator, English project, American fuel; a civiliza-
 25. tion that unifies, expands, that gives you well-being. Or am I wrong?' Abramo
 26. continues: 'That also allows you to maintain and enjoy all the beautiful things
 27. you have: Bach, Michelangelo, Baudelaire, Giotto and that which is so beauti-
 28. ful. Yes, that thing you made me listen to. What's his name?' Abramo interro-
 29. gates Fausto as the finale of Beethoven's 'Symphony No.7' ironically plays in
 30. the soundtrack. 'They are all things that belong only to you. For you to keep
 31. them, it costs us a lot', says Abramo, alluding to the European intellectual's
 32. guilt, complicity and responsibility for colonial and neo-colonial exploitation.

33. This memorable scene is based in part on a real FIAT G91 aircraft bomb-
 34. ing (Portugal used the model in its colonial wars), which Orsini and Filippi
 35. witnessed while marching alongside PAIGC militiamen. Throughout this
 36. scene, Orsini and Filippi show how the system ends up making 'everybody'
 37. an accomplice of exploitation and thus seek to undermine and provoke west-
 38. ern 'good conscience' (Filippi 1968a, 1968b). Using almost the same terms as
 39. Abramo, but from 'the other side' of the Europe–Africa divide, Orsini wrote in
 40. a letter to Guido Aristarco, '[h]ow much does our (European) well-being, our
 41. integration cost to the other people (Africans)? I think a lot' (1967: 329).

42.

43. INTELLECTUAL DILEMMAS AND MODES OF ENGAGEMENT (THE 44. ITALIAN PART)

45. Fausto faces the challenge of completing Abramo's film without betraying,
 46. and indeed while empowering, his thinking. In successive scenes, Fausto
 47. tries again and again to continue writing the script, but he cannot do it. He
 48. walks around the house, drives around the city, thinks and remembers. The
 49. images Abramo left for him demand his close attention: sequences of col-
 50. onial domination and violence – the hard human conditions of the wretched
 51. of the earth – are interspersed with those of Fausto's difficulty writing, his
 52.

18. Such a 'precaution' was also recorded in Abramo's notes regarding Sartre: 'Because Sartre is not African, he is European'. The problem of how to communicate, translate or interpret Abramo's proposal is at the core of Orsini's dilemmas about how to end the film. Srivastava (2018a: 240–44) gives special attention to this. See also Micciché (1975: 190).

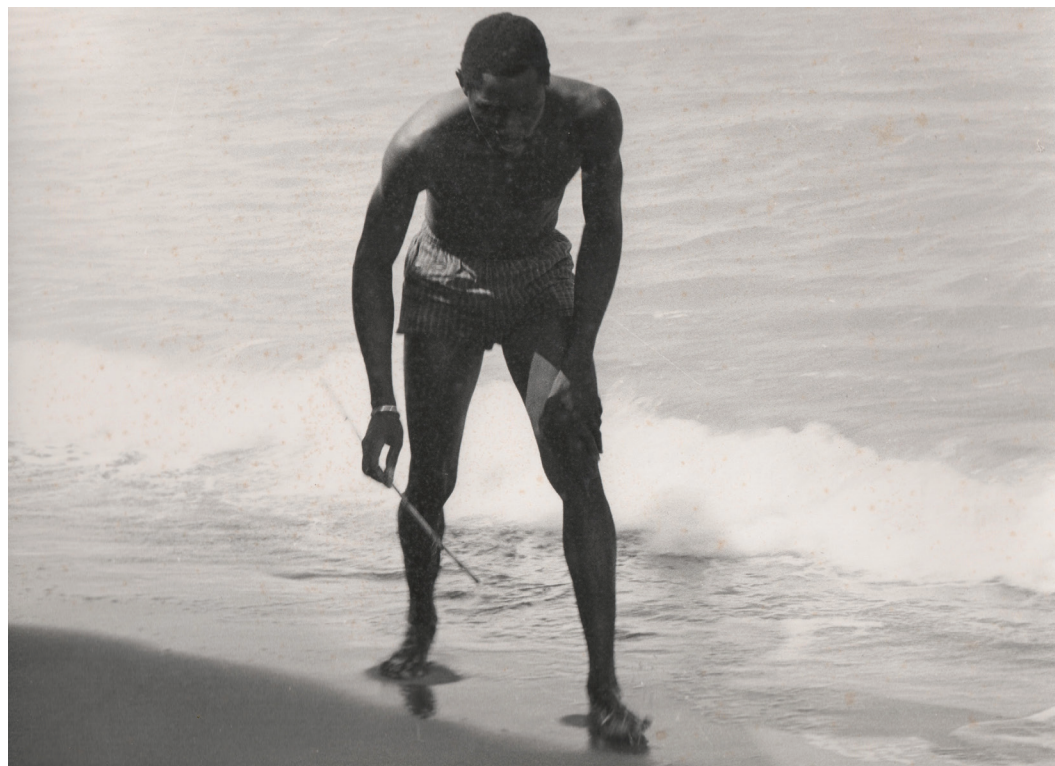


Figure 3: Abramo Malonga with the branch to write in the sand during a Fanonian scene of the film. Alberto Filippi Archive.

