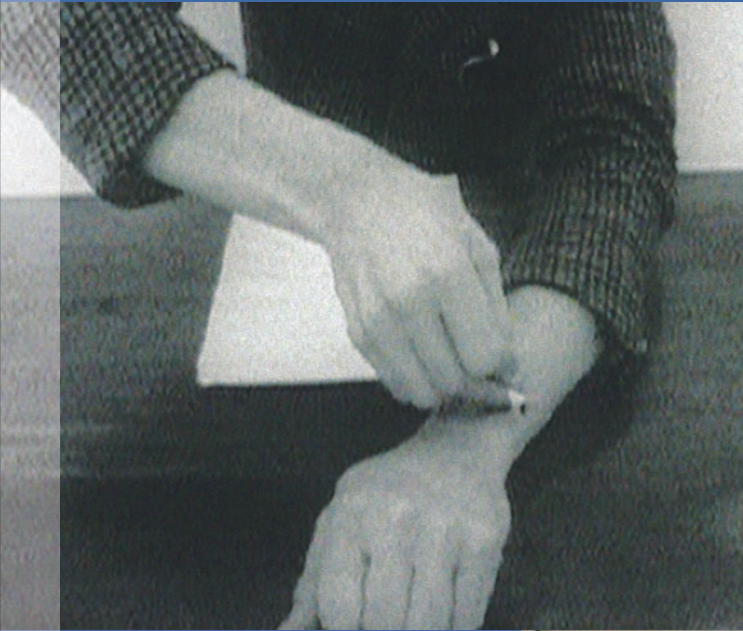


FILM  
CULTURE

IN TRANSITION



Harun

Farocki

Working on the  
Sight-Lines

EDITED BY

THOMAS ELSAESSER

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

Harun Farocki



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**Working on the Sightlines**

*Edited by Thomas Elsaesser*

Amsterdam University Press

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# Introduction



# Harun Farocki: Filmmaker, Artist, Media Theorist

*Thomas Elsaesser*

More than anything else, electronic control technology has a deterritorialising effect. Locations become less specific. An airport contains a shopping centre, a shopping centre contains a school, a school offers leisure and recreation facilities. What are the consequences for prisons, themselves mirrors of society as well as its counter-image and projection surface?

*Harun Farocki*<sup>1</sup>

## Documenting Change: Questions of Agency, Visibility, and Territory

If I am interested in how the technological, and subsequently electronic media have transformed civil society, I can find no better chronicler of their histories, no more intelligent observer of their unexpected connections, no more incisive critic and yet interested party to their epoch-making significance than Harun Farocki. The fact that Farocki is both a writer and a filmmaker is therefore as much a sign of the times as a choice of vocation. Having early on decided to be, in the spirit of Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire, 'resolutely modern', Farocki availed himself of the most resolutely contemporary medium. But a filmmaker, by making images, not only adds images to their store in the world; he comments on the world made by these images, and does so *with* images. Aware that the medium chose him as much as he had chosen it for documenting public life under the rule of the image, he treats cinema with the utmost respect. So central are the technologies of picturing and vision to the twentieth century that there is little Farocki cares about which is not also a reflection on cinema itself. In this perspective, however, its role as our culture's prime storytelling medium is almost secondary. Instead, cinema is understood as a machine of the visible that is itself largely invisible. This is why talking about airports, schools, or prisons is as much a part of the *post-history* of the cinema, as a fork in the road leading to the foundation of cities, the Jacquard loom with its programmable sequence of coloured threads, or the deployment of the Maxim machine gun at the battle of Omdurman are part of the *pre-history* of cinema.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly since the early 20th century, and probably since the invention of the camera obscura, the most pervasive – material and mental – model by which to picture ourselves in this world and acting upon it, has been the ‘cinematic apparatus’. It is present as an arrangement of parts, as a logic of visual processes, and as a geometry of actions even when (especially when) camera and projector are absent. It existed as a philosopher’s dream in Plato’s parable of the cave, and it has a technical-prosthetic afterlife in surveillance videos and body scans, so that its noble golden age as *the* art form of the second industrial age represents a relatively brief lease on its overall life. Or to put it differently: the cinema has many histories, only some of which belong to the movies. It takes an artist-archaeologist, rather than a mere historian, to detect, document and reconstruct them. Today, perhaps the cinema’s most illustrious artist-archaeologist – and as we shall see, allegorist-archivist – is Harun Farocki.

‘Detect, document, reconstruct’: the terms are deliberately ambiguous. They highlight, along with the contested meaning of the word documentary in cinema history and the somewhat *noirish* connotations of detection, a particular challenge of agency when talking about an artist who also considers himself an activist. If the word had not faded into a cliché, ‘intervene’ might be the (Brechtian) term that applies to Farocki’s early work and to its radical ambitions when he began making films in the 1960s. But over the years, he has also demonstrated forms of action with his films that are normally more associated with a social scientist, laboratory technician, or media theorist than with a political activist. To put it in more metaphoric terms: the descriptive distance of the writer has alternated with the constructive patience of the model-builder, and the careful probing of the test lab scientist has competed with the reconstructive skill of the plastic surgeon. Farocki has been an exceptional witness of the second half of the last century, literally keeping his wits about him, especially as he noticed how the visible and the intelligible were drifting ever further apart. For an eyewitness is not at his best when only using his eyes: ‘It is not a matter of what is in a picture, but rather, of what lies behind. Nonetheless, one shows a picture as proof of something which cannot be proven by a picture.’<sup>3</sup> Events, accidents, and disasters can be turned over to see what lies behind them and to inspect the recto of the verso: except that even this ‘image’ belongs to a previous age, when a picture was something you could touch with your fingers and pass from hand to hand. Now it is a matter of recognising the invisible within the visible, or of detecting the code by which the visible is programmed. Farocki once commented on the editing of the evening television news after the air show disaster at the Ramstein airbase in January 1989, noting a cutaway, just before the planes collided, from the fatal manoeuvre to the subsequent official press conference:

The cut of January 16 had the direct effect of compelling the viewer to contemplate the interrupted scene in his imagination. [...] By sequencing the images so that the press conference provided a mere background for the afterimages of the air show, it demoted the Bonn government's image-politics, secretly and decisively. [The cut] is the television-makers' revenge against the business of politics which forces them to use their recording and editing equipment to deal with nameplates, office corridors, official cars, porters' lodges, or staged pseudo-events like press conferences.<sup>4</sup>

What Farocki here spots in the 'afterimage' effected by the cut is the power of cinema, visible in an absence (the missing image) and as its absence (the cinema negatively figured in the use of its basic apparatus, the 'recording and editing equipment' for derisory ends). Around a real-life spectacular disaster, which, like so many in recent years, imitated the movies, Farocki emblematically confirms the 'end of cinema'. But by the same token, he also asserts that if cinema is dead, long live its afterlife (as our best media theory).

The practice of filmmaking has thus obliged Farocki to be a theorist, making him a special kind of witness, a close reader of images, and an exegete-exorcist of their ghostly 'afterimages'. But nearly forty years of directing films, with a list of some eighty titles to his credit, have also established him as one of the great artist-survivors of his generation: of the bohemian-anarchist scene in Hamburg during the early 1960s, of the student protests in West-Berlin from 1968 to the mid-1970s, with their revolutionary dogmatism and activist aspirations. Building up such an oeuvre against the considerable odds of 'independent' film financing and contract work for television, he must also be considered a survivor of the New German Cinema of the 1980s (to which he, properly speaking, never particularly wished to belong). Ironically, it is he who in the 1990s became an international *auteur*, at a time when the term – in Germany at least, as *Autorenfilmer* – had turned from a distinction into an insult (for a filmmaker with mainstream ambitions). As author and artist, Farocki has now made the transition to a new art form and different exhibition venues (his multi-screen installations are being commissioned by museums and media arts festivals), where his work, including his earlier films, reaches audiences beyond the German-speaking countries, in France, Belgium, Latin America, Australia, and the United States, for instance.

## An Uncanny Timeliness

With Farocki, then, the gesture of 'documenting' the world of the media and bearing witness to their vanguard role in contemporary life is complicated by

the respective kinds of autonomy, authorship and agency involved, which extend to his published texts, sometimes written to accompany his films, sometimes to prepare them and sometimes to finance them. But his particular authorship can also be located in the director's performed presence within the films. Farocki speaks in his own voice and person in NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER/INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE (1969), ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN/ BETWEEN TWO WARS (1978), SCHNITTSTELLE/SECTION INTERFACE (1995); at other times, a multi-layered dialogical situation is set up between the characters and the filmmaker (ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR/ BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM, 1982), or a carefully scripted commentary directs attention and instructs the mind's eye (WIE MAN SIEHT/ AS YOU SEE, 1986), occasionally intoned by an off-screen female presenter (WIE MAN SIEHT, BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES/ IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR, 1988). At other times, the camera is a distant and cool observer, with no voice-over telling the viewer what connections to make, other than to attend to the cuts and connections that the images make (LEBEN – BRD/ HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG, 1990, DIE SCHULUNG/ INDOCTRINATION, 1987). One could take the implied distance, the unhurried didacticism and the underplayed irony for the filmmaker's manner of marking his intellectual involvement, while keeping his critical detachment and thus keeping his mastery over the material intact. After all, these are some of the expected positions in the repertoire of documentary filmmakers, well-established since the late 1920s, especially when they come politically from the left. Their films testify to social injustices or the abuse of power, they show the world as it is, give glimpses of how it might be or once was, and they hold a mirror up to mankind in order to shame it into change. But key impulses of Farocki's work seem altogether differently motivated, and they make him finally an unlikely *documentarist*, cast neither in the heroic-constructivist mould of the 1920s and '30s, nor situated on the side of 'direct cinema' of the 1960s and '70s. With respect to the latter, he has probably remained too much of an agitator-activist to create the openness that usually gives the viewer the illusion of entering into the ongoing events as a participant or co-conspirator; and with respect to the former, he is too much of an artist-artisan to presume that he is doing anything other than to work on realities already constituted: replaying them for the sake of the small differences, the small deferrals, so that something (else) may become visible (*'etwas wird sichtbar'*) in the repetition, in the gaps and through the duplication. For Farocki – to use a variation on Sigmund Freud – finding an image is to refine it.<sup>5</sup> It also makes him a close reader of 'found' images.

This last point is important: just as the image and its imagined afterimage belong together in the Ramstein television news broadcast, so each image – visual as well as verbal – is already shadowed. The reason is the degree of 'inter-

ference' provided by the medium of cinema itself, with its vast store of images already present before any event occurs, but also always slipping away from any single event. Farocki once found a wonderfully apt image for it, all the more apt because it was probably unwitting: '[In Basel] we were living in a furnished apartment house. It was five-thirty on Saturday, and we stopped reading or listening to music and went to see a girl and to watch the sports show on TV. She made donuts, but the reception was so bad that the ball disappeared between the lines and the players were covered man-to-man by their own shadows. We had to keep adjusting the antennas so we could at least hear the game we were missing.<sup>66</sup> We too have to keep adjusting our antennas when we view Farocki's films. Their themes at first glance seem to directly 'cover' the turbulent half-century he has been part of: agit-prop films and essays against the War in Vietnam (NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER, ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR); an examination of the collusion of heavy industries with Nazism, and its consequences for labour relations and working class organisations (ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN); oblique reflections on the placement of U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil, and more evidently, a history of the increasing – or persistent – interdependence of cinema and warfare (BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES); several ironic diagnostic tests that chart the rise of self-help and service industries in the security-conscious consumer society of West Germany, before (LEBEN – BRD, WAS IST LOS? / WHAT'S UP? (1991), DIE SCHULUNG, EIN TAG IM LEBEN DER ENDVERBRAUCHER / A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER, (1993), during (DIE FÜHRENDE ROLLE / THE LEADING ROLE, 1994) and after German re-unification (DIE UMSCHULUNG, 1994). VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION / VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION (1992), a (tele)visual analysis of the end of Communism in Central Europe (the fall of Ceaușescu in Romania), was followed by films/installations tracking the changing function and administrative logics of key social institutions, such as factories, prisons, shopping centres (ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK / WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY, 1995, ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN / I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS, 2000, DIE SCHÖPFER DER EINKAUFSWELTEN / THE CREATORS OF THE SHOPPING WORLDS, 2001) (see ill. 81). A tenacious curiosity for 'what goes on' (*was ist los*) and how things work focuses Farocki's attention on how life is organised at the micro-levels of power, language and social relations. His encyclopaedic knowledge feeds this close observation of the day-to-day in offices, schools, or military training camps, while an elegant economy of language and terse visual style find words for images, and images for concepts that light up in the sudden spark of an unexpectedly illuminating comparison, or become the slow-burn fuse of a gradually developing and finally exploding insight.

This symptomatic topicality of Farocki's subjects – their uncanny 'timeliness' – is one of his self-confessed concerns: 'to constantly assure oneself of the



present', as a sort of information feedback loop of the kind he often depicts in his films. But the impression that he has a journalist's eye for issues that are 'in' is as deceptive as his detached, didactic, or deadpan manner of treating them. He is extremely selective, single-minded even, in his choice of themes, while his engagement is total, to the point of requiring careful self-protection and even decoy camouflage.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Farocki takes up a topic only when it fulfils at least three minimal requirements: he must be able to picture the phenomenon in its details as well as show how it partakes of a larger process; he must be able to establish, however obliquely, a level of reflexive self-reference; and finally, he must be able to hint at a hidden centre, an Archimedean point, more often sensed than seen. The principle is illustrated by his early feature-length film, *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*. Based on an essay he had read in a political journal, Farocki tries to explain Hitler's rise to power and his ability to wage a world war, by pinpointing a crisis in the German steel industry, itself the consequence of a 'successful' piece of modernisation in its production process, by which a new kind of feedback loop is created between the coal, coke, and steel industries.<sup>8</sup> The idea of this feedback loop (*Verbund*) then serves as a model for a much larger historical process, namely the peculiar interconnectedness of industrialisation and warfare, and of the different man-machine symbioses typical of modern industrial and media societies. The reflexive self-reference sets in when the same *Verbund* principle becomes the very condition of possibility of *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* itself: 'taking my cue from the steel industry, where every waste product flows back into the process of production and as little energy as possible gets lost, I try to organise a *Verbund* for my own work. The basic research for a project I finance with a radio broadcast, some of the books I use I review for the book programme, and many of the things I notice during this kind of preparatory work end up in my television features.'<sup>9</sup> However, the film's Archimedean point is more difficult to pin down: it most likely has to do with a 'feedback loop' between accident and design, and the role of contingency and unintended consequences in the life of technological systems.

Farocki seizes a situation in flux, preferably when poised for a (dialectical) reversal. Even the most literal event may turn – before our eyes and in real time – into a metaphor that expands into a concept. By suddenly revealing in miniature a social or political totality, each recorded moment unfolds in several dimensions at once, with one dimension invariably referring back to his own position as filmmaker and writer. How this locates the physical as well as moral space from which he speaks is most graphically illustrated in one of his first surviving films *NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER* from 1968-69. The camera, head on, frames Farocki in a static medium close-up, sitting by an empty table in an apparently equally bare room; it could be a teacher's desk, a witness stand before

an investigating magistrate, or the police taking a statement from a suspect. In a monotone, he reads from the eyewitness report by a Vietnamese man describing the methods used by the Americans in their bombing raids. The Vietnamese man is a survivor of a napalm attack on his village, napalm being the 'inextinguishable fire' of the title. Upon finishing the report, Farocki faces the camera to say: 'how can we show you the deployment of napalm and the nature of the burns it causes? If we show you pictures of the injuries inflicted by napalm, you will just close your eyes. At first you will close your eyes before the pictures, then you will close your eyes before the memory of the pictures, and then you will close your eyes before the realities the pictures represent.' Farocki then takes a cigarette from the ashtray, draws on it to make it glow. As the camera slowly tracks into a close-up, he takes the cigarette from his mouth and extinguishes it on the back of his hand. A voice-off in the meantime explains that a cigarette burns at roughly 500 degrees Celsius, while napalm burns at approximately 3000 degrees Celsius.

The scene, in retrospect, includes all of Farocki, and prefigures the fundamental preoccupations of his filmmaking. One recognises the absence of the key image, as in the Ramstein news report twenty years later, but instead of this being the revenge of the television crew for the humiliations inflicted on their craft by the pseudo-events of politicians, this is the revenge of the filmmaker on the politicians who perpetrate such horrific, obscene real-life events as ordering a napalm raid on civilians populations, executed from the distance and safety of a US Air Force B-52 bomber. The scene shows the filmmaker taking the side of the Vietnamese in this war. But his gesture of self-inflicted solidarity derives its moral power (and distinguishes itself from the false pathos of so much self-proclaimed solidarity with the victims, on the part of politicised students at the time) from the implied inadequacy and radical incommensurability of the act. On the other hand, the inadequacy is justified on other grounds: it demonstrates the fundamental need for metaphor – one thing standing for another, the cigarette for the bomb, the back of the hand for the villager's body, the familiar for the horrific – when depicting the realities of this world and when trying to bring the unimaginable 'into the picture'. Metaphor makes something visible, but it also makes it 'uncanny' (unfamiliar), allowing Farocki to re-claim a legitimate place for art and aesthetic practice. And this at a time when many artists – not only Berlin filmmakers at the DFFB, the film and television academy from which Farocki was relegated – no longer saw a justification for art, and instead devoted themselves to 'direct action', or at the very least, felt obliged to make instructional films, thereby rehearsing future direct actions.<sup>10</sup> As Tilmann Baumgärtel has argued, the film is a kind of *poetological-political* manifesto: 'This radical, auto-destructive gesture [of stubbing out the cigarette on his own hand] marks the endpoint of a [...] period, in

which Farocki as a student of the DFFB between 1966 and 1968 had participated [...]. Several of his fellow students did, in the years that followed, opt for active militant resistance: Holger Meins joined the Red Army Fraction, Philip Sauber became a member of the "June 2nd Movement". Farocki for his part decided in favour of filmmaking. His self-mutilation in *NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER* [...] must be read as an act of self-initiation to being an artist (renouncing direct political activism), [...] a sort of aesthetic-political partisan, whose films are acts of resistance against conventional mainstream cinema, produced with "guerrilla tactics"<sup>11</sup> (see ill. 1).

### **The Poetics of the Cut: Montage and Metaphor, Mirror and *Mise-en-Abime***

That Farocki himself regards *NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER* as a key work is clear from the attention he gives it in *SCHNITTSTELLE*, the installation piece he produced to reflect upon but also to cut himself loose (*Schnitt* meaning a cut) from his early work. In the new context, as Christa Blümlinger notes, the surviving scar of the cigarette burn draws attention to another metaphoric feature of the scene, which refers back to the cinema: it is as if Farocki's own hand becomes the bodily equivalent of the indexical trace once thought unique to the cinema.<sup>12</sup> The photographic index is, of course, increasingly absent from all images, now that these images – still or moving – have as their material support the electronic video signal or digital-numerical algorithms, instead of (light- and heat-sensitive) celluloid. In a historical reversal that makes the non-organic stand for the organic, celluloid is now an ironically apt metaphor for human skin ('the skin of film' is a phrase often used by Alexander Kluge, a fellow filmmaker whom Farocki has great respect for). The scene, which perhaps will become known as a turning point in film aesthetics as strategically placed as was Luis Buñuel's slitting of a woman's eye in *UN CHIEN ANDALOU*, illustrates the second condition needed for Farocki to take an interest in a topic, and for him to find it absorbing enough to make it the subject of a film. This condition is that the topic invites and even morally obliges him to take sides against himself. In other words, it must develop a dynamic of self and other that allows him to interrogate his own practice and jeopardise his own intellectual self-assurance, in the meticulous (or sometimes merciless) depiction of the other (enemy, antagonist, secret alter ego). In *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* it is literally a mirror into which the protagonists – and through them, the filmmaker – are forced to look, in order to realise their collusive kinship with the point of view of the aggressor in the Vietnam War (see ill. 23). In other films, the commentary does

not relent until it has found such a moment of self-reference as self-exposure, verbal or visual, often disguised as a witty metaphor, a provocative comparison or a particularly bold simile. Consider, for instance, his realisation in the 1980s that some of his Maoist ideas might have been naive, or that his pro-Vietnamese stance from the mid-1970s could not survive the historical moment:

Ever since revolutions have existed, there has been enthusiasm, followed by disappointment. 'How could I have been so blind as to believe that the Vietcong would create a better regime?' One says 'blind' because love is blind. But to be faithful to an idea means not to exchange it right away for another, more opportune one. Perhaps one has to be prepared even to endure the death of an idea, without running away. To be faithful means to be present even in the hour of death.<sup>13</sup>

So prominent is the habit of thought to express one thing through another, and to 'see' the self in the other that it must be considered the founding gesture of Farocki's body of work and the signature of his mind at work. Whether it is the point of departure or finishing line, the moment of metaphoric 'conversion' marks the pull of gravity of his imagination. Juxtaposing apparent opposites and if necessary, torturing them until they yield a hidden identity or an unsuspected similarity, provide the (temporary) moments of closure for his trains of thought. In this sense, metaphoric equivalence and (almost as often) metaphoric discrepancy (catachresis) establish Farocki's poetics as well as his politics.<sup>14</sup> But metaphor also defines what an image can be and what are its limits, and metaphor passes the responsibility for taking care of the image back to language, where it holds it accountable.

Farocki himself discusses his poetics under a different heading, not metaphor but montage. His montage takes two forms. One is as a sort of meta-commentary, traversing especially the early films like a steady murmur, repeating the need to 'separate and join'. The other type of montage is embedded in the movement of the thought, as its structuring dynamic, but verbalised, if at all, only as the cut, the gap and what becomes visible 'in-between'. Where film theorists speak of segmentation, Farocki (or his characters) discuss the difficulty of thinking things together at one level, while at another, making distinctions and keeping things apart. Only when the two levels are aligned, are the preconditions of new knowledge present: making connections on the basis of having taken something apart is thus where the rhetoric of metaphor meets the technique of filmic montage. In *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR*, separating/joining defines the entire movement of the plot, as if its macrostructure had to be repeated at the microlevel, a sort of fractal relationship between the big themes (how to link a political struggle for liberation to a personal act of emancipation, how to separate as a couple while maintaining a friendship) and the small

formal concerns (the relations from shot to shot, keeping shots static and nonetheless creating an inner movement linking these self-contained units of meaning). In trying to find new building blocks for film narrative, and a new grammar for film language, Farocki works towards creating the formal basis for his metaphoric thinking, by for instance, 'reinventing' the tableau shot of early cinema, and by devising several kinds of frame-within-a-frame compositions. In many cases, the voice-over commentary or the scripted dialogue between the characters verbalises both tenor and vehicle, while the visuals repeat the metaphoric figure by literalising it: in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, one finds sentences like: 'the chemist Kékulé was looking for the molecular structure of benzol [...] one night, he dreamt of serpents swallowing their own tail.' In a hand mirror, held up to an imagined window, we see a group of children down in the street, dancing in a row and slowly forming a circle (see ill. 13). 'So Kékulé proposed the form of a circle for the benzol molecules' – 'It's like a bird that eats its own eggs, in order to feed itself while it is hatching them.' The scene with its metaphoric relays and its visual *mise-en-abime* introduces the key concept of the film, that of the *Verbund*, i.e. the creation of a connection between steel production and the coking plant, in order to maximise the energy use of the industrial processes involved, so that the waste products of one can become an energy source for another. As the engineer puts it: 'our task today is to direct whatever energy is generated in a production process to wherever it can be optimally utilised. We have to create links between mines, coking plants, steelworks, and blast furnaces.' To which the industrialist replies: 'I started off as a farmer. A sow gives birth to a litter of twenty, of which two or three will be too weak to survive, and the sow will eat them. Pigs can eat piglets. But piglets are much too valuable to just make them into pig-feed as a matter of principle. Yet that is exactly what we are doing when we feed the gas from the coke plant back into the firing up of the coking ovens. No farmer would ever fatten his pigs with piglets, with the idea that this lowers his feed costs.'

If in his early films, the metaphoric principle is verbalised, and applied somewhat externally, by way of political slogans ('mass battles are like factory work, the trenches are the assembly lines'), the later ones integrate their metaphors, by providing the implicit structure for an entire film. Thus, *LEBEN – BRD* consists of a series of such tableau vignettes, each showing a different group of people or locations, where an exercise, a rehearsal, a training programme or a demonstration takes place: schoolchildren are taught to safely cross the road, pensioners are rehearsing an amateur theatrical performance, trainee midwives are shown how to deliver babies, soldiers are taken through their paces with tanks on open terrain, police rehearse the arrest of a resisting suspect, and so on (see ill. 57). Each vignette is itself cut into different seg-

ments, so that the film can return to them several times, even to the point where the second appearance retrospectively explains the first. But intercut into the intercut segments are also scenes of mechanical tests: a metal weight falls rhythmically onto an armchair, to test the durability of the internal springs; car doors are mechanically opened and slammed shut; robots insert car keys into locks, give them half a turn and pull them out again, toilet seats are raised and lowered, washing machines are rumbled and tilted until they crash into corners. Machines impersonate the human users who brutalise the object world. The metaphor is evident, and if understood as an exact equivalence, is highly polemical: today, people are nothing but objects, commodities that, in order to remain in the market place as tradable goods, have to be regularly and mechanically tested as to their utility, durability and stress resistance.<sup>15</sup> But precisely because no commentary is offered, and no verbal paraphrase links the one sequence to the other, or compares the animate with the inanimate, the viewers are given ample room for their own reflections. The sequences may elicit a troubling image of parallels, but also one that focuses on the differences between the groups, or they may pass through a whole gamut of recognition- and estrangement-effects, as daily life before our eyes takes on the contours of a permanent fire drill, a coaching lesson, a therapy session, a job interview, or awareness training. Are these dress rehearsals a sensible behavioural insurance policy against a risky, uncertain future, or do they confirm just the opposite: the foolishness of believing that life is a script that can be learnt by heart or by rote? Thus, if as viewers we come to the key metaphor (that human beings are like commodities and the social system is like a stress-testing machine) from the other side, from its verso – the patchy analogies, the ironic asymmetry, and the painful rather than cynical equivalences – we see the film more as a series of Chinese boxes. A sort of mental *mise-en-abyme* begins to connect the segments, potentially undercutting and even inverting the paratactic (but pointedly non-chronological) succession of segments produced by Farocki's mimicry of the observational, direct-cinema editing style.<sup>16</sup>

In his most recent works, notably the installation pieces, the metaphors become strikingly bold and revealing in other respects: linking prisons to shopping malls, for instance, seems provocative in quite a different way than his earlier comparisons of First World War trenches with Fordist assembly lines. It is precisely because some of the visual analogies no longer fully support the wide-ranging argument – such as the juxtaposition of a surveillance video of a prison visiting hour, and one of shoppers pushing carts through supermarket aisles – that the comparisons between the architecture of prisons, modern theatres of war, and the design of shopping malls remain conceptually sound. The Bentham Panopticon prison that he shows in the opening scenes of *ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN*, with its tight alignment of camera eye and gun

sight is, as he himself remarks, already obsolete in light of the new tagging, tracking, and deterritorialising surveillance technologies. Farocki's very point is to indicate the limits of the visible itself in the new commercially high-profit but politically low-profile *Verbund* systems emerging with the 'synergies' between computer software firms, security specialists, and consumer service industries. They also pose a new challenge to film history, as Farocki argues in 'Controlling Observation':

We have already mentioned the fact that the prison visitation scene [so central to the prison film genre] will soon no longer correspond with reality. The introduction of electronic cash will make bank robbery practically impossible as well, and if it turns out that in the future all weapons will be electronically tagged, [...] the end of the screen shoot-out will also be just around the corner. [...] With the increase in electronic control devices, everyday life will become just as difficult to portray and to dramatise as everyday work already is.

In a sense, Farocki's cinema has consistently anticipated this state of affairs: what is decisive in our society and what shapes much of our everyday lives, has almost totally withdrawn itself from the visual plane and escapes traditional representation techniques, including those of cinematic montage. Hence the importance of the cut or gap that one not only finds in his editing of filmic segments, but also in the conceptual montage of his argument, which always leaves a space between the missing shot or missing link for the viewer to either notice or not, but in any case, to figure out for himself. As with all metaphors, there is also a *tertium comparationis* in Farocki's work that is not always entirely spelled out, and which at times becomes the hidden Archimedean point around which the comparison finally turns. In the case of prisons and shopping malls, the missing link might be '(enforced) (leisure)', with, in each case, a significant shift of emphasis from one institution to the other.<sup>17</sup> If the more overt link is, of course, the presence of surveillance cameras in both prisons and shopping centres, then the intended goal of this close circuit visibility, namely to make all contact routine, that is to say: predictable and programmable – 'safe' – is the more pertinent and thought-provoking connection. In Farocki's accompanying text, on the other hand, the factory principle, the assembly line and the kinds of discipline associated with mechanised labour returns as the focal point. There, he brings together prisons and shopping malls, military training camps and factories, as examples of artificial environments carefully designed to permit the friction-free sequencing of production processes: be they the processing of model prisoners and model shoppers, or the production of combat soldiers and of quality-controlled consumer goods (see ill. 42).



## The Man with the Writing Desk, at the Editing Table

Farocki's poetics, I want to argue, has developed from a montage cinema to one encompassing installation art. But is this a natural progression, in line with the times, a shift of conceptual plane and register, or an advance that simultaneously implies a step back? From the point of view of the centrality of metaphor in his cinema, the question is particularly acute. But as I have tried to indicate, the problem of the semantic versus the spatial relation between images posed itself right from the start. When a filmmaker edits a sequence of images, either consecutively or in contiguous opposition, it is almost too difficult to create metaphors that are not purely rhetorical gestures or pre-structured linguistically (as in Eisenstein's, or Chaplin's actualised 'inner speech' metaphors). By contrast, in a twin screen installation work, where there are two images side by side, it is almost too easy to create metaphors: the installation itself becomes a sort of metaphor machine, which may have to be constrained, synchronised by voice, sound and a new kind of syntax, in order to also produce contiguous-metonymic relations and, by extension, an argument or a sense of progression. The task is to distil (con)sequentiality out of pure succession, to trace a trajectory out of random access, and to effect the sort of spacing that can generate meaningful syntactic relationships between images. Cinema and installation art illustrate two principles that potentially conflict with one another: the sequence and simultaneity, 'one thing after another' and 'two things at the same time'. Given the contending claims of these two principles throughout his work, it is possible to argue that Farocki's cinema has always aspired to the condition of installation art, while his installations are especially creative ways of tackling the problem how to keep the movement of thought going, even when two image-tracks are running side by side. Already in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (1977) one finds the following sentence as a sort of manifesto for the logic of his installation pieces: 'I have started to take photographs. *One* image, incidentally, is too few; you need to take *two* images of everything [that matters]. Things are in flux so much that it requires two images at the very least to properly register the *direction* of the movement.' A few years later (1981) he published an article that argued the pros and cons of shot-countershot as the (all too convenient but nonetheless apparently indispensable) base-line of cinematic thought and its temporal articulations:

It is authors, author-authors, who are against the shot-countershot technique. The shot-countershot technique is a method of montage which in advance has an effect on the shooting, and thus also upon the invention, choice, and the way one deals with types of filmic images and prototypes. In the end, shot-countershot is the first rule, the law of value. [...] Shot-countershot is such an important technique in the



language of film because it offers the possibility of placing very different images in a series. Continuity, discontinuity: the series is interrupted, yet still progresses. [...] Shot-countershot offers the best opportunities for manipulating narrative time. Attention is diverted by the back and forth, so that real time can disappear between the cuts [...]. I am trying to comment on this shot-countershot by taking shots from both sides. Placed side by side, they are meant to yield another image and that which exists between the images should become visible. Klaus Wyborny gave a sharp illustration of this shot-countershot from *one* side. His work demonstrates that there can be no commerciality without shot-countershot. In the same way, everything looks amateurish in the absence of shot-countershot. [...] The clumsiness exposed by the omission of shot-countershot arises from film's paucity of the stylistics of play. Unlike the performing arts, cinema has few meaning-condensing gestures which could serve to reduce time.<sup>18</sup>

With his installations, Farocki seems to have approximated – and perhaps even appropriated – this potential of the performing arts for ‘meaning-condensing’ gestures that also ‘reduce time’, which is itself not a bad definition of the function of metaphor. His genius has always been to separate and sub-divide what appear to be self-sufficient and self-contained units of (often, ideological) thought, and to show them as internally split and contradictory: ‘the beginning of an investigation is to link ideas. But in the end, they have to become distinct again.’ Yet he has also linked things that do not seem to belong together but, once they are perceived as connected, can shock, provoke reflection, enlighten. Metaphor and montage in his work are spatial as well as poetological acts, which extend the function of metaphor as a *gleichsetzen*, a ‘putting into relations of equivalence’ as he once described it, in order to achieve a mode of simultaneous multi-dimensional thinking. His installation work finally allows his films to become the kind of architectural-philosophical objects he had always wanted them to be.

But the installation pieces are also the conceptual realisations of Farocki's cinema in another respect. The challenge he evidently set for himself throughout his career has been to think about photography, the cinema, television, and, more recently, digital images in these media's own terms, which is to say, in the only terms that make their historical practice (as feature films, television programmes, found footage, surveillance video, press agency photographs) comprehensible as political realities. In other words, Farocki freezes and seizes images in their textural and textual materiality, before they once more return to being mere retinal stimuli, undifferentiated flow, transparent carriers of sights, sounds, and an overload of data, or ‘noise’. The meaning-making gesture is one of interruption, interception – the raised hand of someone who parts, imparts as well as polices, but also of someone who touches, caresses

and has tactile contact with the image, and even more so, can feel the contours and motions of thought inherent in the moving image down into his very fingertips. A double movement then, and usually staged in the same space, that of the frame. With the installation pieces, this frame becomes a three-dimensional frame, a physical environment experienced by the body. But it is also a conceptual environment, experienced by the mind: installation art becomes a theorist's tool that, happily, does not require a meta-language and yet makes all the demands of a coherent discourse. In fact, the shift from cinema to installation art enacts a set of transformations on an already pre-defined terrain in Farocki's work: it is this work's *mise-en-abime*. If the *Verbund* is now no longer the industrial one of pre-Nazi Germany, but comprised of the synergies between the US-led, world-wide communication and control industries, then Farocki's own *Verbund* has also changed. No longer serving as a freelance partisan, engaging the culture industries in guerrilla raids, he has become more of an architect-designer-displayer. If this combination of skills is present in his installations, it in turn mirrors the architect-designer-displayers of prisons, theme parks, shopping malls... and museums.<sup>19</sup> Here, too, the reflexive self-referentiality is pointed, and as an artist, Farocki is prepared to take full responsibility for his complicity.

For what better place than the museum to once more have the cinema confront itself and its history? A curious set of parallels has evolved between the museum as a space of aesthetic contemplation, and the electronic vision machines with their role as social instruments of surveillance. The museum is a site of distance and reflection, but also a storage space of obsolete media technologies. Meanwhile, the vision machines become mere concessions to the human sensory interface, for they are powered less by sight and optics than by electricity and mathematics. Visuality in all its forms is now the face and visage that a control society gives itself when it has replaced dialogue and democracy with sensing and data-mining, just as vision and the mirror have been the instruments that mute and mutate the hard power of the coercive disciplinary society into the soft power of self-policing and self-fashioning. Farocki's installations thus not only return us to the politics of representation in the image; they also point out how prisons and supermarkets, video games and theatres of war have become 'workplaces' – essential for the reproduction of our societies. As hitherto distinct domains, they are now spaces on the point of convergence, once one appreciates how they all fall under the new pragmatics of the time-space logic of optimising access, flow, control. These are the kinds of sites a filmmaker needs to identify and recognise himself as part of, but so does the spectator, whose role has changed correspondingly: even the most detached or distracted observer leaves his footprints and tracks in electronic space.

Farocki's self-implication is first of all present in the prominence given (in his films as well as in his published texts) to the writing desk and the editing table, two apparently anachronistic sites for a filmmaker in this age of laptops, word-processing, and electronic editing suites. But for Farocki they also serve as highly ironic, valedictory signifiers of the *Autorenfilmer*, the filmmaker-as-author. Hence such deliberate paradoxes as 'I edit at my writing desk and I write at my editing table'. His writing desk is featured in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (with one particularly evocative image of his face reflected in the glass-plate surface (see ill. 14), the camera framing his hand holding a pencil), while his editing table is the subject of the essay 'What is an Editing Table?', and is central to the installation *SCHNITTSTELLE*, as mentioned earlier, his most intimate *ars poetica* to date. Here Farocki once again examines his own site/situation (literally, 'workplace') and tries to locate the crossroads ('*Schnittstelle*') where he finds himself. Not only do video art and digital media challenge a filmmaker's craft (by making many of his skills obsolete); they also 'intersect' with the (still) photographic image (whose function, in Farocki's view of history, it was to serve as an allegorical picture puzzle). Finally, digital video 'interfaces' with his analysis of the politics of the image (by jeopardizing its role as witness and forensic exhibit or *Indiz* [index]).

Across the several layers of meaning of the word '*Schnittstelle*', which the links and crossovers, established between writing desk and editing table, begin to unpack, Farocki thus literalises the genre he is now most frequently associated with – that of the 'essay film'. Without going into this category in any great detail – see the essays by Christa Blümlinger and Nora Alter in this volume – the label conveniently highlights the fact that his films are discursive and proceed via argumentation, rather than by constructing a fictional narrative or practising any of the current modes of interactive, personal or observational documentary. Insofar as Farocki's cinema has always been a form of writing, the label 'essay film' conveys a crucial aspect of his work. In addition, when he uses voice-over commentary, his spoken texts are often both educationally explanatory and ruminating in their reflexivity.

Yet such a definition of the essay film is only half the story. True, Farocki's films are a constant dialogue with images, with image making, and with the institutions that produce and circulate these images. But present in the word 'essay' (with its etymological roots in the verb 'to do') is also Farocki's mode of production, his manufacture, his handwriting, his signature: what Walter Benjamin described, in connection with narration and the storyteller, as 'the thumbprint of the potter on the clay vessel'. Indeed, in several of his films, the director's hand frames the image (e.g., most famously, in *BILDER DER WELT*), and just to emphasise the importance of hands, he made (together with Jörg Becker) a film called simply *DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE/ THE EXPRESSION OF*

HANDS (1997) – for which he has also written an illuminatingly candid text<sup>20</sup> (see ill. 36).

## **Allegory, or The Poetics of the Archive**

Much of Farocki's material consists of 'found footage', images or films made for a different purpose and originating from another context. Faced with these sources, the filmmaker is first and foremost an archivist. He collects references, cites quotations, reads passages from books, and researches (or has others research for him) a sizeable stock of images of very diverse provenance. It is his modesty as an archivist that forbids him from doing what every television programme does with still images, namely pretend that they can be set in motion, by elaborately manipulating them with a rostrum camera, zooming in and out, creating close-ups and isolating detail. This simulation of a mechanics of movement, Farocki once described as the ketchup method, as if the filmmaker was vigorously shaking the camera like a bottle, in order to splash the image with the sticky ooze of motion and the gaudy sauce of sense. Instead, Farocki's static set-ups emphasise the frame, or as mentioned earlier, his own hands provide the frame within the frame. But often this store of images in their necessary arbitrariness and ultimate incoherence, laid out flat on a table or the floor (as in *DAS DOPPELTE GESICHT/ THE DOUBLE FACE*, 1984) (see ill. 37) can be a very deceptive conceptual 'non-space' (Marc Augé, interviewed by Farocki in *KINOSTADT PARIS/ CINE CITY PARIS*, 1988). Scarred, striated, and marked by the intervention of several hands, such found or researched images demarcate their own landscape and demand their own territory. In *WIE MAN SIEHT*, for instance, many of the images were literally taken on battlefields, strewn with animal carcasses or mechanical corpses, but all of them, irrespective of their provenance, at least initially show a world that has fallen silent and still. That is what the static camera conveys, orchestrated by distant sound effects that are more like echoes, and by the formal commentary delivered in monotone (as it is in *WIE MAN SIEHT*). To that extent, Farocki the archivist is also an archaeologist, but an archaeologist who executes his reconstructive work not in the triumphalist gestures of a Heinrich Schliemann, rediscovering Troy, but in the spirit of sorrowful contemplation and melancholy reflection, mindful of the historical breaks that especially separate his German homeland from its own past. He has been quite explicit about this conjunction of archival research, archaeological reconstruction, and allegorical reading in, for instance, his description of how he found the subject of *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*. After coming across the *Kursbuch* essay by Alfred Sohn-Rethel, he

was seized by a shock, tinged with elation, which was followed by a spell of dejection:

It was as if I had found the missing fragment of an entire picture. That's when the long story of this film began. I was able to assemble the total picture from the fragmented pieces, but this did not undo the act of destruction. The reconstituted picture was an image of destruction.<sup>21</sup>

The last phrase becomes especially poignant, in its deliberate echo of Walter Benjamin and his 'Theses on History': 'the reconstituted picture was an image of destruction'. The link between image and destruction reverberates throughout Farocki's films, in fact the recto/verso sense of 'shooting' (recording versus destroying) is a conjunction to which he has devoted, apart from *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, at least two of his feature-length films: *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* and *BILDER DER WELT*. The latter is explicitly constructed around this very paradox: taking an image is a gesture of preservation. But this gesture is also one that prepares the object for its destruction. Farocki demonstrates this with the example of the bombing raids flown by British and American planes over Germany during World War II, and by commenting on the mindset of German SS and Nazi bureaucrats, who seemed to take such pleasure in their cameras that they thought nothing of documenting and visually registering even their most appalling crimes. In the case of the Allied reconnaissance flights, he notes that only in the 1970s, after the genocide of the Jews had fully entered Western consciousness and media culture as 'The Holocaust', did the Americans fully realise that they had photographically documented the camps at the very time when extermination was at its most intense:

The first image taken by the Allies of the concentration camp at Auschwitz was shot on April 4, 1944. American planes had taken off from Foggia, Italy, heading towards targets in Silesia [...]. The analysts identified the industrial complexes pictured [...], they did not mention the existence of the camps. Again and again, even in 1945, after the Nazis had cleared out the Auschwitz camps, [...] Allied airplanes flew over Auschwitz and captured the camps in photographs. They were never mentioned in a report. The analysts had no orders to look for the camps, and therefore did not find them (see ill. 43).

The second image, juxtaposed to the ones taken from the air, was taken at ground level, face to face with the victim, by an SS officer for his private album:

An image from this album: a woman has arrived in Auschwitz, and the camera captures her looking over her shoulder as she walks by. To her left, an SS man holds an old man, another recent arrival in Auschwitz, by the lapels of his jacket with his right hand as a sorting gesture. In the centre of the image is the woman: the photographers are always pointing their cameras at the beautiful woman. Or, after they

have set up their camera somewhere, they take a picture when a woman who in their eyes is beautiful passes by. Here, on the 'platform' at Auschwitz, they photograph a woman the way they would cast a glance at her in the street. The woman knows how to take in this photographic gaze with the expression on her face, and how to look ever so slightly past the viewer. In just this way, on a boulevard she would look past a gentleman casting a glance at her, into a store window (see ill. 44).

Here, too, something in the image was not being 'seen' by the camera, in order for something else to survive: the woman's dignity and humanity, in the most inhuman of circumstances imaginable. The photograph stands for the terrible contract that preserves a certain 'reality' or 'normality' under extreme conditions. But so devastating is the a-symmetry between 'he who looks' and 'she who is being looked at' in this instance that as spectators we lose all ground from under us, plunged as we are into an ethical void. It is as if all of Farocki's earlier investigations into the various uses of the cinematic apparatus, understood as the technologies of perception and imaging, as well as the mental constructs, moral stances, and bodily sensations associated with the camera itself, had been brought into sharp focus around these two historical instances, each of which has left traces, to which Farocki can give an emblematic significance. Such a reading of contingent detail, in the knowledge of a 'reconstituted picture' requires the disposition of an allegorist, someone who, according to Benjamin, is able to contemplate a world of fragments and a life in ruins, while still reading it as a totality: in this case the totality of a nation's destruction of a people and its own self-destruction as a moral entity. The instance is once again part of a larger process, affecting *in extremis* the entire history of Western Enlightenment. As modern warfare increasingly relies on aerial reconnaissance (*Aufklärung*), its vision machines become increasingly blind to what they are not programmed to see. In a countermove of enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), Farocki's essay films increasingly read the camera's revelatory role and its gift of resurrection as the reverse side of its destructive and predatory impact,<sup>22</sup> while projecting into each picture the 'reflexive self-reference' noted earlier. The filmmaker knows that he has been implicated, collusive, and is part of the very process he is documenting – nowhere more so than in the 'found image' of the woman at the Auschwitz sorting ramp, but also in the 're-found' images of the Allied planes flying over the camps, recording the smoke rising from the chimneys, so to speak, but not seeing its significance.<sup>23</sup>

## War and Cinema

'You need to take *two* images of everything', the photographer observes in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*. Besides announcing Farocki's video installation, the phrase also returns us to chronophotography, the first condition of possibility of cinema. Its meaning is now even more Janus-faced: looking back to a pre-cinematic way of conceiving motion and succession, it also looks forward to a post-cinematic 'stilling of images', whether in the form of inserting black leader (Farocki, in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, Jean Luc Godard in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*) and the re-materialisation of the 'originary' intermittence, or in the use of found footage and photographs. These still images – stilled even when they are moving in a film like *BILDER DER WELT*, but not just there – Farocki's work reads like maps or secret drawings, bringing to the fore a third definition of the two-image idea. For it is clear that a new image-concept is forming in our culture around satellite images and surveillance cameras which also require two images in order to detect change and thus to measure an event that might require action. This new concept of the image regards it not as a picture or representation, but as the bearer of data and information. What such images record is time itself, creating a new kind of intermittence: now you need two images not so much in order to indicate the direction of movement, as Farocki once asserted, but to track the interval of time as the index of change, and thus of information.<sup>24</sup>

In his commentary on the cinematic apparatus, Farocki goes back to the pre-history of cinema, not unlike those film scholars who in recent decades have reinvestigated the 'origins' of cinema (among other things, in order to speculate on its 'futures'). It transpires that Ottmar Anschütz, Eadweard Muybridge and Jules Etienne Marey had no idea – or for that matter, no intention even – of providing the world with a new entertainment medium. They were scientists, entrepreneur-*bricoleurs*, or, at best, they thought of themselves as philanthropists, benefactors of mankind. In fact, Farocki goes back even further, to 1858, to a relatively obscure German stereometrist by the name of Albrecht Meydenbauer, who stumbled upon – quite literally – the so-called *Messbildverfahren* (scale measurement photography), a way of using the fixed camera and glass-plate photography in order to calculate the height of a building.

By telling the story of this cartographer and building inspector who was nearly killed trying to measure the height of a church in need of repairs, Farocki makes Meydenbauer the founding father of (his) cinematography. Scale measurement opens up a perspective that changes the way we come to understand the history lesson given in *BILDER DER WELT*. Drawing from



Meydenbauer's experience the conclusion that in this world, 'it is dangerous to be present, much more secure to take a picture', Farocki views the shock of mortal danger as the mother of invention, which undercuts the usual story of greed and cupidity as the driving force of cinematic progress and innovation. In addition, with Meydenbauer, the visible becomes the measurable, which is the beginning of what we now call the 'digital'. But as the measurable replaces the visible, a new kind of metaphor signifies the gap. Substituting for the visuality no longer emerging from similarity and difference the measurable is symbolized by juxtaposition and the interval. At the same time, Farocki ties the photographic – and by extension – the cinematic image to a proximity with death that all great theorists of film and photography (such as André Bazin or Roland Barthes) have recognised and reflected upon.

But unlike them, and in line with a historical experience we no longer can escape, Farocki thinks of death in terms of violent death, of man-made death and sex-and-death, or by contrasting the *tactical*, one-off warfare of the guerilla with the *strategic*, systematic warfare of capitalism, of empires and world powers. Thus, one of his great themes is indeed 'war and cinema'. Yet what is so striking about his reflections on this topic, no doubt because he himself feels so deeply implicated, is that embedded in his metaphorical thinking is the related rhetorical figure of metonymy. Contiguity-thinking is a mental habit that cannot look at an object without observing what lies next to it, what nestles inside it. To look also means to look past an object, to turn it over, to discover the obverse and reverse side. Farocki apprehends the world as natural picture puzzles. To put it in the more philosophical idiom: he alerts us to the discrepancy between perception and cognition. Almost all the images he studies closely resemble Ludwig Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit representation, where an image, depending on one's cognitive frame, visually resembles one or the other, but never both at once. Except that for Farocki, there can be contamination between the two alternative readings, they are communicating vessels rather than conceptual deadlocks, notably the communicating vessels that link warfare and military production to civilian usage and image production. We can look at the image of one of the first tanks, for instance, in which we recognise the agricultural vehicle that either served as the tank's model or that looks like a practical joker has mischievously misappropriated and 're-tooled' it. Similar things can be said of a picture of a dead horse, a bomb-shattered house, and soldiers in front of a tank grinding up the road: they signify by their juxtaposition, but they become uncanny by sharing the same pictorial space and frame. Or the equally surreal image that opens *WIE MAN SIEHT* of the plough that turns into a cannon (see ill. 40). Surreal, that is, until we see a soldier who looks like a farmer (who probably *was* a farmer) gripping just such a gun-plough, with a horse dragging it across rough terrain. These rebus-pictures are



reminiscent of *Une Semaine de bonté*, Max Ernst's collages of pictures, cut out of the science journal *La Nature*, but they also confirm what Klaus Kreimeier meant when he called Farocki, referring to his early student films, Germany's only 'Maoist-Dadaist'<sup>25</sup> (see ill. 18-21).

## Archimedean Points or Vanishing Points: Between Abstract Work and Abstract Existence

Farocki's cinema as well as his video work, then, is a meta-cinema without a meta-language. It discusses cinema's origins, its life, death and afterlife, but in cinema's own terms. What becomes visible, even in the short half-century since Farocki began making films, are the many alternative lives of the cinema, reaching from the early agit-prop films, made in the streets as much as for the streets, via his instructional films, his film essays and author films (all of them, in his words, 'made against the cinema and against television') to his installations. It seems as if Farocki has never been comfortable with the black box that is traditional cinema. Yet from what has been said thus far, it is unlikely that he would be any more comfortable with the white cubes of the museum or art gallery, the exhibition spaces where his more recent work has been presented. One indication of this philosophical, but also strategic hesitation between the black box and white cube is that each of Farocki's films mimics a certain ensemble, a certain *dispositif*. In this sense, too, his films are allegories of cinema, even when the apparatus they mimic is not necessarily identical with that of cinema.

*ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, as we have already noted, is built around the model of the *Verbund*, and it becomes an allegory of cinema primarily because it shows, as its photo negative, the portrait of the director as freelance author, television sub-contractor and 'independent' filmmaker working under the conditions of the German subsidy system of the 1970s. *LEBEN – BRD* and *WAS IST LOS?* mimic the instructional training films that also constitute their subject matter, giving a hint that these generally despised or often ignored genres of film history have something to offer even the most serious cineaste<sup>26</sup> (see ill. 41). *WIE MAN SIEHT*, on the other hand, takes the logic of the computer (with its yes/no, fork-in-the-road switching and branching structure) as its mental model, and expands it in several different directions, which reminds us that Farocki was already then of the opinion that the binary yes/no of modern technology and digitisation needed to be complemented by a more 'organic' model, which follows the natural contours of a given terrain, rather than the straight line of the ruler. And his own work pleads for a both/and model: his

praxis of keeping two images in mind simultaneously is best illustrated by the sequence in *WIE MAN SIEHT* that compares the Jacquard loom with Konrad Zuse's drawings after watching Fritz Lang's *METROPOLIS* and claims them as the imaginary twin screens of a conceptual installation that lets us understand the 'invention' of the computer as if it had been a dada ready-made.

*BILDER DER WELT* mimics the *dispositif* that today links military and medicine, police work and portrait photography, by investigating several privileged moments of their historical conjuncture. *VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION*, on the other hand, mimics the apparatus of democracy at the *status nascendi*: a power vacuum as the paradoxical moment of legitimating democratic power, and the double-edged sword that the media represent in both democracies and dictatorships. All these configurations are important to the filmmaker: they confirm that there is no outside to the inside of the image-media world, which obliges him to nail his colours to the mast. They also provide his work with a 'place' from where it becomes operational, even if this place is nothing but the cut, the vertiginous opening, the negative lever I have called the Archimedean point. His recto/verso thinking, his poetic sense of metamorphosis, and his baroque eye for the conceptual *tromp l'oeil* have not only saved Farocki from being locked into fixed positions, whether Cartesian, structuralist or deconstructivist, they have also given him a kind of optimism or confidence in the power of reversals. So much so that his melancholy, paired with an ironic self-reflexivity, is clearly distinguished from the disappointed idealism and at times hysterical fundamentalism of a Jean Baudrillard or Paul Virilio, with whom his ideas about modern warfare, prosthetic perception, and the cinematic apparatus as a simulacrum of social life have sometimes been compared.

Finally, can one be more specific about this Archimedean point, around which, I claim, his work turns? Yes and no: its very nature is to remain hidden, its causes lie in its effects, its mode of action is self-reference, it is the serpent swallowing its own tail. But one can identify some moments and motifs: an Archimedean point (or as Nora Alter in her essay calls it, 'the im/perceptible point') of *BILDER DER WELT*, for instance, would be the gap that opens up only in retrospect, when one takes the images in the beginning (which are repeated at the end) of ebb and tide wave simulations in a research lab water tank, and connects them to a slogan, also twice visible: 'Block the access routes'. The film turns, as Farocki confirms in the interview about the film, on an oblique analogy between the Allied bombing of the Auschwitz gas chambers (which did not take place), and the blocking of the access routes to NATO's nuclear bunkers (which should take place).<sup>27</sup> What connects them is the possibility of mobilising both resistance and an alternative strategy, in a political or ethical situation where what is known is not what is seen, and what is seen is not all there is

to be known. Wave energy might replace nuclear energy, and we might learn from a history that is counterfactual and hypothetical. But as Farocki has noted, *BILDER DER WELT* had unintended consequences, in that its international success 'returned' the film to him with a different title ('Images' instead of 'Pictures'), as well as with a different meaning.<sup>28</sup> What had intervened between the making and its reception, and had changed the relation between cause and effect, was the year 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war. The 'message' about nuclear energy had all but got lost in the historic upheavals and the transatlantic crossing, while several other discourses: of the Holocaust, war and cinema, feminist issues of representation, body and voice did return. Considered now more urgent, they therefore became more visible also in the film.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps a similar tension or hidden reference point exists in his later work. Farocki is in the vanguard of those artists and thinkers willing to name the forces that hollow out democracy from within, for instance, by commodifying public space and simulating citizenship in gated communities or enclosed experience worlds. But as a filmmaker he knows that the zones of exclusion that emerge on either side are policed in equal measure by fantasy and violence. If this analysis is inspired neither by a nostalgia for bourgeois individualism ('humanism'), nor by the ideals of socialism that used to be its obverse, a core concern does link him to one aspect of this tradition, and to the key theme of one of its dissident thinkers, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, the lifelong preoccupation of Alfred Sohn-Rethel.<sup>30</sup> I have already mentioned the idea of manufacture as it traverses Farocki's films, and how its combination of hand and eye is at once avant-garde and obsolete. Filmmaking – Farocki's kind of filmmaking – might be the last kind of work to deserve that name, and for him it serves as an allegory for so many other kinds of work no longer needed nor valued. When Farocki had placed himself, in *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR*, between 'working like a machine' and 'working like an artist', he qualified both as ultimately 'too easy': 'it is not a question of doing either one or the other, but of joining the two'. And although, at that point in 1981 his cinema was a meta-cinema, mainly because of his critical commentary on filmmaking in West Germany, it has since become a meta-cinema in a somewhat different sense. Farocki's films focus on the problems of 'work' as not only a category of the economic – how a society materially produces and ideologically reproduces the means of its survival – but work as the very condition of what it means to remain human. Now he notes the fatal role that the cinema may have played in abstracting human beings from this, their basic condition:

In order to organise the Fordist factory, experiments were carried out [in the form of time and motion studies]. These tests [of actual workers at their machines] present a

picture of abstract work while the pictures from the surveillance cameras yield a picture of abstract existence.<sup>31</sup>

From abstract work to abstract existence: if Farocki's installations give the impression of recording how mankind is becoming obsolete among its own creations, it is also worth pondering the place from which he himself speaks. For that, we have to remember his remark about love, and how it is sometimes necessary to remain faithful to an idea one has loved, even as one realises that this idea is dying. Might the idea, at whose deathbed Farocki's films hold their long vigil and keep a sorrowful wake, be that it is work which defines and dignifies human existence, and protects it finally, from both fantasy and violence? What is so prophetic about the Lumières' *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY* (central reference point of Farocki's *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK*) is the convergence of a particular technology, the cinematograph, with a particular site, the factory. It stands as the emblem for the fact that, ever since these two made contact, collided and combined, more and more workers have been 'leaving' the factory – not always of their own volition or at the end of the day. With the advent of cinema, and paradoxically, in no small measure because of it, the value of human productivity, along with the function of work, labour, and creativity have all undergone decisive mutations. What their future may be can only be surmised, especially considering how immobilised Western societies seem to be between the ever longer unemployment queues outside and the ever increasing numbers of computer 'terminals' – techno-mutants of the cinematograph – in our workplaces and our homes. Could *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, the title of the first moving images made for the cinema, be Farocki's secret codeword, identifying him as one of the last 'workers' of the moving image (see ill. 70)?

The present collection approaches Farocki by locating a variety of motifs. At times the angle is necessarily oblique, for instance, when identifying in-between spaces and rebus-image emblems, each of which contains the whole and yet none gives away more than it must. As Farocki puts it himself, at the end of *SCHNITTSTELLE*, his *ars poetica* as well as his self-portrait as picture puzzle: 'my workplace is either an enigma machine or a decoder. Is it a matter of uncovering a secret or, on the contrary, of keeping it hidden?' Correspondingly, the terms of analysis are never just opposite pairs, such as man/machine, hand/ eye, writing/editing ('my texts emerge from the editing table [as much as, if not more] than my image montages come from my typewriter') (see ill. 38). As befits metaphors, they usually contain an excluded middle, which they might dialectically imply: hand/eye implies mind, for instance. Or they produce something through the fusion of two terms (as when surveillance photography connotes both preservation and destruction). It might be a

matter of a single term that forms a chain or a semantic cluster (the *Verbund* – network and feedback loop – in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, or the term *Aufklärung* – enlightenment and reconnaissance – in *BILDER DER WELT*). A picture might meta-morph and suddenly merge two unlikely realms (i.e. ploughshare/cannon, combine harvester/tank, or the trope of the cut, which in *WIE MAN SIEHT* suggests analogies between the way a butcher cuts a side of beef, and the way a civil engineer ‘cuts’ a motorway through the natural terrain). Concepts or topics occupy a multidimensional space (as when camera, voice, and monitor all comment on one another in an installation piece, or the several dimensions of a cinematographic archive, searchable in a lateral fashion, map unexpected connections across time). Certain image-emblems reveal a hidden history (‘weaving’ takes us from the Jacquard loom to the television screen, the grid from Hollerith cards to digital images), just as the implicit third term of a metaphor may provide its real motor (‘enforced leisure’ linking prison yard to shopping mall). The excluded middle of a binary opposition may suggest an ironic twist to a conflict (in *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* the production methods of the big ‘USA’ – large machines that only work the centre of a wheat field – are opposed to those of small ‘Vietnam’ – manual work that harvests the margins – until along comes small ‘Japan’, which has devised machines that also harvest the margins).<sup>32</sup>

While these similes and tropes capture something of the logic of movement and metaphor in Farocki’s work, as well as his habitus of self-contestation and self-reference, they do not fully convey the always implied incommensurability between image and reality. This constitutive gap in the ‘world of images’ is addressed by the contributors to the volume in a wide variety of contexts – political, philosophical and poetological. The essays have been chosen with this perspective in mind: to consider his films and installations as a set of themes and variations, informed by an urgent, topical, but nonetheless wholly coherent agenda. But the selection also follows another (chrono)logic, which documents the different stages not so much of Farocki’s career as of his reception in the English-speaking world (i.e., the chapters by Elsaesser [1985], Rosenbaum [1992], Keenan [1992] and Alter [1994] for instance). Each registers the impact his work has had at a particular place and point in time, but also indexes the effort, and sometimes the difficulties encountered, when trying to place him within the then prevailing filmic discourses and theoretical debates. In fact, Farocki has been ‘introduced’ to an international audience on numerous occasions during the 1980s and 1990s, and this was often done by choosing different emphases or vantage points (Elsaesser in Britain [1983], Becker in Spain and the USA [1992], Blümlinger in France [1995]). Important analytical texts by Farocki himself that were written in tandem with the films and that provide some biographical-autobiographical pith are also included, in the

form of his own essays (dating respectively from 1977, 1982, 1988, 1995, 1998, 1999) and by two interviews (Elsaesser, 1993, Hüser, 2000). They indicate the different intellectual as well as cinéphile traditions Farocki draws on in his work, as do the essays taken from a German publication on Farocki, which pay attention to his immediate circle of friends as well as the role he played in the journal *Filmkritik* (Siebel, Möller, Kneppergeres). Three essays were written more recently, one of which provides a close reading of *VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION* in the light of political theory and media politics (Young), the second pinpoints some of the major thematic preoccupations up to and including his installation work (Blümlinger) and the third by Wolfgang Ernst (and co-authored by Farocki) outlines an ambitious project which aims to take our cinematic heritage and audio-visual memory into the digital realm, at least conceptually, by asking how, and in the name of what criteria given the vast capacity to store images one can sort, archive, and make accessible this 'grammar' of our culture, this software programme of our memory, where moving images form units both above and below the lexical and the semantic dimensions. Ernst and Farocki seem to want to continue the work of film semioticians, of folklorists and narratologists, but now within the image and through the image itself. It not so much concludes his film work as it opens even his installations to a new dimension.

As these hints at layers and strata indicate, this book has itself had an almost geological genesis. When I first wrote about Farocki in 1983, I was still under the strong impression of a chance encounter from 1975. The many times we have met since have always included an element of surprise, of displacement and detour, of a moment that should be fixed but probably was better remembered as being transitory. The first time I introduced one of his films was at a conference in Vancouver, having smuggled a 16mm print of *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* past Canadian customs. Nearly ten years later, I introduced Farocki and *WIE MAN SIEHT* in Berkeley, California, in January 1992. But what was more memorable was the dinner afterwards, with Laura Mulvey, Carol Clover and Kaja Silverman. In London, in February 1993, I interviewed him on *BILDER DER WELT* for a retrospective I had curated at the NFT, where it was his stage presence that kept the audience spellbound. No less a spell was cast by him in Amsterdam, a year later, when he showed *VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION* to my students. A born performer as much as a born pedagogue, I saw him discuss his films with Paul Virilio at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, and invited him again to Amsterdam for a workshop on *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK*. When I visited him in a remote part of the former East Berlin, it was a wall of peculiarly enigmatic graffiti that seemed to lead me to his home, and in New York, at the MoMA's retrospective of his films, I saw him patiently sit every evening by the auditorium door like K. waiting 'Before the Law' in Kafka's *The*

*Castle*. Each of these encounters left me with a particular gesture, sharp remark, witty pun, or vivid image; and, finally, with the desire to do this book. In realizing it, I was helped by many: Christa Blümlinger, Tom Keenan, Ulrich Kriest and Rolf Aurich, Kay Hoffmann, the Goethe Institute Melbourne, Fiona Villella of *Senses of Cinema*, Wolfgang Ernst, Tamara de Rijk and above all by Harun Farocki himself. Thanks also go to the other authors, Jonathan Rosenbaum, Nora Alter, and Benjamin Young who graciously permitted me to reprint or publish their essays. Initially I had wanted to include the filmography, carefully compiled by Christa Blümlinger for a French publication, but in the end opted for the annotated filmography, as listed on the official website: [www.farockifilm.de](http://www.farockifilm.de). Biographical notes about Farocki are included in the List of Authors, and bibliographical details concerning the original publication of essays here reprinted and of their translators can be found at the end of the volume.

## Notes

1. Harun Farocki, 'Controlling Observation', originally in *Jungle World* no. 37 (8 September 1999); in this volume.
2. These examples are all taken from WIE MAN SIEHT.
3. Dialogue passage by 'Robert' from BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM.
4. Harun Farocki, 'Ein Schnitt, oder die Rache der Fernsehleute', *Die Tageszeitung* (Berlin), 2 February 1989.
5. See also Blaise Pascal: 'you would not be looking for me if you had not already found me'.
6. Harun Farocki, 'Ein Zigarettenende', *Filmkritik* no. 1, 1977.
7. '... a typical German misunderstanding. People do not realise that an author like Farocki seeks [...] to disguise his own labour and himself as a person. It is part of this hide-and-seek – and it is worth insisting on this – that what appears as a throwaway joke or casual remark is in fact the expression of persistent work and the fruit of reflected experience.' D. Lederer, 'Begegnungen in Duisburg und anderswo', in: Rolf Aurich/Ulrich Kriest (eds.) *Der Ärger mit den Bildern Die Filme von Harun Farocki*, Konstanz: UVK Medien 1998, p. 61.
8. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, 'Ökonomie und Klassenstruktur des deutschen Faschismus', *Kursbuch* 21, October 1970, originally published in *Deutsche Führerbriefe*, nr. 72, 73, then reprinted in: *Der Rote Aufbau*, vol. V, no. 20, Berlin, 15 October 1932, p. 934.
9. Harun Farocki, 'Notwendige Abwechslung und Vielfalt', *Filmkritik* 224, August 1975, pp. 360-369.
10. Among the most notorious of these instructional shorts were THEIR NEWSPAPERS (which ends with a stone being thrown through the window of the Springer Press Headquarters), HOW TO SEPARATE A POLICEMAN FROM HIS HELMET and the (apoc-



- ryphal) HOW TO MAKE A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL – all of which were at least co-authored by Farocki.
11. Tilmann Baumgärtel, 'Bildnis des Künstlers als junger Mann', in *Der Ärger mit den Bildern*, p. 156.
  12. See also Christa Blümlinger, SCHNITTSTELLE, in this volume.
  13. 'Gespräch mit Harun Farocki', Information sheet no.13, Internationale Forum des Jungen Films, Berlin 1982.
  14. For a passage which shows the formation of this kind of equivalence, and its ultimate rejection as too improbable, see the following: 'After we visited the Two Rivers prison in Oregon and shot some footage, I had a coffee with the cameraman Ingo Kratisch, on the terrace of the neighbouring golf club. It was impossible not to be struck by the triteness of this particular editing trick in our experience: from high-tech prison (sub-proletariat) to the golf club (idle landed class), with its sprinkler system. The golfers drove around in electric carts. This kind of antithetical situation begs for deeper connections to be made. But what kind? One thing is for certain: the golfers' stock market profits don't have much to do with the prisoners' sweatshop work.' ('An Image Thesaurus', in this volume).
  15. The film was refused a certificate that would have made it eligible for financial subsidy on the grounds that 'it tries to prove the thesis that all of the Federal Republic's citizens are conformist and remote-controlled' in their personal lives and social activities.
  16. Farocki: 'We tried to be like waiters, in whose presence the masters of the manor felt free to converse without reserve.' Quoted in *Der Ärger mit den Bildern*, p.16.
  17. 'In the Netherlands of the seventeenth century, there were prison cells in which water kept rising and whose inmates had to bale it out so as not to drown; this demonstrated that man must work to live. In eighteenth century England, many prisoners had to work the treadmill – today many prisoners can again be found on treadmills, keeping themselves physically fit.' 'Controlling Observation', in this volume.
  18. Harun Farocki, 'Schuss-Gegenschuss: Der wichtigste Ausdruck im Wertgesetz Film', *Filmkritik* no. 11, 1981.
  19. In the interview with Rembert Hüser, Farocki cites Rem Koolhaas's book *The Harvard Guide to Shopping* as having alerted him to the fact that 'high-tech companies once involved in the production of weapons are now producing high-tech applications for the retail industry.' Koolhaas himself, of course, is one of the leading architect-designer-displays, at the forefront of blurring the distinctions between physical buildings and display screens (i.e., his unrealised project for the ZKM in Karlsruhe), and between retail outlets and museums (his realised conversion of the former Guggenheim building in downtown Manhattan into a flagship Prada shop).
  20. See the relevant passage in 'Towards an Archive of Visual Concepts', in this volume.
  21. *Filmkritik* no. 263, November 1978, pp. 569-606.
  22. Paul Virilio: 'the searchlight [...] illuminated a future where observation and destruction would develop at the same pace [...] the deadly harmony that always establishes itself between the functions of eye and weapon.' *War and Cinema* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 68-69.



23. See the interview I conducted with Farocki about *Images of the World* where he mentioned that cameras are circling, in order to make the world 'superfluous', and that he felt he was part of these cameras circling around the world: 'It's not my idea, but yes, in a way I am part of it. I am also part of the business, even though I am not literally in the space industry' (in this volume).
24. On this mode of reading images, see Farocki's 'Reality would have to begin': 'Nuclear weapons [...] arrive by ship in Bremerhaven, where they are put on trains, whose departure time and destination are kept secret. About a week before departure, army aircraft fly the entire length of the route and photograph it. This status report is repeated half an hour before the train is to pass, and the most recent set of images is compared with the first set. Through their juxtaposition one can discern whether any significant changes have occurred in the interim' (in this volume).
25. Klaus Kreimeier, 'Papier – Schere – Stein', in *Der Ärger mit den Bildern*, p. 37.
26. 'In the 1950s, I too was shown instructional films at school. Silent, black and white, screened with a noisy projector. Films about fallow deer and glassblowing. We high school kids with tastes formed by the photo journal *Magnum* [...] didn't like these films, and even today in discussions many say "like a school instruction film", it is clear that they mean these films are the very dregs. But to me that is not clear at all.' *Filmkritik*, no. 274, October 1979, p. 429.
27. 'Making the World Superfluous', in this volume.
28. *Ibid.*
29. See Kaja Silverman, 'What Is a Camera? Or: History in the Field of Vision', *Discourse* 15 (Spring 1993), pp. 3-56.
30. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1978).
31. 'Controlling Observation', in this volume.
32. For a full quotation of this scene, see 'Film as a Form of Intelligence', in this volume.

# **Image In(ter)ventions**



# Painting Pavements

*Volker Siebel*

A popular specimen of the copyist is the pavement painter, still occasionally seen today in the pedestrian zones of our cities. As a young man, Harun Farocki started out as a pavement painter. Along with a friend, he copied in chalk onto German pavements the works from the usual repertoire of these true folk artists. Street painting is sustained in equal measure by the public's fascination with icons and the artist's self-effacement. Street painters have to keep to a limited canon of motifs (they may only copy easily recognisable images so that their ability as skilful copyists can be appreciated by the crowd), while they are condemned, in the face of the infinite possibilities of conceivable images, to reproduce what is always already familiar. Nonetheless, Farocki and his companion unwittingly outwitted this tradition. The more often they reproduced a set piece, which after a while they did from memory, the less it resembled the original. The reproductions actually ended up taking on a character of their own. Yet such a show of individual style made them suspect both in the eyes of their peers and the public. The suspicion was that they were not masters of their trade (see ill. 22).

Many years later this young man can once again be found making copies of pictures – though in the meantime, he has changed his medium to filmmaking. Quite apart from the fact that no one would consider copying film images to be a skill, he still does not seem to be able to comply with the reigning visual conventions. Is he the eternal dilettante, and doomed to remain one, or has he made some kind of progress after all?

## Precipitation

In *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR (BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM, 1980-1982)*, the street pavement painting returns as a filmic motif: it is being washed away by the rain. A precise metaphor for the transience of images (see ill. 7). Both pavement painting and cinema, by their very existence, stage their own death. The transience of the pavement picture is obvious – it is only painted 'for the moment'. In the case of cinema, the image is not only (mechanically) always in the process of escaping the eye of the beholder, while the film material itself is in a

perpetual state of chemical disintegration. Worse yet is that the viewer's insatiable hunger for images relies on the destruction of each image by a newer one, and the speedier the process, the greater the hunger, leaving the images as victims.

The metaphor of water (purifying, but also extinguishing) runs through *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* as images of the river, the sea, the pool, or Vietnamese field irrigation systems. Today, when images are at stake, the water metaphor is mostly used in the opposite sense: it is the *images* that wash everything away, which makes them perpetrators, not victims. Rarely is there a speech about the current state of the visual media without the 'flood of images' metaphor being invoked. What this metaphor means is that either images wash away something (e.g. the written word) or everything (e.g. reality itself), or the word 'flood' is simply a metaphor for something monstrous, the way one used to speak of a 'mountain of images'. The metaphor becomes dubious when what is meant is that images supposedly annihilate each other: can a flood flood waters?

*BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*, the quintessence of Farocki's fictional work up to that point, deals above all with the impotence of images. When the American soldier recites the following text, his head and hands lying uselessly on the table, he voices the director's own credo, which I should like to call the 'critique of the enlightened eye': *Philosophy asks: What is a human being? I ask: What is a picture? In our culture, images are not given their due. Images are enlisted. Images are interrogated, in order to extract information, and only the sort of information that can be expressed in words or numbers.* It is clear from his posture that the soldier is one of the losers of the war (of images). He is defeated. His insight could not help him become victorious.<sup>1</sup>

*BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* marks a distinct break from Farocki's earlier work. Firstly, because subsequently, he no longer put as much emphasis on translating his ideas into photographically sophisticated forms, that is, he no longer sought to compose each image in such a way as to optimally embody his own aesthetics. Secondly, because the film completed for Farocki the phase of experimental feature filmmaking a phase marked by the '68ers' pathos of agitation, which drew on Brecht's theory of estrangement and which in some cases led to dubious results. I am thinking here of Farocki's short films which originated at the DFFB (Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin),<sup>2</sup> the didactic films he made at the beginning of the 1970s with Hartmut Bitomsky and *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (BETWEEN TWO WARS, 1977/78). *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* still carries some of the intellectual and formalist baggage of the 1970s, but it does not pretend to be formally homogeneous. Nonetheless, the *mise-en-scène* certainly testifies to its author's radical will to style, which would have been capable of further development had Farocki not turned, with one

exception, *BETROGEN* (*BETRAYED*, 1985) his attention to the documentary genre (understood in the broadest sense). He, too, admitted a defeat of sorts, at least as far as the possibility of enlightenment through fictional means is concerned. The failure of *BETROGEN* confirmed his scepticism of the relevance of feature films in relation to the enlightenment project, even if later ironic allusions to this film cite economic reasons: 'Six years ago I made a film where some fifty people were paid for watching me at work. I shouted 'action', 'cut' and for the next minute and a half wondered where to place the camera. Since then I've only had ideas for films where I don't have to get involved in what's going on in front of the camera.'<sup>3</sup>

These and similar pronouncements confirm that his constant discomfort at appropriating images is not a pose, but an existential dilemma. For as Farocki puts it in *SCHNITTSTELLE* (1995), his intention has never been to reproduce images (*Abbilder*) but rather, to produce models (*Vorbilder*). But a model or prototype needs to be presented, and every presentation relies on a mental space, and on representability.

## Counterattack

*BETROGEN* was the film with which Farocki in 1985 tried once more to launch a counterattack: this time using the enemy's weapons. It is his only feature where you can tell that it cost the sort of money usually spent on this kind of film, while all his other productions were located at the low- to no-budget end of the spectrum. Money is said to be bad for one's character, and thus *BETROGEN* could easily be mistaken for a 'slip-up', since on the surface the film is photographed and directed like a conventional TV play. There is no longer any question of a stylistic signature such as in *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR*. Farocki directed the story along the lines of a real event. Located in a convincing social environment, the main roles are brilliantly cast. Nonetheless, this film too is a prototype with a clear experimental set-up. Thematically *BETROGEN* fits in perfectly with Farocki's 'critique of the enlightened eye' and is just as self-referential as his earlier documentary essays.

In the first part of the film, 'seeing' is thematised as voyeurism, symptomatic of the neurotic individual. The protagonist Jens Baumann visits the same pub every evening to observe the prostitute Anna who works there, until finally he speaks to her. Here fate takes its course. The beautiful Anna enters Jens' life as an angel of disaster and almost ruins his life. The story seems to end up with him accidentally running over Anna in his car. Since there were no witnesses, Baumann gets rid of the corpse. Anna is not officially reported as

missing, and Baumann can keep her death a secret. He persuades Anna's sister Edith to play the part of Anna, although neither her personality nor her appearance resembles Anna's (except for the long blond hair). Edith enters into the game not only out of sympathy for Baumann, but because it also improves her social status (see ill. 34).

Just as the voyeur is inclined to stare, to fixate, and finally to hallucinate, that is, to see more than is actually there, thus representing one extreme of visual perversion (*seeing too much*), the couple Jens and Edith in the second part of the film are able to exploit another pervasive form of perverted seeing for their own game of deception: merely scanning the surface the eye that no longer sees properly (*seeing too little*). For both forms of perverted seeing, the film offers an explanation: in the first case, it is industrial society which structures perception in accordance with the requirements of the rhythm of production, leading to the isolation of its members and inevitably provoking in them neurotic behaviour. In the second case, it is the impersonal and stereotypical administrative processes of bureaucracy, as well as the fact that people (like the woman next door to Baumann) no longer come close enough to perceive more than the surface of a person (see ill. 35).

To form a picture of something: this phrase used to imply having an accurate picture. In *BETROGEN*, Farocki gathers evidence that this is no longer so straightforward today, and may even be impossible. That the substitution of a double is in the end uncovered only thanks to the 'vision' of a madman underscores the nature of the film as a model case, a parable. Truth comes to light through the visionary image that Eddi has of Anna's death. Throughout human history, madmen have been considered holy, because they alone possess the gift of second sight. On this occasion, the madman represents the filmmaker, Farocki. His madness is the result of the distance he manages to put between himself and reality, so as to really see this reality. Distance is not only the prerequisite for seeing, but also for thinking. 'When I write, at least I have words between myself and those who are not-I. Public transport presses proximity and intimacy upon me. When I'm writing I can at least maintain the dignity of the pedestrian. Filming, like being a commuter on the underground, means having to join in. You cannot keep people at bay with a camera and a microphone.'<sup>4</sup>

Maintaining one's distance means losing touch with reality in order to gain reality; in other words, a filmmaker no longer has to be an eyewitness to see the truth. On the contrary, in our society, the presence of a camera is more likely to stand in the way of truthfulness.

## The Trouble with Television

Farocki's films can be read as an ongoing analysis of his distrust of the technological image. He has always had a tendency to use visual material belonging to others and to reinterpret it. Initially, he quoted other films, weaving them into his own line of argument as evidence. What he had in mind was to teach the audience to look and listen closely. He still had faith in the enlightening effect of his own work. It was not until *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* that he reached the point where he began to distrust even his own images (and thereby the potency of the visual media altogether). At first he traced this distrust to the abuse made of images by others, above all, by television journalists. The aim was to expose their machinations. The WDR (West German Broadcasting) offered him a platform for this. In 1973, for the series *Telekritik (tele-criticism)*, Farocki made *DER ÄRGER MIT DEN BILDERN (THE TROUBLE WITH IMAGES)*, a critical meta-film in which he settled scores with the television news feature as a format, by pointing out the systematic overuse of meaningless images. For the first time Farocki made do entirely with material not shot by himself. (In *DIE SPRACHE DER REVOLUTION [THE LANGUAGE OF REVOLUTION]*, a collage of film excerpts from various sources made the year before, Farocki still managed to insert into his argument a couple of brief, staged sequences that he directed himself.) *THE TROUBLE WITH IMAGES* pursued a precise didactic concept, and for that reason it ended up very wordy. But because there was more spoken text than visual material to clinch his argument (and because the text was supposed to propel the analysis), Farocki faced a problem. How could he visually illustrate a spoken text without practising precisely what he was preaching against, the cancelling out of a critical commentary by levelling it with arbitrary images? He decided on a principled refusal of images. Spacing the paragraphs that constituted the line of his argument, he spliced in black leader. This nod in the direction of experimental cinema shows signs of the director's own disorientation, an admission of his own impotence in the face of the superior power of the images senselessly churned out day in day out by the television machine.

In the 1970s, he produced other films for the WDR that criticised the media, like *MODERATOREN IM FERNSEHEN (TV ANCHORMEN)* or *DIE ARBEIT MIT DEN BILDERN (WORKING WITH IMAGES)*, both made in 1974. But the easier it was for Farocki to expose the mechanisms that led to the thoughtless use of images on television, the harder it was for him to find the right approach to his own. In *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, completed in 1978, after he had worked on it for years as his own producer and facing constant interruptions, the poverty of images is carried to the limit of what is considered bearable. No doubt the sparseness of the film was due to a lack of finances, but Farocki managed to raise reticence to



the status of an aesthetic programme. As such, it was more an instinctive reaction to the overabundance of images around him than a properly worked-out concept. But it wasn't long before there were further developments. In *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*, Farocki explicitly reflects on the way he sees himself as a filmmaker, even though photography stands in for the role of filmmaking. As in Antonioni's *BLOW-UP* (GB, 1966), a photo sequence forms the core of the film: the intense scrutiny of a series of photographs from the Vietnam War yields a key insight for Farocki's protagonist Robert: *it's not a matter of what's in an image, but rather what lies behind it. Nonetheless, you show an image as a proof of something that it cannot prove.*

What lies behind the images of *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* are ideology and concepts. Since I am already engaged in the dubious enterprise of trying to find a linear development in Farocki's works, I would like to venture here the hypothesis that it was Farocki's work on *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* which led him to realise that a productive critique of images presupposes a critique of (verbal) language, since our perceptual apprehension proceeds from the conceptual. We stop watching an image intensely as soon as we have understood what it represents. The moment an image registers as a concept, its existence as an image is over. In his films of the 1980s, Farocki was engaged with language as a condition for the possibility of perception (in a general sense, but also specifically in the case of filmic perception). Because images can only refer back to their elementary meaning as signs for abstract concepts by means of verbal support (commentary, writing), Farocki had to turn to filmic forms that had a documentary status and the qualities of an essay. They permitted him to reflect on his own work within the medium to a greater degree – that is, to make images at once the object, the method, and the means of his critique.

## **The Trouble with Language**

Farocki's work, however, rarely develops in a linear fashion. Rather, it comes in cycles: a fact neatly revealed by samples from his analysis of language. As early as *THE TROUBLE WITH IMAGES*, Farocki was already confronting the German language. He demonstrates how everyday language changes when interviewees are given the chance to 'express' themselves in front of a camera: Office language prevails, driving out the language of joy, desire, passion, sex and power. Behind it, terror lurks. Indirectly, he proves how the administration of the everyday (for example, through the media) helps disintegrate any sense of being in charge of one's life. The intimidating jargon of bureaucrats and of the marketplace were to become the other main targets of his critique. Farocki has

always had a fine ear for the German language, for the etymology of words and the meanings that resonate within them, but above all for the abuses to which language is subjected. Because he has such a clear idea of how insidiously false consciousness can contaminate speech, his critique of language is, first and foremost, a critique of capitalism. Invariably, the traces of language abuse, no less than that of image abuse, point back to Germany's past, although Farocki rarely makes the link explicit.

