

Introduction

Two Image Researchers

“Even saying you don’t want to follow him can turn you into a little Godard.”

Harun Farocki¹

At the *documenta* X in 1997, alongside two chapters from Jean-Luc Godard’s video series HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, visitors were able to view the film STILL LIFE² by Harun Farocki. While the final four-hour version of Godard’s montage is a unique attempt to visualize a hundred years of (film) history not as a text but as a condensed mix of superimposed images, sounds, written inserts, and recontextualized quotations, Farocki’s film is based on an apparently simple comparison. Godard layers and creates “image compresses”;³ Farocki juxtaposes and dissects. His parallel montage counters classical sixteenth- and seventeenth-century still-life painting with documentary footage from the studios of 1990s commercial photographers in which the same objects—clocks, food, glasses, money—become images. In advertising, one could say, the symbolic reference, which in the paintings of the sixteenth century evoked the divine through the objects, is superseded within the image by the deification of the goods themselves.

Seven years later, an exhibition entitled *The Government*⁴ took place at the Kunstraum Lüneburg. Again, a work by Harun Farocki was linked to one of Jean-Luc Godard’s films, and in this case both works actually came into contact with one another. The supermarket scene from TOUT VA BIEN was projected onto a screen stretched across the exhibition space. The reverse side showed an excerpt from Farocki’s video THE CREATORS

1 Harun Farocki, “Passion,” *Filmkritik* 7/1983, 317–328: 317.

2 HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, F1988–1998, director: Jean-Luc Godard; STILL LIFE, D1997, director: Harun Farocki. STILL LIFE was commissioned for *documenta* X.

3 Klaus Theweleit introduced the concept of *Bildkompresse* to describe Godard’s methods in his book *Deutschlandfilme*: Klaus Theweleit, *Deutschlandfilme. Filmendenken und Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld 2003), passim. See also the newspaper interview with Theweleit conducted by Veronika Rall in 2003: “Sachbearbeiter von Wirklichkeiten. Der Diskurs-Jockey,” *WOZ. Die Wochenzeitung*, September 11, 2003.

4 See Thomas Wagner, “Wie es euch regiert,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 2, 2004 and Thomas Wulffen, “Blick zurück auf die eigenen Zustände,” *Der Standard* February 23, 2004. Roger M. Buerger, joint curator of the exhibition with Ruth Noack, translated Harun Farocki and Kaja Silverman’s *Speaking about Godard* (New York, London: New York UP 1998) into German. He later became the director of *documenta* 12, which took place in Kassel in 2007.

OF SHOPPING WORLDS, an observation film that documents the planning sessions of several architects and designers of shopping malls.⁵ *TOUT VA BIEN* is the last feature-length film that Godard made with Jean-Pierre Gorin, his partner in the Groupe Dziga Vertov collective, and is also the only one they produced in 35-mm cinema format with international stars.⁶ It represents a short interlude between the aggressive, agitprop 16-mm films made in 1968–1972 and Godard's work on video.⁷ The film deals with factory and media work, the industrial strike, and consumerism critique. The scene shown in Lüneburg consists of a single tracking shot, lasting several minutes, along a tediously large number of checkout counters in a shopping center.⁸ The camera initially hovers to the left, while the loud noises of cash registers and students rioting in the supermarket can be heard on the soundtrack. When it reaches the last checkout, the camera changes direction and returns just as slowly to its point of departure. The world of consumerism is thus patiently surveyed, as if it were coextensive with the visible world, to which—at least in the logic of the shot—there is nothing exterior.

The projection of sequences from films by Farocki and Godard on the front and reverse sides of a screen provokes a series of interpretations: Are the past and present of consumer society being shown here? Or is its visible front—the modern supermarket in Godard's film—being confronted by its invisible reverse side, the infrastructure of planning and control that leads to a shopping mall? Godard shows consumer space as a political space; Farocki reveals the symbolic politics that decide on the visibility and invisibility of the merchandise and the movement of consumers in modern shopping centers.