19. These last scenes with Adriana – which can be read as part of a moment of personal ‘confusion’ – were questioned by some contemporary critics. Colleoni (2015) proposes a more complex reading of this Fausto–Adriana relationship.
20. Two episodes of the film generalize such a ‘personal’ experience to a ‘common’ feature lived in those years by Italian (European) artists and intellectuals, one associated with the crisis of the left and the project of revolution. On the one hand, there is the encounter of Fausto with a writer friend, Mario, who goes through the same situation and cannot complete his

wandering around the city and his romance with Adriana (Abramo’s ex-wife, who is collaborating on the new film).¹⁹ Sitting at his desk, he wonders: ‘Far from Asia, from Africa, from Latin America, it’s true! But far from taking power in Europe, too. So, what are we close to? What am I close to?’ Fausto writes and studies, insists, rips up the paper and starts over. He keeps Che and Mao’s books on the desk, hoping to fill in the blank pages. But he barely manages to outline a few ideas.

Fausto is so intimately linked to Orsini that one could be considered the other’s alter-ego. Apart from the common biographical data, or even the physical resemblance between Orsini and Fausto (played by actor Frank Wolff), Fausto expresses many of Orsini’s own political thoughts in the film. As I will show, this begins with the moment of precariousness, inner distress and confusion that Fausto goes through in relation to his work and political identity.²⁰ He enters this phase after participating in an act of solidarity with Vietnam that turns out to be a source of deep disappointment because of the modes of ‘commitment’ of artists and intellectuals and the role of the PCI.²¹ This episode alternates between documentary footage and fictionalized scenes, both in shots from a street demonstration and at the Adriano Theatre, where the political act took place. The montage inserts the characters of Fausto and Adriana into the historical events illustrated by images taken from the documentary *Vietnam Test* (1965), produced by Unitefilm and directed by Antonio Bertini (then an Ager Film collaborator and assistant director of

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1. *The Damned*). But the scene, as shown in *The Damned*, incorporates only brief
 2. sequences from Bertini's documentary. These images evoke the real histori-
 3. cal act, but are also interspersed with a rapid succession of speakers, singers
 4. and audiences so as to depict an obscure and uniform mass that seems to
 5. engulf and dilute all protest. In this way, the film critically distances itself from
 6. the kind of commitment that Fausto rejects. In the script, Filippi and Orsini
 7. (1966) describe the scene in an even more radical and ferocious way, using the
 8. cruel term 'pathetic' to describe such a commitment: they say that it speaks of
 9. the 'banality' of the intellectuals and the left-wing artists who 'disturbed the
 10. protagonist' (Fausto) to make him feel 'nervous' and 'out of place' as he came to
 11. terms with 'the instrumentalization of left-wing parties, with the useless bad
 12. faith of all people who, for a long time now with respect to the Vietnamese
 13. issue, have a resigned and passive opinion'.

14. Indeed, when Fausto is interviewed in a theatre corridor, he refuses to
 15. continue 'mourning our dead', demanding a strong and effective response to
 16. imperialist violence in Vietnam.²² He furiously questions the party's 'demobi-
 17. lization' and engages in a strong discussion with a PCI leader who treats him
 18. as a mere 'charlatan' and demands that he stop making provocations, telling
 19. him with contempt to search for examples in the revolutions of Africa, China
 20. and Cuba. This scene depicts Fausto's break with the PCI's political line. Like
 21. Fausto, Orsini was also a 'drifting' communist in the mid-1960s at odds with
 22. an ideology that he considered 'fossilized' and, together with Filippi, looking
 23. for a Third-Worldist alternative.²³

24. A few months before finishing the editing of the film, Orsini and Filippi
 25. participated in a meeting between intellectuals from both the European and
 26. American (US) left and the Third World. At the Cultural Congress of Havana
 27. (January 1968), more than 600 intellectuals (in the broadest sense of the word)
 28. from over 60 countries discussed colonialism and neo-colonialism in Asia,
 29. Africa and Latin America. Filippi and Orsini were part of an Italian delegation
 30. of around 25 prominent artists and intellectuals (including Rossana Rossanda,
 31. Giulio Einaudi, Gian Giacomo Feltrinelli, Luca Pavolini, Alba de Céspedes,
 32. Luigi Pestalozza, Pio Baldelli, Francesco Rosi, Luigi Nono and others) and
 33. took advantage of the trip by showing previews of their film to many guests,
 34. especially Alfredo Guevara, the director of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC).
 35. Although the Cultural Congress remained for a long time 'forgotten' (Acosta
 36. de Arriba 2015), it certainly constituted a 'point of arrival' and expression of a
 37. Third World internationalism that, in the Cuban case, had been acting – not
 38. without internal difficulties and tensions – as a means of resistance against
 39. 'socialist realism' in culture and as a critic to the USSR, orthodox communism
 40. and 'peaceful coexistence'. In fact, even on the eve of an increasing Cuban
 41. approach to the USSR, in early 1968, those positions were still expressed in the
 42. Cultural Congress, which remained under the influence of the Tricontinental
 43. Conference (January 1966).²⁴ The authors of *The Damned* were clearly in tune
 44. with all of this. In a book chapter on the Cultural Congress, Rebecca Gordon-
 45. Nesbitt (2015: 263–64) compares Fidel Castro's closing speech about the
 46. reformist positions of the European left with Filippi's presentation during the
 47. meeting (1968); she especially compares it to Filippi's criticism of European
 48. intellectuals who opposed imperialist violence in Vietnam because it disturbed
 49. 'world peace' but were unwilling to defend the Vietnamese Revolution.²⁵

50. In any case, it is worth noting that even in their search for a Third-Worldist
 51. alternative, distant from international communism's most orthodox posi-
 52. tions, Orsini and Filippi maintained a close relationship with the PCI and

book. On the other hand, there is a lunch with a group of young people who ask Fausto for his opinion on a play about Vladimir Mayakovski that they are rehearsing. There is, moreover, the question of the artist's relationship with the revolution (how to maintain critical capacity and historical responsibilities at the same time) expanded as a 'universal' theme but finally grounded in the 'here and now' of the Italian reality.

