A black and white photograph of a woman with dark hair, looking out of a window. The view outside the window is blurred, showing what appears to be a body of water and some distant structures. The woman's face is in profile, looking towards the left. The lighting is soft, and the overall mood is contemplative.

An intimate study of OYOYO,
a film by Chetna Vora

Chetna Vora, an Indian student from Palitana in Gujarat, who came to GDR in the mid 1970s made two important films during her study at the Babelsberg Film Academy; the first *OYOYO* was towards her third year submission in 1980 and *Women In Berlin* towards her graduation in 1981.

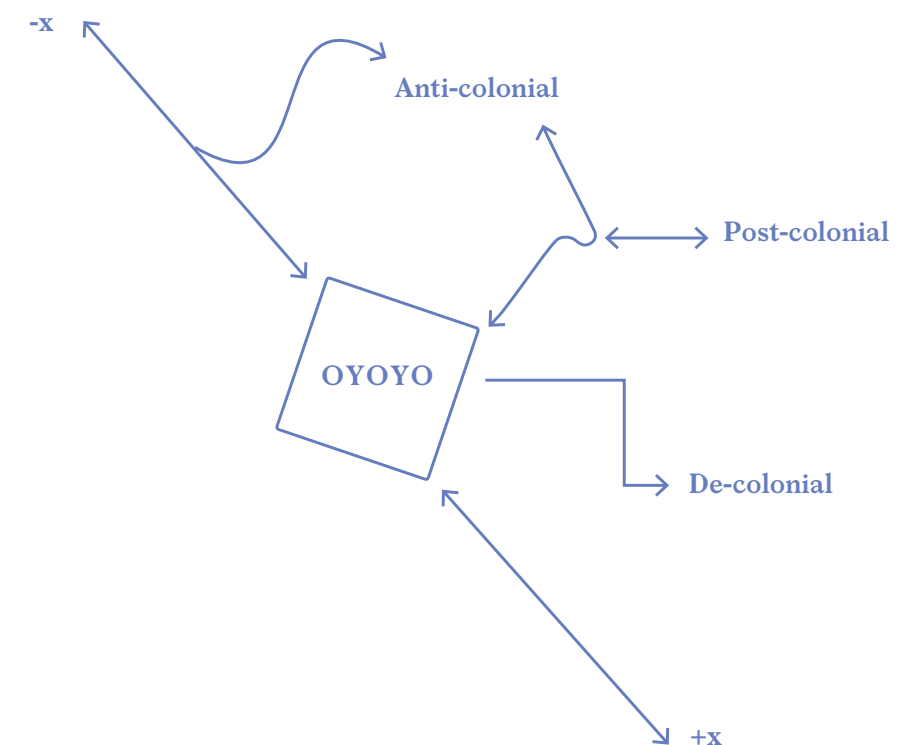
In *OYOYO*, Chetna interviews students from many countries about their parcours in their hostel. This film is in the archive of Babelsberg Film Academy and was shared with me via Vimeo by Chetna's partner Lars Barthel for research purposes. The cut that I have received of the film is 47 minutes and 57 seconds long.

This is a study of the politics of friendship towards feminist socialist internationalism as a concept by means of *OYOYO*. This concept lies in a vector to used and abused concepts of solidarities, networks, rhizomatiks, pattern based thinking and alliances. As students from socialist countries such as Mongolia, Chile, India, Bissau (in today's Guinea-Bissau), Cuba, Mali, Greece arrive in East Germany and anti-colonial struggles and post-coloniality turn on the (-x to +x) axis of the Cold War period, the binaries get displaced.

Towards an investigation of films such as *OYOYO*, we find that there is a 'coming together', in desire, politics and economics of not only the students from these countries but also of anti-colonial, post-colonial, anti-capitalistic and international concerns. Internationalism is formed and processually constructed frame-by-frame in these films as a possibility. A possibility that remains as liminality. A possible liminality that does not disappear as soon as the two ends between which liminality resides disintegrate, but is sustained by its constant escape from realization (-x and +x, a Cold War binary displaced by socialist solidarities in anti-colonial struggles and post-colonial reimaginings).

If. OYOYO as liminality. Liminality as a-priori condition

Liminality as a-priori condition for feminist socialist internationalism



I have viewed *OYOYO* multiple times in this research process and have also listened to the film with my eyes closed, translating literally into research methodology what Tina Campt suggests in *Listening to Images* (2017). I want to postpone or suspend meanings of words being spoken. I am trying to find other ways to listen to its language than the language in use. Where do linguistics and architecture come together in this film? Is this corruption of disciplinary boundaries a necessary enterprise towards the formation of socialist internationalism?