5 *TOUT VA BIEN*, F/I 1972, directors: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *THE CREATORS OF SHOPPING WORLDS*, D 2001, director: Harun Farocki.

6 The leads are taken by Yves Montand and Jane Fonda; Gorin and Godard sharply criticize the nature of Fonda's commitment to the Vietcong in their last joint film *LETTER TO JANE* (F 1972).

7 Godard only returned to the cinema in 1979 with the film *EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF* (F/CH 1979), after several video productions and the television series *SIX FOIS DEUX* (F/CH 1976) and *FRANCE TOUR DÉTOUR DEUX ENFANTS* (F/CH 1979). Godard's video and television work has received increased attention in recent years, including a retrospective at the Swiss Institute in New York and a resulting collection of essays: Gareth James/Florian Zeyfang, eds. *I said I love. That is the promise. The tvideo politics of Jean-Luc Godard/Die TVideopolitik von Jean-Luc Godard* (Berlin: b_books 2003). For a complete filmography of the films of the Groupe Dziga Vertov, see David Faroult, "Filmographie du Groupe Dziga Vertov," *Jean-Luc Godard: Documents*, eds. Nicole Brenez, David Faroult et al. (Paris: Centre Pompidou 2006), 132–133.

8 The shot takes up the even more famous seven-minute tracking shot of an endless traffic jam on a French highway in Godard's *WEEK END*. This film shows consumers starting their weekend, while *TOUT VA BIEN* shows the place where they consume during the week.

The Berlin filmmaker and author Harun Farocki has often acknowledged the influence of the French New Wave, above all of its most maverick representative Jean-Luc Godard. Farocki, who was born in January 1944 and is thus thirteen years younger than Godard, began his training in 1966. He was one of the first students at the newly founded film school, the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB), which in the following two years was to develop into a center of politicization in West Berlin. Here, he made short films, such as *THE WORDS OF THE CHAIRMAN* and *WHITE CHRISTMAS*,⁹ which attest to the equally strong influence of the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the work of Jean-Luc Godard. Farocki has described his relationship to Godard in a conversation with Thomas Elsaesser:

For me, Godard has been way out in front for the past thirty years, he always encourages 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. [...] So many ideas are hidden in his work that although you are a different director, you can nonetheless always refer back to him.¹⁰

Asked whether he had ever met Godard, Farocki once said that he avoids this, which can either be taken as a mark of respect and diffidence, or as a symptom of what Harold Bloom has called the “anxiety of influence.”¹¹ Farocki’s works certainly have a varied, often explicit, sometimes hidden connection to those of Godard. A particularly evident result of this over thirty-year involvement is the book *Speaking about Godard*, published in 1998, in which Farocki dialogues around eight of Godard’s films with the American film theorist Kaja Silverman.¹² But the Franco-Swiss filmmaker had also been a central point of reference in Farocki’s thinking during the

9 THE WORD OF THE CHAIRMAN, FRG 1967, WHITE CHRISTMAS, FRG 1968, director: Harun Farocki.

10 Thomas Elsaesser, “Making the World Superfluous: An Interview with Harun Farocki,” in *Harun Farocki. Working on the Sight-Lines*, ed. *ibid.* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP 2004), 177–189; 178. Harun Farocki had described Godard as a “role model” almost fifteen years earlier: “He was already a role model thirty years ago: He could deal with both intellect and money—he used both of them for his productions. Today, he represents someone who thinks in terms of film.” Harun Farocki, “Biographical Note,” *Harun Farocki. A Retrospective*, eds. Neil Christian Pages and Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart (New York: Goethe House New York 1991), 3.