21. This episode is edited in parallel with sequences of Abramo's death in a hospital (from leukaemia, an obvious allusion to Fanon) in order to combine the political disagreement with the personal impact of the memory of the friend's death, both dimensions of the crisis that does not allow Fausto to move forward with his film.
22. The similarity between Fausto's words and those of Orsini himself on the (real) event of 1965 is remarkable. Even the staging in *The Damned* seems to mimic the recorded testimony of Orsini in Bertini's documentary.
23. Orsini (2000), interview with M. Mestman, Cerveteri, September.
24. Of course, the question is more complex because that spirit of revolutionary effervescence somehow 'coexists' in the days of Congress with a dense, complex plot resulting from the (then) very recent murder of Che Guevara in Bolivia (October 1967), its emotional impact (pain, sadness), the possible uncertainty that came with his fall and the challenge of responding to his legacy.

25. On his return from Havana, Filippi developed an extensive dissemination activity of the Cultural Congress in Italy and Europe. He also contributed to the diffusion of Cuban and Latin American political cinema, as reflected in articles published in film magazines in 1968 and, especially, in his *Cinema e Rivoluzione* (1970), a film magazine dedicated to Third World cinema and co-edited by Pio Baldelli.
26. On this debate between 1965 and 1969, see Pappagallo (2017: 147, 163–66 [and 2009]) and Galeazzi (2011: 174–77). Srivastava (2018a) analyses the active role of the PCI in the face of Italian colonialism and the war in Ethiopia (2018: 15–64), and then its role in relation to French colonialism in Algeria (2018: 205).
27. Palmiro Togliatti (1893–1964) was the secretary general of the PCI since 1927, and one of its most important leaders from the post-war years to his sudden death in August 1964.

like-minded film companies, such as Ager Film and Unitelefilm, as well as with their leaders or members, like Romano Ledda or Giuliani De Negri. The ‘Yalta Memorial’ (Togliatti, August 1964) established certain distance of the PCI from the Soviet hegemony in the international communist movement (expressed by even earlier ideas like ‘the unity in diversity’, the ‘polycentrism’, the plurality of paths to socialism). At the same time, during the 1960s, the PCI updated its much earlier solidarity with anti-colonial struggles. These positions created distance between the Italian party and other powerful European communist parties, such as the French Communist Party. In fact, in those days, debates internal to the PCI focused on Cuba, the figure of Che, Vietnam, the invalidity of ‘peaceful coexistence’ and more.²⁶ As Orsini explained in an interview, he considered *The Damned* a ‘revolutionary’ film, not a ‘communist’ one. Yet Orsini also proposed a subtle distinction between critical political positioning and communist feelings and affinity. Speaking about the Vietnam sequence, Orsini explained that, in the Adriano Theatre interview, Fausto is ‘precise’ and ‘extremely critical’ towards the PCI. Nevertheless, in his controversy with the party leader, ‘for lack of arguments he obviously loses control’. As Orsini underlined, it is ‘an open wound for Fausto, an old bond’ (Aprà and Menon 1969: 61–62).

ITALIAN THIRD WORLDISM AND THE LEGACY OF THE RESISTENZA PARTIGIANA

In the midst of his daily work, Fausto recalls a journey he and Abramo took to his native Pisa in order to meet old party colleagues he had disassociated from due to political reasons some years earlier. The main scene focuses on a tense dialogue between Fausto and Gioiello, whom the script describes as a former Partisan labour leader, representing Fausto’s ‘youthful years in the struggle that was at first clandestine and later public: mistakes, certainties, one hundred trials and evaluations’. The images of the family atmosphere, the periphery of Pisa, the walls of the prison, the faces of former partisans and the tombs of the fallen – interwoven with the filmmaker’s memories of fascism’s final years and a subtle musical backdrop – shape an affective atmosphere that sets the scene for a strong critical discussion that ends with the eruption of political differences and mutual anger. Fausto shows his resentment towards Gioiello for having accepted the party’s ‘*togliattiana* line’,²⁷ ‘the longest way’ to socialism and for having defended a party that was ‘towed’ by events instead of directing them. As a result of his early vocal criticism of the party’s attitude, Fausto had felt isolated and even repudiated by his Pisa comrades. But the scene also exposes Gioiello’s political bitterness towards Fausto, who had abandoned Gioiello and other comrades (and their politics) by going to Rome to work in film. Abramo’s intervention seems to lighten the mood, and despite their differences, a sense of affection and old friendship, forged by their shared experiences during the Resistance to Nazi Fascism and the immediate post-war period, prevails. Fausto explains to Abramo that both Gioiello and he had somehow fallen into an illusory ‘trap’; if the party could not change reality, his cinematic work would be even less effective. As Fausto says, it was not a personal crisis but an ‘objective’, ‘historical’ one.