His own language plays a major part, forcing itself into consciousness along with the commentaries of so many of his films as the filmmaker's personal signature, and often provides the very scaffolding for his films. This language is not poetic. But it stimulates thought because it is rough cut and avoids rhetorical flourishes. Farocki was always at pains to find a visual language that matched the precision with which his texts seize and hold on to reality. And you can tell from his films how long he had to wrestle with the problem that the words were there first, and that the images only served to transmit them. The first attempts at liberation from the ballast of language and of conceptual thought were *MAKE UP* (1973) and *DER GESCHMACK DES LEBENS* (*THE TASTE OF LIFE*, 1979), where first dialogue, then commentary were reduced to their bare essentials. But even in *BETWEEN TWO WARS, BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* and *WIE MAN SIEHT* (*AS YOU SEE*, 1986), dialogue or commentary seem to have been copied from a textbook or manual, because Farocki's critique of ideology is itself still based on ideology as a system of concepts, which is simply supported by images. The images cannot speak for themselves. In the best of cases (for instance, in several passages from *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES* (*IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*, 1988), Farocki manages to treat writing, language, and image as filmic elements of equal value. Commentary found its proper place when applied as counterpoint, thereby creating a space for thinking located between image and language. Nonetheless, Farocki's ideal has always been to let only the images speak for him, an ideal he keeps open in order to counter his distrust of the impact of images. But this is precisely the contradiction that makes his development as a filmmaker so interesting and multifaceted. In the cases where he abandoned the essayistic style, he managed, at about the same time as his essay films, to also liberate himself from wordiness: both *EIN BILD* (*AN IMAGE*, 1983) and *DIE SCHULUNG* (*THE TRAINING COURSE*, 1987) dispense with commentary, the former still includes the authoritarian gesture of the camera, the latter without any didacticism, and more in the style of Direct Cinema (see ill. 32).

## Becoming Interchangeable

The tendency to treat his own images as if they were 'found' footage, which already characterised Farocki's essay films *AS YOU SEE* and *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* was logically extended in *LEBEN – BRD (HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG, 1989)*. The film gives an early indication that Farocki would soon abandon altogether shooting his own material in order to work solely with ready-made shots. Footage that is seemingly author-less but was in fact carefully researched and 'found', proves that Farocki's assistant, Michael Trabitzsch, is responsible for an increasing input in the final product. As the film makes clear, Farocki's ideas of what is filmic are moving further away from what is photographic, even though Ingo Kratisch was once again operating the camera. 'Operating' in this case is to be understood literally. It is a kind of photography, which no longer makes great demands on the cameraman's expertise. Every photographic enhancement (by no means a privilege of the fiction film) is intentionally avoided; except for a few pans, the shots remain static and give rise to the suspicion that the cameraman may have left his position in between setups. The film's photographic minimalism does indeed evoke something claustrophobic, not unlike images from surveillance cameras, many shots could have been taken in a coin-operated photo booth. *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* has the air of a film without an author, reinforced by the lack of commentary. However, the serial principle of the film, evident in its montage and mosaic aspects, gives it an intensity far superior to films like *THE TRAINING COURSE*, because the subject is no longer an esoteric club of professionals but the state of a whole nation (see ill. 58). It allows every (German) viewer to draw a connection with his or her own life. What we see is, on the surface, nothing 'special': daily life, in a nutshell (the film title's multiple ironies could not possibly be bettered). Everyone who can turn on a camera, the film suggests, could make a film like this. In a way, this is true, but it is a misconception, nonetheless. For not everyone has the inner distance to risk the concept of such a film. And this, despite the fact that Farocki's method in this instance is that of a rather traditional artistic realism: whoever wishes to learn something about a society has to turn to what is self-evident. For what is put under the spotlight rarely reveals anything. The 'insignificantly' self-evident on the other hand, blown up on the big screen in the cinema, out of all human proportion, can truly express the grotesque aspects of what is being acted out. The fact that reality has slipped from our grip and has become a game of make-believe could hardly be more aptly formulated than in *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, which for me is Farocki's most important and most radical film to date. *THE TASTE OF LIFE*, made ten years earlier, gave a foretaste of *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* (here the cyclical principle

turns up again in Farocki's work), but where the former was still dominated by the charm of the amateur film, the latter is pure concept. The similarly conceived sequel *WAS IST LOS? (WHAT'S UP?, 1991)* again attempted to help the viewer along with words and in so doing, was not nearly as good. *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* is probably the film which makes most transparent the intentions behind Farocki's critique of language (which is, of course, as it already was in *THE TRAINING COURSE* and *IMAGE UND UMSATZ (IMAGE AND TURNOVER, 1989)*, a critique of the system) even though or precisely because Farocki dispenses with all commentary. To see how in all walks of life, from a New Age commune to the Federal Army, the paper language of administration is on a permanent collision course with regional dialects and colloquial speech, is irresistibly, devastatingly funny.

## Becoming Invisible

In the 1990s, Farocki made films consisting entirely of pre-produced images: *VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION (VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION, in collaboration with Andrei Ujica, 1991/92)*; the advertising clip collage *EIN TAG IM LEBEN DER ENDVERBRAUCHER (A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER, 1993)*; *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK (WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY, 1995, the one most reminiscent of his earlier works with foreign material)*; on through to the video installation *SCHNITTSTELLE*, in which he mainly works with his own old films. It completes a further circle: Farocki has again become a copyist, in the vein of Flaubert's lovable dilettantes, Bouvard and Pécuchet.

Just as the most advanced musical tendencies in contemporary pop music sampling techniques and re-mixes, dub and hip hop, respond to the daily increase in acoustic debris with formal minimalism, these films are Farocki's answer to the same problem in the area of the visual: 'You don't have to look for new images that have never been seen, but you have to work on existing images in a way that makes them new. There are various paths. Mine is to look for the buried sense, and to clear away the rubble lying on top of the images.'<sup>5</sup>

The musician's sampler is the filmmaker's editing table. The author working with found material tends to become invisible as the originator of the work, because he hides behind something that pretends to be a piece of 'reality' become history. The creative process shifts from production to reproduction. The artistic material is charged with meaning not intended by the original producers. Techniques like sampling, dub, assemblage, collage, compilation film, essay film and found footage film are made possible by the increasing availability of an immense wealth of ready-made material from cultural his-

tory. The techniques are made necessary by the increasing arbitrariness of every artefact newly added to the pile. The abundance of what has been produced, no longer kept in check, at some stage or other renders everything indifferent, and the chances of an audience gaining information by what has been newly created verge on zero. The more encyclopaedic the knowledge of an author/artist, the greater will be his distrust of his work being truly 'his own' or 'innovative'. So it makes sense for the filmmaker, who has to become an archaeologist in order to keep up with his age, to secure for himself those images already there, so as to project on to them what is his own. Did not Farocki involuntarily practice something similar back in his days as a pavement painter? His tendency toward iconoclasm, which he could be accused of because of his last films, is not a negation of the image, when you look at it more closely, but a progressive step back to the essential quality of an image. By underlining the facticity of images through recycling, he makes evident what significance images could possess, had we, who live in a world of images, undergone a proper initiation into seeing. Whether this method of working is capable of building up a functioning opposition to the mainstream is another question. What in music has opened up not only a world-wide body of listeners, but also a viable market, remains too marginal in the visual realm on account of its aesthetic indifference. Moreover, here too, television and advertising were quicker off the mark.

## The Double Author

Farocki's instrument is no longer the camera but the editing room. In one of his ironic insights he apostrophised himself as a 'sales representative' for the pre-filmed. In his dual-channel video installation *SCHNITTSTELLE*, he ends up representing himself (see ill. 38). The idea of double projection being not exactly new (many artists and avant-garde filmmakers have been employing it for ages), one has to wonder why Farocki had never done something of the sort earlier. For he always wanted to comment on the use of images by using images. And although he yet again reproduces an image of himself and his own workplace, he still keeps a distance from his object: himself. Although he shows how he becomes his own encyclopaedist and analyst, the attempt is not meant to be honest, more a wink and a nod, a rogue's progress. Farocki is by no means, as *SCHNITTSTELLE* seems to suggest, the lone bricoleur holed up in his studio, remote from the real world. If not before, the end credits listing the crew involved, disabuse one of such a misconception. The impression one gets is of someone chatting a bit about his work. In actual fact, he is coaching us

again with a lesson on how to see. Reading between the lines, however, Farocki here states his failure. His biggest problem is that the medium in which, despite decades of filmic work, he has his roots – writing – has reached its historical endpoint. He recognised this early on, and along with many of his colleagues who had emerged from the '68 movement as filmmakers, he believed that the visual media could take over the political function of writing, because the scope for distribution seemed broader and comprehensibility greater. At some stage he noticed that illiteracy was far greater amongst the viewing than the reading public. Although all the consciousness-raising projects of the auteur-filmmakers came to nought, he never abandoned hope. In a society dominated by images, Farocki believed political engagement could only arise out of the making of images. His programme was and still is (and SCHNITTSTELLE renders this explicit): making images against images. Wrenching images from the speeding up process. Slowing images down. Bringing images to a halt. Blowing up images. Reframing images. Taking images and turning them into real images. And finally: making images about images. Repeating images, re-capturing images. SCHNITTSTELLE, at the very least, is testimony to a productive failure. It is just possible that the key to truth lies in tautology and redundancy. With their motto of 'copying the way the ancients used to', Bouvard and Pécuchet were also ultimately redeemed. That was over a hundred years ago, when it was time to invent the cinema so as to liberate the traditional arts from the ballast of redundancy (see ill. 33).

## Notes

1. Farocki is an heir to German enlightenment philosophy, but the term 'Aufklärung' (enlightenment) is used here in a more *Brechtian* sense. In the same way as, throughout the centuries, the painted picture transformed from giving information to representing deformation, the film image turned from informing the viewer to deforming the viewer (mentally, of course). That was not done by a change of quality (e.g., the introduction of colour and sound) but by a gigantic increase of quantity, since the technological/filmic image (including television) is still meant to present an image of a pro-filmic reality. The 'critique of the enlightened eye' maintains that the initial goal of enlightenment (to circulate information in order to make the receiver gain a deeper knowledge) is no longer possible with the technological image.
2. The Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) is the first film school in West Germany, founded in 1967. Farocki had been a student in its first year.
3. Duisburger Filmwoche (Annual Festival of German Documentary Film) Catalogue 1991, Duisburg, accompanying text to Farocki's film *Was Ist Los?* p. 14.
4. Farocki, *ibid.* p. 13.

5. Conny Voester, Interview with Harun Farocki in *Nordkurier*, Neubrandenburg, January 9, 1993.

*Translated by Roger Hillman.*

# Images and Thoughts, People and Things, Materials and Methods

*Jörg Becker*

Harun Farocki's 1990 film *LEBEN – BRD* (HOW TO LIVE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY) is a montage assembled from short scenes taken from 32 instructional and training classes, and therapy and test sessions from across the German Federal Republic. The individual film segments are all 'acted scenes', recorded during practice sessions in which some real life situation is being introduced, taught, practised, imitated, invoked, or mastered. *LEBEN – BRD* is a film composed entirely of these scenes – 'a documentary film with performers'. The various types of performances in the film all have specific rules, sometimes revealing a depressing banality and sometimes an enticing, all too obvious perfection. The effort demanded by these performances represents a particular form of labour – indirect and contrived. True human action is ruled out, what is important here is the significance of preparatory and follow-up work, which appear as exercises in wasted human knowledge, or as a drill in modern marketing methods. These 'didactic plays on mastering life' are intended to be instructional in the carrying out of certain administrative and service activities, that is, in the rehearsing of certain functions. In addition, they – much like a 'false bottom' – are meant to lay bare and cure, per therapy, the effects of actual events and actions on the human spirit. *LEBEN – BRD*, in its brief shots of the tests that various consumer goods are put to, has created its own cinematic method of editing, its own form of punctuation. It is precisely these images, absent of people, that reinforce the human situation. 'Matter is more magical than life' (Roland Barthes), this magic appears to imbue the film's scenes, somewhat similar to a concept of 'endurance', whether of human beings or of objects. Just as material and product testing reveal something about our utilisation of things – in the face of endless, rhythmic endurance/application/torture testing of consumer goods, the essence of ordinary activity emerges – so the various trials and errors and re-enactments and role-playing reveal something of the control that the forces of big business, of the insurance conglomerates, and the military impose on human life through their representation of the world, a standardisation that human beings do not ever completely assimilate. To practice life's rules when these visibly lack coherence, means two different things, in terms of life and in terms of the processes of work. One is that a bias, an ideology (or in today's language: a philosophy) is



imparted and secured in people, through schooling, practice, and rehearsal. The other is that something in these people is forced open, something that is supposedly hidden in each of us individually, and is then brought to light (economics and therapy...).

LEBEN – BRD is assembled according to associations, contrasts, key words, movements, and gestures. The scenes were not meant to connect, their particular montage form emerged from them – in the *coupling*, for example, of the rhythmic sounds of computer porno and the product testing of mattresses; couplings that derive from the attention given in each scene to synthetic objects, from the concentration on didactic material and subject matter.<sup>1</sup> The montages are also based on linguistic usage: ‘Would you like me to help you?’ the psychotherapist says to the child ‘playing’ at being tested, which is directly followed by a mother saying to the same therapist: ‘It doesn’t matter where, I’d like her...’ Four or five conversational situations are spliced together to form one conventional dialogue, on the subject, for example, of how a bank clerk learns to pacify an angry customer by deliberately ignoring his question and countering it with a question of his own. Or similarly: a montage of midwife training films in which different students practice a simulated birth on an artificial womb addressed as ‘Frau Müller’ (see ill. 57). There is also the incessant repetition of conversational fragments from similar practice session scenes that follow one another in rapid succession. The attention to and minimising of the bank customer’s complaint corresponds inversely to the strategic training of insurance agents, which focuses on alarming the client. All this produces a dramatic back-and-forth – the rhythm of product testing has roughly the same beat; a short film on objects and sounds that are subjected to the stress test of phantoms simulating humans in the torture chamber of product testing. The thematic montages combine disparate situations: etiquette classes, diet classes, and therapeutic play-acting for anorexics, for example, are connected to a social welfare agency where the homeless learn how to cook. A sequence of door images represents arrivals on the scene. Two scenes are coupled involving people off camera. One is from a police training film, in which a policeman has led a man playing a troublemaker out of view, and the other is a landscape shot of a training ground where two soldiers converse off camera in a ‘directed dialogue’ before walking into the scene with an anti-tank gun. The ‘war game’ at the end of this segment is set to music to which a striptease act is then rehearsed down to the tiniest detail.

The particles of reality of which LEBEN – BRD is composed offer a simulated life. The sections are connected as in a feature film. Johannes Beringer has noted the stylistic affinity of this film to Walter Benjamin’s plan to write a book consisting entirely of quotes from foreign languages.<sup>2</sup> The ‘image of the present’ that LEBEN – BRD assembles offers a rediscovery of the concept of

'factography' (according to Sergei Tretjakow), with an altered meaning: not as a rolling text in which relationships are ordered contextually by function, but as a form of synchronous compression, a visual as well as conceptual denseness surrounding a phenomenon that is rewritten visually in order that it might be seen.

It cannot be determined which of the ideas imparted in Farocki's films were already there from the beginning, what descriptive quality they might have possessed, or which visual associations they already carried and which originated on the cutting table. In terms of his documentary work, particularly those films in which individual work processes are recorded and compressed – *EIN BILD (AN IMAGE, 1983)*; *IMAGE UND UMSATZ, ODER: WIE KANN MAN EINEN SCHUH DARSTELLEN (IMAGE AND TURNOVER OR HOW TO DEPICT A SHOE, 1989)*; *DIE SCHULUNG (SCHOOLING, 1987)*; and *LEBEN – BRD (1990)* – the adage implies that one should 'not think one's way into the picture, but rather one's way out of it'. One should not use thought to fashion the original material, but instead look at it until its form and rhythm are found. This method, which could also be termed veracity in film, is one that places Farocki outside the mainstream of contemporary documentaries. Compared to them, he is not really a documentary filmmaker at all, which one notices from his rejection of the standard forms of documentary groundwork and research. This is particularly clear in his opposition to the rejection of autonomy of form and artistic presentation. In his films, Farocki demonstrates a creative counter-position to that rejection of form which, analogous to a dogmatically scientific mind-set, is also driven by a seemingly purist documentary method, a form demanding that all content be indifferent to its representation, which should be conventional and not dictated by the subject matter.<sup>3</sup> The fact that he is not really a documentary filmmaker links him to the films of Peter Nestler, whose stringent imagery, derived from a close look at production methods and living conditions, Farocki quoted in his film *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN (BETWEEN TWO WARS, 1971-77)*.

Farocki's films make their operative means visible in their portrayal; they are self-reflective. There is no idea that, in its forward or backward movement, has not been tested; no sequence of ideas that doesn't follow some rule of composition and rhythm: a rhythm that has prescribed what the film will become. The valence that words possess in a grammatical system – an ordering of accumulation – is comparable to the valence of chemical elements that determines a compound's balance, but not its form. Replace the word or element with an image, and the composition the author creates takes on its own meaning, which may change. The coupling process is decisive, a mental leap in a certain direction executed by an invisible linking. Farocki speaks of an 'irregular web made up of the most diverse found objects', within which is revealed a think-

ing oriented to an object introduced and set in perpetual motion, now disappearing, now reformed, now confronted: film as paraphrase, a paraphrastic technique of transposition. A 'boldness, anticipation, of each essayistic detail'<sup>4</sup> clearly emerges in the films *WIE MAN SIEHT* (*AS YOU SEE*, 1986), and *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES* (*IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*, 1988), Farocki's two explicit film-essays. In them, historical excursions and investigations into, and the examination of, a given visual subject are mixed with actual footage to create a synchronous-diachronous web, a filmic structure that is closely related in its numerous openings, its main line and side tracks, to the work of Alexander Kluge.<sup>5</sup>

### **Film as a Form of Thought: Following the Structure of an Idea**

Farocki's handling of images – his reworking of images so that they become new – is an exemplary reading, an illuminating process of critique. The author captures his specimen and submits it to analysis. Placed in a new context, these visual specimens offer new perceptions, a new text, or one could say, they have gained from this a new message. Film as an essayistic exercise reveals itself here as thought constantly oscillating between viewing/visual analysis and a core scientific/epistemological interest. As early as 1983, with *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* (*BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*), Thomas Elsaesser wrote that Harun Farocki, in treating pictures as archaeological finds, or as the evidence of phantoms and traumas, could win back for the work and for the image's materiality a critical intelligence.<sup>6</sup> Whoever 'speaks with images', as Farocki does, whoever organises given images in such a way that they become new, whoever works between the images' levels of meanings, must struggle resolutely against the flood of excessively synthetic, stylised images and sounds. He must counter the delirium of a wealth of imagery with an extremely conscious, economical vigilance. 'He must be selective and compile with care, to keep the passageways clear through which what is new can flow, so that the film may breathe. The ethical diet that Harun Farocki subjects his images and sounds to does not disavow his models (Bresson, Straub, Godard) and yet achieves the status of fully accountable speech, an individual language.' This according to Johannes Beringer.<sup>7</sup>

In the stringent self-restraint of his films, Farocki approaches the film idiom of Jean-Marie Straub (in particular his *NICHT VERSÖHNT*), Bresson and Dreyer. His choice of visual elements and their disengagement from a familiar context represents a method of historical reconstruction that is the opposite of the illu-

sory depiction of history and recasting of time. The images of *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* offer the greatest contrast imaginable to the illusion of realistic set design; a recovery, the distillation of a learning stage; they are witness to the realisation that history cannot be reset. Hitler's speech to the Düsseldorf Industry Club, and the shiny radiator hood of a Horch limousine relate to each other as a historical fact and its transference into symbol (see ill. 8). The express references in Farocki's first long film (*METROPOLIS, STRIKE, KUHLE WAMPE...*) modify the significance of the narrative moments, giving them unique meaning: The suicide of the young unemployed man that Brecht and Dudow placed at the beginning of the film (as an initial tragedy which then makes way for the optimism inspired by the workers' movement during the Weimar Republic's last years), is positioned at the end of Farocki's *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*. It is the destruction of an entire class, represented by the chalk figure left behind on the asphalt of the rear courtyard. The figure of the chalk outline reveals that the furnace man has thrown himself from a window (and the rain washes away the outline, turning it into a trickle of chalky water) (see ill. 7). In these profoundly symbolic motifs, a different historiography, a more materialistic counter-text to history, points to a 'dignity of the nameless' (Hartmut Lange) that – as if underlying civilisation's memory for faces or names – speaks from effaced artefacts, transience, and the forgotten anonymous millions of people.

'The philosophers ask: What is man? I ask: What is an image?' This line is spoken by a G.I. in *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR (BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM, 1982)*. And, accompanying the image of a worker looking at a factory wall through the viewfinder of his camera (*ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*), we hear: 'I have begun to take pictures. One picture is too few, incidentally, you have to take two pictures of everything. Things move around so much, and only by taking a minimum of two pictures can you at least fix the direction of the movement.'<sup>8</sup> The central theme of the film-essays is what occurs between the human eye, the feedback of its perceptions to the memory, and objectivity: the image between an occurrence and the viewing of it. In *BILDER DER WELT* every object and every event is seen at least twice; in this way the material provides direction and demonstrates a range of possible applications. One such application is the image's praxis, its context and utilitarian character and what, ultimately, jumps out as if it was the incidental result of the capturing of the pictures. Another is the image's symbolism, what it stands for, what it demonstrates, simulates, and how it misleads (*WIE MAN SIEHT* and, above all, *BILDER DER WELT* repeatedly return to the topos of elucidation in the form of military aerial reconnaissance).<sup>9</sup>

The author addresses the objects of his investigations with a sense of loss that speaks from historical events and the conditions they have occasioned. These are basic cultural models that tell how industrial labour, the organisa-

tion of work, and the evolution of the forces of production have transformed one another. Farocki's objects are 'aggregate states' of capitalism,<sup>10</sup> states of war and of crisis, of technological upheaval and anachronistic forms of production. What is demonstrated is the attempt by the forces of production to attain the level of the ruling forces, a compensation for handicaps (assimilative behaviour and machine performance), and, even in the critique of the present, the will to become aware of a potentially 'synchronous' familiarisation with circumstances. 'I would like most of all to bring time to a standstill, for events have an advantage over our understanding'; 'Things disappear from view before they're even halfway understood', (*ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*). In Farocki's films, decline appears inevitable, whereas the increasing flexibility and acquisitive power of the status quo concerning the motor processes of things and human relations are revealed. In the age of automation, both a visual sense and human labour appear to be disappearing from history (the transition from analogue to digital systems in *WIE MAN SIEHT*), as the partisan disappears after a war of liberation, 'like a dog from the freeway'.<sup>11</sup>

'You have to be able to understand things as they happen, not later', says Anna, the protagonist of *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR*, speaking both of war and of herself.

## Notes

1. Harun Farocki, 'Eine Rede über zwei Filme', *Zelluloid* (Cologne), no. 27, 1988.
2. Johannes Beringer, 'Spiel ohne Grenzen', *Internationales Forum des jungen Films*, Berlin, 1990, Information sheet no 3.
3. See T. W. Adorno: 'The Essay as Form', in *Notes to Literature*, Volume 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 3-23.
4. *Ibid.*, 7.
5. Jörg Becker, 'Wie man sieht. Ein Essay zum Film von Harun Farocki', *Filmwärts* (Hannover), nos. 15-16, February 1990.
6. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Working at the Margins: Two or Three Things Not Known About Harun Farocki', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, no. 597, 1983 (in this volume).
7. Johannes Beringer, 'Hand und Auge', *Zelluloid* (Cologne) nos. 28-29, May 1989.
8. Harun Farocki, *Zwischen zwei Kriegen*. Recounted and recorded by Peter Nau (Munich: Filmkritik, 1978).
9. Klaus Gronenborn, 'Vom Abenteuer des zweiten Blicks', *Zelluloid* (Cologne), nos. 28-29, May 1989.
10. Klaus Kreimeier, 'Wie man sieht, was man sieht', *epd-film* 8, 1987.
11. Harun Farocki, 'Dog from the Freeway' (in this volume).

*Translated by Neil Christian Pages.*

# Incisive Divides and Revolving Images: On the Installation SCHNITTSTELLE

*Christa Blümlinger*

In desiring machines everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures, breakdowns and failures, stalling and short circuits, distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeeds in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole. That is because the breaks in the process are productive, and are reassemblies in and of themselves. Disjunctions, by the very fact that they are disjunctions, are inclusive.

*Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus<sup>1</sup>*

How does a filmmaker approach a museum art form like video installation? Harun Farocki finds himself among a small, but eminent group of like-minded directors – Chris Marker, Chantal Akerman, Raul Ruiz and Peter Greenaway – whose films negotiate the relationship between word and image in equally radical fashion, and conduct in their installations similar inquiries into their own images and those of others. They try to account for the metamorphoses cinema has undergone in recent audio-visual configurations, by restaging its public *mise-en-scène*.

Perhaps what is at issue here is giving images back their distance, so that a question like ‘what is an image?’, for example, threads its way like a leitmotif through Farocki’s films and videos so that it can be posed anew, and whose formulation is to be found – somewhat programmatically – in film titles such as EIN BILD (AN IMAGE, 1983) or WIE MAN SIEHT (AS YOU SEE, 1986). It is a question Farocki has long linked to the aesthetic changes in information technology, and is now more relevant to cinema than ever before. With the installation SCHNITTSTELLE (SECTION/INTERFACE, 1995) an essential element of this issue is touched upon, namely how moving pictures are formally organised. And this from the perspective of an auteur who now presents himself more as an engineer than as a creator: ‘What happens at the editing table, is this comparable to a scientific experiment?’<sup>2</sup>

SCHNITTSTELLE is a double challenge to the spectator’s capacity to remember and to perceive. Like the editor at his editing table, the spectator is first confronted with sequences of parallel images simultaneously shown on two monitors. The twin image tracks are, in the following step (which is also a

temporal one, because the visitor has to enter another space), re-integrated on a third monitor, which presents them for a rereading. Thus the viewer sees a series of takes from various films by Farocki (i.e., images of the Romanian Revolution, workers leaving the factory, a scene from *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*, the indescribable violence of the Vietnam War, and photographic constructions of the female body). Above all, the filmmaker is seen at work, as he arranges and manipulates his images. That this arrangement takes place in the context of a museum is crucial.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, the expression of a way of thinking is entrusted to an artistic form, and on the other, this thinking is itself made into an object of reflection through filmic and electronic means. (It is probably no coincidence that this kind of theoretical and aesthetic effort comes from someone who has for most of his career also been an incisive film and media critic.) The title *SCHNITTSTELLE* brings together the twin paths of *techné* and poetics. At issue are the basic filmic processes of the spatio-temporal arrangement of the image material – the question of the interval, of the interstices of images (and sounds) – as well as the combination of analogue and (paradigmatically) digital representation, and finally, the possibilities and dangers of bringing montage into the electronic and information age. It is therefore less about the ancient quarrel of whether the computer image must imitate the cinematic image, or can claim an independent existence. Farocki is more generally concerned with the binary principles of montage, with what happens to the powers of abstraction when analogue images are processed automatically. Hence the pointedly pedagogical demonstration of the production of an electronically ‘mixed’ image (as opposed to the mechanically ‘edited’ one) portrayed as a research experiment. Even the most recent developments in virtual (digital) montage thus resonate in Farocki’s theoretical media interrogations, even when these are not explicitly the object of his (re)presentation.

*SCHNITTSTELLE* invokes an apparatus that permits one to experience the simultaneity of images which film usually orders as a succession: an almost perfect model of the solitary place where the author writes and processes images: ‘Nowadays I can barely write a word unless an image is visible on the screen at the same time. Or rather, on both screens.’ In this imaginary laboratory, at the simulated workplace of the filmmaker, the spectator’s involvement with the composition of the video differs from that of a (single) large screen in a dark cinema. While in Farocki’s *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK* (*WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, 1995) it is the successive presentation of Lumière’s primary film of the same name, and excerpts from other (hi)stories of the cinema – such as Marilyn Monroe at the factory gate in Fritz Lang’s *CLASH BY NIGHT* (USA, 1952) (see ill. 73) and the proletarian masses in lock-step in *METROPOLIS* (Germany 1925-26) which forms the basis for comparison; the association of these



films can now be called up simultaneously. *Here on the left, the first motif from the history of film: male and female workers leaving a factory, in this case a factory, which produces photographic items. And on the right: a century of images which repeat, vary and further develop the initial motif.*

Even if the visitor is not required to engage in any physical 'interactivity', as a reader s/he develops a textual mobility when confronted with two audiovisual tracks whose arrangement is interdependent, as if they are conversing with each other. For SCHNITTSTELLE is a space in which various languages circulate, according to a particular structural order. What the reader of this 25-minute long text sees is comparable to the *flâneur* out for a stroll (in Barthes' sense)<sup>4</sup> – it is at once multiple and irreducible. Each combination of events is unique to the one perceiving it and defines his itinerary, which when repeated is necessarily different. Finally, this is not a closed text, but an open form, which already premeditates variations and textual deviations, each one a possible film.

Differing from the apparatus of classical cinema, where the linear passage of images inscribes meaning diachronically, a moving picture or even a still image is here matched by the one best suited (and which can immediately be shown) in a kind of horizontal montage. 'In the past, it was words, sometimes pieces of music that commented on the images. Now images comment on images.' The principle of this montage is complex because editing articulates itself not just from right to left (whether by cutting between sound and image, or between image and image), but enables the circulation of images through precisely calculated sequences of change and repetitions, not just within individual tracks, but above all between the two screens. A compositional structure typical of Farocki becomes instantly recognisable, one that functions via anticipation and repetition. An image is introduced (viz. the figure of a chemist) which is later reintroduced and explained (for instance, to exemplify the aesthetic process of distanciation: 'The images say a laboratory doesn't look like that').

In the video editing studio, the different possibilities of mounting a sequence can be achieved with the press of a button. The process is quite different at a 16mm editing table – Farocki demonstrates both in SCHNITTSTELLE – where each new edit has to be materially and physically prepared, such that the editor touches the ends to be cut or pasted with his fingertips. What we see is not, as was the case in Vertov's CELOVEK'S KINOAPPARATOM (MAN WITH THE MOVIE CAMERA, USSR, 1929), a professional cutter on the job, but an author who manipulates his film in solitary and ruminating fashion, surrounded only by machines and a notebook (see ill. 38). It illustrates how filmic dimensions like time and motion are capable of being translated into haptic or tactile terms, and how the choice of images is ultimately the consequence of a solitary



act: a twofold thought, the notion of which is taken to extremes by Jean Luc Godard's radical self portrait JLG/JLG – AUTO PORTRAIT DE DÉCEMBRE (1994), with the figure of the blind woman editor.

In spite of its sensuous quality, the strip of celluloid is, like money, primarily a means to an end: 'With a banknote it becomes especially clear how little the essence and the appearance coincide.' As long as the film cutter is working manually on the *other* film, the celluloid strip, as the total material basis of the *actual* film, the one to be projected, the latter cannot be actualised in projection. Video is different: here computerisation allows montage – or better yet, mixing – to establish a 'direct' link between the manual editing operations and the appearance of the image. Beyond that, a spatial replication of the images is possible, for the electronic image is constantly being reorganised. Ultimately, the direct temporal constitution of the electronic image allows for various viewing situations, giving for instance the illusion of gaining extra viewing time through the stilled image, or of being visually disoriented by a rapid succession of sequences. Farocki had already considered this relationship of stasis and motion in the construction of his film BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES (IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR, 1998). Moving images appear there, as he notes in SCHNITTSTELLE, where he briefly recombines certain elements of BILDER DER WELT, without accompanying text.

Symbolically sitting in the museum's electronic 'editing studio', Farocki submits his films to a re-vision, allowing him to pose questions like 'What is an image?' and 'How is a sequence of images put together?' of his own work in a radically new fashion. What was hitherto examined most often in found images and accidental apparati – for example in the imploring gesture of an amateur filmmaker in VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION (VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION, 1991/92) – is now applied to the architecture of the films that emerged from them. Thus, Farocki, with a rapidly sketched montage of moving images from IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR, provides the spectator with the visible evidence that these repeat themselves according to a law of permutation: 'when I was editing this film, I based my decisions on a simple programme, according to which the shots are combined and re-combined'. This type of editing, inspired (according to the author) by the rules of music composition and the rotating cylinders of a gaming casino fruit machine can already be found in a film that appears to adhere to chronological observation, but whose structure is likewise based on the principle of repetition. Re-visioning his apparatus-film EIN BILD, shot in Munich's 'Playboy' studio and assembled without commentary, Farocki speaks of *the necessity of the unpremeditated gaze* (see ill. 32).

In SCHNITTSTELLE, the director does not, despite appearances to the contrary, present himself biographically. Instead, he is present as the observer and

maker of his films, as their writer and reader, as a cinephile and a bibliophile – much like Godard in his later work. In this way, Farocki outlines a self-portrait, which develops via metaphors and analogies rather than via the structures of a story line. His figure is present in images, but it dissolves into serially arranged bodily gestures that always resemble each other. The video camera and monitor serve as a mirror, but less in the sense of the ‘aesthetics of narcissism’<sup>5</sup> specific to video, than as the technical means that facilitate the fabrication of temporal differences and short circuits. Even where Farocki breaks through his pose of rereading his work, to show a close-up of his burn scar, as evidence of his self-mutilation during the making of his pamphlet-film NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER (INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE, 1968/69), it is not so much the actual referent which is at stake in this rather actionist performance scene (‘it *really* happened’), but the temporal referentiality of the photographic index, which is to say, the filmic image as an ‘it *once* happened’. Just as the original film cuts to the burning flesh, so here, too, the point is to establish, through aesthetic means, a comparison *with animals in a research laboratory* and thus to make the referentiality to the real world paradigmatic. For in INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE, ‘Vietnam’ is precisely *not* present in the images, so as to make palpable the idea that this war is unrepresentable (see ill. 2).

Farocki portrays himself sitting at his editing table in a laboratory enveloped in smoke, which seems to indicate above all the artificially arranged nature of the scene. It’s not for nothing that his re-visioning includes a shot from ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN (BETWEEN TWO WARS, 1977/78), in which one can see the figure of the author with paper and pen at his writing desk, symbolically arriving at new combinations for a filmic montage. And when in SCHNITTSTELLE the code writers and decoding machines are (re)presented and commented upon, the target includes the double aspect of an installation that pretends to deal with a film: ‘Is it a matter of unravelling a secret, or of keeping it?’

There is nothing anecdotal about the new linkage of image slivers. As soon as Farocki reverts back to fragments of his older films and videos, he analyzes and dismembers the visual and acoustic image so as to usher the spectator into a mental space between these (acoustic and visual) images. In all of the films this in-between space has value in itself, where the cut is not – as in linear narratives – part of either one or another image, of one or another sequence of images, which it separates and divides. Instead, the cut now ‘liberates’ itself, as Deleuze puts it.<sup>6</sup> Such a form of montage, insisting as it does on the interval, no longer creates (linear) sequences but (parallel) series.

This kind of staging of the apparatus of the montage process, with assistance from the relevant technical armature, fuses temporal moments: the (past tense of the) original take (destined to become a future filmic element) joins the (present tense of the) act of rereading, i.e. reviewing. The difference between

these temporalities and states of being is communicated partly via the parallel placement or *mise-en-abyme* of two images, partly via an occasional duplication at the level of sound. The infinite regress of the visuals finds its correspondence, for instance, in *INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE* where his voice is merely the echo of the person he once was (who is once more rendered present through the projection). At the end of this layering process stands the visitor-viewer (transposed into the future), whose eyes and ears are directed toward this serialising process of images and sounds, in a movement which perpetually repeats and renews itself. Added to this, and in contrast to a screening in the cinema or on television, *SCHNITTSTELLE* is shown in the museum as a loop and thus ideally – and in accordance with the principle of repetition – it can be watched for as long as one wants. The arrangement of the apparatus locates both the viewer reading images and the author rereading his work equally at the incisive divide (the *Schnittstelle*) of observation and imagination.

## Notes

1. "Harun Farocki, Bilderkreislauf", in: Rolf Aurich/Ulrich Kriest (eds.): *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki*; Konstanz: UVK Medien 1998, p. 307-315
2. This quotation, as indeed all those not specifically referenced, is taken from Farocki's spoken commentary in *SCHNITTSTELLE*.
3. *SCHNITTSTELLE* was first conceived in 1995, in the arrangement described above, for the exhibition 'Le monde après la photographie' in the Musée d'Art Moderne de Villeneuve-d'Ascq (June 10-October 1, 1995), and presented under the title "Section". The video of this installation, which brings together both sequences of images (A and B) in a second room and in a single image (C), was then shown on Channel 3 on 25 June 1995 under the title *SCHNITTSTELLE*. In a further variation "Section" was finally exhibited as part of the exhibition "Face à l'histoire" (19 December 1996 – 7 April 1997) in the Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou. Here "Section" could be viewed in an open cube, corresponding to the set-up from the first room of the installation in Villeneuve-d'Ascq.
4. On this concept of text, see Roland Barthes, 'De l'Oeuvre au Texte', in *Revue Esthétique* 3 (1971), pp. 225-232.
5. After the title of an essay by Rosalind Krauss, 'Video: The Aesthetics as Narcissism', in *October* 1 (Spring 1976).
6. Deleuze calls this the "irrational cut"; cf. Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-Temps. Cinéma 2* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p. 324, engl. *The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 248.

Translation by Roger Hillman and Timothy Mathieson, revised by Thomas Elsaesser.

**Filming as Writing, Writing as  
Filming, Staking One's Life**



# Passage along the Shadow-Line: Feeling One's Way Towards the *Filmkritik*-Style

*Olaf Möller*

I think it's a good thing that they make films separately. The freeway in Farocki's *WIE MAN SIEHT* is not the same as in Bitomsky's *REICHAUTOBAHN*. But it is as if, beyond the different approaches and beyond the films themselves, they had corresponded with each other (one a James-Joyce-modernist-montage artist, the other a John Ford-contemplative-romanticist).

*Christian Petzold'*

Harun Farocki, Hartmut Bitomsky, Wolf-Eckart Bühler; Manfred Blank, Ingemo Engström, Gerhard Theuring, Hanns Zischler; Rudolph Thome, the young Wim Wenders of *3 AMERICAN LPS* (West Germany, 1969) and *SUMMER IN THE CITY* (West Germany 1969-1971, with Helmut Färber and Zischler, dedicated to the Kinks), reminiscences of it in Nick's *Film – LIGHTNING OVER WATER* (West Germany/Sweden 1979-80): Each an *auteur* with an unmistakably individual voice. Nevertheless, all of them more or less share something we could perhaps call the *Filmkritik* style, just as there once were Warner-style gangster films or MGM-style musicals<sup>2</sup> (see ill. 3).

This style is only applicable to those authors (in every sense) who made up the *Filmkritik* group from the 1970s until its demise in 1984, who formed a collective that owned the magazine, even if not all its members were, strictly speaking, editors or part owners. Rather, the magazine existed as an open space in which whatever the authors considered important was written about. Put another way, for the sake of clarity, Theodor Kotulla, one of the leading *Filmkritik* authors of the early 1960s, by this reckoning does not belong to this collective. Why? Have a look at his film *AUS EINEM DEUTSCHEN LEBEN* (*FROM A GERMAN LIFE*, West Germany 1977), and compare it to Farocki's *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (*BETWEEN TWO WARS*), released the following year. Kotulla made a 'proper' feature film, with lots of money, a star (Götz George), using a conventional realist style; that is, he told the biography of a man in simple, clear steps. Farocki takes a chemical process and the people who are linked to this process as an image to illustrate how Germany headed toward fascism during the period between the two world wars. In Kotulla's film, fascism is merely reactivated, while Farocki shows that Germany decided for fascism

from among several 'options'. With Kotulla the facts add up to a final sum, so that a closed, cohesive picture emerges; with Farocki the contours blur, exposing what is latent in every construction, in every image.

Simply put, all these authors wrote for *Filmkritik*, some only occasionally, like Engström, others only for a brief, intense period, like Wenders. But it was not just about writing for *Filmkritik*; you wrote for it when you weren't making films, you filmed when you weren't writing; writing and filming ultimately became a continuum in the ebb and flow of life. Farocki, for instance, made *ZUR ANSICHT: PETER WEISS (PETER WEISS BROUGHT INTO VIEW)* in 1979, then published a conversation with Weiss in *Filmkritik* 2, 1980, and *Filmkritik* 6, 1981. But Farocki needed more time to develop the Georg Glaser project: a conversation with him appears in *Filmkritik* 7, 1982, whereas the film *GEORG K. GLASER – SCHRIFTSTELLER UND SCHMIED (GEORG K. GLASER, WRITER AND SMITHY)* only finally appears in 1988. Bitomsky, in collaboration with Heiner Mühlenbrock, made *DEUTSCHLANDBILDER (IMAGES OF GERMANY, West Germany 1983)*, and authors two issues of *Filmkritik* to go with it, issues number 10 and 12 in 1983.

The old *Filmkritik* (of Enno Patalas, Frieda Grafe, Ulrich Gregor, Wilhelm Roth, and Theodor Kotulla) had a lively involvement in the events of the day; it had clarity and an unambiguous ideological orientation. Films and directors were judged according to their compatibility with this ideology – which occasionally meant turning a blind eye and accepting that a certain form can sometimes be more progressive than its content, as evidenced by the films of the late Will Tremper whom they admired despite his total ideological incompatibility with their ideals: such is life – *c'est la vie (de critique)*. The new *Filmkritik*, whose protagonists, ideas, thinking, writing and productions are at issue here, seemed at first more preoccupied with writing its way into film history, just as the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* had done earlier, only later to emerge as the critically accepted core of the New Wave. Selections were not made on the basis of obvious ideological predispositions (which frequently cannot be maintained in discussions about aesthetics); instead, one described how John Ford or Jerry Lewis had changed one's life.

'Describe' is the key word. The *Filmkritik* authors rarely used purely evaluative words for films by those they loved, esteemed, and honoured. Instead, a scene was described for pages on end, each word carefully and scrupulously weighed up against its implications, its resonances, its role in the logic and the poetry of the sentence and the text. Essayistic webs were woven: Bitomsky began his unfinished masterpiece of film criticism, 'Gelbe Streifen – strenges Blau' ('Yellow stripes – severe blue'), with a quote from Freud about a case of compulsive neurosis; Bühler finds his way into the work of Jacques Tournier via the atomic physicist Heisenberg, whose writings echo in Bühler's text on Irving Lerner, 'Tod und Mathematik' ('Death and mathemat-

ics'). The two Lerner issues in particular found more common ground among the *Filmkritik* authors and those at *Cahiers*: both sought contact with the people they admired, some of their finest issues consisting solely of interviews. They were also proud to show off their souvenirs when they returned from their travels, one example being the lovely Hank Worden photo autographed with a dedication to Bühler.

Now, it is only fair to add that the *Filmkritik* group never altered the arguments of a reactionary film director to fit their own. They were not blind to the ideological imponderabilities of John Ford, for instance. But, and this ultimately is a testimony to their greatness, they took Ford just as he was: great, imperfect – but morally beyond reproach. Their observations frequently struck a sober, but rarely intrusive note of setting the record straight: 'John Ford – Tribut an eine Legende' ('John Ford – Tribute to a Legend' *Filmkritik* 8, 1978, with several Irving Lerner reviews) appeared at a time when certain backward-thinking people in Germany were still writing with impunity about how Ford was a sentimental reactionary who swallowed communists alive, and so *Filmkritik* concentrated instead on the American Left's admiration for Ford in the mid-1930s.

If one took all the masters that the *Filmkritik* directors chose to associate their own work with, and if one were to programme a retrospective of their work placed side by side with that of their models, one would quickly see the points of aesthetic convergence, and so arrive at a rough sketch of the *Filmkritik* style. And after noting their individual differences as filmmakers, one would come to recognize that they all agree on one great unifying figure, the director Jean-Marie Straub. Of the classic masters, they love Rossellini, Renoir, and Ford and they rediscovered Grémillon and Ophüls, while their work ethos is defined by the pragmatism of Hawks, Tourneur, and Sirk, and in their writings they feel akin to Delmer Daves, Lerner, Paul Fejos, and Leo Hurwitz. Among their contemporaries they are steeped in the work of Maurice Pialat, Johan van der Keuken, and Peter Nestler.

None of their favourite directors impose their world view upon the spectator – they do not hit you over the head with their visions; rather, they approach the world by describing it. They show people at work and in their free time, in groups and through the dynamics that bind them together. Their images remain clear, their style is unadorned; a multiple exposure or a superimposed image is about as wild and manipulated a special effect as one of their films would permit itself. These directors also seem to reject the classical bourgeois notion of the functionality of art, in which everything is ultimately resolved and assigned its meaningful place.

The filmmaker who is unable or unwilling to completely shut himself off from the market (which only means that he has to create a different, 'meta'-market, like



Straub, or like many of the other colleagues in this journal), but then refuses to do or to reject certain things, is of necessity related to the professional killer who insists on killing only in the manner he chooses, and who only walks over corpses when they are of his own making.<sup>3</sup>

There is a lot of collaboration among the collective. For example, Bitomsky and Farocki share directing assignments, and Farocki also works with Blank, Engström, and Zischler. They also act in each other's films. Having moved away from the naturalism-realism of the stage toward a cinematographic style, these filmmakers regard the uninhibited, 'spontaneous' performances of professional actors as, frankly, an abomination. They prefer the aesthetics of the untrained actor (see ill. 4).

One could ponder the following: imagine the *Filmkritik* authors as a group of travellers, archaeologists, ethnologists, or criminologists. Apart from the works of Bühler, their travel films, every one of them, are epic in length, they are films you have to concentrate on, films made for the cinema, just as the cinema was made for them. Their travels are 'genuine', they are documentaries, or else heading in that direction, such as *FLUCHTWEG NACH MARSEILLE* (*FLIGHT TO MARSEILLES*, 1977, Engström and Theuring), *BESCHREIBUNG EINER INSEL* (*DESCRIPTION OF AN ISLAND*, 1978-79, Thome and Cynthia Beatt), *HIGHWAY 40 WEST – REISE IN AMERIKA* (*TRAVELS IN AMERICA*, 1981, Bitomsky), *AMERASIA* (1985, Bühler) and *VIETNAM* (1994, Bühler). They are rarely purely spiritual like *NEUER ENGEL. WESTWÄRTS* (*NEW ANGEL. WESTWARDS*, 1987, Theuring) or *GINEVRA* (1991, Engström). Even though they are written texts, mention should also be made of Peter Nau's *Voyage Surprise* and *Hotelbrand im Roc'h-Ar-Mor* (*Hotel fire in the Roc'h-Ar-Mor*), both of which are inspired by the work of Jean Grémillon. In any case, Nau became the odd man out among his *Filmkritik* comrade, because he was the only one who continued to only write, the only one who never wanted to make films and yet could not resist the temptation on one occasion. He managed to refine his style over the years into a kind of filmic prose, refined of all journalistic impurities, such as now and then they could be found in even the most finely wrought works of the other contributors.

Engström and Theuring are inspired by Anna Seghers' novel *Transit*, Thome pursues the memories of *TABU* (Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Robert Flaherty, 1929-1931) and the early dreams and promises of his marriage, while Bitomsky explores the memories of Ford and Michael Miller. *NEUER ENGEL. WESTWÄRTS* hovers as a meta-work above the rest of the group's efforts, as a kind of quest for the Grail, which in its cinematographic spirituality shuns contact even with the meta-markets.

The reading of many ghost stories has shown me that the greatest successes have been by the authors who can make us envisage a definite time and place, and give us plenty of clear-cut detail, but who, when the climax is reached, allow us to be left just a little in the dark as to the workings of their machinery.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of seeing Farocki's and Bitomsky's films as stories of the supernatural sends chills up one's spine. The first reaction is an easy-does-it *Filmkritik*-pragmatic: 'Yes-No', which on closer inspection becomes a 'Yes'. It is a definite 'Yes' to the first half of Montague Rhodes James' statement. There is a precision of observation of the world, which encompasses a precision that extends to the finest details. The gaze remains consistently stationary, calm, and has some of the charm of a police photo – the chalk marks outlining the body at the scene of the crime in *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (*BETWEEN TWO WARS*), the traces one follows in *ISAAK BABEL: DIE REITERARMEE* (*THE CAVALRY*, Germany/France 1990, Bitomsky); sometimes it is as if the researcher is gazing through a microscope, as with those serial moments in *LEBEN – BRD* (*HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*) or *DIE UMSCHULUNG* (*RE-EDUCATION*).

But then James also mentions how the machinery functions, which is supposedly never totally explicable. He is referring to two things: Firstly, to the spirits themselves (who they are, why they do what they do) and secondly, to the description of the spirits and their apparition (the author's handiwork). One can just about see how, but why like this remains *mystère*, magic. One wouldn't think this kind of description could apply to Farocki, outwardly the coolest of the *Filmkritik* dialecticians, the brilliance of whose films is a result of the integrity and honesty of his analyses. Nevertheless, his intellectual achievement is only part of the reason, meaning that his films are not simply brilliant because Farocki has thought up something brilliant. Their true brilliance lies in how thoughts are presented, how the films reveal the beauty of a deeply felt thought. The ghost of *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* is the beauty, the sensitivity towards the lives of others; the ghost is the film's aesthetic surplus value.

Finally, a most definitely 'ghostly apparition' is manifest in *IMAGINÄRE ARCHITEKTUR* (*IMAGINARY ARCHITECTURE*, Germany 1994), where Bitomsky uses multiple exposures in an attempt to make visible the various gazes in houses designed by Hans Scharoun. It remains only an attempt, however, and Bitomsky thematises his subsequent 'failure'. However, these multiple exposures become spectral images, shots of what we cannot see and yet something that is very present, never totally tangible, a phantom lacking circumstantial evidence, and hence powerfully suggestive.

[For some of us,] living with films is a little like living with music, the way it appears in [Wim Wenders'] 3 *AMERICAN LPs*: looking at the world from a balcony, listening

to Van Morrison, who is describing the way things are, and then seeing them that way.

It is easy to 'live in' the *Filmkritik* films, if you are a cinephile. Many of them have videocassettes with the films by Farocki, Bitomsky, Bühler and/or Thome right at the front in their video cabinet, clearly visible and clearly accessible. When they come home at night, alone, and depending on how dark their mood is, they may choose a film like *HIGHWAY 40 WEST – REISE IN AMERIKA*, or *KINOSTADT PARIS (CINE CITY PARIS)*, or *LEBEN – BRD*. Thome's films *BERLIN CHAMISSOPLATZ* (1980), *DAS MIKROSKOP (THE MICROSCOPE, 1987)*, *DER PHILOSOPH (THE PHILOSOPHER, 1988)* and *LIEBE AUF DEN ERSTEN BLICK (LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, 1991)* are especially dangerous during these bleak and despondent hours. One cherishes these films, and the *auteurs'* self-portraits and those of their entourages. Bitomsky's films, for instance can hardly be imagined without his voice, his generous presence; Farocki casts his friends and colleagues in films while in *ANNA UND LARA MACHEN DAS FERNSEHEN VOR UND NACH (ANNA AND LARA DEMONSTRATE AND IMITATE THE TV, 1979)* he films his daughters; Thome began filmmaking after the birth of his first child; in *LIEBE AUF DEN ERSTEN BLICK*, his most recent offspring (for the time being) runs around whooping, occasionally gazing up at dad just outside the frame.

We [Farocki and Petzold] then sit by the open-air swimming pool and repeat the dialogues of the women (in *PILOTINNEN [FEMALE PILOTS, Germany 1995, Christian Petzold]*). One could say Farocki was my dramatist – a dramatist with little interest in dramaturgy, and more in what we'd been talking about beforehand, in this everyday knowledge that you find in many thrillers [...]. Bitomsky is, in any case, the spiciest storyteller in the world. By the way, I believe it was music more than anything else that enticed him to the States – like the record 'Highwayman' by Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash, and Waylon Jennings. But now he writes to tell me that no one over there knows this record. That is the sad fact of the matter.<sup>5</sup>

This is undoubtedly true, you simply have to see the composed way Bitomsky goes into an American trucker joint and orders a hamburger with everything, or the relish with which he films a gunslinger-artist. Frequently a slender, very ironic, and always absolutely credible sense of adventure is revealed in this everydayness, which reminds one that adventure and mystery continue to exist. It looks different from how one might have imagined it, not like Joseph Conrad or Jack London, but better, because you can picture it and in the final analysis, even emulate it. Stories have circulated about Bühler, maybe the most adventurous of the lot, of how he and a partner were supposedly running a bar in Saigon called 'Apocalypse Now', and how he is now working for a televi-

sion station in Hong Kong, delivering reports from around the globe. He was reportedly last seen in Yemen.

As such, Bitomsky and Bühler come across as more adventurous than Farocki. Bühler, quite clearly, because he travels across faraway lands, Bitomsky, because his journeys lead him through the vast territories of film history.

André Malraux once observed that 'The fatherland of a man who can choose is there where the heaviest clouds gather'. Farocki's clouds gather over Germany. He seldom travels for his films – not to Marseilles, the United States, or Vietnam; his travels are at best confined to cycling into some suburb or other to get to a pre-natal class for expecting parents. While Bitomsky still finds vague traces of a connection to the past in the everyday, Farocki discovers the relentless dismemberment of the present. He lacks Bitomsky's romantic cinephilia, and his films-about-films are concerned with people like Peter Weiss, Alexander Kluge, or, time and again, with Straub. The perspective of his critical media works is deconstructive, whereas Bitomsky's perspective, while operating in a similar fashion, albeit with his own themes, is constructive. Farocki always seemed to be the saddest of the lot. His texts, especially those concerning contemporary themes, resemble the most corrosive of acids. Underneath, despair certainly makes itself felt, but also astonishment at the fact that things are represented the way they are. Once again the chalk shadow on the cobblestones: rain causing the traces to blur to the strains of Mahler. To continue without emotion, without a reason – beyond the simple, rational reason – would make analysis a worthless undertaking.

## Notes

1. Christian Petzold, quoted in Stefan Ertl and Rainer Knepperger, 'Drei zu zwei hitverdächtig. Ein Gespräch mit Christian Petzold' ('Three to two: a future Top of the Pops. A conversation with Christian Petzold'), in *filmwärts* 34/35 (May 1995), p. 75 and 76 (first appeared in *Gdinetmao*, no. 8, spring 1995).
2. Editor's note: *Filmkritik* is a German film magazine, which was published in Munich from 1957-1984, and served as a hub for innovative and impassioned German filmmakers-writers.
3. Translator's note: in the original German, the expression 'über Leichen gehen' (to walk over corpses) has an idiomatic usage in German similar to the English meaning 'to stop at nothing'. This of course is lost in the translation.
4. M.R. James, *A Pleasing Terror: The Complete Supernatural Writings* (Ash-Tree Press, 2001).
5. Christian Petzold, in Ertl and Knepperger.

*Translated by Roger Hillman.*



# The Green of the Grass: Harun Farocki in *Filmkritik*

Rainer Kneppergeres (ed.)

There's no better way of getting to know a text than by typing it out. (1977, p. 359)

One notices montage, and one does not notice editing. Montage is linking images through ideas, editing is [...] creating a flow, finding a rhythm. (1979, p. 489)

To turn 120 pages into 15 is no longer editing, it is post-synchronisation. (1979, p. 563)

Ten years on, it is always the article on the back of the newspaper cutting that is of interest, but half a column is missing. (1979, p. 234) (see ill. 5)

When you are driving or running around it can happen that, with a brief glance, you catch the image of a totally different way of life. [...] Children acquire this glance when they look about hungrily, longing for another life alongside their own. I have finally been able to see this kind of images again in a film (on *LE CIEL EST À VOUS* [THE SKY IS YOURS, aka THE WOMAN WHO DARED], Jean Grémillon, France 1943). (1978, p. 471)

The first time I ran away from home, it was a Monday and on the cover of *Der Spiegel* [Germany's equivalent of *Newsweek* or *Time Magazine* – ed.] was Juliette Mayniel, featured in a lead article about the *Nouvelle Vague*. At that time film was still an exotic topic for *Der Spiegel*, unlike today when the cinema has become a trendy topic for the entire bourgeois in-crowd. And West Berlin was a city quaking with fear, illuminated like a sausage stand near the railway station, where the owner lights up an Italian kerosene lamp because he's afraid of the shadowy figures (while dreaming of pouring hot cooking oil over his assailants). (1981, p. 119)

The police here in Basel drive white Volvos. To see them you would think the academic middle class had finally been armed and put in uniform. (1977, p. 39)

I have always wanted to have a creative job. I gave up track and field athletics, did not go near the girls in our row-house suburb who read *Bravo* [German equivalent of *Who Weekly* – ed.]. I dropped out of school to lead a life with more variety. In Berlin, I lived in a cellar. In the mornings, I went to a brewery to deliver beer, afternoons I distributed pamphlets to tenement houses, evenings I collected beer glasses in the first discotheque, nights I went to night school to get on, around midnight I took part in

dance competitions in the Eden saloon and on several occasions was voted Mister Twist, and I saw dawn break beside the runway of the Tempelhof Airport in spotlessly white Pan Am overalls. But I couldn't write anything. After three lines, I feared that life wouldn't let itself be grasped in this way and I went to look for it somewhere else. Then, for seven years, a woman sheltered me and I learnt everything. I could do my work. But what I experienced made no sense. Marriage, the company, life – all fakes. (1978, pp. 374-75)

The fight between Ali and Frazier took place twice. When Ali lost the first time, it was a heavy defeat for us, sitting together and wanting to speak out politically with film. We could see this amazement come across his face from the 7th round on as he was destined to learn that beauty cannot fly. When he beat Frazier several years later, it no longer mattered. (1977, p. 411)

When I was working at a television studio, getting home at five each day, I was so wrecked that all I could do was watch television. (1977, p. 46)

I got into this business by the tradesman's entrance (...). I told my friends, who had to continue earning their living with beer deliveries, that I had connections. Straight away they hated and admired me, and even later, it never changed. (1975, pp. 362-63)

A few years ago at WDR [West German Broadcasting] I had been playing soccer for a couple of weeks with stagehands, drivers, and technicians, when one day one of them let on that I was the director on his team; from that moment on they not only addressed me using the polite form, but they stopped fouling me, the way kids might treat the one who owns the ball. (1976, p. 502)

At present I cannot watch television. How one is expected to live in the image of television is beyond me; all I can do is *not* look. A life of moderated participation. I would prefer to invent it for myself. (1978, p. 606)

Before I had kids, there used to be a thousand places in the city where I could go during the day, and time would just slip away. (1977, p. 409)

*Wenn eine Tote* (When a dead woman) ... is a boring novel, but sometimes it is this mechanical aspect that is needed on a rainy day in a hotel room in a strange city to reassure oneself of one's own singular being. (1980, p. 276)

The first three or four times I saw *MURDER BY CONTRACT* (Irving Lerner, USA 1958), it always seemed to me as if the hero had committed ten murders before he killed the woman. Then I made a list and noticed it was only three. It is a telling discrepancy. The film manages to suggest that the killer has been murdering mechanically for an eternity before the actual story begins. It gives his final assignment real significance, and the film knows how to fabricate this eternity with a very brief listing. (1982, pp. 405-6)

If you do not read thrillers you might not understand why such a film deserves to be admired. This lightness of touch, perfect timing, and a feeling of happiness is only achieved when I succeed in throwing the wash into the machine, register a letter at the post office and return to the laundromat at the very moment the tub stops rotating. *RED LINE 7000* (Howard Hawks, USA 1965) is about the stupidity of life, excessively so, without letting itself be affected by it.

In *UNE FEMME DOUCE* (Robert Bresson, France 1968/69) a man and a woman are sitting mutely opposite each other, both having a bowl of soup. Bresson cuts from the soup spoon of one person, which is being lowered, to the other soup spoon, which is being raised to the mouth of the other person. The movements of the spoons link man and woman in the same way pistons connect the wheels of a locomotive. Shot-countershot, it is a technique of film language that has received much criticism – Bresson criticizes it by applying it with precision. (1984, p. 65)

I'm trying to comment on this shot-countershot technique while taking shots from both sides; placed side by side they are meant to yield another image, and that which exists between the images should become visible. (1981, p. 516)

Pialat tries to make films without any rhetoric, films that never leave you observing afterwards: 'well edited' or the like. (...) That is also why his scenes do not begin with a few panoramic shots to introduce a scene and set its mood, nor with what is held to be the opposite and is in fact the same thing: namely an affected leaping into the scene. (1981, p. 117)

In *TOPAZ* (USA 1969), I thought it was amazingly brave for Hitchcock to make a film in which two thirds of it include a stupid wall and a stupid door that can be seen with a splash of light on them. [...] With Hawks and Hitchcock there is this glaring ugliness that blows me away. (1983, p. 32)

I have a theory that only in the American studio system were there people who could break the rules by cutting on action without action, that is, cutting from a further shot to a closer one taken from the same angle. And they could do this without staging a grand movement to distract the eye so that you don't notice the images not fitting together. (1979, p. 490)

One advantage film photography has over still photography are the actors, who direct the viewer's gaze through the images. How nice it is to look at a stretch of water being traversed by a ship. Without the ship the gaze would head off into the distance where it would be buried by an obscure immensity, now it skims like a flat stone across the wake of the ship, a trace whose imprint the water bears for a surprisingly long time. (1983, p. 327)



[W]hy does dramaturgy have to be smooth, why is there no crisis in acting! Actors still play cute like orphaned babies in a crib wanting parents to adopt them. This gurgling, dribbling and crooning! (...) Then the actors travel to the USA in the summer, and in loft workshops they learn how to let it all hang out, instead of going to a Swiss clinic to have their facial muscles severed. (1981, pp. 139-40)

In 1890, the basic plan of action was for someone to kick the ball ahead and the others to run after it. Since then there have been a hundred methods and applications. In the 1960s, the defensive approach did a lot of damage to soccer, but the game put all this behind it. Soccer gives the impression of being a strong culture capable of renewal through formal innovation, like prostitution and drugs. Film seems to lack this vitality. There were a couple of times when film was part of everyday culture, and philosophy had its physical expression, you could see it with your eyes. It was like that in 1972, when West Germany beat England 3-1 in London, and you could see the thoughts on the playing field. (1983, p. 12)

[In a porno film] [t]here's a tracking shot that begins as a long shot of a lake, then the camera travels through a ladies' changing room, past a thin dividing wall through to the gents' changing room, where some men are waiting, then on to a group of women who are going along the walkway to the little changing booths. They talk to each other, the camera picks up on their movements and returns with them, past the expectant men into the empty space that the women now enter. Not only does filming something like this take a whole day; before you get to the pornographic elements, the place where it will happen is established with heightened atmosphere, and tracking back and forth serves to emphasise the inevitability of the climax. And the walls are cut open for the camera like beehives or birds' nests in a scientific film, so that the camera can follow it all: a *love experiment*.

Everything I've chanced to read about pornography is filled with humanistic opportunism: the spectators are deceived, the producers are speculative cynics, desire is commercialised; what's shown is disgusting, the image of woman is degraded. Meanwhile, the words 'pimp', 'whore', 'prostitution' have become operative concepts of cultural criticism. In the ABClub, where only singles were sitting, it was quiet, lots of concentration, and it's true that an almost religious atmosphere prevailed. (1975, p. 537)

A visit to the cinema in conjunction with a foreign trip has never proved a disappointment for me. (1975, p. 539)

[In Basel:] On Saturdays, I sometimes went to the flea market and opened a small *Filmkritik* stand on my jacket spread out beneath the cathedral's gargoyles. The batik lady from the next stall came across and asked whether I was a film critic. No, no. (1977, p. 46)

It all began with Berlin having so many Leftist bars run by Leftists, so many cinemas with films 'acceptable' to them, and all those events. Then the first journals shot up out of the ground, allowing them to gain an overview. And without asking anyone's permission people came and stuck on this overview a few more magazines, with imitations of theatre and film reviews. At first readers put up with it, the way one puts up with someone who insists on doing a little theatre show for one's birthday. [...] Let's be grateful to the post office for not allowing a single parasite to publish an arts review in the telephone directory. (1978, pp. 375-76)

Since the production fund credits have opened up and Berlin has had a film boom, it's been my impression that a whole lot of people have started working in film who would otherwise be running a bar or be into interior decorating. Any number of types on 5000 Marks a month, people who like making pretty things, while others look on. (1982, p. 240)

A person who looks out onto a street, perhaps with a pillow on the windowsill, is viewed as poor, whereas watching the flow of a river is considered enriching. (1982, p. 354)

In the 1950s, at school, I too was shown the films of the FWU (the leading educational film distributor in Germany, ed.). Silent, black and white, screened with a noisy projector, these films were about fallow deer and glassblowing. We high school kids with tastes formed by the photo journal *Magnum*, later on by *Twen*, by Roth-Händle advertising, green MGs, the monthly *Polen* (Poland), Herbert Vesely, Günter Grass, didn't like these films, and even today in discussions when someone says 'like a schoolfilm' it's clear they mean these films are the very dregs. But to me that's not clear at all. (1979, p. 429)

When children play doctor, one learns more about the medical fraternity than when one goes to a hospital. (1978, p. 375)

Once I saw a film called *TARZAN UND DIE NAZIS* (*TARZAN TRIUMPHS*, William/Wilhelm Thiele, USA 1943). Tarzan couldn't care less what the Nazis did to the blacks, but when they harassed Cheetah (or was it Jane, or the child?), Tarzan was seized with rage and he entered World War II. Pearl Harbor looked like the idea of a script-writer who writes for films like *TARZAN UND DIE NAZIS*. Again and again the question was raised whether the USA hadn't staged the Japanese attack. [...] Pearl Harbor, the Reichstag fire as well, the assassination in Dallas, I'd like to call these stories, core stories. [...] But what is a core story: one with the power to attract denials, confirmations, additions, deletions, legal and parliamentary investigations, and finally, scholarly studies. One layer on top of another accumulates around the nucleus, and as with freshly fallen snow, when you're rolling a great ball for the snowman, eventually the green of the grass appears. [...] Thus they (the nuclear stories) tell how you

cannot know how the world works, but you can imagine it. The way these interesting women teach you how it cannot work out with love but still instil in you the idea of what it would be like if... (1983, pp. 51-52)

When one looks at a woman on the street in Paris she looks back for about three seconds, then she lowers her eyes or else looks intently, conveying: 'Enough of this approach', then if one keeps on looking across to her she again shifts her neutral expression. Now the woman shows a second face, the face of conditional being, if one had access to her, it would be her own... She opens a door to show you that you don't have the key. (1982, p. 435)

The book (*Brackwasser [Brackish Water]* by Heinrich Hauser) reminded me of James M. Cain, the bit where a man wins a woman because he knows how to make fire and prepare a meal at the right moment. In *SERENADE IN MEXICO* the hero wins back his masculinity when he transforms a loathsome iguana into a tasty meal for a woman. With Cain, too, there is this hope: that the intensity one extracts from the world when working on it might include women. (1981, p. 381)

Construction workers, when shifting cobblestones, throw one stone into the air and catch it, each stone is different, and from its flight they gauge exactly where it will fit. [...] Work at the editing table is like this: whether it is a question of where to cut, which version of a take to include, or where to place the music, one needs to know the material so well that it fits of its own accord. (1980, p. 2)

For me this music begins when I realize we are carrying out something that brings together a dozen adults in the middle of the week, half of them coming by car via the Berlin Autobahn. Of course, I'd prefer getting together for a communist commando expedition, but a dozen people coming together without the promise of a salary or reimbursement of expenses is already a big step; there has to be a spiritual power present. (1983, p. 34)

[A meeting, a fresh encounter with films by Hitchcock, Hawks, Truffaut and Straub, with which *Filmkritik* was 'defined'; a retrospective; conversations about it, printed in excerpts. One year later the journal appears for the last time. When I started devouring the *Filmkritik*, it was already bound and on library shelves. Its format means that it is difficult to photocopy. Reading it makes one proud. R. K.]

Reproduction forbidden, even excerpts, no photocopies. (1981, p. 140)

*Translated by Roger Hillman and Timothy Mathieson*

# Staking One's Life: Images of Holger Meins

*Harun Farocki*

After his death in prison, I saw a picture of his body in a magazine. He had been on hunger strike and was wasted to the bones. It was hard to believe that this body could have been alive only a short time before; his death seemed to lie far in the past, and some special circumstance must have protected the body from decay. Encasement in eternal ice or in lava from a volcano – the face, however, belied this. While it bore the marks of the drawn-out death, which had distorted it, it was in no way strange. Not only was it familiar, it also expressed presence and was clearly from my lifetime and my world. The full head of hair still gleamed as well and did not go with a corpse. I read a blissful triumph in his face, as if he had taken death upon himself and was proclaiming it now as in a *danse macabre*. His picture drove me to ever-new flights of fancy. I felt like a child and I wanted to be told that what was important was the seriousness of the matter and not the distinctiveness of its appearance, and most definitely not the enjoyment of discussing it.

It was not until a few days later that the dead prisoners from the concentration camps came to my mind; it probably took so long because you hardly ever see pictures of individuals from the camps. Photos almost always show several people, sometimes countless numbers of people, and it seems incongruous to focus your attention on just one person. Those starved to skeletons and close to death from exhaustion were known as *Muselmane*, or *Mussulmans*. This clearly alludes to fakirs and dervishes, obliquely to the wars against the Turks and still more obliquely to the crusades. In the crusades, *Muselmane* were regarded as beings without rights; the absolute lack of rights of those dying in the camps was thus confirmed one last time. A further scandal is that this stupid comparison is intended to place the crimes in the camps within a historical context as if to justify them through this derivation.

I hope that Holger Meins had not planned for a connection to be made between his death and the deaths in the camps. Although it was part of RAF [Red Army Fraction] propaganda to link the West German government to the Nazi regime, there were no posters showing the mountains of corpses at Bergen-Belsen on the left and the dead Holger Meins on the right. It is not really customary to exhibit pictures of a prisoner's dead body or to make it public. Today, the justice system seeks to avoid making a show out of punishment. Even

if today television cameras are making their way into courtrooms and death cells, it still remains true that contemporary courts express their superiority by the distance they maintain from the prisoner's body. The West German government always insisted that the RAF was neither a political opponent nor a military enemy and avoided mobilising against it. The pictures of the dead Holger Meins were probably published to prove that there was nothing to hide. The images were intended to convey a message: we didn't kill him, he did it himself, and it was not within our power to prevent it. But photos don't always say what they are intended to say. The exhibition of the dead man was to prove power, and by doing so, the distance from the prisoner was eliminated. He was exhibited like a trophy. This evoked memories of the magical and ritualized prehistory of punishment, of lingering tortures that led to death staged for an audience of the curious.

Because I have seen these pictures, for me Holger Meins is not a dead man who has remained forever young. According to Louis-Ferdinand Céline, human development is directed towards just one single grimace. I would not presume to be so desperate myself and would rather say that a face develops towards one single expression. I saw this expression in the photos of the dead man, and this purpose in his face has imprinted itself retroactively onto all the earlier images, those I saw and those I remembered. It's as if I knew the construction plans of his appearance because I can easily imagine how he would look today after almost thirty years and twenty years after that as well. In my imagination he has aged, but without the injuries from empty self-assertion and dull self-disappointment which genuine aging inflicts. Recently I remembered a scene with Holger Meins which I hadn't thought about for decades. At the beginning of 1968, I went to see him at his apartment on Hauptstrasse in Berlin-Schöneberg. I had with me a newspaper-sized photograph that I had pasted on cardboard. It showed a Vietnamese woman holding an injured or perhaps dead child in her arms. (I was working on a small film that was supposed to show a connection between Christmas kitsch in Europe and the US and the war in Vietnam.) Holger Meins took a stick of charcoal and heightened the contrast between the woman and the background. He then began to shade her face, saying something along the lines of: if you're going to do it at all, then you must exaggerate a little, her suffering has to be really visible. That's the kind of thing they probably said in Hollywood when they were trying to have an effect against the Nazis. I know there was a third party present at the film shoot. The picture in my memory latches onto the fact that there was a shape there, but it was unrecognizable, like in photos of Lenin from which Trotsky was later removed. In my picture, however, the hand of the censor had slipped, failing to expunge the figure of the terrorist and the suicide.

I am glad that I can remember one other detail concerning this scene: because of the lighting conditions we shot outside on the street. Without this superfluous detail, my memory would seem false to me, freely invented so as to prove that Holger Meins mistrusted the political rhetoric we employed at the time. Invented to show that we ourselves had been exploiting Vietnam, by making it our thing – although the images of the Vietnamese Anti-Madonna whose child is already dead at Christmas refer back to the Passion images of Holger Meins. The war the United States waged against Vietnam was outrageous, first and foremost in its extreme cruelty. It assumed that civil society would regard it without interest or passion. The right to resistance against this war was evident, even according to an extensive interpretation. The protests against the US war unleashed far more energy than did the support for it. The protest was a flash in the pan, however, and the war had already been forgotten before it ended. The Vietnam War didn't serve to justify any theories – unlike World War I whose outbreak seemed to confirm the theory of imperialist competition – nor was it handed down as a tale of resistance like the Spanish Civil War. A shrug of the shoulders was all that remained – much in the same way as one takes the news that an unremarkable neighbour once tortured a man to death for no reason and then resumed his everyday life.

My earliest memory of Holger Meins is from the summer of 1966, when we were both among about sixty, mostly male, applicants taking the entrance examination for the film academy – it was in a villa in Berlin-Wannsee. Several hundred had applied, and about sixty were chosen to take the examination. They had already had enough experience of what it means to be rejected – or worse still, to be 'almost accepted': to have almost sold a script to a broadcaster, almost had a piece produced on a studio stage, almost managed to make a short film. Some of the examinees were around forty years old, and the youngest were just over twenty; they too felt that an eternity had passed since they had heard the call to become artists. An eternity since a sunny afternoon in the attic, spent reading Brecht, an eternity since a starry winter's night after a Cocteau film, and so forth. They had been holding on to their vocation for so long that it already seemed worn out and lacking any glamour. The new film academy offered a happy, unbelievable opportunity. After a thousand unheard prayers, God suddenly responded. Acceptance meant qualifying as a person of culture, and much more conclusively than through any actual cultural production, which would have involved some laborious proof. Three more years beckoned in which to savour one's raised self-expectations. On that day in the villa in Wannsee we had to shoot an examination film on Super-8, and I watched Holger Meins trying to usher out of the room two fellow applicants who had failed to stick to the schedule. He seemed to be speaking carelessly with a northern German accent; grinning and making faces, but he

managed to maintain the force of his arguments despite the grimaces and contortions. He naturally expressed a power to demand.

The prime example for stylized youthful uncertainty remains James Dean, who never seemed not to be acting, but rather to be presenting his actions as something he had discovered and regarded as being worth reproducing. When he plays a student he reveals that he has already been an adult for a long time or that he is pursuing something beyond the mere contrast between youth and adulthood. This seemed to be true of Holger Meins as well, in whom I could see no distinctive characteristics of a family background, not even in the form of its rejection. It seemed as if he had effortlessly shed his background and, when in a playful mood, was able to delve into his childhood with equal ease, but without ever immersing himself in its social history. Everything about him seemed to have happened to him. Over the next few years I saw him again and again with his shoulders hunched, with his arms dangling or folded behind his neck. In seminars and later at political gatherings, he liked to sit on the floor or on the table; one time he might sit with his knees drawn up, clutching his ankles, the next with his back pressed against the wall, arms folded across his chest, and his hands clutching his shoulders. He expressed a sense of not being quite where he wanted to be or belonged. He had little use for social propriety and was not ashamed that his deep sense of unrest was so obvious. At the entrance examination I must have eyeballed all my fellow applicants like a debutante examining the other dancers: every other girl seems as perfectly rounded as a character out of a novel and only she is merely piece-work.

I first noticed Holger Meins because he knew how to make so much more out of his restlessness than I did of mine. I began listening to what he said and found myself adopting the attitude of a listener even when we were speaking to each other. It already seemed that he had reached the place where one must seek the secrets of film. He said that you should use colour material in the same way you use black and white film, by which he denounced the meaningless expression 'dramatic use of colour'. On another occasion, when the film academy was considering buying a viewfinder, he said that if someone could not recognise a shot with his own eyes, then a viewfinder wouldn't help either. Once, when the conversation turned to Francesco Rosi, I heard Holger Meins say that Rosi only made films for television. He said that he was not going to work for television, but only for cinema.

By that he meant real cinematography, which is something almost never accomplished in the actual film business. All this talk of colour or black and white film, of how superfluous viewfinders were, of how large a face can appear in close-up, whether long focal lengths should be allowed, whether zooms are a crime, whether we ought to subordinate ourselves to shot-



countershot, whether synchronised sound is deceitful, all this could only be meaningful if one had already chosen to embark on the journey to cinematography. Even back then cinema and television were already becoming intermingled to such an extent that they could no longer be distinguished. But what remains true even today is that when you go to the movies it means you have to leave your house, even for a film edited with a razor-blade and projected onto a bed sheet. This fact alone divorces it from the everyday murmurs of events like a court trial or a religious service. What was needed was to preserve something of the inner and outer division of cinema films, as well as the cinema fable, which encapsulates and enraptures the life it portrays by means of pretended completeness. This concept of cinema was completely idea-based, and obviously one could remain true to this idea even while working for money in television. A simple sentence like 'We don't need a viewfinder' became a magical formula that either promised to open the door or helped one avert danger. These words were whispered, and upon them entire secret societies were founded. In the following years, when growing politicisation seemed to demand completely different films whose aim it was to create a completely different life, the value of this religious foundation to one's art was suddenly confirmed. He who did not have this spirit became simply nothing or, worse still, became a mere fraction of the common sociological denominator.

I once watched Holger Meins at the editing table while he was working on his film *OSKAR LANGENFELD*. He commanded it like a musical instrument. That this took place at four in the morning says a lot about the permanent heightened state we had chosen to live in. I often went to the film academy at unsocial hours; sometimes to try out a cut, but mostly to watch somebody or talk to someone – to strengthen my powers of judgment and get a feeling for film!

The film *OSKAR LANGENFELD* is barely twelve minutes long; black numbers on grey background divide it into twelve chapters (see ill. 6).

1. O.L. enters through a door and says that the boss wants to see him. He is told that the boss is busy and he'll have to wait. Then come seven shots of O.L., who is aware of being depicted. The shots were probably not all made on this one occasion; the series shortens the waiting time and thus lends it emphasis. It's as if something has got lost through this exercise. The next cut is into the movement of a panning shot of the boss, who has already begun his speech. Boss 'What does that mean "alright"? You know exactly what this place is about; you get food here. In other places you don't even get that. OK, then go see the doorman, make your apologies, and settle the matter.' The camera has now moved left away from the bald boss, whose office is painted in washable oil-base enamel, over to O.L. who is sitting



there in a pinstriped jacket, wearing a scarf, the kind artists wear. O.L. 'I'll remember.' Boss 'Don't remember it, don't remember it; you're meant to do it!' O.L. 'It won't happen again.' The boss could have insisted that O.L. respond with: 'I will remember it, and I will do it.' However, he has to worry about O.L. getting another opportunity to express his submissiveness in words, without his transgression being mentioned. So the boss mentions that O.L. has smuggled alcohol into this institution – a homeless shelter – which cannot be tolerated – or would he perhaps prefer that he causes another commotion and smashes more furniture? O.L. responds no. As the camera recedes again back to the boss, and it becomes clear that the two have been sitting in the middle of the almost empty room exactly opposite each other; O.L. has stood up and walks through the door again which closes behind him; the number of the next chapter appears.

2. This chapter lasts barely a minute and ends with the 'Oh-oh' of a man's voice offscreen. O.L. has walked through the hostel dormitory, at one point arranging a card game for half a *pfennig* per point and attempting to get a laundry order. This scene doesn't reveal very much, and the decision to end it emphasises this short scene.
3. O.L. is at the food counter asking what there is to eat today. The woman from the kitchen tells him as she serves him his food: one portion of bread, one of fruit, one of margarine, and one of sardines in oil. O.L. gives back the brown bread and demands white bread. When he receives it, he says in voice louder than necessary that they don't like handing that out. He is told that he is really being brash today with the word 'Today' addressed to the camera, which O.L. is playing to in making his demand. This chapter consists of a single shot and ends with O.L. asking, 'What'll there be tomorrow?'
4. As he is doing the laundry in the washroom, he shouts to someone, 'What are you looking at?' Later when he comes to hang the wash on the line, the effort of stretching is too much for him. His toothless mouth falls open. The shirts drip.
5. Back in the dormitory, he has put on his spectacles and is reading a cheap novel and smoking. As he sits upright in order to take a cigarette from one of the four packs, which at that time were still only available in West Berlin, a few bars of music waft in from a distant radio. A sense of nostalgic expectation arises. O.L. draws on the cigarette and begins to cough. There is mucus in his mouth, which he tries to hide. There is a cut, and he is shown in another shot, still occupied with the mucus so that you are left wondering whether the witnessing camera is being discreet or particularly intrusive. O.L. turns to the camera and for a moment it seems that a smile is about to

- break out across his face. Once again a few bars can be heard – the warm tone of a wood-cased radio.
6. O.L. is at the counter of a local bar talking to some men. Behind the counter a woman with heavily made-up eyes gives the camera a long gaze, as though she sees a guest for whom she has been waiting forever. As in the other scenes, a long focal length is used, probably in part because they were shot with a loud camera, which had to be kept away from the microphone. O.L. is talking about something he has found and lists what it contained. The chapter ends in the middle of his sentence. In the background, behind his neck, we again see the waitress's heavily made-up eye looking off into space with calm expectation.
  7. O.L. is visiting Erich, a man with a very high voice. O.L. is poking at crumbs on a tablecloth. In front of him there is a birdcage in which a canary is fluttering and chirping. Erich says that O.L.'s pants look dreadful. O.L. takes a cigar from a box and lights it carefully with a lighter. Erich comes in with coffee and cake. By now the ash on the cigar O.L. has just lit is very long; he pokes his finger through the bars of the cage. Erich reenters with another pot of coffee, this time O.L. only wants half a cup. Erich sits down on the bed – he obviously lives in one room with a kitchen. O.L. says that he has become very nervous. But he says that he's got his thirty Marks and he'll cope. During this conversation we can usually hear the person who is not on camera, evidently the sound was not recorded together with the images and has now been transferred offscreen so as to make the asynchronous sound less noticeable. O.L. raises his cup to Erich, who smiles. O.L. 'Today I..., today I...' And the chapter closes.
  8. O.L. approaches a man in what is obviously the hostel's dining hall and says with great emphasis that the man owes him ten Marks. The debtor remains seated and answers with great calm that he doesn't yet have the money. O.L. carries on, saying that if he doesn't get the money by that evening, 'then that suit is gone'. The debtor says something conciliatory whereupon O.L. is shown in close-up. Although his eyebrows are raised, he does not look threatening. He says, 'We'll see.' It is obvious that this scene has been staged for the camera and that the debtor probably played along. O.L.'s close-up was arranged, and while this was being done, his anger vanished. One can see just how assertive he is.
  9. A card game among some men from the hostel. Among them is O.L., who is sitting out a round and drinking out of a cup, taking another gulp, and then another. His thirst seems unquenchable.
  10. O.L. stands wearing long pants. He puts his cap on, undoes his tie, and laboriously unbuttons his shirt; upon taking this one off, a second shirt is revealed, which is missing several buttons. He reaches for a third shirt, takes

off his cap, pulls the shirt over his head without unbuttoning it, and reties his tie. The film then cuts to a window viewed from outside. Behind it O.L. is drawing back the curtain and looking grimly down at the street. He turns away, and the curtain falls.

11. This time O.L. is visiting a woman, obviously a close relative. The camera shows them sitting opposite each other at a set table, behind them is a bamboo stand as tall as a wardrobe and looking like a triangular sail, with struts between its supports, and holding a few potted plants. There is an unusual amount of space above the couple's heads, and O.L. appears very small as he sits there, so hunched that his head touches his chest. He asks where his nephew is, whether he can't come up for a moment, and is told that he is busy chopping wood. So O.L. postpones the reunion until next time.
12. This chapter starts out with a black screen. We hear Holger Meins's voice saying, 'Go on, say shit.' O.L. repeats it with various intonations. The film ends without Oskar Langenfeld having ever found the proper approach.