11 See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford UP 1973).

12 Harun Farocki/Kaja Silverman, *Speaking about Godard* (New York, London: New York UP 1998).

preceding decades. The links between the two have occasionally been observed and put to productive use, primarily in art-related exhibition projects,¹³ but there have been no detailed studies relating the oeuvres to one another until now.¹⁴

There are a number of striking similarities between the two directors. Both have always accompanied their cinematic work with texts—Godard even before his first article in the *Cahiers du cinéma* and other film journals, Farocki increasingly between 1974 and 1984 as an author and editor of the periodical *Filmkritik*.¹⁵ As such, they can also be discovered as authors¹⁶ who comment on their films in many different ways: on the one hand, through the voice-over commentaries in the films themselves, intertitles, books quoted, read, and processed; on the other, in accompanying texts, interviews, draft screenplays, research notes on individual films. The dialectic of proximity and distance between text and image is one of

13 The implications of this shift to different sites of presentation should be considered separately: What does it mean that more and more filmmakers have been moving from the cinema to the art scene since the 1990s? Does a film automatically become art through its presentation as an installation? Isaac Julien is also an example of the move from the cinema or television film to the gallery, along with Matthias Müller or Martin Arnold in the area of experimental film. See also *Texte zur Kunst*, September 2001, vol. 11, no. 43 [special edition on art and film] and the exhibition catalogue *Moving Pictures. Fotografie und Film in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz 2001). An excellent catalogue on the mutual influence of art and film after the Second World War is *Hall of Mirrors. Art and Film since 1945*, ed. Kerry Brougher (New York: Monacelli 1996). In 2006, Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmman curated an exhibition entitled *Cinema like never before*, whose aim was “to detach image analyses from the discursive and enable them to be experienced through compellingly conceived visual configurations” (*Cinema like never before*, Generali Foundation Vienna, January 20 to April 24, 2006).

14 One exception is a short text by Christina Scherer. See Christina Scherer, “Bilder kommentieren Bilder: Die Analyse von Film im Film. Schnittstellen zwischen Harun Farocki und Jean-Luc Godard,” *AugenBlick* 34, December 2003 [special edition on Godard and consequences], 73–85.

15 Bettina Klix has written an excellent text about this journal, which Rainald Goetz has described as the “central committee of young hard thought”: Bettina Klix, “Das Zentralkomitee der Politik des Sehens,” *Jungle World* 28, July 4, 2001. Farocki has published a short retrospective on the journal: Harun Farocki, “Filmkritik,” *Fate of alien modes*, eds. Constanze Ruhm et al. (Vienna: Secession 2003), 103–104.

16 A step in this direction has been taken by a volume of selected texts by Farocki: *Harun Farocki: Nachdruck/Imprint. Texte/Writings*, eds. Susanne Gaensheimer and Nikolaus Schafhausen (Berlin: Vorwerk 8 2001). For the connection between Farocki’s films and texts, see Volker Pantenburg, “Visibilities. Harun Farocki between Image and Text,” 12–40. Many of Godard’s interviews and texts have been collected in the two-volume French publication *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 1, 1950–1984, ed. Alain Bergala (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma 1998) and *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 2, 1985–1998, ed. Alain Bergala (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma 1998), henceforth quoted as *Godard par Godard I* and *Godard par Godard II*.

the crucial methods with which the coordinates of what can be called an “image” are determined. The texts find their way into the films, but the films simultaneously extend into the texts: “Indeed, some of your films exist as a written text and as a film,” remarks Elsaesser in a conversation with Farocki,

without the one canceling 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.¹⁷

This kind of dovetailing of reception (reading) and production (filmmaking, writing) is constitutive of Harun Farocki’s method. In the 1970s, while working on *BETWEEN TWO WARS*,¹⁸ he described this kind of organization as a “compound system”:

Following the example of the steel industry, in which every waste product flows back into the production process and almost no energy is lost, I try to compound my works. I finance the basic research on the material with a radio broadcast, review certain books studied during this research in other broadcasts, and some of what I look at goes into television programs.¹⁹

More than thirty years later, this compound system has a different form. Since the discovery of Farocki’s works by the art world in the 1990s, they have increasingly been presented in exhibitions and much less so in the cinema. Production can now be financed at least partially by galleries and art exhibitions; some works have both installation and television versions. The close relationship to texts remains unchanged, however, with the continuing appearance—if less regularly than during Farocki’s *Filmkritik*

17 Elsaesser, “Making the World Superfluous,” 179.

18 *BETWEEN TWO WARS*, FRG 1977/78, director: Harun Farocki.