The allusions to Orsini’s life in this scene are once again remarkable: a childhood spent on the outskirts of Pisa with a sculptor father and a glass-maker mother, plus the trips to Latin America and Africa. Alongside these allusions, the scene’s references to Fausto’s anarchic-plebeian radicalism and

1. his historical link with the Italian Resistance also stem from the biography
 2. of Orsini, whose early anti-Fascist education was influenced by his father
 3. and fellow anarchists in Pisa and Lucca. In adolescence (around 1942–43),
 4. Orsini approached Marxism at the Normal School of Pisa. Those were years of
 5. underground press activities and anti-fascist slogans on city walls, as well as
 6. of his first clashes with fascist militants. Orsini became increasingly involved
 7. in clandestine action (from propaganda to the theft of arms and ammunition
 8. on behalf of the most active groups in Garfagnana and Volterrano), and on
 9. 3 March 1944, he was arrested and sent to prison for several months. Upon
 10. release, Orsini joined the militia of the *Nevilio Casarosa* Partisan group, which
 11. was part of the 23 Garibaldi Brigade.²⁸ *The Damned's* Pisa episode refers –
 12. indirectly but deeply – to all this. It even seems to pay homage to at least
 13. two or three of the protagonists Orsini had met during those years: Mariotti
 14. Gioiello, a communist worker-militant and, from mid-1944, one of the leaders
 15. of *Nevilio Casarosa*; perhaps Walter Pistelli, who was imprisoned with Gioiello
 16. before he joined the group; and Gianfranco Nannicini, who had been part of
 17. the anti-fascist youth in Pisa with Orsini.²⁹
18. In the same interview quoted above, Orsini compares Fausto's attitude
 19. towards Gioiello in the Pisa scene to that of his discussion with the PCI leader
 20. in the Vietnam episode. In Pisa, Orsini observes, Fausto is no longer in front
 21. of the party, but in front of the class: 'Gioiello is a fellow worker, who has had
 22. great revolutionary potential, which the party has then mortified'. For Orsini,
 23. Gioiello's speech is 'very precise' and 'very beautiful' about 'the drama of the
 24. Italian working class during a certain historical period (the Italian Resistance
 25. and the post-war years that followed)'. In Gioiello and Fausto, there is 'a wound
 26. still open; nostalgia for things that could happen and haven't happened',
 27. according to Orsini (Aprà and Menon 1969: 62).
28. The historical Italian Resistance which fought against Nazi Fascism has an
 29. important place in Orsini's work, from *San Miniato, luglio '44* (*San Miniato, July*
 30. *'44*), his early film with the Taviani Brothers and Zavattini (1954), to *Corbari*
 31. (1970) and *Uomini e no* (*Men or Not Men*) (1981). Although critics and academ-
 32. ics have discussed the subject of the Italian Resistance in these films, it is strik-
 33. ing that its treatment in *The Damned* has gone unnoticed. It is precisely in this
 34. film, as I have shown, that the legacy of the Resistance converges with Third
 35. World struggles. The Pisa episode recovers the 'memory of the vanquished'
 36. and perceives 'the lost battles of the past' (in this case, the triumph of the
 37. Resistance but the failure of the Revolution) as 'a burden and a debt that
 38. are also a promise of redemption'.³⁰ In fact, the episode culminates in warm
 39. farewell hugs between Fausto and Gioiello and between the former partisan
 40. companions of Fausto and Abramo as a way of symbolizing the affective and
 41. political bond of the anti-fascist past with the present of African independ-
 42. ence struggles.
43. As I have mentioned, Neelam Srivastava (2018a) has studied the relation-
 44. ship between the Italian Resistance and Third Worldism in terms of what she
 45. calls the 'aesthetics of resistance'. The main argument of Srivastava's discus-
 46. sion (2018a: 211–15) is that 'themes and forms echo each other', both in the
 47. films of Gillo Pontecorvo (from *Kapo* to *The Battle of Algiers*) and in Giovanni
 48. Pirelli's collections of testimonial writings (from Italian and European resist-
 49. ance fighters and Algerian ones). Although she does not explicitly speak of
 50. Orsini's personal history in the Resistenza (nor of the presence of the issue
 51. in *The Damned*), Srivastava thoroughly analyses the contribution of the film
 52. to the 'resistance aesthetic' associated with Third World struggles in the 1960s
28. In this reconstruction, I follow Renzo Vanni's valuable work (1972) on the Italian Resistance in the region.
29. Renzo Vanni (1972: 70, 80, 222, 232; 57, 84, 130, 227, 256–57, 268; and 71, 255, 259, respectively).
30. I am citing traits of Enzo Traverso's notion of 'left-wing melancholy' (2018: 20).

31. It would be set up in a relationship with two successive countervisualities he calls anti-fascist neo-realism (since 1917) and decolonial neo-realism (since 1945), which have links to a 'turn of the south' in Gramsci and Dubois (Mirzoeff 2011: 33). This last mention is a key element to take into account when considering the remarkable importance of the Southern Question starting with post-war neo-realist cinema (and new Italian cinema of the 1960s). Orsini, Filippi and other militants or Third-Worldist Italian filmmakers (like Ansano Giannarelli) were interested in the issue. Moreover, Mirzoeff (2011: 238) clarifies that the term 'neo-realism' is used in a broad sense that transcends the post-war experience, and it was reconfigured in the 1960s.

32. In particular, the French *Nouvelle Vague*. Alain Resnais' work, for example, was mentioned by critics as an influence on the film. But already in those years, Aristarco (1978: 244–45) pointed out the differences of both works. In addition, Filippi and Orsini distanced themselves from Resnais' latest film at that moment (with a script by Jorge Semprún) about a leftist communist militant in Franco's Spain: *La guerre est finie* (*The War Is Over*) (1966).