These questions are placed as soon as the film begins, in the very first frame, where we see a set of multistoried buildings horizontally laid out with a pathway between them. The structure closest to the camera makes an L-shaped invitation, leading us deep into the horizons of prefabricated buildings.

Chetna Vora (with Lars Barthel) shot the film in a students' residence in Berlin-Karlshorst. The building shown in the film where most international students studying *Ökonomie* lived, does not exist anymore. This house where the film is located and a house of 'internationalism' is right at the center of multipolar politics of the Cold War. Berlin Karlshorst is a special place whose traces we also find in a CIA report on East Germany filed on 16 April 1959. This report can be used to essentially re-situate the initial markings of this student residence in Berlin-Karlshorst. The 60 point report includes a determinate account of each of the buildings, their security, capacity, architecture and functions. A map of the area is included at the end of the CIA report.

INFORMATION REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

S-E-C-R-E-T

COUNTRY	East Germany/USBR	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Description of the Soviet Compound at Karlshorst, East Berlin	DATE DISTR.	16 / 1959
		NO. PAGES	14
		REFERENCES	RD
DATE OF INFO.			
PLACE & DATE ACQ.			

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. The Soviet Compound located in East Berlin-Karlshorst is the headquarters for the following major Soviet Units: KGB Residentura, RU Strategic Residentura, the Agent Operations Section, RU GSFG, and the Berlin Soviet Garrison (Soviet Kommandatura). The Compound also serves as a housing area for all major Soviet units in East Berlin including in addition to those units mentioned above, the Soviet Embassy to the GDR, the Soviet Trade Delegation, the 83rd Motorized Rifle Regiment located in Berlin-Karlshorst, and the KGB Signals Regiment located in Berlin-Wilhelmssee and Berlin-Friedrichshagen. To service the Soviet installations and billets in the Karlshorst Compound numerous German units have also been established.

The information provided in this report is for the most part current, though at times have drawn on older reports for the sake of lucidity.

It remains hard to determine which of these 60- pointer buildings and configurations would have been turned into residences by 1973-1974 when Chetna arrived there. I kept reading this report over and over again and the descriptions in relation to the architecture of the students' residence that we see in the film. It aligns most closely to point 33 and point 42.

33. "KGB Hotel" is a term arbitrarily applied to the row of apartment buildings extending from Ehrenfelsstr. 12 through 15. It houses both transient and permanent KGB employees (primarily bachelors). Until August 1958, N. V. STEPANOV, husband of Antonia STEPANOVA who was the Chief of the Embassy Billeting and Maintenance Office, was the head of the Hotel. He was replaced by (fnu) PETROW. STEPANOV had a certain amount of autonomy in regards to funding repairs and maintenance, but was responsible to VASENIN, Chief of the KGB Admin.

42. The Kommandatura Hotel system includes the nine-room transient billet at Zwieslerstr. 9 for bachelor officers, the main Kommandatura Hotel building at Godesbergerstr. 5 containing a minimum of 12 rooms, and a six to eight apartment building believed to have facilities for at least 30 at Godesbergerstr. 6 which, although used by the hotel, is also the billets for the single Soviet females employed at the various Kommandatura installations. The first floor of Godesbergerstr. 5 is also the site of the Kommandatura billeting office and the hotel administration. Sgt. (fnu) SMIRNOV was the director of the hotel until circa June 1957. A (fnu) KOSTYANIKOV is his successor. A Soviet female bookkeeper is the other employee in the hotel office. Two German and one Soviet charwomen work at Godesbergerstr. and one or two German women at Zwieslerstr. 9. The hotel system also has its own fireman.

In *OYOYO*, we see the building right at the beginning and then the interiors through the rest of the film. As if this building was the narrator of the film, its voice audible yet subtle, walking on that turning axis between -x and +x.



OYOYO was the pre-final year submission of Chetna Vora towards her thesis. Her final submission was *Women in Berlin* [Frauen in Berlin] which was made during Chetna's studies at Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR [Film and Television Academy of the GDR] in Potsdam but it was not accepted officially as a film that was finished at the film school. The production of *Women in Berlin* was canceled by the direction of HFF at the rough-cut stage and the negatives were largely destroyed. The label on the back of the DVD copy of *Women In Berlin* states:

"Chetna managed, along with some other students, to copy the cut on VHS. There was only one VHS camera in 1981 in GDR, at the Volksbühne Theatre. The HFF called onto police to retrieve the rough-cut but didn't know about the VHS copy. After Chetna returned to India in 1983, HFF destroyed most of the material and produced a 30 minutes version which was presumably shown on TV in DDR."