As I watched Holger Meins at the editing table, he was working solely on the sound of the lighter. Today when I see O.L.'s lighter in chapter seven, my recollection is confirmed. However, this confirmation seems to me to be a fault in my brain currents, like when something known long in advance is confirmed by hindsight, like a *déjà vu*. Holger Meins was not out to prove himself with this film. Although the idea of the twelve chapters and their apodictic conclusions originates with Jean Luc Godard's *VIVRE SA VIE* (*MY LIFE TO LIVE*, 1962), there is nothing imitative about his style. The film is about an old man who is unable to find the right words to express his troubles, who can hear this himself, yet continues by making another attempt, one which goes all the more wrong. There is something about the way he looks; his bearing seems to be that of an actor portraying his own existence. The film does not consider where the borderline between the social and the existential might lie. It deals instead with the way time passes along with events. Something is made apparent which could just as easily disappear once again. It is uncertain whether there are such things as meanings or whether they are created because the common conception of the world requires them. This short film, in which so much has been made from a couple of days of shooting and a few rolls of black and white film, proved that Holger Meins knew how to come to terms with a subject.

It was only much later that I understood that Holger Meins's work at the editing table consisted of examining the shots so he could come to his own conclusions. He was able to transfer some of what he learned from his material into the montage that portrayed this very fact.

When I read in a newspaper that he was one of the wanted terrorists, his name had been printed as 'Mons', and this led me to hope both that it might

not be him and at the same time that he might not be caught simply because of this misspelling.

We never discussed the 'question of armed struggle' as it used to be known. We only ate together when we were working or travelling together; we only drank beer together when we met by chance at a screening or a political gathering. I did once spend a few days with him one winter when we drove to a film festival in Belgium in a Volkswagen which leaked when it rained and whose heating sucked in engine fumes. Once we were there we watched a lot of films and discussed them; we organised a political riot and drew up a short manifesto. We never did discuss a gangster movie, the kind I could imagine as being the model for the RAF. In my imagination, Holger Meins was a figure on the RAF sidelines, one of those who in the gangster genre doesn't say a lot, but performs the quiet, technical tasks – preparing a getaway car or blowing a safe. These gangster-workers have often turned to crime as the result of a tragedy involving love, or because of their love for a profession like boxing or auto racing.

Holger Meins and I never spoke with one another about love. Could it be that he had a deep love of film and had been disappointed? Or, if he could not cope with the claims made by such a love, how could I? These are the fantasies of someone who felt abandoned. But what should have been and should be understood is that he wanted to dissolve all attachments – he wanted to stake his life.

*Translated by Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.*



# **Between Wars, Between Images**



# Working at the Margins: Film as a Form of Intelligence

*Thomas Elsaesser*

Who is Farocki? – I don't know. Or to be more precise, I know very little about him.

He is one of the twelve editors of *Filmkritik*, the austere and compelling German magazine on cinema, and *BETWEEN TWO WARS* has been recommended to us by Jean-Marie Straub. The film is beautiful, very beautiful, and that should be enough.

*Louis Skorecki*'

*Cahiers du Cinéma*'s November 1981 introduction of Farocki needs to be updated.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, much of Harun Farocki's early television work is buried in the cellars of several German broadcasters and his short films are not in distribution. But he has completed a second full-length feature film, *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* (*BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*).

The title could translate as 'Something Is Coming to Light', and with it, something more about Farocki deserves to come to light as well. Not necessarily about him as an individual (although he is a colourful personality on the Berlin film scene), not even about his production methods (Farocki first appears in *BETWEEN TWO WARS* putting captions on photos of nude women: 'Mona loves freedom'; 'Ina loves death' etc., while his voice-over explains that in order to finance this film he 'accepted any job that demanded covering sensuality with words, as is the rule in the culture business'). There needs to be far more attention given to the fact that Farocki is a writer of images. Paradoxically, Farocki was for a long time probably more important as a writer than as a filmmaker. His films were more written about than seen, and instead of considering this a failing or something to his discredit, it actually consolidates his significance in the world of cinema and emphasises his considerable role in the German political avant-garde.

## **Between Two Wars**

In 1970, the political journal *Kursbuch* reprinted a brief essay on the technological reorganisation of the German coal and steel industries in the 1920s. Written



by Alfred Sohn-Rethel, a Marxist economist close to the Frankfurt School, who spent most of his life in exile in Britain, the essay outlines in a concise style the economic interest and seemingly inescapable logic that led the German industrial bourgeoisie to lend Hitler financial support and make common cause with Nazism. By showing how the formation of the VESTAG, the United Steelworks, based as it was on the use of waste, scrap or by-products from one industry as raw material for another, made consumption (or accelerated consumption in the form of destruction and self-consumption) a mere function of the processes of production, Sohn-Rethel demonstrated a classic Marxist dictum about the inevitable contradictions which the development of the forces of production bring about in the relations of production. He also put his finger on the origins of modern consumer society, of multinational companies and their economic crisis management through arms production, warfare, and repressive-interventionist political regimes: 'You cannot speak about fascism if you do not speak about capitalism' (Max Horkheimer).

Farocki thought the subject was contemporary enough to spend some seven years (1971-77) making a film inspired by Sohn-Rethel's essay. While Nazism was becoming big (show) business (*CABARET*, *THE DAMNED*, *THE CONFORMIST*, *THE NIGHT PORTER*, etc.), it seemed timely to point out to what extent big business in the 1930s was 'fascist', not because of a conspiracy of industrialists with right-wing nationalist views, but because of capitalism's inherent logic. *BETWEEN TWO WARS* belongs to that relatively rare category of films which does not try to illustrate Marxist perspectives and then posit these as analyses; instead, it treats their 'truth' as itself a matter of perspective, part of a past no longer accessible to us nor evidently to the subjects in the film, who all try to 'learn from history' and are therefore necessarily separated from it. What happens in the realms of the social and economic spheres remains peripheral, and the characters exhaust themselves, in fact are killed, trying to internalise historical events and their implications, as if swallowing what their bodies refuse, like patients in Freud's case histories of hysterics. This is perhaps the real drama of the film, giving it its seriousness and air of anxious claustrophobia: that inside the characters' minds nothing quite corresponds to either the violence of the social transformations taking place around them, nor to the lucid simplicity of Sohn-Rethel's forceful deductions. It is reminiscent of Jean Luc Godard's investigations into how to make films politically, and related to Jean-Marie Straub's *NOT RECONCILED* (as well as to Dreyer and Bresson's severe pictorial self-restraint). *BETWEEN TWO WARS* can also be seen as a document about a generation of German filmmakers whose knowledge of their own past, its cultural and political traditions, far exceeded their ability either to assume or to reject this past's political and ethical implications.

The story of *BETWEEN TWO WARS* is built like a multi-layered parable. 'A film about class warfare, which doesn't deal with the pain of the injured or the agonies of death. A film about the organisation of production and labour which doesn't deal with the agonies of the working day.' It starts in 1917: An army nurse asks two German soldiers why they fight. The first, dying on the railway tracks, scratches the words 'raw materials' into a wooden sleeper; the second, floating in a puddle, manages to write the word 'irrational' in the mud. Trying to understand the relation between the two words, the nurse concludes that a gun is a source of profit, both potential (it can kill an enemy and thus conquer territory) and assured (for the steel industry and the arms manufacturer, insofar as each bullet, whether it hits a target or not, produces an empty shell). The enigma of the rational irrationality of war remains. We move to 1919: A serious looking young man, the hero, tells an engineer of his dream (possibly an image of his own working life) in which a bird, exhausted from hatching its eggs, starts eating them in order to stay alive. The engineer tells him about the chemist Kekulé who, after years of research, dreamt the correct molecular structure of benzol, which led to the development of the petrochemical industry. The hero concludes that science must blend with the dreams of the workers. The engineer also has a dream about utilising the gases given off as a by-product of converting coal into coke. By 1923, the engineer has persuaded leading members of the coal and steel industry that his dream of merging coal mines, coking plants, blast furnaces, and mills into a single chain of energy production can be realised, provided that technical rationalisation is synchronised with economic rationality.<sup>3</sup> The rational and the irrational, too, arrive at a 'synthesis'. But the constant threat to this form of rationalisation is over-production: capitalism survives by changes from competitive struggle to cartelisation and monopolies; monopolies survive by controlling markets, if necessary through planned destruction, as in warfare. The irrational shows its own particular kind of rationality.

*BETWEEN TWO WARS* is very much concerned with these kinds of historical reconstructions. This does not mean the film recreates its historical setting in the studio, or that Farocki had 'authentic' sets built. If nothing else, poverty would have dictated a different aesthetic (the film was made on a budget of less than 8000 German Marks, money that Farocki saved while working in the television industry). Reconstruction here is the opposite of recreation: the selection of a detail and its isolation from habitual contexts has to stand for a larger totality, while simultaneously signalling its inadequacy of being able to do so. The small leather tool bag of a bicycle or the shiny radiator of a Horch luxury automobile can represent generalisations such as, for instance, the German working class, or for something as specific as Hitler's speech to the Düsseldorf industrialists (see ill. 11). As Farocki points out in the film, history

'disappears from sight before the connections are even half-understood'. Therefore, a film about the past is always a search for the past. Having discovered a vanished site of history, *BETWEEN TWO WARS* conducts an archaeological dig of mentalities and concepts, as well as of industrial ruins and wasted lives. When a brick wall in the foreground frames a house and a factory chimney, it recalls the constructivist optimism of some of the socially progressive housing programmes of the 1920s in Frankfurt, or it brings to mind the generous semi-detached working-class estates that Krupp had built in the Ruhrgebiet for 'his' miners, and which play a prominent part in Wim Wenders' *ALICE IN THE CITIES* (see ill. 9). In his notes to the film, Farocki explains that a particular Berlin church was chosen, because 'it has a staircase as if Murnau had had it constructed in the Ufa studio', while a certain garage on the Kantstrasse, almost hidden from view by the giant neon sign now fronting it, was important for his film because it was the first building in Berlin constructed with reinforced concrete<sup>4</sup> (see ill. 10).

The architectural, industrial, or historical film references are thus both implicit and explicit, while their meanings are embedded in an argument that evokes a precedent only to underline the difference between a 'then' and a 'now'. *METROPOLIS*, with its demagogic utopia of the unification of capital and labour, is quite clearly the model of the false synthesis between technology and the dream, against which Farocki's hero argues when he says that the workers' dreams have to shape themselves in the technology, rather than the dream of technology shaping the workers. When the hero talks to one of his comrades over a glass of wine about the difference between bourgeois conceptions of time and a worker's experience of time, Farocki invents a simple but effective visual metaphor. While they are talking, a glass of wine overflows, the wine trickles away, dripping down the stairs. It might be an ironic comment on the revolutionary outrage and pathos of Eisenstein's 'Odessa Steps' sequence in *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* or *STRIKE*, but it also comments on the strange proximity of fervour and sacrifice, bacchanals and blood (see ill. 12).

The film ends with the very physical threat implied by the rise of fascism. In a woman's apartment there is a knock at the door, the hero takes off his wristwatch and begins to climb out the window. In a voice-over, the nurse declares that those who died during the Second World War did nothing to teach the living, because they simply repeated the mistakes of the First World War. The camera tracks to the window and looks outside where the chalk outlines of a spread-eagled body are gradually being washed into the gully by the rain (see ill. 7).

## Learning from History?

Without the various levels of implied irony and the recognition that this, too, is a filmic quotation, the scene might have become trapped in the pathos of its metaphors. The watch on the window sill and the high angle shot into a tenement courtyard recall the key scene of the young worker's suicide from Brecht and Dudow's *KUHLE WAMPE*. The scene's irony operates on several levels, because Brecht and Dudow began their film with the kind of tragic ending they criticised in such socially conscious Weimar period films as *MOTHER KRAUSE'S TRIP TO HEAVEN* in order to show that suicide is the wrong kind of closure to a narrative about history, especially the history of the working class. Farocki's reversal of a reversal makes the leap out the window less the suicide of an individual worker than the metaphoric destruction of an entire political culture. *KUHLE WAMPE*'s final optimism must seem somewhat irresponsible in hindsight with the emergence of fascist repression and the persistent economic logic which survived the Nazis and the 'Third Reich' into the present day. The knock on the door is its cinematic off-screen allusion. *BETWEEN TWO WARS* then, is about the desire to learn from history and catastrophe, and the failure to do so, but it is not a film that sets out to teach. It is a film of reflection, of traces, and as such, its basic *gestus* is that of a text, a set of visual puzzles and graphic hieroglyphs, which have to be deciphered and whose entire effort and strength depend on its resistance to being consumed.

Farocki's characters are preoccupied with learning from history, sometimes literally (they read books), but even more so when they think they can avoid repeating their forebears' mistakes. As working-class German communists, they do so mostly from the perspective of bitter and bloody defeat (see ill. 15). As the nurse notes: 'in this Second World War, there is nothing to learn that could not have been learnt from the first. My diary remains empty'. In trying to learn from not learning from history, *BETWEEN TWO WARS* reconstructs the story of a particular economic organisation, the *VESTAG* as a *Verbund*, an interdependent network. Yet this story is incomplete in some important respects. Its object is to explain the 'origins' of German fascism and thereby come to terms with a traumatic historical event, the destruction of the German Left. In the process of telling the story as a narrative with characters, it attempts to wrest from this a coherent subject position: not of an individual, to be sure, but of a class, the German working class. The quest is frustrated on both counts: the explanation that the parable of the *Verbund* can offer regarding fascism stubbornly refuses to relinquish its political ambivalence (the use of waste energy for production is 'rational' from a socialist perspective just as much as from a capitalist one, and one might add, it also makes sense from an ecologi-

cal perspective). Secondly, the story's relationship to the learning process (as the acquisition of knowledge to generate further knowledge) is limited by the problematic subject positions it gives to the protagonists, whom the outcome, as an example of struggle, leaves no other option than to once more understand themselves as victims of history, rather than as (its) revolutionary subjects. The knowledge this story offers seems useless to the women in the film and suicidal to their men, in a trajectory that is reminiscent of those detectives in Jorge Luis Borges or Edgar Allan Poe's stories, who at the end of their investigation discover that they are themselves the murderer's intended victim, caught out by their own truth-seeking zeal.

In *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, the protagonists have to cope with a double defeat: they are defeated in their attempt to make their political aspirations converge with their personal ones. But they are also defeated by the images they find, and the narratives they construct, or rather: by the way these images place them, in relation to history, as spectators of themselves. In this film, as in much of his work, Farocki confronts the paradox that a film is always already a history of its images, rather than merely providing the images that go with a particular story. A film about history is a film trapped by the images of history. How, then, to learn history lessons other than the melancholy ones of defeat, circularity, and repetition (see ill. 17)?

The answer implies a life's pursuit that is by no means assured of success, because learning from history means working with images, and working with images is the political task of progressive forces. But while for those on the left this has often meant denouncing the ideological work of official pictures or news photography, of the images used in advertising and the dominant political discourse, the power of images must not remain in the hands of those in power. Roland Barthes has tried to identify what it is that makes this kind of image fantasmagorical, arguing that a photograph is both a record of a presence and a substitute for that presence. Inscribing itself in two temporalities at once, that of 'having been there once' referring to its *indexicality*, and the timeless presence it preserves, thanks to the plenitude of its iconic referents, a photograph is both a document-subject and a fetish-object. Its status of 'not-now/not-here' as well as its illusion of presence that seemingly protects the viewer from loss, also implies that a photograph invariably structures a disavowal.

## Before Your Eyes – Vietnam

This disavowal and temporal displacement experienced in front of images is the starting point of Farocki's second film, *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*. Its central scene shows the hero and the heroine, both political activists in Berlin's anti-Vietnam movement, in front of an exhibition of war photographs from the conflict. They are deeply disturbed not only by what the images reveal. The shock they experience in the face of the photographs' immediacy and impact is doubled – and further troubled – by the shock of a felt distance, brought on by the sign character of the images, their legibility as a deliberate, constructed rhetoric. Vietnam was palpably present, at the time, in Berlin, and not just some faraway region on the other side of the globe. But the photographs were also messages, addressed to someone, as densely coded as medieval emblems, and as formal in their iconography as Renaissance paintings. How, then, do these media images situate the activists looking at them?

[A] picture of us among the pictures of Vietnam... it looks obscene, because we are unharmed. The victims in the photos are covered in blood, their assassins remain unharmed... It's like a war film...'

The German student movement wanted to demonstrate its involvement, its sympathy, and solidarity with suffering and with the world's victims of injustice. It developed a cult of *Betroffenheit* (concern). But another motive was involved as well: the students' own sense of German responsibility for this suffering and incredible injustice. Hence the desire to undo the isolation and self-satisfaction that a newly prosperous Germany had displayed during the reconstruction period of the 1950s, which led to the next generation's near obsession with joining almost anything: the past with the present, the first world with the third, student protest with direct military action. But instead of building a united front with the 'anti-imperialist struggle' the students found themselves in a maze of mirror images and echo effects. Yet because *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* is about the images of Vietnam, the books about Vietnam, the recollections of militant demonstrations in Berlin's streets, its activism becomes double-edged: sincere and committed, remote and vicarious. The film is as much a story about love and living as a couple during a time of war, as it is about the protagonists' struggle with 'memory' and 'mourning work'. The central emotional fact and key revolutionary discipline of their relationship with each other, as well as with the world, are their daily acts of 'joining' and 'separating'. Are they able to join disparate things through thinking, and to keep separate what appears to be one and the same?

Farocki's film is about an impasse in practice as well as language. Standing in front of the Vietnam images, the couple find themselves in the prison house of metaphor, where love is like war, and war like a machine, and the United States 'is like a machine tool that destroys the very material it is supposed to be working on', whereas the 'guerrilla war is a machine whose violence has precision. It is the violence of a tool... that forms the material but does not press it into an alien shape'. But whenever either the man or the woman in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* try to come up with this kind of metaphoric equation, one of them begins to have doubts: 'Not like this, it doesn't sound right'. These are the sorts of demands the characters put on the photographs to make them render a meaning they can translate into practice. They believe that the historical experience lodged in these images is either beaten into the shape of a template, or is fractured into a series of metaphors, replicating, echoing, and mirroring.

If we need an image to properly grasp a reality, Farocki seems to be saying, then let us subject these images to a process of work. But what precisely *is* work with images? Photographs often simultaneously say too much because of their iconic density, and too little, because political reality is too complex to be represented as an arrangement of visual phenomena. Here the cinema intervenes as that language which 'processes' images, metonymically as well as metaphorically, making connections as well as maintaining separations, working by analogy as well as by contiguity. In *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*, a voice-over comments on one of the most familiar images from the war: 'An interesting picture: the American soldier has a stethoscope, just like a doctor, in order to hear better and determine whether the Vietcong are moving along underground tunnels. The image concludes that the Vietcong are an illness that is afflicting Vietnam and the American soldier is the doctor who can cure this country. The image also says something else, that the Vietcong are the blood which flows through the veins of Vietnam. Its heartbeat and pulse'. By metaphorical extension, Farocki the filmmaker becomes a doctor with a stethoscope, 'listening' to the images. He examines the 'heartbeat and the pulse' of these images, as well as of those looking at them. In a reversal of the metaphoric equivalence of the image, however, the 'doctor' has become a 'soldier', a militant in another war (see ill. 24).

For Farocki, the filmmaker is also an allegorist. Insofar as *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* deals with the impact of the images from Vietnam on the West German Left and their conception of revolutionary action, the film at first seems to have little to do with the New German Cinema. However, given the conditions under which the film was produced, outside the film industry, without support from television, and at the margins of the funding system, Farocki time and again finds apt 'images' that portray the impossible



battlefronts facing avant-garde filmmakers in Germany in the 1970s and 80s. Their unenviable choice was either producing analytical work on the mass media's images (and making films perceived as abstract and agit-prop by the public), or telling the stories not told by the media in fictional-realist terms (work perceived as illusionist or naively idealist by the 'progressive' critics). Farocki's film comments on this either/or dilemma in certain passages that seem merely aphoristic in relation to the war in Vietnam, but which become graphically descriptive when seen in light of the plight of independent filmmaking:

It is not a question of doing either one or the other, but of merging the two. When you clear up your room by moving everything to one side, that's easy. Or when in your workshop every time you use a tool you put it back where it belongs, that's easy, too. It's easy to produce something systematically, like a machine. And it's also easy to produce something new, a one-off, like an artist.

Evidently, filmmaking has to situate itself somewhere between the highly technologised apparatus of the factory and the unique insight of an artist's sensibility and temperament, and yet have a public dimension of accountability that is inherent in neither. The difficulty comes from Farocki's explicit aim in his films to 'follow the structure of an idea, rather than that of an "exemplary biography"', which is to say, to have a human agent, but without the traditional narrative of a fictional protagonist. What could be the filmic form of an idea? Or, in Farocki's words, how does a filmmaker practise 'film as a form of intelligence'?

There are moments in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* where this process of an idea taking filmic form can be seen unfolding in both its abstract and concrete shapes.

An open field, a combine harvester; the name 'New Holland' is visible.

Voice of Robert: Why are the Vietcong more patient and persistent than the American G.I.? A Vietcong is a peasant from the Mekong Delta, the American soldier is an employee on a farm somewhere in the Mid-West, which belongs to a corporation.

Voice of Anna: We were studying the war in Vietnam and ended up in the wheat fields of the United States.

Voice of Robert: One has to replace the images of Vietnam with images from here, express Vietnam through us.

Voice of Anna: The fields are large. The combine harvester drives five miles in a straight line and then makes a turn. Because it is a large machine, operated at high speeds, and because machine time is expensive, the harvester makes large turns.



Voice of Robert: Out in the open field, the American form of production is superior. But here, on the margins, the American machine is too large, here the fields can only be worked with a hoe and a scythe. Wherever there is a straight line, the American form of production is superior. Wherever there is a turn, the Vietnamese one is victorious. In the middle of the field, the United States grows enough to feed the entire world with its harvest, or to let it starve. Whoever fights the United States has to make do with what grows at the margins.

Voice of Anna: Or, only those who survive on what grows at the margins can successfully fight the United States.

### **Working (at) the Margins**

Farocki here treats an idea (not necessarily an original one) and research (not necessarily his own, as the book references as sources for his films make apparent) in the manner that Straub and Huillet treat literary texts and music: it becomes a material object. Hence the concern that ideas and concepts do and do not become images, but that, nonetheless *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR*, something is becoming visible in the in-between, or during the passage from one to the other. The scene is not meant to 'illustrate' the uneven balance of forces between the US and Vietnam (even if this is a fact), nor is it a cinematic representation of 'heavy-handed, wasteful imperialism' (even if this is implied). The image of the New Holland combine harvester, instead of, say, a John Deere, harvesting a field somewhere in Germany, functions as the visual anchor for the development of an idea, in itself contradictory and dialectical, which, in the actual combine harvester that we see, has become embodiment and object, resisting both the transparency of a representation and the density of a symbol. Instead, it interposes itself between, and substitutes itself for, all the ready-made images that spectators may have in their heads about the American Midwest and US military warfare, as well as all the images we possess of Vietnamese peasants, rice paddies, and emaciated figures in places anywhere from Ethiopia to Bangladesh, Biafra to Rwanda. The 'image' that the different voices in the commentary create regarding the relation of 'US – Vietnam' retains its metaphoric potential, and its character of a model (since the film returns repeatedly to the field-edge or centre-margin relations, as well as to the question of different modes and machines of production and work). At the same time, the image on the screen is ascetic, neutral, distanced, and low-key in its referential information. This allows it, not without paradox, to become the cinematically adequate representation of the political idea that the scene is concerned with, while dividing the spectator's attention between the memory images

evoked by the text and the perception of a beautiful, idyllic composition of fields in the German countryside. In its minimalist way, the scene performs its own meaning: 'The beginning of an investigation is when one joins ideas. At the end, one has to separate them'.

Farocki so thoroughly allegorises his position as a 'marginal' filmmaker that he can reflexively situate the biographical and historical experience of his generation. In both the discussed films, the disenchantment and the disorientation of those who tried to join a political with a private struggle become his model for how one can 'think' (German) history (e.g. where to see the continuities and where the breaks, where the parallels and where the antinomies), which in turn provides the means not only for historicising (Marxist) political thought, but for historicising the cinema's chief formal resource, montage.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the negative associations of separation and personal loss as witnessed in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* when the couple ends up on different halves of an opening drawbridge serve Farocki as image for a cautiously optimistic assessment of the possibility of thought-in-action (see ill. 4). In a media world gripped by a veritable rage for rendering everything visible, transparent, apparent, it is the ability to separate and join (as in montage) that becomes a form of resistance, if it teaches you not only to live with discontinuity, but to let it energize you: to let go of memories in order to experience adventure, to use black leader or the white page in filming and writing, in order to create a new mental or ethical space. Such an idea of montage opposes itself not only to the official media's presumption of 'total recall' and seamless omnipresence, it also places in critical perspective the melancholy narcissism, powerlessness and anomie that seems to be the private mirror image we draw from the media's totalizing ubiquity.

Farocki's films thus define themselves less by their subject – whether it be fascism in *BETWEEN TWO WARS* or the Vietnam war in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* – except insofar as these are strategic subjects of a counter-cinema, counter to the personalised memoirs and family melodramas with which the fascist years are depicted in the New German Cinema, and counter to the be-reaved recollections of the years around 1968 and their traumatic aftermath for the Left. Film as a form of intelligence is Farocki's own guerrilla war. He makes films without making cinema, and more remarkable still, he also makes films when he is not making films at all. For instance, when he writes articles and essays in the 'austere and compelling *Filmkritik*', a monthly which, by his own admission, may not have much to do with what movie fans think of as cinema, but prides itself on being the 'only literary avant-garde journal in Germany'. He makes films when he interviews himself (as well as Peter Weiss and Heiner Müller), or argues with the editor of the East German official literary magazine about Ernst Fischer's definition of 'socialist realism'. He makes films when he

rents out a cinema to show his film for free, but stands by the door to prevent certain people from seeing it; when he addresses the annual general meeting of German film journalists, giving them a seminar on film criticism by reviewing their reviews of *BETWEEN TWO WARS*; when he plays the Situationist prankster by having himself arrested on the pavement in front of the Berlin Festival Palace the evening the Minister of the Interior is awarding the annual film prizes (see ill. 18-21). By a characteristic inversion, Farocki picks as his political motto a sentence from Carl Schmitt, the anti-democratic, dyspeptic political thinker of Germany's nationalist right: 'If the inner, and according to optimistic opinion, immanent rationality of the technically organised world was to be completely implemented, then the partisan will probably not even be a troublemaker. Then, he will vanish of his own accord... as dogs have disappeared from the freeways.'<sup>6</sup>

But no more than the Vietcong guerrilla, faced with the American stethoscope, can the filmmaker either go 'underground' or permit himself to vanish of his own accord. He has to disperse himself, make himself invisible by other means. Not even the margins are safe, for as a character in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* ruefully concludes the discussion about the wheat field and the combine harvester, 'America's junior partner, Japan, has built a smaller machine which can also harvest the margins'. Film has to disappear from the cinema screen and perhaps even from the small, portable video screen. For the time being, Farocki has decided that only by turning itself into a form of 'writing' in the broadest possible sense, can film preserve itself as 'a form of intelligence', at least until the arrival of a new machine, in time for a different (wheat)field of dreams or battle.

## Notes

1. Louis Skorecki, 'Qui est Farocki?', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 329, November 1981.
2. This essay was first published as a review of *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, together with a background article 'Working at the Margins: Two or Three Things Not Known About Harun Farocki' in *Monthly Film Bulletin* no. 597, February 1983. It has been slightly revised and abridged.
3. The pipes that connect the plants and supply them with energy ('Das große Verbindungsrohr' – the big connecting pipe – of Farocki's radio play of the same title) need to be underpinned by a 'big pipe' – a cartel – that controls ownership and administers the various production units as a total industrial combine, as well as by co-ordinating markets and consumption, because the system only works when the units all work to capacity.
4. Harun Farocki, *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN*. Recounted and recorded by Peter Nau (Munich: *Filmkritik*, 1978), pp. 17, 63, 67.

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5. 'When one has no money for cars, gunfights, beautiful costumes, when one has no money for pictures where film time and film life go past as if by themselves, then one's energy has to go into the [...] montage of ideas' the voice-over observes at one point in *BETWEEN TWO WARS*.
  6. Harun Farocki, 'Dog from the Freeway' (in this volume).



# Dog from the Freeway

*Harun Farocki*

A photograph from Vietnam. An interesting photo. One has to put a lot into it to get a lot out of it.

The American soldier has put on a hearing device and is listening to the ground. He is listening to hear whether there is any movement in the tunnels dug into the earth. Bullet-proof vest, glasses, and stethoscope – he looks like a physician. The American soldier is the physician who wants to cure Vietnam. The Vietcong underground is the illness afflicting Vietnam (see ill. 24).

All of Vietnam was a warren of tunnels – tunnels connecting villages with each other, leading to underground food and ammunition depots, to underground workshops and operating rooms. The entrance to the tunnel system could be located under the ash of a camp fire or in a hollow tree. The Americans were physically too clumsy and big to crawl down into these tunnels. The weaker one hides. The tunnels are the counterpart to the sky. The Americans had almost a complete mastery of the skies over Vietnam; the Vietcong had almost total control of the region under Vietnamese soil.

When the French were besieged at Dien Bien Phu, they too tried to dig themselves in. But the weeks of bombardment had reduced the earth to such a fine powder that the trenches and tunnels began collapsing. The soil of Vietnam was not going to protect the French.

In April 1975, as the Americans were preparing their evacuation, Camp Davis, right at Saigon's airfield, remained behind, right in the middle of the area still controlled by the Thieu regime. In accordance with the provisions of the Paris cease-fire, some Vietcong soldiers were stationed there who had a status similar to that of a military mission. They were aware of the date of the last planned attack on Saigon and must have feared they might come under heavy shelling. They therefore began digging shelters under their barracks; and they had to do this at night as well as hide all the debris. The amount of danger they were exposed to could be inferred from the behaviour of the Vietcong in much the same way a farmer can predict the weather from the behaviour of his livestock.

The American soldier in the photo is listening to the ground with a stethoscope, converting a readily available civilian thing into a military one. He is like the guerrilla, who transforms his entire sphere of life, down to the very

soil, into the means of his struggle. Military writers report that Napoleon is to have said that one has to 'fight the guerrilla as a guerrilla'.

In addition to this improvised method of surveillance, the United States also systematically employed echo sounding and sonar apparatuses. Aerial photography revealed where certain layers of earth were sunken or collapsing. Using partisan tactics the US fought the Vietcong with counter-guerrilla tactics as well as conventional warfare tactics, as pawns in the realm of mechanised warfare.

While one soldier listens to the ground, the other one grips a rifle with a fixed baryonet – combat readiness posed for the photo, because there's nowhere for him to shoot or stab. The false pose, however, does express a truth of an aimless readiness to fight an opponent who is invisible and who won't attack for as long as anyone is expecting him to do so. The American soldier is the physician who wants to cure Vietnam. The Vietcong are the blood flowing through the veins of Vietnam.

## I

'In his brilliant episode from the film *FAR FROM VIETNAM* (*LOIN DU VIETNAM*, 1967), Godard reflects (as we hear his voice, we see him sitting behind an idle movie camera) how good it would be if each one of us made a Vietnam inside ourselves, especially if we cannot actually go there (Godard had wanted to shoot his episode in North Vietnam, but was denied a visa). Godard's point – a variant on Che's maxim that it is the duty of revolutionaries to crack the American hegemony by creating 'two, three, many Vietnams' – seems to be right on target. What I'd been creating and enduring for the last four years was a Vietnam inside my head, under my skin, in the pit of my stomach. But the Vietnam I'd been thinking about for years was scarcely elaborated. It was really more of a mould cut by America's official seal.'<sup>1</sup>

A photograph from Vietnam; it all began with these photos. They began appearing in 1965 and afterward, first in the US, then in Sweden, France, and later here as well. This image and these images. The image is from a series and is at the same time an example of a type, a print belonging to a class of image like those of the concentration camp photo, famine victim photo, and socialism standing-in-line photo genres. The text below the picture can be either interpreted as pro-American or pro-Vietnamese, but there is always a second text: why were there so many pictures from this one war?

In the winter of 1979-80, another teach-in on Indochina took place in the Auditorium Maximum of the Free University, Berlin. This large lecture hall is located in the Henry Ford Building which is itself made up of a large hall, glazed on two sides, a smaller side hall, and a few lecture theatres; it is often used as a shortcut from the subway to the canteen or from an institute to the library. It is an antechamber to the exit, a void at the centre incapable of presenting even a false appearance of power, knowledge, or spirit.

After almost ten years, there was something about Indochina again. In the course of the past years there had been reports, then denials, and then more convincing reports of growing mountains of corpses in Cambodia, of the slaughter of millions of people under the Khmer Rouge regime. In January 1979, the army of reunified Vietnam had marched into Cambodia; and after the Pol Pot regime had been chased from the centre, it remained there (and remains there to this day [i.e. 1982]). In February, China attacked Vietnam precipitating a sixteen-day war with at least seventy thousand casualties. In addition, the South China Sea was filled with boats, overloaded with refugees drowning or dying of hunger and thirst.

At the teach-in, I made a note: 'There are two groups in the hall: one siding with China and Cambodia and the other with Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The China-Cambodia people shove the three million deaths in Cambodia to one side and become great humanists when it comes to whether human rights are being respected in Vietnam. The Soviet Union-Vietnam people don't want to be told that there are concentration camps in Vietnam. Both groups have identical mental mechanisms. One member of the China-Cambodia group announces that the newspaper article reporting about the mass murders is verifiably false and is immediately met with applause from the rest of the group, as if nobody had ever died in Cambodia. And then Georg W. Alsheimer proves that at least one of the signatories to the 'Will of the Patriotic Prisoners' is a Thieu regime collaborator and is immediately met with applause from the group, quite as if nobody had ever been locked up in Vietnam after 1975.

Indeed, I myself don't want to have to hear that the Vietnamese are occupying other countries and that their own country is ruled by an incompetent, corrupt, and oppressive regime. It should be possible to discern a historical character without glossing over the faults; just as the word "character" implies, there must also be such a thing as loyalty.'

I wrote 'Soviet Union-Vietnam people' and 'China-Cambodia people' and avoided words like the 'Left' or 'left-wing factions'. I could choose whether to associate with them or not, I could also choose to oscillate imperceptibly between us and them. I preferred to invent two choruses and also a self. In the early seventies, I met with some dozen old communists to discuss a project which never got off the ground. All of them were members of a faction which



had broken away from the KPD, KPO or KAPD. The break-away took place forty years ago and since then they were defeated by the Nazis, had experienced the Hitler-Stalin pact and Khrushchev's disagreements with Stalin, but they still remained obsessed with the events from forty years earlier. For them everything came out of that split, even they themselves.

## 2

At times there were fifteen hundred accredited journalists in Saigon, several hundred of which were working with cameras. It has been said that no other war was ever portrayed in pictures, in print and on television to the same extent. The question why there were so many pictures from one war is a question which journalists themselves like to ask. The answer has to do with the importance of immaterial production exceeding that of material production. For that reason, there is a different, simpler answer: in most wars, the warring parties are too far apart. In Vietnam, the American soldier got so close to the Vietcong soldiers that both could fit into the picture.

The war in Indochina began in 1940 (at the latest) and had many parties, fronts, and causes. In China, the Japanese were fighting the nationalist (and internationalist) forces brought together under the Kuomintang. They demanded stationing and transit rights from French Indochina so they could move through northern Vietnam from Haiphong to reach the Chinese province of Yunnan. While the two sides were negotiating, the Japanese invaded Vietnam on 22 September 1940. The Pétain government granted the Japanese the right to station their troops there.

Thailand, Japan's only ally in Asia, attacked the western border in January 1941. In the course of negotiations under Japanese coercion, French Indochina ceded some Cambodian and Laotian provinces to Thailand. In March 1945, the Japanese directed a surprise attack against the remaining French administrative personnel they had tolerated until then. They directed the emperor of Amman to declare the demise of the French protectorate and the country's independence under Japanese protection.

France had surrendered to Germany in 1940, and the Germans' puppet regime under Pétain and Laval had signed a non-aggression pact with the Axis powers. This coalition did not apply in Asia. The governor-general of Indochina tried to purchase planes and anti-aircraft guns from the US, reckoning that the United States, as political and military backers of the Kuomintang, would have an interest in an anti-Japanese power in Indochina. (Some of the American arms supplies to China were shipped through Haiphong.) The US,

however, declared that they would not stand in the way of Japan's occupation of Indochina. The French in Indochina were thus neither Japanese collaborators nor recognised as allies of the US.

In 1945, a situation arose when French troops under pressure from the Japanese were unable to receive assistance from the Americans, something Bernard Fall has compared to the attitude taken towards the partisans of the Warsaw uprising by Stalin's USSR.<sup>2</sup>

Since the end of 1944, guerrilla units in the north of Vietnam, under a leadership that included Ho Chi Minh and Giap, had begun the national struggle for liberation from Japanese and French foreign rule. The precursor of the CIA, the OSS, provided this resistance group with weapons. Up to 1954, the Viet Minh fought the French mainly with American weapons, much of which the North Koreans and Chinese had captured in Korea and passed on to the Vietnamese.

In this outline of the beginning of the war in Indochina one already notes the strategy of wearing out an ally by employing surrogates and arming opponent. This war began with a lack of clarity and that is also (for the time being) how it ended.

'It started in Vietnam, and exploded in the streets of America.' I had thought things might change a little (here) once the Vietcong reached Saigon. Vietnam began being forgotten long before. In 1971, when after a 'pause' in the bombardment, the US once more began bombing the north of Vietnam (North Vietnam, the DRV), there wasn't nearly as much protest against the US and aid for Vietnam as there had been in 1968.

Perhaps the day in 1973 when Le Duc Tho and Kissinger signed a treaty in Paris was important. A small country had successfully resisted its suppression and destruction by the world's largest military machine; the day this was established in writing passed almost without notice. On 30 April 1975, television again showed something: the whole world saw how the US Army, its administration and its allies were driven out of the country. There was no dancing in the streets here, in Calcutta, Cairo, or Rome.

Forgetting and disappointment – it seems important to me that the distinction be maintained. In any specialised library today you can probably find fifty American, French, or German serious books on Vietnam. Academic interest in Indochina increased with the experience of war. 'It just can't be, it would be contrary to all historical sense, that so much intellectual energy, so prodigious an activity, and so noble a martyrdom should not have their eventual impact.'<sup>3</sup>

## 3

It is just not true that the United States permitted all kinds of reporting in a libertarian sense and that that was how Photo 1 (ill. 28) came to be made (in its many forms). After all, the US military and political leadership had succeeded in putting across a completely false version of the 'Tonkin incidents' to the international press, thus justifying the 'engagement' of regular troops in Vietnam. Seven years later, when US opposition to the war was far more broad-based – not only communists and pacifists but also many representatives of finance capital – the military leadership managed to conceal its attacks on Cambodia.

Photo 1 did not leak out to reveal anything, it was authorised and distributed to represent something. Photo 1 is not aimed at readers of the *New York Times* or *Paris Match*. It is directed at farmers in Malaysia, students in Djakarta, the residents of Phnom Penh. It states: one must fight the guerrilla as a guerrilla, that is what we are doing.

This photo alludes to another image, whose many impressions are represented by Photo 2 (ill. 29), the image of communist terror. Photos 1 and 2 belong together. Opponents of the Vietnam War separated them, but they were not so easy to separate. If in Berlin you distributed pamphlets with a copy of Photo 1 and then drove home afterwards, the Berlin daily newspaper *BZ* might contain a copy of Photo 2. One side published one picture, and the other side published the other. This divide was particularly marked in West Germany where the level of ideological debate, of the prevailing official opinion as much as that of the opposition, was particularly low. Despite this false separation the images managed to come together elsewhere, to give the entire war a bad picture.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of history as a play that grips its audience: in 1808, Napoleon defeated the regular Spanish army and precipitated a guerrilla war, comprised of some two hundred local guerrilla wars. Less than 50,000 Spanish *guerrilleros* succeeded in pinning down some 250,000 French soldiers. The word 'guerrilla' is Spanish for 'little war'. The only other place that guerrilla warfare took place was in Tirol and then only for a short time; the rest of the European wars against Napoleon were fought in open battle.

'The Vienna Convention of 1814-15 restored the European conventions of war. War is waged between states as a war of the regular state armies; by sovereigns of the *jus belli*, who even in war respect one another as enemies and do not denigrate the other as criminal, so that a peace agreement remains a possibility. [...] Given this kind of classic regularity, and for as long as this actually remained valid, the partisan could only be a marginal figure as indeed he remained throughout the entire First World War (1914-18).'<sup>5</sup>

The spark then flew northwards from Spain. In Germany, it didn't affect the farmers and workers so much as the artists and the military. Heinrich von Kleist wrote the play *The Warrior's Battle*, and August von Gneisenau and Carl von Clausewitz read booklets translated from the Spanish. An edict was issued in 1813 concerning the militia; signed by the King, it was published with due ceremony in the Prussian statute books. The edict obliged every citizen to oppose the enemy with weapons of any kind. Axes, pitchforks, scythes, and shotguns were recommended. Every Prussian was ordered to disobey all enemy orders. Three months later this order was withdrawn, freed from all 'acherontic dynamism'.

'The moment when the partisan assumed a new and decisive role occurred in that short-lived Prussian edict on the militia, the *Landsturmedikt* of April 1813; a new and hitherto unknown character of *Weltgeist* took the stage. It was not a brave and warlike people's will to resist that opened the way for the emergence of the partisan and legitimised him philosophically, but education, culture, and intelligence. He was, if I may say so, philosophically accredited and made presentable. [...]

For at least a moment, he enjoyed historical rank and an intellectual consecration. He would never be able to pin down this precise episode. This is an important circumstance in terms of our topic, this theory of the partisan, which is political and goes beyond the classifications of military studies that was only made possible by this accreditation in Berlin. The spark which flew northwards from Spain to Berlin in 1808 found its theoretical shape in Berlin, which allowed its embers to remain safe, to be passed on to other hands. [...]

After the Wars of Liberation, Prussia came to be dominated by the philosophy of Hegel. It attempted to reconcile revolution and tradition systematically. It could be regarded as being conservative as indeed it was. Yet it also preserved the revolutionary spark and through it the philosophy of history presented the ongoing revolution with a dangerous ideological weapon; one more dangerous than Rousseau's philosophy had been in the hands of the Jacobins.' The concept of history as an experiment, in which the experimenter becomes infected by the subject.

## 4

When the Vietcong reached Saigon:

'Heard the good news by any chance?' Masters enquired. They were facing each other. Not three feet lay between them. Masters was staring at Jerry's signal but his eyes did not appear to be scanning the lines.

'What news is that, sport?'

'We just lost the war, Mr Westerby. Yes sir. Last of the brave just had themselves scraped off the roof of the Saigon Embassy by chopper like a bunch of rookies caught with their pants down in a whorehouse. Maybe that doesn't affect you. Ambassador's dog survived, you'll be relieved to hear. Newsman took it out on his damn lap. Maybe that doesn't affect you either. Maybe you're not a dog lover. Maybe you feel about dogs the same way I feel about newsmen, Mr Westerby, sir.'

Jerry had by now noticed the brandy on Masters's breath, which no amount of coffee could conceal, and he guessed he had been drinking for a long time without succeeding in getting drunk.

'Mr Westerby, sir?'

'Yes, old boy.'

Masters held out his hand.

'Old boy, I want you to shake me by the hand.'

The hand stuck between them, thumb upward.

'What for?' said Jerry.

'I want you to extend the hand of welcome, sir. The United States of America has just applied to join the club of second class powers, of which, I understand, your own fine nation is to be chairman, president, and oldest member. Shake it!'

'Proud to have you on board,' said Jerry [...] <sup>6</sup> Leaving aside the expulsion and extermination of the Indians, there have been but two wars on US soil. There was the war for national liberation against the English, that in part used guerrilla tactics. The second was the Civil War, fought for, among other reasons, the emancipation of the slaves so that they could become paid labourers.

Despite the fact that the country's size and the scattered nature of its settlement is similar to what is found in Asia, the US has no history of despotism.

Even its first settlers had advanced skills and tools in both agriculture and manufacturing. The incorporation of the huge territory into one nation and one society was achieved using modern means of communication – the telegraph, railroads, and money. The role played by the police and the army was merely corrective. The thought that taking possession of a country means installing one's own administration, running up a flag, and demanding tribute and submission from the natives is one inherited from feudal agrarianism. It is this form of colonialism that even the most backward European countries like Portugal employed until they verged on self-destruction. The US also made territorial conquests and possessed overseas colonies, but the capitalist wisdom prevailed that it is better to control a company through its shares than to take it over completely.

This wisdom further dictates that one withdraw from failing companies rather than having to ensure the food supply of the entire neighbourhood, as a feudal lord would have been obliged to do ...

The special history of the US is a special history of civilisation where power was exercised internally and externally, and the fact that its supremacy has never been in danger has given US imperialism an essentially extensive character.

Did the Vietnamese beat the US in 1975, or was it just not that important for the US to crush the Vietnamese?

## 5

The book *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival* deals with the US bombing war against the DRV in the period from 1965 to 1968.<sup>7</sup> It is based on a seminar on national security policy held at Harvard University and was directed in part by Kissinger. The source material for the book included pamphlets from the DRV, statements by North Vietnamese prisoners in the south, travel reports by journalists, and military aerial reconnaissance material. It is a book that attacks Vietnam from the air and offers explanations.

A bomb is dropped (one of eight hundred tons dropped daily on average), and a reconnaissance plane takes a photo and another the next day. The pictures are compared. Has anything changed, is there any sign of life? The criteria obtained and verified are based on the reality of Vietnamese life; however, whereas it is usually the terminology which creates a distance from its object, here it is inherent in the method itself. The country is ploughed under by American science, whereby its surface area becomes greater, and it can more easily be perceived; this methodical cruelty is expressed less stiltedly if one simply speaks of a child poking at an anthill.

In each bombing raid flown over Germany during World War II, about a quarter of the planes that took off from England were shot down. The US planes over Vietnam did not have to reckon with much resistance. The American superiority was so great that the American pilots were scarcely prepared for encounters of resistance; as a result they were occasionally shot down by a farmer armed with a rifle. The Vietnamese frequently deployed artillery mock-ups, thus keeping the bombs away from the real targets. Or they protected a possible target with a host of fake cannons and presented the Americans with easier targets. Or they lulled the Americans into believing themselves safe from the false guns, so that they flew within range of genuine artillery. Because of the inferiority of their own planes and pilots – some had

never even been in a car before entering a plane – the North Vietnamese air force basically operated defensively. A MIG would appear on the horizon, whereupon the US planes had to drop their bombs willy-nilly in order to prepare for battle – the MIG would then withdraw.

The book describes the intelligence of the Vietnamese, including their leadership, giving hundreds of examples. The American bombing and decentralisation led to a gradual democratisation in the DRV. Their book describes, for example, how the Vietnamese would protect their trenches from snakes by planting particular plants in the vicinity, making a distinction between uplands where they used banyans (*Ficus bengalensis*) and the Red River Delta where rough dogstail (*Cynosurus echinatus*) was used. The passage describes Vietnamese ‘tellurian’ cunning precisely, but also the power of the Americans to comprehend them in their entirety. In a Hegelian sense, the book’s portrayal of the Vietnamese is ‘most magnificent’, but it is American science that has provided this portrayal. This science is literally a science of war.

## 6

But despite the drums, death occasionally came close. I can still feel my father’s strong grip as he held me close to his chest in the bottom of a trench. I couldn’t have been more than six or seven. But I can hear him muttering faster and faster: ‘*Nam do a di da phat, Nam do a di da phat, Nam do a di da phat*’, a Buddhist invocation meaning roughly, ‘May God protect us’. Over the sound of this chanting came the roar of bombs exploding around the trench and the rain of dirt upon us.

One particular day the drums had sounded too late, and many of the villagers – including my father and me – didn’t have any time to take cover. One of the two planes spotted us and altered its bomb run, flying in low, right over the treetops. Little geysers of earth puffed up near us as my father dove for the trench, sweeping me up in his arms. The thunder overhead terrified me. Were we going to die? I hugged my father as tightly as I could and squeezed my eyes shut.

Suddenly, the racket disappeared and was followed by shouts of joy, growing louder and closer. My father jumped up and yelled, ‘It’s been hit!’ Everyone piled out of the trenches, running, shouting in delirium, ‘It’s falling, it’s falling!’ Fingers pointed upward as the bomber, one engine on fire, swept across the sky in a relentless downward arc. The unbelievable had happened; a lucky gunshot had brought the monster down. As we ran, a fiery ball exploded two or three kilometres away.



The villagers raced out from every direction towards the explosion: the young men out front, pursued by the children, the women and older men somewhat behind. I felt like I had wings. When I caught up to my father he was pumping the hand of a beaming young man, his other hand on the young man's shoulder.

'Hey, you're the one who got him, aren't you? You're the one who did it! Wonderful, that's just wonderful!'

[...] Hai hoisted me up on his shoulders so that I could see. A hero was my friend; my father was making a speech; my brother played mandolin in the orchestra. I was lost in a swirl of happiness, and pride that I was connected with the men Rach Ranh admired most. Since Rach Ranh was my universe, I could not imagine a higher honor. Nobody celebrated the victory over the plane more enthusiastically than I did. Neither the French nor the Americans could ever possibly know what a triumph it was for a miserable delta village to achieve this victory over the oppressive force wielded by a Western power. For a barefoot village boy like me, it was a treasure which sustains me to this day.<sup>8</sup>

Doan van Toai was arrested two months after the Americans' withdrawal and the fall of the Thieu regime. He spent twenty-eight months in prisons and camps, he never learned what he was accused of, and he was dismissed without any explanation. He was allowed to leave the country and so he went to Paris where he published this book, *The Vietnamese Gulag*. It was written with a journalist, Michel Voirel, and it may have been his idea to intersperse the description of the present protracted time in prison with flashbacks of the prisoner's former life.

Being in prison is monotonous and hard to describe. The prisoners are crammed into small rooms, it is very hot, and there is little to eat. Some camps originated during the Thieu era; some of the old regime's guards were hired on as well. The slightest violation of camp regulations led to solitary confinement. There is abuse and torture; Toai tells of horrendous corporal punishment. The prisoners are mainly highly respected people, including some who had spent a long time fighting for the revolution. One had previously been imprisoned during the struggle against the French.

While in prison, Toai remembers the scene of a plane shot down by a son of the village, a village where people were working, a plane from above that brought strangers, an opponent superior in speed, firepower, agility, and training and who also had the advantage of being able to determine the time and place of engagement. Whether it was out of boredom or high spirits, this enemy treats the villagers as fair game in a shooting party. The village's resistance seems to be a natural right. Toai, the son of a teacher, tells of a village in which everyone shows their solidarity because everyone there was poor. But what if some of the villagers were discovered to be in collaboration with the



foreigners – and what is collaboration? And what if one has to leave his/her village to fight the aggressors at their home base?

Toai is the same age as those who founded the anti-Vietnam War movement at universities all across the US and Europe in the mid-1960s, and who created a Vietnam which they carried in their heads, under their skin, and in the pits of their stomachs. Toai was a student-politician in Saigon. The Thieu regime used police, secret police, and armed forces against the opposition students. Students were thrown in jail, among them Toai, although he remained aware that the student movement had a rhetorical undertone. People talk like everything was a matter of life and death, but as long as you were a student in the city, you were a future master, the progeny of the caste that controlled the politics and deals in this country. Enmity may exist in this caste, but not to an extent that it would threaten its existence or grip on power.

During a general strike by students in 1970, Toai suggested an action in support of their Vietnamese compatriots in Cambodia; enthusiasm rose; they occupied the Cambodian embassy and were able to hold it for two months. The context: the neutral Cambodian leader, Sihanouk, had been overthrown and replaced by a pro-US regime under Lon Nol. Under Sihanouk, several Cambodian provinces had been used by the North Vietnamese to marshal forces for their battles in South Vietnam. 'Sihanouk's fall for the Cambodians signalled an opportunity to oppose the Vietnamese.' However, they failed to act against the North Vietnamese troops, preferring to take advantage of the Vietnamese merchants in Phnom Penh, where pogroms took place over a period of days; thousands of them ended up fleeing to South Vietnam. These pogroms further incited the South Vietnamese against the Cambodians. The students took advantage of this climate to push the government into a dilemma. It had to act because Cambodia was now an ally, but at the same time, it couldn't act because Saigon's businessmen and their clients were anti-Cambodian and pro-student. The occupation was a clever gambit, but it failed to untangle the country's knotted relations (national and supranational, racist and capable of solidarity, traditional and modern, political and humanitarian). A country had changed allegiance, and the tremor among those in power uncovered something otherwise hidden by the larger war.

Toai travelled to the US at the invitation of the student committee against the war. He was disappointed by the verbal radicalism of the American students, who were swift to agree with the NLF so they wouldn't have to deal with the contradictions in Vietnam and Indochina dismissively. The Americans exhibited a masochistic sense of shame, an anti-colonialist reflex which also had an egotistical theme: '[...] this war should stop because it has cost too many American lives and dollars. Whether they were supporters of war or of

peace, the Americans were mostly interested in their own country and themselves, and not in Vietnam or the Vietnamese.'

Toai was not a member of the NLF, but he sympathised with it and believed that after its victory a 'tolerant and liberal South Vietnam' would be established. Imprisonment, however, led to dramatic changes. Toai's attitudes in the book begin to change. Attempts are made to reconstruct things as they once were. There is also the past as expressed through today's consciousness. In this process the events and perceptions before imprisonment are not only read differently, but edited in hindsight.

Casting a sideways glance at Mao, Ho Chi Minh consistently pointed out that he was not a theorist and had not developed any ideas which could be preserved in a book. He made clear that he regarded himself not as an author, but as a reader. He had read Lenin's book *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* again and again over the years, and felt it was enough to continue rereading this book. This apparent gesture of humility is simultaneously an expression of self-confidence: 'Our political culture is strong, it is so very contemporary that we have no need to manifest it in a book. What we lack – and the only thing we lack – is the relation of our struggle to the world.' This is what made the Vietnamese struggle against the US into a warm, nurturing current for me here and my contemporary Toai who was living a few hundred meters from events occurring in Saigon. The Marxist-Leninist reading of history aligns all the forces like a magnet. Revolution is authentic, not natural: in this pair of concepts there is the hope that society can be redesigned. You don't have to burn down the land like some Brazilian rain forest, you can change society like they did in the Alps, along the Nile, between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and on the Mekong. Politics as landscape gardening [...] a gentle self-conception. Why, oh why did this warm current cool down? Lenin feared that the Bolsheviks' culture was too weak, that the Czarist traditions of imperialist Russia would prevail against their will. Toai cites Vietnamese intellectuals who thought that any Marxist-Leninist culture that was separated from Buddhism and Confucianism could never come to grips with their reality.

Toai attempted to explain. In the 1968 Tet Offensive, the people who supplied the soul to the Vietnamese revolution were killed; those left behind were bureaucrats and opportunists. After that, the front could no longer find a broad-based coalition in which the traditional Vietnamese experience could be enriched by the systematic ideas of the West. The history of social revolution offers many examples of a few thousand people inspiring a great movement, and that with their death, their departure, or disappointment, the inspiration was lost. During the Tet Offensive, the NLF stormed the cities and even the US embassy in Saigon, losing tens of thousands of its soldiers. This had a propa-

gandistic function, proving – and it could do little more than prove – that the US could not succeed in its goal in the immediate future.

In every war there are attacks whose aim is more to demonstrate one's might than to actually achieve anything else. Until recently, I considered the Tet Offensive as an event dictated by the tragic necessity of the weaker party to demonstrate through real blood that it can prolong the war indefinitely. Today I wonder whether all this fits together: the sacrifice of the avant-garde and its liquidation.

Old inmates of the jail, welcome new prisoners.  
 In the Sky, white clouds are chasing the black ones away.  
 White clouds and black have drifted out of our sight.  
 On earth free people are huddled into the jail.<sup>9</sup>

The body count: five dead bodies were laid in a row and the row is further continued by weapons laid side by side. A hunter's orderly bag displayed to allow one to take stock, count, and make photographs. The weapons lie next to the people, just like after the hunt, the smaller animals lie next to the bigger ones. There are also some weapons lying in a small, muddled heap; they are the values behind the decimal point. The fact that weapons and people have been placed in a row shows that we are being given a demonstration of the enemies' fighting power, and that the exhibited part has been broken.

The automobile and the motor-tricycle on the opposite side of the road stand there just as they would in the US or in Europe in a picture displaying dead people in the road. Death interrupts the journey – the person involved, the witness, the helper, the onlooker. There are two children in this photo observing the activity; the closest one seems to be looking at the photographer. This is characteristic of most street photos: a bystander whose look is one which asks why exactly this moment should be worth photographing. The women with the bicycles have averted their bodies and their gaze, perhaps in expectation of the person approaching on the bicycle. The ambiguity of their behaviour gives the picture its authenticity. It indicates that it wasn't the photographer who arranged these symbols or had them put there. This helps him appear like someone who observes and records, as an eyewitness.

But who are the dead? Who killed them?

#### Abbreviations:

AID	(United States) Agency for International Development
ARVN	Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
DRV	Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam
GVN	Government of (South) Vietnam
MAAG	(United States) Military Aid and Assistance Group

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MACV	(United States) Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
NLF	National Liberation Front
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party
USOM	United States Operations Missions

The image of American torturers and the tortured Vietnamese is a simplified summary of the war; a war with many parties, many fronts, and fought in very different ways. On the one side there are regular North Vietnamese troops and NLF regulars. The North Vietnamese and the NLF (known to the Americans as the Vietcong) also fought as irregulars, that is to say out of uniform. Parts of the rural and city populations are sucked into their struggle, without belonging to them in a formal sense. On the other side, there is the South Vietnamese government army and its police forces. There is the US Army and its liaison units with the South Vietnamese. This side is fighting two wars as well, one conventional and the other partisan-style, a big one and a small one. This side too persuades or forces portions of the population to take part in the fighting. However long, varied, and intensive, the war continues and there remain millions who take no part in it. Many of these are killed by bullets, bombs, or shells without belonging to any one party.

Each fatality is entered on the credit side of the balance sheet, provided one can find the corpse. If the dead man is not in uniform, one can put him down in the books and reports as a guerrilla or suspected Vietcong. Any woman or child can be described as such. If the dead man is in the uniform of the South Vietnamese army, one can remove the uniform, and he can continue his shadowy existence on the payroll of his superiors. In the attacks on Saigon, Vietcong grenades landed in the poorer areas as well. And who knows precisely who fired a grenade or a bullet when the Vietcong captures most of its weapons from the Americans forces, and when the weapons lined up beside the corpses to portray the broken opposition will in turn be sold on the black market? Sometimes, the US uses political/educational/psychological means to wage their little war, to try and win over a village with the GVN; a US plane, fighting the larger war, flies overhead and bombs the re-education experiment to pieces. It is hard to coordinate the big war with the small war; of course, the US sometimes fires at its own allies accidentally and vice versa, and various members of any army are always shooting their comrades by mistake. The body count. The picture is a proper receipt for so many faked balance sheets.

## 7

John Keegan asks what words one can use to describe what war actually means. What does it mean to say: '[...] the brigade attacked, but could not prevail [...], the enemy was shaken [...], the French reserves mingled with the surging masses and attempted to resume the battle'? What does it mean when a description of a battle says 'a wall of corpses'?

'Human bodies, even when pushed about by bulldozers, do not, as one can observe if one is able to keep one's eyes open during the film of the mass burials at Belsen for instance, pile into walls, but lie in shapeless sprawling hummocks. [...] For the heaps to mount, they must be climbed by the following victims. While the "six-foot heaps" of Agincourt could only have been topped off if men on either side had been ready and able to duel together while balancing on the corpses of twenty or thirty others. The notion is ludicrous, not grisly.'<sup>10</sup>

Keegan studied at Oxford and trained officers at Sandhurst. His book describes three battles – Agincourt in 1415, Waterloo in 1815, and Somme in 1916. A battle is a war in a unity of place, time, and action. He declares at the outset that he has never taken part in a battle. Before describing the battles, he discusses the methodology of military writing and its themes: battle descriptions as national prose, as legend, and as political propaganda. There is the contrast between the view of a battle from above, from the general's vantage point, and that from below, the perspective of the combatant or non-combatants involved – whereby literature deals with the individual while military sociology has begun to develop the figure of the unit, about six men strong, as both protagonist and recipient.

'Action is essentially destructive of all institutional studies: just as it compromises the purity of doctrines, it damages the integrity of structures, upsets the balance of relationships, interrupts the network of communication which the institutional historian struggles to identify and, having identified, to crystallize.'<sup>11</sup>

War is destruction, and even when practised systematically by institutions, the extent of the destruction will always exceed expectations. The destruction spreads to that which is communicated. So too in Vietnam; soldiers throughout history have never gone to their deaths entirely voluntarily, it was always necessary to organise this voluntariness. In this book the war appears as a subject like sexuality. The war is always there, and everybody knows this. Much is talked about it, but nobody completely trusts what they hear and say about war. The simplest aspects of war are puzzling or mysterious: knowledge is withheld, yet attempts to inform are made. Taboos are created and broken;

there is banality and there are well-kept secrets. By the way, Keegan is more than a little coquettish, but that's no great comfort.

## 8

Of the many armies fighting in Vietnam, there is an additional one that deserves attention. The Americans sent so many scientists to Vietnam that they could be considered a separate branch of the armed services. These included sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, ethnologists, and even communication researchers. One of them, named Pike, wrote a quite conventional book about the Vietcong which on the surface appears to be quite deficient. The author replaces genuinely useful organisational sociology terminology with terms from the science of communication: interviews, surveys, documents, statistics, influencing factors, and variables. How it all accumulates! Hardly any books are published using this material, more often they are papers which are copied from microfilm or typed, wrapped in a piece of cardboard. They are not issued by publishers, but by agencies or foundations which launder money for the military or university authorities. The early imperialists in Asia, Britain, and France at least commemorated the cultures they despoiled in books – a book can still be a valid tombstone.

The unceremonious American writings were produced to argue, accompany, and justify the Americans' smaller war in Vietnam. Science in the spirit of soap advertising – what would a Vietnamese do if you gave him one hundred dollars or shot his mother. Despite a few references to history, ethics, or religion – which can also be found in advertising – the authors deal only with the immediate present and future. The Americans do not know Vietnam. The scientists cannot speak Vietnamese and have only come to Vietnam after being called there by the army; called to help in the task of establishing a regime loyal to the US – one which is considered pretty lightweight but tough. They don't speak Vietnamese, and they don't have any desire to learn new words. Their words remain the same when applied to new objects. The heartless impoverishment of intellect that characterises most American Vietnam Studies makes them hard to bear.

You know of course that I am American. I am in Vietnam for rather interesting reasons. In this war there are many people who don't approve of the position of the United States. It's important to us that we come to understand those who disagree with us. I am not from the armed forces, I am a social scientist, a psychoanalyst. I have nothing to do with military intelligence, I am not interested in political or military secrets. I [...]

Have you had dreams lately?

No dreams. When I lie down, I am very tired.

Do you dream much?

No sir.

Do you ever dream?

No.

No dreaming?

Never.

Did you ever dream as a child?

Yes. If I had played with something during the day, I mostly dreamt of it at night.

Please remember, try and remember a dream.

I can't remember any, sir.<sup>12</sup>

Strange language – just ten years after the Communist Revolution of 1917, there was already a large body of publications, today the literature on the subject is countless, partly because emigration and exile meant that many publications appeared in distant lands which don't have the bibliographical standards of Europe or the US.

Since about the middle of the nineteenth century, when the labour movement entered into an alliance with science, a broad class of intellectuals and intellectualised workers was founded. This class had a cosmopolitan orientation and tried to organise itself internationally. Further exchanges were the result of subsequent repression and exile; there were the Russian socialists in Switzerland, Belgium, and London, and every large European city had its own group of multinational foreigners forming their own circles. Scientists, but also Spanish syndicalists and Swedish social democrats, found themselves thinking about movements and developments in other European countries. Added to this was a new common language arising out of the terminology of the social sciences, accompanied by a mingling of bourgeois and socialist aims. Many social democratic political leaders were journalists or writers linked to the movement. How important Gorky's agreement was for Lenin! During the civil war, Trotsky wrote a book on art. The Bolsheviks' method of penetrating large areas using words has the quality of literature. Analytical words were like an infrastructure. Until 1929, Max Nettelau was able to live off the money he received for his articles – 'the simplest life with constant work' –

published in the *Freie Arbeiterstimme*, a weekly paper appearing in Yiddish in New York, and later in *Protesta* in Buenos Aires and *Probuzhdenie*, a Russian language magazine published in Detroit. The literary apparatus surrounding the social movement which worked on an event like St. Petersburg in 1917 was that extensive; its equivalent was missing in the Saigon of 1975.

Fire in the lake: the image of Revolution.  
 Thus the superior man  
 Sets the calendar in order  
 And makes the seasons clear.<sup>13</sup>

Fire in the Lake – the water in flames, new energies are released. But the title also reminds one of the napalm bombs which continued to burn when under water. In its method the book attempts to transform water into an inflammable material. The American sciences of war are consulted and critically applied. The false image the Americans created of themselves is stripped away layer by layer. Through this method a static concept of truth is avoided.

### **Excerpts:**

The Vietnamese village: great autonomy from the centre. Private ownership of arable land, yet a high sense of community. Communal storage of provisions and a common aid programme for special cases. 'Every man feels that he is both son and father.'

Disintegration under the influence of the French colonial power. The village loses its protective function, the mechanisms of social redistribution no longer work, the villages become dependent on trade. In 1930, the development of market prices reduces the villagers to living below the minimum subsistence level. The villagers are divorced from their souls, and are searching for a new sense of the collective or any new form of integration. The Diem regime, which attempted to re-establish the concept of authority, should be referred to in this context. But the new economy has put an end to familial authority, it cannot be rekindled by some kind of voodoo.

The US attempted to reorganise the village, a measure that accompanied the small war through new elections in 'safe' areas, self-help projects, and co-operatives. 'But the villagers did not trust one another.' Western influence has undermined patriarchal authority, but the programme of ancestral traditions remains, preventing the inhabitants from recognising one another as equals.



Ich Tien village is a model settlement. Saigon and the Americans gave the residents money and solid houses, and helped clear the forest. However, the newly installed regional chief and his administration are thoroughly corrupt.

The Vietcong come to the village, at first only at night. Conversations. They arrange for the election of a go-between. Associations are formed for farmers, young people, women, old people. It is uncertain whether the farmers understand the abstract political propaganda, but they certainly understand the practical applications. Even the Vietcong's system of taxation is comprehensible, it makes sense that the villagers need to eat. The associations practice function rotation, so that everyone gets to know the life and economic circumstances of the rest. 'Rather than substitute one bureaucracy for another, they set up an organisation that created a new relationship between the villagers the government authorities and among themselves.' Through frequent meetings, individual investigative conversations, and organised collective work, the Vietcong succeeded in establishing a network of personal relationships.

Before the Vietcong came to the village, life was determined by the familiar (itself disintegrating). Now it is determined by the village community. Quarrels over land are arbitrated together, taxes are fixed jointly. 'The Front remakes them, so that they can rule themselves.' The Front withdraws once the villagers are capable of organising themselves, recruiting and hosting meetings. Unlike the government officials, the front does not assume the pose of hereditary authority. Something new: the population is allowed to complain. A unity based on active participation rather than passive acceptance. The villages are no longer isolated from the city, they themselves are the city, 'they were the cities of the NLF'. To avoid corruption, the NLF is organised in cells comprised of party members of equal rank. But each cell has someone from a higher-ranking cell, whose job it is to monitor how decisions taken above are received below. No loss of face from mistakes and criticism, since decision-making is a collective affair. Chapter on hate. Traditional education leading to self-control. The Vietcong holds classes on a new form of hate, how to hate with precision, and how to distinguish between people and the offices they hold. Previously, loss of self-control meant hatred was disruptive and aimless.

## 9

'The idea of pitting partisan units against a systematically and centrally organised army [...] is a characteristic product of the political thought or lack of

thought of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia. [...] Promoting gang warfare as a military programme is the same as wanting to trade in large-scale industrial capability for the old cottage industry system' (Leon Trotsky, 1917). In Vietnam, the US never succeeded in connecting the large war (large-scale industry) to the smaller war (cottage industry).

If the inner, and according to optimistic opinion, immanent rationality of the technically organised world is implemented completely, then the partisan will perhaps cease to be a valid troublemaker. He will vanish of his own accord in the frictionless performance of technical-functional processes, no different from the disappearance of a dog from the freeway. (Carl Schmitt, 1963)

## Notes

1. Susan Sontag, *Trip to Hanoi* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1968; London: Panther Books, 1969), pp. 18-19. Susan Sontag, an author who had protested against the war in the United States, was invited to Vietnam but only spent a very short time there. She noted that at the outset her other writings had not yet connected with her politics. Her experiences in Hanoi are written in the past tense and introduced with the word 'today', while the interpretations appear in the present tense – as if she was sitting down on her bed at night to write about what had happened and that the text was meant to appear to have been written in Hanoi. She realizes how little she can learn, not speaking Vietnamese and having never been in Asia before. How then did she hope to find out what was characteristically Vietnamese as opposed to more generally Asian? The little she does discover despite the circumstances, such as the discrepancies in the translation of her conversations, she interprets very cleverly and in some detail. She compares the Jews' history of suffering with that of the Vietnamese; she devises a speculative history of culture (which is aware of being speculative). This effort is in part an act of self-assertion – she feels cut off from everything which has characterized her life until now, from the intellectual life of the city – and in part an attempt to participate, to establish herself inside this Vietnam.
2. Bernard B. Fall, *Street without Joy* (London, 1963). But this comparison grants the Frenchmen in Vietnam a right of domicile. Fall refers to the careers of many Indochina soldiers who worked for the Résistance during World War II. The Foreign Legion fought at Dien Bien Phu, as did many soldiers from Africa. It is a little known fact that during World War II the Legion accepted countless anti-Nazis among their ranks. This is material that may lead to a theory about partisans in France, whose history begins with the German occupation and continues via Indochina and Algeria to the O.A.S.
3. This sentence, about Trotsky, is by Isaac Deutscher. [Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1929-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, 1970), p. 512. Trans.]

4. In 1970, a Vietnam War opponent might have said, 'The answer is that the Vietcong may have dropped a bomb on these children, but it isn't their policy to drop bombs on children. This US soldier is torturing a farmer, and that is the policy of the US.' On being reproached in 1979 for failing to acknowledge the millions killed under Pol Pot's regime, Jan Myrdal observed: 'The interesting thing is that the American journalists who reported Vietcong atrocities were right. You could just as well describe Africa. You could ask, "Who ate Lumumba's Liver?" It was probably Tschombe. At least that's what Indira Gandhi says. You then take the next picture, this one showing a Tanzanian soldier happily saying, "When we catch Amin we will eat his flesh." And you then build on this. By doing this, you are doubtlessly showing facts, but giving a rather unsystematic version of reality. 'I don't think that you are lying, but that you work in the same shoddy, unstructured way as the others. You pose two questions: Vietnam's invasion and the genocide, but because the genocide comes across better, you go on to show the genocide on television three times and to emphasise only this point in interviews. [...]

I did not say that this was a peasant war without first considering the matter. I am referring back to our own history as well as that of Asia. There is a strange conception that peasant wars are beautiful. They aren't at all. Peasant wars have been among the bloodiest wars we have ever had, have now, or will ever have. Within the next forty, fifty, sixty years we will see developments similar to those in Kampuchea occurring in many places. Many cities will be emptied. Then it won't be so much a question of whether one likes peasant wars or not, but only of stating that this is what is happening. What frightens people in our countries is the cities being emptied. That has to be scary here. It scares the left wing whose social basis is in the urban middle classes. It doesn't really frighten the farmers in Bihar. They aren't scared at all.

'The propaganda against Kampuchea speaks about children no longer there – we saw masses of children; of women who can't have babies – it was obvious that a lot had had children; of families not allowed to live together – they obviously lived together; of parents who were gotten rid of – but they were walking on the street, we saw them. In the entire, vast area we travelled through there was obviously food, but no soldiers. The soldiers were away at the fronts. Everyone said so. They were at the fronts of a new war. I don't say there was nobody on guard nearby, but we couldn't see them. I believe that behind the Vietnamese occupation, you have to see the Vietnamese tradition of seeking to dominate Indochina's smaller nations, but also their rice fields. Kampuchea is a rich – potentially rich – country. The Vietnamese need empty land. They need three million to be dead so they can get their rice. As I understand it, that's what it's about.

The great genocide, which was a real genocide, was the war fought against the US. We can argue whether it was 500,000 or a million who lost their lives. One can never know precisely. The second genocide is happening right now. The Vietnamese are emptying the country of Kampucheans. In-between there was a bloody uprising which I believe – although I didn't see it, we saw no sign of it where we travelled – was not organised violence which got out of control, but rather a normal commotion which one was attempting to bring under control. [...]

'For reasons of convenience you stayed close to the occupiers. Let us assume that all the reports you heard are true. Let us further assume them to be true to the last detail. Let us also assume that all the people you met were actually from Kampuchea and not brought there, by the Vietnamese for example. Even then I fail to understand the way you work and can't understand how you can demand that someone believe your reports. You are not the first journalists to be in a situation like this. We had a similar situation in the Ukraine in 1941 when in the German armies' wake one could obtain reports of the thirties under Stalin.

'And of course, many of these reports were quite right. But the journalists who kept on writing exclusively about them presented a skewed picture of the Soviet Union. That is the one side, and that is what I meant when I talked about the cruelties of the Vietcong or how one reports about events in Africa. You have to structure. To structure a report you have to describe the invasion first and all the rest afterwards. Only then can it all be understood. Otherwise, the reasons for how it came to this remain pretty impenetrable.

'I tried very consciously to introduce a structure, which discussed the need for irrigation and showed the reasons behind the empty cities. I thought that this was the right picture to paint of events and that it should be done. I cannot view it in any other way than that you have been working not like fascist vultures – and the thousands of journalists I have been speaking about weren't either – but like the dozens of journalists who swarm in the armies' wake and gave honest reports about the Ukraine, honest reports about the atrocities of the Vietcong, honest reports about African atrocities.'

Myrdal demands that a picture of the Vietnamese invasion be shown prior to one of the victims of the Pol Pot regime or the civil war which took place in Cambodia. The Vietnamese themselves pointed to the image of American aggression when shown a picture of the dead bodies in Cambodia. As they pushed into Cambodia, they pulled out the image. These discussions are not about pictures, but about what a picture represents. If it is representative, one may take an interest in what is shown. If it is not sensitive, one has to be able to see through what is actually depicted.

Photos 1 and 2, both together and separately, have served to obscure Vietnam rather than reveal it.

Myrdal's remarks can be found in *Befreiung* (Berlin), no. 15/16 (1979).

5. Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen* (Berlin, 1963). Words used by Carl Schmitt: Acherontic-Acheron is the river that passes through the underworld. It marks the boundary that the partisan crosses as he enters into history. Partisans declare limitless war while rulers set the boundaries of war so that enmity cannot essentially endanger their hold on power. Nurtured enmity – like a game, enmity requires rules so that the players do not totally risk their existence. The word 'nurture' is a familiar term in the field of horticulture. Telluric – Coming from the earth. The partisan bases his claim on the soil he is fighting for and in it lies his strength. Throughout history he has hardly ever been successful without the help of an interested third party. According to his primary nature, his fight is defensive. In their reasoning, Mao and Lin Piao or Giap all take

great care to not place the partisan in opposition to the regular armies which are needed to topple the forces of the state or the occupier.

Spain – ‘The coincidence is significant that Mao wrote his most important works in the years 1936-38, that is to say, during the same years in which the Spanish [Franco] government was engaged in combating international communism by means of a war of national liberation.’ It is also a significant coincidence that this book arose from two lectures given by Schmitt in 1962 at the invitation of the Universities of Pamplona and Zaragoza. (Like this earlier Prussian edict concerning the militia, the constitutions of Switzerland and Norway, and more recently, [Tito’s] Yugoslavia, contain a provision calling on citizens to armed resistance in the event of a foreign occupation. In this way the irregular resistance struggle is made legal. Conversely, the otherwise legal step of capitulation is made illegal in Yugoslavia’s case: ‘[...] and nobody has the right to recognise or accept the occupation of the country or any part thereof or its armed forces.’)

6. John le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977; London: Coronet, Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp. 494-495.
7. Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam’s Strategy for Survival* (Palo Alto, Cal.: Pacific Books, 1972).
8. Doan van Toai and David Chanoff, *The Vietnamese Gulag*, trans. Sylvie Romanowski and Françoise Simon-Miller (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), p. 37 and 39.
9. Ho Chi Minh, *Prison Diary*, trans. Aileen Palmer (Hanoi: Foreign languages Publishing House, 1962), p. 21.
10. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), p. 107.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
12. Walter H. Slote, Ph.D., ‘Transcript of Interviews with Vietcong Leader of Sabotage Squad in Saigon’, hectograph published by The Simulmatics Corp., 16 East Forty-first Street, New York.
13. Francis Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (London, 1972). With extensive bibliography.

*Translated by Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.*

# Political Filmmaking after Brecht: Harun Farocki, for Example<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Elsaesser

## Brecht and Brechtian Cinema

Filmmakers, especially in Europe, who profess they owe something to Brecht are numerous, but his legacy has been appropriated in very different ways. For Italian post-war directors such as Luchino Visconti, Francesco Rosi, Bernardo Bertolucci, Ermanno Olmi, and the Taviani Brothers, Brecht's influence was most apparent in novel, often anti-heroic ways of dramatising (national) history. In films like *SENSO* (1954), *SALVATORE GIULIANO* (1962), *1900* (1976), *THE TREE OF WOODEN CLOGS* (1978), and *KAOS* (1984), the historical process is depicted not only in the Marxist sense as the movement of conflicting class interests. Directors delight in that sensuous apprehension of lived contradiction one finds in *Galileo*, a play that more than any other of Brecht's theatre pieces has appealed to film professionals.<sup>2</sup> Charles Laughton gave it its American premiere, produced by John Houseman and directed by Joseph Losey. *Galileo* may in turn even have been inspired by Hollywood biopics, judging from Brecht's praise for one of their chief directors, the German emigré William Dieterle.<sup>3</sup>

French directors such as Jean Luc Godard and Jean-Marie Straub have transposed more specific Brechtian ideas into filmic terms: rethinking the question of pleasure and spectacle, developing filmic modes of spectatorial distanciation, and exploring the politics of representation in and through the cinema – in much the same spirit as Brecht reflected on the ideological implications of the traditions of bourgeois theatre. Straub, for instance, explicitly fashioned the acting style and verbal delivery of his protagonists after Brechtian precepts, but he also prefaced his first feature film *NOT RECONCILED* (1965) with a quotation from Brecht: 'only violence serves where violence reigns'.<sup>4</sup> He even adapted a prose work of Brecht, *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Cäsar* for his film, *HISTORY LESSONS* (1972). Godard's work from 1967 onwards shows an intense preoccupation with the theories of Brecht, which in *LA CHINOISE* (1967) surfaces in the form of extended quotations. It culminates in such explicitly Brechtian films as *ONE PLUS ONE*, *BRITISH SOUNDS* (1970), *VENT D'EST* (1970) and *TOUT VA BIEN* (1972).<sup>5</sup>

In West Germany, virtually every director of the so-called New German Cinema makes reference to Brecht, either as a source to be acknowledged or a cultural presence to come to terms with. Of these, Alexander Kluge is the most readily identifiable Brechtian. Films like *YESTERDAY GIRL* (1966), *ARTISTS AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DISORIENTED* (1969), *OCCASIONAL WORK OF A FEMALE SLAVE* (1974), *THE PATRIOT* (1979), and *THE POWER OF FEELINGS* (1984) are typified by episodic narratives, frequent interruptions by voice-over or inserts, non-naturalistic acting, separation of sound from image, self-conscious staging of scenes, quotations from diverse sources, and, finally, a didactic-interventionist stance *vis-à-vis* contemporary social and political issues. Volker Schlöndorff directed Brecht's play *Baal* (1969) for television with Rainer Werner Fassbinder in the title role, and his *POOR PEOPLE OF KOMBACH* (1970) is a didactic parable in a setting not unlike that of *Mother Courage*. Fassbinder's theatre work bears the mark of Brecht,<sup>6</sup> as does the dead-pan diction, the 'primitive epic forms' of films like *KATZELMACHER* (1969), *GODS OF THE PLAGUE* (1969), and *THE TRIP TO NIKLASHAUSEN* (1970) with their division of the action into individual scenes. Likewise, the deliberate artifice of the situation and the didacticism of the denouement in *FEAR EATS THE SOUL* (1973), *FOX AND HIS FRIENDS* (1974) or *THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT* (1972) is reminiscent of Brecht's learning-plays ('Lehrstücke') and his Parables for the Theatre. Hans Jürgen Syberberg's first film was a Super-8 production of Brecht rehearsing Goethe's *Urfaust* with the Berlin Ensemble, filmed semi-clandestinely from the stalls. His German trilogy *LUDWIG, REQUIEM FOR A VIRGIN KING* (1972), *KARL MAY* (1974), and *HITLER – A FILM FROM GERMANY* (1977) is, according to the director himself, 'a marriage of Richard Wagner and Bert Brecht'.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the Bavarian aspects of Brecht's humour are shared by Herbert Achternbusch and Werner Herzog, two names not normally associated with Brecht. Their sense of the contradictory and grotesque elements in human behaviour, their predilection for 'blunt thinking' and satirical materialism, however, stem from the same source as Brecht's: the Munich comedian Karl Valentin and his music hall mock-profundity.

It would be easy to go on.<sup>8</sup> But for a picture of the role of Brecht as a source for concepts of avant-garde cinema and as a model for political filmmaking in the 1970s and 1980s, one has to look further than the direct echoes. Not all the Brechtianisms in post-war cinema are true to the spirit of Brecht. Among those who have claimed him for their work, fewer have inherited his questions than copied his answers, which, of course, were by then no longer answers. Brecht came to stand for a confusing proliferation of practices among filmmakers and a complex set of assumptions for film theory in the 1970s. Yet his teachings also played a crucial role in the much wider cultural shift which marked the avant-garde's final break with high modernism. To understand this break, a flash-



back to the 1960s is necessary, when Brecht's theoretical work was rediscovered, especially in and for the Anglo-Saxon countries.

There, theorists of the avant-garde, such as Peter Wollen, viewed Brecht's example as crucial in arguing *against* abstraction, purism, and medium specificity (key modernist credos) and *for* a multiplicity of intersecting discourses. Brecht was an ally *against* the primacy of the artwork's materiality, and *for* a heterogeneity of the signifying materials, *against* the smooth, homogeneous text of phenomenal realism and *for* montage and collage. According to Wollen, Brecht implicitly and explicitly also set an agenda for what a progressive artwork should be able to do. In order to represent the non-synchronic developments in a given society, it should preserve an awareness of contradiction within the artwork itself, and represent the dynamic interplay of different levels in the social process. In the name of Brecht, cultural theory could move from text (the modernist obsession) to the definition of an audience, and to how such an audience might be addressed: 'The question of choice of artistic means can only be that of how we playwrights give a social stimulus to our audiences. To this end we should try out every conceivable artistic method which assists that end, whether it is old or new'.<sup>9</sup>

This coming together of a political avant-garde, a structuralist 'alternative cinema', and a theoretical 'counter-strategy' in the 1970s was due also to tactical alliances and political opposition to the dominance of Hollywood on the world markets. Yet despite Godard's call to arms ('two or three Vietnams against the Hollywood-Mosfilm-Cinecitta Empire'), this anti-Hollywood stance seemed primarily a problem of form. The dominance was that of a system of representation, which for the political avant-garde meant deconstructing illusionist narrative, and for the structural-materialists, deconstruction of the cinema's elementary 'material' signifiers. In the wake of this 'politics of form', avant-garde filmmaking became almost exclusively devoted to the critical interrogations of the twin supports of mainstream cinema, fictional narrative and the 'specular' seduction of the image. Politics consisted of resisting the power of images, combating their construction of a second nature and countering the reality of their illusion with a more or less didactic discourse about the nature of filmic representation. The self-reflexive turn was a gesture of refusal, a negation, relying on pure antagonism rather than evolving a new form of realism. It was the time of counter-cinemas, of unpleasure, of anti-illusionism.<sup>10</sup>



## Modernism in Retreat: The Artist as Producer

Avant-garde filmmakers in the 1970s felt they had to take a stance on the cinema's relation to politics in general. But they also had to locate their politics of form between modernist aesthetics on the one hand, and popular culture on the other. As to politics in both senses, the watchword was Godard's 'the problem is not to make political films but to make films politically',<sup>11</sup> a Brechtian sentence down to the very formulation. To make films politically meant to challenge the strategies which contemporary popular culture, especially the cinema, had inherited from the bourgeois novel and theatre, as well as to distance itself from the increasingly commercialised leisure culture, T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's 'culture industry'. This meant an intense engagement with the means and modes of production, such as the 'independent' sector, state subsidy, television broadcasters. For if the Hollywood-Mosfilm-Cinecitta Empire was for most of the avant-garde a relatively distant enemy, the different national television networks provided a more immediate target.