19 Harun Farocki, “Notwendige Abwechslung und Vielfalt,” *Filmkritik* 8/1975, 360–369: 368f.

years—of notes on films, theoretical texts, or topical interventions, as in the case of the Iraq War of 2003.²⁰

The interplay of film and text, in which the one is put into perspective by the other, is practiced just as intensively by Jean-Luc Godard. He too has always highlighted media boundaries in the very act of transgressing them. It is well known that he thought of his criticism as filmmaking (and vice versa), and that he accepted the invitation to a lecture series in Montreal in 1978 only on the condition that it would be seen as a “screenplay” for a film project—one he was only able to make a start on ten years later.²¹ The fact that in the case of both artists their cinematic work, although understood as “work with images,” often proceeds from books matches this logic of intermedia connection. In one sense, Godard’s entire output can be interpreted as the compensatory gesture of a failed writer, who, despite having apparently renounced writing, continues to hold firm to the book: “I wanted to publish a debut novel with Gallimard. I tried ‘Night is falling...’ but I couldn’t even finish the first sentence. Then I wanted to become a painter. And finally I made films.”²² Perhaps books migrated into Godard’s films as a reflex against this early failure. It is hard to find a Godard film without books, from which the actors read, which are quoted in the soundtrack, whose titles are invoked, or which are even used as props, like the walls of Mao’s *Little Red Book* in *LA CHINOISE*.²³ For Harun Farocki, the claim can similarly be made that his films and videos, despite their concentration on the image, are always the result of textual work, which in this case means research, the theoretical schooling of the eye, the confrontation of the seen with the said. Seeing is not only the result of previous acts of looking but also adjusts itself to what is read. In a long interview about his work, Farocki once described the textual side of this

20 See, for example, Harun Farocki, “American Framing” [1999] and “Controlling Observation” [1999], *ibid.*, *Nachdruck/Imprint*, 292–304 and 306–320, which were written in connection with *THE CREATORS OF SHOPPING WORLDS* and *PRISON IMAGES*. Farocki’s “war diary” appeared in two parts in the weekly newspaper *Jungle World*: Harun Farocki, “Der Tod der anderen,” *Jungle World* 15, April 2, 2003 and “Experten und Projektile,” *Jungle World* 16, April 9, 2003. A longer version in five parts can be found on the March and April 2003 pages of the film weblog *new filmkritik* (<http://newfilmkritik.de/archiv/2003/03/> and <http://newfilmkritik.de/archiv/2003/04/>; accessed February 20, 2012).

21 For a short overview of the making of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*, see Joachim Paech, “Intermediale Figuration. Am Beispiel von Jean-Luc Godards *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*,” *Mediale Performanzen. Historische Konzepte und Perspektiven*, eds. Jutta Eming, Annette Jael Lehmann, Irmgard Maassen (Freiburg: Rombach 2002), 275–295: 287ff.

22 Jean-Luc Godard, “Les livres et moi” [1997], *Godard par Godard II*, 432–439: 436.

23 *LA CHINOISE*, F 1967, director: Jean-Luc Godard.

“doubled gaze” as “filming my library.”²⁴ An approximative reconstruction of this library reveals a conspicuous lack of distinction between theoretical and literary texts, between primary and secondary literature.²⁵ “The Second World War didn’t go into a novel by some new Tolstoy, more into Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,”²⁶ is how Farocki explains the close connection between narration and argumentation that also structures his films. Despite its narrative elements, *BETWEEN TWO WARS* could equally be understood as the film version of one of the sociologist Alfred Sohn Rethel’s theories, and, in addition to non-fiction books on the Vietnam War, Carl Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan* also went into *BEFORE YOUR EYES VIETNAM*.²⁷

The correspondences between Godard and Farocki go beyond this narrow textual aspect, however: Both artists have written not only about their own productions but also about other directors and the overall conditions of filmmaking. They both combine self-reflection with a marked interest in the history of the cinema, its forms of expression, and its entanglement in economic contexts and constraints. Finally, for both of them, the year 1968 was an important break that strongly shaped a political concept of filmmaking: one that was opposed to the established film industry and reliant as far as possible on autonomous production.²⁸ This critical approach

24 Rolf Aurich/Ulrich Kriest, “Werkstattgespräch Harun Farocki,” *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki*, ed. ibid. (Konstanz: UVK 1998), 325–347: 343.