It is important to note this relation of *OYOYO* with *Women In Berlin*, in which Chetna interviews several women across generations, engaged in care work and conducting daily chores. It demands in no uncertain terms the proposed feminist socialist internationalism to be situated outside the frame of GDR as a single party socialist state, outside any framing of what was made at institutions such as HFF. Indeed *OYOYO*, has a longer version of around 75 minutes (though not digitized) available with Lars Barthel. The 45- minute edit of *OYOYO* made against Chetna's willingness was bound to the transmission of the film on television where a time slot was reserved and an agreement was made with Babelsberg Film Academy to show the films on state television.



Internationalism in *OYOYO* operates as an atomic structure with bonds between different atoms. Inside the atom there is a nucleus. Inside the nucleus there lives a song.

At 25:25 in the film *OYOYO*, a slow plucking of strings commences on a guitar. We sense the arrival of a song. Everything upturns in this fragment. It is like a submarine, an underwater whirlpool that stays deep in the water as a potentiality that can come to fruition the moment you come into contact with this song. The song stays active in this coming together of students from Chile, Guinea-Bissau, the Mongolian Soviet Republic, Cuba, Bulgaria and many other places. This song is *Forti Trabadjá P'alguém* [So much of working for other people], the song from which the title of the film is taken, begins with enunciation of oi oi oi oi (which is a call to gather, that we can understand from the methods of organizing through call and response). A voice leads the music and the song begins in the film. We hear people assembling in the gallery from their respective rooms and dancing together to the accompaniment of this song.

oi oi oi oi oi oi o...
Nha guenti forti trabadjá p'alguem
Nha guenti forti trabadjá p'alguem
Nha guenti forti trabadjá p'alguem
Nha rabo dja kria ferida já tem otu rabixo
Nha rabo dja kria ferida já tem otu rabixo
Nha rabo dja kria ferida já tem otu rabixo
Ba santome es flam pam fla sim senhor
M'Ba lisboa es flam pam fla sim senhor
Quando um tchiga na tchom de holanda
Nha guenti es flam pam fla
Nha guenti es flam pam fla sim senhor so tank iu

In its abbreviated form, *OYOYO* was deemed acceptable but yet maybe plotting a hidden desire. This compels us to read *OYOYO* as a cybernetic loop between constant acceptance and refusal. One that metaphorically appears and reappears in the film from windows. A window is a liminal place between exterior and interior, between outside and inside. What constitutes this outside? Outside the window is neither an active street full of people, nor a manicured lawn—rather all we see of outside seems to be a site under construction/renovation, through the use of long shots, a practice that defines socialist realism where the conversations about everyday life, real time as opposed to cinematic time and a radical openness works in the favor of workers. There are many contexts that can be drawn from this image of a student looking outside the window in Chetna's film. This looking outside the window occurs as a marker of feminist politics that necessarily escapes any institutionalization. We can see it in frames of domestic-public duality, we can read in the image the biography of Chetna between East Germany and her return to India or we can read it through a long history of internationalism and friendships that were hosted in 'in-between'. The motif of looking outside the window thus seems to be a general index through which we can navigate the archive. The window aperture that unfolds this architecture becomes very specific if we consider the 'landscape' that is making the vanishing point. This landscape unlike in its form as a classical motif is a structure in construction; the landscape is a micro-structure of internationalism.

Chetna's own class privilege in India, the censorship of her film *Women in Berlin*, the ethnographical regard and import of a certain orientalism in her later films in the framing of working women in India (for instance, Adivasi women who are different in class, language and social privileges from Chetna), the chance saving of film material of *Women In Berlin* from state censorship and the recovery of these films from one party state-socialism structures of forbidding perceived dissent, Chetna's breakdown, her time in an asylum and 'her decision' to leave this world, multiply the concerns of this study, which itself is exponentially generative of multiple studies.

With the guidance of Sónia Vaz Borges, militant interdisciplinary historian, long-time social-political organizer and author of *Militant Education, Liberation Struggle and Consciousness. The PAIGC education in Guinea Bissau 1963–1978*, we could get more details of the song, Sónia informed us that

"The song is an old Cape Verdean music style called *Finaçon*. The music group, OsTubarões performed the song. The original name of the song is *Forti Trabadjá P'alguém* or *Tchon di Morgado*"

Sónia also generously shared lyrics of the song in Cape Verdean créole, which are as follows:

oi oi oi oi oi oi o...
My people, so much of working to other people
My people, so much of working to other people
My people, so much of working to other people
My 'butt', already has a wound and another one is growing
My 'butt', already has a wound and another one is growing
My 'butt', already has a wound and another one is growing
I went to SãoTomé (and Príncipe) they told me to say Yes Sir
I went to Lisbon they told me to say Yes Sir
When I arrived to the soil of Netherlands
My people they told me to say
My people they told me to say Yes Sir very thank you
(or Yes Sir, I am very thankful)

The focus on a piece and research as an exercise in ontogeny, always already is sociogeny and thus there is an inherent aspiration for sociogenesis. In the socialist framework of GDR, it provides not only ends but also means to engage and create lateral alliances across with internationalist feminist socialism. There is so much work to be done as this is only the beginning.