(2018a: 238–46). Nicholas Mirzoeff, from the field of visual culture studies, observes a similar relationship in his analysis of a 'countervisuality' associated with the struggles against colonialism and neo-colonialism during the twentieth century (2011). In his ambitious research on the successive *complexes of visibility* that have served to legitimize western hegemony since the rise of modernity, Mirzoeff proposes a genealogy of countervisualities that dominated groups have used to respond to power. In building these countervisualities, these groups affirm their autonomy and claim their 'right to look' as 'a claim to a right to the real' and a right to build their own discourse and visibility about the world (2011: 25–26). In studying the 'decolonial countervisuality',³¹ Mirzoeff recovers two films (both about the Algerian war) whose directors and promoters were participants in the European Resistance that had turned to active commitment in the name of liberation struggles in the Third World (2011: 232–70). On the one hand, there is the aforementioned *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo 1966) and, on the other, there is the collaboration between René Vautier and Fanon in the short film *J'ai huit ans* (*The Nicest Kids in Town*) (Poliakoff and Le Mason 1961), which focuses on Fanon's clinical work with Algerian refugee children in Tunisia.

In relation to these academic works and the ongoing discussion of Italian Third Worldism in the 1960s, I would like to highlight a unique characteristic of *The Damned*: not only is it a film about the African liberation struggle made by an Italian filmmaker who participated in the Resistenza Partigiana (Orsini), but its plot also mirrors the kind of life experience that he and other filmmakers had. *The Damned* is the story of a filmmaker who also participated in the Resistenza Partigiana (Fausto), then made a film about the African liberation struggle. In other words, Fausto's dilemma recalls Orsini and Filippi's own dilemma (which they shared with other Italian Third-Worldist filmmakers of the time): How does one build a decolonial countervisuality or a resistance aesthetic (as described by Mirzoeff and Srivastava) capable of connecting Third World and European struggles?

INVENTING CINEMATIC FORMS; RISKING IDEOLOGICAL HYPOTHESES (THE LABYRINTH)

In December 1967, at a symposium in Porretta Terme, Orsini presented the article 'La responsabilità degli autori' ('authors' responsibility'), which best expresses his cinematic vision. In the article, he associates the personal 'distress' that limited his work as a filmmaker with the crisis of the Italian left: bureaucracy and loss of leadership. In spite of that crisis, which he describes in detail, he sees a positive element in the new political situation. Now, the filmmaker/intellectual has to assume a new 'political-ideological commitment' that can no longer be delegated to others, since 'no left-wing force is in a position to accept and allow it'. Faced with this predicament, Orsini proposes to search for an alternative through cinema. Of course, he is aware that cinema cannot replace politics, because 'it is not a weapon, nor a party'. But he still bets on 'making films that, based on this contradiction, become projects of a possible revolutionary opposition' (Orsini 1968: 17–18).

The Damned clearly incorporates the forms of modern cinema and cinematic *Nouvelles vagues* of its time.³² Yet, while Orsini appreciates Jean Luc Godard both for his radical innovations in film language and criticism of the film system (Hollywood-Cinecittà-Mosfilms), he distances himself from him with this irony-laden comment: 'I sincerely envy Godard when he claims he

1. loves cinema. I, quite the opposite, hate it'.³³ Orsini hates cinema because
 2. there are limits to its transformation of reality. Addressing those present in
 3. Porretta, he stated:

4.
 5. I know the smiles of 'experts' because I too nurtured myself on those
 6. smiles, when I repeated to myself that the only job of an author is to
 7. search for truth, then translate truth into poetry. But truth in poetry can't
 8. save anyone [...] Truth in poetry consigns some of us (certainly not me)
 9. to *the little history of cinema, which is void of meaning when compared to the*
 10. *history of man.*

11. (Orsini 1968, emphasis added)

12.
 13. Orsini is highly critical of 'merely formal' research, which is limited to the level
 14. of language. While he does not establish prescriptive guidance on the type of
 15. cinema to be made, he is interested in the author's awareness of the 'ideologi-
 16. cal character of language' and proposes to turn 'research cinema' into 'opposi-
 17. tion cinema' (Orsini 1968). In the same way, a fragment from writing of his
 18. from those years is worth mentioning. Here, Orsini reflects on both cinematic
 19. language and the ideological underpinning of *The Damned*:

20.
 21. assuming responsibility for the two points of view (of Fausto and
 22. Abramo), the author feels the need, through the very environment
 23. with which he intervenes, the cinematographic language, to fulfil the
 24. first gesture of violence, breaking the traditional schemes of the spec-
 25. tacle, destroying the characters as mediators in relation to the public,
 26. re-proposing them, instead, without any search for naturalistic credibil-
 27. ity, but only as actors who pamper in an ideological happening, the very
 28. thought of the author. The ideological hypothesis is an open hypoth-
 29. esis and ideology throughout the film constantly seeks itself, continually
 30. affirming and denying itself, because no one is called to draw a conclu-
 31. sion. Every conclusion requires a new beginning. Language follows the
 32. same itinerary. There is no path that does not imply a responsibility, that
 33. does not have within itself the ideology. The awareness that language,
 34. this 'god drowned in our blood', is part of a heritage that we receive from
 35. a culture of others; it must make us more attentive, because language
 36. has the strength to reintegrate our whole questioning attitude about the
 37. system. Therefore, all the contradictions of the ideological search for me
 38. have also meant living all the contradictions of 'making cinema'.