Modernism thus came under attack from two fronts: firstly, with television accelerating the breakdown of the traditional distinctions between high art, popular culture and mass entertainment, theories of unpleasure threatened not only to remain frozen in a reflex of negativity, but to appear elitist and anti-democratic. Secondly, modernism's fetishism of the text implied neglecting the way formal means function ideologically in a given reception context. In both respects, the legacy of Brecht proved particularly instructive and also controversial. It will be remembered that Brecht himself had in the early 1930s practised a strategy of interventionism (*eingreifendes Denken*) in just about every debate and through every existing medium of technological mass culture. These interventions, tragically, were robbed of their full impact, even for theory, by his exile, first in Denmark, later in Hollywood. Brecht sought in every case 'not to supply the production apparatus without [...] changing that apparatus'.<sup>12</sup> He worked in the theatre, wrote radio plays, and participated in musical life via his association with Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith and Hanns Eisler. He was active in proletarian associations such as the *Rote Wedding*, and wrote his learning plays for factories and workers' clubs. He involved himself in filmmaking via Prometheus Film, and together with Slatan Dudow and Hanns Eisler made *KUHLE WAMPE*.<sup>13</sup> In the theatre he wrote for various publics or non-publics, plays as different as *The Mother* and *St Joan of the Stockyards*, making the years between 1928 and 1933 among the most productive of his life.<sup>14</sup>

West German filmmakers, on the side of the avant-garde and among the so-called author's cinema, seemed much more drawn to this interventionist side

of Brecht (being directly involved in institutional battles and strategic decisions<sup>15</sup>) than to Brecht as a possible theorist of cinema. Notwithstanding the international acclaim some of them received in the 1970s, most directors stayed, with the very notable exception of feminist filmmakers, outside the debates that at the time dominated Anglo-American avant-garde circles and those interested in film theory. Because of the governmental sources of finance that directors and producers depended on, but also because of an increasing access to television, German filmmakers adopted strictly tactical strategies, confronting the question of the spectator in more practical terms. For instance, they travelled with their films and introduced them to live audiences, they took up social issues as their subject matter, and they targeted sections of the public who could be addressed as special interest or pressure groups.

Intervening in the apparatus and not merely supplying it with a product thus became one of the most Brechtian aspects of the New German cinema, crystallising around the representation of the working class, of working-class subjects (*Arbeiterfilme*), and the strategies and compromises these entailed.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, television further marginalised filmmakers who wanted to develop new discursive or non-narrative forms. Lack of access to funds caused a sort of withering away of Brechtian counter-cinema as envisaged by Godard (or Wollen). Even state-run broadcasting corporations had a commissioning policy, which, while quite broad-minded in terms of issues and the expression of minority views, tolerates only a limited amount of formal experiment.

In the case of the (short-lived) workers' films, for instance, it meant adopting a Brechtian spirit, rather than following him to the letter. It meant showing conditions not merely as they were (naturalism) but from the perspective of their susceptibility to change, optimistically assuming that the dialectic of change operated in favour of greater redistribution of wealth and political power. Such old chestnuts of the realism debate as a work's utopian tendency, and the notion of the positive hero were widely argued in media seminars, but also in the house journals of television stations such as Cologne's powerful WDR. Significantly, it was Ernst Bloch as much as Brecht who provided the key words (*Der aufrechte Gang* [Walking Upright], *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* [The Principle of Hope]), not least because filmmakers working in television inherited a typically Blochian problem, namely how to revitalise or redeem the progressive potential of apparently retrograde but emotionally still powerful 'popular' narrative forms, such as melodrama, the sentimental novelette, boys' own adventure stories: disciples of Bloch (such as Christian Ziewer) seemed to carry the day over the more hard-line Brechtians (such as Straub and Huillet). Bloch's writings also represented a more conciliatory stance towards mass entertainment and popular culture than the teachings of Adorno at one end of the radical spectrum, and Brecht's at the other. Brecht's own view

of the debate between popular versus proletarian culture was varied. He wrote, for instance: 'The manifestations of the proletariat in the domain of culture, its apprenticeship, its intellectual productivity do not happen on some ground exterior to bourgeois culture. Certain elements are common to both classes.'<sup>17</sup>

## **The Imaginary and Symbolic as Political Categories?**

From a European vantage point, however, the relation between mainstream cinema and the avant-garde in the late 1960s and early 1970s was radically and absolutely antagonistic in both theory and practice. Debates borrowed their metaphors from the vocabulary of the class struggle, and from Third World liberation struggles. After the mid-1970s, it was this very assumption of pure antagonism which came to be questioned. For while Brecht offered a more genuinely political strategy in one kind of battle (that against high modernism aesthetically, and high capitalism economically), his precepts were scrutinised on another front (psychoanalytically inspired film theory). So much so that by the early 1980s Brecht seemed to be a figure who had closed an epoch, even more than he had opened up new perspectives.

In the province of theory, a sign of an impending change was the way writers came to think about the politics of representation. They began to use Lacanian psychoanalysis to displace the Brechtian concepts of 'distanciation' / identification with a different kind of opposition. Lacan's triple system of the subject (the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real) stipulates a necessary connection between these terms, rather than opposition. Stephen Heath, for instance, attempted to compare the Freudian concept of fetishism to Brecht's notion of 'distanciation', pointing out that distance is not the same as separation, the necessary condition of voyeuristic pleasure: 'identity in separation, the very geometry of [cinematic] representation'.<sup>18</sup> Following Christian Metz and Jean Louis Baudry, Heath argued that Hollywood exemplifies a cinema ruled by the Imaginary (identification, mirroring, control of and through the image), where pleasure derived from the spectator's illusory discursive mastery over such narrative processes as point of view, camera perspective, and the relative positions of knowledge within the fiction. By analysing the function of narrative in 'centring' the spectator and by investigating how filmic images are encoded according to several kinds of binary logic, these theorists sought to demonstrate the workings of the structures underpinning the effects of the filmic Imaginary, depending as it also seemed on a sexually differentiated opposition between seeing/seen, subject and object of the look.<sup>19</sup> Narrative cin-

ema came under attack, not only because it was identified with the dominant form of (Hollywood) filmmaking, but because it also stood for the master discourse by which meaning was encoded in the 'social text' generally, across a wide field of visual representations, of language, of symbolic action and the spaces of (gendered) intersubjectivity.

The core of the Lacanian-Althusserian critique of traditional Marxist models of false consciousness and the 'revolutionary subject' was to posit a necessary relation between recognition, miscognition and disavowal, as key to the subject-effects of identity (not: *cogito ergo sum*, but 'I think where I am not, I am where I do not think'), from which even the class struggle could not escape. Lacan's impact not only on film theory was to lead to a revaluation of the Imaginary as a dimension of political action. In a society of the spectacle, the tactics typical of the Imaginary (deploying the look, the mirror, masquerade and performance) could have a potentially progressive political function, in the form of play, mimicry and 'style', challenging the 'enemy' on his own terrain, by not seeming to challenge him at all, and merely citing and miming his 'style'. Such were the tactics of pop, punk or glitter, in the wake of Andy Warhol or David Bowie. Conversely, Brecht's own critical rationality, and perhaps the entire project of an avant-garde cinema, especially one opposing itself to the 'reactionary' ideology of illusionism, came under scrutiny, in the name of deconstructing or exposing the (hidden) imaginary identifications underpinning certain positions, whether they presented themselves as conservative or as progressive. Furthermore, by questioning the subject positions, which a particular body of knowledge such as Marxism implied, the cultural critique derived from psychoanalysis (often identified with the feminist project) cast doubt on any objectivist position.<sup>20</sup> The Brechtian avant-garde became vulnerable to the charge of implying in its critical practice not only an imaginary subject of enunciation – be it the artist, the filmmaker, or theorist as owner of normative or prescriptive discourses – but also of speaking to an imaginary addressee: the yet to be constituted revolutionary subject. In this respect, Brecht's own strategy had been ambiguous: because the implied spectator of the Brechtian text is invariably the spectator-in-the-know. He (Brecht's spectator is mostly conceived as male) is the ironic spectator, for whom the text provides a complex matrix of comprehensibility based on allusion and intertextuality. The theatre becomes a stage for spectacles of knowledge-effects. But it was this arena of knowledge effects as pleasure effects which the contemporary ('postmodern'), technologically very sophisticated media, such as advertising and television, began increasingly to exploit. A devaluation of once radical techniques and stances, such as Brechtian 'distanciation' was the inevitable consequence. Not only did the media become self-reflexive in recycling their own images and histories. Their self-parodies and inter-textual play made

reflexivity the very sign of a closed, self-referential system, the opposite of Brecht's 'open form' or his concept of realism as contradiction.

## **Before your Eyes – Farocki**

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, an oblique dialogue was taking place among German directors around these paradoxes. Oblique because of the indirect (or even suppressed) struggle with the awkward legacy of Brecht's anti-illusionism and the Frankfurt School's distrust of images, but also because few filmmakers seemed aware of being in a dialogue at all. Most saw themselves as politically isolated and aesthetically too embattled to engage in a 'theoretical practice'. The major exception was Harun Farocki, who more explicitly than almost any other filmmaker began to examine the complex reality of images and the subject positions they implied. With his films, a new (sexual) politics of the image and a new critique of political economy entered avant-garde filmmaking in Germany, emphasising the tensions between history and subjectivity. The politics of representation were now defined also as problems of temporality and enunciation ('here', 'now', 'you', 'me'), around the traumatising but also captivating power of media images and still photographs. An outstanding example of his (self-)interrogation of such images, at once liberating in its radicalism and troubling in the way it makes itself vulnerable to the conflicting tensions between the positions of Brecht and Barthes, between the desire to make political cinema and the knowledge that this takes place in the 'empire of the sign', is his film *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR/BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* (1980-1982).

The narrative of *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* centres on the couple, Anna and Robert. The film chronicles their different phases of living together, their decision to separate and their final brief reunion at the port of Wilhelmshaven, against the background of a common past in the student movement of West Berlin during the late 1960s and early '70s. At the end, the desire for co-operation which their love initially promised gives way to the melancholy realisation that men and women cannot work together politically: they once more agree to go their separate ways. The couple's difficulties are, however, present in the film only in a very muted form, insofar as their own central preoccupation is to understand the relation between the personal and the political, dramatised in their anti-Vietnam war protests and their encounter with this war through its media representations. As in some of the films of Marguerite Duras, the love story acts as the fictional support for setting up a dialogical situation which echoes throughout the film and is

not confined to the couple. Besides Robert and Anna's self-questioning, an American psychoanalyst interrogates a Vietcong prisoner about his family background, a North Vietnamese man is talking to a South Vietnamese woman, and the story as a whole is framed by a confrontation in a hotel room between Claire, alias Judy, alias Francesca; and a Mr Jackson, alias Rosenblum, alias Frankson. She is a 'terrorist', fighting the US in France, Idaho and Mexico, he is a former SAS member in Algeria, a CIA liaison officer in Vietnam and now a scientist employed by the Pentagon to supervise research programmes at American universities. Their 'dialogue' ends with him being killed by her revolver and her being slashed by his razor (see ill. 28). In Duras, the dialogical situation often works towards a stark opposition between a placeless space of feeling ('love', 'desire', 'loss') and a geographical location ('Empire', the French colonies), allowing the filmic image to occupy a floating space in-between the 'timeless' space of the narrative and the historically specific referent.<sup>21</sup> In Farocki, the dialogical structure of *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* seeks to fix a referent, politically so colonised by discourse that the subjective space always risks being 'out of place'. Made in 1980, but covering the period between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, the film looks back and shows why 'Vietnam' especially in West Germany was such an over-determined political referent, and why the personal could only inscribe itself into this powerful political presence through acts of exchange and substitution, transfers and transformations – in short, through metaphor. Hence the choice of the dialogue form, the aim of which is to disengage from 'Vietnam' neither a position of knowledge, such as a politically correct analysis of the war and its aftermath, nor a personal truth, which would allow the protagonists to put their own experience retrospectively 'into perspective'. Instead, the love story connotes (as the plot synopsis has already indicated) a perpetual movement of joining and separating (until the final 'severing' of ties on a drawbridge that is slowly opening), governed by a dynamic of couple-dom to which Lacan's 'you never speak from where I listen' might apply. The Vietnam war becomes a 'model', a master-trope of how to represent any number of conflicts and encounters between two radically non-aligned, asynchronous, asymmetrical entities. Starting from the imbalance of forces between the US and Vietnam as countries and military powers, the film investigates similar non-equivalences among temporalities (now/then), productive relations (mental work/manual work), types of warfare (army/guerrilla), subjectivities (men/women), and cinematic signifiers (sounds/images).

Telling its tale as a story-within-a-story-within-a-story, of different couples, of different partners in dialogue, of different pairs of antagonists and enemies, *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* is constructed like a hall of mirrors, but also

shifts laterally, along a series of metaphoric-metonymic substitutions. At a certain point, during the visit to a gallery showing war correspondents' pictures from Vietnam, one of the images literally becomes a mirror and the mirror, appropriately placed, becomes an image (see ill. 23). Ostensibly, Farocki makes the central characters confront a biographical as well as a political past, interrogating images supposedly referring to a reality 'out there' that reveal themselves to have a reality 'in here'. At another level (the mirror-phase of radical politics, so to speak), he takes the still photographs in the exhibition as emblems for an investigation of the new role of the imaginary in politics. 'It started with these images', Anna comments, after leaving the exhibition. What this 'it' is becomes clearer as the story unfolds: she attributes her commitment to the anti-war cause to the images, which made her a militant and an urban guerrilla:

When I worked as a typist in an office in 1966, I first saw them [in the papers] and it was for their sake that I wanted to change my life. I wanted to be a partisan. At the office I tried to work conscientiously and listen attentively so that when the time came no one would remember my face.<sup>22</sup>

The photographs remind her of her own place in several distinct social realities and roles, hinting at their incompatibility. What follows is a narrative entirely given to uncovering the splits and divisions between conflicting and coexisting identities: of office girl and militant, of Western Marxism and Third World liberation movements, of socialism and feminism, of 1960s utopian optimism and 1980s pragmatic disillusionment. However, unlike mainstream films where similarly disparate sets of oppositions would be lined up in a single story-space, and moved forward by the logic of repetition and resolution towards some form of closure, *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* takes as its central theme the fundamental irreconcilability of story-space, subject-position and the political referents that are in play. So disturbing, enigmatic and yet familiar are the images seen on television, in the newspapers, or in the gallery to Anna that instead of confirming her identity as spectator, and giving her mastery over her role as activist and 'partisan', they make the very idea of identity and action problematic: not only to herself, but to others, too, notably to her lover and to the political commune that has become her surrogate family. The images made her a militant, but the images also make her question the meaning of militancy.

For Farocki, to make a film about the war in Vietnam is to make a film about the *images* of Vietnam. And to make it about Vietnam images in Berlin and West Germany. Thus the characters in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* look at the photos not only for what they show; their significance is the place and time in which they were encountered:



I used to distribute handbills with this picture on them. Underneath we had written a text, which demanded the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam. In the street people swore at me and made threatening gestures [...]. On the underground train going home they read the evening papers. And maybe they saw this other picture, with the caption 'in South Vietnam, Communists are committing atrocities'. The images were so close together. We pointed at one and said 'Americans out'; they pointed at the other saying 'Vietcong out' It was like advertising, competing as to who could show the more appalling atrocities. I felt ashamed.

Time and place not only create the context. They constitute the images' main *indexical* relation to the 'reality' they depict, the temporal relations implying an *enunciative* position for the speaking subject (me/you, now/then). Perhaps the imaginary dimension of public affect ('I felt ashamed') is a sign that the power of the images is not of the order of truth, but that it exceeds the ability of language – the symbolic – to assign to them a fixed place in discourse. The new political battlefield, as Godard had already shown, was in the relationship between image and word, or as Farocki's characters put it: a caption to a photo may be correct but what it says is nonetheless not true, for 'what matters is not what is on the picture, rather what lies behind it. And yet we are showing pictures to prove something that cannot be proven.'

The terms of this exchange return us once more to Brecht. They recall his well-known remarks, also quoted by Walter Benjamin, to the effect that a photograph of a Siemens, Krupp or AEG factory does not tell us anything about capitalism and its sites of industrial production, because 'reality has slipped into the realm of functions and cannot be grasped as appearance'.<sup>23</sup> Brecht's opposition between function and appearance still assumes the belief in a position of knowledge 'outside' the image from which its truth can be judged. Several of Farocki's earlier films were also a form of practical engagement with Brecht's assertion, notably *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, which probes the political reality behind certain 'images' that have come down to us from the history of the German working class and its industrial struggles. Another one was a television documentary, called *INDUSTRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY*, made in the same year that Farocki completed *BETWEEN TWO WARS* (1978). It was compiled from material he collected during location research for the full-length film and acknowledges the photographs made by Bernd and Hilla Becher of the Ruhr Industrial Area in the 1960s and '70s (see ill. 16). Reversing Brecht's dictum, while still staying within the same political perspective of what exactly it is that images can tell us about the power relations in society, *INDUSTRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY* is a form of archaeology that investigates the different meanings contained in photographs taken at factory sites and industrial installations:



Most of the images [...] are private photos, images from advertising, images that look like painted still-lives. The film 'reads' these images in order to talk about labour and photography [...] how for instance collieries are both useful constructions and works of architecture, sites of work and signs that want to be looked at.<sup>24</sup>

In his rejection of photography as a means of understanding social relations, Brecht took for granted the convergence of a class position with a position of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely at this point that Farocki's commentary intervenes. The viewer becomes aware of the non-convergence of class and gender, of knowledge and subjectivity, of discursive mastery and personal emancipation. Posing the question of history in the subject and of the subject in history, Farocki chooses an archaeological – along with a semiological – approach to images, making a distinction between the 'sign' and the 'site', the latter always present in the photograph as a surplus or an excess. Brecht notwithstanding, the film gives the images a 'history' – even if this history is a history only of the looks the images have been able to attract. Of these looks, Farocki's documentary wants to be the story, no less than his feature film about the images of Vietnam is the documentary of the looks cast on them by two people who seek in them a mirror-image of themselves.

In this sense, *INDUSTRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY* and *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* are reminiscent of Godard in their dialogical interplay of image and voice, but they also go beyond, say, *LETTER TO JANE* (1972), where the director's voice-off addresses, interrogates and even harrasses Jane Fonda, his star from *TOUT VA BIEN* (1972), shown in the famous press photograph taken of her in Hanoi.<sup>26</sup> Farocki, who has also at times chosen the single news photo as pretext, makes sure that when 'reading the image' the filmmaker, too, suspends his illusion of mastery. In *INDUSTRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY*, through his commentary, he retraces the very division between the iconic-indexical and the discursive-constructed in photography, pointing to the divisions in the (speaking and viewing) subject itself. These insights, though, are not presented in a psychoanalytic vocabulary. Instead, Farocki confronts the viewer with his/her bodily limits when entering the technological space of post-industrial society, demanding a different kind of visuality:

Cameras are built to accommodate the gaze of a human eye. But heavy industry accomplishes work, which cannot be surveyed by a human eye. Industry extends the labour process over vast distances and at the same time concentrates and joins the work of many different sites of production. A gigantic organism, at once beyond vision and of somnambulist precision. How can one grasp this with images? Ought there not to be images that do not fit into households, nor on walls, into pockets, or illustrated books? And on no retina?<sup>27</sup>

Farocki's provocative final question leads directly to a speculation about what gaze might be inscribed in an image, and to whom it is addressed, once neither the retina nor the image are conceived as stand-ins for a subject-object duality governing the relations between spectator and image. One might even go so far as to suggest that the specific epistemological change that the cinema poses for the Cartesian subject is precisely this: that consciousness can no longer be defined within any form of a traditional subject-object division, any more than within the mind-body-eye split of the *camera obscura*.

## Body, Image, and Voice

Many of the issues of political cinema after Brecht thus turned on the relation of 'who looks' and 'who speaks', and on the traces which these marks of enunciation leave on the filmic discourse. Nowhere is this more acutely evident than in the question of the voice-over, or the voice-off, a frequent feature of many German *auteur*, avant-garde and documentary films in general, with Farocki's films being no exception. Non-fiction films and especially documentaries made for television rarely exist without a voice-over, which often presumes a hierarchy of knowledge in favour of the spoken word, indicated by the generic term 'voice of God' documentary.

This symbolic order of The Word needed to be deconstructed. Separation of sound and image became one of the key features of avant-garde practice in the 1970s, challenging in the first instance the normative practices of Hollywood's carefully matched synchronicities of body, voice, and image. But this counterstrategy, foregrounding the constructed nature of the sound-image alignment, became more problematic for directors working in television. There, such a split assumed a different political significance, if only because television itself has largely deconstructed and reworked the relation of sound and image of classical film. Sound motivates, focalises and cues the images on television in a way that both emphasises the material difference of the respective source, and precludes this heterogeneity from playing an oppositional role. The voice of God rules. As a result, television can tolerate the coexistence of several quite distinct diegetic spaces. Whether present through voice only, or through the image joined to sound-off, as in a reportage or news bulletin that combines studio presentation with on-location footage, such a multiple diegesis does not challenge the impression of coherence of the discourse. On the contrary, the heterogeneity of the sources actually consolidates an illusion of control and authority that the referent ('the live broadcast') has over the image – com-

parable to and yet distinct from the power of the voice-over in observational documentary or instructional films.<sup>28</sup>

The German avant-garde cinema of the 1980s differed from French filmmakers like Godard, Duras, and Marker, not least because of a closer proximity to this documentary tradition, to which television (and its funding) had given a new lease of life. The question of separation of voice and image, so central to these French directors, was in Germany discussed in the context of the political-didactic function of voice-over commentary, or the strategies of the filmed interview when structuring a political cinema around long-term observation and an aesthetic of realism. Berlin filmmakers like Farocki or his erstwhile collaborator, Hartmut Bitomsky, had to define themselves against these documentary tendencies, taught and practised at the Berlin Film Academy, and represented by figures like Peter Nestler, Klaus Wildenhahn and Gisela Tuchtenhagen, who made documentaries in the style of Fred Wiseman, without any commentary whatsoever. But they also had to differentiate themselves from Alexander Kluge, whose sometimes didactic, sometimes ironic but always insistent editorialising of his images was regarded by many as schoolmasterly and patronising.<sup>29</sup>

This debate over documentary was in Germany one of the liveliest and theoretically most astute anywhere.<sup>30</sup> For instance, it was not unusual during the 1970s to find in *Filmkritik*, the journal then co-edited by Farocki, discussions of Joris Ivens' and Alain Resnais' or Georges Franju's documentaries, articles on Kracauer's theories of realism, or on Jean Rouch, next to very full dossiers on the films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. The question of which filmmaker to support was a matter of substance for *Filmkritik*, but the journal's deceptive eclecticism might have made it easy for the casual reader to overlook the significance of a passing comment on Jean Rouch which appeared in an essay ranging quite generally over film aesthetics that appeared in the early 1980s. Citing *PETIT A PETIT* (1969), the film Rouch made of a young Senegalese coming to Paris, in order to conduct ethnographic studies on the French, the author finds that:

[T]he illuminating wit of the reversal of roles vanished completely the moment I became aware with a sudden shock that the young black has no other function in the film than to beat out of the bush and drive into the open the game that hunter Rouch is ready to shoot with his camera.<sup>31</sup>

This attack on the unexamined power relations in the enunciative strategies of one of the pioneers of ethnographic films was indicative of quite a dramatic shift away from the prevailing practices of political documentary (which favoured the ethnographic approach) in Germany in the 1970s. But it also took its distance from those filmmakers whose economic and artistic survival at the

margins of television largely depended on the didactic or sometimes 'poetic' use of off-screen narration. It meant that those holding such uncompromising views as expressed in *Filmkritik* about Rouch would find it hard to get work from the commissioning editors. The same article, for instance, mentions a television documentary about the monitoring of the ecological balance in a bird sanctuary. As the author notes, with the sound turned off, however well-intended by the makers, the images only register the creatures' fear, the gestures of aggression of the ornithologists, and the mechanical handling of the birds as they are captured, ringed, and measured. The question was which to trust: the voice-over commentary or the image? If one believes the image one may become victim of the naive anthropomorphism characteristic of wildlife documentaries. If one privileges the soundtrack, what exactly is the function of the images?

The positions of *Filmkritik* and of other participants in the debate about documentary would thus furnish one important context for Farocki's own practice of the 'essay film', of which the interplay of commentary and image forms such a key characteristic. What Farocki & Cie achieved by their subtle and complex strategies of allowing sound, voice, and image their autonomy was to emphasise the power relations normally hidden in television as well as in 'independent' documentaries. Giving shape to several worlds within the film simultaneously, they opened up spaces of reflection and critical engagement, without creating the illusion of spatio-temporal unity, or of 'voice of God' omniscience – and this despite the impression that Farocki's films give, thanks to the quality of the writing in the commentary, of favouring the soundtrack as the locus of narrative authority. The political aspect of this avant-garde practice was that it maintains a material coherence at the level of production (such as Straub-Huillet's rule of filming only with synch-sound for instance). The conceptual and semantic coherence then becomes the viewers' task: joining sound and image, staying alert to the inherent ironies and mismatches, finding for themselves the connection between the movement of the ideas of the commentary and the movement of the images.

## **Guerrilla versus Terrorist, Margins and Centres of the Visible**

With this debate about 'seeing with one's ears, listening with one's eyes' in mind, we can now approach another theme prominent in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*. Farocki's film is literally called 'Something is Becoming Visible' and in this respect is crucially concerned with the tension between 'visibility' and

'representability'. At first, it may seem that the narrative is mainly treating the relations between representation and visibility as antagonistic. But by adding to the voice-image dialectic the question of the body and the subject implicit in the cinema's technological and discursive apparatus, Farocki makes it clear that in the sphere of photographs and media images a more complex relation holds between the viewing subject and representation. Interpellated by public images, individuals respond in very different ways. As Anna notes, pictures from Vietnam make militants, but pictures from Vietnam also 'de-politicise' militants (see ill. 31). How to understand this paradox? Caught in the Imaginary of the image, and thus confronted with their own reveries or fantasms, subjects try to 'represent' themselves to themselves across discourses that secure them once more a place in the Symbolic. It is as if Marxism and feminism played a double role in the formation of these political subjects. Whatever their emancipatory intent, the discourses do not so much help us 'read' these images and assign them a meaning; rather, they allow us to repossess as 'representation' what escapes or overwhelms as/in the 'image'. But therein also lies the danger: the excessiveness of the image invites fetishistic fascination, or gets instrumentalised through propaganda:

In our culture, images are given too little significance. Images are appropriated and put into service. One investigates images to obtain information, and then only the information that can be expressed in words or numbers. Incidentally, I think that noises are even less studied than images. In Vietnam, I learnt to listen to noises; though one has to be careful that somebody doesn't come along and turn them into music.

BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM is haunted by images as representations, and is in constant search for images that exceed their instrumentalisation. It shows the public images from Vietnam, which Robert and Anna investigate, analyse, interpret, remember, place, discuss and generalise from, just to keep meaning at bay: a G.I. lying flat on the ground listening with a stethoscope for underground tunnels (see ill. 24); the execution by the chief of police of a Vietcong prisoner in a Saigon street; an overturned bicycle used by a Vietcong soldier as a power generator for a light bulb. As if to exorcise them, the film even enacts them, has them staged by actors (see ill. 26). As the couple looks at the all too familiar pictures and sees themselves in the mirror, Robert says: 'It's like a trailer for a war film: An exciting love story against the background of war and genocide', to which Anna replies: 'It looks so obscene, because we are unharmed. In these pictures the victims are all bloody but the aggressors are all unharmed'. Thus, visibility produced by the media exceeds representation only at the price of generating that fantasmatic interpellation of the subject, which Robert associates with Hollywood, and Anna calls 'obscene'. On the

other hand, visibility must exceed representation, in order to make political action possible. The former CIA agent puts it most succinctly:

Ten years ago (i.e., in 1960) nobody knew where Vietnam was. Vietnam only became visible through the war [...]. How good it sounds to be against war. War is above all an experiment. An experiment with research objectives which cannot be formulated in advance. Where did you get your knowledge about Vietnam? Most likely from a book like *Strategy for Survival*, financed by the CIA and with a preface by Henry Kissinger. In this war, Vietnam represented itself most splendidly. And it is American science that brought this out. Why plough a field? So that the surface gets larger. American bombs have ploughed Vietnam and it became larger and more visible.

The two opposing factions of the armed conflict are thus paradoxically united by their common effort towards mobilising, not only their soldiers and weaponry, but also their respective means of representation. Located between the clandestine underground of its local resistance fighters and the hyper-visibility of (mostly) American television and photo-journalism, the Vietnam War proved to be a watershed. As a media war, as well as a liberation struggle, it challenged the meaning of territory, by creating the 'terrorist' alongside the 'guerrilla': where the latter hides in the bush, vanishes in the undergrowth, camouflages himself into invisibility, the former has to make a pact with visibility and spectacle. In order to be effective, the terrorist has to be visible, but in order to be 'visible' among so many images, his actions have to exceed the order of representations, while nonetheless engaging 'the enemy' on the territory of representation. Political actions attain credibility and the 'truth of the image', it seems, by passing through the processes of intense specularisation, with the contradictory effect that in order to become recognisable as political, events have to be staged as spectacle, which seems to depoliticise them, as noted by Anna. Any terrain outside visual discourses and narrative 'emplacements' becomes unseen and unthinkable, and therefore non-existent.

Anna's paradox, then, hints at one of the double binds of terrorist action, as Jean Baudrillard was also to point out. Visibility for him signals terrorism's collusion with the Imaginary: the politics of the Red Brigades in Italy in the 1970s or those of the German Red Army Fraction both now almost exclusively associated with the kidnapping and subsequently the killing of Aldo Moro and Hans Martin Schleyer) were as 'obscene' in their violence and as exhibitionist in their relation to the regimes of the visible, as the counter-moves on the part of the authorities risked being politically reprehensible and legally indefensible. The war in Vietnam from this perspective was fought on both sides as a battle for the control of enemy territory only in order to produce for the world at large images of such horror and fascination as might transgress the limits of the imaginable itself. With some of these images, international politics

had succumbed not only to a movie scenario, but to one where superpowers and 'terrorists' alike used violence in order to create images, and used these images in order to send 'messages'.

A reversal could thus be noted in the relation of event to filmic scene such as had already been predicted by Guillaume Apollinaire in 1910, in his short story *Un Beau Film* where a crime is committed solely in order to film it.<sup>32</sup> What in Apollinaire is the gesture of an aristocratic dandy may, in the politics of marginality – whether Palestinian, Vietnamese, or in Northern Ireland – be perceived as the last resort (regardless of how suicidal it may prove to be), in a situation where the state, politics, and the symbolic order are manifest only through their own Imaginary, i.e., in the discourses of power and knowledge conveyed by the media and television.

### **Images beyond the Imaginary: Separating and Joining**

Such are the slippages that Farocki, too, probes with his dialogical form, with a lovers' discourse no less, to paraphrase Barthes. But dialogue not only joins; it separates even where it seems to join, for instance, when men and women experience their dialogue as irredeemably asymmetrical (see ill. 30). Illustrating a fundamental principle of cinematic signification – separating and joining, in short: montage – Farocki in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* tests its viability for locating the point at which the private and public, the personal, and the political might intersect:

Robert: Why, when lovers embrace do they fall silent and when they start to think or speak, they disengage from the embrace? Or worse still: two lovers talk. When they run out of ideas they embrace. But to join love with politics that would mean doing both simultaneously.

Anna: No, you cannot put it this way. Two lovers embrace silently and it is like a conversation. Or they stand far apart and speak to each other, and it is like an embrace.

The various forms of discontinuity in the articulation of space and time, the doublings and displacements with regard to character and place, the asynchronicity of sound and image are in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* directly related to a master dialectic. The dialectic is that of joining and separating and it forms the hinge on which the political strategies of the film and its theoretical reflections turn. 'The beginning of an investigation is when one joins two ideas, but at the end one has to isolate an idea, take it out of its context', Judy/Claire says to Jackson/Rosenblum. Later on, Robert remarks: 'In



1972 we wanted to connect everything with everything else'. To which Anna's new man Michael later replies: 'You have to keep things separate. Two things can lie closely together, and each can be regarded separately. Or they are kept far apart and nonetheless closely refer to each other'. But Anna protests:

Keep things separate, but how? First the Vietnamese children, torn to shreds by American bombs. Then the mountains of bodies in Cambodia all with their skulls smashed. Then the stinking boats with Vietnamese refugees [...]. You call this keeping things separate, but I would rather draw a line. In 1977, I wanted to draw a line and sever all connections.

If the political problem of the film is how to learn from the experience of Vietnam, how to extract from its images a model for action also for one's personal life, then the theoretical problem Farocki keeps returning to is montage and metaphor. As Robert notes at one point: 'One has to replace the images of Vietnam with images from here; express Vietnam through us'. The narrative endorses this as a necessary move, yet such a joining of two distinct referents via images, such a move to express one entity through another, assumes as equivalent what is in fact incommensurate. Politically, metaphorical thinking is criticised in the film because the Vietnam experience teaches that concepts such as struggle and resistance, in order to be effective, have to be thought differently, as a relational dynamic of non-equivalent entities, such as strong and weak, machine and tool, centre and margin, the visible and the representable. Joining these terms (montage) also marks the limits of their substitution (metaphor). This is why the film ultimately argues for the local, the irreducible *thereness* and separateness of its discrete elements. Every move anticipates its counter-move, and *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* is careful not to cede too much territory to rhetoric and metaphor. Seemingly taking Godard's dictum of the 'two or three Vietnams' literally, Farocki nonetheless treads lightly among the analogies he has set up between his filmmaking practice and the liberation struggles of the third world. Aware of its marginality, the film tries to conceptualise its relation to 'dominance' as a mobile field of differently calibrated forces. It is a film of the 1980s because it carefully disentangles itself from the 1970s counter-strategies of struggle and resistance, while sensing its way towards another kind of (still Brechtian/Brechtian again?) tactical interventionism. The guerrilla soldier, we learn, is superior to the professional soldier because of his different relation to both time and space; he withdraws from place, to make himself invisible; he withdraws from time, to tire out the enemy. But how to deal with the politics of spectacle, the 'terrorist' side of tactical guerrilla warfare? Farocki gives no straightforward answer, but in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*, at least, he shows himself more courageous than most filmmakers who began by rejecting all forms of seduction through the image.



So thoroughly does he investigate the imaginary of cinema, so deeply does he enter into the contradictions of representation and visibility, that in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* he practices, to borrow a term from Paul Virilio, an ‘aesthetics of disappearance’.<sup>33</sup> It gives to his sounds and images, so apparently minimalist and restrained, a sensuousness of thought and clarity of voice to which one is tempted to apply the words of Stéphane Mallarmé who, speaking of flowers made of words, found in them a scent that was ‘absent from all bouquets’.<sup>34</sup>

## Notes

1. Parts of this essay were first published in *Discourse* no. 7, Autumn 1985, pp. 95-120. In its present form, it appeared in German in Rolf Aurich, Ulrich Kriest (eds.), *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki*: (Konstanz: UVK-Close Up, 1998), pp. 111-144.
2. John Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton: University Press, 1980).
3. Bertolt Brecht, ‘Wilhelm Dieterles Galerie großer bürgerlicher Figuren’, *Von Deutschland nach Hollywood: William Dieterle 1893-1972* (Berlin: Internationale Filmfestspiele, 1973), pp. 5-7.
4. From *St Joan of the Stockyards*. In a note Straub adds that he discarded everything satirical and psychological from the novel, in order to make ‘a kind of film oratorio’. (Richard Roud, *Straub* [London: Secker and Warburg, 1971]), p. 40.
5. For a more extended discussion of Brecht’s influence on modern cinema, see Martin Walsh, *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1979), and James Roy MacBean, *Film and Revolution* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1975).
6. Yaak Karsunke, ‘Die Anfänge’, in P.W. Jansen and W. Schütte (eds.), *Fassbinder* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1975), pp. 8-9.
7. Hans Jürgen Syberberg, *Syberbergs Filmbuch* (Frankfurt: Fischer 1979), p. 304.
8. More detailed examples can be found in Hans Bernhard Moeller, ‘Brecht and “Epic” Film Medium’ (*Wide Angle*, vol. 5 no. 4, 1979), pp. 4-11.
9. John Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 229.
10. The terms are used in Peter Wollen, ‘Godard and Counter Cinema – Vent d’est’ *Af-terimage* 4 (Autumn 1972), Laura Mulvey (see note 19), and Colin McCabe, ‘Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure’, *Screen* vol. 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1976).
11. Quoted in Colin McCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 19.
12. Walter Benjamin, ‘The Artist as Producer’, reprinted in Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 22.
13. See special issue on Brecht, *Screen* vol. 15 no. 2, 1974.
14. John Willett, *Brecht in Context* (London: Methuen, 1984), especially chapters 6-9.

15. The 'New German Cinema' owed its existence in part to a very elaborate state funding and subsidy system. See Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema – A History* (London: BFI/Macmillan: 1990), pp. 8-35.
16. For a discussion of Brecht's influence on German post-war film and television production, see also Richard Collins and Vincent Porter, *WDR and the Arbeiterfilm* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), pp. 97-102 and pp. 118-163.
17. Quoted by Stephen Heath, 'Lessons from Brecht', *Screen* vol. 15 no. 2, 1974, p. 123.
18. Stephen Heath, 'Notes on some Brechtian Theses', *Screen* vol. 15 no. 2, 1974, p. 107.
19. To paraphrase Laura Mulvey's famous formula from 'Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure', *Screen* vol. 16 no. 3, 1975/6, pp. 6-18.
20. Constance Penley, for instance, detected in the practice of 'foregrounding the signifier' a fetishism of the cinematic apparatus which merely displaces the male-centred discourse of Hollywood representation in favour of an equally male-centred obsession with self-regulatory, closed systems. See her 'The Avantgarde and its Imaginary', *Camera Obscura*, no. 2, 1977, p. 24.
21. One could cite Marguerite Duras' *India Song*, where the images neither enact nor represent nor even seek to contain the play of historical and geographical referents that the text evokes.
22. All quotations from ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR are taken from a dialogue transcript in German, supplied by the filmmaker.
23. Quoted in Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', trans. in *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 1972.
24. Harun Farocki, *Industrie und Fotografie* (WDR, 1978), programme note.
25. Brecht: 'The dominant ideas of the age are usually the ideas of those who dominate'. But as a Marxist he was also convinced that the proletariat alone had access to ideas that were 'true'.
26. Godard, in *LETTER TO JANE*, uses his voice-over to 'master' the photograph. His commentary works over the image, analyses its visual composition, contrasts this with the caption, which practices a reversal of active and passive in the verbal coding of the picture for Western consumption and locates the function of the star-image in politics of which Jane Fonda had become the icon.
27. *Industrie und Fotografie*, programme note.
28. See Noel Burch, 'Narrative/Diegesis', in *Screen* vol. 23, no. 2, July-August 1982.
29. But see Farocki's defence of Kluge's voice and voice-over in the interview 'Making the World Superfluous', in this volume.
30. For a discussion of the various positions, see my *New German Cinema, A History*, pp. 162-206.
31. Rainer Gansera, 'Szenarien (Noten zu Film und Ökologie)', *Filmkritik* no. 299/300, Nov-Dec 1981, p. 480.
32. Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Un Beau Film', *L'Heresiaque et Cie* (English translation in *Sight and Sound*, July-Sept. 1952, pp. 40-41).
33. Paul Virilio, *Esthetique de la disparition* (Paris: Balland, 1980).
34. Stephane Mallarmé, 'Crisis in verse', in *Mallarmé* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).



**Documenting the Life of Ideas? –  
Farocki and the ‘Essay Film’**



# The Road Not Taken: Films by Harun Farocki

*Jonathan Rosenbaum*

The paradox is that Farocki is probably more important as a writer than as a filmmaker, that his films are more written about than seen, and that instead of being a failing, this actually underlines his significance to the cinema today and his considerable role in the contemporary political avant-garde...

Only by turning itself into 'writing' in the largest possible sense can film preserve itself as 'a form of intelligence'.

*Thomas Elsaesser, 1983*

The filmography of Harun Farocki, a German independent filmmaker, the son of an Indian doctor spans sixteen titles and twenty-one years. To the best of my knowledge, only one of his films (*BETWEEN TWO WARS*) has ever been shown in North America until now. A travelling group of eleven films put together by the Goethe-Institut began showing in Boston last November, and this April [1992] will reach Houston, the last of the tour's ten cities. Nine of the eleven films are currently showing at Chicago Filmmakers and I presume that the other two, both 35-millimeter films, aren't being shown because no 35-millimeter venue is available or willing to screen them. The larger question, however, is why it has taken so long for most of Farocki's films to be seen on this side of the Atlantic. I would venture that this is because they belong to an intellectual and artistic tradition in Europe that has never taken hold on these shores – an approach to filmmaking that regards formal and political concerns as intimately intertwined and interdependent.

No film that only translates into a film what is already known (from the newspaper, a book, TV) is worth anything. A film has to find an expression in its own language.

*Harun Farocki*

A relative recently asked me whatever happened to all my Marxist and communist friends I knew in Paris in the late-1960s and early-1970s. If I understood him correctly, the subtext of his question was that with the virtual collapse of European communism, European communists and Marxists today must feel rather obsolete, made irrelevant by the forces of history.

What this question seems to overlook is that European Marxism encompasses a lot more than what Americans understand as 'politics'. The aesthetics of most American Marxists and communists, at least in my lifetime, tend toward socialist realism and – more recently – multiculturalism. Turn to leftist American film magazines like *Jump Cut* and *Cineaste*, and you'll find articles about Third World filmmakers, American independent documentarists and old-style Hollywood lefties like Dalton Trumbo and Budd Schulberg. You're less likely to find articles about more formally oriented filmmakers like Farocki, Robert Bresson, Carl Dreyer, Jean Luc Godard, Alexander Kluge, Jacques Rivette, Jacques Tati, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, but these are the filmmakers that the European Marxists and communists I know care passionately about.

The issue here isn't so much the political leanings of these filmmakers: Bresson's politics, which seldom figure directly in his work, are said to be right-wing; Tati was a petit bourgeois liberal at best; and Rivette hasn't shown any leftist engagement since the 1960s or 1970s. But if, for instance, one was interested in artistic form in 1970s France, in critical movements such as Russian formalism, or in the formal achievements of films ranging from Tati's *PLAY-TIME* to Rivette's *OUT 1*, one had to turn to communist critics like Noel Burch, Bernard Eisenschitz, or Jean-Andre Fieschi, and communist journals like *La nouvelle critique*, in order to read about it.

One reason why this fact seems worth stressing is that viewed superficially and solely in terms of their content, some of Farocki's best films might seem academic and even pedantic Marxist tracts. But in fact, much of this content is directly about form and the films' formal properties are much subtler than they first appear. Take, for example, *AS YOU SEE* (1986), which is showing tonight. A densely compacted essay film about technological and industrial history, *AS YOU SEE* initially might seem to proceed in the manner of a Marxist slide lecture. The film covers a vast amount of history and material ranging from ancient Egypt to the present. It begins with a drawing and a voice-over commentary spoken by the English translator Cynthia Beatt: 'Here is a plough that looks like a cannon or a cannon that looks like a plough. The ploughshare exists only to give the cannon a firm base. War is founded on earning one's daily bread'. From here the film speeds past such subjects as an Egyptian hieroglyph combining a circle and cross (which is related to the formations of towns and forked paths), the invention and military uses of the machine and Maxim guns, highway cloverleaves, and the relation between transitional highway curves (which are compared to the cuts of butchers, who 'respect anatomy') and straight roads (which are connected to the concerns of surveyors and colonialists). (Over an aerial photograph of a roadway resembling a sinuous river,

the narrator says, 'Gazing at flowing water implies inner richness, but those who gaze at flowing traffic are considered stupid'.)

All these concerns, and many others that follow in the film, might be said to be political by virtue of being formal, and vice versa. Even the discussion of the machine gun might be said to follow this principle as it critiques the form of the weapon: 'The military had fifty years to study what a machine gun is and they still sent soldiers out into machine-gun fire over and over again. They didn't understand that one machine is more than a match for a thousand men. Their way of breaking the machines was to send soldiers out into the line of fire'.

But, formally speaking, much more than just a linear and logical argument is being developed. While the above words are spoken, we hear the faint sounds of Brazilian drums and chants, also heard elsewhere in the film without any obvious correlation to the images or commentary. Periodically there are faint snatches of other kinds of music that seem to be employed in an aleatory manner (a technique that is also used effectively in Farocki's subsequent essay film, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*). It gradually becomes apparent that this essay is structured in some ways like a densely plotted narrative: certain themes and subjects that originally seem to have no logical relation to the argument crop up later more legibly, like peripheral characters who eventually become integrated into a story. Other images, such as shots of actors dubbing a German porn film, are never directly alluded to in the commentary, and one has to grasp their significance formally, poetically, and metaphorically (if at all).

As Thomas Elsaesser argues, Farocki may be more important as a writer than as a filmmaker. But it is important to note that the 'writing' that matters most in *AS YOU SEE*, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*, and *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY* – all of which were made after Elsaesser published his essay – is indistinguishable from the filmmaking. On one level, the first two of these films are narrations with illustrations, and the third is a series of illustrations – scenes taken from instructional classes and therapy and test sessions involving simulations and exercises – that require no narration because the juxtapositions and intercutting between them say everything (and say it with devastating impact). On this level, all three films pursue ambitious and multifaceted intellectual arguments, and in each case the argument is perfectly described by the film's title. But on another level, these three films are mysterious, provocative, and even beautiful formal constructions that say far more.

Film was discovered too late. The art-mathematicians of the Renaissance should have discovered it, it would have helped them in measuring man and space. It would have flourished during the Enlightenment when one was able to believe that



a concept could be arrived at through visual perception (viewing), and that what is understandable could be made visible. When film was finally discovered, science was beyond the imaginable (the presentable). He who tries to imagine the theory of relativity suffers from misconceptions.

*Harun Farocki*

What seems especially regrettable about the absence of Farocki's two 35-millimeter films – *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* (1981) and *BETRAYED* (1985) – from the Chicago retrospective is that, judging from the eight Farocki films I *have* seen, his recent work is much more interesting and complex than his early shorts. While the early shorts aren't devoid of interest, they bear heavy traces of Godard's and Straub-Huillet's influence and show relatively few signs of either the intellectual density of *AS YOU SEE* and *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (1989) or the conceptual clarity of *THE TASTE OF LIFE* (1979), *AN IMAGE* (1983), and *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY* (1990). (Apparently his first feature, *BETWEEN TWO WARS – VIETNAM*, an essay film completed in 1977, escapes some of these strictures.) *THE WORDS OF THE CHAIRMAN* (1967), *INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE* (1969), and *THE DIVISION OF ALL DAYS* (1970) are all black-and-white shorts concerned with issues of representation in relation to political subjects. The first, only two minutes long and narrated by fellow German independent Helke Sander, is a rather jokey reflection on the then-current state of Maoism, made the same year as Godard's *LA CHINOISE* and oriented around the notion that Chairman Mao's words may become weapons, but they exist only on paper.

*INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE* offers a minimalist but precise 22 minutes on the subject of the manufacture and effects of napalm – a salutary subject at the present moment, especially when Francis Coppola's and Oliver Stone's morally anguished beads of sweat in *APOCALYPSE NOW* and *PLATOON* are deemed to be of far greater historical importance. A chilling moment occurs near the beginning of the film: a man is monotonically reading the testimony of a Vietnamese victim when he suddenly extinguishes a cigarette on the back of his hand. He then calmly explains that the temperature of napalm is seven and a half times greater than the temperature of that lit cigarette (see ill. 1). Most of the remainder of the film is informative but anticlimactic.

The 40-minute *THE DIVISION OF ALL DAYS* – a dry Marxist analysis of capitalist exploitation with occasional sarcastic asides, co-written and co-directed by Hartmut Bitomsky – is the least interesting Farocki film I've seen. Unless I missed something, I'm afraid that adjectives such as 'dour' and 'pedantic' that have been applied unjustly to his subsequent works are more to the point here. In striking contrast, *THE TASTE OF LIFE*, a half-hour colour documentary made the same year, is the most lyrical and 'open' of all the Farocki films I've seen. A

series of street scenes – some shown silently, some with sync sound – proceeds musically with variations around certain themes. The film opens with a series of identically framed shots of different adults and children stopping to examine the damage done to a car's headlights in a collision. We see neither the collision nor the headlights, so the musical structure is mainly built on the ways various people crouch by, point at, and study the front of the car. A more extended motif is shot in front of a newsagent's shop. We see the shop around opening time on separate days, as a woman emerges carrying signs that advertise the headlines of different newspapers. There are two stretches of untranslated narration in this short that I couldn't follow, and these might well add significantly to the film's meaning, but even without this textual element, the film is a pleasure to watch and listen to.

*AN IMAGE*, another half-hour colour documentary, is devoted to the construction of one centerfold photo shot over a single day in *Playboy's* Munich studio. I mean 'construction' literally. The film begins with the building of the set and the placement of props, then proceeds through the diverse poses and rearrangements of the model, complete with the photographer's instructions ('Give us your usual saucy look'), followed by various critiques and conferences about the test photos and various re-shoots before the lights are extinguished and the set is dismantled.

A materialist documentary in the best sense of the word, *AN IMAGE* provides a fascinating contrast with the artist-and-model sessions in Rivette's recent *LA BELLE NOISEUSE*. As in the Rivette film, many others besides the artist and the model are involved in the construction of the image, but here the others (many of them women) are visibly participating in its creation, and the ideological construction taking place is as evident as the various kinds of labour involved. Here industrial history and analysis – the explicit subject of many of Farocki's films, and the implicit subject of many others – inform our basic understanding of how porn is manufactured, while incidentally providing us with some clues about how the porn dubbing sessions in *AS YOU SEE* link up with some of that film's other industrial subjects.

'The history of technology is fond of describing the route that development has taken from A to B', the narrator says at a key juncture in *AS YOU SEE*. 'It should describe which alternatives there were and who rejected them!' The same thing might be said of the history of art, including the history of cinema. From this standpoint, the work of Harun Farocki – strategically positioned outside the history of cinema as it's usually written – represents a tantalising and exciting intellectual alternative, a road not taken.



# Slowly Forming a Thought While Working on Images<sup>1</sup>

*Christa Blümlinger*

After the screening of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (1988) at the documentary film festival in Lyon, I was so disturbed that I was unable to say anything to Harun Farocki other than to ask him what Hartmut Bitomsky was up to, whose intelligent compilation films had similarly impressed me. As a kind of damage control, I conducted an interview with Harun two days later, which was to mark the beginning of our friendship and was to change my view of the essay film as a genre. Documentaries that both think for themselves and present themselves as works in progress are not only produced in France, nor are they the exclusive domain of Marker, Varda, or Godard.

Many years ago one could encounter the Berlin filmmaker Harun Farocki regularly during the Berlin Film Festival, behind the counter of the coat check in the lobby of the Akademie der Künste, where he offered back issues of the journal *Filmkritik* for sale. Until a short time ago, one of his many varied biographies offered the following: '1973-84 editor and author of the journal *Filmkritik*, which was driven to financial ruin because it attempted to write about a given film without telling the viewer what to think about it'. Farocki's films have remained as marginal and radical as Germany's best film journal, whose editorial board included Frieda Grafe, Helmut Färber and Wim Wenders, and later, Hartmut Bitomsky and Hanns Zischler.

*Filmkritik* gathered together a group of filmmakers as writers and was, as such, not dissimilar to *Cahiers du cinéma*, the contents of which often found their way, in German translation, into *Filmkritik*.<sup>2</sup> Key texts by Bazin or discussions between Rivette and Delahaye and Barthes and Levi-Strauss belonged to *Filmkritik*'s repertoire as much as *cinéphile* addenda like material on Godard's *FRANCE TOUR DÉTOUR* or special issues on John Ford and *VERTIGO*. Farocki has a great deal in common with Hartmut Bitomsky, whose compilation films are of historical importance, both cinematically and culturally. They shared directorial credits on several film projects; both belonged to *Filmkritik*'s editorial collective; in more recent years they both enjoyed renown as the *essayists* of the (new) German film. With many of the 'first' (approximately ten years older) generation of (more or less) West German filmmakers, who worked in a (more or less) documentary fashion, there is, of course, a certain degree of kinship:

with Peter Nestler, Alexander Kluge or the Straubs. Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, to whom *Filmkritik* devoted entire issues, were on close terms with Farocki, when no television station took any notice of his work; a documentary short made by Farocki on the shooting of the Straubs' *KAFKA'S AMERIKA – KLASSENVERHÄLTNISSE* is a testament to the strength of their friendship.

Farocki's films focus on the imbrications of war, economics, politics, and society. They do so in the form of an audio-visual history of cultural and technical systems, paying particular attention to alternatives, deviations from the norm and the apparent dead-ends of technological developments. The films are extensions of his reviews, often accompanied by texts that were written before, during, and after the film work. For Farocki, writing and making images (or their amalgamation with found images) are in such close proximity to each other that the one leads to the other.

Word and image are in a constant process of interaction: the textual commentary allows the images to be read, while found images from the past produce new ideas. Farocki tries – as he himself has stated – to find the words on the editing table and to find the editing strategy at his writing desk.

## Militant Films

In one of his first films, *INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE* (1969), dressed in a suit and tie, Farocki reads a text on both the effects of napalm and the reasons for its use, and on the aversion of the (television) viewer in the face of such horrific images, who only wants to forget. In order to offer a minimal representation of the effects of napalm, Farocki reaches off-frame for a burning cigarette, and proceeds to extinguish that cigarette on his bare forearm. A voice-over commentary notes laconically that 'a cigarette burns at 600 degrees Celsius; Napalm burns at approximately 3000 degrees' (see ill. 1). Is Farocki an action artist or an activist?

At first glance a number of Farocki's films from the years following 1968 could be considered 'militant' films. However, in a fashion similar to Godard's and Gorin's *LETTER TO JANE*, Farocki's 'Vietnam films' are never about an 'elsewhere', or the imperialist aggression of the Americans against the Vietcong, or the disagreements about the effects of the war in Vietnam. They are about the state of mind of a political movement 'here' in Europe, more specifically in West Germany and West Berlin. For example, Farocki contrasts two photographs, one published by the opponents of the war in Vietnam showing an American soldier beating a Vietnamese partisan and the other from the daily

newspaper showing the victims of communist retribution. The contrast between the two photographs makes Vietnam more inscrutable than visible; no communication whatsoever takes place between the two images. Both images comment on the ideological complexity of the discourse on the Vietnam War in the Federal Republic of Germany, in that they originate and circulate as statement and counter-statement in different media. Anna, the female protagonist of *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* (1982) calls it 'competing for the greater atrocity'. Together with her lover she observes herself in the mirror, on either side of which photos from the war in Vietnam are hung. This moment of self-observation represents for the couple the essence of a war film, 'a thrilling love story set against the backdrop of war and genocide', the blending of kitsch and death (see ill. 23).

Farocki's films do not attempt to create 'true' images of something, nor do they offer images as proof of something they are incapable of proving. Instead, the point is to make the structural connection between these individual images both evident and even striking, in order to give visual form to the ideological division between different public spheres.

## What is an image?

Investigating images can be considered a leitmotiv in Farocki's films. Is Farocki a relative of Godard's? If, as is commonly noted in France, *ICI ET AILLEURS* represents the cinematic apparatus, the unwinding of the film reel and the parade of figures before the camera, then *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* demonstrates the apparatus of war photography and the circulation of images from the war in Vietnam. There, the key issues are the mutually incompatible modes of perception practised in the different public spheres, blocking communication and blunting the gaze. Needless to say, not only the gaze is obscured. As the film notes: 'One pays even less conscious attention to sounds than to images'.

At the beginning of *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*, which may be considered a narrative film or, more precisely, a film with actors, two figures kill each other: a 'leftist' female terrorist and a male agent from some Western intelligence agency or other. The camera arrives at the scene of the killings, a hotel room held in the mesmerising sway of the television. American news reports of the end of the Vietnam War are visible there, an excited voice comments on the now familiar pictures of a plane taxiing down the runway, with desperate South Vietnamese, allies of the Americans, struggling to get on the plane. Later the question will be posed, what exactly was made visible by these images;

why were there so many images of this war? One possible answer is that, 'in Vietnam the American soldier is in such close proximity to the Vietnamese partisan that both fit into a single image'.

The question '*What is an Image?*' is posed in *BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM* by an American soldier, who explains what the military reads into photos that are gathered by reconnaissance planes: the material condition of the enemy's weaponry, for example. One examines the images – in a continuation of this train of thought – to gather information, which can be expressed in words or numbers.

The series of images that went around the world, of the South Vietnamese chief of police holding a pistol to the head of a Vietnamese fighter, do not need to be shown again by Farocki for us to grasp their essence. Instead, the *dispositif* generating such images is set out, re-staged, in order to integrate that which lies beyond the frame in the photograph. For instance, the one of two children playing dead in Vietnam; a third looks on and presses the button of the camera, taking the photograph (see ill. 27).

Similarly, the *dispositifs* of measurement and photography are central to Farocki in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (1988), in order to reveal the disjunction between the camera and the eye,<sup>3</sup> between the subject and the apparatus. This analysis focuses primarily on stills, historical (surveillance) images, insisting on their double temporal codification: they recall, indeed they state, as Barthes has suggested, '*Cela a été* (this has been)', but they also suggest a death that is yet to come.

In *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* images of military, industrial and scientific apparatuses of calibration are combined with photographs that were created by those means: identity papers belonging to Algerian women, who were registered and photographed for the first time by French officials without their veils; the image of a Jewish woman on the loading ramp in Auschwitz, taken by an SS photographer. This image appears repeatedly and finally is examined more closely at one point in the film, as a representation of the interplay between preservation and destruction.<sup>4</sup> Farocki's voice-over adds something to that image of the woman, in that he considers her gaze directed past the camera. The *dispositif* defined by sexual difference (a man gazes at a woman) is *also* at play here, a fact that is employed to evoke the significance of everyday life beyond the borders of Auschwitz, pointing out the distinction between here and elsewhere, between seeing and being seen, the life that unfolded prior to the moment that this photograph was taken and the fatal regulations, which led to the Nazi's and thus also the photographer's subjugation of this woman.

In *VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION* (1992), a film that Farocki, together with Andrei Ujica, compiled completely from found footage, it is television and amateur documentation of the mass protests leading to the fall of Ceauçescu that

are examined. On one side is the official television *dispositif* that does not change substantially after the fall of the despot. On the other are the images shot – at least initially – spontaneously and surreptitiously by amateurs, showing people on the street, revealing the revolution beyond the television images, which increasingly take on the conventions of television, as the event is increasingly reported on by the official station.

In the decisive gesture in the film an amateur filmmaker's camera records the official live television broadcast of a public speech made by Ceaușescu from the television set in the living room. It pans over to the window and the turbulence outside, which cannot be precisely located on the street, 'to see if the incident had any consequences', as the commentary suggests.

The archival footage from the television underscores this distinction between the tele-visual *dispositif* and public space as the location for historical events. (It has been said of this revolution that it took place on television.) Farocki/Ujica offer a comparison between the normal cueing of official television images and an image notable for its deviation: the red screen, used by Romanian television as the sign of a loss of signal and the interruption of the broadcast, is placed in opposition to the still running but shaky camera belonging to the state television team, which finally is pointed towards the sky, as per instructions under such circumstances.

## Image Loops

When Farocki in his films examines images of heterogeneous origin, he weaves them together into a spiral-like form, into a movement-image, in which the meaning of the individual parts is multiplied. Such multiplication is supported by a type of filmic linkage termed *montage lateral* by André Bazin, or montage from ear to eye.<sup>5</sup> An example from *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*: the images made by the SS of the Jewish woman at Auschwitz and the registration of the Algerian women by the French colonial authorities are paired at one point in the film with a kind of permutation of the motif of automation – images of robots used in the production of automobiles. A direct link is made between the machines of observation used by the oppressors (as a single cog in the bureaucratic-military machinery) and the machinery of industrial production, which is without subjectivity in that it eliminates the part played by vision within that machinery. The point is not only made here; it is itself a variation of the notion of the blind eye turned by the analysts of the American reconnaissance images from 1944, who were interested in the industrial complex belonging to I.G. Farben but not in the adjacent concentration camp, Auschwitz. Farocki



thus strikes at the heart of the violence implicit in images of the media, 'the terrorist aesthetic of optical impact',<sup>6</sup> equally present today on television and on screens dedicated to surveillance, a strategy with the intent of making the observer or the viewer into either an accomplice or a potential victim.

IMAGES OF THE WORLD is constructed on the principles of repetition and deviation: things continually reappear in mutated form, creating numerous loop-like series. The point is not only to connect one image to the next, but rather to arrange individual images by type, to treat objects like objects of reflection, creating something akin to Deleuze's 'mental image' or *image mentale*.<sup>7</sup>

A pivotal feature of Farocki's montage is the doubt that enters into the relationship between two images, between sound and image or sound and sound. It is not only a product of the reality effect, the *effet de réel*, belonging to documentary images, but instead abuts on the limits of the photographic image itself, on the imaginary, on that which escapes representation, what is incommensurable or *undecidable*. This doubt is located within the motto in the epilogue that is presented at the beginning of AS YOU SEE (1986). The commentary here focuses on a kind of optical illusion that has occurred by chance: a drawing that shows a plough, which could also be a cannon and vice versa.<sup>8</sup> 'The only purpose of the ploughshare is to provide a base for the cannon', states the film, and then continues, 'war, too, is a form of harvest'. Even before the beginning of the film one is, quite literally, introduced by means of Farocki's own pedagogy to the way one sees ('as you see'), but also to the degree to which concepts in a given culture and the pictures they evoke are mutually determined.

What follows is a complex web of motifs drawn from cultural and technical history, which link the development of modes of transportation, methods of war and systems of production by association. Farocki focuses on the development of cities, of digital and analogue systems of production, on the distinction between manual and intellectual labour. He is less concerned here with describing developments from A to B than with the deviations. At the end of AS YOU SEE in an almost programmatic fashion, he asks which other developments could have taken place, and who made the decisions that prevented them? By means of the analysis of the (images of) different trajectories of development, which are initially examined as places and then are transformed into the principle on which the film itself is based, a dense and impressive system of stilled images, of graphics, photographs, and paintings is interrupted and contrasted by movement images from the present. With a kind of respectful distance, the voice-over comments on this chain of images. Verbal and musical accents are often introduced in counterpoint to the movement image, sometimes parallel to it, and on occasion totally autonomous. Both image and

soundtrack are dance-like: there is no linear progression within the film but rather a rhythmic 'two steps forward, one step back'.

## From Text to Film

Farocki often chooses to work, on a visual level, with found footage, in order to read those images anew; similarly, he often chooses to make use of texts by other authors, quoting these (in a fashion similar to Godard), or – in earlier films – (similar to Straub, in a Brechtian manner) reciting them: Hannah Arendt, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Heiner Müller, Günther Anders or Carl Schmitt have provided Farocki with material and starting points for reflection.

Farocki's films are allegorical in that they incorporate fragments and remains. They double or re-read such texts, also making use of second-hand material on the soundtrack, they shoot new images and combine all of these elements afresh, in order to create a 'new analytical capacity of the image' in the sense intended by Deleuze.

The beginning of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* speaks of the sea, free thinking, and a gaze liberated from all bounds, while a scientific station researches water quality, followed by images of the simulation of a ship's passage through a canal in which the effect of waves are measured: visual counterpoints to unfettered thought. Near the end of the film the image of the wave-canal reappears in the midst of a sequence in which Farocki examines American reconnaissance photography from the Second World War. The spoken commentary points out particular features of those images, as do visual markers, stating that the CIA years later discovered details the Allies did not want to see in 1944: that the concentration camp, Auschwitz, was visible right next to the industrial target, the I.G. Farben plant. The image of the wave-canal is suddenly and momentarily re-introduced, at this point in the middle of this investigation, suggesting quite clearly the manner in which the gaze is trained. For neither the gaze nor thought is unfettered when machines in conjunction with science and the military determine what is worth investigating. The texture of the film does not only offer the linkage of images but rather selects corresponding sets of images, in order to create a space between those images, transporting thought itself to the interior of the image.

The fact that both found footage and found texts make up the basis of Farocki's films is already anticipated in his writings for *Filmkritik* that accompanied his work in film. On *BETWEEN TWO WARS* (1978) he wrote: 'Eight years ago I read an analytical piece in the journal *Kursbuch* Nr. 21. It was one and a half pages long and I nearly had a stroke. It was as if I had found the missing

shard that finally made up a complete image. The long process that led to this film began at that moment. I was able to construct the image from those fragments, but the destruction was not thereby nullified. The reconstructed image was an image of destruction'.<sup>9</sup> The intellectual images suggested by that film (and the images of the industrial landscape of the Ruhr region of Germany) revolve around the lucid analysis offered by Alfred Sohn-Rethel, shortly before Hitler seized power, which suggests the links between technology, labour, the economy, and politics. The war of aggression begun by the Germans is thus understood to be a result of the marketing difficulties experienced by the entire steel industry of the Weimar era, which had been (organised as a producers' alliance) so successful that it was plagued by overproduction.

Beyond the materials and the stagings that the alliance and the historical analysis of its effects make apparent, reflections on memory and photography take place here, which consider the relationship between stasis and movement, of past and present – precisely at the location where the figure of the photographer (played by Peter Nau, another of the *Filmkritik* editors) is situated. Farocki has him say, 'One must, above all, make two images. Things are in such a state of flux and it is only when one makes two images that one is able to determine the trajectory of that movement'. The tracking shot that begins at this moment along the factory walls is later continued, during a monologue spoken off-screen, which ironically delineates a historical argument in favour of the connection between a smelting oven and a blast furnace. Behind the wall a large pipe then appears, which turns off in to the distance at the precise point where the wall ends. Could this be a mannerist gesture pointing out the parallel image and soundtracks of the film itself? Perhaps. But it is not only this. The pipe indicates that works are being connected here – but the factory itself remains invisible behind the wall. If the view of a particular object is not unencumbered, then Farocki examines why and how this is the case.

## Reading Rituals

The power relationships and regulatory systems, which guide a society, are only seldom made apparent. Nevertheless, they can be a challenging subject for a '*cinema du réel*'. A number of Farocki's films examine the sites where a society practiced its rules and learns its regulations, thus emphasising the logic of the systems of regulations themselves, as that is precisely the task of such sites: to naturalise these systems. As ethnographic filmmakers are well aware, rituals express a great deal about the structure of a given society. Farocki has systematically visited such laboratories of social practice throughout West

Germany, covering the entire range of testing facilities, which are represented implicitly by the institutions of education and training that serve them. *INDOCTRINATION* (1987), *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* (1990) and *WHAT'S UP* (1991) are all eloquent caricatures of a service-oriented society, whose agents are being prepared and shaped in endless continuing education seminars. In the form of a simple compilation of advertising footage, *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER* (1993) presents the consumer as the phantom counterpart of the employee of the service industry (see ill. 69).

Shortly before the reunification of Germany, Farocki shot *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* in the schools offering training in midwifery, the insurance industry, in self-awareness seminars, police academies, in churches or in the military – the training ground on which the ‘instruction manuals’ for living are offered. The material for *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* was recorded for the most part by Farocki himself: practising emergencies, situations of need, or what to do in the event of an accident. The people who participate are tested like machines and tools, in all sectors of society and the economy. Farocki demonstrates the situation of contingency indeed as the primal situation, a calculated moment in the life of a society. He demonstrates the emergency without showing it, as a phantom, a simulacrum, a bad copy.

Midwifery schools make use of a plastic torso to practice exclamations of encouragement to an imaginary woman in labour; pregnant women train in proper breathing techniques, performing rituals of initiation for the washing and bearing of babies. The question is: who is being served? (see ill. 57). The essence of this documentary which shows the social as a form of *mise-en-scène* lies in the rules of the game,<sup>10</sup> by which the protagonists react and were developed by the military, the church, social service departments, and insurance agencies.

Industrial processes are integrated into the film: images of product testing, robots that rhythmically insert keys into locks, and repeatedly and endlessly mistreat mattresses, create a series of images of mechanized automatism, the symbolic precursors to human rituals.

In loops, recurring motifs and cycles of similarity, *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* demonstrates the processes of mechanisation with which the future expert, busy acting out the emergency situation, will be equated. Regardless of whether the comparison is made with car keys, washing machines, midwives, driving instruction students, or insurance agents, all submit themselves to the absurdity of a modern society defined by risk. Machines simulate the human catastrophe; humans perform like machines. They mimic living, training for it according to an instruction manual. By means of these observations the film points out the mimetic failure of a series of ‘real’ actors and thereby the distinction between the power of the system and the individual life-world.

In the laboratory of society, novices have the choice of being bad actors or viewers. In *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* 'real' life in Germany is absent. It turns – as one sees – into a chimera. This is demonstrated in a particularly remarkable scene that shows a group of people gathered at a gigantic parking lot to practice the proper behaviour after a car accident. The car is turned on its side; after detailed instructions are given, two women emerge: the accident victims in training. During these instructions one hears the 'instructor' off-screen explain what one should do in case of an emergency. The camera, framing the car on its side, does not initially reveal the interior of the car, where the bad imitations of accident victims are giving it their all. What we see are distorted images of the observers, who are receiving 'instruction' reflected in the windshield of that car (see ill. 58).

The complex impression slowly takes shape here – as it does in the film as a whole – through displacement: we repeatedly hear about something that is not visible in the image but is announced off-screen (such as the imitation accident victims), or we happen to see something 'by chance' that is present in the image (such as the reflection of the participants in the windshield) but actually is thought to be absent, since it lies ostensibly beyond the edges of the frame.

Farocki is able to demonstrate social and media rituals through the structure of the filmic composition. In the compilation film, *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER*, we encounter the fictionalised world of consumption in the form of a symphony. An imaginary day-in-the-life emerges from the narrative modules of the heterogeneous but (as one may observe) deeply conventionalised footage from German advertising gleaned from various decades: from the ritual of rising in the morning to various mealtimes and the semicircle formed by the family of consumers as they watch television, finally to an evening at the opera and the goodnight kiss. An iconography of advertising is revealed that develops from the montage of the material guided by motifs or other formal criteria.

Farocki demonstrates a certain faithfulness to the rules of 'documentary' behaviour: the quotations are only decontextualised to the point that they are grouped differently than they would be in normal advertising segments, but not by means of a dissociation of image and sound. This type of filmic montage functions entirely without commentary. It is enough that a particular ad is allowed to speak for itself in order to make the associative link between the heterogeneous clips. (Television advertising functions, on the basis of meaning displacement and a divergence between image and sound, which is the reason why in *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER* humorous moments develop on the basis of the repetition or proximate placement of similar material on either the image or soundtrack.) The cleverness of the film lies in the logic of its composition (see ill. 68).

## The Essay

'If one has no money for cars, gun battles, beautiful clothes, if one has no money for images that allow the film time, indeed the film life to elapse of its own accord, then one must invest one's energy in intelligence, that is, the link between individual elements.' This statement was made by Farocki in *BETWEEN TWO WARS* in order to demonstrate the manner in which his *Montage of Ideas* functions. One sees him at work at his desk, organising clips of images, maps, drawings and pieces of paper into categories.

Movement in film is related to the flow of thought and images, claimed Alexander Kluge, a filmmaker who works with both epic and episodic forms. Not unlike Godard and Kluge, Farocki's films utilise the cut as an interstitial space that allows the viewer to call the images themselves into question in a radical fashion. The minute precision of the construction and aesthetic rigour of the gaze implicit in such constructions are astounding, particularly when a rereading of already existing material is at stake.

If Farocki signs his films as an author and producer, he is the 'author as a producer' in the sense suggested by Benjamin: he transforms readers and viewers into participants, in that he transcends the division between script and image. The notion of the image as something to be read as proposed by Benjamin bears the impression here of the critical and dangerous moment.

In his lucid contributions to *Filmkritik*, Farocki himself argued against the expression of convictions, that would doubtlessly be transformed at a later date (and should the opportunity present itself) to truths. He wrote the following about the teach-in conducted by the *Soviet Union-Vietnam-group* and the *China-Cambodia-group*: 'to name someone the author of words that were written or to name the photographer as the producer of an image, or indeed the newspaper that publishes it, is an act of fiction. A person is conceived in that act, a form is sketched out, revealing its contours. Too often one focuses on the words between the words and the images between the images; rather than invent authors and photographers to account for them, I prefer to say *I'*. Nearly all of Farocki's films are defined by this use of the first-person, at least those that consider the significance of found footage.

Because the objects of study, to which Farocki turns, are not fixed but are considered to be in a state of flux, they are defined in their particular manner of creating transitions by the influence of the gaze and its ability to transform. The always questioning and therefore incomplete search sees its own discoveries as temporary truths, which cannot survive without also inscribing the first person singular into the text.

This is, of course, dependent on the tangibility of the manner in which thoughts come into being and the process by which the film itself was created. Farocki points explicitly to the moments of rupture in the films with a disarming openness, as in, for example, *AS YOU SEE* (1986), which is dedicated to male fantasies and the *dispositifs* of war: after an image which displays the apparatus of a duel with pistols and a quotation from Hannah Arendt about the figure of the unknown soldier (to the effect that 'an act without a name does not exist'), followed by images from porn magazines which are labelled with women's names. 'Even the girls in these magazines are given names', the film states, and shortly afterwards: 'I bring death and sex together as did the American bomber pilots in the Second World War'.

If the signature of the author is made tangible at this point in the voice-over, it is also often transmitted through gestures: Farocki's hands organise the documents into a montage, point out photographs, obscuring certain parts of the image. In *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*, for instance, the hands of the filmmaker conduct an examination of the French identity card of the Algerian woman: first the face is obscured by the hands, replacing the veil, then finally the eyes become blind in the face of the gaze directed at them by the official registrars. This kind of manual reframing offers a visible and even pleading depiction of the manner in which historical photographs may be read.

Although Farocki is not afraid of including his own image, he operates beyond narcissistic self-revelation. If he reveals his own body in these non-fictional films, then it is always in the context of the work conducted by the artisan, who happens to be a collector and editor of images, the author making notes or the researcher posing questions. In *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, for instance, the director points out the following from (what would seem to be) beyond the frame: 'a story cannot tell of two worlds', while one observes the figure of the film's author, only vaguely visible mirrored in the shiny surface of the table on which his notes have been spread, as he speaks those words.

Two worlds: thus we locate one pivotal source for the writer and image-maker, son of an Indian father and a German mother, himself an impassioned father of twin girls, who are themselves now adults. Whenever Farocki works in a less essayistic and more documentary fashion, he reveals his dedication to a similarly dualist artistic personality: alongside the essay films, Farocki has made portraits of like-minded individuals such as the author and cineaste, Peter Weiss, or the author of German-language fiction, Georg K. Glaser, who lived for years as an 'artist and smithy' in Paris and refused to the very end to divide the work of the mind from that of the hand.

It is difficult to describe something, which I, from my Viennese perspective, would describe as Harun Farocki's 'vital' humour, 'vital' particularly at a time when German artists and intellectuals tend to be emotional about the new-



found sense of *Heimat* in a reunified Germany. Not so long ago, he made me laugh with a joke he included in a letter, about the author of *Storms of Steel* who had recently celebrated his 100th birthday: 'Ernst Jünger stood in line for tickets to see NATURAL BORN KILLERS. The woman at the ticket booth looked at him and said, "Sorry, the film is restricted to those of 116 years of age and older".'

## Notes

1. This text first appeared in French under the title 'De la lente élaboration des pensées dans le travail des images', *Trafic* 13, 1995.
2. I note peripherally that the intellectual and cultural transfer from France to German-speaking countries functions better than it does in the other direction. I do not know if the same is true with respect to the Anglo-American film community.
3. See the convincing argument made by Kaja Silverman: 'What is a Camera?', or : History in the Field of Vision', *Discourse* 15.3 (Spring 1993), pp. 3-56.
4. See Harun Farocki: 'Reality would have to Begin'. In this volume.
5. André Bazin, 'Lettre de Sibérie', *Le Cinéma français de la libération à la nouvelle vague*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma 1983, pp. 178-181.
6. Paul Virilio: *The Art of the Motor*. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 73.
7. Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
8. Translator's note: the German saying refers to 'Kanone' or cannons and 'Pflugschar' as opposed to the English 'swords into ploughshares'.
9. Harun Farocki. 'Nicht nur die Zeit, auch die Erinnerung steht stille', *Filmkritik* 263 (Nov. 1978), pp. 569-606.
10. In a text that accompanies this film, Farocki says that he recorded the games because they suggest rules: 'the speech and behaviour of people in documentary films today would seem to be free of rules. I have often thought about a film in which the employees, who have been fired, sing, the aid workers rhyme their adventures in developing countries, the personages of history dance their experience. I have often thought about a documentary with actors, but I don't want to tell them how to act'.

*Translated by Robin Curtis.*





# Making the World Superfluous: An Interview with Harun Farocki

*Thomas Elsaesser*

This interview was conducted after a screening of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* at the National Film Theatre-MOMI London, 6 February 1993.

**TE:** You have been making films since 1966. I think your filmography numbers some fifty titles. Where have you been all these years? The New German Cinema has come and gone, Fassbinder, Wenders, Herzog – been and gone. How did you manage to survive? How have you been able to create such a body of work, unnoticed by the world?

**HF:** Not entirely unnoticed. I'm probably the best known unknown filmmaker in Germany. Hartmut Bitomsky is another filmmaker in the same position, a well-known, unknown filmmaker in Germany. He and I started making films together, after leaving the Berlin Film Academy in 1969. During those years a lot of things were possible, or so it seemed to us. Kluge was successful in the cinema, and Hellmuth Costard's work was shown on prime-time television. There was a short boom for political films in West Germany, and for a brief summer we had the possibility of producing this kind of films, and before we knew it the fashion was over. I think we didn't take advantage of our opportunity all that wisely, and with the start of the 1970s, it was all over. Take Wim Wenders, he gave up his long takes, began to work with shot-countershots and made himself socially acceptable. But we didn't manage the crossover, and it seems that anyone who failed to adapt at that point, stayed out in the cold for a long time. I tried to get by, by getting my work into arts programmes or on children's television, but it was by no means always a done deal. And in any case, there is not much public attention to be gained from those kinds of assignments. Working for television, a documentarist like Peter Nestler attracted precious little attention, and today, not even the Straubs can provoke a reaction, always assuming that their films are being shown at all.

**TE:** Was it a deliberate move on your part to more or less bypass the subsidy system as it existed in Germany during the 1970s? I noticed that *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* did actually get subsidised by the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, a

regional funding authority. Considering the way your projects are set up, it could not have been easy to submit scripts or otherwise comply with the regulations, which were required by this public machinery surrounding the subsidy system? Or maybe it was a political decision to not even try?

**HF:** No policy decision on my part. Simply, in the case of *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, I tried twenty-five times or so to get the finances together, but in the end, I had to produce it without public money, and instead used some 30,000 German Marks that I had earned with other film work.

**TE:** I gather that *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, when it was submitted for a *Prädikat*, that is, when it was submitted for evaluation to the Ratings Board was actually refused a certificate on the grounds that it was biased, unimaginative, a filmed lecture. Does this sort of discriminatory judgement hurt you when you hear someone referring to your films as didactic?

**HF:** Yes, unfortunately, yes. If you look at the film that Henri-Georges Clouzot made about Picasso [*THE MYSTERY OF PICASSO*, 1956] you can see that Picasso wanted to prove something, namely what a virtuoso painter he was. Apparently all that talk about his work being something 'a five-year old boy could do' got to him. So it may be true that I, too, am trying to prove that my films are not unfilmic or uncinematic, that with my framing and editing I want to prove them wrong. There is already a burden of proof in *BETWEEN TWO WARS*.

**TE:** You have actually made feature films, fiction films, but I think on average you prefer either to make fictional documentaries or to document fictions. With your films, which sometimes go by the name of 'essay films', you have actually contributed to film history a sort of genre, or at least you gave the idea some currency in Germany. One tends to think of Jean Luc Godard in this context, but your films do not strike me as Godardian, to use a term that has gone a little out of fashion. But I know that you have worked with Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, for instance. Do you see yourself as a filmmaker belonging to the European cinema in either of these senses?

**HF:** For me, Godard has been way out in front for the past thirty years, he always encouraged me to do things, and I always found out that I do what he did fifteen years earlier. Luckily for me, not quite in the same way. At the moment I am working with video, sometimes I think I see myself remaking *NUMÉRO DEUX*, the same staging in my apartment, but there are also major differences. So many ideas are hidden in his work that although you are a different director, you can nonetheless always refer back to him.

**TE:** You have written on Robert Bresson. How does this come together? A filmmaker like Bresson on the one hand, Godard on the other. Are these compatible ways of thinking about the cinema, and if so, what idea of cinema do you see them pursuing?

**HF:** But Bert Brecht and Thomas Mann were also antagonists, and nonetheless one can be an admirer of both, as happens to be the case with me. Bresson, to put it briefly, makes his images rhyme, of which I'm a great admirer, even though this is not at all my own project. Whether it is Bresson, Godard or the Straubs, watching their films or writing about them is like learning to read. In order to read a philosophical text, you have to have a certain amount of training; the text requires a different mode of reading than a newspaper or a novel. The same goes for these films. I study them in order to attune myself to their way of thinking and production.

**TE:** One thinks of the kind of spare clarity that the *mise-en-scène* has in Bresson, the tremendous effort to keep a certain distance. With Godard, one rather gets the sense that he always comes in with his own voice or pencil or paintbrush, and that, graffiti-like, he crowds the frame with all kinds of – admittedly far from irrelevant – interferences and interjections. But I also remember something you said when we met nearly twenty years ago, and we got to talking about *Filmkritik*, the Munich-based film journal, of which you were at the time a contributor, and you said, jokingly: 'Terrible magazine if you want to know what movies to see, but the best literary magazine in Germany.' As a long-time subscriber to *Filmkritik*, I found this an illuminating comment, also about your own work. Not only because writing for you is obviously very important. Indeed, some of your films exist as a written text and as a film, without the one cancelling out the other, but also because it seems to me that your writing is already a form of filming, of spacing, editing, of transposing ideas into images and actions. On the other hand, there is also a sense in which for you the cinema is not a substitute for writing. On the contrary, writing has, since the advent of cinema, achieved a new definition, a new purity and outline that is paradoxically due to the existence of cinema. Where does this stance of cinema as writing come from – for it seems different from the French *caméra stylo* idea of Astruc. Or is it quite simply an economic relation: you have to make some of your money with journalism, getting your work published, in order to keep circulating as an author, for only as an author can you continue making films.

**HF:** Yes, of course, by writing one produces oneself as author. In the mid-1970s I stopped working for radio, because those texts took too much time compared to what they paid. Since then I only write when I feel like I have something to

say, regardless of what it pays. But of course, writing increases your cultural capital, as it does for US professors who get promoted in direct relation to the number of published works. Another thing is that a film accompanied by a text elicits much more commentary than one in which the author manifests himself only with images and sounds and their organisation.