25 I refer here to the numerous interviews with writers that Farocki conducted for *Filmkritik*. The long conversations with Heiner Müller (5/1981), Peter Weiss (6/1981), or Georg K. Glaser (7/1982) are examples of Farocki’s interest, since the 1980s at least, in literary writing and procedures. See also Rembert Hüser, “Wo fängt das an, wo hört das auf? Laudatio zum Peter Weiss-Preis für Harun Farocki,” *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch 2003* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag 2003) 21–31.

26 Rembert Hüser, “Nine Minutes in the Yard: A Conversation with Harun Farocki,” Thomas Elsaesser (ed.) *Harun Farocki. Working on the Sight-Lines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP 2004), 297–314: 313.

27 *BEFORE YOUR EYES VIETNAM*, FRG 1982, director: Harun Farocki.

28 The year 1968 is particularly important for cinema history: In February, thousands of students and cultural practitioners, including Roland Barthes and Jean-Luc Godard, demonstrated against the dismissal of Henri Langlois as director of the Cinémathèque Française. In May, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and others forced the discontinuation of the Cannes Film Festival. In Berlin the wave of politicization was closely linked to the DFFB, the film school where Harun Farocki was studying. For the complex “1968 and the cinema,” see the informative catalogue *That Magic Moment. 1968 und das Kino*, eds. Hans Hurch, Bert Rebhandl (Vienna: Viennale 1998), in which contemporary texts and retrospective essays by those involved are collected. For a contemporary reconstruction of the events in France, see Enno Patalas, “Zum Beispiel Frankreich,” *Filmkritik* 8/1968, 553–560. A short retrospective on the French developments can also be found in Joachim Paech, “Vor 20 Jahren. Das Kino lehnt sich auf,” *epd*

to the medium of film—particularly around and after 1968—was formed by Marxist-materialist positions, which caused Godard to break temporarily with traditional cinema. After Farocki's expulsion from film school,²⁹ he was able to produce *INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE*,³⁰ which was successful in political circles, but he was then dependent on television commissions for many years. Only in 1977 was *BETWEEN TWO WARS* released, having been financed by all its participants.

Despite these parallels, the confrontation of Farocki's and Godard's work could raise an objection: Shouldn't Farocki's films—with the exception of the melodrama *BETRAYED*³¹—be seen as documentaries, and Godard's as feature films? Don't they belong to two fundamentally different filmic registers, here the fictional and there the factual? The answer from Godard's and Farocki's perspective must be that the question is wrongly framed, because they both proceed from the uncertain difference between fiction and reality in the medium of film. For although the distinction between feature film and documentary has turned out to be one of the most tenacious in film-historical analysis, theoretically it is barely sustainable. As much as the mere recording of reality implies a framing, fictionalizing act, the arrangement and shaping of reality for the camera inevitably results in an implicit documentation of this process. Not only do both filmmakers challenge the basic distinction, they have also turned the relationship between reality and invention the subject matter of their films and texts. Godard seems to be more strongly attached to the cinema than Farocki; however, and despite his references to visual art, he essentially appears to work within the boundaries of cinema and film history. "Like Godard, Farocki has produced a political metacinema; yet whereas Godard has focused on the classic genres of film, Farocki concentrates on its military-industrial

film 7/1988, 24–27. See also Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: BFI 1978), 16–27; a chronology of the events can be found on pages 121–125.