39. (1967: 330–31)

40.
 41. The quote is long because this text and Filippi's writings on violence are key to
 42. addressing the last part of the film, where these 'contradictions' are addressed
 43. but not resolved. Indeed, they are opened up to political debate and history.

44. The last 25 minutes of the film (a section called 'the labyrinth of violence')
 45. follow Fausto's period of 'confusion', during which he manages to resume his
 46. work on the film. The camera carries us through an all-white corridor towards
 47. stripped-down, almost empty rooms, where it seems like the 'film inside the
 48. film' is being recorded. However, in reality, what we are seeing is the staging
 49. of a sort of labyrinth of violence that, by way of radical narrative breakup, is
 50. built with experimental forms that highlight the prominence of the actors'
 51. work in order to challenge the viewer, that is, an intervention programme
 52. linked to the legacy of the most committed political-cultural avant-gardes, as
 I will show now.

33. See the criticisms of Orsini and Filippi (1967) that address Godard's limited political and ideological treatment.

34. Note that this Fausto, who addresses the audience, is no longer the previous character (the director of the 'film within the film'); he is now presented as an actor of *The Damned* somehow disengaging himself from his character. The composition is even more complex, because both roles will be alternated and confused in what follows, thus building an ambiguous status between fiction and reality and between the two roles (and those of the other characters).
35. Aristarco (1969, and 1978) extensively analysed Brecht's influence on the film.
36. This also alludes, of course, to the memory of the concentration camps, as observed by Filippi (1968).
37. Callisto Cosulich titled an early note about the film: 'L'Happening della Rivoluzione' ('The happening of revolution') (*ABC*, 18, Milan, 5 May 1968).

The labyrinth permanently makes its constructive mechanisms visible through anti-illusionist procedures. At first, Fausto speaks to the camera, thus breaking the previous structure of the story. Surrounded by actors and set technicians, he didactically presents to the audience not only the subject it will be addressed but also the procedures of building the labyrinth's metaphor (or allegory). He begins: 'the metaphor is simple: there are only two kinds of men whose practice is violence: those who exercise it and those who endure it'. He immediately clarifies that the labyrinth responds to the former, to those who sustain the system or capital with their violence, but only the latter will be shown, those who 'suffer' it and 'fight' it. While it will ultimately be a fictional representation, as he says, this initial warning sets the critical distance from which it should be interpreted. In fact, Fausto addresses the viewers ('you', he says) in order to place them in the position of attaching historical importance to what they see and to prevent them from taking that reality and 'turning it into a spectacle'.³⁴ The reflexive distancing/estrangement effect inaugurated here in the labyrinth has the obvious marks of the Brechtian legacy – a key influence on the film (also present in previous parts of the film) that is here enhanced and radicalized.³⁵

As a whole, the labyrinth alludes to the repression and exploitation of the human being. However, prison and torture in particular are the aspects that are most present in the original script.³⁶ One thinks of their presence in the contemporary Third World reality as well as in the visual memory of the audience because of the impact of their representation in some important works of Italian neo-realist and post-neo-realist cinema, from *Roma città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*) (Rossellini 1945) to *The Battle of Algiers* and other films (not only Italian films). However, unlike the 'realistic' depictions of these films, the configuration of prison, oppression and torture in *The Damned* acquires a more abstract form in the labyrinth.

In this way, the labyrinth combines two types of scenes that represent violence or incorporate it as a procedure. First, the audience encounters ghostly scenes that are neither real nor entirely abstract that symbolize the humiliation and domination suffered by persons stripped of their human condition, which is alluded to by the complete nudity of actors' bodies. These scenes dialogue with advanced contemporary avant-garde trends that explore mechanisms of 'happenings', participatory art, action and other manifestations that concern the vitality of gestural and body expression (from Artaud to Grotowsky and the striking staging of Peter Brook–Peter Weiss or, especially, the Living Theatre). More than a direct and precise 'influence', this is a 'contamination' of the movie's ending with that effervescent laboratory of contemporary experimentation. Of all the elements, the ideological and political happenings are the labyrinth's most relevant artistic manifestation, both for its authors and for the critics.³⁷ It is an appropriation of techniques and procedures (of happenings and related tendencies) that have no playful-experimental purpose in themselves, but rather function as staging tools to configure a kind of non-naturalistic, unspectacular setting that alludes to the violence of the system as a totality. It consists of a minimalist staging, with disturbing, intense music and sounds, in which men are lined up like prisoners along walls or hung from their feet, face down, in torture (see Figure 4). They are enslaved, exploited people carrying huge stones or wandering on an empty stage, aimless, with no present or future. Other sequences depict firing squads and actors falling bombastically at the sounds of off-screen gunfire. Other times, we see helpless women trying to find shelter while fleeing naked



Figure 4: Hanging human bodies that allude to torture in the labyrinth of violence. Alberto Filippi Archive.

from the hand-held camera, which pursues and intimidates them, or else we watch them move desperately through empty scenarios, trying to escape from bombings or napalm flames that constitute a Dantesque hell. The modes of happening and related trends are deployed in the compositions of these scenes, but only as procedures, since the constant presence of the director, instructing technicians and actors, leaves little room for random occurrences. I insist that this composition reaches such a degree of abstraction that it should be differentiated from the documents of African colonial history that are incorporated as footage in the previous parts of the film, where they function as testimony. In the labyrinth, on the contrary, the actors' nudity emphasizes a performance that is not a representation of an era or place, but rather a conceptualization of the condition of human beings when they are submitted to injustice and violence.