IMAGES OF THE WORLD attracted much more writing than, for instance, *LEBEN – BRD*. The same is true of Chris Marker's *SANS SOLEIL*, which has an extraordinary text – a text that emanates from a lifetime's preoccupation with cinema, as you just sketched it. This text can also be reproduced without the film, by which I do not at all imply that the images in the film are somehow worthless. Rather, the text has had such a strong effect that in some places nobody paid much attention to the images. To give a small example: there is a scene in *SANS SOLEIL* where the camera accompanies two people visiting a grave. It rushes ahead of them and waits for them at the graveside, just like a television crew would do it, if it had the time and a chance to stage things. Why does the camera rush ahead? – this sort of question has not generated any critical energy. I probably write, or rather: occupy myself with writing, in order to determine the difference between film and text. I want to make films that are not that far removed from texts, and that are nonetheless very distinct.

I am very interested in etymology. In the case of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*, we always called it 'pictures of war', and that's what it was called in the subtitles. In 1988, the film went to San Francisco to the festival, then started circulating in the US for a while, and when it came back it had been renamed 'images of the world...' – that is how it appeared in all the catalogues and programmes. The same thing happens with children, you give them a name, but the world does not accept it, and then they end up with another name. I had chosen 'pictures', because I liked it when Sartre's book *Les Mots* was translated into German by the critic Hans Maier, who called it not 'Worte' but 'Wörter'. The latter is a less ambitious term, and that is also what I tried to do with my title. Etymology is a very strange discipline, I like surfing through dictionaries and learn about 'Wörter', before they become 'Worte'. It gives you insights into all kinds of details that can never become a system, which strikes me as very innocent. Of course I know that words are not entirely determined by their origins, but where they come from for me retains a certain radiance. It makes the word 'Holocaust' unacceptable to me, because it puts Auschwitz into a mitigating, historicising context. Maybe I want to exercise a similar form of tact with words in my films: investigate pictures, take them apart to reveal their elements.

**TE:** I do get the sense that words for you are related to artefacts, that looking at them makes them strangely remote but also somehow *haptic* or tactile. When

you say you're interested in etymology, you obviously have a writer's sensibility also as it relates to the shape of meaning, to the ambiguities and multiple meanings of a word. I am not thinking of the old problem of 'film language' or 'film grammar' that has preoccupied filmmakers since Griffith and Eisenstein, and film theorists from Bela Balasz to Christian Metz. What I have in mind has more to do with the nature of the objects, the artefacts that one can 'make' with words, compared to the ones one makes with sounds and images. And the way in which an image can be a concept – here we do end up touching on Eisenstein – as well as a cliché saturated with cultural meaning, and therefore, act as a kind of 'revolving door' between different associations, ideas, even histories.

You seem to be alert to puns, for instance, and the way they can fuse two quite distinct levels, or domains. One very striking example of how a single word brings different things together occurs in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* through the double and triple meanings of the German word 'Aufklärung'. How crucial is it to you that audiences realise that 'Aufklärung' has this potential? For this is something that gets lost in the translation, where 'enlightenment', 're-connaissance', 'sex education' and 'a cloudless sky' really belong to very different clusters of associations.

**HF:** Yes, there are terrible casualties that occur in translation. To translate the word 'heldisch' as 'heroic' is to deprive it of what is special about it. I have been wondering whether I should not really find authors who take full responsibility for the English or French versions of my films, instead of myself getting involved in the translations and the recording of the voices.

**TE:** But now that the word 'Aufklärung' carries all this baggage, are you intrigued by the possibilities? Does it make you reflect on how words like this suggest connections in the real world, in your visual material, in the argumentative fabric of your film, so to speak, for which you have to take responsibility?

**HF:** Yes, that is a very interesting field. For instance, Hans Jonas points out in his book, *Phenomenon of Life*, that nearly everything in philosophy has a metaphor related to the eyes, to vision and so forth, and that in religion, things always relate to the ear. In many languages, at least in many European languages, God is audible and philosophy is visible. That's very interesting because we always seem to believe that the word, simply the word is related to philosophy and the image to religion. So, in this sense, it's very essential that the German word 'Aufklärung' is a bit different from the English word 'enlightenment', and such things are essential for a film, but they were not the

starting point of the film. In fact, I wanted to make a film without a starting point, simply to tell something about images nowadays, that was the idea. Luckily, I succeeded in raising some money, quite similar to an author who says, here I have pencil and paper and now I'll take one and a half or two years to write something. This is how I started to work, and then I read this note by Günter Anders who is quoted in the film, who compares the early 1980s to these political attempts to prevent access to the Auschwitz installations. If there was a starting point for all the research, this was it. It was only later that I found this strange brochure about the two CIA men who came across those photos.

TE: So, the centre of the film, these two images, these two collections of images came later: one of the aerial photographs taken by Allied bombers, by American bombers in 1944 (see ill. 43), and this album, this Auschwitz album by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler which was found, I forget when, in the fifties or sixties... (see ill. 44)

HF: ... no, earlier, it was re-found, it's a long story...

TE: ... obviously, these two collections bring two very different perspectives to bear on something that in a sense is neither explicable, nor *seizable* in images or even words. It defies understanding in either direction, as it were. At least, this is how Auschwitz has entered our culture, as something that almost signifies the limits of understanding and representation, of our capacity of picturing something. You have in some sense tried to work with this blockage, to see in your film if something cannot be displaced, cannot somehow be opened up, maybe to 'Aufklärung'. Is your film an attempt to open up a space for the mind to grasp what was going on, or are you more concerned about pointing to the unbridgeable gap between the two sets of images, pictures, representations? Could such an awareness of the gap help us overcome it, help us to 'work through' it in some sense? I may be over-interpreting, I don't know how you feel about this, but your analysis of the processes of 'inscription' seems to make sure that the aerial photograph is opened up to a political history, which is the history of the Allied campaign against Nazi Germany. One begins to ask what were their goals, their objectives? On the other hand, there is the history of how it could come to Auschwitz, or rather how it could be that Auschwitz was 'seen' but apparently not 'known'? Or if they were indeed known, the existence of the camps was not part of any military 'Aufklärung', it did not figure as a reality to be verified or acted upon. Thus, even if it was known only in this virtual state, in these photographs, they make it clear that among the Allied war aims, humanitarian considerations, like saving lives, were not as impor-

tant as the economic war aims, which were to destroy Germany's military might and industrial installations. Yet by using this image of the woman, and the way you comment on it, you make something else very comprehensible to us, namely the 'ordinariness' of the basic situation, and therefore the mind-shattering extraordinariness of the circumstances. A man is looking at a woman, who is looking at a man and not looking at a man. It's almost a kind of founding moment of cinematic fascination, vision and attraction, a moment very important, as we know, for feminist theories about the cinema. Yet these two detours, in order to approach 'Auschwitz' are very, very different. Are you prepared to bear the burden of making the connection between them? What is it that is so productive in this juxtaposition across the gaps and the detours?

**HF:** We're talking about two different kinds of images. The aerial photograph is a technical image. Although an analogue recording, it already points, with its grid system (as Vilém Flusser noted) (see ill. 39), to the digital mode. The individual human beings fall through the grid, and only the ornament of their group-existence registers: for instance, when they line up in the yard for the selection or a roll call. The image of the woman, arriving at the camp, is taken by SS-men. Every bureaucracy is in the business of documenting itself, but not always with photographs. The Nazis did not circulate images of the concentration camps, so maybe these pictures were intended for a select public, or for an anticipated future. This particular picture, in any event, was the result of a reflex, an impulse of the kind you just described. The picture could even have been taken by a well-meaning non-Nazi. He takes a blond woman, so as not to pander to racial stereotypes, he shows an attractive woman, so as to arouse compassion. A woman one want to possess, and this is the desire that the Nazis accommodate... The main figure in the picture is basking in the light of our attention, while the people in the background are already swallowed in the twilight of our indifference (see ill. 45).

The two pictures belong to two different classes or categories, they embody the technical and the narrative mode of historical writing. 1944, with the discovery of the camps, was like an experiment. On the one hand, the new automated technology of recording was already around, was already in the air, capable of being used as a sensor and recording everything that was happening, including what was happening in Auschwitz. On the other hand, two prisoners, Vrba and Wetzler, who are escaping from the camp and have to testify to the reality of Auschwitz by being physical, bodily eyewitnesses. This is the crisis, this is somehow a turning point in human history. Both types of narrative, both types of images are inadequate, both are inappropriate. The old dualism of word and image – we cannot simply opt for one or the other, we have to try and establish a relation between the two. The same occurs here; maybe



one image can elucidate the other, critique it, give it some experiential validity. If I may add something here, you are right in the way you've programmed this retrospective. The choice you've made in showing a series of films that look at cinema not as part of the history of storytelling, but as belonging more to the history of other techniques and technologies of surveillance, measuring, calculating, automation. I know of someone in Germany, Bernhard Siegert, who has written a book about the postal system. For him, the history of the novel is a sub-category in the history of postal communication [1993; transl. as *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA. 1999].

Now, while working on this film I became aware that in all these strange experimental installations where I did my shoot, 'optical *sensing*' or 'imaging' was only a sub-category of other kinds of measuring, that light is only a wave of a certain frequency. Most measuring has little use for images anymore, certainly not in order to harvest figures, as at the time of Meydenbauer. The figures are now the primary material. They calculate the statistics and the numbers, and occasionally they press a button, and there is an image you can see, just to make it a bit more vivid. In the film, I argue that appliances and instruments that have become historically obsolete undergo a brief deification, before they disappear. You can observe it in today's body culture: directly proportional to the decline of physical labour, everyone now dons these sport shoes and trainers, as if they were athletes. And I suddenly realised that the human eye, too, is no longer essential to the production process. Film and television images have a simple function: to keep our eyes alert and moving, similar to having to exercise horses, when they're not out working. If you compare this to the field of manual labour, it is the same: more and more automation, also in the field of vision. Suddenly I realised that this branch of working with images that I am in is about as modern as Muybridge's experiments with recording a galloping horse's movement.

**TE:** If I understand you right, what you are hinting at is that images, which in some sense are fundamental to our culture – you mention religion, of course religion has a double edge because many religions have a big prohibition against images – are on their way out. For the last 200 to 300 years our culture has been dominated by images. We are shedding one of our key perceptual and conceptual supports, if what you are pointing to is really happening, namely the possibility that images today are, as it were, merely a concession to the human interface. Since machines don't need images, they can do their own 'visualisations' and 'conceptualisations' with mathematical calculations. Is this, then, the historical connection between fascism and, let's say, virtual real-

ity? In some sense, for both, the human interface has dropped out of the equation as a cumbersome and costly irrelevance?

**HF:** Yes, that's correct. A process of human self-abolition is underway. The extermination camps were directed against 'the Jews' – I put it in scare quotes, because so many of the victims were not even aware that this was their identity, being a 'Jew'. Already in this case, the identity and image of the other was not clearly drawn. With euthanasia and eugenics the border is even less clear because every family can have a handicapped or terminally ill family member. In his table talk, Hitler was thinking out loud about the possibility of exterminating all those with hereditary lung or heart disease. Meanwhile, nuclear weapons are even more indiscriminate: they're directed against everyone. The German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat once wrote that if there was ever a nuclear war, the survivors of the first wave would most likely queue up outside the gas chambers, if they existed. It is a terrible thought. I had it in the script, but maybe I did not dare keep it in.

When in 1989, the regimes in Eastern Europe began to collapse into nothingness, it would have been a good opportunity to also address the question of the threat of nuclear weapons. The existence of nuclear installations is to my mind no less a scandal than political dictatorship or the five-year plan. Incidentally, this aspect of my film has largely passed unnoticed. It's a little like the story with the title; to me, the film has come back from its journey with another name and a somewhat different identity. Of course, one has to be careful if one establishes relations between Auschwitz and other events, it can easily lead to purely dramatic or rhetorical effects. I hope my filmic method allows for certain reflections to enter into relations with each other, without suggesting equivalence.

**Audience member:** I found your film very graphic and I would like to know about your use of still photographs.

**HF:** I saw a film recently, where Robert Frank was asked what the difference was between still photography and the moving image. And he said something like, 'in a photograph you see a man standing somewhere, and in a film, he stands there for only a moment and then he walks out of the frame'. Then he walked out of the frame, but unfortunately, the camera panned after him. There is just too much movement in the world. When I make a film, I have to compete with all this movement. So, I try to reduce the level of expectation a little, slow things down a bit. I use still images, in the hope that afterwards, the moving image will acquire a different value. When I show sequences where

there is movement, ideally I'd like to produce the same kind of astonishment that occurred when the first Lumière films were shown.

**TE:** Perhaps you can just pick up on this last point, because what strikes me about photography in general is that it is not as if the still photograph was there first, and then it became a moving image. Historically, photography and cinema are not quite related in this sequential causality. With you, it's in fact the other way round, as you say, you are arresting time, you are slowing it down. Without, however, thereby annihilating the fact that a still image is the sum or the cusp of a movement, that there once was movement where there is now stilled movement. In that sense, as a photographer, you are always responsible for arresting time at that precise moment. And then the burden is for you to explain to us why you are arresting it, in other words, you raise a strong expectation of reading that image, of making that image say something, that it would not necessarily have said if it had just slipped past us. There is a kind of force that the image acquires. This seems very characteristic of your film-making, even in your other films.

**HF:** It is probably comparable to what is meant when one speaks of an author's concept, rather than of his movement of thought around the concept. I think I am looking for images that represent, in their stilled state, several directions of movement at once. An image like a juncture, the way one speaks of a railway junction. I am looking for an image that is the concept for several sequences of movement. *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is not a fully worked-out film so much as the design or blueprint of maybe several films.

**Audience member:** Could you comment some more on your use of sound?

**HF:** A totally zero-sound space is considered to be a no-no in the cinema. That is why even silence is 'represented' by low ambient sound. I did not want to take this kind of atmospheric sound out of the archive, that is why I made one with music. I had the idea to take Beethoven's Razumovsky quartet and Bach's English suites, and then I took the sound reel and put the scissors on it and then put the reel in the eraser drum. Everything was erased except the parts protected by the scissors. During the final sound mix I was also following an aleatory principle, because without calculating it in advance, I would sometimes turn the music on and then off again. Every language version therefore has a different soundtrack and because these frequencies are different in nearly every theatre, each performance is somehow different. The idea was to have something excessive and random, not calculated, because there was already so much calculation and premeditation in this film.

**Audience member:** My question relates to the previous question. You use images that speak very eloquently, but you give them a very insistent commentary, too. Unless I'm wrong, the commentary tended to overlap and double the images, sometimes to undermine them. At times this made me angry, it seemed quite didactic. I wonder whether it was meant to make me angry. Could you imagine making a film, perhaps even this film with these images but without the commentary, imagine that the images are on their own, without the insistent commentary?

**HF:** Yes, you're right, in principle, I could. I think if I was really using up the images with my commentary, then I would have to agree with what you say. But I think that often I make such playful use of the commentary, I propose this meaning and then another meaning, and then exchange them, as one does when playing cards in a game. They are never the so-called representative illustrations for these ideas. They are never that. There is always a reading of the images, sometimes a provocative reading, where the audience will wonder, 'surely, this can't be the right commentary to these images?' Between the images and the commentary there is a parallel, but it's a parallel that will meet in infinity.

**TE:** This may actually be a point that an English audience would be more struck by than a German audience, where commentary, when it is used in a documentary, often seems to be killing the images. In Alexander Kluge, for instance, one has that sense that he knows it all and whatever is in the images is in a sense just dangling from his words. In your film – partly because of the rather flat delivery by Cynthia Beatt – one is very conscious of her delivering the words in a kind of even monotone, against the melody of meaning and sense. Was this precisely in order to create that interplay that the last questioner was alluding to, that there is the possibility not only of reflecting on the sense, but of inserting oneself and disagreeing with the words, disagreeing with the commentary?

**HF:** Yes, the dramaturgical line is not in the commentary, it is somewhere else. It's somewhere in your mind or in these connections and solutions. And the connection is made through all these combinations, the structure of these loops, and therefore the music and the commentary should also loop in this way.

**TE:** I am thinking of 'the solution that begets the solution' that Chris Marker found in *SANS SOLEIL* where he actually has a female voice speak what is effectively a male text because these are letters written to her by a man. So there is a

double displacement or reversal, and at the same time, there is a gender question involved as well. Is the voice in the German version also a woman's voice? Is it important that the gender of the voice is female?

**HF:** Yes, but not for political reasons. It was not a matter of choosing a female voice so that women can have their say – that would be bizarre, since it is after all, I who wrote the text. Simply, I wanted to make evident that here a not-I was speaking.

**TE:** In the case of Kluge, the commentary was one of the major objections women filmmakers had about his films. That here was a male voice, which often was Kluge's own voice, telling everybody what to think about the images.

**HF:** Yes, but Kluge has such a wonderful feminine Saxonian word-melody! I want to defend Kluge against some of the criticism you have alluded to. First of all, when Kluge speaks, it's not at all easy to understand what he says, there is still plenty of work for the spectator. Secondly, his films are full of passages that make so many different kinds of sense, if you think of all these tangles of slow-motion he puts in, and all these moons and clouds speeding past in his time-lapse fast-forward sequences. Kluge is at least conscious of the fact that a text can tie up one's thoughts, instead of setting them free. I would not agree that he is a know-it-all. Or at least, he doesn't want to be one. And that is already a lot.

**TE:** Is this another case of a filmmaker who is very different from you, yet whose work you can admire, because you recognise and respect his project?

**HF:** I hope so, I hope so. I definitely try to avoid being smarter than the film is. I try to let the film think. Literally, I write a line, then I go to the editing table and try to comment on it with images. Conversely, I try to find my words on the editing table. I have both my typewriter and my editing table in one room. It is connected to this question of writing and filmmaking, because it is also very evident you cannot make films the same way you can write a text. For the text you need to go to the library, but 80% or so of them are created in the room, or if not created, then at least the final version is made indoors at your desk. That is also the last stage of the filmmaking, the aspect where writing and filmmaking come together. People ask me, why don't you write anymore, and I realise it is because I have succeeded in making a form of writing out of my filmmaking.

**TE:** I want perhaps to close with something you said earlier on. Quite casually you mentioned a phrase that really was quite extraordinary to me. You said

that cameras are circling the world to make it superfluous, and that you are part of these cameras circling around the world...

**HF:** It's not my idea, but yes, in a way I am part of it. I am also part of the business, even though I am not literally in the space industry. And it's those cameras that I was talking about. I think the analogy is that in a film, I can always tell who speaks the image, I can always hear the image, I always know how people are making use of an image, instrumentalising it. Once, when Ronald Reagan was in Germany and went to the Bergen Belsen concentration camp with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, he said something like, 'I didn't know that Christians – not just Jews – were also victims of the Nazis'. It's unbelievable how people make use of victims. After all, they are just quoting things, in this remote way. I suddenly realised that I am also making use of images as quotations, therefore, I had this sequence with the woman photographed in the camp, where somehow I have to confess my method so I can't continue to hide behind other quotations. Perhaps that's also the designated breaking point of my film. Sometimes, one has to say 'I'.



# **Images of the World and the Inscription of War**





# Reality Would Have to Begin

*Harun Farocki*

In 1983, as preparations were underway to install even more nuclear weapons in the Federal Republic of Germany, Günther Anders wrote: 'Reality has to begin. This means that the blockade of the entrances to the murder installations, which continue to exist, must also be continuous. [...] This idea is not new. It reminds me of an action – or rather a non-action – more than forty years ago, when the Allies learned the truth about the extermination camps in Poland. The proposal was immediately made to block access to the camps, which meant bombing the railroad tracks leading to Auschwitz, Majdanek, etc. extensively in order to sabotage, through this blockade, the delivery of new victims – that is, the possibility of further murder.'

Nuclear weapons stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany arrive by ship in Bremerhaven where they are put on trains, whose departure time and destination are kept secret. About a week before departure, army aircraft fly the entire length of the route and photograph it. This status report is repeated half an hour before the train is to pass, and the most recent set of images is compared with the first set. Through their juxtaposition one can discern whether any significant changes have occurred in the interim. If, for example, a construction vehicle has recently been parked along the tracks, the police will drive to or fly over the spot to investigate whether it is providing camouflage for saboteurs. Whether such sabotage has been attempted is not made public.

Reconnaissance of enemy territory by means of photographs taken from airplanes was already in use during World War I. And even before there were airplanes, balloons and rockets carrying cameras aloft and even carrier pigeons were outfitted with small cameras. In World War II, it was the English who were the first to begin equipping their bombers with photographic apparatus. Since they had to fly through enemy flak (anti-aircraft artillery fire) and enemy fighters, the bomber pilots always tried to drop their bomb load as quickly as possible (often a third of the planes were lost on flights from England to Germany). In their fear, the pilots believed all too readily that they had delivered their bombs on target. The introduction of cameras on board aircraft significantly diminished the space previously accorded to their oral reports. The English bomber pilots had the first workplace in which the camera was installed to monitor performance. Up to that point, men in war did work that

was much less monitored and capable of being monitored than all industrial, commercial, or agricultural activity, since the object of their labour, enemy territory, was not under surveillance. In the case of the bomber pilot, the workers' perceptions and descriptions still counted for something. Photographs would destroy this last remaining sense of authority.

A photographic image is a cut, a section through the bundle of light rays reflected off objects in a circumscribed space. Photography reproduces the three-dimensional object on a flat plane, based on the laws of projective geometry. In 1858, it occurred to Albrecht Meydenbauer, the director of the Government Building Office, to make use of this optical principle and to think of photographs as images for scale measurement. Faced with the task of measuring the façade of the cathedral in Wetzlar, he traversed the length of the façade in a basket suspended from block and tackle (in the same way that window-washers do), in order to avoid the expense of erecting scaffolding. One evening, in order to save time, he tried to climb from the basket into a window of the tower, when the basket swung away from the façade and put him in danger of plummeting to the ground. 'In the nick of time I grabbed the curved edge of an arch with my right hand, and with my left foot I kicked the basket far into the air; the counteraction sufficed to push my body into the opening and I was saved. [...] As I came down, the thought occurred to me: is it not possible to replace measurement by hand by the reversal of that perspectival seeing which is captured in a photographic image? This thought, which eliminated the personal difficulty and danger involved in measuring buildings, was father to the technique of scale measurement.'<sup>2</sup>

Meydenbauer often repeated this story from the nineteenth century. It is a narrative of endangerment and redemptive insight: the hero is in the process of making a construction into a calculation, is engaged in the labour of abstraction, at which point the measured space wants once more to prove its actuality. The greatest danger is posed by the objectivity and actuality of things. It is dangerous to remain physically near the object, to linger at the scene. One is much safer if one takes a picture and evaluates it later at one's desk. Immediately following the initial publication of Meydenbauer's idea, the military, an organisation with many desks, offered to cover the cost of a practical experiment, but this could not be undertaken right away, as there was a war on at the time. The first scale measurement based on photographs took place in 1868 at the fortress of Saarlouis. The military immediately recognised in the technique of photographic scale measurements the possibility of capturing objects and spaces at a distance, numerically, spaces which soldiers otherwise could only traverse and measure at the risk of life and limb. The military took Meydenbauer's formulation of death or measurement literally.

The first image taken by the Allies of the concentration camp at Auschwitz was shot on April 4, 1944. American planes had taken off from Foggia, Italy, heading towards targets in Silesia: factories for extracting gasoline from coal (gasoline hydrogenation) and for producing buna (synthetic rubber). While approaching the I.G. Farben complex, still under construction, an airman turned on the camera and took a series of twenty-two aerial photographs, three of which also captured the 'main camp' located in the vicinity of the industrial plants. These images, along with others, arrived at the centre for aerial photography analysis in Medmenham, England. The analysts identified the industrial complexes pictured, recorded in their reports the state of their construction and the degree of their destruction, and made estimates of the production capacities of the buna plants – they did not mention the existence of the camps. Again and again, even in 1945, after the Nazis had cleared out the Auschwitz camps, having dismantled some of the murder complexes and either killed, abandoned, or transferred the prisoners to other camps in the West, Allied airplanes flew over Auschwitz and captured the camps in photographs. They were never mentioned in a report. The analysts had no orders to look for the camps, and therefore did not find them (see ill. 43).

It was the success of the television series *Holocaust* – a programme that tried to make suffering and dying imaginable through visual narratives, thereby turning it into kitsch – that gave two CIA employees the idea of looking for aerial photographs of Auschwitz. They fed the geographic coordinates of all camps that were located in the vicinity of bombing targets into the CIA computer, and thus also those of the I.G. Farben factory in Monowitz. I.G. Farben had built large plants in Monowitz and allowed the SS to provide them with slave labourers. For a time, they operated a camp (Auschwitz III, also known as Buna) located immediately adjacent to the factory grounds. Here, Jewish prisoners from across Europe, prisoners of war primarily from the Soviet Union, and others who had been declared enemies of the Reich were worked to death. Sometimes, one-seventh, or thirty out of two hundred, of a particular group perished in one day. Those who did not die from overwork or undernourishment, and those who were not beaten to death by the SS or kapos, soon became too weak to work and were transferred to Birkenau, the extermination camp (Auschwitz II). The I.G. Farben Monowitz factories served the aircraft industry and consequently were of strategic interest to the Allies, which is what attracted the bombers and cameras and later helped lead to the rediscovery of the images (see ill. 46).

Thirty-three years after the pictures were shot, two CIA men undertook a new analysis of the images. In the first image from April 4, 1944, they identified the house of Auschwitz's commandant and marked the wall between Blocks 10 and 11 where executions regularly took place. They also identified

and marked the gas chambers of Auschwitz I and wrote: 'A small vehicle was identified in a specially secured annex adjacent to the Main Camp gas chamber. Eyewitness accounts describe how prisoners arriving in Auschwitz-Birkenau, not knowing they were destined for extermination, were comforted by the presence of a "Red Cross ambulance". In reality, the SS used that vehicle to transport the deadly Zyklon-B crystals. Could this be that notorious vehicle?'<sup>3</sup> The analysts are not entirely certain since, while they are able, at a distance of seven thousand meters, to make out the spot as a vehicle, they can establish neither what type of vehicle it is nor discern any markings on it. What distinguishes Auschwitz from other places cannot be immediately observed from these images. We only recognise in these images what others have already testified to, eyewitnesses who were physically present at the site. Once again, there is an interplay between image and text in the writing of history: texts that should make images accessible, and images that should make texts imaginable.

'On the night of April 9, we suddenly heard the distant rumble of heavy aircraft, something which we had never known in all the time we had been in Auschwitz. [...] Was the secret out? Were high explosives going to rip away the high-tension wires and the watchtowers and the guards with their dogs? Was this the end of Auschwitz?'<sup>4</sup> The two prisoners listening for the sounds of aircraft on this April 9 were attempting to escape from Auschwitz. One of them, Rudolf Vrba, then nineteen years old, had already been in the camp for two years, first working on the construction of the buna factory and later in the 'effects' detachment. When a train with deportees arrived at the camp, the new arrivals had to have their possessions dropped in by air, which were collected and sorted by a special detail, a Sonderkommando. The Nazis called these possessions 'effects', and among them Vrba found food, which helped him to sustain his strength and stay alive. The other prisoner, Alfred Wetzler, like Vrba, a Jew from Slovakia, worked in the camp administration office. There, he committed to memory the arrival dates, places of origin, and the number of deportees newly arrived at the camp. And since he was in contact with men in the special details forced to work at the gas chambers and the crematoria, he also learned the statistics of those murdered – and memorised long lists of numbers. Vrba and Wetzler decided to flee when it became clear to them that the resistance groups in the camp would not be able to revolt, but could at best fight for their own survival. They wanted to flee because they could not imagine that the existence of the camp was known to the Polish resistance and the Allies. Vrba was convinced that Auschwitz was possible only 'because the victims who came to Auschwitz didn't know what was happening there'.<sup>5</sup>

'Some may find it hard to believe, but experience has proven that one can see, not everything, but many things, better in the scale measurement than on

the spot', wrote Meydenbauer in a text in which he sought to lay the groundwork for the historic preservation of archives. Again, he described how unnecessary a long stay at the site was, even for the purpose of measurement. 'At this mentally and physically strenuous occupation, the architect is exposed to the weather; sunshine or rainfall on his sketch hook, and when he looks up, dust in his eyes.'<sup>6</sup> In these passages, a horror of the objectivity of the world is noticeable. Meydenbauer's meditation gave rise in 1885 to the foundation of the Royal Prussian Institute for Scale Measurement, the world's first. The military took up the idea of measuring from photographs, as did the historic preservationists of monuments – the former destroys, while the latter preserves. Since 1972, the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage obligates all member states to document special buildings photographically. Using these archived photographs, one ought to be able to read and calculate the building's floor plan, in the case of its destruction – a destruction already conceived in these protective measures. The mathematical artists of the Renaissance stretched transparent papers in frames and traced on the plane the outlines of the spatial objects shining through. With the invention of photography these founders of the perspectival method seem to be the precursors of photographers; with the invention of scale measurement, they seem to be early scale measurement engineers. Erwin Panofsky wrote that one could understand perspective observation both in terms of ratio and objectivism, and in terms of chance and subjectivism. 'It is an ordering, but an order of the visual phenomenon.'<sup>7</sup> If one considers an image as a measuring device, then one should ignore chance and subjectivity. To conceive of a photographic image as a measuring device is to insist on the mathematicality, calculability, and finally the 'computability' of the image-world. Photography is first of all analogue technology; a photographic image is an impression of the original, an impression at a distance, made with the help of optics and chemistry. Vilém Flusser has remarked that digital technology is already found in embryonic form in photography, because the photographic image is built up out of dots and decomposes into dots (see ill. 39).<sup>8</sup> The human eye synthesises these dots of information into an image. A machine can capture the same image, without any consciousness or experience of the form, by situating the image points in a co-ordinate system. The continuous sign-system image thereby becomes divisible into 'discrete' units; it can be transmitted and reproduced. A code is thus obtained that comprehends images. This leads one to activate the code and to create new images out of the code language. Images without originals become possible and, hence, generated images.

Vrba and Wetzler hid themselves outside the high voltage fence around the camp, under a pile of boards they had doused with a mix of tobacco and petro-

leum. An experienced fellow prisoner had advised them to do so, because this would keep the tracker dogs at bay. After three days, the SS gave up their search and reported the escape of both men in a telegram addressed to Himmler; this indicates the extent to which they must have feared an eyewitness account from the concentration camps. Vrba and Wetzler made it to the Slovakian border by marching at night, crossed it, and made contact with the Jewish Council in the city of Zilina. Over the next days they reported on the death camp at Auschwitz. They drew the ground plan of the complexes, and recounted the lists of statistics on the people delivered and murdered. What they reported they had to reconfirm time and again, as they were cross-examined and the questions rephrased. The Jewish Council wanted conclusive, irrefutable material, in order to prove to the world the barely-believable crime. The unimaginable was repeated to make it imaginable. Three copies of the Vrba-Wetzler report were drawn up and sent out.<sup>9</sup> The first was supposed to go to Palestine. It was sent to Istanbul, but it never arrived there since the courier was probably a spy paid by the Nazis. The second copy was sent to a rabbi who had contacts in Switzerland, and reached London via Switzerland. The British government passed the report on to Washington. A third copy was sent to the papal nuncio and arrived in Rome approximately five months later. When Vrba and Wetzler fled in April, the deportation and murder of about one million Hungarian Jews was imminent. It was only in July of 1944 that the Horthy government stopped handing over Hungarian Jews to the Germans. As the Red Army was approaching and the war was on the verge of being lost, Horthy sought an arrangement with the West, which now had accurate knowledge of Auschwitz and demanded, through diplomatic channels, an end to the mass extermination. Vrba and Wetzler's report had thus helped save hundreds of thousands of lives. On June 25 and 27, *The Manchester Guardian* reported on the Nazi death factory and for the first time mentioned the place name, Oswiecim. The mass extermination of the Jews by the Nazis was now occasionally mentioned in the newspapers; however, only as one among many stories of dramatic war events, as news that soon disappeared into oblivion. A year later, when the Germans had lost the war and the concentration camps were liberated, the Allies photographed and filmed the camps, the survivors, and the traces that pointed to the millions murdered. It was above all the images of piles of shoes, glasses, false teeth, the mountains of shorn hair that have made such a profound impression. Perhaps we need images, so that something that is hardly imaginable can register: photographic images as the impressions of the actual at a distance.

The Nazis, in fact, also took photographs in Auschwitz. When Lili Jacob – who had been transferred from Auschwitz to the Silesian munitions factories and from there to the Dora-Nordhausen camp – was looking for warm clothes

in the guards' quarters after the liberation, she found an album with 206 photographs. In the pictures she recognised herself and members of her family who had not survived Auschwitz.<sup>10</sup>

Photography was forbidden in Auschwitz, but apparently two SS men were charged with documenting the camp. They captured the 'sorting' or 'selection' procedure in one comprehensive high-angle shot. In the foreground we see men in SS uniforms, behind them the newly-arrived deportees in two columns. Seen from the camera's perspective, men and women up to roughly the age of forty are standing on the left, wearing lighter coloured clothes; on the right are the older ones, women with children, and all those too sick or weak to work. Those standing on the right will be taken immediately to the gas chamber. Those standing on the left will undergo the admission procedure; they will be tattooed, they will be shaved bald, and they will be assigned work; work that is also a form of extermination, which delays death and prolongs dying. Once the authorities started taking photographs, everything had to be captured in images; even the crimes they themselves committed were documented visually. A mountain of images rises alongside a mountain of files.

An image from this album: a woman has arrived at Auschwitz, and the camera captures her in the act of looking back as she walks by. On her left, an SS man holds an old man, also recently arrived at Auschwitz, by the lapels of his jacket with his right hand: a gesture of sorting. In the centre of the image the woman: the photographers always point their cameras at the beautiful women. Or, after they have set up their camera somewhere, they take a picture when a woman they consider beautiful passes by. Here, on the 'platform' at Auschwitz, they photograph a woman the way they would cast a glance at her in the street. The woman knows how to take in this photographic gaze with the expression on her face, and how to look ever so slightly past the viewer. In just this way, on a boulevard she would look past a gentleman casting a glance at her, into a store window.

She shows that she does not respond to the gaze but is still aware of being looked at. With this gaze she transplants herself into a different place, a place with boulevards, gentlemen, shop windows, far from here. The camp, run by the SS, is meant to destroy her and the photographer who captures her beauty for posterity is part of that same SS. How the two elements interact – destruction and preservation!

This is how we get an image like this, an image that fits in well with the story the Nazis spread about the deportation of the Jews. They said the Jews would arrive in a kind of large ghetto, a kind of colony, a place 'somewhere in Poland'. The Nazis did not make even these images public, since they deemed it more appropriate to withhold everything that pointed to the actuality of the extermination camps. It was more useful to allow the place 'somewhere in Po-



land' to remain uncertain. The structure of the album Lili Jacob found follows the ordering principles of the camp. It classifies the people in the camp according to the designations 'still able-bodied men', 'no longer able-bodied men', 'still able-bodied women', 'no longer able-bodied women'. In their anticipated post-war future, the Nazis could have displayed these images; while here in the camp, there would be not a single kick, not a single dead person, to be seen – the extermination of the Jews would have the appearance of an administrative measure. Vrba and Wetzler's report was not the first news of the extermination of the Jews in camps and death factories, but due to the precision of its details about places and numbers it had a much greater impact than those that had preceded it. In its wake, Jewish functionaries repeatedly appealed to London and Washington for air raids to destroy the train tracks leading to Auschwitz. Yitzak Gruenbaum of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem telegraphed Washington: 'Suggest deportation would be much impeded if railways between Hungary and Poland could be bombed.'<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Akzin, of the US government's War Refugee Board, advocated bombing the gas chambers and crematoria themselves, as this would constitute 'the most tangible – and perhaps the only tangible – evidence of the indignation aroused by the existence of these charnel-houses. [...] Presumably, a large number of Jews in these camps may be killed in the course of such bombings (though some of them may escape in the confusion). But these Jews are doomed to death anyhow. The destruction of the camps would not change their fate, but it would serve as visible retribution against their murderers and it might save the lives of future victims'.<sup>12</sup> In fact, had the gas chambers and crematoria been destroyed in 1944, the Nazis could no longer have rebuilt them. The military and political leaders of England and the US refused, however, to attack the access routes to the camps or the extermination installations themselves. They let the pleas, suggestions, petitions, and demands circulate for a long time internally, and then justified their refusal with the argument that they could not afford to divert their forces. The conclusion was that the only way to help the Jews would be a military victory over Germany.

When on August 25, 1944, American planes once more flew over Auschwitz, one of them again took a picture from which we notice that a train has just arrived in Auschwitz II (Birkenau). One of its freight cars can be identified near the left edge of the image. A group of deportees is walking along the tracks toward the gas chambers at crematorium complex 2 where the entrance gate is open. Behind the gate a decorative flowerbed ('landscaping'), a courtyard, and buildings are meant to convey the impression that this is a hospital or a sanatorium. Over the flowerbed a flat building, barely recognisable through the shadow of its front wall ('undressing room'). In this room, the arrivals were told to undress in preparation for showering. Diagonally across the

room are the gas chambers. The details were meant to simulate a shower room. It could hold up to two thousand people, who were often forced in violently. Then the SS would lock the doors. Four openings can be spotted on the roof ('vents'). It was through these openings that, after a short waiting period to allow the temperature in the gas chamber to rise, SS men in gas masks dropped the Zyklon-B pellets. Everyone in the gas chambers died within three minutes. Others, who did not have to go to their deaths immediately, can be seen here waiting in line being registered. They are waiting to be tattooed, to have their heads shaved and assigned work and a place to sleep. The doubly curved figure of their waiting line extends all the way to the trees on the lower right.

The Nazis did not notice that someone had taken note of their crimes, and the Americans did not notice that they had captured them on film. The victims also failed to notice. Notes that seemed to be written into God's book alone.

Meydenbauer's fear of death established departments and administrative authorities that began to process images. Today, one speaks of image processing when machines are programmed to screen and classify photographs according to given criteria. A satellite continuously takes pictures of a specific region, a computer programme examines all the images to determine whether their details betray differences with earlier images. Another machine examines all the sequential images to detect traces of moving vehicles. Yet another is programmed to recognise any forms that may indicate a rocket silo. This is called image processing; machines are supposed to evaluate images made by machines. The Nazis talked about the eradication of cities, which means the suspension of their symbolic existence on the map. Vrba and Wetzler wanted to put the names Oswiecim/Auschwitz on the map. At that time, images of the Auschwitz death factory already existed, but no one had yet evaluated them. 'In the fall of 1944, Jewish women who worked at a munitions factory inside Auschwitz managed to smuggle small amounts of explosives to members of the camp's underground. The material was relayed to male prisoners who worked in the gas chamber and crematoria area. Those few wretched Jews then attempted what the Allied powers, with their vast might, would not. On October 7, in a suicidal uprising, they blew up one of the crematorium buildings.'<sup>13</sup> None of the insurgents survived. An aerial photograph displays the partial destruction of crematorium IV.

*Translated by Marek Wieczorek, Tom Keenan, Thomas Y. Levin.*

## Notes

1. Günther Anders, 'Schinkensemelfrieden – Rede zum Dritten Forum der Krefelder Friedensinitiative', *Konkret* (Hamburg), November 1983.
2. Cited in Albrecht Grimm, *720 Jahre Photogrammetrie in Deutschland: Das Tagebuch van Albrecht Meydenbauer* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1977), pp. 15-16.
3. Dino A. Brugioni and Robert G. Poirier, *The Holocaust Revisited: A Retrospective Analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Complex* (Washington, D.C: Central Intelligence Agency, February 1979), p. 5.
4. Rudolf Vrba and Alan Bestic, *I Cannot Forgive* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., and Anthony Gibbs and Phillips, 1963); reprinted, with additional material, as *44070: The Conspiracy of the Twentieth Century* (Bellingham, Wash.: Star and Cross Publishing House, 1989), p. 233.
5. Rudolf Vrba in a statement from the film SHOAH, printed in Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust: The Complete Text of the Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 166.
6. Albrecht Meydenbauer, *Das Denkmäler-Archiv* (Berlin, 1884).
7. Erwin Panofsky, 'Die Perspective als "symbolische Form",' in *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft* (Berlin: Hessling, 1974); trans. Christopher S. Wood as *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 71.
8. Vilém Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie* (Göttingen: European Photography, 1983); *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Göttingen: European Photography, 1984).
9. The full text of the report is reprinted in Vrba and Bestic 1989 (see note 4), pp. 279-317. Trans.
10. Serge Klarsfeld (ed.), *The Auschwitz Album: Lili Jacob's Album* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1980; reprinted in trade edition, with text by Peter Heller, as *The Auschwitz Album: A Book Based upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili [Jacob] Meier* (New York: Random House, 1981).Trans.
11. Cited in Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 220.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.
13. David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1937-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 307.

# Light Weapons

Tom Keenan

... Scan Freeze, arrêt sur image.  
Paul Virilio, *Guerre et Cinéma*<sup>1</sup>

## Lights on

One of the Jewish prisoners forced to work in a so-called 'special detail' at Auschwitz told Claude Lanzmann in *SHOAH*, a film that contained no historical or archival images, what happened when a new transport arrived at the station and the SS was notified:

Now one SS man woke us up and we moved to the ramp. We immediately got an escort and were escorted to the ramp – say we were about two hundred men. And the lights went on. There was a ramp, around the ramp were lights, and under those lights were a cordon of SS. [...] Now when all this was done – everybody was there – the transport was rolled in.<sup>2</sup>

Harun Farocki, reading from the caption of an image of this ramp, asks: *First thought: why all these spotlights? Is a film being shot?*<sup>3</sup>

## Click

Farocki's film, *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES* (*IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*)<sup>4</sup> focuses on found photographs and documentary or industrial images. It answers the question of 'why the lights' with an analysis of some of the film being shot: images, and the light that made them possible. *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is a film of light and disaster, of exposure and its time, or more properly its timing and hence its speed. It is not a film of montage, of cutting and sequencing, nor one of zooms and pans and travellings. The title makes it clear: what is at stake are images,<sup>5</sup> the stilled traces left over after light has etched itself on film, the remnants of *the silver that turns to black in the grain of a photograph*. And yet, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is not

exactly a film about seeing, either. One does not simply see an image, it says; its light is always shadowed by something that does not belong to the perception or intuition of the visible (which is to say, finally, to the aesthetic). Of necessity there could never be enough seeing to saturate an image. *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* fixes on what is not there to be seen, on what could never be seen, not because of some invisibility but rather because of a sort of blindness built into sight; it attends to what is not of the order of sight, to another light or an oversight in the image. Which is to say, it takes these images as inscriptions, to be read and not just to be seen or looked at. This excess of the image over the eye that would see it (*more images than the eyes [...] can consume*), this non-coincidence of what is shot and what is seen, means that something always remains in the image: remains, not only to be seen.<sup>6</sup>

*IMAGES OF THE WORLD* practices a politics or a tactics of the flash and the click, the burst of light and the snap of the shutter, the passage back and forth of the diaphragm across the lens. It constantly reframes its stills, dissecting and re-cutting them. It operates on them with a kind of acuity, with a sharpness of cutting that crops, isolates, zeroes in on a spot in detail sufficient to bring it to the blurring point. The timing is that of enumeration and re-inscription: cut, re-cut, blow-up, explosion. Its clarity is thus that of glare and blur; not the clear and distinct ideas of Descartes, not the perspicacity of vision, not the transparency of the human subject to itself, but the brightness and obscurity of exposure. In other words, the inscriptions are not just of war, but of what Virilio has called the *guerre lumière*, the lighting war that he dates to the first use of the military searchlight in 1904.<sup>7</sup> In *World War II*, the film tells us, *the largest metal sheets were pressed for searchlights, to show up aircraft in the sky. The aircraft, for their part, threw light bulbs like a lightning flash, to illuminate the earth for a photo.* War of images, at the speed of light – sometimes too bright, and long delayed in its arrival.<sup>8</sup>

The important images rarely move in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*; its privileged temporality is that of the still, and its cherished motion that of the play between light and darkness. The image takes place in the still of the moment, the blink of a shutter. *The photograph captures the moment, and thus crops away past and future.* But the moment has no self-sufficiency to it; it needs the future in order to have its past. In the moment, what it showed was not there to be seen, 'lost to vision altogether'. Today and tonight, in the light of the future, the possibility opens up to finally read what it could not see.

The shutter clicks twice in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*, and the film turns on the two resulting images... of Auschwitz, for so long and so many the very figure of something immune to representation, and of an imperative to bear witness. Images from sky and earth, products of a technology intimately tied to the machinery of death: *the preserving photograph, the destroying bomb: these two, now*

*pressed together.* Auschwitz from the camera of an American reconnaissance plane, 26,000 feet above, and Auschwitz from the camera of an SS man, on the unloading ramp: testimony in the decisive language of the 20th century to its most indelible scar.

## Aufklärung

Just a few minutes into Farocki's film, the English voice-over tells us: '*Enlightenment, that is a word in the history of ideas, in German, Aufklärung.*' And a few minutes later, the phrase is repeated with some additional information:

In German *Aufklärung* also has a military meaning – reconnaissance, flight reconnaissance. In Central Europe, the sky is cloudy most of the time, clear skies about thirty days of the year. On the 4th of April 1944, the sky was cloudless. Earlier rain showers had eliminated the dust from the air. American aircraft had taken off in Foggia, Italy, and flown towards targets in Silesia, factories that were producing synthetic petrol and rubber known as buna. On the flight over the I.G. Farben Co. factory, still under construction, a pilot clicked his camera shutter and took photographs of the Auschwitz concentration camp. First picture of Auschwitz, taken at 7,000 meters altitude. The pictures taken in April 1944 in Silesia arrived for evaluation at Medmenham, England. The analysts discovered a power station, a carbide factory, a factory under construction for buna and another for petrol hydrogenation. They were not under orders to look for the Auschwitz camp and thus they did not find it.

Blindly, the airman clicks his shutter, and focused as they are on industrial targets, the photo interpreters fail again to see. *It was not until thirty-three years later that [...] the word 'gas chamber' was inscribed, by the two CIA photo interpreters who discovered Auschwitz in their files.* Only with the passage of time did another image come to light. The image records the inscription of war, archives it for another time and place, for memory. At the first mention of the word *Auschwitz*, the narration is interrupted by the image track, and the screen goes black. Click. When the light and an image reappear, it shows the *first picture of Auschwitz* (see ill. 47-51). While there are many other such reconnaissance photographs of the camp,<sup>9</sup> as it turns out, for Farocki there are really only two images of Auschwitz. The other photo was taken by an SS man, charged with documenting as well as killing. Before we see it, the light goes out again: cut to black, coincident with the sharp click of a shutter on the soundtrack. Click. When the light returns to disrupt the darkness, another image arrives with it:

A woman has arrived at Auschwitz. The camera captures her in movement. The photographer has his camera mounted and as the woman passes by he clicks the shutter, in the same way he would cast a glance at her in the street, because she is beautiful. The woman understands how to pose her face so as to catch the eye of the photographer and how to look with a slight sideways glance. [...] The camp run by the SS shall bring her to destruction, and the photographer who captures her beauty for posterity is from this very same SS. How the two elements interplay: preservation and destruction.

The light goes out only twice in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*; two images, and a striking emphasis on the cut and the darkness that precedes them. The formula is repeated – the click of the shutter – and the film underlines the opening of the aperture by re-inscribing the passage to black in its own action. The darkness against which an image, a photograph or a film, finds its possibility is here brought into the event of the film itself.

These images are not new. The SS man's photo collection had been published by Serge Klarsfeld in 1980, and the reconnaissance imagery became a commonplace of Holocaust literature within a few years of the CIA report.<sup>10</sup> But the professionals of photo interpretation and of the Holocaust fail to do justice to the peculiar difficulty of these images. Farocki seeks to understand what it means for the camera to be *part of the equipment* of destruction, indeed for the destruction to be in a certain sense impossible without the camera. This is what he calls *Aufklärung*: no bombing without reconnaissance, certainly, but also no annihilation without the record of what has been accomplished. *Since the authorities began to take photographs, everything is accompanied by images, even the crimes they themselves commit.*

The difficulty is that the *interplay of preservation and destruction* does not stop here. The luxury, or the protection, of simply playing preservation against destruction and finding them entangled, is denied to the reader of these images. Click one: what is preserved is the record of the destruction that should have taken place, but never did. There is so much destruction with images from the air, and an oversight. Click two: what is preserved is the record of the destruction that took place with such disastrous efficiency, the record that might have stopped it as well as permitted it. No destruction without images, yes, but also no response to the destruction, no critique and no intervention. This is what justifies Farocki in reading and reinscribing these images as a question of enlightenment, that *Aufklärung* defined by Kant as the release or exit (*Ausgang*) from immaturity<sup>11</sup> and later *dialecticised* by Horkheimer and Adorno as at once inseparable from liberation and 'totalitarian'. With his attention to the interplay, to the eventuality of destruction as the very condition of preservation, Farocki seems closest to the disenchanting wisdom of *Dialectic of Enlighten-*



ment's opening words: 'In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant'.<sup>12</sup> And yet, the radiance does not give in so easily to the narrative of the exit or to the dialectic of the 'yet', the symmetrical reversal of liberation and domination, preservation, and destruction. The Allies needed their imagery so as not to miss the factories, and so they missed the camps that remained unseen on that same set of images. The SS, and the filmmaker, needed their photographs for something terribly like the same reason: so as not to forget what had been done. The radiance, the flash or the glare, of the disaster is as it were the oblique reflection or the signature, the shadow, of the Enlightenment. So the inscription of the light war is, for Farocki, something like the 'writing of the disaster'. It is, says Blanchot, 'the dark disaster that carries the light': 'The light flashes – the flash which, in clarity, clamors and does not clarify (the dispersion that resonates or vibrates dazzlingly). Flash, the shattering reverberation of a language without hearing'.<sup>13</sup>

The temptation to find an easy irony in this interplay is difficult to resist, but Farocki – a practitioner of the still and its manipulation, not of the montage and its narrative – betrays no sense of surprise in the coincidence, no hint that the one simply befalls the other. *The SS took these pictures. The camera was part of the camp equipment. [...] Again, these pictures that the SS had made to show the world one day how they had destroyed the Jews.* No destruction without this preservation, just as much for the SS man at Auschwitz as for the reconnaissance aircraft overhead. The record already implies, even looks forward to, the disappearance of its object: hence no security, no good conscience, for the one who records. Including the filmmaker. The irony, if there is one, would involve history and memory, and the risk of the utter disappearance of the trace. It would be the terrible irony that splits the subject without insulating the parts from one another, the irony that implicates and contaminates even as it seems to offer the *safety* of that distance from the *actual* (the *on the spot*), which is historically attributed to images. This is the lesson of radical magnification: the image is the spot, deprived of distance.

## Blur

Farocki's images finally put to the test the distinction between public and private, on which the question of enlightenment since Kant has been founded. Neither private nor public, they come to light in a history of disaster, accident, and failure. Their overexposure, their glare, blurs the distinction and defines



the task of a new publicity and a new enlightenment. The blur is the mark of our implication, the collapse of distance and our exposure to the image. *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* ends with a blur, an arrow aimed at the heart of a blur. Which is to say, it ends with an image (even the soundtrack ends on the word *image*), and a question. How to see a blur? – not a blur of motion but one of magnification, the explosion of a still to its *unsignifying* points. Or rather: how to *read* a blur, not a blur of vision but one of light, the dissociated points of what is finally the only enlightenment worthy of the name.

## Thunder and lightning

Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf told his troops on 17 January 1991, ‘you must be the thunder and lightning of Desert Storm’. It did not take long to learn that the thunder and lightning would be the audio and video feeds from the Gulf, that this war would be fought with weapons of light as never before: not only with laser rangefinders and target designators, night illumination devices, airborne and satellite imagery provided in near real-time, and television cameras that both guided their weapons to their targets and provided a record of the event in the same moment... not only with those weapons, but with the television screens of the world as well. Thunder and lightning meant the roar and the flash of the cruise missile launched before the cameras on the deck of the battleship *Wisconsin* and captured in flight over other cameras in the streets of Baghdad, played out – fought – in the new electro-optical public sphere. In this sense, there was only one image from this war: not the reiterated arrival of guided weapons at their targets, not the bodies on stretchers or the look of horror on seeing a dead comrade, not the lights over Baghdad, but the pilot’s sure grasp of a videocassette.

*Thanks to Ria Davidis for invaluable research assistance.*

## Notes

1. Paul Virilio, *Guerre et cinema Logistique de la Perception* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema, 1991).
2. Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust* (The Complete Text of the Film), trans. A. Whitelaw and W. Byron, New York: Pantheon, 1985, pp. 41-2. The prisoner was Rudolf Vrba.

3. The image is a drawing by Alfred Kantor, which can be found in *The Book of Alfred Kantor: An Artist's Journal of the Holocaust*, London: Judy Piatkus, 1987 [1971], p. 29. Kantor's caption reads: 'Concentration camp Auschwitz. Dec. 18th 1943, arrival at night after 2 1/2 days in a sealed cattle car... first thought: what are all the spotlights for, a movie?'
4. Directed by Harun Farocki, 1988/89, 16 mm, 75 minutes, available in the United States on videocassette with an English voice-over. All citations from this voice-over are in italics.
5. Farocki's concept of the 'image' seems deeply involved with the Heidegger of 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes': '*Weltbild*, when understood essentially, does not mean image of the world but the world conceived and grasped as image'. Later, Heidegger writes: 'Everyday opinion sees in the shadow only the lack of light, if not light's complete denial. In truth, however, the shadow is a manifest, though impenetrable, testimony to the concealed emitting of light' ('Die Zeit des Weltbildes', in *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972, pp. 82, 104; 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, pp. 129, 154).
6. As Thomas Elsaesser shows, Farocki is committed to this project of 'reading' images that come from somewhere else, and this reading is not the activity of a subject examining an object. The image, strictly speaking, puts the subject under scrutiny. Farocki – seeking as he put it in the notes for his 1978 *Industriefotographie*, 'images that fit into no households, on no wall, into no pocket, no illustrated book [...] and on no retina' – provokes the question for Elsaesser of 'what images might represent for whom [...] once neither the retina nor the image are conceived as metonymic stand-ins for a subject/object duality'. Elsaesser has written the two best articles on Farocki in English: "'It started with these Images" – Some Notes on Political Filmmaking after Brecht in Germany: Helke Sander and Harun Farocki', *Discourse* 7, Fall 1985, p. 104, and 'Working at the Margins: two or three things not known about Harun Farocki', *Monthly Film Bulletin* 50, October 1983, pp. 269-70.
7. Paul Virilio, *Guerre et cinéma 1: Logistique de la perception*, second edition, Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1991, p. 121. The epigraph can be found on p. 147.
8. According to 'a military manual published at the beginning of the century', the earliest applications of military searchlights were as an aid to infantry movements, where the first use is listed as ... 'to dazzle defenders'. Cited in E.W. Chivers and D.E.H. Jones, 'The Function and Design of Army Searchlights', in *Symposium on Searchlights*, London: The Illuminating Engineering Society, 1948, p. 7. On 'the blinding beams of massed searchlight batteries' in the air battle over Germany, see Alfred Price, *Battle Over the Reich*, London: Ian Allan, 1973, p. 50.
9. According to Roy Stanley, 'Allied photorecon aircraft made it to these targets less than two dozen times between 4 April 1944 and 14 January 1945 [and] half of those missions also coincidentally got cover of the death camps – a few frames in each of eighteen rolls of film' (*World War II Photo Intelligence*, New York: Charles Scribner's 1981, p. 346).
10. On the history of photography at Auschwitz, see Serge Klarsfeld, ed., *The Auschwitz Album: Lili Jacob's Album*, New York: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1980, pp. 5-23, and Peter Heller's introduction to the commercial edition of the collection, *The Auschwitz Album: A Book Based Upon an Album Discovered by a Concentra-*

- tion Camp Survivor, Lili [Jacob] Meier*, New York: Random House, 1981, pp. vii-x, xxiv-xxvi. On the aerial photography of the camp, see Dino A. Brugioni and Robert G. Poirier, *The Holocaust Revisited: A Retrospective Analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Complex*, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, February 1979 (still available from the National Technical Information Service, NTISUB E 280 002); Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence*, pp. 340-351, which extends the CIA analysts' work; Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981, pp. 190-341; David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, New York: Pantheon, 1984, p. 302; and Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, New York: Penguin Meridien, 1989 [1987], p. 193. Gilbert's book became the subject of a BBC television film, also called *Auschwitz and the Allies*, in 1982.
11. Immanuel Kant, *Was Ist Aufklärung?* [1783], ed. Jürgen Zehbe, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985, p. 55; 'What is Enlightenment?', in *On History*, ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck, New York: Macmillan, 1985 [1957], p. 3.
  12. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Amsterdam: de Munter, 1968 [1944], p. 13; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 1991, p. 3.
  13. Maurice Blanchot, *L'écriture du désastre*, Paris: Gallimard, 1980, p. 67.

# The Political Im/perceptible: Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of War

*Nora Alter*

The essay's innermost formal law is heresy. Through violations of the orthodoxy of thought, something in the object becomes visible which is orthodoxy's secret and objective aim to keep invisible.

Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Essay as Form'

Once more, but in a different sense, filmmaking has to go underground, disperse itself, make itself invisible. Only by turning itself into 'writing' in the largest possible sense can film preserve itself as [what Harun Farocki calls] 'a form of intelligence'.

Thomas Elsaesser, 'Working at the Margins'

Just as weapons and armour developed in unison throughout history, so visibility and invisibility now began to evolve together, eventually producing *invisible weapons that make things visible*.

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*

During the 1970s and '80s, Harun Farocki was not as well known as Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, and Kluge – the group that came to be known as New German Cinema. Yet Farocki's films constituted more of a departure from or radical alternative to dominant cinematic practice. Farocki was a member of the first year class of the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB), and his classmates included Helke Sander, Hartmut Bitomsky, Wolfgang Peterson, and former protester and activist Holger Meins. Though Farocki was not an active member of the RAF, he, like many of his colleagues, clearly sympathised with RAF politics, and during the late 1960s he produced several collaborative *agitational* films, such as NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER (INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE, 1969); ANLEITUNG, POLIZISTEN DEN HELM ABZUREISSEN (INSTRUCTIONS ON TAKING AWAY SECURITY/POWER FROM THE POLICE, 1969); and DREI SCHÜSSE AUF RUDI (THREE SHOTS AT RUDI, 1968). In 1975, he paid a

direct tribute to Meins with an experimental memorial film, *ES STIRBT ALLERDINGS EIN JEDER* (EVERYBODY MUST DIE), and in 1981, Farocki made *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* (BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM), a meditation on two students who meet each other at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration in Berlin and discuss the possibilities of political resistance and activism within the parameters of acceptable behaviour. Farocki has been producing films for the past thirty years, many of the earlier ones in collaboration with filmmakers such as Hartmut Bitomsky.<sup>1</sup> Most of Farocki's films *problematise* technologies of visual representation and reproduction, generally exposing the views inculcated by mass media and/or contrasting them with more independent coverage of the same events.<sup>2</sup> To some extent, Farocki's films carry on the critique set forth in *GERMANY IN AUTUMN* and address the differences and similarities between what might be called a visual public sphere and a visual private sphere. His works are clearly informed by Walter Benjamin's critique of 'mechanical reproducibility', by Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 'consciousness industry', and by contemporary critical theory's exposure of the totalitarian aspect of enlightenment. Thus, for example, Farocki's most recent work, *ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN* (I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS, 2000), examines surveillance tapes from California penitentiaries and exposes the perverse practice of prison employees who arrange and wager bets on (deadly) fights between prisoners.

Although Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, Kluge, and Wenders constructed a filmmaking practice in opposition to 'Papa's Kino' and Hollywood, they worked within West German funding structures and cinematic institutions. In sharp contrast, since his initial forays into filmmaking as a member of DFFB, Farocki has independently produced – that is, without public sponsorship – almost all of his films. This independence and its resulting lack of financial resources is an integral component of Farocki's filmic practice, for it informs his politics of image production: formally, stylistically, thematically, and materially. In Farocki's first full-length film, *ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN* (BETWEEN TWO WARS, 1977), the filmmaker appears and gives the following statement: 'When one doesn't have money for cars, shooting, nice clothes; when one doesn't have money to make images in which film time and film life flow uninterruptedly, then one has to put one's effort into intelligently putting together separate elements: a montage of ideas'.<sup>3</sup>

The difficult material circumstances surrounding Farocki's film production have differed significantly from other better-known, commercially successful filmmakers who did not work under extreme economic constraints. This economic independence contributed to Farocki's development of his special technique: as an independent avant-garde leftist working on the periphery of the German and European film-subsidy system, he recycled commercial material

that he had produced for his paying customers, including German industry and television (though some of his made-for-TV films were never broadcast).<sup>4</sup> Financing his essay films by making traditional industrial documentaries, he thus participated – however critically – in what is called the *Verbundsystem*, as he stated, not without irony, in a 1975 issue of *Filmkritik*: 'Following the example of the steel industry [...] I try to create a *Verbund* with my work. The basic research for a project I finance with a radio broadcast, some of the books I use I review for the book programmes, and many of the things I notice during this kind of work end up in my television features'.<sup>5</sup> And eventually in his essay films.

In the 1920s, Soviet filmmaker Esther Schub perfected the strategy of film production known as compilation film, which relies primarily on using previously shot or existent material. Whereas Schub was working with celluloid, Farocki was one of the first German filmmakers to have access to a video camera in the late 1960s. He immediately became aware of the liberating and democratising potential of the new technology. The video camera enabled him – and others without financial means – to make films on a bare-bones budget, to make something out of nothing. This cinematic practice might adequately be termed a 'cinema povera'. This economy of means required creative thinking about alternative ways of producing images for his films, since expensive shoots were out of the question. The solution was to shift the emphasis onto montage and editing to produce meaning. These choices have important implications, not merely for the material practice of filmmaking (that is, the multiple economic determinations on Farocki as a cultural worker) but also for the im/perceptible political points made – consciously and unconsciously – by his specific films, including his remarkable 1988/89 *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (*BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES*).<sup>6</sup> This film ambitiously brings together crucial aspects of Farocki's filmic theory and production while marking a significant turning point in German history: it was released on the eve of German reunification and the imagined end of the Cold War.

## I. Im/perceptibility and Essay Film

Farocki's *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* is an essay film that articulates the formal and aesthetic with the historical and political in the context of modern – and increasingly postmodern – mass media, technoculture, and technowarfare. On the one hand, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is a specifically West German leftist response to events of the 1980s; on the other hand,

it raises the perennial issue of the relation between vision and visibility and projects this issue into an uncertain future of technical developments – the digital image synthesis, dubbed ‘Scitex,’ and/or the ‘reconfigured eye’<sup>7</sup> – which render age-old questions about the nature of representation and truth increasingly technologically obsolete yet philosophically relevant. Poised on the shifting boundary between the modern and the postmodern, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* addresses aesthetic issues that are trans-historical and trans-global.

*IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is a technically and ideologically overdetermined work that covers a lot of conceptual and historical ground. Farocki acknowledges that in addition to the financial advantages of working in video, the tapes allow for films that can be seen and reseen, the way one reads a book, thereby allowing for a certain density and unclarity and a crucial shift in the production of meaning onto the spectator. Heavily influenced by Brecht, Farocki stresses that for him, a film is political only to the extent that it has a political effect on the audience, and that effect is mobilised when one can watch it more than once. As implied/applied theory, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is an extended investigation into the nature of vision and visibility in relation to modern technologies of image production and into the way of perceiving and interpreting both vision and visibility from a phenomenological point of view. *Vision* here means ‘sight as a physical operation’ (the capacity and action of seeing), and *visuality* means ‘sight as a social fact’ (the understanding and modality of seeing). This duality corresponds roughly to the ancient distinction between nature and culture, reread as what Hal Foster calls ‘the datum of vision and its discursive determinations’. As Foster notes, both sets of distinction are relative: ‘vision is social and historical too, and visibility involves the body and the psyche’.<sup>8</sup> A third key term could also be added here: the Heideggerian category of *Umsicht*, or visibility, which refers to the field of pre-cognitive, pre-reflective circumspection (expectation of seeing) within which viewers find themselves.<sup>9</sup> Vision could also be converted into Lacanian psychoanalytical terms, in that visibility may also be viewed as seeingness (*voyure*) – an apparently inaccessible category imagined to be anterior to the determining split between ‘gaze and look’, or, as in one of Lacan’s succinct formulations, ‘I see only from one point [a look], but in my existence I am looked at from all sides’.<sup>10</sup> Like visibility, seeingness is the never quite visible precondition of the radically unsutureable look-gaze split.<sup>11</sup> To grasp *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* adequately, another pair of terms must be subtended to this discussion: the political in/visible and in/audible that moves stealthily beneath, within, and around vision, visuality, and visibility or seeingness.

Visibility, or seeingness, provides *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* with the ontological precondition that anything can be seen or that anything can be revealed or concealed, can be visible or invisible, including any possible ‘image of the



world' or 'inscription of war' and its ideological connotations. Farocki addresses that issue, albeit more empirically than theoretically.<sup>12</sup> The film interrogates photographic processes of image making and the surrounding disciplines that use these images: fine arts, engineering, architecture, artisanal and assembly-line production, city planning and urban renewal, military science and practice. In that sense, Farocki's 'world' resembles what cultural theorist Fredric Jameson calls the 'geopolitical aesthetic' of late capitalism, which is never perceivable as totality.<sup>13</sup> But, at the same time, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* also focuses on the political in/visible, with additional attention to and manipulation of the political in/audible. In fact, the film's formal and political achievement as well as its limitations reside precisely in the tension between in/audibility and in/visibility – hence in im/perceptibility.

The 'in/visible' is perhaps best captured in a provocative remark by Louis Althusser:

[w]hat classical political economy does not see, is not what it does not see, it is *what it sees*; it is not what it lacks, on the contrary, it is *what it does not lack*; it is not what it misses, on the contrary, it is *what it does not miss*. This oversight, then, is not to see what one sees, the oversight no longer concerns the object, but *the sight* itself.<sup>14</sup>

Althusser specifically means that classical political economy both sees (perceives) and does not see (acknowledged) the determining but not fully representable role of labour and class struggle in history. This perspective is surely applicable to *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* to the extent that the film both reveals and conceals the impact of the political economy on Farocki. Even when *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* draws manifest links between vision and politics, some significant economic determinations may remain im/perceptible, just as, in the dynamics of Theodor Adorno's *Vexierbild*, or picture puzzle of political economy, most workers are increasingly unable to perceive that they are workers.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, if the political unconscious is indeed *unconscious* and needs investigation 'to lead to the unmasking of cultural artefacts as socially symbolic acts',<sup>16</sup> then one must expect to encounter the politically im/perceptible on the uncanny boundaries of the human sensorial grasp of the world. This is also the shifting site of art, since, to quote Adorno, 'the *Vexierbild* is a good-natured reprise of the serious vexation perpetrated by every artwork. Like art it hides something while at the same time showing it'.<sup>17</sup> In his use of preexistent images, Farocki accesses an audio-visual archive, the use of which has been theorised by Alan Sekula as capable of 'liberating' 'the possibility of meaning' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, Sekula continues, 'an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context [...]. So new meanings come to supplant old ones, with the archive serving as a "clearing house" of meaning'.<sup>18</sup> Farocki finds existent texts to put together an



alternative history, and although he removes the documents from their archival context, he attempts to show the other image in the *Vexierbild*. In his words, 'One has to encounter an image or thought at least twice to see what happened to it, how it has been transformed by a new context'.<sup>19</sup> What is perceptible in some respects remains simultaneously imperceptible in others, but this im/perceptibility is not random: it has specific political causes and consequences for specific instances of production and reception.

Farocki's film illustrates that notion of im/perceptibility in showing that people can look without really seeing. Is this failure conscious or unconscious, natural or cultural, physical or psychological? Farocki offers no answers, nor does he really ask questions. Rather, he manipulates the potential of the essay film to stimulate questions in the viewer's mind. In that sense, he takes up the challenge of Adorno's thesis that in an age of the persistent and irreversible methodological reduction of reason to scientism and instrumentality, 'in the realm of thought it is virtually the essay alone that has successfully raised doubts about the absolute privilege of method'.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps paradoxically, when showing/concealing the im/perceptible, Farocki expands the realm of thought to a modern audio-visual mass medium – the essay film – that favours techniques of sub-rosa persuasion.<sup>21</sup>

Among the various acknowledged secondary features of the essay film, Farocki's film most manifestly displays techniques requiring reading between the lines, or locating the message, as with *GERMANY IN AUTUMN*, in the splits between documentary versus fiction and truth versus fantasy. It is in the breaks, reiterations, ambiguities, veiled prolapses and anachronisms, misdirections, verbal or visual puns, and other free-play spaces of essay films that *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* conceals and reveals its im/perceptible politics and challenges the attention of viewers (and historians). Conversely, perhaps because of his ideological commitment or theoretical inclination, Farocki avoids the structural tension between *narrativity* and *specularity*, the story and the image, that marks many essay films (notably *GERMANY IN AUTUMN* or Wim Wenders's *TOKYO-GA* and *NOTEBOOKS ON CITIES AND CLOTHES*) and, more generally, according to Thomas Elsaesser, most of the New German Cinema, including the avant-garde.<sup>22</sup> The same sobriety or single-mindedness accounts for Farocki's ability to elude two perils nurtured by any essay: excessive self-reflection (a Charybdis threatening to become self-indulgence) and documentary illusion (a Scylla threatening to make illicit claims for total objectivity). In all these ways, favouring an intellectual approach, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* qualifies as a 'form of intelligence' (Farocki's preferred term for essay film) and, to yield its full (political) impact, must be actively co-produced by a relatively educated audience.

## II. Vision and Its Others

The multiplicity and heterogeneity of the building blocks of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* enables Farocki to structure it not only visually but also 'musically' so that each social practice he depicts can be associated with key images that recur in a more or less rhythmic fashion and thematic variations. For example, an identical sequence of a Hannover water-research laboratory appears at the beginning, in the middle, and near the end of the film. This reiteration, which might seem unmotivated on its own, is integrated in the structure of the film as a whole with some recurring sequences. In fact, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* has remarkably few really unmotivated sequences – quite an achievement for a film so extensively montaged from commissioned, ready-made, documentary images. And within that network of associations and reverberations, the Hannover sequence turns out to be particularly significant.

When initially filming the Hannover laboratory, Farocki was not pleased with the results. However, members of the film crew brought to his attention that the shot he was seeking already existed in a film archive. Why produce new footage of images and sequences if sufficient ones already exist? Why not employ the images of others? Thus, Farocki dispensed with the auteurist practice of producing his own shots. (Interestingly, Wim Wenders faced a similar conundrum when he was in Tokyo seeking traces of Ozu's Japan, but instead of using Ozu's footage, Wenders reshot many of the same scenes with the same camera and angle, thereby rendering the images his own.) Another consequence of this cannibalistic practice – Farocki's use of commercial footage – is his systematic recourse to well-controlled (and controlling) montage to make sense of the accumulated disparate materials. Farocki explains the importance of montage in an interview with Kaja Silverman, underscoring the basic difference between Soviet (that is, ideological) and American (entertaining) cinema: 'Montage for the Soviets meant the juxtaposition of ideas. For the Americans it meant instead the juxtaposition of narrative components... Soviet montage is very out of fashion these days. Only advertisements and political films use it'.<sup>23</sup>

As a form of intelligence (or ideas), Farocki's essay films might then be expected, in their intense use of montage, to be inspired not only by an explicit leftist political tradition (notably Eisenstein's 'intellectual montage') but also by a powerful medium of consumer capitalism – that is, commercial advertising films that dominate the culture industry so much that 'consumers feel compelled to buy and use products even though they see through them'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, montage – or the practice of montage or the mastery of tricks that montage can play – links Farocki's two seemingly incompatible filming activities,

enabling and encouraging him to feed his (essay) films with previously produced advertising material.

The resulting personal editing technique creates a new global image with fragmented old images, with both ideological and aesthetic results. Most obviously, this new image echoes Farocki's concern with the way that a constructed technological vision relates to a direct natural vision. Do the two compliment or negate one another, or both?<sup>25</sup> Farocki is aware that the camera lens often provides information that viewers normally do not see, in spite and/or because of its visibility – recalling Adorno's conceptualization of the *Vexierbild*. One of the most striking examples in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* involves a 1944 Allied photograph of I.G. Farben in Auschwitz: the Auschwitz death camp was shown in the photo yet had not been seen by the CIA until 1977<sup>26</sup> (see ill. 53). To clarify the other meaning of this image, Farocki takes viewers rhythmically through a complex montage of seemingly unrelated sequences: the work of Alfred Meydenbauer (the inventor of scale measurement by the use of photography); photographs taken by SS officers in Auschwitz; pictures of unveiled Algerian women taken in 1960 by French soldiers; drawings of the Auschwitz camp made by an inmate, Alfred Kantor; a Dior model being made up in Paris; an art school class; and relatively high-tech computer-generated images, robotized industrial production lines, and flight simulators – all in addition to the aforementioned water-research laboratory in Hannover and the aerial photograph of I.G. Farben/Auschwitz (see ill. 58-59). *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*'s image track thus implies that the historical purpose of photography – whether scientific, military, forensic, or aesthetic – has been not only to record and preserve but also to mislead, deceive, and even destroy: that is, to aid yet obfuscate vision. In other words, to show the in/visible. Of course, this thematic aspect of the film is itself problematic (intentionally or not), since film in general – and, in particular, this film – is subject to the same visual regime as photography and hence must deceive and obfuscate, not only at the level of sight but also at the level of sound.

This dual function of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is notably carried out through the interplay of images and Farocki's verbal narrative that in both the German and English version is spoken (ventriloquized) by a tonally objective and neutral female voice-over. Farocki clearly seeks thematic contrasts by superimposing an intentionally fictional and subjective narrative on the documentary and objective photographic facts. But this strategy, while consistent with the theory and practice of the essay film, raises certain questions in its concrete application to *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*. Why is only a woman's voice heard? And why is it accompanied by the minimalist tinkling of a piano? In fact, these are questions related to a much more basic interrogation about the instances of

Farocki's use of women to make a point in his film. Is he fully in control of his inscription (*Inscription*) of the re/presentation of women?

In addition to the photo of I.G. Farben/Auschwitz, three other sequences must be considered here; in each case, the photographed subjects/objects are women. The first sequence has drawn by far the most critical attention in analyses of the film.<sup>27</sup> It can be first examined as a silent image without accompanying female voice-over narration, then we shall add to it the verbal track (see ill. 44).

The woman has arrived at Auschwitz; the camera captures her in movement. The photographer has his camera installed, and as the woman passes by he clicks the shutter – in the same way he would cast a glance at her in the street, because she is beautiful. The woman understands how to pose her face so as to catch the eye of the photographer, and how to look with a slight sideways glance. On a boulevard she would look in the same way just past a man casting his eye over her at a shop window, and with this sideways glance she seeks to displace herself into a world of boulevards, men and shop windows. (Farocki, 'Commentary', 86)

This passage is striking because the description by the female voice-over – if taken at face value – sentimentalises the soliciting look with too much narrative that, paradoxically, is as problematic as Margaret Bourke-White's famous refusal, when the camps were finally liberated, to inscribe any meaning or consciousness whatsoever to the look of the inmates. She is said, upon first arriving at Buchenwald, to have set to work immediately. A crowd of men in prison clothes stood silently behind barbed wire. She stood in front of them with a flash to take their picture; not one of them reacted. *The camera, which automatically forces self-consciousness on its subjects, could not do so here; Buchenwald had stripped away self-consciousness and ordinary response.*<sup>28</sup>

What about this image attracts Farocki's camera, and how should this image be read – as text or image? One possible method may be to approach it as a 'blur' (the Lacanian *point de capiton*), as the device that according to Slavoj Žižek 'denatures' an image, 'rendering all its constituents "suspicious"'.<sup>29</sup> According to Žižek, when viewers are confronted with such a blur,

[The] ground of the established, familiar signification opens up; we find ourselves in a realm of total ambiguity, but this very lack propels us to produce ever new 'hidden meanings' [...] The oscillation between lack and surplus meaning constitutes the proper dimension of subjectivity. In other words, it is by means of the [...] spot that the observed picture is subjectivised: this paradoxical point undermines our position as 'neutral,' 'objective' observer, pinning us to the observed object itself. This is the point at which the observer is already included, inscribed in the observed scene – in a way, it is the point from which the picture itself looks back at us.<sup>30</sup>

All the photographs filmed by Farocki do indeed 'look back at us', implicating us in them in a political way. One of the main reasons for the Allies' failure to see the horror of Auschwitz 'in' the comparatively 'natural,' 'familiar,' and 'idyllic' photographs taken of I.G. Farben was precisely because there was an ideological bias. This point – which articulates how the economic base can be occluded by the superstructure – has preoccupied Farocki from the beginning. Thus, for example, in *AS YOU SEE*, he includes a citation from Hannah Arendt: 'Work is hidden because working society is ashamed of it'. And in *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, Farocki covers 1917-33 from the perspective of the German working class to show that the military-industrial complex had eliminated the international worker in favour of fascism. For Farocki, ideology may appear in/visible but is revealed in the tensions among vision, visuality, and visibility – and one might add, with Žižek – as 'subliminally anamorphic' or, with Adorno, as 'puzzled'.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, returning to the Allies' failure to see Auschwitz, the practical consequence of that *méconnaissance* was nothing less than horrific for millions and somehow was already inscribed in images.

As for the SS photograph of the Jewish woman, what is at stake is not a more accurate description, or 'truth', but rather the search for alternative and more precise narrative possibilities that could have been occluded from sight. Tom Keenan insightfully concludes,

Farocki seems to understand what it means for the camera to be part of the equipment of destruction, indeed for the destruction to be in a certain sense impossible without the camera. This is what he calls *Aufklärung*: no bombing without reconnaissance, certainly, but also no annihilation without the record of what has been accomplished.<sup>32</sup>

But what about Farocki's film, to which this same function presumably can also be applied? What exactly does it make visible yet simultaneously destroy? What kind of 'light weapon' might it be? And what does gender have to do with it? These questions remain unanswered.

I now turn to a sequence that occurs early in the film and is then repeated several times. It is a series of photographs of unveiled Algerian women taken in 1960 by a French soldier, Marc Garanger. Farocki films himself leafing through the book in which these images are collected. His face is sometimes directly behind the book, in which, changing point of view, we see the face of one woman in particular, unveiled and revealed by Farocki's hand (see ill. 60). The disembodied female voice-over asks,

How to face a camera? The horror of being photographed for the first time. The year 1960 in Algeria: women are photographed for the first time. They are to be

issued with identity cards. Faces which up till then had worn the veil. (Farocki, 'Commentary', 80)

Then there is a third sequence, toward the end of the film, in which Farocki focuses in on a female prisoner, ostensibly smiling, in a group of inmates that are walking, perhaps to their deaths (see ill. 52). The accompanying voice-over says:

Among the shaven heads, a girl who smiles. In Auschwitz, apart from death and work, there was a black market, there were love stories and resistance groups. (Farocki, 'Commentary', 90)

Yet as the photographs show, just as the Algerian women do not necessarily look horrified, the female prisoner does not necessarily smile. To sentimentalise these women in this way is really akin to sentimentalising the death camps by stating – without further comment – that there were love stories there. Is Farocki here directly contradicting his earlier statement in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* that 'the success of the TV series 'Holocaust' – which aims to depict vividly suffering and dying [...] turns it into kitsch'?<sup>33</sup> He seems himself at risk, in these three voice-overs involving women, of producing precisely this kind of kitsch, indeed of reproducing the problematic in/visibility he exposes in his account of the I.G. Farben/Auschwitz photographs. True, what is now at issue explicitly – and hence self-reflectively – is more a matter of vision and of gender than of the vision of military surveillance. Still, why does Farocki include such a potentially sentimental narrative and ascribe it to a female voice? Perhaps he does so – or can be interpreted to do so – precisely to disrupt any assumption that viewers know what these images mean. An essay film is supposed to make its audience doubt and think. By spotlighting the tension between the visual and the audible, Farocki makes alternative narratives – opposed narratives, even – possible and perhaps necessary.<sup>34</sup>

The photographs are of Berber women who have been photographed by the military police because they are suspected criminals – more precisely, 'terrorists' carrying bombs. Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 pseudo-documentary, *BATTLE OF ALGIERS*, dealt sympathetically with a similar theme, showing Algerian women in the Casbah who disguise themselves as Europeans so that they may pass through French checkpoints to plant bombs in the European part of the city, while Algerian men veil themselves like traditional Muslim women to escape detection by the French.<sup>35</sup> More than Algerian, however, the photographed women's faces in Farocki's film are primarily the faces of the (female) enemy, actual or potential: *fatales* being *femmes*.<sup>36</sup> Through his montage, Farocki links these singularly unhorrorified faces to present-day German police photographs of wanted suspects (women – one composite photo bears an uncanny resemblance to Ulrike Meinhof – or men disguised as women) and then moves

back again to the two photographs of women in Auschwitz. Whether 'Jew', 'Algerian', or 'German', it is suggested that they are all someone's enemies. They are also all females, it is true, but they primarily evoke facing an in/visible enemy in a world of violence and terror – in/visible because that world has been historically and culturally en/gendered as a male sphere. At once female and hostile, the 'inappropriate/d other' appears here to be particularly dangerous because it surfaces not where one expects it but where one does not.<sup>37</sup> We also begin to grasp why the German police photograph of a wanted woman is computer enhanced into a male face (see ill. 53). It is almost as if the suspected female 'terrorist' was changed into a male to better identify her as the enemy other – traditionally a military, male other. As Susan Sontag and Paul Virilio proclaim, to photograph is – potentially – to kill.<sup>38</sup>

Still, women are the carriers of bombs in Farocki's film – as in the actual battle of Algiers and in *BATTLE OF ALGIERS*. And women had done so earlier in Auschwitz, as Farocki will presently show. It is also worth noting that the 'revolutionary' Algerian women are shown unveiled, perhaps as a symbolic allusion, Farocki's as well as the women's, to their rejection of the pre- and post-colonial and/or Islamic oppression of women in Algeria. But the absence of the veil also suggests the women's refusal of public invisibility and of the resulting sexual mystery and appeal.<sup>39</sup> In that sense, Farocki might have wanted to link the veil motif with another group of women terrorists – Gudrun Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof – and so to protest against the relentless mass media branding of these women as whores, lesbians, PLO trainees, and so on.<sup>40</sup> (Indeed, *AS YOU SEE* directly refers to Meinhof with the inclusion of a popular magazine's cover story on her.) This linkage is not surprising because, as demonstrated earlier, the overdetermined layering of the enemy body with 'female' and 'oriental' sexuality seems to cut across many cultures and times.<sup>41</sup>

Then there is the story of the Auschwitz women. Three rhythmically inserted sequences show a series of handwritten numbers on a slip of paper. On the first two occasions, viewers are offered what turn out to be false leads, seeming to link the numbers with military reconnaissance or with electronic image manipulation. The numbers flash on the screen without voice-over commentary, but the visual context suggests some semantics even though we do not see yet their precise historical meaning (see ill. 54). Only near the end of the film is this series of numbers explained retroactively (that is, after the audience has begun to assimilate them in/visibly): the female voice-over explains that they were 'coded messages from Auschwitz prisoners who belonged to a resistance group. They set the date for an uprising [...] With explosive devices made from powder that women had smuggled out from the Union Munitions factory, they set fire to the crematorium'.<sup>42</sup>



Without these women, neither terrorism nor resistance would have been possible. They, at least, attempted actively to do what the combined might of Allied bombers could not – or would not – accomplish: stop the horror.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, women are allowed access – into history and into Farocki's film – precisely because they are in/visible. But does the female voice-over problematise or reinforce this point? Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror* contains a helpful analysis of the role of the female voice in feature films. She deconstructs 'the classic cinema's rigorous 'marriage' of voice to image' and explores the 'ironic distance between the female voice and her filmic "stand-in"'.<sup>44</sup> On these grounds, the voice-over in the essay film *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* would also be 'a voice "apart"', in both senses of that word – a voice which asserts its independence from the classic system, and which is somehow a part of what it narrates'.<sup>45</sup> As critics have pointed out, German male directors have often used a male voice-over to undermine female characters and women's issues – a voice that 'takes on the guise of a meta-character, offered up unproblematically for audience identification, smoothing over the real contradictions of the film's form in order to displace attention upon false contradictions taken to represent impossible obstacles to political consciousness or action'.<sup>46</sup> However, switching the gender of the voice-over from male to female does not necessarily solve the problem of biased presentation.<sup>47</sup> Part of the problem in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is that Farocki's audible woman is never made visible: she is literally disembodied, ventriloquising for a Farocki whose hands, at least, are visible in the film. It may be that the problematic of the political tension between the in/visible and the in/audible is not wholly under Farocki's conscious control but rather is part of his own political unconscious. Furthermore, the accompanying soft piano music acts in tandem with the female voice as a parallel suture: another way of seaming the movie together in terms of its seeming gendered content, or *semés*. Here again, a direct link can be made back to the written essay, for as Adorno observes, 'the essay approaches the logic of music, that stringent and yet aconceptual art of transition'.<sup>48</sup> As in a Hollywood feature film, that *nondiegetic* music signals moments of special significance, producing an 'acoustic mirror': in this case, a replication of the audio-visual, acutely en/gendered montage. But, of course, not all of the montage serves gender issues, and its contribution to the film's intelligence has more general political effects. In that sense the question now becomes, what exactly are its in/visible and in/audible countercultural politics?