29 For the political debates at the DFFB, which was temporarily renamed the Dziga Vertov-Akademie by its students, see Tilman Baumgärtel, *Harun Farocki. Vom Guerillakino zum Essayfilm. Werkmonografie eines Autorenfilmers* (Berlin: b_books 1998), 56–78. Seventeen other students were expelled from the school together with Farocki—including Hartmut Bitomsky (director of the DFFB from 2006–2009), Holger Meins, and Philip Sauber—after their occupation of the principal's office in November 1968. For the early history of the DFFB, see Volker Pantenburg, "Die Rote Fahne. Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin, 1966–1968," 1968. *Ein Handbuch zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, eds. Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau 2006), 259–268.

30 *INEXTINGUISHABLE FIRE*, FRG 1969, director: Harun Farocki.

31 *BETRAYED*, FRG 1985, director: Harun Farocki.

exploitation,”³² writes Hal Foster, pointing out a possible difference. Yet although this differentiation should not be neglected, two points can be made here: First, Godard’s interest goes beyond the cinema. He may not concentrate on the use of images in contexts of industrial production and destruction, as can be observed in Farocki’s work since the 1980s, but his films, too, always aim for something more than the cinematographic and contribute to a general image critique. Second, Farocki’s image critique, although not adhering to classical film genres, is always deeply grounded in practices of cinematic *mise en scène*. The way in which cinema films narrate and treat their material, and what this implies, is a constant background to his analysis of “found” images from archives and image-recognition software.

Despite my concentration on two directors, Harun Farocki and Jean-Luc Godard only represent one focus of this study. The texts and films of these two auteurs are also the point of departure for a further discussion of the relationship between the medium of film and theoretical discourse. The understanding of “film as theory,” as the title of this book suggests, is a particularly strong feature of the work of Farocki and Godard, but it is in no way restricted to these two directors or to the “genre” of the auteur film. Many of the procedures described here can readily be found in conventionally structured narrative films, in which the interweaving of different visual levels or reflexive loops activate a process of thinking about the medium itself.³³ The works of Farocki and Godard are not special because they categorically differ from other films: the crucial thing is that for several decades, and on a basic level, they have emphatically raised questions about “cinematic thinking”: How can concrete visible material be combined in such a way that something invisible and abstract can be perceived? To what extent has the medium of film introduced a new form of thought, above all through the possibilities of montage? Few other filmmakers have shown such a continued interest in using film not primarily as a medium of entertainment, and in developing the technical *dispositif*—be it cinema film, video installation, or television broadcast—into a theoretically versed instrument of research that can make things visible that would otherwise have remained hidden.³⁴ Farocki’s and Godard’s aim is a form of

32 Hal Foster, “The Cinema of Harun Farocki,” *Artforum*, November 2004, 156–161: 158.

33 See, for example, Katharina Sykora’s analysis of the use of painting in the classical Hollywood film: Katharina Sykora, *As you desire me. Das Bildnis im Film* (Cologne: Walther König 2003).

34 Farocki’s film titles particularly indicate this central interest: BEFORE YOUR EYES VIETNAM (1982), AS YOU SEE (1986), EYE/MACHINE (three-part installation, 2000–2003). The list could be extended by several further titles.

image research that doesn't see film as a self-evident, easily manageable recording medium but that primarily aims to clarify its presuppositions: What characterizes the images that are generated by the filming process and subsequent montage? What rules does their combination follow? How can the conventional approach to images be countered by a praxis that turns the image itself into an agent of theory? These questions are not asked to the same degree in every film. Godard's *LE GAI SAVOIR* or Farocki's *AS YOU SEE* foreground the question of how images function more directly than *BREATHLESS* or *THE INTERVIEW*, one of the "observation films" in which Farocki documents institutions that rehearse economic, social, or leisure behavior.³⁵