Second, in the midst of this almost dreamlike or ghostly universe of oppression and torture, other scenes fulfil a more precise and significant remission of key political facts. In them, an accusatory voice interrogates people/actors, framed in medium shots or close-ups in order to highlight their facial gestures. I will comment on only one of them: the most aggressive verbal interrogation, which borders on abuse and torture. It opens with the Spanish actress Margarita Lozano, who plays the part of an Argentinian (and, by extension, Latin American) woman. The voice-over accuses her of

lacking commitment during the moment of Che Guevara's death. Where was she when it happened? Perhaps in some country in Europe that 'for you Argentinians is the "great myth"'. The voice-over interrogates her, generating an atmosphere of tension. 'Che', says the voice-over, 'never looked for deserters, did he, Margaret?' It continues: 'I wonder; I ask you: didn't you kill Che too? Behind Barrientos' rifle was not only the United States, but also your indifference'. The situation becomes increasingly aggressive and humiliating, since a distressed, misty and crying Margarita denies all this while the voice continues to accuse her of desertion and emphasizes her lack of mercy towards Che, telling her that no one believes her anymore, not even the spectator. The end of the scene is of particular interest due to the procedure it follows and the significance it builds. Exhausted, Margarita claims that she cannot take it anymore, to which the interrogator (still off-screen) responds with emphasis that she did well ('Brava'), thus cutting the tension and reminding us that it is a simple (albeit terrible) 'performance', a staging. But Margarita does not relax; on the contrary, in a gesture of infuriated confrontation and resistance, she exclaims: 'Don't do me any more harm. That's enough'.

This scene was one of the last shots taken by Orsini and Filippi upon their return from the Cultural Congress of Havana in early 1968. During this trip, Alfredo Guevara and Cuban filmmakers expressed their disagreement about the use of images of Che (who had recently been murdered). In particular, they expressed deep objection of the use of the corpse image disseminated by the international press. These conversations strongly influenced the treatment of this scene in *The Damned*, which in the end becomes minimalist, distant and reflective, with no images other than that of Margarita and without any words other than those that evoke a kind of guilt that – as Che would have done – incites her (and the viewer) to action. Similar procedures are elaborated on in the cruel and incisive interrogation of Alibe, a young Black American woman living in Europe, whom the off-screen voice accuses of leaving her country, betraying those who have 'the courage to rebel against the power of the whites'. The interrogations of Margarita and Alibe are highlighted by the careful, precise work of staging an oppressive experience, both in terms of the women's performances (their facial gestures and movements) and the inflections of the off-screen voice. Together with the communicative power achieved in the other shocking scenes, the whole labyrinth refers to the violence of the system (see Figure 5). But how is this violence historically conceptualized and how should it be addressed?

VIOLENCE

In his aforementioned notes to Fausto about Lumumba's failed pacifism and revolutionary options, Abramo explains that for the PAIGC guerrilla, the armed struggle was 'neither a dogma nor an end, [...] just one method'. At the end of the film, three monologues by Abramo condense *The Damned's* reflection on the crucial problem of violence and revolution. They synthesize the theses of the film or, more specifically, its 'open ideological hypothesis'. These monologues are interspersed with the aforementioned minimalist staging of shootings and bombings and with other brief images highlighting the work of the film crew. The tone of all these public-facing monologues is didactic and reflective, at times playful, since Abramo plays around with words and resorts to irony and parody. Such resources enrich the political importance of his interventions. The first monologue uses ingenious reasoning about the

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28. *Figure 5: Valentino Orsini giving instructions to the cameraman for a shot of the naked bodies shot down*
29. *during the labyrinth of violence. Alberto Filippi Archive.*

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contradictions and paradoxes of the peace–violence binomial to justify the violence of the oppressed against the discourse of ‘world peace’. It highlights the limits of ‘common sense’ and other words and phrases with which the subject is usually discussed:

I too might say, ‘Enough with their violence! I reject it. I’m for peace. Then: long live the peace!’ But peace does not stop violence, because those who suffer violence are clearly not at peace. Then: down with peace, because it does not stop violence! Peace will actually come later, when there will be no more violence. And while their violence lasts, we will not be at peace. Down with the violence! Can it be said, with the excuse of peace: ‘I am at peace?’ But how? It’s me, I’m the only one who’s at peace. And with my peace I exert violence on those who suffer from it, and who are not at all at peace. And so? Long live the violence, which can stop violence and restore us to peace. Why just say it and not do it, if we know that violence is a good deed and our peace nothing but beautiful words? Then long live violence!

In his second and third monologues, Abramo speaks about the need to uncover ‘the real’ (‘the violence that peace hides’), demands that words be ‘used to say things clear’ and calls on the viewer to engage in the destruction

38. Note that Aristarco's article on the film (1978) analyses and paraphrases these monologues on violence. See also Orsini and Filippi (1967).
39. Although Filippi mentions the images of imperialist violence in Vietnam, another reference could be made to the controversy raised in Italy (and elsewhere) about the depiction of African violence in terms of exoticism, morbidity and savagery, in *Africa addio* (*Africa Blood and Guts*) (David di Donatello award in 1966), by Jacopetti and Prospero. See Brunetta (1982: 28, 190, 423).

of the system: 'Either our revolution or their violence'. But far from using this apothegm triumphantly, Abramo recognizes the difficulty of the present and claims that oppressive violence (the violence of capitalism) grows far more than 'our revolution'. He therefore calls for a reflection on this situation because he realizes that the 'historical failure' of the present is also his 'personal defeat'. In any case, he states that the only way he can exist is by denying violence, even if from his own fragile political and personal reality.