### III. Political In/Visibility, In/Audibility

This secret but ultimately driving meaning of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is articulated by one of the strongest structuring leitmotifs that Farocki incorporates into his film: a series of images of camouflage and concealment that conjure the coexistence of two interfacing worlds – one visible, the other invisible. At the most manifest level, this problematic jibes easily with the film's relatively explicit discourse on what is visible and what escapes detection. Examples abound: most tragically, the Allies failed, within the regime of visibility, to see at the level of visibility precisely what they had photographed at the level of vision – the Auschwitz death camp in the immediate vicinity of I.G. Farben. Or veils are made to conceal the identities of Algerian women from the male gaze. Or more mundanely, European women apply make-up to beautify their looks under the gaze of men, and so on, just as buildings and landscapes are camouflaged during wartime to avoid destruction, and so on. Yet this entire discursive level is really only thematic. It points to the lack of reliability of signs and/or to the rupture between signs and reality and the takeover of the latter by the former in an age of spectacularisation, a society of spectacle, a pertinent but somehow insufficient lesson. In a film that centres so much on concealment and disguise, viewers also want to know what Farocki is hiding, consciously or not. Is there a camouflaged political text? *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* may be conforming to political rhetoric, where if one talks about the presence of hidden meanings, then a good possibility exists that one is putting one's money where one's mouth is, that one is not merely *constating* but also performing an act of political im/perceptibility.<sup>49</sup>

As a political filmmaker, Farocki had a history of situationist activism,<sup>50</sup> and *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* logically both conceals and reveals his strong censure of West Germany – a censure directed not merely against its Nazi past but also against its post-war political developments. When the narrator remarks that 'after the war the I.G. Farben company took another name, as some SS men also did',<sup>51</sup> Farocki purposefully – or instinctively – uses what classical rhetoric called *sigetics*, the argument from silence – viewers want to know these other names, yet the film fails to mention them. One reason for the silence may be pragmatic. Farocki uses parts of other projects – sequences from technological films or documentaries, including the clip of the Dior model being made up<sup>52</sup> – to help finance his essay films, which largely owe their careful montage to all these pre-manufactured images (see ill. 55). To name what I.G. Farben has turned into – a rather small 'secret' – might be disingenuous, counterproductive, or even economically suicidal for future films of this *Verbundsystem* heri-

tage. After all, such companies were Farocki's bread and butter, and it would be foolish to overtly implicate them, to bite the hand that feeds him.

But there is more, of course. There is Farocki's own reference, mentioned earlier, to advertising montage as related to Soviet film practice – a blueprint of a more general pragmatic strategy.<sup>53</sup> Farocki is surely aware that in contemporary neo-capitalism, technology and industry have so pervaded the public sphere that it is virtually impossible to avoid dealing with them – and with their im/perceptibility. What in modernist times counted as self-reflection tends to become in today's Jamesonian post-modern condition the way in which 'culture acts out its own commodification'.<sup>54</sup> *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*, too, must act out cultural commodification but can also work to subvert it (much as Adorno had claimed for the role of the essay). Hearing that I.G. Farben now flies under another name, Farocki's viewers are invited to find out what that name is, if they don't know it already, or, if they do, to wonder why this knowledge is concealed here. Three major companies have evolved out of I.G. Farben: Bayer, Hoechst, and BASF, which produces the kind of videotape on which one can view and hear *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*. These names, an anthropologist might say, are the 'public secret' at the basis of social/cultural mimesis, in/audible and in/visible.<sup>55</sup> And Farocki's film functions as an act of understated – im/perceptible – resistance to that culture, since as he puts it, in the face of the increasingly global 'development in production techniques, [which] excludes me and shuts me out [...] my only means of defense is to make films on this topic. I make films about the industrialisation of thought'.<sup>56</sup>

The concrete, specific, topical aspects of German politics that underlie and motivate the general censure in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* are introduced in the penultimate image sequence of the film. Rhetorically speaking, this is an effective location for such a message, since the beginning or end would be too obvious. (Commentators on texts produced under censorship, such as Leo Strauss, theorise that most explicit political messages are rarely concealed at the easily visible positions but rather somewhere nearby.) Farocki's female voice-over sends the following message:

In 1983, as the number of atomic weapons in the Federal Republic of Germany was to be increased again, Günter Anders recalled the failure to bomb Auschwitz and demanded: the reality must begin: 'The reality must begin. That means: the blockading of all entrances to the murder installations which permanently persist [i.e. exist] must be equally persistent. Let us destroy the possibility of access to these weapons'. To the atomic weapons.<sup>57</sup>

This is obviously part of Farocki's message. But it is not only thematically but also formally and aesthetically coded, like the numbers used by the Auschwitz resistance group. And, like the pleas for Allied bombing of the railroads lead-

ing to Auschwitz, this statement calls for the destruction of train lines, this time the tracks that lead to the atomic weapons placed in Germany by the Allies, especially the United States (partly responsible for not bombing the death camps). In an article that contains part of the text of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD*, Farocki says as much, in some detail.<sup>58</sup> But in his essay film, this political message is at once most explicit and most in/audible and in/visible when Farocki shows his own hand literally inscribing (à la Astruc), with a crayon or pen, his call to action on the inmate Alfred Kantor's drawing of a locomotive bringing prisoners to their death in Auschwitz (see ill. 56).

Farocki twice writes, '*Den Zugang blockieren!*' (Block the access routes!). Offering a first version of a 'political *anamorphosis*', Farocki depicts his inscription at an unnatural angle – making it harder to see yet still visible. By a similar reckoning, the entire *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* is itself the 'inscription of war' (*INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES*) alluded to in the title: a more or less concealed, more or less im/perceptible instruction about waging war against nuclear might, much as *BATTLE OF ALGIERS* was viewed as a manual for waging underground urban warfare.

To be more precise, Farocki's film proposes a double war of position and manoeuvre: tactically and immediately, blockade the trains! But Farocki is well aware that massive surveillance by the military-industrial complex will make such blockades almost impossible, though nonetheless necessary. Hence, his recourse to a second form of warfare in and as *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* itself: a more strategic and long-term action. It involves another *anamorphosis*, almost subliminal and quite independent of perspective: images showing the use of hydropower in opposition to nuclear power. This contrast provides the underlying reason for the otherwise inexplicably recurrent and redundant image of the Hannover water-research laboratory. The accompanying female voice-over notes – but only once, near the beginning of the film – that 'the motions of water are still less researched than those of light'.<sup>59</sup> This is a remarkable acknowledgement of the power of science and technology in a film that is – ostensibly – critical of their impact on today's culture. Perhaps Farocki trusts that labs such as the Hannover plant, given enough financial and public support, will someday come up with alternatives to nuclear energy. For the rest of the industrial companies for whom Farocki must make documentaries, he is employing the *Verbundsystem* against itself, attempting to accomplish, what the situationists might have called its *détournement*, Brecht its *Umfunktionierung*.<sup>60</sup> Not far away, one might imagine, is the im/perceptible affirmation of direct action up to, and including, what others would call terrorism.

Paradoxically, Farocki's attempt to use the subliminal *anamorphosis* of the im/perceptible may be seen as contradicting the enlightenment aspect of his project, which demands complete disclosure. Much of his ultimate political strategy thus risks remaining obscure while being grasped as emotionally subversive. Noting in 1983 that 'film as a form of intelligence is Farocki's own guerrilla war',<sup>61</sup> Elsaesser declined to make any more specific the form such warfare might take, either in Farocki's work or more generally in cinematic practice, criticism, and theory.

On a more general note, it is worth quoting, in that respect, filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha. Attuned to the aesthetic, economic, and historical as well as the (sexual) political, she writes about documentaries as one might write about an effective essay film:

A documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction. It does not work to conceal or exclude what is normalised as 'non-factual', for it understands the mutual dependence of realism and 'artificiality' in the process of filmmaking. It recognises the necessity of composing (on) life in living it or making it. Documentary reduced to a mere vehicle of facts may be used to advocate a cause, but it does not constitute one in itself [...]. Meaning can therefore be political only when it does not let itself be easily stabilised, and, when it does not rely on any single source of authority, but rather empties it, decentralizes it.<sup>62</sup>

The dual task of criticism, similarly, is, on the one hand, to resist overly stabilising the meaning of an essay film like *IMAGES OF THE WORLD* and/or to reducing it to its advocacy. But, on the other hand, it is equally important to resist the over-decentralisation of (possible) political messages that would thus become ineffective, and, in that sense, im/perceptible. In spite and because of its multilayered, self-reflective quality generating solipsisms and contradictions, Farocki's essay film does have a relatively decidable political message – indeed, is ultimately quite agitational in intent thereby keeping alive the old agit-prop tradition under postmodern conditions.

## Notes

1. For a comprehensive overview of Farocki's career, see Rolf Aurich and Ulrich Kriest (eds.), *Der Ärger mit den Bildern: Die Filme von Harun Farocki* (Konstanz: WK Medien, 1998); Tilman Baumgärtel, *Vom Guerillakino zum Essayfilm: Harun Farocki* (Berlin: b-books, 1998).
2. For example, his 1981 *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* (*BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM*) looks at how the Vietnam War was represented and spectacularised by the mass media, and his 1986 *WIE MAN SIEHT* (*AS YOU SEE*) stresses that the viewer must always

- read between the lines of images. More recent are the 1991 *LEBEN – BRD (HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG)*, an ironic critique of self-help groups and the opposition they face, and a year later *VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION (VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION)*, in which Farocki compares CNN media coverage of the Romanian revolution to home videos taken by Romanians at the time of the upheaval.
3. 'Wenn man kein Geld für Autos, Schießereien, schöne Kleider, wenn man kein Geld hat für Bilder, die Film-Zeit, das Filmleben von selber verstreichen lassen, dann muß man seine Kraft in die Intelligenz Verbindung der einzelnen Elemente legen: Die Montage der Ideen.'
  4. See Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 82-83.
  5. Harun Farocki, 'Notwendige Abwechslung und Vielfalt,' *Filmkritik* 224 (August 1975), pp. 368-69; cited in Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, pp. 82-83.
  6. Harun Farocki, *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*, 16mm, color, 75 min., Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, 1988-89. The English voice-over has been transcribed with slight variations as Harun Farocki, 'Commentary from *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*,' *Discourse* 15 (spring 1993), pp. 78-92.
  7. See Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: BFI, 1995), chap. 2, 'The Documentary, Scitex and Harry'; William J. Mitchell, *The Re-configured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).
  8. Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality* [Seattle: Bay Press, 1988]. According to Foster, *vision* and *visuality* are two interrelated but significantly separate terms: 'the difference between the terms signals a difference within the visual – between the mechanism of sight and its historical techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations – a difference, many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or unseen therein' (*Vision and Visuality*, p. ix).
  9. See Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture' [1938], in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 116. For the original, see 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes', in his *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972). This concept is favoured by Tom Keenan, who has carried out extensive analyses of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*. For Keenan, Farocki's film is directly related to Heideggerian visibility (see Keenan, 'Light Weapons', *Documents* 1 – 2 [fall-winter 1992], pp. 147-58). In this volume.
  10. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* [1973], ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 72, 82.
  11. This Lacanian framework informs Kaja Silverman's analysis of *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (see Silverman, 'What Is a Camera? or: History in the Field of Vision', *Discourse* 15 [spring 1993], p. 3-56; reprinted with minor changes in Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* [New York: Routledge, 1996], chap. 4, 'The Gaze').
  12. As Silverman notes, Jonathan Crary's work on what he calls 'techniques of the observer' helps clarify that aspect of Farocki's *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* as well as Lacanian and Heideggerian approaches to it. Crary problematises, by historicising, not only ahistorical theories of the ways viewers

- and viewing are constructed but also contemporary 'attempts to theorise vision and visuality [that] are wedded to models that emphasise a continuous and overarching Western visual tradition'. Cary argues that 'during the first decades of the nineteenth century a new kind of observer took shape in Europe radically different from the type of observer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', that this paradigm shift had much to do with technologies leading up to and including photography, and that 'concepts of subjective vision, of the productivity of the observer, pervaded not only areas of art and literature but were present in philosophical, scientific, and technological discourses'. A new viewing subject, an embodied vision, was produced (Cary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990], p. 6, 9, 25). It is precisely this kind of a viewer who is the subject and object of Farocki's film.
13. See Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
  14. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* [1965-68], trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1970), p. 21. This remark also figures prominently in Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), in his chapter entitled 'Lacan, Althusser, and the Specular Subject of Ideology'. But whereas Jay uses Althusser's text to buttress his thesis that 'a plurality of scopic regimes' ought to replace his (problematic) claim that recent French thought has 'denigrated' vision, my own inclination is to use Althusser's remark more simply as a salutary warning against our assuming that we have seen what we think we have seen. And I argue that this is Farocki's warning as well.
  15. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* [1951], trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), pp. 193-94.
  16. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 20.
  17. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. C. Lenhardt (1970; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 178.
  18. Alan Sekula, 'Reading an Archive', in *Blasted Allegories*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 116.
  19. 'Mindestens zweimal muß ein Bild oder ein Gedanke schon vorkommen, damit man sieht, was aus ihm wurde, wie er sich verändert in einem neuen Zusammenhang' (quoted in Baumgärtel, 'Vom Guerillakino zum Essayfilm', p. 145).
  20. Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Essay as Form' [1954-58], in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 9.
  21. In addition to Marker and Godard, these essay filmmakers include Derek Jarman, Kidlat Tahimik, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Orson Welles as well as, in the German-speaking world, Hartmut Bitomsky, Werner Herzog, Alexander Kluge, Elfi Mikesch, Ulrike Ottinger, Rosa von Praunheim, Helke Sander, and Wim Wenders – to mention but a few. Clearly, this is not a homogeneous group. And Farocki and his *Filmkritik* group explicitly distanced themselves, in theory and in practice, from Wenders, Herzog, and Kluge. An in-depth study of the essay film as an international movement remains to be done.



22. Thomas Elsaesser, 'It Started with These Images' – Some Notes on Political Filmmaking after Brecht in Germany: Helke Sander and Harun Farocki', *Discourse* 7 (1985), pp. 95-120. In this volume.
23. Harun Farocki and Kaja Silverman, 'To Love to Work and to Work to Love – A Conversation about Passion', *Discourse* 15 (spring 1993), p. 63.
24. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944], trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 167.
25. Thus, Hitchcock liked to insist that there is an irreducible difference between the circular field of the human and camera eye on the one hand and the rectangle of the celluloid and screen frame on the other ('I Wish I Didn't Have to Shoot the Picture: An Interview with Alfred Hitchcock' [1966], in *Focus on Hitchcock*, ed. Albert J. LaValley [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972], pp. 22-27).
26. This photograph – or one from the same series – is on display at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Although Farocki does not mention it, there were several photographs of I.G. Farben/Auschwitz: 'Allied photorecon aircraft made it to these targets less than two dozen times between 4 April 1944 and 14 January 1945[, and] half of those missions also coincidentally got cover of the death camps – a few frames in each of eighteen roles of film' (Roy Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence* [New York: Scribner's, 1981], p. 346; also cited by Keenan, 'Light Weapons', p. 149).
27. At least it has drawn the detailed attention of Silverman and Keenan – the first, and to date only, extended treatments of IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR. This image, framed by Farocki's hands, also appears as the cover of Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993), though the book mentions neither Farocki nor IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR. Silverman observes, 'This text is at first shocking in its imputation to the Jewish woman and her Nazi photographer of viewing relations which we associate with "normality" and which seem unthinkable within a context like Auschwitz. However, one of the primary functions of this sequence is to stress that although the male subject is at most a privileged "functionary" of the camera/gaze, the latter is defined as a masculine extension through a whole confluence of institutional, discursive, and representational determinations. At least within the West, the same determinants posit the female subject as the "specular" object par excellence. Given how overdetermined these relations are, there would seem to be no context – even one as given over to death as Auschwitz – within which they could not somehow be inscribed'. Silverman concludes, 'to object to the commentary for imputing meaning to these two photographs which was not available to the camera, and which cannot be historically documented, is to overlook another crucial feature of IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR's interrogation of the visual field – its discourse upon the human look' ('What Is a Camera?' pp. 39-42). It is striking that Keenan, in his article on IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR with the intriguing title 'Light Weapons', uses the same citation of the narrative voice-over segment as Silverman does. For Keenan, however the key point is that the image and its commentary are immediately preceded by the click of a shutter, one of the few times in the film where, quite literally, 'the light goes out in IMAGES OF THE WORLD' – that is, the screen goes black. This emphasis on 'the cut and the darkness that precedes it' is crucial be-

- cause from a neo-Heideggerian point of view, the cut stands for 'the darkness against which an image, a photograph or a film, finds its possibility' – a possibility that is here 'brought into the event of the film itself' ('Light Weapons', p. 151).
28. Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White, A Biography* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), p. 290. Farocki's SS photo must be contextualised further, however, with regard to another problem of photographing (in) the camps. Thus, the *Picture Post* in 1943, when prison camps in Italy were liberated, captioned a picture of an emaciated female inmate, 'Women Want to Be Photographed'. In 1945, a *Picture Post* caption of an image of a horrifically thin man claimed that he had demanded to be photographed because 'the free peoples of the world should know what a German prison-camp does to a man'. See 'The Eighth Army Breaks Open a Concentration Camp', *Picture Post*, October 23, 1943, p. 8; 'The Problem That Makes All Europe Wonder', *Picture Post*, May 5, 1945, p. 11. For these references, I am indebted to an unpublished essay by Barbie Zelizer of Temple University: 'The Image, the Word, and the Holocaust: Photojournalism and the Shape of Memory'.
  29. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 91.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
  31. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*; Žižek, *Looking Awry*.
  32. Keenan, 'Light Weapons', p. 151. This certainly is not a particularly original observation by either Keenan or Farocki. See, for example, the extensive treatment of this articulation of war and cinema in Virilio's *War and Cinema*, which Keenan cites only in passing and Silverman not at all. There is also the infamous case of *Life* photographer Ron Haerberle, who asked GIs to hold their fire for an instant at My Lai so that he could snap his picture of the victims before they were murdered. (He was rewarded with a Pulitzer Prize.) For this and similar incidents, see Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). A similar problematic has been recently addressed from a very different angle in Remy Belvaux's pseudo-documentary *Man Bites Dog* (France, 1992), in which the film crew assigned to 'document' the everyday life of a serial killer eventually 'participates' in stealing money to finance the film and in raping a victim.
  33. Farocki, 'Commentary', p. 81.
  34. This more or less un/decidable and im/perceptible effect is further enhanced by an ever-so-slight tinkling of classical European piano music in the background. Viewing Farocki's treatment of the Algerian women, this musical soundtrack weaves its way in and out here, too, as if to recall not only the history of the cinema (that is, silent films without audible verbal interpretation and/or misinterpretation) but also the subliminal hegemony of the (here aural) West over the (here visible) Orient. This would be an ironic reversal of Trinh T. Minh-ha's remark, following Foucault, that in the West the power/knowledge effect resides primarily in the visual ('The World as a Foreign Land' [1989], in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* [New York: Routledge, 1991], p. 189).
  35. *BATTLE OF ALGIERS*, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo (screenplay Franco Solinas), 35 mm, 120 min., Igor Films, Algeria, France, and Italy, 1965. This film had a huge impact when it first appeared and was censored in many countries.



36. For an important psychoanalytic approach to the *femme fatale* in cinema, see Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
37. On the concept of 'inappropriate/d other' in this sense, see Trinh T. Minh-ha, ed., *She, the Inappropriate/d Other* (special issue of *Discourse* 8 [fall-winter 1986-87]).
38. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Doubleday, 1973); Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (1984; trans. Patrick Camillor [London: Verso, 1989]).
39. For the classic work on the intricate dialectic between repressive and liberationist aspects of native cultures in the context of revolutionary situations generally and in Africa specifically, see the work of Frantz Fanon, including *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH* [1961], preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1978). On the ambivalent attraction to and fear of, veiled women, see Doane's ongoing work, beginning with 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' [1982], reprinted in *The Sexual Subject: A 'Screen' Reader in Sexuality*, eds. John Caughie and Annette Kuhn (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 227-43.
40. For a detailed investigation into representations and constructions of terrorism in German culture and cultural theory, see Matthew T. Grant, 'Critical Intellectuals and the New Media: Bernward Vesper, Ulrike Meinhof, the Frankfurt School, and the Red Army Faction' (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1993).
41. In literature, the image of the Vietnamese woman as simultaneously a prostitute and a terrorist is a common international theme. See Nora Alter, *Vietnam Protest Theatre: The Television War on Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Today, a similar problematic of veiling and unveiling emerges in the so-called *Vermummungsgesetz* – the prohibition of veils or masks in German demonstrations and, in France, the schools. The spectre of anyone, perhaps women especially, as potential terrorists who might be called in/visible is haunting for many people, male and female, now more than ever.
42. Farocki, 'Commentary', p. 92. One of these women was Roza Robota, whose photograph in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is captioned to assert that she was responsible for smuggling out the explosives that resulted in the October 7, 1944, demolition of a small part of the Auschwitz crematorium. She was executed for her 'crime' on January 1, 1945.
43. This issue has by no means been settled; indeed, in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum it is raised once again with the supporting evidence of letters by members of Jewish organisations addressed to British and US heads of state, pleading for the bombing of the camps and the train lines; the rejections of these demands are also displayed.
44. Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 168.
45. Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*, p. 131.
46. B. Ruby Rich, 'She Says, He Says: The Power of the Narrator in Modernist Film Politics' [1983], in *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions*, vol. 1, *Gender and Representation in New German Cinema*, ed. Sandra Frieden, Richard W. McCormick, Vibeke R. Petersen, and Laurie Melissa Vogelsang (Providence, R.I.: Berg, 1993), p. 151. On male voice-overs undermining female characters, see, for

- example, the analysis of Alexander Kluge's mis/use of male voice-over in Miriam Hansen, 'Cooperative Auteur Cinema and Oppositional Public Sphere: Alexander Kluge's Contribution to GERMANY IN AUTUMN', *New German Critique* 24-25 (fall-winter 1981-82), pp. 36-56, where Hansen argues that the status of Kluge's male narrator is never radically questioned. Building on this argument, see further Rich, 'She Says, He Says', pp. 143-61.
47. Various male directors other than Farocki use – wittingly or not – a female voice-over to deflect possible criticism expressing feminist perspectives. Indeed, this has become something of a trend in recent documentaries, exemplified by the English version of Ray Müller's *The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993).
  48. Adorno, 'Essay as Form', p. 22.
  49. See, for example, Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
  50. See Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, p. 82.
  51. Farocki, 'Commentary', p. 87.
  52. When Farocki intercuts IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR with the long sequence of this woman being made up (in all senses) and, in effect, being disguised, his female voice-over comments, 'Women paint themselves to be beautiful', even though a man is clearly doing the work (see also Farocki, 'Commentary', p. 88). To be sure, there are other possible interpretations of this scene. For example, I would prefer to read it (also) as an allusion to the aforementioned scene in Pontecorvo's BATTLE OF ALGIERS, when Algerian militants make themselves up as Europeans to conceal their identity and then plant bombs.
  53. The dictum of Dziga Vertov is illustrative in this regard: 'Kino-eye is the documentary cinematic decoding of both the visible world and that which is invisible to the naked eye' ('From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye' [1929], in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. and intro. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], p. 87).
  54. Jameson, *Geopolitical Aesthetic*, p. 5.
  55. See Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. pp. 83-86. Taussig argues that 'the "origins" of mimesis lie in art and politics and not in survival' and that mimesis in effect is the 'nature' that cultures use to produce second nature to maintain various types of social control, including the means of public secrets and various forms of aesthetic semblance. For Adorno, 'under the essay's gaze second nature recognises itself as first nature', in part because 'the essay has something like an aesthetic autonomy that is easily accused of being simply derived from art, although it is distinguished from art by its medium, concepts, and by its claim to be a truth devoid of aesthetic semblance' (Adorno, 'Essay as Form', pp. 5, 20). I argue that the essay film as practised by Farocki attempts to continue this proper Enlightenment tradition by bringing it up to techno-cultural speed, whatever the limitations may be.
  56. Harun Farocki, 'The Industrialization of Thought', *Discourse* 15 (spring 1993), p. 77.
  57. Farocki, 'Commentary', p. 92.
  58. See Harun Farocki, 'Reality Would Have to Begin', trans. Marek Wieczorek, Tom Keenan, and Thomas Y. Levin, *Documents* 1-2 (fall-winter 1992), pp. 136-46; originally published as 'Die Wirklichkeit hätte zu beginnen', in *Fotovision: Projekt*

Photographie nach 150 Jahren, ed. Bernd Busch, Udo Liebelt, and Werner Oeder (Hannover: Sprengle Museum, 1988) in this volume.

59. Farocki, 'Commentary', 78.
60. On Brecht and Farocki as different but also related types of political filmmakers, see Elsaesser, *It Started with These Images* in this volume.
61. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Working at the Margins: Two or Three Things Not Known About Harun Farocki', *Monthly Film Bulletin* 50: 597 (October 1983), p. 270.
62. Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'The Totalizing Quest of Meaning' [1990], in *When the Moon Waxes Red*, p. 41.

**Film: Media: Work: Archive**



# Workers Leaving the Factory

*Harun Farocki*

The film *WORKERS LEAVING THE LUMIÈRE FACTORY IN LYON* (1895) by the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière is forty-five seconds long and shows the roughly one hundred workers at the factory for photographic goods in Lyon-Montplaisir leaving the factory through two gates and exiting the frame to both sides. Over the past twelve months, I set myself the task of tracking down the theme of this film, workers leaving the workplace, in as many variants as possible. Examples were found in documentaries, industrial and propaganda films, newsreels, and features. I left out TV archives which offer an immeasurable number of references for any given keyword as well as the archives of cinema and television advertising in which industrial work hardly ever occurs as a motif – commercial film's dread of factory work is second only to that of death.

Berlin, 1934: Siemens factory workers and employees leave the premises in marching order to attend a Nazi rally. There is a column of war invalids, and many are wearing white overalls as if to bring the idea of militarised science into the shot.

German Democratic Republic, 1963 (without precise localisation): A *Betriebskampfgruppe* – a worker combat unit or militia made up of workers under the leadership of the party – turn, out for manoeuvres. Very serious men and women in uniform climb into military light vehicles and drive to the woods where they will encounter men who are also wearing flat caps pushed into their necks and are posing as saboteurs. As the convoy drives out through the gate, the factory looks like a barracks.

Federal Republic of Germany, 1975: A small loudspeaker van is parked in front of the Volkswagen plant in Emden and plays music with lyrics by Vladimir Mayakovsky and vocals by Ernst Busch. A man from the labour union calls on the workers leaving the early shift to attend a meeting protesting against the plan to transfer production to the US.

The labour union uses optimistic, revolutionary music as backing for the image of industrial workers in the Federal Republic of 1975; music echoing from the actual scene and not, as was the stupid practice in so many films around 1968, just from the soundtrack. Ironically, the workers put up with this music precisely because the break with communism was so total that they are no longer aware that the song evokes the October Revolution. In

1895, the Lumières' camera was pointed at the factory gates (see ill. 70); it is a precursor of today's many surveillance cameras which automatically and blindly produce an infinite number of pictures in order to safeguard private property. With this kind of cameras one might perhaps be able to identify the four men in Robert Siodmak's *THE KILLERS* (1946) who, dressed as workers, enter a hat factory and rob the payroll. In this film, one can see workers leaving the factory who are in fact gangsters. Today cameras for the surveillance of walls, fences, warehouses, roofs, or yards are sold, equipped with automatic video motion detectors. They disregard changes in light and contrast, and are programmed to distinguish an unimportant movement from an actual threat. (An alarm is activated when a person climbs over a fence, but not if a bird flies past.) A new archive system is thus under way, a future library for moving images, in which one can search for and retrieve elements of pictures. Up to now the dynamic and compositional definitions of a sequence of images – those things which are the decisive factor in the editing process of converting a sequence of images into a film – have not been classified nor included.

The first camera in the history of cinema was pointed at a factory, but a century later it can be said that film is seldom drawn to the factory and even repelled by it. Films about work or workers have not emerged as one of the main film genres, and the space in front of the factory has remained on the sidelines. Most narrative films take place in that part of life where work has been left behind. Everything which makes the industrial form of production superior to others – the division of labour that breaks down the production process into minute stages, the constant repetition, a degree of organisation which demands few decisions of the individual and which leaves him little room to manoeuvre – all this makes it hard to demonstrate the vicissitudes of the workplace. Over the last century virtually none of the communication that took place in factories, whether through words, glances, or gestures, was recorded on film. Cameras and projectors are essentially mechanical inventions, and by 1895, the heyday of mechanical inventions had passed. The technical processes which were emerging at the time – chemistry and electricity – were almost inaccessible to visual understanding. The reality that was based on these methods was hardly ever characterised by visible movement. The cine-camera, however, has remained fixated on movement. Ten years ago, when large mainframes were still commonly used, cameras always focused on the last remaining perceptible movement as a surrogate for their invisible operations – the magnetic tape jerking back and forth. This addiction to motion is increasingly running out of material, a phenomenon that could lead to the self-destruction of cinema.

Detroit, 1926: Workers are descending the stairs of a walkway over a street running parallel to the main Ford Motor Company building. The camera then pans to the right with measured self-assurance, and a passage comes into view, large enough for several locomotives to pass through at the same time. Behind it lies a rectangular yard, large enough for an airship to land in. On the margins of the square, hundreds of workers are on their way to the exits, which will take them several minutes. In the furthest background, a freight train pulls past in perfect co-ordination with the speed of the pan; a second walkway then jerks into the picture, similar to the first and whose four lanes of stairs are again crowded with descending workers. The camera stages the building with such mastery and self-assurance that the building becomes a stage set, seemingly constructed by a subdivision of the film production company just to serve this well-timed pan-shot. The camera's authorial control transforms the workers into an army of extras. The main reason the workers are shown in this shot is to prove that the film is not portraying a model of an automobile factory, or to put it another way, the model was implemented on a 1:1 scale.

In the Lumière film of 1895, it is possible to discover that the workers were assembled behind the gates and surged out at the camera operator's command. Before the film direction stepped in to condense the subject, it was the industrial order which synchronised the lives of these assembled individuals. They were released from this regulation at a particular point in time, contained in the process by the factory gates as within a frame. The Lumières' camera did not have a viewfinder, so they remained uncertain of the view they were depicting; the gates provide a perception of framing which leaves no room for doubt. The work structure synchronises the workers, the factory gates herds them together, and this process of compression produces the image of a work force. The portrayal reminds us that the people passing through the gates evidently have something fundamental in common. The images are closely related to concepts, thus this visual trope has become a rhetorical figure. One finds it used in documentaries, in industrial and propaganda films, often with music and/or words as backing, the image being given a textual meaning such as 'the exploited', 'the industrial proletariat', 'the workers of the fist', or 'the society of the masses'. The appearance of community does not last long. Immediately after the workers hurry past the gate, they disperse to become individual people, and it is this aspect of their existence which is addressed by most narrative films. With their departure from the factory, the workers do not remain behind as a body of united workers for a rally and thus, their image as workers disintegrates. Cinema could sustain this feeling by having them dance along the street; after all, Fritz Lang uses a dance-like movement in



METROPOLIS (1927) to convey the appearance of men as workers. In this film, the workers wear work uniforms and move in a muffled, synchronous rhythm. This vision of the future has, however, not proved correct, at least not in Europe or North America, where you can tell by looking at someone on the street whether they are coming from work, the gym, or the welfare offices. Capital, or to use the language of METROPOLIS, the 'masters' of the factory are not concerned with the uniform appearance of their work slaves. Because the image of community cannot be maintained once the workplace is left behind, the rhetorical figure of leaving the factory is often found at the beginning or the end of a film, like a slogan, where it is possible to leave it detached, like a prologue or epilogue. It is astonishing that even this first film by the Lumière brothers already contained something that would not be easy to surpass. It makes a statement that is hard to expand upon immediately.

When it comes to the matter of strikes or strike-breaking, of factory sit-ins or lock-outs, the factory forecourt can become a productive setting. The factory gate serves as the boundary between the protected production sphere and public space; this is precisely the right spot to transform an economic struggle into a political one. The striking workers file through the gate, and the various other castes and classes follow. That is not the way the October Revolution began, however, or the way the communist regimes were toppled. Nevertheless, one major contributing factor that led to the demise of Polish communism involved a group of non-workers who stationed themselves in front of the gates of Gdansk's Lenin shipyard during its occupation, in order to show the police that it would be impossible to secretly extricate the workers from the factory. Andrzej Wajda's *THE MAN OF IRON* (1981) tells this story.

1916: D. W. Griffith presented a dramatic portrayal of a strike in the modern episode of *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*. Initially, the workers see their pay cut (because the Associations that have taken it upon themselves to improve the souls of the workers demand higher dues), then the strikers swarm into the street, while the police with machine guns move in, take up their positions, and mow the crowd down. The workers' struggle is shown here as a civil war. Their wives and children have gathered in front of their homes and are seen observing the bloodbath in horror. A group of the unemployed, eager to take the strikers' jobs, are ready and waiting, literally as a reserve army. This is probably the greatest shoot-out in front of factory gates in the hundred-year history of cinema.

1933: In Vsevolod Pudovkin's depiction of a strike by Hamburg longshoremen, *DESERTER*, a picket has to watch ships being unloaded by strikebreakers. He sees one of the strikebreakers first swaying under the burden of a heavy crate, then he stand firm against the weight for a long time, but finally breaks down. The picket looks at the unconscious man lying there with cold socio-his-

torical attention, shadows darting across his face. These are cast by the unemployed men hurrying to the gates of the harbour area to take the collapsed worker's place. They are miserable and so ill from their impoverished state that they seem much older than they actually are. The picket looks deep into the face of an older man, his tongue playing with the saliva in his mouth, and then, frightened, turns away from him. With so many people unable to find work or a place in a society based on work, how can social revolution become a reality? The film shows the faces of the destitute through the bars of the entrance gate. They are looking out from the prison of unemployment to the freedom called 'paid labour'. Filmed through the bars they already appear to have been shut away in a camp. In the course of the 20th century, millions of people were declared redundant; were deemed to be socially harmful or classified as racially inferior. Many of them were locked up in camps by the Nazis or Communists to be re-educated or eliminated.

Charles Chaplin accepted a job at a conveyor belt and was thrown out of the factory by the police during a strike... Marilyn Monroe sat alongside a conveyor belt of a fish cannery for Fritz Lang... Ingrid Bergman spent a day in a factory, and upon entering, an expression of holy fright came upon her face, as though she was on the road to hell... Movie stars are important people in a feudal kind of way, and they are drawn to the world of the workers; their fate is similar to that of kings who get lost while out hunting and thus come to know what hunger is. For instance, in Michelangelo Antonioni's *THE RED DESERT* (1964), Monica Vitti, snatches a half-eaten bun from one of the striking workers because she wants to experience the life of the workers (see ill. 70).

If one compares the iconography of cinema with that of Christian painting, the worker is depicted as if he was one of the more obscure saints. Cinema does embody the worker in other figures, or at any rate, picks up elements of a worker's existence in other forms of social life. When American films deal with economic power or dependence, they often portray small and big-time gangsters, preferring this to the setting of workers and employers. Because the Mafia controls some of America's labour unions, the transition from labour film to gangster movie can be a smooth one. Competition, trust formations, loss of independence, the fate of minor employees, and exploitation are all relegated to the underworld. The American film has transferred the fight for bread and better pay from the factory to the bank lobbies. Although Westerns also frequently deal with social struggles, like those between farmers and ranchers, these are seldom fought in the pastures or fields, and more often in the village streets or in the saloon. But even in the real world, social conflict seldom takes place in front of a factory. When the Nazis crushed the labour movement in Germany, they did so in apartments and neighbourhoods, in prisons and camps, but hardly ever in or in front of factories. Although many of the

worst acts of violence this century – civil wars, world wars, re-education and extermination camps – have been closely linked to the structure of industrial production and to its crises, nevertheless most of these events took place far away from actual factories.

1956: A British Pathé newsreel shows pictures of the class struggle in England. Striking workers at the Austin plant in Birmingham attempt to prevent strikebreakers from replacing them. They try sit-down protests and turn to violence in order to stop the scabs from entering or leaving the factory. They try to wrench open the door of a truck, to pull out a strikebreaker, but they do not punch him through the truck's open window to force him to open the door or give up. Obviously this fight is following the unwritten rules that limit the extent of the violence. The strikers act with passion, but without the desire to injure anybody or destroy property. The workers' own demonstrations are almost always less violent than the ones carried out in their name by others.

I have gathered, compared, and studied these and many other images that use the motif of the first film in the history of cinema, 'workers leaving the factory', and have assembled them in a film, *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK* (*WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, video, 37 minutes, b/w and colour, 1995). The film montage had a totalising effect on me. With the montage before me, I found myself gaining the impression that for over a century cinematography had been dealing with just one single theme. It's like a child repeating the first words it has learned to speak for more than a hundred years in order to immortalise the joy of learning to speak. Or as if cinema had been working in the same spirit as painters of the Far East, always painting the same landscape until it is perfected and eventually includes the painter himself within it. When it was no longer possible to believe in such perfection, film was invented.

In the Lumière film about leaving the factory, the building or area is a container, full at the beginning and by the end, empty. This satisfies the desire of the eye, which itself can be based on other desires. In the first film, the aim was to represent motion and thus to illustrate the possibility of representing movement. The actors in motion are aware of this; some throw their arms up so high, and when walking, put their feet down so clearly, as though they're trying to make their walk appear as vivid as possible for a new *orbis pictus* – this time in moving pictures. A book dealing with pictures of motion could, like an encyclopaedia, note that the gate motif occurs in one of the first works of literature, *The Odyssey*. The blinded Cyclops at the cave entrance feels the emerging animals, under whose bellies Odysseus and his followers are clinging. Leaving the factory is not a literary theme, not one that has been adopted by cinema from a visualized literature. On the other hand, one cannot conceive a filmic image which does not refer to pictures from before the age of cinema – painted, written, or narrative images, images embedded inside the thought process. By

straying from the path we may discover something of this prehistory. Immediately after the command was given to leave the factory back in 1895, the workers streamed out. Even if they sometimes got in each other's way – one young woman is seen tugging on another woman's skirt before they part in opposite directions, she knows this woman doesn't retaliate under the camera's stern eye – the overall movement remains swift and nobody is left behind (see ill. 71). That this is the case is perhaps because the primary aim was to represent motion, but maybe an additional sense is already being signalled. Only once it had been learned how filmic images grasp for ideas and are themselves seized by them, were we able to see with hindsight that the resolution of the workers' motion represents something, that the visible movement of people is standing in for the absent and invisible movement of goods, money, and ideas circulating in the industrial sphere.

In the opening sequence of this first film, the cinema's basic stylistic principle is already present. Its signs and meanings are not put into the world, they arise from the real. In the cinema it is as if the world itself wanted to tell us something.

*Translated by Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.*



# On Media and Democratic Politics: Videograms of a Revolution

*Benjamin Young*

[I]n the same way in which it has been said that after Auschwitz it is impossible to write and think as before, after Timisoara it will no longer be possible to watch television in the same way.

Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*

VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION (VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION), the 1992 film by Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica, details the five days in December of 1989 during which a popular uprising in Romania deposed and executed the Stalinist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. The nascent revolt was first propelled onto international television news by images of corpses reputed to be victims of the army's recent attack on anti-government protestors in the western town of Timisoara. The bodies were laid out for display to the television cameras and the images of the dead helped publicize the incident abroad. Although the images were not seen on Romanian state television, reports of the massacre spread the uprising through the capital of Bucharest and to other towns. It was later disclosed that the bodies in the mass grave, although possibly victims of state terror, had in fact been buried too long ago to be victims of the Timisoara crackdown. On a larger scale, the fear and uncertainty surrounding the repressive power of the fallen regime produced estimates of those killed in the uprising that turned out to be grossly inflated.<sup>1</sup> The confusion surrounding the revolution, and the swiftness with which the army turned against the regime, led many to suspect that the apparently spontaneous revolt had been a coup engineered by dissident Communist generals and politicians. Although this incident and its international press coverage are only briefly cited in the opening voice-over of the film, the questions it raises regarding the use and abuse of images for politics, as well as the intersection of television, violence, and democracy, all structure the terrain on which VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION unfolds.

Limited to the five days of the revolution that it explores in chronological sequence, VIDEOGRAMS is constructed solely from recordings of Romanian state television broadcasts and what was captured by nomadic video cameras in and around the streets of Bucharest during that time. Long one-shot se-

quences from portable video cameras are inter-cut with images from state television archives, including both broadcast and off-air footage. Searching, unsteady cameras, distant or unclear subject matter, and technical difficulties are the rule. While the poor quality of the handheld camera footage attests both to the uncomposed actuality and occasional banality of the events, the general disregard for the codes and conventions of cinematography and television broadcast serves to highlight the sporadic efforts by television crews to reassert the professional norms of reportage.

The film turns on a spatial axis marked out by the state television station on one end and Central Committee headquarters, the government building that housed the Communist Party, on the other end. In staking out new political ground between the poles of media authority and political authority, the people of Bucharest occupy both their streets and their living rooms in a new way. While driving back security police still loyal to the regime and occasionally taking fire from unidentified snipers, the citizens of the capital quickly moved in to collectively occupy public space, asserting the previously illegal right to assembly. Many gathered in Palace Square outside Central Committee headquarters, the former site of state-sponsored pageants where just a day earlier, a disruption during an enforced pro-Ceaușescu rally had signaled the beginning of the revolt in Bucharest. As *VIDEOGRAMS* documents the TV broadcast van driving up to start filming the speeches, announcements, and debates being held on Ceaușescu's former viewing balcony, the subtitles translate the call issued over the loudspeakers that is advocating a new enlightenment, truth, and transparency for the public sphere: 'We ordered generators and spotlights. We shall turn the night into day in this square in a city which laid in darkness for so long'. However, when the filmmakers return us to the same scene a few hours later, the night is punctuated by gunfire and the flash of tracers, the spotlights chaotically scan the crowd and surrounding buildings for snipers, and soldiers fire into the darkness from a tank; as the speakers alternately call for the soldiers to stop firing as well as eliminate the remaining criminals, we learn that the promised illumination can bring with it unanticipated disruption, violence, and obscurity. The street, now populated with roving cameras, does not function solely as the space of political action, but plays host to new forms of popular visibility, manifestation and self-representation.

In the meantime, the televisions linking living rooms across the nation have also become part of the field of struggle. As families and friends gather around television sets to try to sort out what was happening, soldiers lay siege to the television station. After Ceaușescu had fled, students and workers quickly liberated the television station (see ill. 59 and 60). Far from a simply 'reflective' or 'communicative' medium, the interior of Studio 4 became an arena for on-screen takeovers, arrests, and decrees. In staging the revolutionary occupation

and armed defence of Studio 4, the new TV personalities were not so much reporting on outside events in the street as enacting, performatively declaring, a freed Romania.

The government officials, army generals, and dissidents who had gathered inside the Communist Party headquarters – to form new political parties, consolidate the interim government, and address the crowd gathered outside – quickly turned on television sets to watch the transmission of events in the studio and in the streets (see ill. 61). Inside, roving video cameras captured the deliberations going on within the Central Committee building. The democratic expansion of the political here unfolds with the horizontal interpenetration of the system of politics and the system of (tele-visual) representation.

In his analysis of media and politics in Romania during the uprising, Jean Baudrillard has written:

[T]he moment that the studio became the focal point of the revolution [...] everybody ran to the studio to appear on the screen at any price or into the street to be caught by cameras sometimes filming each other. The whole street became the extension of the studio, that is, an extension of the *non-place* of the event or of the *virtual* place of the event. The street itself became a virtual space. How to manage this paradoxical situation? When all information comes from television, how can the thousands of television viewers be at the same time in front of the screen *and* in the places of action?<sup>2</sup>

Baudrillard goes on to oppose what he calls the 'liberation of the image' to 'human liberty'. Here, the penetration of tele-visual recording and broadcast into the event and its actors – the so-called death of the real at the hands of the virtual – entails for Baudrillard the destruction of both historical reference and an active, free, and conscious political subject.<sup>3</sup> Behind this argument about 'the liberation of the image, its total mobility, its total disconnection and projection in the space of virtuality and simulation' (68) lies a traditional, Enlightenment model of the political subject. Political action, for Baudrillard, requires a free, unified, conscious agent who can know, control, and master the images that represent his or her place in the world. However, once the image of this subject exceeds his or her grasp, free to be transmitted and repeated across the globe, politics and responsibility become impossible. For Baudrillard, once the subject can no longer appropriate the images of his or her life, 'historical consciousness is struck down' (63).

As VIDEOGRAMS replays the events of the Romanian revolution, the images do indeed become 'nodal points of uncertainty [and] undecidability' (63), oscillating between revolution and coup, faked and real, in and out of control. However, rather than pre-emptively decrying the 'confusion in real time of act and sign' (64), VIDEOGRAMS offers no hasty conclusions; instead, it explores



what this confusion might mean for politics and publicity. Refusing to simply oppose the 'liberated image' to 'human liberty', the film investigates the relation between historical agency and the virtualisation of the event by asking how images might condition the extension of democratic demands. Specifically, the film poses questions regarding: one, the relation between the political actor and spectator, viewing and acting; two, the indeterminate nature of the democratic demand; and three, the historical event and its (tele-visual) representation.

## **Witness**

The film begins with a direct address to the viewer. Wearing a cast that runs from her hand to her shoulder, a woman lets out short cries of pain as she is lowered onto a hospital bed. Although, as we soon learn, she is waiting for two bullets to be removed from her body, the pained expression on her face changes when she notices the video camera hovering by the bed. She confirms that the camera is rolling and concentrates on speaking through the pain (see ill. 62). She gives her name, Rodica Marcau, and describes how she was attacked by the secret police. A witness to political violence, she has survived to report on the state's repressive arresting, shooting, and torturing of demonstrators in her town of Timisoara. Continuing the protestors' demands for freedom, bread, and happiness, she has a message of solidarity for the rest of Romania: Remember the dead and continue the revolution!

First, a message, an address, a report from a democratic revolution returns from the past of a European communist nation-state and its imminent collapse. The double injunction to remember the fallen and to continue the revolt, nominally addressed to her fellow revolutionaries, has been rerouted to the viewers of the videotape. The addressee is undetermined, the receiver put into question, and the viewer's response remains equally unfixed. The electronic circuit of the woman's declaration posits both revolutionary and spectator at the place of the viewing subject.

The structure of this videogram clearly troubles any idealisations of revolutionary praxis as the re-appropriation of an alienated subjectivity unified in knowledge and action. Here, the conscious, acting revolutionary subject is caught on film, frozen, extended, blurred, and most of all split, cut through by artificial prostheses, mediated and linked to the rest of the collective by technics and telematics. If VIDEOGRAMS links something like the open possibility of democracy with the circulation of the tele-visual image, both seem tied to the expropriation of the subject, and a disruption in the continuity between

knowledge and action. Rather than Baudrillard's lament that the priority of images in constructing the subject 'out in the street' results in tele-visual indifference and apathy, VIDEOGRAMS explores the difficulty of a subject that is neither clearly a passive spectator nor an active revolutionary. Challenging such a dichotomy, both the viewers of the film and those featured in it assume the position of witness, structured by an unmasterable force or image that precedes them and interrupts the verities of conscious knowledge. In this disruption of clear boundaries between self and other, image and event, the witness is called to a response or action that is never guaranteed.<sup>4</sup>

Shot through by death, turned to address the living, the woman in the video tells her story to the spectator, perhaps transmitting the reality of the trauma and igniting a revolutionary spark.<sup>5</sup> But the fact that both the 'actors' and viewers of the video are positioned as witnesses does not place them at a symmetrical level of exchange and recognition. Because this image from the past carries with it an uncrossable temporal lag that separates it from our present, any response the viewer offers to this image will come too late; no matter how many times the image is replayed, the viewer and the survivor do not see eye to eye.<sup>6</sup>

Even as it attempts to bridge this gulf, VIDEOGRAMS builds this temporal break into its formal structure. This scene of testimony is the first thing the viewer sees, preceding the title and the credits that mark out the body of the film proper. Similarly, after the credits for each camera and footage source have rolled by at the end of the film, an unexpected scene of direct address to the viewer appears: this time, a man is speaking, surrounded by other citizens, workers, or friends. Looking at the camera, he describes the repressive conditions of the regime, the economic hardships, all the money stolen from the people, the ethnic and social divisions fostered by the government, and begins to cry as he speaks of the relatives and children from so many different families who have died. Before concluding, he asks that people 'never forget to support each other because that's what life demands of us'. By placing these two scenes of witness at the margins of the film, outside the narrative arc of 'historical events', Farocki and Ujica demonstrate to what extent this testimony inhabits another time, irreducible to the linear unfolding of historicism.

## Past Images

Secondly, the time lapse that opens up between the enunciation and its reception gives the message the appearance of anachronism: what claims could this message stake on the present?<sup>7</sup> What could the call for democratic revolution

in the twilight of a Stalinist regime have to do with politics in the age of globalisation?

One might respond by stating that since democracy has been fully instituted and realised here, in the US, Europe, and the 'West', since the age of globalisation bears no historical similarity to crumbling Cold War Romania, the message is anachronistic in the sense of pure distance, non-relation, total and forgotten past: that woman cannot possibly be talking to us.

But the image remains. Lingering, it persists in addressing each new viewer, soliciting anyone who chances across it; we rest unsure about who it is she's talking to. The structural anonymity of the viewer of this videotaped message as well as the indefinite nature of the speaker's demands – bread, freedom, happiness – exceed her specific historical past. As Claude Lefort has theorised, the democratic invention is a symbolic mutation in the political order whose force derives precisely from its indeterminacy, the uncertain and contestable character of the foundation and institution of the social.<sup>8</sup> Etienne Balibar has similarly argued that the democratic equation of equality and liberty in the rights of man and citizen enacts an indeterminacy or 'hyperbolic universality' that exceeds its particular referent: the practical meaning or effects of the demand for freedom or happiness are never fully instituted at a historical moment, whether past or present.<sup>9</sup>

No longer wholly distant from the past invoked by this image, the present suffers its uneasy persistence, its recurrence, its anachronism. Returning from the past to disturb the proper boundaries of the present and its politics, the witness's address carries an injunction that divides the receiver between the past and the future, between remembering the dead and continuing the democratic revolution. This message from the past does not simply arrive at the present, but arrives to divide the present, dislocating the current, actual, or proper forms of democracy, whether limited to electoral representation or the unchecked expansion of neoliberal markets. Along with a certain debt to the past and the dead, this videogram's heterogeneous temporal structure invokes a democracy of the future, a democracy to come that disturbs what we think we know to be the present.<sup>10</sup>

## **'Video-gram'**

Thirdly, this introductory scene plays out the structure of the videogram for the viewer, as well as the way this structure conditions historical events. Etymologically linking image and writing, the presentation of the image as a 'videogram' asks the viewer to remain attentive to both the visual specificity of

the moving image and the importance of its 'textual', discursive, or institutional frame. Seen as a mark or a trace, the videogram possesses its own singular qualities that are nevertheless inscribed in broader systems of production and circulation; the image appears only when mobilised across a network of historical references, visual and non-visual alike, which condition and partially govern it.

While the plural 'videograms' in the title relates to the inscription of the image in this historical field, the word also invokes the transmission of images, as in the sending of telegrams. By suggesting that all images bear an address, the videogram calls attention to the function of interpellation in the image. The videogram we receive is not simply an inert historical record of past events and circumstances, but also serves to solicit viewers to look, to identify, to act in the present and future. Addressed to an unseen other, the videogram aims to hail a viewer; although the significance of the image is not given in advance, it nevertheless confronts the viewer with questions of response and responsibility.

The circulation of this message and the questions it poses are possible only through the technical apparatus of video recording, storing, reproduction, and transmission that, in capturing sound and image, cuts them off from their speaker. As Derrida has emphasised, the errancy of this message does not merely befall it later, after the message has been spoken or delivered.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the camera inhabits the very act of enunciation with a rupture, a spacing that breaks the image into the successive, pixellated scan lines of electronically coded light; it is not only a question about what effects the arrival of these videograms offer us today, but how this tele-technology of spacing, delay, and reproduction determined, divided, or conditioned the historical event or utterance. This could be rephrased by asking what it means not only for politics to happen *on* TV, but also what it means for politics to happen *for* TV.

If the function of television is to move images (or vision) through space, in a potentially endless transmission, video recording, as opposed to television, performs a temporal function that holds back, delays, captures, and stores the image in its decomposed form.<sup>12</sup> The video recorder not only provides for the fragmentation, storing, and repetition of the apparently irreversible temporal flow of 'live' TV, but the portable video camera also extends and diffuses this recording function beyond the television studio (previously only possible with film). The emphasis on the 'videogram' draws on both of these qualities to consider images at the level of discrete message, enunciation, or interpellation, before they are fully saturated and managed by the 24/7 multi-channel flow of television under late capitalism.

At the same time, Farocki and Ujica deftly cut between the street and the living room, the political conference and the television studio, further explor-

ing the temporality of the event and its transmission through the spaces of the image's broadcast and reception (see ill. 63 and 64 show a pan from Ceaușescu on television to the crowd in the street, connecting the space of the image to the place of its reception and to the locus of action).<sup>13</sup> The film qualifies the apparent neutrality and homogeneity of the endless, one-way television transmission by contrasting it with the many specific and situated television sets on which it is received. By frequently grounding the televised image in its different sites of reception, *VIDEOGRAMS* does not only outline the limits of the image, what is excluded or marked off by the edges of the TV set. It also links the broadcast image to other spaces and contexts, showing how the broadcast is never a single present instant, but always appropriated by and inserted into other visual economies; *VIDEOGRAMS* often shows how the look pushes back against the screen of the TV set, focusing on viewers scrutinising the image or cameras pointed at the television, appropriating the broadcast for new ends. While this attention to the 'spacing' of video in broadcast troubles any unitary meaning that would be carried by the videogram, it also disrupts the ideology of so-called 'live' transmission that requires the simulation of a unified, instantaneous visibility that signifies cognitive availability, symmetry, and equal exchange.<sup>14</sup>

## Old News

In addition to exposing the transmission to the different sites of reception that relate, rework, or relay it, *VIDEOGRAMS* submits the immediacy of video to other trials, sometimes repeating the same event from multiple points of view and often replaying a shot with a new narration or analysis. By showing what is discarded or cut out of the finished product, the viewer peeks in on the means of image production. In one section, we see four different versions of an American journalist trying to deliver his sound bite to the camera with just the right amount of ambient gunfire, all the while looking nervously over his shoulder between takes. This comparison not only suspends the perceptive immediacy of transmission, but undermines the knowing confidence and authority of the newsman by looking closely at how the 'live' news is planned, programmed, and produced for certain effects.

Keeping the larger context of the global tele-visual market in mind, this film is 'yesterday's news' in two ways. First, in a literal sense, the film is composed of the raw material that goes into the production of television news. Under the profit structure of tele-visual flow, the news must continuously manufacture urgency in order to generate the experience of the 'live' broadcast and stimu-

late consumer desire. The waste product of this fantasmagoric co-presence is the disposable daily transmission itself. Farocki and his collaborator Ujica were able to compile the huge amount of footage in the film only because it was no longer useful for international news outlets like CNN. VIDEOGRAMS uses the storage capabilities of the video archive to haunt the mechanized instantaneity of transmission, performing a historical lag in the broadcast that stages the return of the discarded past, critically disturbing the forgettable self-sufficiency of 'live' television and the version of history it promotes.

Thus the events of the film are also 'yesterday's news' according to a neoliberal historicism that, whether or not it proclaims the events of 1989 as the 'triumph of capitalism', still uses 'the present' to justify the restriction of the democratic imaginary to its Western electoral form, and to underscore the 'inevitability' of corporate globalisation and the privatisation and 'self-regulation' of markets. By confining itself to footage filmed within the five-day chronology of the revolution, VIDEOGRAMS refuses the confirming perspective granted to the historian by hindsight, instead returning to history in order to think it as an event, open to uncertainty, change, possibility. This investigation of the tele-visual event works to register the performative force of the revolutionary declaration or what Walter Benjamin called 'messianic time'. Derrida describes the messianic appeal as 'that irreducible moment of the historical opening of the future [that] is always revolutionary'.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, in order to keep the future open, the messianic never fully arrives, but hesitates. By exploring how the event gets photographed, frozen, cut up, and apportioned, VIDEOGRAMS asks how the image can affect media spectators with the force of revolutionary time.

The film puts itself in a critical relation not only to television but also to the history of documentary film, especially the appropriation of *cinema vérité* and direct cinema for broadcast journalism. What VIDEOGRAMS does not do is oppose the 'truth' of the mobile, nonprofessional street videographer to the mystifications of mass media. The proliferation of handheld cameras throughout the course of the film does work to subvert the attempts to control television through centralised transmission. However, since the film's limited time frame does not show us the effects of the revolution, it does not assert, but rather asks if the decentralisation of media technology is equal to its democratisation. Nor does this automatically favour the portable camera with greater veracity. While the cameras in the studio are limited by location, and a centralised transmission allows for greater programming and control, the image-gathering power of the cameras in the street is compromised by chance and bodily danger.

What is more, the material from which the film is composed is limited to the camera movements of those who have gone before, the documentarian's

willed omniscience is limited and broken; the lopsided, out-of-focus action in the corner of the frame remains in continual tension with the eye of the spectator that seeks to unite looking with knowing. Left to deal only with the available, incomplete images, documentary is treated as found footage. What emerges is something like a model of historical knowledge premised on the fact and the limit of the camera already being there to structure the event. Not only do images have their own historical force and legacy, but history itself becomes bound up in how we read it through images, with all the limits, blindness, and risk of abuse and falsification this entails.<sup>16</sup>

### The Screen: Between Insurrection and Constitution

Just as the revolutionary subject is partially constituted through his or her spectatorship, so the excessive moment of revolutionary politics that VIDEOGRAMS captures only occurs in and against the remaining institutional order of the state, pre-existing power structures, and emerging efforts to construct a new constitutional politics. As Etienne Balibar has theorised, the instability engendered by the democratic declaration of the identity of man and citizen, in the rights of man and the rights of citizen, results in the oscillation between what he calls insurrectionary and constitutional politics, between permanent, uninterrupted revolution and the state as institutional order.<sup>17</sup> The co-presence of these incommensurable forms of politics is evident in VIDEOGRAMS. This is most obvious in the behind-the-scenes footage of army generals and communist party members directing troops, organizing supplies, and forming new political parties. Here, the revolutionary faction is wholly contaminated by members of the ruling government who seek to establish their legitimacy with the people, often by way of visibility on television. Since democracy only functions because its outcome is not predetermined, the extension of equality and liberty under these compromised conditions becomes a question of hegemony. If these videograms transmit images of a revolutionary democratic imaginary, they also make it clear that the practical extension of this imaginary only comes at the cost of political struggle on unsure representational terrain.

VIDEOGRAMS, then, investigates the tele-visual image as a condition of politics. My thesis is that the radical intervention of the film occurs in the overlay of the citationality of the tele-visual image with the groundlessness of democratic politics. The 'citationality of the tele-visual image' simply means its ability to be cut up, reproduced, reassembled, and recontextualised in transmission. With 'groundlessness of democratic politics', I follow Lefort in maintaining that 'democracy is instituted and sustained by the *dissolution of the*



*markers of certainty*. It inaugurates a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law and knowledge, and to the basis of relations between *self* and *other*'.<sup>18</sup> With democracy, power resides within the people rather than being concentrated in the dictator or single-party apparatus. At the same time, the identity of 'the people' must always remain a question; maintaining the indeterminacy and open-endedness of democracy prohibits one group from laying claim to society or 'the people' as an integral whole to the exclusion of all others. The legitimisation of social antagonism renders society opaque to itself.

Let us be clear about what the (potentially global) circulation of the tele-visual image means: it does not signal the transparent, communicative intimacy of the global village or the world without borders. Nor does it realise transnational capital's disembodied ideal of the unhindered, instantaneous circulation of currency, images, or commodities; there is no transport that is not transformation. The possibility that tele-visual images circulate cannot be separated from the institutional circuits that legislate and regulate, edit, select, frame, and distribute those images. VIDEOGRAMS demonstrates how the analysis of media must be central to the practice of radical democracy: the successful exercise of democratic rights requires not only drawing on the rhetoric of political theory, but also accounting for what makes a sensible image. This includes codes of representability, entry conditions into the media, access to technological resources, cultural translation, and the limits of the visible.

Similarly, as democratic questioning shakes existing, crystallised social relations, it is accompanied by attempts to stabilise this indeterminacy, whether through the founding democratic social institutions or otherwise. The economic hardships suffered by the people of Romania after 1989, as well as the violent nationalisms that returned to persecute many Romanian ethnic minorities, point out how the revolution faltered on both the issue of building new social institutions and reforming the nation state. Not only was the new regime that promised to bring order and rule of law to Romania less democratically inclined than it had claimed, it was populated by ex-Communist politicians, secret police officers, and army generals who had manipulated the events to gain legitimacy as 'democratic leaders'. These image circuits entail static, interference, errancy, and opacity that not only plagues, but constitutes the intelligibility of the social; the response to this unreadability is not necessarily progressive, and the advancement of a radically democratic politics is by no means guaranteed.

Baudrillard formulates the risk in this global circulation of images by asking, 'Why would the image, once liberated, not have the right to be false?'<sup>19</sup> Rather than apathy or indifference, the voice-over and editing strategy of VIDEOGRAMS, like the rest of Farocki's oeuvre, shows how the ethico-political



response to this risk requires a practice of critical reading that does not determine the fate of the image in advance. This responsibility would attend both to the production, framing, and reception of the image in a circuit of political calculation, as well as to its singularity, its strange unsubstantial materiality, and its otherness.

## Direct Transmission

Like the film's first scene of testimony, the events in Bucharest on December 21, 1989, also begin with a direct address to the camera (see ill. 65). This time, the dictator Ceauçescu is making a live, televised speech to a massive state-organised rally a few days after the repression of protests in Timisoara. In the middle of a sentence, he worriedly looks toward a disturbance out of frame (see ill. 66). As shouts are heard, the camera shakes and static tears through the image just before the television cuts to a blank red screen with the title 'direct transmission' (see ill. 67).

The closed circuit of power that would connect Ceauçescu to his audience in an unmediated fashion has been interrupted and the transparent representation of the nation in his figure has been replaced with an opaque obstacle. In one sense, the blank screen indexes how the identity of people not defined in relation to the totalitarian state, that is, in popular resistance to the government, can appear only as the limit of intelligibility for that apparatus. In another sense, this paradoxical image, both visual interruption (the blank screen) and the assertion of continued live transmission (the title), tells us something about the structure of television.

In fact, this technical difficulty could be seen as pushing the latent contradictions of television to their extreme. According to Mary Ann Doane's account of the temporal structure of television, this image combines the two apparently incompatible temporal modes – flow and discontinuity – on which television operates. For Doane, 'catastrophe' is the unexpected interruption that television's realism of temporal continuity cannot assimilate, at least not immediately. Rather than the regulated, modulated punctuality of news flashes and ads for the newest, hottest commodity, catastrophe on television inflicts a traumatic shock resistant to the ideology of liveness, of which the loss of signal is the most disastrous. In the pre-programmed and minutely calculated flow of television, only when the signal is unexpectedly broken, lost, or terminated can it really be immediate, instantaneous, truly 'live' or 'direct'. The condition that guarantees television's referential connection to events is in fact its failure to broadcast at all. Doane sees the coverage of catastrophe in the

profit-driven corporate media of the West as a mechanism for television's internal justification and self-legitimation: first, information is only valuable when it is threatened with impending destruction or obsolescence; second, television's calculated flow is 'proven' to be indexically tied to events in the world, shoring up its authority in the interpretation of events. However, rather than fragmented consumerism, the poverty of censored television broadcasts during the totalitarian regime in Romania saturates this catastrophe with the political context of control and resistance.<sup>20</sup> In a desperate attempt to hold onto power, the regime tries to censor its own loss of control.

As the technological catastrophe stages the limits of television, the blank screen also registers the moment at which the Ceaușescu regime began to topple, driven by the nascent revolt to efface its own image. When Ceaușescu's visage returned to the television screen after the shouts and movement of the crowd that had interrupted his speech had died down, the repetition of his image also involved an alteration in its significance. No longer the enforced visibility of the legitimate ruler, it became the image of a weakened, insufferable tyrant, its broadcast energizing the popular revolt in Bucharest. The moment his image becomes ungovernable, when the totalitarian image is exposed to errancy, interruption, and re-signification, is also the moment at which the disruptive vision of democratic society emerges as the loss of the single position of power that dominates society from the outside. To maintain democratic questioning would mean keeping the 'people' and their institution in society open, subject to the unsettling circulation of images beyond their context and intended function. At this moment, the direct transmission of the will of the people can never be transparent or totally fixed. The locus of power becomes, as Lefort says, the image of an empty place, here flickering across television.

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## Notes

1. First picked up by East German and Yugoslav news agencies, the figure of 4500 dead in the Timisoara massacre, buoyed by images of bodies being exhumed from a gravesite, was later amended by Romanian doctors and international aid workers to a few hundred. Of the two dozen bodies uncovered in the pauper's cemetery in Timisoara, some appeared to have died of natural causes, while others had been bound with wire or bore the marks of torture, perhaps dumped there by the secret police before the uprising (Mary Battiata, 'Death Toll Doubts Raised in Romania',

- Washington Post*, 28 December 1989, final ed., A1+). At the peak of the revolution, Romanian television was reporting 80,000 dead; while the new government insisted that 60,000 had perished, hospital workers and international sources later estimated numbers in the low thousands (Amit Roy, 'Death Toll Put Under 10,000: Romania', *Times* [London], 31 December 1989). Despite the 'faked' or 'fraudulent' character of the images and the casualty estimates, we might ask how they bear witness to both the real and imagined terror instilled by the Ceauçescu regime. As VIDEOGRAMS makes clear, these numbers attest, in a different way, to the amplified paranoia and sense of loss that accompanied the fall of the regime; the hunt for missing bodies and disappeared relatives continued after the uprising. Contrary to Marx, these revolutionaries were not content to let the dead bury the dead. For a reading that claims 'Marx knew very well that the dead never buried anyone', see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 114, pp. 174-175.
2. Jean Baudrillard, 'The Timisoara Syndrome: The *Télécratie* and the Revolution', *D 2* [Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory] (New York, 1993), p. 64.
  3. 'Film mixes fiction and reality in a projective form, while television abolishes all distinctions and leaves no place for anything other than a screenlike perception in which the image refers only to itself [...] it raises the problem of the image's *indifference to the world* and thus that of our virtual *indifference* to both the world and image [...] [Television images] are *virtual*, and virtuality puts an end to both positivity and negativity and thus to all historical references' (Baudrillard, p. 62). '[W]hen TV becomes the strategic space of the event, it becomes unconditional self-reference' (63). And later, 'The Gulf War only reinforced this feeling of having been dragged so far into simulation that the question of truth and reality can no longer even be asked, so far into the liberation of the image that the question of freedom can no longer be posed [...] Television teaches us indifference, distance, radical skepticism, unconditional apathy' (70).
  4. For a rigorous account of the role of witnessing and media in deconstructing the relation between cognition and action, see Tom Keenan, *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), pp. 1-5, 12, 99-100.
  5. Shoshana Felman writes that 'the task of testimony is to impart [...] a firsthand knowledge of a historical passage through death, and of the way life will forever be inhabited by that passage and by that death' in such a way that this history and its passage touches, concerns, contaminates all who hear it (Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* [London: Routledge, 1992], p. 111). In a different context, Derrida relates this experience of death to the image and the archive when he writes that 'the living present is itself divided. From now on, it bears death within itself and reinscribes in its own immediacy what ought as it were to survive it. It divides itself, in its life, between its life and its afterlife, without which there would be no image, no recording. There would be no archive without this dehiscence, without this divisibility of the living present, which bears its specter within itself. Specter, which is also to say, *phantasma*, ghost [*revenant*] or possible image of the image' (Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek [Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002], p. 51).

6. 'The wholly other – and the dead person is the wholly other – watches me, concerns me, and concerns or watches me while addressing to me, without however answering to me, a prayer or an injunction, an infinite demand, which becomes the law for me: it concerns me, it regards me, it addresses itself only to me at the same time that it exceeds me infinitely and universally, without my being able to exchange a glance with him or with her' (Derrida, *Echographies*, pp. 120-121).
7. Recalling Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, Cathy Caruth writes that there is 'an inherent latency within the experience [of trauma] itself' so that 'the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time'. This split within immediate experience, 'the fundamental dislocation implied by all traumatic experience [...] is both its testimony to the event and to the impossibility of its direct access' (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996], pp. 8-9).
8. Claude Lefort, 'The Question of Democracy', *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 16.
9. Etienne Balibar, "'Rights of Man" and "Rights of Citizen": The Modern Dialectic of Equality and Freedom', *Masses, Classes, Ideas*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 49-50.
10. For Derrida, anachrony invokes 'what must (without debt and without duty) be rendered to the singularity of the other, to his or her absolute precedence or to his or her absolute previousness, to the heterogeneity of a *pre-*, which, to be sure, means what comes before me, before any present, thus before any past present, but also what, for that very reason, comes from the future or as future as the very coming of the event' (*Specters*, p. 28). This division or disjuncture in the present is the possibility of justice, which is not without its risks; later, he states, 'anxiety in the face of the ghost is properly revolutionary' because it 'calls upon death to invent the quick and enliven the new, to summon the presence of what is not yet there' (p. 109).
11. See Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context', trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 8-9, 17. *Videograms* catalogues a long list of technical difficulties that structure the development of the revolution. Beginning with a camera too far from the event to be very informative, the film focuses on the interruption of Ceauçescu's televised speech (the voiceover notes that Ceauçescu responds by shouting 'allo, allo' into the microphone 'as if there were noise on the line'), a minister repeating the government's resignation to the crowd because the television cameras were not turned on the first time, televised speeches from the Central Committee balcony cut short or shot through with static, as well as an entire section called 'attempted broadcasts'.
12. Richard Dienst, *Still Life in Real Time: Theory After Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 20-23.
13. For an analysis of the way television transmission both splits the image between different sites and also serves to unite them, see Samuel Weber, 'Television: Set and Screen', *Mass Mediauras*, ed. Alan Cholodenko. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

14. Deborah Esch writes, 'Often the illusion of instantaneity is motivated by a vested interest in erasing from the image the multiple, heterogeneous times that went into its production, positioning, and eventual reception. But these constitutive distances, or differences, cannot be *represented* in the photograph; rather, the passing of time, and the time of its own passing (as image of the past) can only be *figured* there. Thus we are called upon to search the image for precisely what it occults: the differential times that characterize the medium's structure and effects' (*In the Event: Reading Journalism, Reading Theory* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999], p. 2).
15. *Specters*, pp. 167-168. For an account of the way that the temporal lag in the return of the past also involves a singular urgency in the 'here-now', see *Spectres*, pp. 30-31
16. As the camera pans across a room packed with people watching a television, some pointing their own cameras at the screen to record the announcement of the capture, trial, and execution of the Ceauçescus, the voice-over in VIDEOGRAMS observes, 'Camera and event: since its invention, film has seemed destined to make history visible. It has been able to portray the past and stage the present. We have seen Napoleon on horseback and Lenin on the train. Film was possible because there was history. Almost imperceptibly, like moving forward on a Moebius strip, the side was flipped. We look on and have to think: if film is possible, then history too is possible'.
17. Balibar, p. 51.
18. Lefort, p. 19.
19. Baudrillard, p. 68. Earlier, he observed, 'Absolving the real event and substituting a double, a ghost event, an artificial prosthesis, like the artificial corpses of Timisoara, testifies to an acute awareness of the image function, of the blackmail function, of the speculation, of the deterrence function of information' (Baudrillard, p. 65).
20. But can the punctual discontinuity of catastrophe continue to hold out the promise of the opening of a democracy to come? While we may witness the temporary loss of control or the breakdown of the ideology of immediate referential authority from broadcast news, what would an extensive democratization of (tele-visual) media and technology look like?

# Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts

Wolfgang Ernst and Harun Farocki

## I. A Visual Archive of Cinematographic Topics: Sorting and Storing Images (Wolfgang Ernst)

The cultural memory of images has traditionally linked images with texts, titles, and other verbal indices. Confronted with the transition of images to digital storage, non-verbal methods of classification are gradually becoming more important. It is not the archival question as such which makes video memory a problem; but that search methods used to find pictorial information are still limited to models developed for retrieving texts: 'Typically, available methods depend on file ID's, keywords, or texts associated with the images. They do not allow queries based directly on the visual properties of the images, [and they] are dependent on the particular vocabulary used'.<sup>1</sup>

In his 1766 essay 'Laocoon', G. E. Lessing discussed the aesthetic conflict between the logic of language and the logic of images in terms of a genuinely multimedia semiotics: *pictura* is no longer – as Horace declared – *ut poiesis*; time-based media (like dramatic speech and linear narratives) differ from space-based media (like simultaneous pictures). The digitisation of images today provides a technical basis of inquiry into this conflict, so that this investigation can be grounded in the terms of the computer.

The archive here is seen as a medium of storage and a form of organisation of all that can be accessed as knowledge. The function of archives of images such as museums or data banks exceeds by far the mere storage and conservation of images. Instead of just collecting passively and subsequently storing these holdings, archives actively define what is to be known, remembered, and *archivable* at all. In so far that archives also determine what is allowed to be forgotten. In terms of technology, an archive is a coupling of storage media, the format of contents, and address structure. In this case, the images must be conceived as data format. Methodologically this implies leaving behind the contemplation and description of single images in favour of an investigation of sets of images. In terms of knowledge and memory, image archives pose, the following questions: what new kinds of knowledge will exist exclusively in the form of images; what part of traditional knowledge can be transformed into images; and what part might just vanish altogether? Therefore, it would

not make sense to retell a teleological story of image-processing which finally reached its goal in digitisation; on the contrary, this history of images should be revised from the present point of view of digitisation. How can, for example, archives be related to algorithms of image processing, of pattern recognition and computer graphics?

What is needed is a new image archaeology that has as its aim the rethinking of the notion of images from the vantage point of the process of archiving. In sharp contrast to traditional hermeneutics, the media-archaeological investigation of image archives does not regard images as carriers of experiences and meanings. The relation between vision and image cannot be taken as the guideline of investigation, since image processing by computers can no longer be re-enacted with the anthropological semantics of the human eye. The methodological starting point must be theories of technical media, such as Michel Foucault's discourse analysis and Claude Shannon's mathematical theory of communication, as well as the practices of data-structure oriented programming.

The memory arts, as developed by rhetoricians from antiquity to the Renaissance, were essentially visual techniques of memorisation. Museums, collections, images of picture galleries, and catalogues ever since have always dealt with the programming of material image banks. The striving for visual knowledge in the aptly named 'age of enlightenment' during the eighteenth century led to pictorial encyclopaedias with their visualisation of knowledge (in the form of illustrated plates, such as the visual supplement of the big *French Encyclopaedia* edited by Diderot and d'Alambert). In the nineteenth century, photography became the switching medium from ocular perception and pictorial knowledge to technological perception, creating the first technical image archives. In the twentieth century, the moving image opened up new possibilities concerning the idea of the visual archive. Classical Hollywood, with its rigid rules of editing, its genre conventions and normative image sequencing in the form of the canonical screenplay construction can be seen as a hybrid form of 'archive' of cultural memory – halfway between the rhetoric of the ancients (Aristotle) and the technical media (photography).

### **Navigating Images on the Borderline of Digital Address**

Western culture, thus, has for the longest time subjected the memory of images to verbal or numerical access (alphanumeric indexing by authors and subjects). The advent of the cinema challenged but did not change this mode of thinking. Even Sergei Eisenstein subjected films to the idea of encoding and deciphering a virtual storybook, by transcribing moving images into a score – a kind of reverse engineering of the written script. In this respect, the iconic



turn, predicted by W. T. Mitchell, has yet to arrive in the field of image-based multimedia information retrieval.

Addressing and sorting non-scriptural media remains an urgent challenge (not only because of the commercial potential of moving image archives), which after the arrival of fast-processing computers can be tackled by digitising analogous sources. While digitisation does not necessarily guarantee better image quality, it does offer the option of addressing not only images (frame by frame), but also each single picture element (pixel). Images and sounds thus become calculable and can be subjected to algorithms of pattern recognition procedures, which will 'excavate' unexpected optical statements and perspectives out of the audio-visual archive. For the first time, such an archive can organise itself not just according to meta-data, but according to criteria proper to its own data-structure: a visual memory in its own medium (endogenic). By translating analogous, photographic images (including film) into digital codes, not only do images become addressable in mathematical operations, their ordering as well can be literally calculated (we can note here the re-appearance of principles of picture-hanging already envisaged by Diderot in the eighteenth century).

Genuinely mediatory criteria for storing electronic or filmic images have been listed by the former director of the Federal Archives of Germany (Kahlenberg), and the chief archivist of ZDF (Schmitt), Germany's national public broadcasting channel, specialising in, among other subjects, historical documentary features. Besides economically driven criteria (such as facilitating international trade with their holdings and repeat broadcast of their programmes), they have developed a number of historical-semantic-iconographic criteria:

1. historical event-centred;
2. political and social indicators of long-term developments and trends;
3. the social reality of the everyday;
4. special optical effects (remarkable camera perspectives, such as diagonal framing and extreme high or low angles);
5. special dramaturgical effects within a sequence (montage cuts, opposition of single frames);
6. special pictorial motifs (landscapes, people);
7. last but not least, media-specific criteria (appropriate to media archives, documenting the history of the broadcasting channel itself).

In the marketplace, however, digital video browsing still seeks to reaffirm textual notions such as the story format, the segmentation of a video sequence such as the news story, 'a series of related scenes with a common content. The system needs to determine the beginning and ending of an individual news



story'.<sup>2</sup> Beginning and end, however, in technical terms, are nothing but cuts here.

### **Cinematic Montage as Storage and Sorting Principle**

Within the medium of film, the practice of montage (cutting) has always already performed a kind of image-based image sorting (for instance, by similarity, or contiguity). Cutting has two options: to link images by similarity or by contrast (Eisenstein's option). Only video – as a kind of intermediary medium between classical cinema and the digital image – has replaced the mechanical addressing of cinematographic images by different means (time code), offering new options of navigating within stored image space. Automated digital linking of images by similarity, though, creates rather unexpected, improbable links: which are, in the theory of information, the most informative, the least redundant ones. It also allows one to search for the least probable cuts.

Jurij Lotman, in his film semiotics, explained the importance of the principle of contiguity: 'Joining chains of varied shots into a meaningful sequence forms a story'.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Roger Odin in his analysis of Chris Marker's film *LA JETÉE* (1963) poses the question: how can a medium, consisting of single and discrete shots, in which nothing moves internally – photographic moments of time (frozen image) – create narrative effects? Cinematographic sequences are time-based, but film as such – the cinematographic apparatus – 'has no first layer of narrativity', when being looked at media-archaeologically.<sup>4</sup> 'The absence of reproduction of movement [...] tends to block *narrativity*, since the lack of movement means that there is no before/after opposition within each shot. The [effect of] narrative can only be derived from the sequence of shots, that is, from montage.'<sup>5</sup>

What happens when a sequence like this is no longer arranged according to iconological or narrative codes, but rather in an inherently similarity-based mode, leading to a genuinely (image- or media-)archaeological montage? After a century of creating the basis for an audio-visual technical memory, a new cultural practice of mnemonic immediacy is about to emerge: the recycling and feedback of the media archive (a new archival economy of memory). With new options of measuring, naming, describing and addressing digitally stored images, this ocean needs to be navigated (cybernetics, literally) in different ways and no longer merely ordered by classification (the encyclopaedic enlightenment paradigm). Such a media-archaeology is the opposite of iconographic history: What is being digitally 'excavated' by the computer is a genuinely media-mediated gaze on a well-defined number of (what we still call) images.

This state of affairs has motivated the film director Harun Farocki, the media theorist Friedrich Kittler, and myself to design a project that performs an equivalent to lexicographical research using a collection of filmic expressions. Contrary to familiar semantic research in the history of ideas (which Farocki calls *contentism*,<sup>6</sup> that is: the fixation on the fable, the narrative bits), such a filmic archive will no longer concentrate on protagonists and plots, list images and sequences according to their authors, or log the time and space of recording and subject. On the contrary, digital image data banks allow for systematising visual sequences according to genuinely iconic notions (*topoi*, or – for time-based images – a variation of the notion of Bachtin's *chrono-topoi*). The narrative elements, too, will reveal new insights into their semantic, symbolic, and stylistic values. This is exactly what Farocki had in mind, when in the summer 1995 at the Potsdam Einstein Foundation he proposed the project for a kind of visual library of film which would not only classify its images according to directors, place and time of shooting, but beyond that: it would systematise sequences of images according to motifs, *topoi* and narrative statements, thus helping to create a culture of visual thinking with a visual grammar, analogous to our linguistic capacities.<sup>7</sup>

Given that the moving image is the first medium that can 'store' time, one of the greatest challenges now is how to 'sort' this time. With film, time enters the pictorial archive. The equivalent for iconographic studies of images is the search for macroscopic time objects in moving images, 'for instance, larger sequences constituting a narrative unit' (the preoccupation of Christian Metz's film-semiotics, in the 1960s).<sup>8</sup> The media-archaeological look on film, on the contrary, segments serially. Once digitised, even the single frame is no longer a static photographic image, but a virtual object, which is constantly being re-inscribed on the computer monitor in electronically refreshed light beams. While the visual archive has for the longest time in history been an institution associated with unchangeable content, the memory of (time-based) images itself becomes dynamic and images get a temporal index.

Of course, 'motion is the major indicator of content change,' a zoom shot, for instance, is best abstracted by the first, the last, and one frame in the middle.<sup>9</sup> 'Current video processing technologies reduce the volume of information by transforming the dynamic medium of video into the static medium of images, that is, a video stream is segmented and a representative image is "extracted"; that is exactly what indexing by words (description) does. How does one avoid freezing the analysis into a data bank? Image analysis looks at the images in the video stream. Image analysis is primarily used for the identification of scene breaks and to select static frame icons that are representative of a scene',<sup>10</sup> using colour histogram analysis and optical flow analysis and speech analysis for analyzing the audio component (which can be done by transform-

ing the spoken content of news stories into a phoneme string). Thus the image stream is not subjected to verbal description but rather accompanied by an audio-visual frame analysis.