This document hopes to be a message sent in outer space of what we call the past, looking out for various participants in the film – Tungalag Sodnomgombyn from Ulaanbaatar, Emilio Fernandez from Concepción, Carlos Neto from Bolama, Irene Blanco from La Habana, Ansoumane Mané from Bissau, Emma Korouma from Segou, Manuel Coelho Mendonça from Vorela, Carmen Maria Barbosa e Sá from Bissau, Jose Júlio Delgado from Bissau, Theodros Alemu from Addis Ababa, Monica Mateluna from Santiago, and many more. This document hopes to be a message to the decolonial future from anti-colonial and post-colonial socialist imaginations of internationalism as a possibility that is passed on, an imagination that can come to realization. As we intermeditate through study and research (that cannot but be a recognition of researches already) intermingled realities of today (in the eruptions of interruptions), here is an inter∞note.



The song *Forti Trabadja P'alguém* [So much of working for other people] in Cape Verdean Créole that marks a sonic moment of friendship in *OYOYO* (1980) by Chetna Vora.

Text and montage: vinit agarwal. Images: Chetna Vora. Diagram: vinit agarwal. Documents: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), HFF Potsdam/Babelsberg. Translation Cape Verdean Créole into English: Sónia Vaz Borges. Copy-editing: Latika Gupta. Concept inter∞note: Doreen Mende and Graphic Design: Laure Giletti & Gregory Dapra.

inter∞note marks an independent space-time for reflecting on the possibilities and impossibilities of research practices, contemporary art and curatorial/politics which function under current conditions of the ongoing coloniality of global capitalism. It can be understood as a research edition that may take the form of a paper, an essay, poster, booklet, interface, or any other format to reflect on the scientific research study *Decolonizing Socialism. Entangled Internationalism* by para-academic means: *Hidden Labour Across* (inter∞note 01) is the first curatorial forum of the transdisciplinary study. The name inter∞note alludes to the mobilization of the preposition INTER from economic and social contexts, for example, in socialist counties such as the GDR and beyond, to imagine a politics of friendship, or, transgenerational conversations and modes of coalitions. The extension to NOTE refers to the need to take notes as an essential part of the research process by means of listening, observing, reflecting, concretizing, time-lining, commenting, etc. The ∞ speaks of feedback loops, back and forward, infinitely.

While the scientific research of *Decolonizing Socialism. Entangled Internationalism* is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the making of inter∞note always depends on collaborations otherwise in the context of contemporary art practices. inter∞note 01 has been realized in collaboration with Kunstverein Leipzig for the exhibition *Hidden Labour Across* (inter∞note 01) with vinit agarwal, Joo Young Hwang, Aarti Sunder, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt and Chetna Vora as well as archival material of *Zentralbild*, conceptualized by Doreen Mende, from 22 August through 21 October 2020.

inter∞note 01 is printed in an edition of 300 copies by brandenburgische universitätsdruckerei und verlags-gesellschaft potsdam, August 2020.

A film by Chetna Vora

Oyoyo

In conversation with Tungalag Sodnomgombyn ^{ULAANBAATAR} / Emilio Fernandez ^{CONCEPCIÓN} / Carlos Neto ^{BOLAMA} / Irene Blanco ^{LA HABANA} / Mario Chavez Landivar ^{SANTA CRUZ} / Afonso Semedo ^{PRATA} / Emma Korouma ^{SÉGOU} / Manuel Coelho Mendonça ^{VORELA} / Ansoumane Mané ^{BISSAU} / Carmen Mara Barbosa e Sá / José Júlio Delgado ^{BISSAU} / Carlos Monteiro Cardoso / Monica Mateluna ^{SANTIAGO} / Theodros Alemu ^{ADDIS ABEBA} / Georgos Loumiotis ^{ATHENAI} / Isidoro Rodrigues Junior / Alcina Garez Barbosa ^{BISSAU} / Silva Auznda. Camera: Lars Barthel. Editor: Petra Heymann. 1980 / 48min., Courtesy of HFF Potsdam-Babelsberg / GDR.