In a final speech where he addresses the camera in the foreground, Fausto, like Abramo, promotes the struggles to transform the present and acknowledges the difficulties of uniting one's own political action with that of others. By doing this, both Fausto and Abramo displace the epic apologetics of much of the period's militant cinema by underlining the difficulties of resistance and revolution.

The portrayal of violence within the labyrinth comes largely from Filippi's ideas in his article 'Criticism of violence in *The Damned*' (1968).³⁸ In fact, Abramo's monologues contain synthesized phrases from this article, in which Filippi explores the mystifications of bourgeois ideologies of violence, from the daily life of European neo-capitalist factories ('the seemingly pacified opulent society') to the 'reconquest of Africa through neo-colonial investments'. He also glosses the supposed 'exceptionality' of places where direct colonial rule and liberation wars endure (Vietnam, Guinea Bissau). Filippi argues that violence spreads to the whole capital-dominated world and consequently maintains that calls for peaceful coexistence and non-violence are naïve.

Filippi's reading of the 'mystified image' of violence in the mass media is of particular interest: such an image ends up 'making all images of violence tolerable' and 'matching' the oppressor's violence with the violence of the oppressed, 'hiding' their respective causes.³⁹ In light of this, the goal of *The Damned's* ending is 'not to put the accent' on an 'apologetic' or 'celebratory' image of violence but to work on the demystification of its 'natural appearances', to reveal its 'historic' reality and its logic of power, which is concentrated in the capitalist system (Filippi 1968). As I have shown, Abramo's monologues and the labyrinth itself promote a radical critical understanding of the system of domination, including its explicit and implicit violence.

At the end of the film, we see Fausto and the technicians preparing Abramo for a new monologue while a new voice-over (for the first time, one that stands in for *The Damned's* authors) says the following:

Abramo and Fausto have reached a common revolutionary consciousness, but in the role of actors. And as you know, this is not enough. As it is not enough, and we know, to confront the violence depicted in the films and pretend that the historical violence of capital is being eliminated. At this point, in order not to deceive anyone, the film is interrupted. Now it is up to us, out of here, to confront violence.

Thus, the movie ends with a challenge to the viewer. By this interruption, Orsini and Filippi propose an open end for the film and invite the audience to go out and face the violence of the system, which exists beyond the film, outside of the institution of cinema.

CONCLUSION

Although questioning the viewer and encouraging them to take part in the political process is a common feature of many intervention films of the period, this call to action within the film's text distinguishes *The Damned* and places

1. it alongside very few other films. As Orsini had proposed in Porretta Terme,
 2. the 'little history of cinema' is insignificant compared to the 'History of Man'.
 3. When the film was first distributed, that 'History of Man' (of humanity, of
 4. the people) manifested itself in Italy in the outburst of student and working-
 5. class struggles in 1968–69. The film was not ready in time to participate in the
 6. Cannes Film Festival in May 1968 (which had been occupied by critics, film-
 7. makers and students, and closed without the award ceremony in the context
 8. of the popular uprising in Paris), nor was it ready for the Pesaro Film Festival
 9. in June. But Filippi and Orsini actively participated in that hectic film exhibi-
 10. tion and its *auto-contestazione* (self-protest), the latter by leading the assem-
 11. bly of filmmakers and getting arrested during a street demonstration. A few
 12. weeks later, in September, *The Damned* was shown, however marginally, at a
 13. counter festival in Venice, where the *contestazione* was growing weaker by the
 14. day. Finally, in February 1969, the film had its real premiere at the Festival del
 15. Popolo in Florence, where the protests of university students caused screen-
 16. ings to be suspended for a few days. From then on, the film achieved scant
 17. but dignified exhibition in other festivals and on the Italian alternative circuit,
 18. with mixed reviews. While the film did not go unnoticed in those years, it was
 19. subsequently forgotten for a long time.

20. In this article, I have traced the moments of political history in *The Damned*
 21. and those of *The Damned's* participation in that history. In this respect,
 22. what Valentino Orsini and Alberto Filippi's film suggests is an open discus-
 23. sion about visual and political possibilities for resistance and revolution that
 24. spanned Africa, Italy and the whole capital-dominated world.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Mariano Mestman is head researcher at the National Council of Scientific Research (CONICET) and the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he teaches courses about Italian, Latin American and Third World cinema. His works also include studies on working-class cinema and the artistic vanguards of the 1960s. He has done research work in film archives in Cuba, Mexico, Italy and Canada, among other places. His work has been published in international academic journals in Argentina, the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Spain. He is also the author or editor of the following books: *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde. Vanguardia artística y política en el 68 argentino* with Ana Longoni (El Cielo por Asalto, 2000); *Masas, pueblo, multitud en cine y television* (co-edited with Mirta Varela; Eudeba, 2013); *Estados Generales del Tercer Cine. Los documentos de Montreal* (Rehime, 2014); and *Las rupturas del 68 en el cine de América Latina* (Akal, 2016).

Contact: Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, UBA, J.E. Uriburu 950, 6to. (1114) Argentina.
E-mail: marianomestman@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4398-7736>

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