Retrieval and browsing require that the source material first be effectively indexed. While most previous research in indexing has been text-based, content-based indexing of video with visual features is still a research problem. Visual features can be divided into two levels (cf. Erwin Panofsky's three iconological image-layers: low-level image features, 'radical surface', and semantic features based on objects and events). How can this be translated into the terms of movement? A viable solution seems to be to index representative key-frames (O'Connor 1991) extracted from the video sources. But what would 'representative' mean, in our present *archivo-archaeological* context? 'Key frames utilise only spatial information and ignore the temporal nature of a video to a large extent.'<sup>11</sup>

The basic unit of video to be represented or indexed is usually assumed to be a single camera shot, consisting of one or more frames generated and recorded contiguously and representing a continuous action in time and space. Thus, temporal segmentation is the problem of detecting boundaries between consecutive camera shots. The general approach to solving the problem has been the definition of a suitable quantitative difference metric, which represents significant qualitative differences between frames.<sup>12</sup> The question, then, is what exactly is the boundary between the iconological and the *archaeological* gaze, between semantics and statistics, between narrative and formal (in the sense of Wölfflin's *topoi*? Admittedly, a *topos* is a rhetorical category; rhetoric, though, is more of a technique than a question of content. For instance, Immanuel Kant considered the ordering art of topics to be a kind of storage grid for general notions, just like the books in a library are distributed and stored on shelves with different inscriptions. But do we always have to group image features into meaningful objects and attach semantic descriptions to scenes,<sup>13</sup> or does it instead make sense to concentrate on syntax, treating semantics as second-order-syntax? This is where Farocki's notion of cinematographic *topoi* or a thesaurus provides a preliminary answer: 'Each segment has some informative label, or topic. It is this kind of table of contents that we strive [for instance, by topic segmentation] to automatically generate.'<sup>14</sup>

### The Warburg Paradigm

Aiming at an archive of expressions is what Farocki shares with the art historian Aby Warburg who established, between the World Wars, a visual, photography-based archive of gestural expressions (so-called *pathos formulas*) in Western art history, in the form of his *Mnemosyne-Atlas* (a kind of visual

encyclopaedia where the reproductions, provided with numbers, could be constantly re-arranged and re-configured). But, although Warburg conceived of his chart sequentially, even there the *a priori* of this pictorial memory is still the order of the library.<sup>15</sup> It is the famous Warburg file catalogue (*Zettelkästen*) which translates both texts and images into alphanumerical notations – like in digital space – which then allow for hypermedia-like links of visual and verbal information (the definition for hypertext according to Ted Nelson).

*Encyclopaedia Cinematographica* has been the name of a film project of the German Institute of Scientific Film (Göttingen), which, under the guidance of Konrad Lorenz, attempted to fix the world of moving beings on celluloid (up to 4000 films). Not unlike the medical films produced at the Berlin hospital Charité between 1900 and 1990, which the media artist Christoph Keller has successfully prevented from being thrown away as trash, this visual encyclopaedia forms an archive, which gains its coherence not from semantically internal but formally external criteria.<sup>16</sup>

As a first practical 'entry' for an analogous international *Dictionary of Filmic Terms* – and taking one hundred years of film as a motive – Farocki has produced a commentated compilation of the recurrent cinematographic motif of WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY (*ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK*, Germany 1995) – starting with the Lumière brothers film *LA SORTIE DES USINES LUMIÈRE* (1895)<sup>17</sup> and reoccurring in films by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Fritz Lang, D. W. Griffith, and Hartmut Bitomsky. Farocki operates on an iconological level in classifying cinematographic topics (see also his film *THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS* (*DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE*), where he links gestures which are symptomatic of Taylorism in work situations – and in the standardisation of filmic rules themselves<sup>18</sup> – with the narrative gestures of such films). There is, in fact, a historic film model: a film produced in the US called *HANDS*, showed gestures which did not tell stories – a phenomenon well known, for instance, from forensic rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> Today, one option for the content-based retrieval of digital archives is using statistical object modelling techniques (so-called Hidden Markov Models, probability scores which are deformation tolerant), i.e., the user searches an image database intuitively by applying simple drawings, sketches: a hand, for instance.

Here, the subject and the object of *THE EXPRESSIONS OF HANDS* become *performative*. Film itself is not a tactile, but visual medium. However, when it comes to creating a man-machine interface for the query of image databanks, it is easier to use a computer mouse or digitizer board than an alphanumeric keyboard – a fact which, on the physiological level, matches the disadvantages of text-based retrieval and the traditional manual textual indexing.<sup>20</sup>

Farocki has also been working on filmic expressions of symptomatic moments of human encounters and video surveillance in prisons (*ICH GLAUBTE*,

GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN), installed as a two-channel-version, that is, two projections are blended and overlapped into one, both visually and acoustically.<sup>21</sup>

As in classical iconography, verbal commentaries, attached to the image sequences, explain or extend the meaning; one of the reference books for this iconological approach shown in Farocki's *DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE* is Karl von Amira and Claudius von Schwerin's, *Rechtsarchäologie: Gegenstände, Formen und Symbole Germanischen Rechts*, Berlin (Ahnenerbe-Stiftung) 1943, especially page 17: 'Prisons'. I want to contrast this with a media-archaeological approach, where the aesthetics of surveillance cameras is taken as a starting point. For this field, automatic image sorting and comparative algorithms have been developed, which might be used as the basis for an audio-visual archive of filmic sequences.

Indeed, the genre of compilation film already operates on similarity-based image retrieval (by association), as noted by Pierre Billard in *Cinéma 63* (April 1963 issue): There is always a director who feels tempted to create, out of thousands of metres of known film material, new combinations and interpretations, 'in order to breath new life into the material'.<sup>22</sup> A veritable *memory of waste*; what happens to the *non utilisées* (*nus* – *nudes* – in the language of the cutters)?<sup>23</sup>

This is why Farocki envisions the *Visual Archive* as a CD-ROM which can be read/seen vertically and horizontally, i.e., paradigmatically and *syntagmatically*, which is different from the linear reading of analogue film and video.

While the *Visual archive of cinematic topoi* project began as an iconographical and logically oriented project at first glance, its coupling with new a-semantically operating digital-image sorting programmes opens up new perspectives, resulting in a productive, but perhaps irreconcilable, tension between the image-content-based (Farocki) and the media-archaeological (Ernst) approach which privileges a form-based method of ordering images, as developed by the controversial art historian Heinrich Wölfflin.<sup>24</sup>

While the French *apparatus theory* (Baudry) discovered that the ideological pressure and physical *disciplination* acted upon the viewer by the very technical form of the optical media which select, frame, and direct the visual,<sup>25</sup> the media-archaeological aesthetics on the contrary makes these technical predispositions a chance for liberating the images from exclusively human perception. An algorithm, however, will never compose images in a way that Farocki does; Farocki may be heading towards his individual, rather idiosyncratic archive. *Authoring tools* simply do not reach the level of complexity of associations, which grow from experience rather than data banks.<sup>26</sup> 'We do not have to search for new, unseen images, but we have to work on the already known images in a way that they appear new', Farocki comments on his film *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (*BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT*

DES KRIEGES, 1988-89).<sup>27</sup> Which is true, though, for the digital transformation of images as well. Thus the 'death of the author', proclaimed once by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, is the precondition for the digital archive: a radical separation from subjective respects. This is how photography acts upon the real, for instance, by superimposing faces of different people, thus blending them into a composite picture for the purpose of apprehending a suspect.<sup>28</sup> This is also the realm of supervising cameras, of *monitoring systems* which actually *create* an archive of filmic expressions by automatically selecting images according to affinities with an archive – an affinity which was not seen by the allied centre for aerial photography analysis in Medmenham, England, when the first aerial photographs of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Complex from April 1944 onwards were not identified as concentration camps by human eyes. 'They were not under orders to look for the Auschwitz camp, and thus they did not find it' – analogous to pattern recognition in automated image retrieval systems. Here the Lacanian separation of the camera (and digital) gaze from the human eye makes sense:

Not only does the camera gaze here manifestly 'apprehend' what the human eye cannot, but the eye also seems strikingly handicapped by its historical and institutional placement, as if to suggest that military control extends beyond behaviour, speech, dress, and bodily posture to the very sensory organs themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Human blindness here confronts technical insight:

Again and again, even in 1945, after the Nazis had cleared out the Auschwitz camps [...] Allied airplanes flew over Auschwitz and captured the camps in photographs. They were never mentioned in a report. The analysis had no orders to look for the camps, and therefore did not find them.<sup>30</sup>

Only the I.G. Farben Monowitz chemical factories were of strategic interest to the Allies, which is what attracted the bombers and cameras. Today, of course, it is television cameras that both guide their weapons to their targets and provide a record of the event in the same instant.<sup>31</sup>

Thirty-three years after the pictures were shot, two CIA men undertook a new analysis of the images, having been stimulated for this search by the *Holocaust* television series. They fed into the photo archive computer the co-ordinates of all strategically important targets situated in the vicinity of the concentration camp – and thus also the co-ordinates of the I.G. Farben plant at Monowitz; thus the alliance of automated image recognition and military targets becomes evident. Since World War I and II bomber planes have been equipped with cameras in co-ordination with search lights; in the case of the V-2 rocket, these camera images were telematically transferred to auto-flight-correction systems, thus they were not addressed to human eyes at all any

more. 'A programme is being developed that focuses on sections of aerial photographs and isolates moving objects [...]. More pictures than the eyes of the soldiers can consume.'<sup>32</sup>

In the first image from April 4, 1944, they identified the Auschwitz gas chambers. What distinguishes Auschwitz from other places cannot be immediately observed from these images. We can only recognize in these images what others have already testified to, eyewitnesses who were physically present at the site. Once again there is an interplay between image and text in the writing of history: texts that should make the images accessible, and images that should make the texts imaginable.<sup>33</sup>

So it was only belatedly that the word 'gas chamber' was literally inscribed on the photographs. Once again, images can only be retrieved logo-centrally. The alternative is automated image retrieval by image content. In order to do so, we have to insist on the computability of the imagined world. For monitoring systems to process a large amount of electronic images, such as human faces, such systems have to get rid of semantic notions of *Gestalt*:

The police are not yet able to register the characteristics of a human face that remain the same, in youth and old age, in happiness and in sorrow. [...] And because the police do not know what it is, how to describe the picture of a human being, the police want at least to take measurements of it, to express its picture in numbers.<sup>34</sup>

Enter the computability of images, which derives ultimately from Albrecht Dürer and the Renaissance perspective artists' scale pictures (the rules of projective geometry). 'This precedes depiction by photographic means' and makes it, conversely, possible for machines to calculate pictures out of numbers and rules, as accentuated by the late media philosopher Vilém Flusser (see ill. 39):

Vilém Flusser has remarked that *digital technology* is already found in embryonic form in photography, because the photographic images is built up out of points and decomposes into points. The human eye synthesizes the points into an image. A machine can capture the same image, without any consciousness or experience of the form, by situating the image points in a co-ordinate system. The continuous sign-system image thereby becomes divisible into discrete units; it can be transmitted and reproduced. A code is thus obtained that comprehends images. This leads one to activate the code and to create new images out of the code language.<sup>35</sup>

Humans are much better than computers at extracting semantic descriptions from pictures. Computers, however, are better than humans at measuring properties and retaining these in long-term memory. This is why the IBM search engine QBIC (Query by Image Content), in the quarrel between semantic *versus* non-semantic information, does not try to radically decide but in-



stead tries to distribute the task according to the respective strength in the human-machine interface: 'One of the guiding principles used by QBIC is to let computers do what they do best – quantifiable measurements – and let humans do what they do best – attaching semantic meaning'<sup>36</sup> that establishes a feedback-loop between man and machine and stages the difference between analogous and digital-data processing. Thus it does not try to efface, but to creatively enhance the human-computer difference where they meet on the interface.

Dormant mnemonic energies can be revitalised out of the latent audio-visual archive of film (as long as they are accessible in the *public domain* of state and public image archives). Opening new ways of access to such archives in an administrative and technical sense is an aim of the project which will test (or even develop) new tools of image-based image retrieval (e.g. QBIC). Versions of this new cultural practice are marginally already being performed by the archival image retrieval software *VideoScribe* at the Institut National de l'Audio-visuel in Paris. What remains is the theoretical reflection of this practice on its implications for memory culture and historiography of film, in order to supplement film-philological approaches by trans-hermeneutic ways of processing cinematic information.

## Beyond Morelli

Excavating the cinematographic archive also means uncovering the hidden virtual machine of the film event, its cuttings and montages hidden behind the apparent narrative. With film, there is a different aesthetics implied in the succession of technically generated images: formal variations and differences are used to achieve the illusion of continuity in time and space. This allows one to search within films according to these rules of organisation of images; the procedure is based on identifying and logging the differences of objects (shapes, colours) in digitized images. This kind of program is based not on iconographic, word-based criteria, but, on the contrary, on the computer's dullness:

No 'sample information' can suffice [...] unless great care is taken in finding the points at which the text ceases to be standard and becomes variable. In one sense this type of detective work emulates the original text compiler's work in creating the text. [...] No understanding of the meaning of the text is required to analyse text in this way. In many ways, this is an ideal application for the 'dump' computer. The computer will be able to sort which elements are similar and which are unique, which are always variable, which are sometimes similar, etc. To the computer, the mysteries of the meaning of the text [...] are not relevant. The words might as well be figures. Where a database becomes useful in this case is in dealing with quantities of information, which would otherwise become unmanageable.<sup>37</sup>



This is reminiscent of the colour theory of the impressionist school of painting, as analysed by the late art historian Max Imdahl in his seminal study *Farbe (Colour)* from 1987. Its main characteristic is the ‘desemantisation of seeing’ (‘Entbegrifflichung des Sehens’), freeing the image from its pictorial logic – an archaeological gaze indeed.<sup>38</sup>

A digital-image sorting method has been developed by the London-based art historian William Vaughan under the name *Morelli*. He reduces digital pictures to a sort of visual abstract called the ‘visual identifier’ which manages to keep the characteristic signature of an image, which then can be mathematically compared with similar structures without absorbing enormous amounts of storage space. Contrary to art historical image banks like *Iconclass* or the Marburg-based *German Documentary Centre for the Arts*, where we can access images via Internet but still only address them by verbal descriptors like subject or artist name ([www.bildindex.de](http://www.bildindex.de)), the specific new option in digital space is the possibility of addressing images *in their own medium* according to inherent criteria like formal and colour qualities; QBIC, for instance, allows one to draw outlines of objects in pictures and to search for similar shapes in the pictorial archive. This, of course, requires an explicit non-iconographic view of images: not seeing, but gazing/scanning (aesthetics of the scanner), a media-archaeological approach like in Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall’s book on *Tiepolo* which is explicitly ‘un-historical’ or pictorial elements, like ship masts, which are being analysed beyond any iconographical content and are instead being regarded as graphic and geometrical picture elements (macro-‘pixels’, in a way).<sup>39</sup>

This is significantly different from the method of the 19th-century scholar Morelli who is well known for having detected fraudulent paintings by observing seemingly insignificant details which reveal an author’s very individual style: ‘The automated “Morelli” system is not concerned with establishing authorship’, but ‘with providing an objective means of describing and identifying pictorial characteristics, such as form, configuration, motif, tonality and [...] colour’. Here digital image processing takes over:

The comparison [i.e., of images] is of a simple ‘overlay’ kind, and points of similarity and difference are recorded during the process of comparison. [...] The central [criterion] is that of a simple matching process. In this sense it is really the visual equivalent of the ‘word search’ that is a standard feature of every word-processing and database package [made] possible due to the fact that the digitized image is an image that is stored as a set of quantifiable elements.<sup>40</sup>

Between the human notion of an image and the digital, formal format of an image stands the pictogram as a cultural form(alisation),<sup>41</sup> applied as an interface

tool for image retrieval by QBIC, where the user is supposed to draw an outline of the object to be found.<sup>42</sup> Another notion of sorting pictures is *blending*, which derived from camera techniques and brings us even closer to the project of a visual encyclopaedia of filmic expressions, and in cognitive linguistics it means the virtual combination of two realms of imagination. It is different from metaphoric speech, in that blending transforms the context of image *a* into image *b*.<sup>43</sup> And so, if cognitive operations work like this, why not translate them into algorithmic procedures?

## 2. A Cinematographic Thesaurus (Harun Farocki)

I am a lover of dictionaries. I get great pleasure out of looking up words and their etymological sources in specialised and obscure lexica. This I do without any systematic approach and thus it resembles my general working method: a filmmaker does not work within a clearly demarcated field, but rather continually notices new things with passing interest, believing that he thereby acquires a kind of intuition for such things. In searching for order in my collection of material, I have to think of dictionaries because of the way they document the usage of a word or expression chronologically, through the decades or centuries. And it occurred to me that there is nothing comparable to a dictionary in the realm of cinema. How might one even name such a thing? One could call it an 'illustrated book', a 'thesaurus' or a 'treasure trove of images', or perhaps even an 'archive of filmic expressions'. I arrive at this latter title by way of the exemplary series of publications termed the *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (literally, the archive for the history of concepts), published by the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz over the past several decades. This collection has the advantage of not being bound to any lexical or systematic principle, and it includes, for instance, a contribution by the philosopher Hans Blumenberg, who offers a basic approach to the study of metaphor. There, he examines the word 'to enjoy' in German, when used with the genitive case as in Latin ('frui'), such as is found in Johann Sebastian Bach's hymn 'Genieße der Ruh' in contrast to 'enjoy' with the accusative case, as would be common usage today ('genieße die Ruhe'). Over a space of perhaps thirty pages Blumenberg makes the distinction between these two grammatical cases clear. Such a contribution sharpens one's consciousness for the manner in which language functions. There ought to be a similar work, which offers an education of one's perception of the fine distinctions within filmic language! Something akin to Christian Meier's text on the political terminology in use among the Greeks in the 6th century B.C., which follows the trans-

formation in the meaning of the words 'democracy' and 'tyrannis', 'eunomy' and 'isonomy' at that time, a work that I cite in my compilation *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*. What is essential for me is that the texts in such an archive are independent of each other and do not acquire their individual legitimacy through the system in which they are embedded.

My first contribution to this imaginary archive was indeed *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*; the second was from 1997 and was called *DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE/THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS*. I quote the exposé for this film: 'The first close-ups in film history were focused on the human face, but the second ones showed hands. These close-ups isolate, emphasise or magnify: hands that greedily grasp a glass, hold a revolver, tremble with fear or are clenched in rage. A close-up of the face is something else entirely from that of the hands. A face can stand in for the entirety of the person (perhaps because the eyes are located there, offering a possible access point to the soul, to the self), while the longer one looks at them, the more hands look like objects, or perhaps like small creatures. Hands often seem to reveal something that the face seeks to hide, such as when someone crushes a glass in their bare hands even as they try to maintain composure in the face of emotional trauma. Pathologists look closely at hands, not at faces, when they try to gauge the age of a person. The hands are not as capable of lying as the face; they present the truth in a more direct fashion, something that was once believed true of the lower classes. Hands are designed for the language of gestures. Consider for instance, in general, the threatening index finger, the counting of money and, more specialised, sailor's signs and sign language – the expressions in both these modes are far more explicit than more mimetic signs. Too often the camera focuses on the hands in order to prove something, and too seldom, to read something from them. Too often hands appear as complementary elements to the face [...] There are other, more magical gestures as well, the caress that enchants or beguiles, offers blessing and often consoles. These gestures have a long history. In every contemporary gesture many of these past histories are echoed.'

Currently I am working on a third instalment – I want to consider the prison, the manner in which the prison is presented in the filmic image. I do not yet have funding for this project and for that reason I don't yet have much material collected. I only have a few silent films and documentaries from the archives in Washington, which are in the 'public domain' there, that is, are free of charge, as no one holds the rights to them anymore. Everyone is familiar with the image of the inmate being freed from prison (see ill. 74). This situation is depicted so often in films that anyone who is indeed being released from prison is obliged to think of such an image, when the gate closes and the entranceway to the prison stretches out ahead. Most prisons are set up in such a fashion that there is a space in front of the entryway that is suggestive of a

passageway for re-entry into society. Such a re-entry is supported by the gaze of real observers in that space as well as imaginary ones. A few examples show that the released inmate usually emerges with a small cap, with a bundle of items or a small suitcase (see ill. 75). However, in two early silent films they emerge empty-handed, and thus they have even less than those with that small bundle, but that is not obvious. Their possessions are absent and absence cannot be shown in images.

In the first months of 1999, I was travelling in the USA, visiting prisons, to gather images from surveillance cameras, a particular kind of image that has been under-theorised. Most prisons in the US are located at a great distance from cities and therefore often have little more than a parking lot to remind the visitor of urban planning, to remind one of the public sphere. In a few states, the visitors are offered the option of not travelling to the prison itself but rather having a kind of teleconference with the inmate from home. In California and Oregon, I visited prisons located in areas that were nearly completely uninhabited, which makes one think of the practice of sending inmates to the colonies. In the US the military is also housed in similarly distinct 'internal colonies'. Visiting these prisons was a terrible experience. A prison director in California, who had trained to be a minister, told me that the previous Governor had been of Armenian descent and therefore did not allow a high voltage prison fence. It reminded him too much of German concentration camps. Then Reagan was elected 'and the policy changed'. In Camden, New Jersey, near Philadelphia, the prison was the only structure on the main road that was still intact. Behind thick glass walls, the visiting rooms were available for viewing and smelled of sweat, just like in a zoo. The 'correctional officer', who was my guide, pointed to an opening in the ceiling, through which teargas could be introduced in case of a disturbance! It has never come to that, however, since the chemicals deteriorate when they have been stored too long. The need for such draconian punishment in the US has rarely, or at any rate, not adequately, been accounted for. There are more than a few theorists in the US who advocate the reintroduction of slavery.

Such an assessment may indeed be of polemical value – a large number of the inmates are black and are moreover employed at sweatshop-level wages. In Oregon, the law states that every inmate must work forty hours a week, although I believe this is a merely symbolic gesture. 'They shouldn't be lazing about at our expense' is the curious rationale in the name of which such a work ethic is upheld. At present, anyone who profits from a rise in interest rates and a bull market is considered a hero. After we visited the 'Two Rivers' prison in Oregon and shot some footage, I had a coffee with the cameraman Ingo Kratisch, on the terrace of the neighbouring golf club. It was impossible not to be struck by the triteness of this particular editing trick in our experience: from

high-tech prison (sub-proletariat) to the golf club (the idle landed class), with its sprinkler system. The golfers drove around in electric cars. Such a contrast begs for deeper connections. But what kind of connections? One thing is certain, the golfers' gains on the stock market are not dependent on the prisoners' sweatshop work.

### **Describing or Showing: Criteria for the Indexing of Moving Images**

When one speaks of a film sequence, one often makes small sketches, to suggest the framing or composition of an image or to fathom the relationship between orientation and disorientation, say, in the famous shower sequence in *PSYCHO*. With the new digital techniques of simulation one can now imagine the possibility of reproducing the dynamic element of a given sequence, here the contours of the space in which the scene takes place, there the movements of the camera. One can even imagine that only the movements of the characters in the scene are reproduced or nothing but the changes in the light levels, as in the installations that Constance Ruhm has made out of scenes of films by Irvin Kershner and Jean Luc Godard. It gives us an extraordinary analytical and discursive tool, and when in the future one speaks about a film, one does not have to limit oneself to showing merely a short clip as a quotation from this film. What is quoted can be transformed, put in indirect speech, so to speak, as one does when one offers a review or an analysis of a film; in which case one discusses the subject of the film or the behaviour of the characters. In a review it is difficult to speak of other things, because one must first of all remember the sequence using language. In order to write about Hitchcock's shower sequence, one must first describe the sequence in words. If one had a form of depiction where only the movement of the knife and the editing were reproduced, then one could recall the sequence in an entirely different fashion. Only a few minutes from *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY* show that I have not managed to move much beyond questions of content. I did, however, allow myself a few digressions and nothing is depicted merely to serve as a symptom, for the sake of proving my case. I always try to avoid interpretations where the film dissolves without leaving a residue. One of my strategies is to over-interpret or even misinterpret a film. My hope is that something is being saved in such an exaggeration.

Let us take the film *CLASH BY NIGHT* by Fritz Lang as an example, one of the first films with Marilyn Monroe, who earns her keep as a worker in a fish packing plant. The film was apparently shot on location. When Monroe leaves the building during lunch break, the door of the factory is never seen. She simply jumps down from a loading dock, so that I have to assume that the door of the factory was transported to this place, since one can spot the

fish packing plants sign in this location. In a long shot one sees how the sign functions. As if it were a bridge or a painted banner, the name of the fish plant links the two buildings on either sides of the street. The street itself is a public thoroughfare, but is subsumed by the reality of the factory itself. Afterwards we see that this is an improvised exit from the factory, not the official one. Monroe jumps off the dock. She meets her boyfriend and they begin a conversation and slowly walk away from the plant. The plant siren, the sign, and the exit all label Monroe as a worker at that plant. The two figures walking together defines them as a couple, in the sense of two who share a 'common path' (see ill. 73).

At this particular point in my own compilation film I inserted another clip, a sequence from the film *ZECHE MORGENROT* which was shot in the Soviet-occupied zone in post-war Germany. A woman picks up a man at work and both slowly walk away from the factory, immersed in conversation; I also included a clip from *ACCATONE*: the hero follows the woman, with whom he has a child and who doesn't want anything more to do with him. He walks behind her; she begins to walk quickly and wants to avoid his presence in the image of walking a 'common path'. In all three cases the camera moves along in front of the protagonists and the tracking shot is unedited. Why is there no cut? It would seem that this is meant to signify something: this woman is a worker; one sees that she is leaving the factory. The same woman enters the story, as it is told in the cinema. She is a worker and without any kind of tricks, she enters into the realm of the cinematic fable, becoming a princess in the process! Filmic narration is rarely able to deal with collectives or large groups. The cinematic fable is about individuals, who are also always standing in, or are meant to stand in, for a multitude. One could even say that most films begin where the identity of the protagonist as a worker ends. They begin at the moment, when the protagonist leaves the factory behind, and in this sense, the Lumière's' film is a precursor to the rest of cinema, with its inclination to tell the story of life that is left to the individual after work is over, or indeed of the life that one dreams of and wishes for beyond the realm of work. This is precisely what is expressed in the couple's conversation in *CLASH BY NIGHT*. The man reminds the woman that she didn't want to eat any more chocolate, a comment that transmits the level of intimacy between the two. Monroe then talks about a co-worker who was beaten by her husband. As she speaks, the two cross the street diagonally and a car crosses their path and honks; after they have crossed the road, one can see two other pedestrians who gawk at the couple, reacting as if they were passers-by who stop to catch a glimpse of movie stars.

Finally, the couple is alone. The man comments that a husband has the right to beat his wife, and the woman asks, 'would you try that with me?' He wonders if she would scratch out his eyes and she answers, 'just try!' The couple

act out a fight. The camera films them against the backdrop of the building with a recessed wall, so that the walls envelop the two, and it seems as if they are inside the building and not in the public space of the street. Unfortunately, there is a splice in the film print available to me at this very spot. But it was at least the original English-language version of the film and I chose that over the German dubbed version, even if it had its limitations. In the case of Pasolini's *ACCATONE*, I had no choice but to use the German version; I had the same problem with Antonioni's *DESERTO ROSSO* and that is, of course, a scandalous state of affairs. Financial and logistical problems were often decisive factors in the selection of my filmic examples and I ended up using both a great deal of examples from East German films since they were so inexpensive, and many silent films since they are in the public domain in the US.

But the act of 'leaving the factory' or 'entering into (or returning to) the world of the family' can be witnessed in many eras and national cinemas. I mentioned that the tracking shots affect this transformation; they are also a stylistic mode of amplification. In *ZECHE MORGENROT* it is the light that removes our couple from the world around them. In *CLASH BY NIGHT* the couple speaks of everyday things, and they are, as I have shown, slowly removed from the social environment of the factory. A camera that is in such close agreement with its hero and heroine, as the tracking shot demonstrates, transforms an everyday walk into a ritual and thus establishes its stars. Monroe's ability to move is an additional factor. Her walk is as fine as hearing an aria or taking a bath in milk. The ability to shine is the point, although just a moment before she was standing along the conveyor belt of a fish packing plant, a nobody.

### **Towards an Archive of Visual Concepts**

I return once more to the *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, which serves as a template. I cannot claim to be well-read in the area of political theory but I can claim that there is a body of literature on terms such as 'democracy' or 'isonomy' that nearly defies assimilation. Anyone who is occupied with texts in a professional capacity looks up words. Knowledge about film cannot be researched in this fashion. One watches Billy Wilder's *THE APARTMENT*, in which the two heroes are followed in a tracking shot as they walk through the cavernous space of the office, together with other white-collar workers, and pass through the revolving door in groups of two. If one shoots a similar series of set-ups today, must one have seen this sequence or another, similar one? Or does one arrive at such a sequence, because the inherent properties of a particular medium tend toward such a staging? I do not believe that a sociology of knowledge exists, which could answer this question. Twenty years ago in the television industry one had to spend seven years as a camera assistant and the



same amount of time as an editing assistant. The individual unions still possessed a degree of autonomy in those days and a certain code of behaviour was still in effect, which was transmitted within those professions. I do not intend to judge that situation, but merely to point out that the situation has changed a great deal since then. No one is an apprentice for seven years anymore; after seven years, one is either the director of Viva 3 [trans.: a German TV station broadcasting music videos] or unemployed again. The majority of texts on the language of film were written at a time when the film profession still offered the appearance of being a craft. The de-skilling of the profession came about through the technical revolution. With video, the camera assistant became obsolete, and with him disappeared an institution with hierarchical significance, like a private assigned to serve his officer. The time given for production has been dramatically reduced. One is not able to shoot a narrative film very much faster than one did before – in Hollywood in the 1950s, a 70-minute B-movie was made in a week. However, the tools of post-production, video and the computer have been responsible for a major acceleration in tempo. In 1970, one would be allotted four weeks to edit a 45-minute film at the WDR, say, on Heinrich Böll or on the desperate living conditions in the suburbs. Today one is allotted perhaps nine days to edit and add post-production sound to a *Tatort* episode [trans.: a popular weekly crime show on German television] on an AVID. The technical revolution has also seen the rise of particular effects that are made possible by those devices, indeed they are part of the programmes of these machines, as Vilém Flusser would say. Flusser emphasises the manner in which any individual photograph or filmic expression is a product of programming. I use the word ‘programming’ in a somewhat less essential fashion. Even in the days when film reigned, technical advancement always had stylistic implications: one only needed to consider portable cameras, the *blimped* camera, the zoom lens. But today there are technical advances nearly every year, which produce, in turn, stylistic proclivities. People no longer learn from a textbook but rather from a manual – by way of its explicit and implicit advice. What takes place there has long ceased entering into book form.

One can easily imagine that a great deal is possible in such a situation, when a filmmaker theorises or when one’s filmmaking praxis is transformed into writing about film. Written language, which, according to Flusser, is fundamentally critical, only minimally reveals an orientation towards praxis in the case of film language. I do not mean to say that one should begin to search for theories, which would allow a more systematic approach to film production, as is the case in the analysis of the production of other material goods. Camera-man Axel Block told me a few years ago how the directors who shoot a *Tatort* episode, watch a tape of a Hawks film the night before, in order to draw something from it for their own shoot. One could make fun of this practice, as I actu-



ally did, but it will never lead to an imitation, because the conditions of production between the two are so different. Ever since video recorders have been available, filmmakers have begun to refer back to film history – it is time for the rise of the lexicon. In the journal *Wide Angle* I recently read a text on the genre of the boxing film, which offered a typology. Around thirty films were examined and a high level of structural similarity was discovered. The opposition between ‘body and soul’ was nearly always at issue. It demonstrated that it was not enough for a boxer to be strong and triumphant; he also has to have access to another kind of strength. A particular station has significance within this paradigm: the second fight. In the first, the fighter must gain a reputation in the boxing world, indeed prove himself worthy of being a hero in the fable. At this point, the unexpected adversaries are introduced, who cannot simply be knocked out of the ring. The boxer loses his innocence and thus the love of a woman; he becomes dependent on alcohol or other drugs, falls into the hands of the mafia or even begins to lose fights. Thus one arrives at the second fight, which the boxer usually wins under difficult circumstances, and through which he transcends boxing. One might find this kind of analysis in Propp’s research into fairy tales or in folklore research in general. Indeed, because film lends itself so well to oral transmission, it is fitting that a grammar of filmic motifs orient itself by means of research into folklore.

Even architects, whose work involves far more money than that of filmmakers, have become great lovers of lexica. They look up such things as the look of Moorish architecture in order to gather ideas for shopping malls with orientalist inflection. They are always up to date concerning what is being built, thanks to the many buildings pictured in the construction or planning stage, whether in Shanghai or the Swiss Engadin. Thus, a truly ‘international style’ is created and regional schools, such as those from fifty years ago, are unthinkable today. Nonetheless, attempts are still being made to proclaim the existence of regional building styles, such as the Ticino School in recent years, an attempt that is closer to branding, or the establishment of a brand name. Thus we again see a kind of folklore, but one that is closer to that which is familiar from the look of airports and airport culture (see ill. 80).

In contrast to *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, *THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS* is put together in an entirely different fashion. The images of hands in close-up are very different, portraying a pickpocket in a subway or the gentle caress of the barrel of a gun; there are hands which open in the moment of death, revealing something. Since there is no primal scene for hands, like the Lumière’s film, I am less able to offer proof and am more obliged to simply make claims. Thus the film seems to have more of a workshop-like quality, offering itself up for view like a run-through on the editing table with running commentary. It would therefore be particularly well suited to presenta-

tion on a DVD, where it would be possible to switch from the compilation film with verbal commentary to the filmic examples themselves, as one might do with footnotes in books (see ill. 36). The Institut National de l'Audio-visuel, the INA in Paris, produces this kind of works. They show film material on writers, clips of conversations that were recorded at various times with that writer. In an appendix, one can select the conversation in its entirety, just as in a book. In my contributions to a collection of filmic terminology I would also like to include the film from which I quoted in its entirety in the appendix. It is always in the interest of the reader to be able to check whether the quote captures the spirit of the film in general, or indeed what the relationship between the quotation and the film as a whole is. When reading, I have often been irritated by examples from films being named, which indeed do support the argument made in the text, but do nothing else but localise the argument within film history. Let me elaborate: I personally would not want my first acquaintance with a film such as Fuller's *PICK UP ON SOUTH STREET* to be as an appendix in a text on hands in close-ups. One sometimes says of books: we read that in school. One must first give the films one refers to in one's thoughts their own space.

In *PICK UP ON SOUTH STREET* by Samuel Fuller we see a pickpocket who is about to steal something from a woman's handbag in the New York subway. He only wants money but steals a piece of paper which contains military secrets as part of a communist spy plot. In the dubbed German version of the film, the paper has been transformed into the formula for a particular drug. Two plainclothes police officers who have been following the woman are not quite sure what has just happened. The man approached the woman and carefully opened the handbag. The woman reacts to the proximity of the thief as she might to an erotic advance; she tilts her head back and spreads her lips. The thief's hands do something entirely different from that which is expressed on his face. His face totally conceals the fact that he is committing a crime by coming so close to a strange woman, an act that is only apparent to the two of them in the crush of the subway. In the compression of the montage it looks like the man has opened the woman's lips with his hands, or as if the opening of the handbag underscores the opening of the lips, like a musical motif. In this sense, the woman opened the bag with her lips. What I am getting at here is that much more is happening than one can tell from the basic structure of the narrative. This scene is constructed to maximise ambiguity – certainly it suggests the complicity of the victim, a morally very problematic stance. But it is essentially true with filmic montage that one is never sure who is in possession of agency. A chase scene functions in a similar fashion – one always sees it from alternating perspectives.

A and B – it can easily be made to suddenly look like B is following A, a possibility that slapstick comedy exploits. The subject-object construction is less clear than it is in language; the question remains open: who did what to whom? That the object can also be the subject simultaneously seems to me to be more important than the possibility that the object may become the subject, undergoing a transformation from victim to aggressor. Flusser wrote that, in the future, it will no longer do to say that A is subject to B but instead that A is in relation to B. Such a position would seem to show a debt to Nietzsche's notion that our sentence structure gives (and sustains) a false impression that there is cause, that there is an act that brings about a subsequent state.

### **Serial Indexing and the Surveillance Paradigm**

Finally, I would like to present a series of images from the collection of my most recent work, *PRISON IMAGES*. These are images from surveillance cameras in US prisons and the whole thing is about the two main themes in the cinema: love and death, sex and violence. The interesting thing about the images from the surveillance camera is that they are used in a purely indexical fashion, that suspicions or hypotheses are never at issue, only facts. Was the car present at 2:23 p.m. in the parking lot? Did the waiter wash his hands after urinating? And so on. They go so far as to allow the images to speak for themselves, when nothing in particular is happening, and often they are erased right away to save on tape. Michael Klier made a film entitled *THE GIANT*, which consists only of surveillance videos and thereby suggests a radical misreading. He acts as if the images of the cars, which drive in the rain through the underpass, are from a narrative film, and he accompanies them with music. They are taken from a film from the 1950s: a gangster has rented a hotel room with his girlfriend; what follows is a long shot of the city, meaning something like, this city is full of the stories of regular people. Since there are few camera movements or edits in the surveillance images, the most common means of condensation are missing. For the same reason the events depicted are extremely undramatic and it becomes clear to what degree the filmmaker is a promoter of, or accomplice in, the events that take place. My images come from the visiting room at the Calipatria prison in California, where men and women are only permitted to embrace one another upon arrival and are otherwise only allowed to touch each other's hands.

I have here 24 minutes of tape from such a visiting hour. The camera can be moved and the officer pans around in order to document transgressions, which, of course, seems highly voyeuristic. He or she has overlooked one thing: a black prisoner has turned the back of his chair toward the camera and has placed the hands of the woman who is visiting him between his legs. I

have often observed scenes of visiting hours in prison but I don't believe that I have ever seen that happen before. We are only familiar with such a skilled transgression of prohibitions from our own life, usually from childhood, often in connection with prohibitions around love. Another clip is from the prison in Snake River in Oregon. The guards wanted to demonstrate to us their technological capacities and zoomed in close as a couple passed a piece of paper beneath the table. It could even be read from above. From the same perspective, with similar framing, one could see how a woman took out two coins from her transparent purse. One coin was a new quarter, which had just been entered into circulation; the other was a regular old quarter. The man bent over and compared the two with great curiosity. As I read this image, the new coin indicates to him that momentous things are happening outside the prison and that he is not participating in them. That a prisoner is missing out on life is a story often told, mostly in the way his wife or girlfriend are leaving him. Here, in this material that was considered worthless, I made a little discovery, a new variation on an old *topos*.

In the brothers Grimm's dictionary of the German language, the majority of quotations are taken from Goethe or Schiller; in the Oxford English Dictionary there are also at least quotations from newspapers. I have already mentioned that textbooks on films usually draw their examples from canonised or sub-canonical sources. I myself have enjoyed a good film education in *cinémathèques*. For this project, however, knowledge will also have to come from the obscure and the nameless in cinema history. I intend to develop definitions like the ones mentioned here, gleaned from sources such as these.

*Translation by Robin Curtis.*

## Notes

1. Myron Flickner et al., 'Query by Image and Video Content', in: Mark T. Maybury (ed.), *Intelligent Multimedia Information Retrieval*, Cambridge, Mass. / London (MIT), p. 7.
2. Alexander G. Hauptmann and Michael J. Witbrock, 'Informedia: News-on-Demand Multimedia Information Acquisition and Retrieval', in: *Maybury 1997*, pp. 215-240 (226).
3. Quoted by André Gaudreault, 'Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers', in: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute 1990), pp. 68-75 (72).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
5. Roger Odin, as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 72.

6. Harun Farocki, in a lecture given at the Cologne Academy of Media Arts, 7 December 1999, borrowing a term from the media theorist Friedrich Kittler (Berlin): 'inhaltistisch'.
7. See Rolf Aurich 'Von Bildern und Träumen. Überall Filmgeschichte: *Kinostadt Paris*', in: R. Aurich and Ulrich Kriest (eds.), *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki* (Konstanz: UVK Medien, 1998), pp. 245-252 (247f), referring (quotation) to: 'Harun Farocki, Wortsprache, Bildsprache. Der Dokumentarfilmer Harun Farocki reflektiert anhand der Ereignisse 1989' in 'Rumänien über die Diskrepanz zwischen Verstehen- und Mitteilenkönnen, wenn es um Bilder geht', in: *Zoom* No. 9 (September) 1995, pp. 22-25 (23).
8. Philippe Aigrain, Philippe Joly, and Véronique Longueville, 'Medium Knowledge-Based Macro-Segmentation of Video into Sequences', in: *Maybury 1997*, pp. 159-174 (159).
9. Hong Jiang Zhang et al., 'Video Parsing, Retrieval and Browsing: An Integrated and Content-based Solution', in: *Maybury 1997*, pp. 139-158 (143).
10. Hauptmann and Witbrock 1997, p. 222.
11. Zhang et al. 1997, p. 149.
12. Ibid.
13. Flickner et al. 1997, p. 8.
14. Inderjeet Mani et al., 'Towards Content-Based Browsing of Broadcast News Video', in: *Maybury 1997*, pp. 241-258 (243).
15. Hans Ulrich Reck, 'Aby Warburg als Medientheoretiker? Aus Anlass und zur Edition von Band 1 der "Gesammelten Schriften"' (*Kunstforum International*, Bd. 152, Dezember), Köln 2000, p. 225.
16. Exhibition at Kunstbank Berlin, Mai 2000.
17. See Richard DeCordova, 'From Lumière to Pathé. The Break-Up of Perspectival Space', in: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative*, London (BFI) 1990, p. 76 (76ff.).
18. On the convergence of technical standardisation, economic consumption, scriptural organisation (screenplay) and Tayloristic working structure see: Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production*, London 1985; Wsewolod Pudowkin, *Über Filmtechnik*, Zürich 1961; Lew Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film. Writings*, Berkeley 1974.
19. See Karl von Amira and Claudius von Schwerin, *Rechtsarchäologie. Gegenstände, Formen und Symbole Germanischen Rechts, Teil I: Einführung in die Rechtsarchäologie*, Berlin (Ahnenerbe-Foundation) 1943.
20. Stefan Müller, Frank Wallhoff, Stefan Eickeler, and Gerhard Rigoll (Dept. of Computer Science, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Gerhard-Mercator-University Duisburg, Germany), 'Content-based retrieval of digital archives is using statistical object modelling techniques', in: *Conference proceedings volume: EVA 99 (Electronics in the Visual Arts)* Berlin, 12-1 to 12-4 (12-1).
21. ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN (double projection installation); Single Channel Version on video, 25 min., colour and black/white, by Harun Farocki. Cooperation and camera: Cathy Lee Crane; Sound: Louis Van Rooki, Editing: Max Reimann, funded by the Generali Foundation Vienna, 2000.
22. Quoted in: Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Film*, [German trans. by Ernst Adler: *Filme aus Filmen. Eine Studie über den Kompilationsfilm*, Berlin (Henschel) 1967, p. 16].

23. See Chris Marker, *Le Fond de l'Air est Rouge*, Paris (Maspéro) 1978, introduction, quoted here from: Birgit Kämper and Thomas Tode (eds.), *Chris Marker: Filmessayist*, München (CICIM) 1997, pp. 176ff. (176).
24. See W. E. and Stefan Heidenreich, 'Digitale Bildarchivierung: der Wölfflin-Kalkül', in: Sigrid Schade and Christoph Tholen (eds.), *Konfigurationen. Zwischen Kunst und Medien*, (München: Fink 1999), pp. 306-320.
25. Flusser also underlines that some things are actually being produced because they are inscribed in the very *apparativity* of the media.
26. See Vannevar Bush's hypertextual aesthetics, based on the associative model of the human brain instead of library logics, designed in his seminal essay 'As We May Think' in: *Atlantic Monthly* (July 1945).
27. Harun Farocki, Commentary, *Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 15.3 (Spring 1993), pp. 78-92. 'Man muss keine neuen, nie gesehenen Bilder suchen, aber man muss die vorhandenen Bilder in einer Weise bearbeiten, dass sie neu werden.' Harun Farocki, as quoted in: Birgit Maier, 'Kriegsinschriften. Harun Farockis Arbeit am Bild', in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin edition), 18 April 2000, BS 5.
28. See Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, (New York: Routledge 1996), p. 148.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
30. Harun Farocki, 'Reality Would Have to Begin', trans. Marek Wieczorek, Tom Keenan, and Thomas Y. Levin, *Documents* 1/2 (Fall/Winter 1992), pp. 136-146 (138) (in this volume).
31. Tom Keenan, 'Light Weapons', *Documents* 1/2 (Fall/Winter 1992), pp. 147-153 (in this volume).
32. Harun Farocki, Commentary, *Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 15.3 (Spring 1993), p. 82.
33. Harun Farocki, Reality Would Have to Begin, p. 142.
34. Harun Farocki, Commentary, *Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 15.3 (Spring 1993), p. 82.
35. Harun Farocki, Reality Would Have to Begin, p. 142, here referring to: Vilém Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*, Göttingen (European Photography) 1984 ('Towards a Philosophy of Photography').
36. Myron Flickner et al., 'Query by Image and Video Content: The QBIC System', in: Maybury 1997, pp. 7-22 (8).
37. Michael Michael, 'Computers and Manuscript Illumination', in: *Computers and the History of Art*, eds. Anthony Hamber, Jean Miles, and Vaughan Williams, (London/New York: Mansell 1989), pp. 200-206 (203f).
38. See Lambert Wiesing, *Die Sichtbarkeit des Bildes*, Reinbek (Rowohlt) 1997, chapter 'Die Relationslogik des Bildes', pp. 95-117 (112).
39. See Hubertus Kohle, Das Morelli-Projekt, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26th April 2000, N5.
40. William Vaughan, 'Automated Picture Referencing: A Further Look at "Morelli"', in: *Computers and the History of Art Journal*, vol. 2, part 2, 1992, p. 9.
41. See S. Müller, G. Rigoll, D. Mazurenok, and D. Willett, 'Invariante Erkennung handskizzierter Piktogramme mit Anwendungsmöglichkeiten in der inhalts-

- orientierten Bilddatenbankabfrage', in: 20. *DAGM-Symposium, Tagungsband Stuttgart* (Springer) 1998, pp. 271-279.
42. See the IBM search engine, QBIC (Query by Image Content): <http://www.qbic.almaden.ibm.com/>
  43. See Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, 'A Mechanism of Creativity', in: *Poetics Today* vol. 20, no. 3, 1999; see further Martin Klaus, 'Ein zweischneidiges Schwert. Überblenden als schöpferisches Verfahren der Sprache', in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 April 2000, N6.

# **From the Surveillance Society to the Control Society**





# Controlling Observation

*Harun Farocki*

In January 1999, Cathy Crane and I started research in the US for a film with the working title GEFÄNGNISBILDER (PRISON IMAGES). We were looking for footage from security cameras installed in penitentiaries, instruction material for prison officers, documentaries, and feature films, which included depictions of prisons. We got to know a private investigator who, as a civil rights activist, campaigns for the families of prisoners killed in Californian prisons: a private detective who reads Hans Blumenberg when he has time to kill. An architect showed us the plans for a new penitentiary for 'sex offenders' in Oregon; one-third of the planned buildings – those intended for therapeutic services – had been crossed out from the plans because the legislature refused to fund them. In Camden, New Jersey, near Philadelphia, a guard showed me around the prison; the men gave me disdainful, sidelong glances from behind glass similar to that in the lion house of a zoo. I saw women brushing each other's hair like women in a Pasolini film. The guard told me that there were vents in the ceilings of the day rooms through which tear gas could be introduced, but that this had never been done as the chemicals deteriorated over time.

Pictures from the maximum security prison in Corcoran, California: A surveillance camera shows a pie-shaped segment of the concrete yard where the prisoners, dressed in shorts and mostly shirtless, are allowed to spend half an hour a day. One prisoner attacks another, whereupon those not involved lay flat on the ground, arms over their heads. They know that when a fight breaks out, the guard will call out a warning and then fire once using a rubber bullet. If the prisoners continue fighting, the guard will use live ammunition. The pictures are silent, and the shot is only revealed in the trail of gun smoke drifting across the screen. The camera and the gun are right next to each other; field of vision and field of fire merge. The reason that the yard was built in pie segments is clear – so that there is nowhere to hide from observation or bullets. One of the prisoners – usually the attacker – collapses. In many cases he is either seriously wounded or dead. The prisoners belong to prison gangs with names like 'Aryan Brotherhood' or 'Mexican Mafia'. They have received long sentences and are locked up far away from the world in a maximum security prison. They have hardly anything but their bodies, the muscles of which they work out constantly, and their affiliation to an organisation. Their honour is

more important to them than their lives; they fight knowing full well they will be shot at. At Corcoran, brawling prisoners have been shot at on more than two thousand occasions. Some guards claim that their colleagues have often deliberately put members of warring groups into the yard together and placed bets on the outcome of the fights as if the prisoners were gladiators. The surveillance cameras run at a slower speed in order to save on costs. In the footage available to us, the intervals were extended so that the movements are jerky and not flowing. The fights in the yard look like something from a cheap computer game. It is hard to imagine a less dramatic representation of death (see ill. 78).

## Surveillance Technology

We obtained the footage of the fights and shootings from a female attorney representing the relatives of the prisoners killed. The guards continually claimed that they feared the attacking prisoner was carrying a weapon, such as the sharpened handle of a plastic spoon. The prisoners in Corcoran are subject to such strict controls, however, that this hardly seems likely. From a central control room it is possible to monitor which cells are occupied and which are empty, which doors are open and in which walkway each person can be found. The guards can send out an electronic identification signal to warn of a prohibited movement by a prisoner.

In the present judicial crisis in the US – despite falling crime rates, the number of prisoners has quadrupled over the past twenty years – many new prisons are being built, including some by private operators. New technologies are being developed and implemented in order to reduce costs. Guards are meant to have as little direct contact with the prisoners as possible, and just as humans in the production sector have turned over war production to machines, prisoners should also be isolated from any direct human contact. There is now a machine available that can check for drugs and weapons in all of a prisoner's orifices. There are metal detectors at every door. An iris scanner is a device that photographs the iris, isolates the significant characteristics, and compares them with a set of data. This equipment can be fixed to doors and identify each individual, prisoner or guard, within two seconds. Meanwhile, a chair embraces a raging prisoner in its steel arms and gags him with gentle force, like something from a fantasy film. This apparatus also expresses a general desire for objectivity, for dispassionate repression.

## Public Relations

The State of California has removed the word 'rehabilitation' from its statutes; prisons have given up on correction, they are explicitly and solely there to punish. The justice department commissioned a video for the media, primarily intended to prove that those sentenced to prison do not lead a life of luxury and actually have a tough time there ('The Toughest Beat in California'). The style for this video meant slamming and locking doors extra loudly, guards approaching with loud and ominous footsteps and rattling their keys as if there were an execution about to happen.

They are shown in slow motion, using a long focal length and the accompanying background music is intended to link them with the heroes from Westerns. This video can be compared to a propaganda film the Nazis produced at the Brandenburg Prison in 1943. They have the same message: 'The time for leniency is over. Let us no longer speak of correction, but rather of the severity of punishment'. Both films show how a prisoner is bound hand and foot like an escape artist in the circus. Both films transform the criminal into a spectacle. In doing so, the California film is even more sensationalist than the Nazi film. The extent of abuse in the Germany of 1943 was of course far greater than in the California of today, but the Nazis were still at pains to maintain at least an appearance of legality. The demand for entertainment has grown immeasurably since then. Even films critical of prisons aim at being entertaining. There are hardly any critical films that manage to do so without the accompanying fearful excitement of an execution.

## Prison as a Spectacle

With the advent of the modern era, punishment underwent a fundamental change when public torture and execution were abolished. Those who break the law today are shut away behind walls, withdrawn from the gaze, made invisible. Every picture from prison is a reminder of the cruel history of the criminal justice system. We see a film produced by the Bureau of Prisons in Washington, D.C., for the further education of the prison staff. A prisoner is raging, and a guard tries in vain to calm him down; he calls his superior who again attempts appeasement. Then the guard fetches a camera to document the procedure completely. A combat unit arrives on the scene together with a physician; having stormed the cell and overwhelmed the prisoner, they tie him up on the bed. (The five members of the combat unit are wearing protective helmets and

breastplates, and each of them has the task of seizing a particular part of the raging man's body.) All this is captured on camera so as to document the detachment that the justice apparatus is supposed to maintain towards the prisoner. Precisely because the portrayal is so meticulous, it is also implausible and thus functions as a denial. It insists so emphatically that the personnel were acting indifferently and without emotion, that they took no pleasure in subduing the prisoner. This message is proclaimed so often and so loudly that one ends up believing exactly the opposite.

## Observational Control

In modern prisons, where the aim is to rehabilitate the prisoner, he is not put on display, but the guard's controlling gaze remains. The guard is society's representative, and with this in mind, Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher of punishment, drew up plans for a prison with a central watchtower, providing a line of sight into each cell. The prisoners would be unable to tell whether the tower was actually occupied; they would simply be aware that they were potentially being observed. Bentham thought that anyone could enter the tower and perform the task of supervision.

In order for panoptic control to work, cells must be open and have bars instead of walls. This is usually the case in the US. Over the past ten years, prisons in the United States are again being built according to panoptic principles. In point of fact, video cameras could be used anywhere but what is important to prison operators is that the prisoner feels exposed to human observation.

At the same time, there are more and more prisons where the prisoners no longer have direct visual contact with their visitors whether it be through bars or glass. They are only allowed to communicate via videophone. This is justified on humanitarian grounds: relatives no longer need to trek long distances, they only have to go to an office which provides and supervises the videophone connection. This bit of modernisation has meant that one of the central narrative figures of prison films has lost its basis in reality. How often have we viewed movie scenes where the visitor and prisoner are talking together and the vigilant guard steps in? Or of a parting couple symbolically touching longingly through the glass pane that separates them (see ill. 79)?

## Studio Play

Silent films prior to D.W. Griffith, set in prisons: these films are related to theatre and the cell usually resembles a sitting room. Like the fireplace in a sitting room, the bars in the cell are like stage props that the actor playing a prisoner is better off not rattling for fear that they will fall apart. Without a fourth wall, a cell becomes no more than a scene in a peepshow; especially if the actors involved are 'acting as if', instead of acting.

Because there are few visitors in prison, it is difficult to develop dramatic intrigue. This is why silent films often make the prison cell the setting for visions. The condemned man imagines his execution or pardon, the desperate recall their lost happiness, the vengeful picture their hour of revenge. The imagination is portrayed using superimpositions, double exposures, and other film tricks. Seen in this manner, the prison cell is a spiritually rich location. We come to understand that the origins of the cell are related to monastic solitude. 'Alone in his cell the prisoner is delivered up unto himself; in the silence of his passions he descends into his conscience, questions it, and senses within the awakening of that moral feeling which never completely dies in man's heart.' The cell then is designed not just as a grave, but also as a scene of resurrection.

## Removing Walls

More than anything else, electronic control technology has a *detritorialising* effect. (Companies no longer have to be concentrated in one location; and production at these locations can be quickly switched to making different products.) Locations become less specific. An airport contains a shopping centre, a shopping centre has a school, a school offers recreational facilities, and so on. What are the consequences of this development for prisons, themselves mirrors of society as well as its counter-image and projection surface?

On the one hand, electronic technology makes it possible to constrain a person even when he is outside prison, it can supervise and punish him, and with electronic foot tagging it can keep someone under house arrest while it allows him to go to work or attend school. On the other hand, some two hundred years after Europe tore down its city walls, ever increasing numbers of people are closing themselves off in so-called 'gated communities'. The residents of these communities are by no means exclusively from the upper classes. Security technology is no longer restricted to selectively regulating access to 'sensi-

tive' nuclear or military facilities; today it is also used to control access to normal offices and factories. Throughout a thousand years of urban history, streets have always been public space; twenty-five years ago in Minneapolis the first system of inner-city skywalks was established with private security firms to exclude undesirables. Deregulation does not by any means imply a reduction of control. In one of his last writings, Gilles Deleuze outlined the vision of a society of controls which he said would replace disciplinary society.

## The End of Themes and Genres

We have already mentioned that the prison visitation scene will soon correspond to nothing in reality. The introduction of electronic cash will make bank robbery practically impossible as well, and if it turns out that in the future all weapons will be electronically secured and only capable of being fired by the licensed owner, the end of movie shoot-outs will be just around the corner. With the introduction of iris scanners that identify an individual *en passant*, the comedy of errors becomes an endangered genre. It will be almost impossible to tell the story of a man going to prison for a crime he did not commit or of a visitor exchanging clothes with a prisoner, allowing him to walk free. With the increase in electronic control structures, everyday life will become just as hard to portray and to dramatise as everyday work already is.

## Prison – Workhouse

In the prison film, work scenes are more commonly shown than in other genres. In the Netherlands of the seventeenth century, there were cells in which water kept rising and whose inmates had to bale themselves out to keep from drowning; this demonstrated that man must work to live. In eighteenth-century England, many prisoners had to work the treadmill – today many prisoners can again be found on treadmills, keeping themselves physically fit. Prison labour has seldom been economically significant and at best had some educational value. Prison trains prisoners to do industrial work, because factories are organised on similar principles: to concentrate, to distribute in space, to order in time, to compose a productive force within the dimension of space-time whose effect will be greater than the sum of its component forces.

It is worthwhile to compare images of prison with those of work-research laboratories: opening the cell doors, prisoners leaving their cells, role call,

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marching to the yard, circling around the prison yard, etc. Experiments were carried out for the organisation of Fordist factories on how a wall should be built. Should one worker lift the stone and do the mortaring, or is it better for one worker to do the lifting and a second worker to do the mortaring? These tests present a picture of abstract work while the pictures from the surveillance cameras yield a picture of abstract existence.

*Translated by Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.*





# Nine Minutes in the Yard: A Conversation with Harun Farocki

*Rembert Hüser*

The interview took place in Berlin on July 25, 1999.

**Rembert Hüser:** In your film-installation at the Generali Foundation in Vienna, *ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN (I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS, 2000)*, the dead prison convict, William Martinez, lies in the yard for nine minutes before he is taken away. Everything follows a precise choreography.

**Harun Farocki:** I'm sure you are using the term 'choreography' because the yard resembles a stage. Guards, ready to shoot, have their guns trained on Martinez; a camera is lying in wait for an incident worth recording. Martinez is an inmate of a high security prison in Corcoran, California. He starts a fight with another inmate and is shot down. The surveillance video is silent. You see the white smoke from the gunshot glide through the frame. Then it takes nine minutes before Martinez is taken away on a stretcher. Allegedly the yard has to be cleared for security reasons, which takes some time. Though the event looks very different from a movie, it gives the impression that it has to take place and could only occur in this staged, dramatic way; it looks predestined.

**RH:** These nine minutes – during which prisoners are being cleared from the yard, one at a time, making the yard a cross between a chessboard, a billiard table, and bowling alley – have been staged. When the two men in business suits finally enter the yard and pronounce Martinez dead, the dramaturgy of the images approximates silent film style: 'and then Martinez is gone' (here Farocki quotes a voice-over excerpt from an educational film which a civil rights group made about the event). And so your film contains another film, in colour this time, of the prison guards watching the role play of a similar situation and laughing. We have graduated to a role play, which stages the education of educators. What formal techniques do you use to counter or comment on the alien material – material that represents the perspective of power, that's comprised of faded, black-and-white images, probably a result of frequent over-taping?

**HF:** I show these pictures in double projection, which results in a softer montage. The simultaneous words and images are suggestive rather than descriptive. Apart from this, I try to be spontaneous, like the sudden ideas one gets during good conversations. This is also supposed to counter the merciless logic of execution.

**RH:** This would actually sit quite well with the fact that your found footage material runs at different speeds. Sometimes you interfere with the material by varying the frame. You show footage from different types of surveillance cameras: normal video footage, but also infrared. Twice you inter-cut this footage with silent films: an inmate bribes a guard for the permission to embrace his girlfriend. Later, the inmate receives a letter in his cell, which announces the separation. All of this points to quite a bit of comprehensive research. Is your film part of a larger project?

**HF:** ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN is only 25 minutes long and was the result of a sudden opportunity. The curators of the Generali Foundation in Vienna, Ruth Noack and Roger Bürgel, invited me to contribute to an exhibition beautifully titled, 'Things we don't understand'. One year earlier, I had started working on a larger project involving images from prisons. It was about the representation of prisons in movies. But the money to research the project never materialised. So I started looking for footage from surveillance cameras in the US. As is well known, there are many more prisoners in the US than in any other wealthy nation. The 'prison population' continues to grow steadily, while the crime rate is not! Most inmates are black, and many sentences are scandalously long – it was hard for me not to get carried away by the topicality of the issue. I was almost about to make a rabble-rousing film, a film like a pamphlet.

**RH:** Why not? Recently they showed a Chinese film from the '70s on the Arte [television] channel called RED EVEREST. Three hundred Red Army soldiers march to the top of Mount Everest to put a tripod on the summit; only nine end up making it. You know, à la 'Our common belief and the mountains'; pure agit-prop but with a lot of power. Admittedly, ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN resembles a film based on a piece of literature, but one that has improved the propagandistic text. What I'm trying to say is that you film an essay by Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Society of Control', and you turn its quite theatrical theses about the Control Society into a piece of fieldwork, into practice. How did you get the footage from the surveillance cameras?

**HF:** We told the authorities that we wanted to document the new technology in prisons. Prisons are about the only place where productivity can't be increased. There are more and more prisoners, but the guards can't control a hundred more prisoners every month. So they believe that appliances like surveillance cameras allow them to at least symbolically keep up with the general acceleration. And so we had the opportunity to either cut our own tape or obtain an old tape for copying. This is how we accessed images of water cannons breaking up fights between prisoners or images from inside the visitation room where prisoners and female visitors exchange forbidden caresses. Suddenly there is the image of love defying the ban, like a law of nature! We also bumped into a civil rights campaigner from the group 'California Prison Focus', who earns his living as a private detective. An interesting man and he's a fan of Blumenberg and has a wonderful library. I can imagine him observing the back exit of a nightclub from a parking lot and reading a book at the same time, maybe something published in Münster, about the book metaphor, i.e., the book whose meaning is the world. In short, we accessed hours of material from the recess yards in Corcoran: shadowless segments of a circle, completely within the field of vision of the surveillance cameras, and of course within the field of fire of the guns. You can see the prisoners playing sports, and frequently starting fights. Since the opening of the prison, there have been thousands of fights, and the guards have used their guns on approximately 2000 occasions. Hundreds of inmates were wounded, a few dozen were seriously injured, five were shot dead. Each time, the guards commence by using a large-calibre anti-riot gun, and thereafter, 9mm ammunition.

**RH:** ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN ends with the sentence, 'Suddenly there is no longer any reason to shoot at prisoners'. But before this you make it quite clear that the architecture itself supports violence because its very image is violent. Is this last sentence ironic, you know, à la 'a small plea for humane imprisonment'?

**HF:** The irony has a different target. It's becoming all too obvious that there never was any reason to shoot at these prisoners. And since one can simply stop this, one can just as simply start it again for any minor reason. Although mass imprisonment, death sentences, and executions in the yards have become anachronisms, they still happen. Political thought has to come to terms with the knowledge that such anachronisms do occur.

**RH:** The title of your film is ambiguous. It's a quotation from Rossellini's *EUROPE 51* – Ingrid Bergman sees workers and says, 'I thought I was seeing convicts' – and hence, seems to endorse the programmatic humanism of this film.

You know, like ‘now I finally get to see *real* people’. The archaic metaphors you use in your films – baking bread, slaughtering animals, coins, and gladiators – would seem to fit with this hypothesis. On the other hand ‘thought’ could also refer to ‘see’. And in this respect, your demonstration of the surveillance technology in American prisons reveals that the very humanism in the name of which this technology was introduced generates the very violence it pretends to prevent, for instance, by turning penal institutions into a video game.

**HF:** Ingrid Bergman thinks of prison when she works in a factory for one day. In the end, she gets locked up in a clinic. In Rossellini’s film, a comprehensive world view comes into being. This world view may not hold, but the film has great meaning for me because it emphasises an attitude of not wanting to acquiesce to a system of injustice. This is why I understand Angela Davis when she stands up for the abolition of prisons. It is the community’s obligation, not the obligation of institutions, to look after those who commit offences – this demand is true to its core. But there are also activists in the US who have spread the rumour that whites want to re-introduce slavery. This is because so many prisoners are black and because prison labour is exploited to such a high degree that it can compete with Chinese prison labour! Maybe the term ‘slavery’ has its propagandistic value, but I believe these matters can’t be understood in terms of economic theory.

**RH:** But you do put economic categories to the test in your film, at least as far as prisons are concerned. ‘Prison’, ‘acceleration’, and ‘increase’ form parts of an inter-title – what are they supposed to mean there? Your research concentrates on the relationship between technology and the body. On the one hand, there are the inmates and guards (‘They have nothing other than their bodies and membership in a gang’), on the other, the geometry of the recess yards in Corcoran, the radius of the cameras, electronic representations of identities in the control rooms, and total monotony and boredom. This scenario produces ‘expectable improbabilities’: love and death. What kind of economy is this?

**HF:** The Draconian prison conditions in the US are in strange contrast to the general spirit outside. Deleuze says that the classical institutions of power, i.e., schools and prisons, are in crisis. Maybe this increase in locking people up is symptomatic of a crisis in the prison institution. I’ve been thinking about whether this could be the reason for the impatience with which those who don’t comply are dealt with. It’s like parents saying, ‘We’ve never hit you, and still...’ The prisoners who end up in fights know they’ll be shot at! They may seem like gladiators, but the spectacle is not public. The surveillance cameras

parody the arena, but without relaying the event to 'the people'. It is as if the cameras were the Roman proletariat that had to be kept entertained.

**RH:** I'd just like to briefly continue with the political question. In 1982, Basis-Film advertised *ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR* (BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM) with the slogan: 'One has to substitute pictures from Vietnam with pictures from here, one has to express Vietnam here'. The title page of the film's press book reads: 'We study the war against Vietnam and thus penetrate the US.' In 1998, we now have the American study of your German study of the American war (i.e., Jill Godmillow's remake of *NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER* entitled *WHAT FAROCKI TAUGHT*). In 'The Case of California', Laurence Rickels argued that the amalgamation of exiled psychoanalysts, the Frankfurt School, and Hollywood created some kind of a 'German space'. Could you imagine penetrating the Federal Republic with a study of a Hollywood movie? What would you choose to remake?

**HF:** If there was one, I would remake *MURDER BY CONTRACT* (Irving Lerner, 1958). I once saw a child who, standing on top of the Siegestsäule in Berlin, looked down at his tricycle through a telescope. Over the past few years, I have visited California many times, and I assumed a similar perspective when I looked at the titles in video stores and bookshops. The German cinema of *auteurs* is much more important there than here, as is the Frankfurt School – this will finally take effect here as well. Films and books belong together in California in a way I have only encountered in France. In Germany, it's still true that many professors last went to the movies to see *LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS* (Marcel Carné, 1945). But among university students, the understanding of film has increased massively over the past ten or twenty years. When I started making films, there was hardly anyone who saw cuts, or they just saw the really obvious ones. I believe that there are a lot of people nowadays who can interview Hitchcock the way Truffaut did. In those days, Truffaut was almost the only one to notice that *ROPE* contained almost no cuts.

**RH:** Hitchcock himself could work in various ways. The stock of images on the shelves influences the way directors work; today, every filmmaker has videos that cover film history. Tarantino is a very good example – his old job in a video store has had its consequences. What's it like with you? What effect has technological development, such as the AVID, had on the way you work? In *SCHNITTSTELLE* (SECTION/INTERFACE, 1995) you *thematise* the various workplaces within the film industry. Film itself is moving towards Turing [Allan Turing, inventor of the computer, is referred to in *SCHNITTSTELLE* – ed. note].

**HF:** Firstly, all these machines are too fast for me, even VHS. Working with AVID is horrible. I say to my editor: 'what if we tried...' and before I have finished my sentence it is already done. This can be counter-productive since I make changes in order to gain time. I want to be able to view everything from a different perspective, again and again, in the way one rephrases an idea after talking to different people, hoping that the idea will develop in depth and form. I don't need fast machines and hardly use any effects at all. Take, for example, a movie like *NATURAL BORN KILLERS* (Oliver Stone, 1994). It's hard to see how the first thirty minutes have to much do with Oliver Stone at all; they probably only exist because it is so easy to edit with an AVID. There is hardly any material resistance against the ideas. I can imagine that in certain situations one might need a computer, in order to go over more possibilities than can be imagined. But stating it in this way is probably wrong! If the atomic bomb had been created with the help of computers one could say: 'The bomb couldn't have been built without computers.' Of course, AVID influences me even though I seldom use it – it influences me because other people are using it. I can ride my bicycle from Berlin to Paris, but the people I will meet along the way are more used to taking the plane and other means of transport.

**RH:** Just one more detail. Machines offer various degrees of sensuality. A film projector is certainly much more sensual than a video recorder. In *SCHNITTSTELLE* you emphasise the tactile dimension of the editing table as you stroke the film reel. Is it just pathos, some re-potted Walter Benjamin, or does one really do something like that (see ill. 38)?

**HF:** Yes, I do that, though not like a farmer touching his clod of earth after the Hundred Years War (that is, as some grand gesture) but out of impatience. The work at the editing table wasn't proceeding quickly enough. I frequently forgot what I wanted to do before it was done. Touching the reel was pleasantly reassuring – like when you open a book and know immediately where you are in the book. Also, on the editing table the image is never very clear; it's worse than an analogue or digital video image. But there was always the idea that future projection would turn the caterpillar into a butterfly – you don't get that with electronic images. There, you are dealing with two images! On the right is the edited image; on the left, the next image to be added on. The right image makes a demand, but is also being criticised by the left one, sometimes even condemned. This made me experiment with double projection works, at first in *SCHNITTSTELLE*, and now again in *ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN*. It's a matter of 'soft' montage. One image doesn't take the place of the previous one, but supplements it, re-evaluates it, balances it.

**RH:** Last year, during the Kosovo war, you returned from the US to Germany. At that time, an earlier film of yours caught up with you: *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES* (IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR, 1988). A lot of the things you analyse in that film were suddenly current again. Or to put it differently, your film from ten years ago could be used to analyse the current situation. How do you view the film in relation to recent events? Was the media situation something like a boring instant of *déjà vu* for you?

**HF:** In 1990, during the Gulf War, I felt that my film was the key. I rang TV editors and sent them the VHS version of *BILDER-KRIEG* (PICTURE WAR), the short TV-version of *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCRIFT DES KRIEGES*. They wouldn't have had to pay anything; the rights to the film were free. But before the editors even had a chance to look at the VHS, the war was over. I use the term 'key' in the sense of a door opening – a door to the matter itself or to the truth of the matter. Like one presses the 'open' key in order to open a document, not as a key to truth itself. I believe that the Gulf War is a good example of the technological military apparatus having its own dynamics and creating its own opportunities for action. But the Kosovo war seems to me quite different. I believe that the military seized the opportunity to act, but didn't seem to have created it. It's interesting that the Gulf War has been almost totally forgotten – both here and in the US Bush wasn't re-elected, only two years after his great victory. And nowadays no one remembers he even existed. I don't think this is because people don't remember the television broadcast of the war. You know, they're impossible to remember anyway, since they're just snippets of sixty seconds showing planes, or a camp and then a reporter saying, 'and that was it and I am such and such'. No station can afford news items that are longer than three minutes. I think the thing is that there are no *concepts* for this war, you don't know how to align it.

**RH:** Maybe this is also because intellectuals have yielded to the general literary climate. I find the general silence and lack of memory absolutely scandalous. After all, this was our first war – yet, since then it has all started to fade away: the Serbian Horseshoe Plan, the 'Goodwill' talks at Rambouillet, Racak and the great massacres – not to mention the consequences of the genocide in Chechnya. It almost looks like we started an offensive without any international mandate – just to give the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the government a chance to publish war diaries. And no one wants to read these books. It is very helpful to watch your film again in this context, for instance, to actually understand the function air-reconnaissance had in the press conferences of the Federal Minister for Defence of Military Prose.



**HF:** In *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES* I tried to convey my feeling that it was very dangerous that the earth is currently being surveyed for the purpose of cruise missile control. I rummaged through the history of images and deduced that one annihilates the images one creates. It's the same as in Poe's 'Oval Portrait': the image is a success, the model is spoiled. Making images annihilates the model. This is ancient wisdom, but it's only since Hiroshima that we've had to fear that the world could be turned into the model for ultimate annihilation. When I was working on *BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES*, those images recorded by missile-mounted cameras weren't yet available, even though they would soon emerge as a completely new way of representing armed conflict that we saw during the Gulf War.

**RH:** Your next film deals with a connection between air-reconnaissance and shopping centres. Can you elaborate on this?

**HF:** During the last few months, I have been researching shopping malls in the US, i.e., how they are designed and built. I came across a book written by students of Rem Koolhaas called *The Harvard Book of Shopping* (see ill. 81). They put forward the daring hypothesis that a lot of high-tech companies once involved in weapons production are now producing high-tech applications for the retail-industry, like electronic maps that exhibit the buying power of a suburb. There are also 'crime predictors' for certain neighbourhoods. The target has become the consumer, not some outside enemy. The authors of *The Harvard Book of Shopping* also mention that the General who developed the logistics during the Gulf War was hired by Sears and saved it from bankruptcy.

**RH:** Is the mall principle still expanding? I used to think it had reached its saturation level. But from what you are saying it sounds as if the 'mallification' of American society continues to gather pace.

**HF:** There's certainly some saturation, but the investments of money and energy don't stop. They're putting new malls alongside old ones or extending old ones. A hundred years ago in Germany, they built city centres everywhere – ensembles consisting of a town hall, a school, a police station, a church, a war memorial – that were supposed to give impulses and directions to the hinterland. Nowadays these impulses can or are supposed to come from the malls. Railway stations, public swimming pools, old factory buildings – everything is being turned into malls these days. These centres are supposed to offer a 'complete' experience – they are the effect of a totalitarian vision. Just like the

current Hollywood goal of extinguishing the desire for different films or different styles of filmmaking.

**RH:** Is this true? I don't think that Hollywood is *that* totalitarian. Isn't it true that there hasn't been a clear divide between Hollywood and independent films for quite some time? Movies like *PULP FICTION*, *FARGO*, *BUFFALO 66*, *SHORT CUTS* and *MAGNOLIA* exhibit different ways of narration or at least attempt to. I think they keep those desires you were talking about alive and put them into practice. What's really bad are German feature films trying to be American. The results are patriotic American movies of the worst kind being made by Germans who want to establish themselves in Hollywood. And Hollywood's response is *MARS ATTACKS*.

**HF:** War also emerged as an important theme in my research for *ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN*. Prison technology originates from war. We have, for example, electronic sniffing devices that detect the minutest quantities of drugs, or eye-scanners that identify a person in a second. The logical conclusion of this narrative will be that someone exchanges his identity for someone else and thus escapes. That's why I was thinking of war during my visit, and of all those small, high-tech companies. Strangely enough, however, the actual war in Kosovo seemed to be totally absent in US.

**RH:** I'd like to get back to *SCHNITTSTELLE* once more. In this piece, you – in an autobiographical manner – reflect on your place of work at a point in your career when you're practically a canonical figure. Scholars write dissertations about you; you have international retrospectives at festivals and in museums; and there are the first video editions of your work. 'Farocki' is a recognised figure in film history. When you are reflecting on your workplace, which includes watching your old material, at a time when your status is more obvious than ever – can your reflection free itself from the canonisation going on all around you? Or does it change your perspective? Are you starting to envisage something like an oeuvre?

**HF:** When you are sixteen and love Jimmy Hendrix, you can't understand why he took his own life. You wouldn't do that if you were loved the way you love Jimmy Hendrix! I don't look into the mirror in the morning and say: now you've finally entered film history. The book of film history is becoming more and more thumbed-through anyway. I have to admit that I've wanted to get in there, and since this is somewhat embarrassing, I'm mainly trying to use up my cultural capital by ploughing it back as a means for further production. And this is not easy. Straub and Huillet have been saying for a long time now

that there is no film history, anyway – let's just think for a moment about those people in the Hollywood studio system who certainly don't have *auteur* status although they participated in the making of interesting movies. Film has become as difficult to criticise as music. I realised that particularly in the US there are subsystems that cannot establish connections to other branches. There is, for instance, a corpus of films, which are taught, described and disputed only within university film departments. Amongst them are the films of Laura Mulvey, probably because her writings were so important to feminist film theory. *WANDA* (1970) by Barbara Loden – a wonderful film – is not, however, part of this corpus. The more writing there is about a film, the greater the chance such writing will continue, which makes texts about films more important than the films themselves.

**RH:** I think this is also a problem of the way universities archive. Today, the true enjoyment of film tends to be inspired by video. Those who are seriously into enjoying films beyond the visual screen-feast access a video collection – and they are overjoyed by the 'genuine' experience of seeing one of their films shown in a theatre. Otherwise, one comes home from the movies and sits down by the bookshelf again, thinking: what was that quotation again? And one finds a nice chunk of Nietzsche afterward. On the one hand, Mulvey and Loden really ought to be shown on TV so that everyone can tape them; on the other hand, the media collections of university libraries have to stop expecting to get everything for free. This requires a change in the scale of values. 'Videos' don't figure in the library budget in the same way that 'books' do. This is, of course, also due to the fact that video hasn't rid itself of its smutty image, even amongst film scholars. Their discipline doesn't believe in video. What does this problem look like from a filmmaker's perspective?

**HF:** When video came out, its importance didn't lie in the fact that everyone could get hold of a camera. The main thing was that everyone could buy a recorder. Despite the fact that the secrets of production had disappeared, no one was interested. Before then, however, no description was correct. Essays were saying the most absurd things about films concerning both their content and their creation. All of this was completely untenable. I find it very interesting that it is possible to make a film for almost nothing while at the same time, TV stations aren't buying things any more. When Hellmuth Costard tried to improve Super-8 technology, his aim was to be able to produce films with a tighter budget and a greater time frame. That's what I need as well: I need to be able to have time to select, contemplate, cut – otherwise the outcome is mediocre. In this respect, I have been envisaging an oeuvre for quite a while.

**RH:** Let's stay with video for a moment. The first video edition of your films has been released in the US How do they advertise the 'Farocki product'? Can you comment on the artwork they use for the films? How does their interpretation of documentary film express itself? Did you have any say in the cover design? I understand they didn't use the film posters.

**HF:** Facets in Chicago is something like a mega-video-store. They offer some 35,000 titles, and Milos Stehlik, the man who runs it, is taking the greatest pains, for instance, to hunt down a better Godard copy in Canada. The covers of my films look, I suppose, as if I was a DJ.

**RH:** Do you think *auteurs* should have their own TV channel? A station that only buys works from Farocki, Costard and Loden?

**HF:** It is quite possible that the 150th or 300th channel would be appropriate for my films, but I would receive so little money that I wouldn't be able to produce films on this basis alone. Since there is no money, such programmes should at least be made by underground people, so that the result is interesting. In any case, we need newer recording and exhibition formats.

**RH:** In the *feuilleton* of the German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, they recently quoted Houellebecq in the context of pop culture: 'When, in a conversation on literature, the word "style" is mentioned, you know that it is time to relax, look around, order another beer.' How do you read film criticism/reviews in this age of relaxation when everyone thinks they have happily survived the days when style was everything? How do you explain that you and your fellow filmmakers at *Filmkritik* argued the status of the written text with much greater, and more playful reflexivity than nowadays, when it seems to be perfectly all-right to reflect on performance alone?

**HF:** Some very good articles on film have been appearing recently in the weekly, *Jungle World*, by Michael Baute, Ludger Blanke, and Stefan Pethke. With people like them one could re-start *Filmkritik*. At a party with a lot of film studies people from Berkeley, someone mentioned a scholar from Hawaii, saying that he had interpreted a Western in a very Derridian fashion. This kind of encounter confirms my prejudices that film studies pay more attention to the text. The film is even annihilated through text production ('a Western') and so, thought gets influenced by Derrida, not by a film. Film has become a pretext for what one wants to say.

RH: Sure, but such texts are only written for parties anyway. But you are not fundamentally criticizing theory-guided observations on film, are you?

HF: Absolutely not, my years in the US have changed my mind. I never cared much about Fassbinder, not only because he was so far-reaching, but also because he had no style. As you know, he was influenced by Straub and Brecht, but broke with the rules of this school. He returned to characters who offered identification, even though it was mostly via melodramatic exaggeration. Kaja Silverman and Thomas Elsaesser explain how Fassbinder reveals politics in love, exploitation in sexuality. These writings have enriched Fassbinder's films, not only visually, but also intellectually. I also understood that something I deemed impossible applies to Fassbinder: he can communicate something that can't be found in the 'language' of his films, only in his intentions. His intentions express themselves, just as it is possible to say more in a foreign language than your actual limitations allow: a lovers' experience, I think.

RH: In your films you are constantly dealing with film history; sometimes this is really obvious. Apart from Godard, there are not a lot of people who do this well. That's why I would like to establish a connection between your two projects *DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE* (*THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS*, 1997) and *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK* (*WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, 1995). Would you mind explaining your specific techniques of sequencing, material selection, and association?

HF: In 1995, when cinema turned one hundred, I had the idea of taking the Lumière film, *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY*, and looking for examples throughout film history where workers are seen leaving a factory. Of course, there are stars like Chaplin and Monroe, but there are also employees and workers from Siemens in Berlin in 1934 who are leaving to join a Nazi rally. There was also an East German factory brigade pulling out in uniforms and armoured cars to arrest *agents provocateurs* in the forest – one only learns later that this was just an exercise. The real enemy of the working class cannot be shown, or it is too dangerous to turn him into a character. I collected scenes from the US and Europe and from every decade of film history. Doing this, one can learn a lot about 'filmic expression'. Firstly, workers can't be recognised as such once they have walked out of the factory gate. One moment later and you can't distinguish them from other passers-by (see ill. 72). Secondly, it was once the common belief among communists that economic struggle would turn into political struggle – the factory gate would be the ideal place to observe this. But no communist regime ever rose to power or collapsed in this way – if you disregard the Lenin dockyards in Gdansk. More than anything, it's a great

pleasure to have – sometimes quite similar, sometimes very different – versions of the same process before your eyes. I would love to have a book with a thousand versions of the motif ‘A woman takes something away from a sleeping man’. Another thing: how is the soap held? In ads, women hold soap like perfume. I think this is because actual washing would refer to dirt, which is not supposed to exist.

**RH:** How would you draw a line between your methods and Godard’s in the *Histoire(s) de cinéma* project? In your analysis of *LE GAI SAVOIR* (Jean Luc Godard, 1968) in *Speaking About Godard* you and Kaja Silverman write: ‘Even Godard doesn’t have to read all of the texts he quotes’. This is quite clear. Maybe, under certain circumstances, it’s more to the letter not to follow to the letter.

**HF:** I think Godard undertakes a different kind of research. In *Histoire(s) de cinéma*, I had the impression that he is always immediately removing himself from the material. He makes one intellectual observation, then another, and then compares them – literalism is lacking. His first main idea: Sternberg lights Marlene Dietrich in the same way as Speer lights Hitler – this isn’t quite true, but it’s a great idea. He’s after these really great things. A cultural history of light – maybe there are even links to the French ‘Annales’ school of historical writing. My own reference point is more something like the ‘Archiv für Begriffsforschung’ (Archive for Research into the Development of Concepts). This Archiv explores old structures, such as the use of ‘genießen’ (to enjoy) with genitive, as in J. S. Bach: ‘Genieße *der* Ruh’ (enjoy ‘of’ peace). It is a matter of semantic fields and changes of meaning, but also about the creation of new words. There is one film, *LA VERFICA INCERTA*, by Gianfranco Baruchello and Alberto Grifi (1964), for which they bought about forty feature films that had been junked and then re-cut them. So you see Curd Jürgens saluting on a ship that’s firing a broadside and then girls in bikinis jumping into the water from a yacht. Cutting into the St Tropez movie makes one believe that the girls want to save themselves; at the same time you realise that this is, of course, not the case. This aspect, that ‘things are not quite working the way they should’, makes it very clear that filmic narratives have standard expressions too. This is how I came to imagine some kind of film thesaurus, a little like the one that comes with a word processor. You click on a word and you don’t just get the synonyms, but also a set of similar sounding words you could have originally meant in the first place! When you have to narrate that a woman is taking something away from a sleeping man: what should you expect, how can you counteract these expectations? I’m quite surprised that this is so seldom done,

and that film archives and research institutes do so little sampling and comparing.

**RH:** Can you give us an idea of how you research a film? I saw that the closing credits mention several research teams in different countries.

**HF:** I have been working with researchers for almost twenty years. There are some long-term working relationships. At the moment, I'm working with Cathy Crane, Brett Simon, Stefan Pethke and Matthias Rajmann. As far as scriptless films are concerned, these people are of course co-authors. When you are looking for an event, it is quite possible that for a thousand times in a row it happens in a way that you can't film it or that the montage becomes impossible. This is a little like looking for the suitable scene for a feature film. It's not enough that just certain prerequisites are fulfilled, such as a house having triangular balconies. The scene has to communicate something by itself. I like this factuality that film requires – something has to *exist* and it has to be there *now* so that you can film it. This is indeed about making that which is general, concrete. It's very easy to say, 'workers leave the factory when work is over'. But it is very difficult to find out when and where this happens and, especially, that the image transcends what is expressed in the sentence, that it has a value of its own, something beyond being the equivalent of the words. We have indeed looked for a door on a third floor without a balcony in front of it, or rails running straight towards the sea – and we found both. Our experiences right now, with the mall project, are similar. I have found enough papers about how people tried to measure the speed of customers: do they accelerate on certain floor surfaces or slow down? How do they move through space? How can the figuration of space influence their movements and emotions? How can they be guided through special furnishings? It's important to find current studies of this kind – studies in the 'Taylorisation' of the consumer. Production and distribution have already become matters of science – now it's the consumer's turn. This kind of science clearly has something magical about it – something to do with legitimation and self-monitoring.

**RH:** What makes a topic *your* topic? Thinking of a film like one by Gorin, *ROUTINE PLEASURES*, where you have five old men doing maintenance work on a model railway – this is a great film but one knows immediately that it couldn't be one of yours. It's not your kind of topic. Your quite elaborate procedures allowed you to observe all the various kinds of labour. Is there some common denominator to your films? What are the things that get you immediately involved?



**HF:** An important prerequisite for the kind of research that underpins my work is attention to detail – just as in American detective novels. Things like the German police using the acronym PMS (Politisch Motivierter Strassengewalt) for ‘politically motivated violence’ to talk about street demonstrations, or that it is forbidden to repair tyres designed for high speeds. I’m very interested in the origin of words. I like looking them up – this leads to a lot of stories, but doesn’t generate genuine knowledge. A filmmaker doesn’t have a ‘field’ – that’s why I’m so crazy about details.

**RH:** How does this research translate into images? There is this game Carl Schmitt liked to play with his guests: he would ask them from which book a specific sentence was taken. This is quite dull hermeneutics – you know, the forced logic of main and subsidiary passages – but sometimes it can still be quite productive. Would you be able to say about one or another of your films: ‘this is the image from which I made this film’? Is there, for instance, already an image that is going to be pivotal in your next story?

**HF:** No, I don’t start from an image. In the case of *VIDEOGRAMME* (1992), I proceeded from an imagined situation. I read the book by Von Amelnunxen and Ujica about the revolution in Romania and thought of a film in which a few people sit in front of monitors, observe, and analyse sequences of images – just as one might discuss this kind of sequences at the editing table during a seminar. The film turned out very differently. With malls, it’s also different: you can’t exactly film malls, it would just look like junk mail; it’s easier to film barbecue sausages. This film can only be about the *production* of malls. It has to focus on events that bring those malls to life. That’s why the starting point is not an image but rather the difficulty arising from the impossibility of making a concrete image.

**RH:** Could you imagine this kind of co-operation as some kind of text – several filmmakers, the situation at the editing table, intelligent people watching things from different perspectives? I think it’s sad that the old omnibus-movies are no longer around. Recently *LOIN DU VIETNAM* (*FAR FROM VIETNAM*, 1967) was on television – it was great. Do you think this is a dead form or could it be some kind of challenge for the future? Just think, all my favourite directors in one spot...

**HF:** In *DEUTSCHLAND IM HERBST* (*GERMANY IN AUTUMN*, 1978) there was this kind of co-operation, or rather the clash between Kluge and Fassbinder. This makes the film interesting, although some of the contributions are terrible. Kluge is just too much of a megalomaniac to make co-operation possible. He is



like Karl Kraus with his *Fackel* – one should just start a journal of one's own. At the beginning of the '90s, I tried to instigate some kind of media magazine on TV. We were unable to push it through, there was no time slot for it. But even worse, we were unable to assemble a group of people distinguished enough to make it seem scandalous, so that we didn't get the funding for our project.

**RH:** As far as the history of your projects is concerned – would you be able to give a brief sketch of the people backing you? And what changes have occurred in the TV world?

**HF:** Let's start with the end. I don't believe it's possible to concentrate creative forces. It's not realistic to imagine all of the interesting people – *auteurs* and producers – working at one television station and making this station special. The things shown on 3sat [a publicly funded 'cultural' satellite channel] by Inge Classen and others do not exactly correspond to the other material the station broadcasts, because the channel is a kind of off-loading zone for many contributors. And the projects made by Werner Dütsch and his team at WDR tower above the rest like an alien body. With the Arte channel, one can't always be sure either that there is a reason behind every contribution. A lot of what they broadcast makes you realise that they just function as fill-ins for the standards of one of the many contributors. Then you see some strange feature on the Caucasus Mountains where you wonder whether this couldn't have also been shown on Bavarian Broadcasting at 2 p.m. It's not really done well, and you are almost tempted to make a few donations so that they don't have to shut down. And, of course, as is the case with journals and magazines, there is always the covering up of difficulties.

**RH:** This means that an entire genre of film will be gone when these editors retire?

**HF:** At WDR, it looks like they are going to get rid of the film programming department when the – already reduced – staff reaches retirement age. Their budget has been halved, and there are now a lot of Heinz-Rühmann movies instead of the rich and diverse productions found in their archives. NDR's third channel is the same story – one can't imagine Klaus Wildenhahn amongst all of those picturesquely folksy concerts by the harbour singing in their Low-German dialect. I have always produced work that sits at the very margin of this channel, and even this won't be possible any more with the kind of programming they're planning. Certain homeless people just can't get it together to move to the airport when the railway station is closed down – which is not to say that the old railway station was anything special.

**RH:** How helpful is 'essay film' as a category? Baumgärtel, in his Farocki book, has identified the following categories for your films: informative film, *auteur* film, observation film, essay film and found-footage film. *WIE MAN SIEHT, BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES, WAS IST LOS?,* and *SCHNITTSTELLE* are essay films. Leaving the other categories aside: what does 'essay film' mean? Something that's not quite a film? Doesn't this create a category for something that's a fundamental problem for every film? Why is *ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK* not an essay film? Or *NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER?* Or *BEITRÄGE FÜR SANDMÄNNCHEN?* Or *FACES* by Cassavetes?

**HF:** This category is just as unsuitable as 'documentary film', sure. When there is a lot of music on TV and you see landscapes – they've started calling that an essay film as well. A lot of stuff that's just relaxing and not unequivocally journalistic is already called 'essay'. That's terrible, of course. That's as vague as those 'experiments' from the 1950s. Hans Magnus Enzensberger had already noted that the scientific concept of experiment was completely unsuitable for art. The term 'essay' has devolved into a similar vagueness. But to me, narration and argumentation are still very closely linked. I strongly hold that discourses are a form of narration. World War II hasn't quite made it into a novel by some new Tolstoy, but instead it has found its way into the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*.

**RH:** Are genres important to you? What about hybrid forms and genre transitions?

**HF:** Last year Kaja Silverman and I conducted a seminar in Berkeley. It was about making films from stills. We watched some of these films and students also had the opportunity to make them themselves. I was completely overwhelmed by the result! Some films were excellent, and more than half very interesting – which is much more than you can expect even from a festival! This is because of the subject matter: when you turn photographs or other still images into something, you don't compete with the omnipresent narrative machine. When you show a boy who starts talking to a girl at a coffee shop, you are immediately subjected to standards: does it look like Neighbourhood TV, like an independent film or like the work of a student? When it's about putting stills into a sequence, to read them, a new kind of competence arises. There's also some new versatility in making script and images approach each other on the computer screen. Maybe there's a new idiom on the horizon. Helmut Färber wrote that film was similar to tonal languages where intonation is more important than syntax.

**RH:** Do you think that the classical difference between ‘reception’ and ‘production’, between film academia and film production won’t exist for too much longer?

**HF:** In Berkeley, there’s not really any film production, just film studies. There, film production takes place to make people understand how film works, not to teach them film production. Everyone who studies literature writes – not to become an author, but to understand writing.

**RH:** In 1998, for the Christmas edition of *Jungle World* you wrote a text on Holger Meins. An unusual dossier, in that it appeared in a journal. It works like a book whose leaves have remained uncut – you press down in the middle and the pages lie side by side. Why did it take you thirty years to cut the leaves of your book on ‘68?

**HF:** I don’t want to badmouth ‘68, but I’m still quite hung over from it. I once read that the French people shouted ‘The King shall live!’ at the beginning of the revolution – this meant that they wanted to overthrow the monarchy. I have that same feeling: we said something completely different from what we meant, and nowadays it seems that our intentions were right. It’s a little like my film NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER, where I achieved something contrary to my intentions. (Of course, I like achieving more than I intended, but not something different.) We believed or postulated that it was possible to ‘make history’. That’s why we played down national socialism, and why it was beneficial to denounce capitalism as the ultimate stage of national socialism. In this respect we were – unwittingly – very similar to our parents’ generation who wanted to get Hitler behind them as quickly as possible.

**RH:** Well, it’s not really true that there are no links between capitalism and national socialism. I really liked something the director of the literary archives in Marbach said recently: ‘The ‘68 generation was the last generation of readers’.

**HF:** Yes, ‘68 was some kind of cultural revolution that overcame pre-war ethics, ethics best described by the word ‘austerity’: parsimony, sacrifice, discipline. This attitude towards life didn’t match the altered circumstances, and pop made things explode. There was a need for blood for the sake of emphasis: street fights, hijackings, assassinations. You could say: blood for pop. Regarding Holger Meins: this film of his, *O. L.*, is going to last and it can’t be put into the context of everything else he did at all. The only thing you can say is that he realised he knew how filmmaking works and that’s why he lost interest.

*Translated by Winfried Thielmann and Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.*

# Harun Farocki: Critical Strategies

*Christa Blümlinger*

In his analysis of media coverage of the first Gulf War for the newspaper *Libération*, French film critic Serge Daney proposed a conceptual distinction between the 'image', which he qualified as cinematic, and the 'visual', which he attributed to the media (television, advertising, techno-military images). Daney defined this distinction as follows:

The visual, then, is the optical verification that things are functioning on a purely technical level: there are no reverse shots, nothing is missing, everything is sealed in a closed circuit, rather like the pornographic spectacle which is no more than the ecstatic verification that the organs are functioning. The opposite would be true for the image – the image that we have adored at the cinema to the point of obscenity. The image always occurs on the border between two force fields; its purpose is to testify to a certain alterity, and although the core is always there, something is always missing. The image is always both more and less than itself.<sup>1</sup>

If one observes how Harun Farocki incorporates elements that might be considered 'visual' (images of civilian or military surveillance, advertisements, propaganda films) into his essay films and installations, one might conclude that the filmmaker's aim is to confront them with the possibility of the image, which is restored by his writing.

Since his early days as an activist in the late 1960s, the Berlin-based Farocki has always been a profoundly contemporary artist, capable of grasping – indeed of anticipating – the symptoms of discontent in civilisation, either by capturing on-the-spot action or by reworking existing images. This emerges quite clearly from his installation *I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS* (2000), where there is a difference between the recording of the gestures repeated by the trainee guards, freely observed by the filmmaker, and the ways in which prison 'reality' is presented by the surveillance cameras. The difference lies in the system of observation that is established in a supervised area such as this. The filmmaker's 're-view' of a prison visit (which comes to an abrupt end after the prisoner's unsuccessful attempt to conceal his gesture of affection) demonstrates the omnipresence of a form of observation that knows no bounds. The prisoner leaves the room without so much as a backward glance for his visitor; the surveillance has blinded him to all else. In Farocki's work, images of this kind are sequenced in conjunction with explanatory subtitles: such an 'event',

taken from archive footage, is the exception that justifies the surveillance. Consequently, what Farocki has filmed live, such as the guards' training session, can be interpreted in the same way: the chance event becomes calculable, it is part of the logic of the institution. In order to supervise more efficiently, the authorities establish rituals that consist of the repetition of a form beyond communication.

Farocki often uses images that were originally produced with a specific strategic purpose or which circulate in the public sphere. Just as he investigates these images, he has always been capable of studying his own production from a similarly critical standpoint. His installations and films seem to disclose their own production process, like a sort of open work, but his many writings also refer to filmic articulation as one of the problems of the creative process. In a text that describes the editing room as a workplace (an idea he re-worked literally with his 1995 installation *SCHNITTSTELLE/SECTION/INTERFACE*) Farocki writes:

At the editing table, rhetoric emerges from stammering. It's because this rhetorical articulation exists that the unarticulated speech in the editing room is stammering. When you're shooting you can move the camera here or there, frowning in thought as you make on-the-spot decisions. In the editing room you mess about for a week before deciding where to put this minute's worth of image.<sup>2</sup>

For Farocki, any political standpoint is subject to this awareness of the author as producer, in the Benjaminian sense.<sup>3</sup> The author must be 'demythologised and socialised', to transform 'readers and viewers into participants', just as Benjamin proposes. Thus the filmmaker's audiovisual writing is connected to reflections on montage, for which he finds allegories – by filming his own hand as it frames an image in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND INSCRIPTION OF WAR* (1988); or more explicitly, in his autoportrait *SCHNITTSTELLE*, by using his own voice from one of his early films; or through interstices which show up the components of the image, as in *EYE/MACHINE* (2001) or *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* (1990).

Within Farocki's audio-visual *œuvre* (which comprises over eighty films, videos and installations) two types of cinematic approach may be identified: the live and the recycled. Sometimes these anthropological and archival approaches converge, as they do in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND INSCRIPTION OF WAR*, in which the movement of live filming punctuates the commentary on the still images (photographs and drawings). Each approach gives rise to an analytics of the image, which grounds political thinking in a reflection on the *discursivity* of images.

Certain major themes can also be perceived in Farocki's work, the first and foremost of which is the filmmaker's reflection on disciplinary institutions as

precursors of control societies. Farocki studies how the latter take over and administer people's lives by managing and supervising them in a variety of ways. The social stakes are perceptible through rituals, games, repetitions, training sessions, and drill routines of all kinds. His major film, *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, but also a series of short films such as *INDOCTRINATION* (1987) or *THE INTERVIEW* (1997), show how a society of service industries, management, and training departments busy devising one-size-fits-all behavioural templates that guarantee the stability of the system. *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* lists the many ways in which these service sectors prepare their social actors for the eventuality of accidents. By showing their rehearsals for 'D-Day', Farocki captures what is really at stake in a contemporary society that is undergoing a transformation into a post-industrial system in which the factory symbolically gives way to the business enterprise. We see how businesses set individuals against one another by introducing the principle of rivalry. In *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, there are two types of alternating images: the automatic functioning of the machines used to test furniture, and the role play carried out by bank clerks, midwives, or police officers. What is for sale must be tried and tested, as must those who sell or service it. A process of substitution takes place, so aptly described by Gilles Deleuze: 'just as the corporation replaces the factory, *perpetual training* tends to replace the *school*, while continuous control replaces the examination'.<sup>4</sup>

A few years after *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, Farocki made *THE INTERVIEW*, which required him to investigate other social 'laboratories', basically the training centres for the long-term unemployed. In this film, a young and rather attractive woman role plays a job interviewee. She plays her part very well, and the trainer plays his badly. When the video is shown again, the trainer is still unable to compensate for his lack of judgement; he therefore addresses the woman as though she were a young girl, suggesting that she use her charm. When these scenes are replayed on a television screen (in black-and-white), punctuated by a Neil Young soundtrack (a musical 'quotation' from Farocki, the *cinéphile*, perhaps, as it comes from Jim Jarmusch's *DEAD MAN*, 1995), we perceive the distance between this role play and reality. This very distance also reveals the laws that govern such role play when enacted in the 'real' world. The displacement that has occurred here in this distance from real life is represented by the television monitor, which repeats and re-presents the 'role playing' of the 'model actors' and their trainers. The displacement between reality and its simulation affects the repetition, a key element in Farocki's montage and in the viewer's memory.

Such an emphasis on instrumentalising communication is clearly a way of controlling human subjects and giving a specific direction to their body language, speech acts, and somatic behaviour. Farocki's observations are centred

here, always at a distance, with an extremely precise camera which hardly moves, sometimes changes its viewpoint, but always seems to know exactly where it stands in relation to the role play, the performance or appearance. What matters, is capturing moments of *performativity*, insofar as this concept that belongs to cultural studies<sup>3</sup> not only means that something is done but that an action is 'realised'. This 'realisation', which always involves repetition and reformulation, is one of the founding tenets of Farocki's work. The architecture of his films and his montage principles correspond to this *iterability*. In *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, for example, the repetition of certain types of psychological or intelligence tests for children points out the *normativity* of these games, while letting us see that the act of 'realising' such a film is itself based on a language system entailing mimesis and repetition.

Marketing and the image play a central role in these essay-films about control systems. By filming the executives in charge of a public relations campaign, Farocki proposes an interpretation of the mythology of the logo and of what we solemnly call the advertising 'concept': in *THE APPEARANCE* (1996) he touches on the cult status acquired by brand images. The dialogue between the representative of a team from an advertising agency and the managers of an optical consortium about the connotations of the 'Eyedentity' brand show to what extent the product is subordinated to its image.

With his installation *I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS*, Farocki demonstrates the homology between surveillance systems in prisons and those in supermarkets: both reconnaissance systems serve to interpret a recorded action in the same way. People are no longer targeted within a confined space (such as a prison or factory), but in the places they frequent as consumer or employee. From the same perspective, in Farocki's film about experts who develop sales strategies (*THE CREATORS OF THE SHOPPING WORLDS*, 2001), the second to last scene demonstrates, with an almost comic performance, that markets are won not so much by product specialisation but by taking control.

In a supermarket, an impressive number of sales and marketing experts stop in front of a section of shelving where bread and industrial pastries are on display. This long sequence is filmed in long and medium close shots, which show the attitudes and *habitus* of these men, each of whom tries, in his own way, to fulfil his role (as branch manager, merchandising consultant, store executive). They discuss their strategic viewpoints and evoke the absent consumer with the utmost seriousness and concentration, even imitating the customers' gestures as they handle packets of cake and toast that have obviously been mass-produced for consumers with limited means and (consequently) unsophisticated tastes. From time to time they give figures and market research results. At the beginning of the sequence, Farocki inserts the brand images and logos of the rival companies, with their mythology of the grain and



their symbols of nature. He also introduces the scene of the debate with a diagram and the comments of one of its 'creators', which disclose a sort of 'semiology of the layout'. The cross-shaped diagram demonstrates how choices are structured according to a logic that directs the customer's attention: when he looks horizontally, he must see the range of products, when he looks vertically, the type of product. Thus we see the control principle that operates on a short-term basis and in quick succession.<sup>6</sup> Farocki demonstrates how marketing becomes the instrument of social control.

In *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG*, Farocki presents a 'rational' viewpoint, according to which the body is reduced to its function as a medium. A historical dimension is introduced, however, into his other studies on surveillance technologies and on the principle of 'reconnaissance and pursuit', a military principle applied to a large part of the social sphere. This constitutes the second major theme in Farocki's work. In his films (from *BETWEEN TWO WARS* (1978) and *AS YOU SEE* (1986) to *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR* and *EYE/MACHINE 2*) Farocki outlines an audio-visual history of (post-)industrial civilisation and its techniques, in which he positions the convergence of war, economy, and politics within the social sphere. If the assemblage of existing images distinguishes Farocki's work, it is because he analyses this social space by way of the images that circulate within it. *VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION* (1992), for example, uses Romanian television footage to analyse how the media *ideologise* an event, and demonstrates that the 'pathos formulas' (in the sense of Aby Warburg), which developed after the fall of Ceauçescu were quick to acquire the status of symbolic forms comparable to the one they had under the former régime. This pure compilation of archive material suggests that one must go beyond televisual images, beyond what was called a 'televised revolution' to the outtakes and to home movies in order to get back to the beginnings of the revolt, to the public place where history is made by the citizen.

Over the last few years, Farocki has been working on an iconological project with his re-use of images: a sort of catalogue of what he calls 'filmic expressions', like a 'thesaurus of images'<sup>7</sup> with archives structured according to motifs. For Farocki, the Lumière's film *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY* (1895), for example, represents a symbolic form which is in short supply in the history of cinema but now needs to be tracked down and analysed. *WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY* (1995) begins with the image of the original film, then explores a century of cinema in search of the rare images which show the worker leaving the factory (see ill. 70). Farocki expresses this idea as follows:

In the iconography of the cinema, the worker resembles one of the little-known saints of Christian pictorial tradition... The cinema does not ignore the workers'



struggle for jobs and bread in the city, but transposes it from the factory to the bank. Likewise for war as such...<sup>8</sup>

When Farocki analyses a scene from Pudovkin's *DESERTER* (1933), in which a member of the picket line sees jobless men rush to the shipyard gates to take the place of a worker who has just collapsed, what interests him is the representation of faces, the shadows that cross the striker's face, the crowd formations. Farocki's analysis is centred on repetition and the juxtaposition of word and image. Likewise, at the beginning of *THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS* (1997), Farocki is interested in a gesture taken from Samuel Fuller's *PICK UP ON SOUTH STREET*. The repetition of close-ups that switch from the victim's face to the pickpocket's hands corresponds to an idea evoked by the commentary: that hands and mouths speak different languages. The *cinéophile* Farocki was to demonstrate this idea later using the fragmentation in Bresson's work. Thus, in *THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS*, associations are created from the word 'seize' as a tactile act and an act of thought. In a way, Farocki's work resembles the leading idea of the cultural historian Aby Warburg, who worked until his death in 1929 on his great *Mnemosyne Atlas*,<sup>9</sup> assembling the iconographical documents he had gathered throughout a lifetime's research. Warburg's conviction that the repetition, resumption, and metamorphosis of the past encode certain forms of suffering and passion (the pathos formulas mentioned above) is at the very heart of Farocki's montages.

Although there are many stills in Farocki's films (notably in *IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR*), unlike Warburg's, they are film images: not only fragments of gestures as in painting, but fragments of images in movement. In a critical commentary on Warburg, Giorgio Agamben asserts not only the aesthetic dimension of cinema but also the basis of its political power in the gesture: 'Cinema has the gesture and not the image at its centre, and therefore belongs essentially to the ethical and political order (and not simply to the aesthetic order)'. And a little further, he explains: 'The gesture consists of exhibiting a *mediality*, of making a means visible as such. (Consequently, the being within becomes apparent, and the ethical dimension is opened.)'<sup>10</sup>

In these films made up of found footage, Farocki shows himself to be a *cinéophile* who is able to grasp the Barthesian *punctum* in a mere a gesture. For his installations *I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS* and *EYE/MACHINE* (1 and 2) he uses what he calls 'operational images',<sup>11</sup> i.e. images whose purpose is purely technical and functional, thereby taking the visual in Daney's sense into account: single-purpose images, often produced for a specific operation and destined to be erased, such as military surveillance images which verify the efficiency of a bombing raid. These images indicate the lack of *alterity* to

which Daney refers when he designates them as checking images or clichés. Farocki says that he was 'sensitive to the "displaced" nature of all these images, laboriously collected from research institutes, public relations departments, educational film archives and elsewhere'.<sup>12</sup> It might be said that the displacement of these specialised, little-known archives into the milieu of art exhibitions<sup>13</sup> or experimental cinema is like an act of 'ready-made' in itself and represents an awareness of the *exhibition value* of an image.

In his double-screen installations, Farocki confronts images taken from simulations or models with images from a recording of 'reality', but he is not only confronting the terms automatic production / manual production, automatic vision / cinema vision, or the relationship between industry and war, but also the closed-circuit effect which ranked the televisual images of the first Gulf War as 'visual', in the sense that Daney opposes them to the cinematographic image which he defines as both 'a lack and a surplus'.<sup>14</sup> In Farocki's work, consideration of the image as symbolic form is just the first step. The real distinction comes with *montage*, an essential operation between image and image, word and image, sound and image: a process that leads us step by step towards thought. This is where another aspect of Benjamin's idea of the 'author as producer' is particularly valid for Farocki: the transcendence of the barriers between writing and image.

*Translated by Sally Laruelle.*

## Notes

1. Serge Daney, 'Montage obligé. La guerre, le Golfe et le petit écran' (April 1991), in *Devant la recrudescence des vols de sacs à main: cinéma, télévision, information (1988-1991)*, Lyon: Aléas, 1991, p. 163. Trans. S.L.
2. Harun Farocki, 'What is an Editing Room', in *Reconnaissance and Pursuit: Texts Collected and Introduced by Christa Blümlinger, Followed by a Filmography with Comments*, THY 2002, p. 33.
3. See Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume Two (1927-1934)*, Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
4. Gilles Deleuze, 'Post-script on the Societies of Control', *October* 59, Winter 1992, p. 5.
5. See, e.g., Herbert Blau, *To All Appearances: Ideology and Performance*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
6. Deleuze, op. cit., p. 246.
7. 'Bilderschatz', in Farocki, op. cit., p. 93, in this volume.
8. Harun Farocki, 'With a Decisive Step', *Trafic* no. 14, 1995, p. 24.

9. Warburg explains this comparative approach as follows: 'The Mnemosyne Atlas, with its iconographic material, aims to illustrate the process that might be described as an attempt to assimilate, through the representation of living movement, a stock of preformed expressive values'. Aby Warburg, 'Mnemosyne, Introduction', *Trafic* no. 9, Winter 1994, p. 39.
10. Giorgio Agamben, 'Notes on Gesture', *Trafic* no. 1, pp. 34, 35.
11. Harun Farocki, 'Transversal Influences', *Trafic* no. 43, Autumn 2002, pp. 19-24.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
13. Farocki's installations and films have been shown, for example, at the Villeneuve d'Ascq museum in Lille, at the Documenta in Kassel, at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, at the zkm Karlsruhe, at the Generali Foundation in Vienna, and at the Centre Georges Pompidou (see <[www.farocki-film.de](http://www.farocki-film.de)>).
14. The catalogue of *Documenta X*, edited by Catherine David, notably reproduces Daney's text entitled 'Before and After the Image', Cantz: Documenta, 1997, pp. 610-620.

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kungen zum politischen Film nach Brecht', in Rolf Aurich, Ulrich Kriest (eds.), *Harun Farocki: Der Ärger mit den Bildern* (Konstanz: UVK-Medien, Close Up, 1998): 111-144.

A Road Not Taken (Jonathan Rosenbaum): originally published in *Chicago Reader*, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1992.

Slowly Forming A Thought While Working on Images (Christa Blümlinger): originally published as 'De la lente élaboration des pensées dans le travail des images' in *Trafic* no. 13, 1995. Translated by Robin Curtis.

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Light Weapons (Tom Keenan): originally published in *Documents* 1-2 (Fall-Winter 1992): 147-158.

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'A Visual Archive of Cinematographical Topics' (W. Ernst) on [www.nettime.org](http://www.nettime.org) and 'Bilderschatz' (H. Farocki), given as the Vilém Flusser lecture, 2002 in Duisburg (Germany). Texts edited by Thomas Elsaesser, with translation (of 'Bilderschatz') by Robin Curtis.

Controlling Observation (Harun Farocki), originally published as 'Kontrollblicke', in *Jungle World*, no. 37, September 8<sup>th</sup> 1999. Translated by Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim.

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# Farocki: A Filmography

## 1966 ZWEI WEGE

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Horst Kandeler
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
TV-producer	Hanspeter Krüger
length	3 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	31.03.1966 Nord 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Berliner Fenster'

## JEDER EIN BERLINER KINDL

director	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Gerd Delp
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	4 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37

## 1967 DER WAHLHELFER

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Thomas Hartwig
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	14 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37

## DIE WORTE DES VORSITZENDEN (THE WORDS OF THE CHAIRMAN)

director	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Helke Sander

scriptwriter	Harun Farocki, based on texts by Lin Piao
cinematographer	Holger Meins
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	3 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	27.06.1969, ZDF

### 1968 IHRE ZEITUNGEN

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Helke Sander
cinematographer	Skip Norman
sound	Ulrich Knaudt
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	17 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37

### WHITE CHRISTMAS

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Skip Norman
music	Bing Crosby: 'White Christmas'
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	3 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37

### DREI SCHÜSSE AUF RUDI

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Skip Norman
sound	Ulrich Knaudt
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	4 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37, silent
note	The film is presumably lost

### OHNE TITEL ODER: WANDERKINO FÜR INGENIEURSTUDENTEN

director	Harun Farocki
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scriptwriter	Rote Zelle Technik der TU Berlin
production	DFFB, Berlin-West
length	40 min.
format	1-Zoll Ampex, b/w 1:1.37

### 1969 NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER (INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE)

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Helke Sander
cinematographer	Gerd Conradt
sound	Ulrich Knautd
cast	Harun Farocki, Hanspeter Krüger, Eckart Kammer, Caroline Gremm, Gerd Volker Bussäus, Ingrid Oppermann
production	Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
length	25 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	27.07.69, West 3

### UNTITLED OR: NIXON KOMMT NACH BERLIN

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Giorgios Xylandreu
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, Sozialistische Filmemacher Cooperative West-Berlin
length	2 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
note	The film is presumed lost

### ANLEITUNG, POLIZISTEN DEN HELM ABZUREISSEN

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Michael Geißler
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, Rote Zelle Germanistik (FU Berlin), Sozialistische Filmemacher Cooperative West-Berlin
length	2 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
note	The film is presumed lost



**1970** DIE TEILUNG ALLER TAGE (THE DIVISION OF ALL DAYS)

director, scriptwriter, editor	Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki
assistant director	Petra Milhoffer, Ingrid Oppermann
pedagogic programme	Petra Milhoffer, Wolfgang Lenk, based on texts by Karl Marx
Cinematographer	Carlos Bustamante, Adolf Winckelmann
assistent cinematographer	Georg Lehner
animation camera	Helmut Herbst, Carlos Bustamante
technicians	Klaus W. Bunser, Gerhard Braun
sound	Johannes Beringer
mixing	Gerhard Jensen
production	Cinegrafik, Helmut Herbst, Hamburg, WDR, Köln
producer	Helmut Herbst
length	65 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first screening	17.04.70, Oberhausen
first broadcast	19.04.70, West 3
distributor	Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek

**1971** EINE SACHE, DIE SICH VERSTEHT (15 MAL)

director, scriptwriter	Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki, based on texts by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
cinematographer	Carlos Bustamante, David Slama
sound	Johannes Beringer
editor	Hasso Nagel
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, with financial support from Kuratorium junger deutscher Film, Wiesbaden
length	64 min.
format	16 mm, b/w 1:1.37
first screening	Juni 1971, Berlin-West, Internat. Forum des Jungen Films
distributor	Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek

**1972** REMEMBER TOMORROW IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

director, scriptwriter, editor	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Fritz Grosche
assistant director	Klaus Krahn
music	The Velvet Underground: 'Afterhours' DonMcLean: 'American Pie' The New Seekers: 'I'd like to Teach the World to Sing' Neil Young: 'Heart of Gold' Ray Stevens: 'Turn Your Radio On'
production	SFB, Berlin-West
length	10 min.
format	16 mm, Farbe, 1:1.37
first broadcast	14.04.72, Nord 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Studio III / Aus Kunst und Wissenschaft'

DIE SPRACHE DER REVOLUTION. BEISPIELE  
REVOLUTIONÄRER RHETORIK, UNTERSUCHT VON HANS  
CHRISTOPH BUCH

director	Harun Farocki
scriptwriter	Hans Christoph Buch
cinematographer	Bernd Maus, Joachim Pritzel
sound	Christian Praszer
editor	Ulla Agne, Claudia Karsunke
production	WDR, Köln
executive producer	Volker Dieckmann
length	45 min.
format	16 mm,b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	30.10.72, Nord 3

**1973** SESAMSTRASSE

director, scriptwriter	Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Carlos Bustamante
sound	Hans Beringer
editor	Rolf Basedow
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, NDR, Hamburg
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37

Titles	Transport 1 (length: 3 min.) Transport 2 (3 min., first broadcast: 23.01.1973) Container 1 (3 min.) Container 2 (3 min., 12.11.74) Sägen (2.5 min., 10.05.73) Hammer (2,5 min., 19.06.73) Der Weg des Geldes (2.75 min., 27.09.73) Baggerlied (3.5 min., 01.10.73) Dock (2.5 min., 21.05.73) Schiffsentladung 1 Schiffsentladung
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## MAKE UP

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Tillmann Taube
cinematographer	Carlos Bustamante
assistant cinematographer	Marco Fumasoli
sound	Hans Beringer
editor	Rolf Basedow
set designer	Simone Bergmann
make up	Serge Lutens
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, for BR, München
executive producer	Walter Adler, Dirk Gerhard
length	29 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	14.-20.10.73, Bayern 3

## BRUNNER IST DRAN

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki; Heinz von Cramer (overall program, concept and implementation)
script	Harun Farocki based on the story 'Le mauvais vitrier' by Charles Baudelaire
cinematographer	David Slama
assistant cinematographer	Marina Koischwitz, Fritz Grosche, Klaus Krahn (overall program)
sound	Hans Beringer

editor	Rolf Basedow
production manager	Thomas Giefer
production	Larabel Film Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, for SFB, Berlin-West, TV-producer: Jürgen Tomm
length	17 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	08.10.1973, Nord 3

### EINMAL WIRST AUCH DU MICH LIEBEN. ÜBER DIE BEDEUTUNG VON HEFTROMANEN

director, scriptwriter	Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki
assistant director	Walter Adler
cinematographer	Karl Heinz Blöhm
assistant cinematographer	Dietmar Jütten
light design	Hans Heinrichs
sound	Peter Grätz
editor	Ursula Hermann
assistant editor	Brigitte Schröder
costume designer	Detlef Papendorf, Christel Röttgen
make up	Christiane Becker, Günther Wöhn
props	Walter Giese, Horst Koch
production manager	Wolfgang Sperling
production	WRD, Köln
executive producer	Kurt Zeimert
TV-producer	Christhart Burgmann, Leo Kreuzer
length	44 min.
format	16 mm, col. , 1:1.37
first broadcast	30.08.1973, West 3

### DER ÄRGER MIT DEN BILDERN. EINE TELEKRITIK VON HARUN FAROCKI

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
editor	Evelyn Reichert-Panitz
graphic artist	Franziska Scherer
narrator	Harun Farocki
production manager	Wolfgang Kreck
production	WDR, Köln
producer	Guenther R. Weinhold

TV-producer	Angelika Wittlich
length	48 min.
format	16 mm, col., b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	16.05.1973, WDR 3

## 1974 MODERATOREN IM FERNSEHEN

director, scriptwriter, compiler	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
length	22 min.
format	2-Zoll MAZ, col., 1:1.37
note	intended for broadcast in the series 'Telekritik' – 12.11.1973 (West 3), but not shown

## ÜBER 'GELEGENHEITSARBEIT EINER SKLAVIN'

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
narrator	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
length	10 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.66
quotations from films:	GELEGENHEITSARBEIT EINER SKLAVIN (Alexander Kluge, BRD, 1973/74)
note	commissioned for the magazine <i>Program Kino 74</i> , but not shown

## PLAKATMALER

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	R. März
editor	Harun Farocki
sound	Manfred Stelzer
production	WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
length	20 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
note	commissioned for the magazine <i>Program Kino 74</i> , but not shown

## DIE ARBEIT MIT BILDERN. EINE TELEKRITIK VON HARUN FAROCKI

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
editor	Marion Zausch
graphic artist	Franziska Scherer
production manager	Wolfgang Kreck
production	WDR, Köln
executive producer	Kurt Zeimert
TV-producer	Angelika Wittlich
length	44 min. (25 b/s)
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	8.11.1974, West 3

## 1975 ÜBER 'SONG OF CEYLON' VON BASIL WRIGHT

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
editor	Marianne Müller-Kratsch
narrator	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
executive producer	Kurt Zeimert
length	25 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	07.10.1975, West 3
quotations from films	SONG OF CEYLON (Basil Wright, GB, 1934)
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Telekritik'

## ERZÄHLEN

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki, Ingemo Engström, based on texts by Walter Benjamin, Brothers Grimm, Franz Kafka, Jurij M. Lotman, Boris Pasternak, Cesare Pavese, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Sergej Tretjakov, Franz Carl Weiskopf
cinematographer	Axel Block
assistant cinematographer	Chris Strewe
editor	Erika Kisters, Birgit Schuldt
sound	Karl-Heinz Rösch
production manager	Renate Sami

cast	Avinho Barbeitov, Ingemo Enström, Harun Farocki, Hanspeter Krüger, Willem Menne, Karl Retzlaw, Otto Sander, Hanns Zischler
production	WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
length	58 min.
format	16 mm, 1:1.37, b/w
first broadcast	16.12.1975, West 3

### 1976 DIE SCHLACHT. SZENEN AUS DEUTSCHLAND

director, television	
adaptation	Harun Farocki, Hanns Zischler, based on a stage play by Heiner Müller
cinematographer	Jupp Steiof
video technician	Peter Schlögel
editor	Lilo Gieseler
sound	Hans Joachim König
set designer	Walter Hallerstede
costume designer	Brigitte Schünemann
make up	Horst Mühlbrandt
production manager	Erwin Dräger
cast	Marie Bardischewski, Ulrike Bliefert, Lili Schönborn-Anspach, Gisela Stein, Joachim Baumann, Peter Fitz, Otto Mächtlinger, Willem Menne, Hubert Skolud and others
production	SFB, Berlin-West
TV-producer	Jürgen Tomm
executive producer	Martin Stachowitz
length	52 min.
format	2-Zoll-MAZ, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	10.05.1976, Nord 3

**1977** EINSCHLAFGESCHICHTEN 1-5

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Johannes Beringer
sound	Harun Farocki, Johannes Beringer
assistant	Ursula Lefkes
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, NDR, Hamburg
length	5 à 3 min.
format	16 mm/35 mm, col., 1:1.37
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Sesamstraße' (1-2) and 'Das Sandmännchen' (3-5)

## SARAH SCHUMANN MALT EIN BILD

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Rolf Basedow
sound	Johannes Beringer
production	Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, NDR, Hamburg
producer	Harun Farocki
length	8 min.
format	16 mm, col. 1:1.37
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Sesamstraße'

**1978** EIN BILD VON SARAH SCHUMANN

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor, sound	Johannes Beringer
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
length	30 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	02.04.1978, West 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Kunstgeschichten'



## ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN (BETWEEN TWO WARS)

director, editor	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Jörg Papke
script	Harun Farocki, based on radio play by Harun Farocki 'Das große Verbindungsrohr' (1975)
scientific adviser	Hella Jürgens
script	Wolfgang Bruckschen
cinematographer	Axel Block, Ingo Kratisch
assistant cinematographer	Melanie Walz
light design	Melanie Walz
sound	Karl-Heinz Rösch
mixing	Gerhard Jensen
music	excerpts from Gustav Mahler's 'Lied von der Erde'
set designer, costume designer, make up	Ursula Lefkes
props	Ursula Lefkes, Jörg Papke
production manager	Wolfgang Bruckschen
cast	Ingemo Engström (Krankenschwester), Jeff Laysound (Hochöfner), René Schlesier (Trauernde), Stephan Mattusch (Ingenieur), Willem Menne (Ingenieur), Peter Fitz (Ingenieur), Hildegard Schmahl (Frau), Konrad Born (Lernender), Friedhelm Ptok (Schlotbaron), Ingrid Oppermann (Kommunistin), Wolfgang Winkler (Kommunist), Peter Nau (Kommunist), Caroline Neubaur (schöne Bürgersfrau), Harun Farocki (Harun Farocki)
narrator	Harun Farocki
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West (in-house production financed by the participants)
executive producer	Jörg Papke
length	83 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first screening	05.11.1978, Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche)

first release	17.11.1978 Berlin-West (Cinema Bundesallee)
distributor	Basis
first broadcast	11.12.1993, Hessen 3
awards	Prix Carosse d'Or 1978

### ZU 'ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN' (ON 'BETWEEN TWO WARS')

director, scriptwriter, editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
length	10 min.
format	16 mm, b/w, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	1978, West 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Kino 78'

### HÄUSER 1-2

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West, for NDR, Hamburg
length	10 min. (2 à 5 min.)
format	16 mm, col., 1:1. 37
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Sesamstraße'

### EINSCHLAFGESCHICHTEN 1-3 / KATZENGESCHICHTEN

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, David Slama
length	9 min. (3 à 3 min.)
format	35 mm, col.
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West, NDR, Hamburg
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Sandmännchen', NDR

## 1979 INDUSTRIE UND FOTOGRAFIE

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
------------------------	---------------

cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Rolf Silber
editor	Hella Vietzke
music	Tony Conrad and Faust
narrator	Christhart Burgmann
production manager	Hans-Dieter Müller
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
producer	Guenther Weinhold
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	44 min.
format	35 mm., b/w 1:1,37
first broadcast	01.03.1979, West 3

#### ANNA UND LARA MACHEN DAS FERNSEHEN VOR UND NACH

director, cinematographer,	
editor	Harun Farocki
scriptwriter	Annabel Lee Faroqhi, Larissa Lu Faroqhi
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West
length	18 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1,37
note	The film is presumed lost

#### SINGLE. EINE SCHALLPLATTE WIRD PRODUZIERT

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, David Slama, Gerd Braun
editor	Gerd Braun, Gerrit Sommer, Helga Kohlmeier, Dorothea Haffner, Brigitte Kurde
sound	Rolf Müller, Johannes Beringer, Karl-Heinz Wegmann
music	'Time to Love' by Stephan Baal, Caryn McCombs
production manager	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin-West, for SFB
length	49 min.
format	1-Zoll-MAZ, col., 1:1,37

first broadcast	27.07.1980, West 3 and Hessen 3 (apparently not broadcast)
note	commissioned for the TV series 'DENKSTE!?'

### ZUR ANSICHT: PETER WEISS

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Gerd Braun
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
sound	Lasse Sjäström
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin- West
length	44 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	19.10.1979, West 3
first screening	Februar 1980, Berlin-West, Internationales Forum des Jungen Films

### DER GESCHMACK DES LEBENS (THE TASTE OF LIFE)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
editor, sound	Hanns Beringer
music	Tony Conrad and Faust, The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Deep Purple
assistant production manager	Karl-Heinz Wegmann
length	29 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduction, Berlin- West
first broadcast	05.08.1979, SFB
first release	28.06.1980, Berlin-West (Cinema Bundesallee)
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Projektionen'

### 1981 STADTBILD

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
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cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, Ronny Tanner
assistant cinematographer	Matthias von Gunten
editor	Johannes Beringer
sound	Rolf Müller
location manager	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Karl-Heinz Wegmann
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
length	44 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	10.09.1981, West 3

### 1982 ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR (BEFORE YOUR EYES – VIETNAM)

director	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Ursula Lefkes
scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
script	Karl-Heinz Wegmann
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Rainer März, Peter Wirths
assistant cinematographer	Wolf-Dieter Fallert
editor	Johannes Beringer
sound	Rolf Müller, Manfred Blank
mixing	Gerhard Jensen
music	Markus Spies
cast	Anna Mandel, Marcel Werner, Hanns Zischler, Inga Humpe, Bruno Ganz, Jeff Layton, Ronny Tanner, Hartmut Bitomsky, Rainer Homann, Olaf Scheuring, Michael Wagner, Elfriede Irrall, Ingrid Oppermann, Wilhelm Menne
narrator	Till Hagen
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, ZDF, Mainz
executive producer	Ulrich Ströhle
length	114 min.
format	35 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first screening	24.01.1982, Saarbrücken (Max-Ophüls-Preis)

first release	26.02.1982, Berlin-West (Cinema Bundesallee)
first broadcast	05.09.1984, ZDF
distributor	Basis
German Film Board classification	'Prädikat Wertvoll' (of high artistic quality and social relevance)

### KURZFILME VON PETER WEISS. VORGESTELLT VON HARUN FAROCKI

director, scriptwriter, commentary cinematographer production	Harun Farocki Rainer März Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
length	44 min. (1. broadcast version); 80 min. (complete version)
format	16 mm, b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	05.04.1982, West 3, (1. broadcast version), 08.11.1996, 3sat (complete version)
note	The film was intended to be shown in two parts, in 1982 only the first part was broadcast

### 1983 EIN BILD (AN IMAGE)

director, scriptwriter cinematographer assistant cinematographer editor	Harun Farocki Ingo Kratisch Melanie Walz Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
sound	Klaus Klingler
mixing	Gerhard Jensen
music	Markus Spies
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, in collaboration with SFB, Berlin-West
length	25 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	12.09.1983, Hessen 3, Nord 3, West 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Projektionen '83'

JEAN-MARIE STRAUB UND DANIELE HUILLET BEI DER  
ARBEIT AN EINEM FILM NACH FRANZ KAFKAS  
ROMANFRAGMENT *Amerika* (JEAN-MARIE STRAUB AND  
DANIELE HUILLET AT WORK ON FRANZ KAFKA'S *Amerika*)

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
collaboration	Karl-Heinz Wegmann
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
sound	Klaus Klingler
production	Harun Farocki, Berlin-West, WDR, Köln, Large Door, London
TV-producer	Helmut Merker
length	26 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	13.11.1983, ARD
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Schaukasten, Bilder and Berichte vom Kino'

INTERVIEW: HEINER MÜLLER

director, scriptwriter,	
interview	Harun Farocki
length	ca. 30 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
note	The film is presumed lost

'L'ARGENT' VON BRESSON

director	Hartmut Bitomsky, Manfred Blank, Harun Farocki
scriptwriter, commentary	Harun Farocki, Manfred Blank, Hartmut Bitomsky, Jürgen Ebert, Gaby Körner, Melanie Walz, Barbara Schlungbaum
cinematographer	Leo Borchard, Carlos Bustamante
editor	Manfred Blank
video editor	Horst Imlau
sound	Manfred Blank, Egon Bunne, Susanne Röckel

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| production      | Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln       |
| length          | 30 min.  |
| format          | 16 mm + 2-inch-VTR (excerpts from L'Argent ) col., b/w, 1:1.37 |
| first broadcast | 30.11.1983, WDR 3  |
| note            | commissioned for the TV series 'Kino '83'                      |
- 1984 PETER LORRE – DAS DOPPELTE GESICHT (THE DOUBLE FACE OF PETER LORRE)**
- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| director, scriptwriter, | Harun Farocki, Felix Hofmann   |
| commentary              | Wolf-Dieter Fallert, Ingo Kratisch                                       |
| cinematographer         | Ronny Tanner   |
| animation camera        | Klaus Klingler, Gerhard Metz   |
| sound                   | Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln, Transtel, Köln |
| production              | 59 min.  |
| length                  | 16 mm, col., b/w , 1:1.37  |
| format                  | 05.09.1985, West 3   |
| first broadcast         |  |
- 1985 BETROGEN (BETRAYED)**
- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| director, scriptwriter    | Harun Farocki                               |
| assistant director        | Ronny Tanner                                |
| script                    | Victoria Esch                               |
| cinematographer           | Axel Block                                  |
| assistant cinematographer | Michael Tötter, Christoph Oberdieck         |
| light design, stage       | Holger Greiss, Joachim Scholz, Peter Arndt  |
| editor                    | Renate Merck                                |
| assistant editor          | Dagmar Haferi                               |
| sound                     | Rolf Müller                                 |
| sound assistant           | Ernst-Hermann Marell                        |
| mixing                    | Richard Borowski                            |
| music                     | Andreas Köbner                              |
| set designer              | Ursula Lefkes, Hermann Pitz, Raimund Kummer |
| props                     | Michael Möldner, Inken Planthaber           |
| costume designer, make up | Peter Guttenberg, Jues Justin               |



location manager	Sandra Wulff, Michael Danilow
cast	Roland Schäfer, Katja Rupé, Nina Hoger, Rolf Becker, Marquard Bohm, Gerd Volker Bussäus, Gerd David, Michael Dick, Peter Franke, Dietmar Mues, Burkhard Röschmann, Michael Schönborn, Peter Stadlmayer, Angelika Thomas
production	Common Film production GmbH, Berlin-West, with Cinegrafik Helmut Herbst, Hamburg, Winkelmanns Filmproduktion, Dortmund, BR, München, with financial support from Hamburgische Filmförderung / Hamburger Filmbüro / Bundesministerium des Innern
producer	Helmut Wietz
associate producer	Helmut Herbst, Adolf Winkelmann
executive producer	Raphael Bürger
length	99 min.
format	35 mm, Fujicolor, 1:1.66
first screening	26.10.1985, Hof (Filmtage)
first broadcast	09.06.1989, Bayern 3

### FILMTIP: TEE IM HAREM DES ARCHIMEDES

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
length	7 min.
format	1-inch-MAZ col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	12.12.1985, West 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Filmtip'

### 1986 FILMBÜCHER

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
length	15 min.
format	video-U-Matic, col., 1:1.37

first broadcast 17.04.1986, West 3  
 note commissioned for the TV series 'Kino '86'

### WIE MAN SIEHT (AS YOU SEE)

director, scriptwriter,  
 commentary, interview Harun Farocki  
 assistant director Michael Pehlke  
 cinematographer Ingo Kratisch, Ronny Tanner  
 editor Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)  
 negative cut Elke Granke  
 sound Manfred Blank, Klaus Klingler  
 mixing Gerhard Jensen  
 researcher Michael Pehlke  
 narrator Corinna Belz  
 production Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-  
 West, with financial support from  
 Hamburger Filmbüro  
 producer Harun Farocki, Ulrich Ströhle  
 length 72 min.  
 format 16 mm, b/w and Eastmancolor, 1:1.37  
 first screening 08.06.86, Berlin-West (Kinofest '86)  
 Austrian premiere 03.04.1987, Wien (Stadtkino)  
 first release 28.05.1987, Köln  
 distributor Basis  
 first broadcast 19.03.1990, West 3

### FILMTIP: SCHLAGWORTE – SCHLAGBILDER. EIN GESPRÄCH MIT VILÉM FLUSSER

director, scriptwriter,  
 commentary, interview Harun Farocki  
 production WDR, Köln  
 length 13 min.  
 format video-U-Matic, col., 1:1.37  
 first broadcast 01.05.1986, West 3  
 note commissioned for the TV series 'Filmtip'

## FILMTIP: KUHLE WAMPE

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
production	WDR, Köln
length	6 min.
format	video – 1-inch-VTR, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	01.05.1986, West 3
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Filmtip'

## 1987 DIE SCHULUNG (INDOCTRINATION)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Simon Kleebauer
second cinematographer	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
light design, video	
technician	Jürgen Frieß, Fabian Meyer
editor	Roswitha Gnädig
sound	Rolf Müller
production	SWF, Baden-Baden
TV-producer	Ebbo Demant
location manager	Uwe Kremp
length	44 min.
format	video – 1-inch-VTR, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	19.02.1987, ARD
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Ziele'

## FILMTIP: DER TOD DES EMPEDOKLES

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Harun Farocki
sound	Klaus Klingler
production	WDR, Köln
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	7 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	08.10.1987, West 3

quotations from films	DER TOD DES EMPEDOKLES ODER WENN DANN DER ERDE GRÜN VON NEUEM EUCH ERGLÄNZT ( BRD 1986/87, Jean-Marie Straub/Danièle Huillet)
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Filmtip'

### DIE MENSCHEN STEHEN VORWÄRTS IN DEN STRASSEN

director	Harun Farocki
scriptwriter	Harun Farocki, Michael Trabitzsch, based on the poem 'Die Menschen stehen vorwärts in den Straßen' by Georg Heym (1911)
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Harun Farocki
sound	Klaus Klingler
narrator	Adelheid Rogger
production	SWF, Baden-Baden
length	8 min.
format	16 mm, col. , 1:1.37
first broadcast	14.11.1987, Südwest 3

### BILDERKRIEG

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki, based on the texts 'Das Buch des Alfred Kantor' and 'Femmes Algériennes' by Marc Garanger
assistant director, researcher	Michael Trabitzsch
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
animation camera	Irina Hoppe
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
negative cut	Elke Granke
sound	Klaus Klingler
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
narrator	Corinna Belz
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, for WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	44 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	03.12.1987, West 3

**1988** GEORG K. GLASER – SCHRIFTSTELLER UND SCHMIED

director, scriptwriter, commentary, interview	Harun Farocki, with quotations from 'Jenseits der Grenzen' by Georg K. Glaser
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Klaus Klingler
negative cut	Elke Granke
sound	Klaus Klingler
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
narrator	Harun Farocki (commentary), Georg K. Glaser (texts)
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin- West, for SWF, Baden-Baden
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Ebbo Demant
length	44 min.
format	16 mm, Eastmancolor, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	20.09.1988, SWF 3

**BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES (IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR)**

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
assistant director, researcher	Michael Trabitzsch
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
animation camera	Irina Hoppe
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
negative cut	Elke Granke
sound	Klaus Klingler
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
narrator	Ulrike Grote
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin- West, with financial support from kulturellen Filmförderung NRW
producer	Harun Farocki
length	75 min.
format	16 mm, col., b/w, 1:1.37
first screening	10.11.1988, Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche)

## KINOSTADT PARIS (CINE CITY PARIS)

director, scriptwriter, commentary	Manfred Blank, Harun Farocki; drawing on a quotation from 'Ein Ethnologe in der Metro' by Marc Augé
interviews	Manfred Blank
cinematographer	Helmut Handschel
editor	Edith Perlaky
sound	Thomas Schwadorf
researcher	Ursula Langmann
narrator	Corinna Belz, Helmut Grieser
production	WDR, Köln
production manager	Friedhelm Maye
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
Length	60 min., format: video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	05.03.1990, West 3

1989 IMAGE UND UMSATZ ODER: WIE KANN MAN EINEN SCHUH  
DARSTELLEN?

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Egon Bunne, Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
sound	Klaus Klingler
location manager	Michael Trabitzsch
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin- West, for SWF, Baden-Baden
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Ebbo Demant
length	52 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col. and b/w, 1:1.33
first broadcast	29.08.1989, ARD

## 1990 LEBEN – BRD (HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Michael Trabitzsch
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch

editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Irina Hoppe
negative cut	Elke Granke
sound	Klaus Klingler
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
researcher, assistant	Michael Trabitzsch
researcher	Ronny Tanner
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin-West, ZDF, Mainz, La Sept, Paris
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Eckart Stein, Claire Doutriaux
length	83 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first screening	10.02.1990, Internationales Forum des Jungen Films, Berlin-West
distributor	Basis
first broadcast	20.02.1990, ZDF
awards	Deutscher Dokumentarfilmpreis der AG der Filmjournalisten, 1990

### 1991 WAS IST LOS? (WHAT'S UP?)

director, scriptwriter,	
interviews	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Arthur Ahrweiler
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Irina Hoppe
sound	Gerhard Metz
sound assistant	Klaus Klingler, Ronny Tanner
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
researcher	Michael Trabitzsch
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	60 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first screening	12.11.1991, Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche)
first broadcast	18.11.1991, West 3

**1992** VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION (VIDEOGRAMS OF A REVOLUTION)

director, scriptwriter, commentary translation graphic artist	Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujica Nathalie Roth (German) Hauke Sturm, Angela Zumpe, Peter U. Petersen
editor assistant	Egon Bunne Beate Ochsner (Germany), Velvet Moraru (Romania)
narrator production	Thomas Schultz Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, Bremer Institut Film/Fernsehen Produktionsgesellschaft mbH, Bremen, with financial support from Berliner Filmförderung
producer executive producer	Harun Farocki Ulrich Ströhle
length format first screening	106 min. video, transferred to 16 mm, col., 1:1.37 12.08.1992 Locarno (International Film Festival)
German premiere	14.11.92 Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche)
first release first broadcast	06.05.1993 20.12.1993, West 3
German Film Board classification	Prädikat 'Wertvoll' (of high artistic quality and social relevance)

## KAMERA UND WIRKLICHKEIT

director, scriptwriter, commentary on the podium	Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujica Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujica, Andrei Plesu, Friedrich Kittler, Manfred Schneider, Peter M. Spangenberg
production	SWF, Baden-Baden, in collaboration with Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for arte, Straßburg



- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| producer        | Harun Farocki                                   |
| TV-producer     | Ebbo Demant                                     |
| length          | 120 min. (SWF-version); 186 min. (arte-version) |
| format          | video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37                    |
| first broadcast | 07.12.1992, SWF 3; 22.12.1992, arte             |
- 1993** EIN TAG IM LEBEN DER ENDVERBRAUCHER (A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE END-USER)
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| director, scriptwriter,<br>compiled by | Harun Farocki  |
| assistant<br>collaboration             | Aysun Bademsoy, Michael Trabitzsch<br>Annabel Faroqhi, Elke Naters, Christian<br>Petzold |
| video cut                              | Max Reimann  |
| production                             | Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin<br>for SWF, Baden-Baden and WDR, Köln               |
| producer                               | Harun Farocki  |
| executive producer                     | Aysun Bademsoy   |
| TV-producer                            | Ebbo Demant  |
| length                                 | 44 min.  |
| format                                 | video – BetaSp, col., b/w, 1:1.37  |
| first broadcast                        | 24.06.1993, ARD  |
- 1994** DIE UMSCHULUNG
- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| director, scriptwriter | Harun Farocki   |
| assistant director     | Ronny Tanner  |
| cinematographer        | Ingo Kratisch, Thomas Arslan                              |
| editor                 | Max Reimann   |
| sound                  | Klaus Klingler  |
| assistant producer     | Aysun Bademsoy, Anna Faroqhi, Elke<br>Naters              |
| production             | SWF, Baden-Baden, Harun Farocki<br>Filmproduktion, Berlin |
| producer               | Harun Farocki   |
| TV-producer            | Ebbo Demant   |
| length                 | 44 min.   |
| format                 | video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37                              |
| first broadcast        | 09.06.1994, ARD   |

awards	Adolf-Grimme-Preis, 1995 (category 'General films/ Information and culture')
note	commissioned for the TV series 'Leben lernen inklusive'

## DIE FÜHRENDE ROLLE

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
researcher	Tanja Baran
editor	Max Reimann
narrator	Harun Farocki
production	Tele Potsdam, Berlin, 3sat , Mainz
producer	Lew Hohmann
executive producer	Marco Mundt
TV-producer	Inge Classen
length	35 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col. 1:1.37
first broadcast	04.12.1994, 3sat

## 1995 ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK (WORKERS LEAVING THE FACTORY)

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
assistant	Jörg Becker
editor	Max Reimann
narrator	Harun Farocki
researcher	Janny Léveillé (Paris), Marina Nikiforova (Moscow), David Barker (Washington), Kinemathek im Ruhrgebiet – Paul Hoffmann (Duisburg)
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, WDR, Köln with contributions by ORF, Wien, Dr. Heinrich Mis, LAPSUS, Paris, Christian Baute, DRIFT, New York, Chris Hoover
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	36 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col. and b/w, 1:1.37
first broadcast	02.04.1995, 3sat; 18.12.1995, West 3

## SCHNITTSTELLE (SECTION/INTERFACE)

director, scriptwriter,	
commentary	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Leo Borchard
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Klaus Klingler
assistant	Jan Ralske
cast/narrator	Harun Farocki
production	Musée d'art Moderne de Villeneuve d'Ascq, Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin
producer	Harun Farocki
length	23 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
German premiere	08.11.1995, Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche)
first broadcast	25.06.1995, 3sat

## 1996 DIE KÜCHENHILFEN

director, scriptwriter,	
interviews	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Arthur Ahrweiler
editor	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Irina Hoppe
sound	Gerhard Merz
sound assistant	Klaus Klingler, Ronny Tanner
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
researcher	Michael Trabitzzsch
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for WDR, Köln
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
length	60 min.
format	16 mm, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	26.01.1996, arte

## DAS THEATER DER UMSCHULUNG

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
assistant director	Ronny Tanner
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, Thomas Arslan
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Klaus Klingler
assistant producer	Aysun Bademsoy, Anna Faroqhi, Elke Naters
production	SWF, Baden-Baden, Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Ebbo Demant
length	4 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	27.06.1996, arte

## DER AUFTRITT (THE APPEARANCE)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Ronny Tanner
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for 3-sat , Mainz
producer	Harun Farocki
executive producer	Ulrich Ströhle
TV-producer	Inge Classen
length	40 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	14.07.1996, 3sat

## DER WERBEMENSCH

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
sound	Ronny Tanner
editor	Max Reimann

production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for 3-sat , Mainz
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Inge Classen
length	3 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	17.01.1997, arte

### 1997 DIE BEWERBUNG (THE INTERVIEW)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Bernd Löhr
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Ludger Blanke
music	Neil Young
researcher	Ludger Blanke
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for Süddeutschen Rundfunk, Stuttgart
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Juliane Endres
length	58 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	18.02.1997, arte
note	commissioned for the TV series 'La vie en face/Welt im Blick'

### DIE WERBEBOTSCHAFT

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki)
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Ronny Tanner
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin
producer	Harun Farocki
executive producer	Ulrich Ströhle
TV-producer	Inge Classen
length	3 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	04.04.1997, arte

## STILLEBEN (STILL LIFE)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Irina Hoppe, Rosa Mercedes, Jan Ralske
sound	Ludger Blanke, Jason Lopez, Hugues Peyret
mixing	Gerhard Jensen-Nelson
collaboration	Jörg Becker, Dina Ciraulo, Cathérine Mariette
narrator	Hanns Zischler
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, Movimento Production (Christian Baute, Pierre Hanau), in coproduction with ZDF / 3sat, RTBF-Carré Noir (Christiane Philippe), Latitudes Production (Jacques-Henri Bronckart), ORF (Dr. Heinrich Mis), in collaboration with NOS TV The Netherlands Programme Service (Cees van Ede), Planète Cable (Michel Badinter), with support from Centre National de la Cinématographie, France, documenta X (Brigitte Kramer)
TV-producer	Inge Classen (3sat)
length	56 min.
format	16 mm, col.
first screening	August 1997, documenta X
first broadcast	07.09.1997, 3sat

## DAS BILD DER UHR

length	3 min.
format	16 mm, col.
first broadcast	19.09.1997, arte

## DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE (THE EXPRESSION OF HANDS)

director	Harun Farocki
scriptwriter	Harun Farocki, Jörg Becker
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
sound	Klaus Klingler

editor	Max Reimann
researcher in the USA	David Barker, Tom Bigelow
length	30 min.
format	video – BetaSp, col., 1:1.37
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for WDR
TV-producer	Werner Dütsch
first broadcast	07.09.1997, 3sat

### 1998 DER FINANZCHEF

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
second cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Ludger Blanke
researcher	Ludger Blanke
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, for Süddeutscher Rundfunk, Stuttgart
producer	Harun Farocki
TV-producer	Juliane Endres
length	7 min.
format	video – BetaSP, col., 1:1.37
first broadcast	06.03.1998, arte

### WORTE UND SPIELE

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, Rosa Mercedes (Harun Farocki), Ludger Blanke
editor	Max Reimann
light design	Leo Lumen
technicians	Horst Brams, Anna Faroqhi
sound	Ludger Blanke, Sylvia Mittelstädt, Rolf Merker
music	Markus Spies after Johannes Brahms, Opus 121 'Denn es geht dem Menschen wie dem Vieh'
collaboration/researcher	Ludger Blanke
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin
TV-producer	Bernd Michael Fincke

length 68 min.  
format video – BetaSP, col., 1:1.37

**2000** ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN (I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING CONVICTS)

director, scriptwriter Harun Farocki  
researcher and cinematographer Cathy Lee Crane  
editor Max Reimann  
sound Luis Van Rooki  
production Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, Generali Foundation, Wien, with support from 3 sat, Mainz – Inge Classen, Movimento, Paris – Christian Baute

length 25 min.  
format BetaSP, col.  
first screening International Film Festival Locarno, 06.08.2000

**MUSIC VIDEO**

director, scriptwriter Harun Farocki  
cinematographer Harun Farocki, Antje Ehmann  
editor Harun Farocki  
sound Harun Farocki  
production Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin  
curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist  
length 50 sec. and 20 sec.  
Format MiniDV, col.  
first screening Digital City Seoul 2000, Seoul, South Korea, 31.08.2000

**GEFÄNGNISBILDER (PRISON IMAGES)**

director, scriptwriter Harun Farocki  
cinematographer C. Lee Crane, Ingo Kratisch  
editor Max Reimann  
sound Louis van Rooky  
researcher Jörg Becker, Cathy Crane



production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, Movimento, Paris, Christian Baute
TV-producer	Inge Classen
length	60 min.
format	video, col. and b/w
commissioned by	ZDF/3sat

## 2001 DIE SCHÖPFER DER EINKAUFSWELTEN (THE CREATORS OF THE SHOPPING WORLDS)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki
assistant	Matthias Rajmann
cinematographer	Ingo Kratisch, Rosa Mercedes
editor	Max Reimann
sound	Ludger Blanke, Matthias Rajmann, Leo van Rooki
researcher	Rob Miotke, Stefan Pethke, Matthias Rajman, Brett Simon
executive producer SWR	Thomas Lorenz
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, in coproduction with SWR, NDR and WDR in collaboration with arte
TV-producer	Gudrun Hanke-El Ghomri (SWR), Bernd Michael Fincke (NDR), Werner Dütsch (WDR)
length	72 min.
format	video, col.
Premiere	Wiener Festwochen, Wien, 11.6.2001

## AUGE/MASCHINE (EYE MACHINE)

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki with Matthias Rajmann, Ingo Kratisch, Rosa Mercedes
editor	Max Reimann
with support from	ZDF/3sat, Mainz, (Inge Classen), Galerie Greene Naftali, New York, (Carol Greene), ZKM, Karlsruhe (Peter Weibel),
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin
length	25 min.
format	video, col.

**2002** EYE / MASCHINE II

director, scriptwriter	Harun Farocki with Matthias Rajmann, Ingo Kratisch, Kilian Hirt
editor	Max Reimann
with support from	ZDF/3sat, Mainz, Inge Classen, Galerie Greene Naftali, Carol Greene and Brugge 2002, European Capital of Culture / desire productions, Cis Bierinckx
production	Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin, 2002
translation	Laurent Faasch-Ibrahim
length	15 min.
format	video, col. and b/w



# Notes on Contributors

## About the Editor

*Thomas Elsaesser* is Professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam and Chair of Research in Film and Television Studies. Among his recent books are *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (1996), *Weimar Cinema and After* (2000), *Metropolis* (2000), *Studying Contemporary American Film* (with Warren Buckland, 2002) and *Früher Film und Kinogeschichte* (2002).

## About Harun Farocki

*Harun Farocki* was born in 1944 in Nový Jicin (Neutitschein), in German-annexed Czechoslovakia. From 1967-68 he attended the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB). After teaching posts in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Manila, Munich and Stuttgart he took up a visiting professorship at the University of California, Berkeley from 1993-1999. Farocki has made close to ninety films, including three feature films, essay films and documentaries. Between 1974 and 1984, he was editor and author of the magazine *Filmkritik* (Munich). Since 1966 he has been collaborating with other filmmakers (as script writer, actor and producer). Since 1990 he has had numerous exhibitions and installations in galleries and museums. A collection of essays from among his numerous publications has appeared as *Nachdruck/Imprint* in 2000.

## About the Authors

*Nora M. Alter* is Professor of German, Film and Media Studies, Jewish Studies and Woman and Gender Studies at the University of Florida. She is author of *Vietnam Protest Theatre: The Television War on Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), *Projecting History: Non-Fiction German Film* (University of Michigan Press, Summer 2002) and *Chris Marker* (Illinois University Press, forthcoming 2004). Current projects include a book-length study on the international essay film, a co-edited volume, *Sound Matters*, with Lutz Koepnick (Berghahn Press, forthcoming Fall 2004). She has been awarded year-long re-

search fellowships from the NEH, the Howard Foundation and the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.

*Christa Blümlinger* teaches at the University Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris. She is also a writer, art critic, and curator. She has written for many magazines including *Trafic*, *Iris*, and *Blimp*, and her most recent books are *Ohne Untertitel: Fragmente einer Geschichte des österreichischen Kinos* (Vienna 1996; together with Ruth Beckermann); *Von der Welt ins Bild. Augenzeugenberichte eines Cinephilen* (Berlin 2000, an edition of writings by Serge Daney); and *Das Gesicht im Zeitalter des bewegten Bildes* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2002, together with Karl Sierek).

*Wolfgang Ernst* (1959) studied history, archaeology and Latin at the University of Cologne, London University and Bochum. After teaching at the Media Academy in Cologne, and at the Universities of Weimar, Bochum, Paderborn, and Berlin, he is now Professor for Media Theories at Humboldt University, Berlin. Among his publications are: *Medium Foucault: Weimarer Vorlesungen über Archive, Archäologie, Monumente und Medien* (Weimar 2000); *Das Rumoren der Archive: Ordnung aus Unordnung* (Berlin 2002); *Sammeln – Speichern – Erzählen: Infrastrukturelle Konfigurationen des deutschen Gedächtnisses* (Munich 2003).

*Rembert Hüser* was a research fellow at the Institute for Media Studies and Cultural Communication at the University of Cologne, 1999-2001, during which he worked on the history of the Hollywood credit sequence. Since 2001, he has been Visiting Professor of Film Studies at the University of Visual Arts, Braunschweig.

*Tom Keenan* is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the Human Rights Project at Bard College. He has translated the works of philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault and is the author of articles on deconstruction and postmodernism. His publications include *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (Stanford, 1997); as editor: *The End(s) of the Museum/Els limits del museu* (1996); as editor, *American Imago*, special issue on 'Love', Fall 1993; as co-editor with Werner Hamacher and Neil Hertz, *Paul de Man, Wartime Journalism, 1939-1943* (Nebraska, 1988) and *Responses* (1989). He is presently writing a book called *Live Feed: Crisis, Intervention, Media*, about the news media and contemporary conflicts (Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and beyond).

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*Rainer Knepperger*, born 1965 in Korschenbroich, Germany, co-founded *Filmclub 813* in Cologne and is editor of *Gdinetmao*. He has written screenplays (*Happy Weekend*) and has made short films (*Tour Eifel*). He currently lives in Cologne.

*Olaf Möller* is a writer based in Cologne.

*Jonathan Rosenbaum* is the film critic for the *Chicago Reader*. His books include *Moving Places*, *Placing Movies*, *Movies as Politics*, *Greed*, *Dead Man*, *Midnight Movies* (with J. Hoberman), and *Abbas Kiarostami* (with Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa).

*Volker Siebel*, born 1963, lives in Hanover, Germany, where he participates in the cinema *Kino im Sprengel*.

*Benjamin Young* is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the Department of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley.



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Illustration 1: NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER



Illustration 2: SCHNITTSTELLE



Illustration 3: ERZÄHLEN



Illustration 4: Die Schlacht  
(Theatre performance Basel)





Illustration 5: IHRE ZEITUNGEN



Illustration 6: OSKAR LANGENFELD (Holger Meins)



Illustration 7: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN

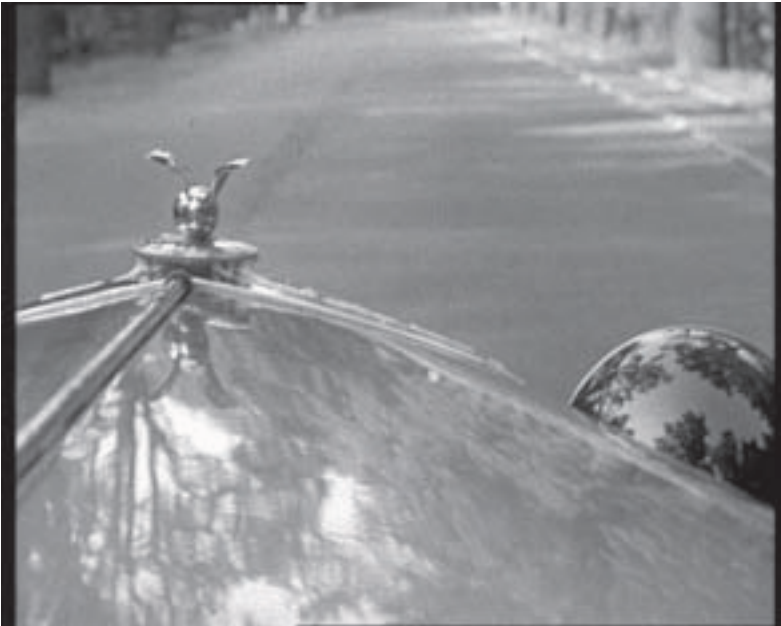


Illustration 8: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 9: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 10: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 11: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 12:  
ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 13: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 14: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 15: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 16: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 17: ZWISCHEN ZWEI KRIEGEN



Illustration 18: Aktion Berlin Zoo



Illustration 19: Aktion Berlin Zoo



Illustration 20: Aktion Berlin Zoo



Illustration 21: Aktion Berlin Zoo

'Endlich: jetzt können Sie Harun Farocki treffen'  
(Here you can meet/hit Harun Farocki)  
Berlin Film Festival 1978





Illustration 22: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 23: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 24: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 25: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR





Illustration 26: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 28:  
Agency Photo Vietnam War



Illustration 27: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 29:  
Agency Photo Vietnam War



Illustration 30: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 31: ETWAS WIRD SICHTBAR



Illustration 32: EIN BILD



Illustration 33: SCHNITTSTELLE



Illustration 34: BETROGEN



Illustration 35: BETROGEN



Illustration 36: DER AUSDRUCK DER HÄNDE



Illustration 37: DAS DOPPELTE GESICHT



Illustration 38: SCHNITTSTELLE



Illustration 39: FILMTIP: SCHLAGWORTE – SCHLAGBILDER

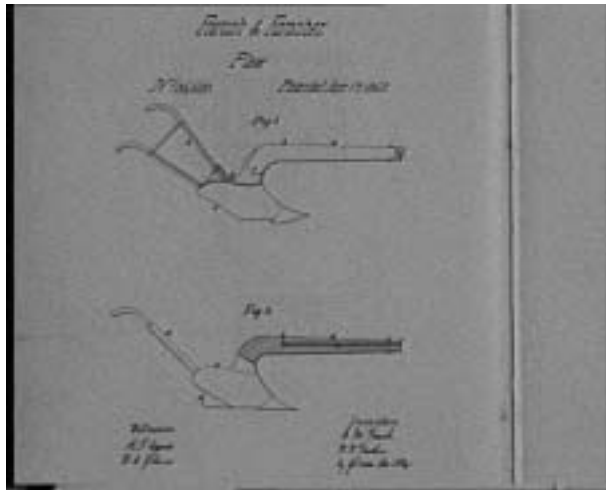


Illustration 40: WIE MAN SIEHT



Illustration 41: WAS IST LOS?



Illustration 42: AUGEN MASCHINE



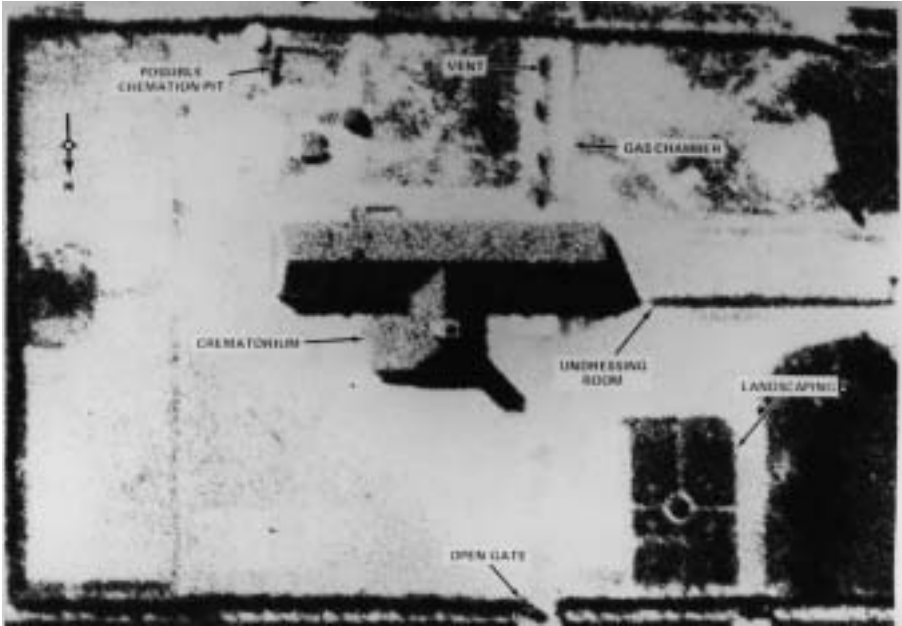


Illustration 43: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 44: BILDER DER WELT





Illustration 45: BILDER DER WELT

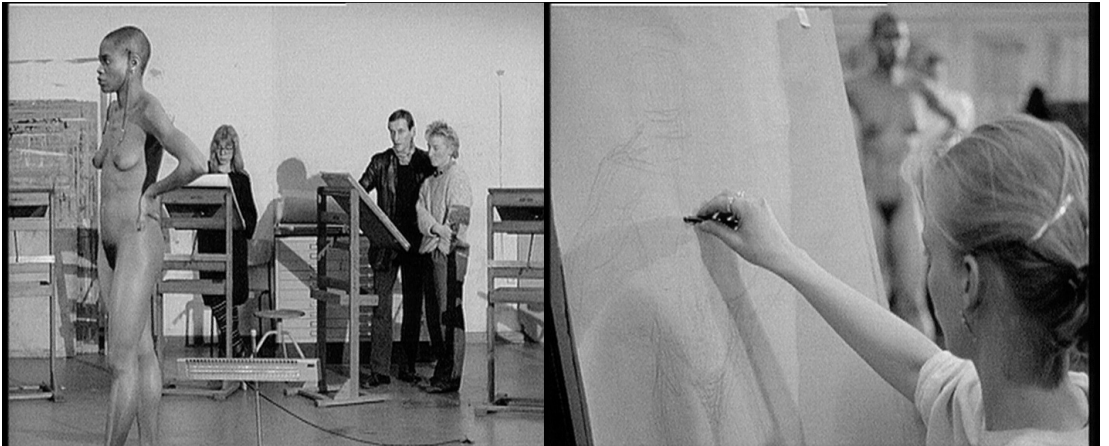


Illustration 46a: BILDER DER WELT

Illustration 46b: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 47: The first pictures of Auschwitz

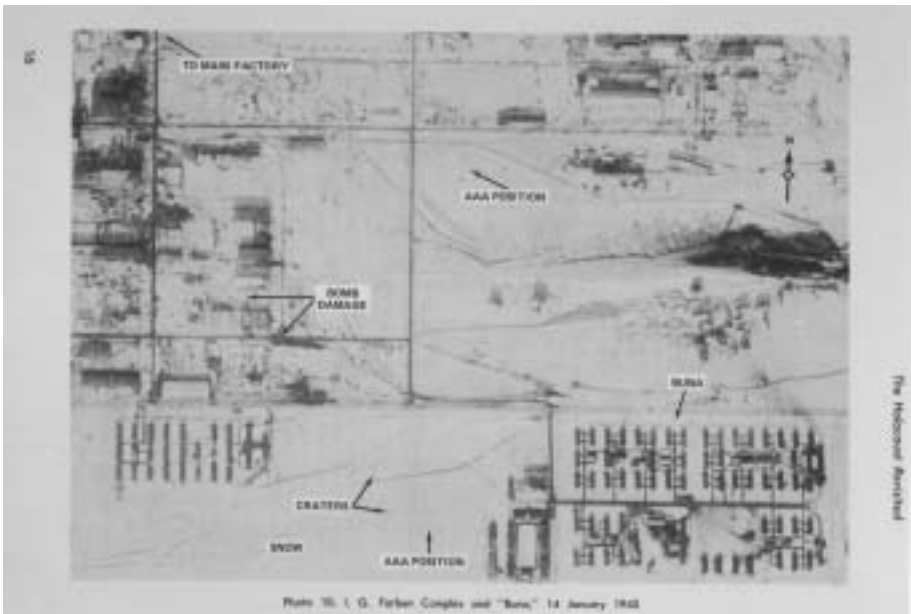


Illustration 48: The first pictures of Auschwitz



Illustration 49: The first pictures of Auschwitz



Illustration 50: The first pictures of Auschwitz



Illustration 51: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 52: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 53: BILDER DER WELT

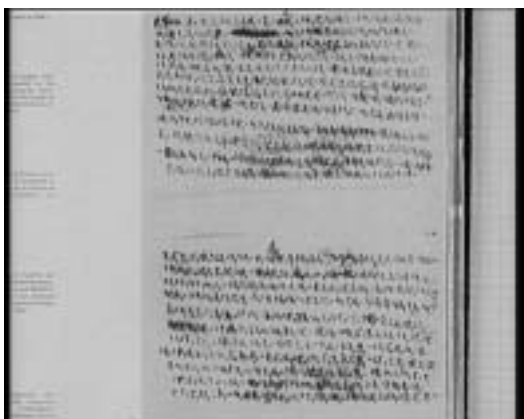


Illustration 54: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 55: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 56: BILDER DER WELT



Illustration 57: LEBEN – BRD



Illustration 58: LEBEN – BRD





Illustration 59: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 60: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 61: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 62: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 63: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 64: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION





Illustration 65: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION

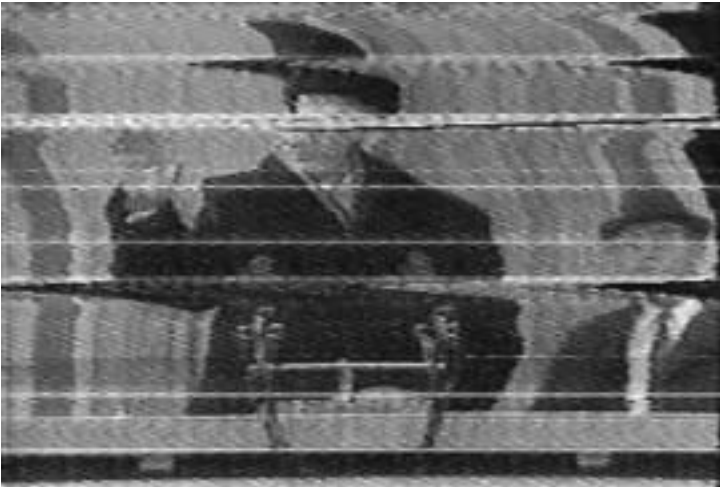


Illustration 66: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 67: VIDEOGRAMME EINER REVOLUTION



Illustration 68: EIN TAG IM LEBEN DER ENDVERBRAUCHER



Illustration 69: EIN TAG IM LEBEN DER ENDVERBRAUCHER



Illustration 70: ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK



Illustration 71: ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK



Illustration 72: ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK



Illustration 73: ARBEITER VERLASSEN DIE FABRIK



Illustration 74: GEFÄNGNISBILDER



Illustration 75: GEFÄNGNISBILDER



Illustration 76: ICH GLAUBTE  
GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN



Illustration 78: GEFÄNGNISBILDER



Illustration 77: GEFÄNGNISBILDER



Illustration 79:  
ICH GLAUBTE GEFANGENE ZU SEHEN





Illustration 80: DIE SCHÖPFER DER EINKAUFSWELTEN



Illustration 81: DIE SCHÖPFER DER EINKAUFSWELTEN