Nevertheless, the investigation of images—not only in the realm of cinema, but also as a structuring feature of all areas of life—has been the central motivation of both filmmakers for several decades. Writing about Farocki's contribution to documenta X, Bert Rebhandl claims that "in principle," he has "built his entire filmic work around the analysis of images,"³⁶ and this can quite easily be applied to Godard as well. It may be less obvious than with Harun Farocki, but Godard also wants his images to be an analysis of the image: "Art and theory of art, at one and the same time; beauty and the secret of beauty; Cinema and apologia for cinema,"³⁷ he wrote early in his filmmaking career about the cinema of Jean Renoir, outlining an agenda for his own auto-reflective cinema praxis of the coming decades. The ideal unity of art and art theory—here film and film analysis—can be traced back to one of the central demands of the Romantic aesthetic, which gives an important indication as to how "theory" should be understood in this book. In the light of early Romantic thought, it can be described as an approach that challenges the distinction between object language and meta-language. Theory implies a double and oscillating view of one's subject matter and methods. It thus requires—and chapter one will address this apparent paradox—a

35 Apart from *THE INTERVIEW* (1996/97), the "observation films" (a term coined by Tilman Baumgärtel) hitherto include *AN IMAGE* (1983), *INDOCTRINATION* (1986/87), *IMAGE AND SALES OR: HOW TO DEPICT A SHOE* (1989), *HOW TO LIVE IN THE FRG* (1991), *RETRAINING* (1994), *THE APPEARANCE* (1996), *WORDS AND GAMES* (1998), *THE CREATORS OF SHOPPING WORLDS* (2001), *NOTHING VENTURED* (2004), *IN COMPARISON* (2009), and most recently *IMMERSION* (2010), *A NEW PRODUCT* (2012), and *SAUERBRUCH HUTTON ARCHITECTS* (2013).

36 Bert Rebhandl, "Bildsprache. documenta X: Sieben Filmemacher im Kunstfeld," *Meteor* 9 (1997), 4–12: 9.

37 Jean-Luc Godard, "Jean Renoir" [1957, 1972], *Godard on Godard*, ed. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo 1986), 62–64: 63.

practice that switches back and forth between concrete object and abstract generalization, and at the same time turns this back and forth into the subject matter of the work. This also means that theory is understood as a general term for various forms of articulation rather than a strictly delimited field. At many points this concept borders on related terms, such as (self-)reflection or criticism.³⁸ However, there are various reasons for my recourse to the term “theory”. For one thing, it relates the films and texts of Farocki and Godard to the developments in the humanities since the 1960s, and attempts to analyze them against the background of the contemporary version of Romantic positions that has emerged as theory during this period.³⁹ On the threshold of structuralist-oriented concepts and the various models that followed them, which are usually described as “poststructuralism,” the linguistic constitution of one’s own speaking comes into primary focus.

The term “theory” as it has evolved over the past fifty years—and thus in parallel to the works of Farocki and Godard—is closely linked to the production of relationships and references. “Representation,” in the sense of a distanced, unambiguous connection between signifier and signified, becomes an equivocal practice; new forms of combining secondary and primary texts, object language and meta-language, are put to the test. This is not least connected to the reflexive development that can equally be observed in French theory and the films of the New Wave and subsequent cinematic tendencies:

[The] contemporary practice of taking the signifying practice as one’s subject, often in the very text in which the signifying practice under scrutiny is occurring, is paralleled by developments in film criticism and theory. (At this point and in this context, the distinction between theory and practice is not without ambiguity, insofar as a film which reflects upon its own or some broader signifying processes is necessarily theorizing, and theorizing is itself a practice in need of theoretical scrutiny.)⁴⁰

38 I mean the concept of criticism that Walter Benjamin reconstructed in his study of early Romantic thought; see Walter Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism” [1920], *ibid.*, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, eds. Marcus Bullock, Michael William Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard UP 5th ed. 2002), 116–200: 149ff.

39 See, for example, Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford/New York: Oxford UP) 1997, 1–17.

40 Don Fredericksen, “Modes of Reflexive Film,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, no. 4, summer 1979, 299–320: 303f.

This book examines the convergence that Don Fredericksen detects here between film and theory. It understands theory as the result of observation, the investigation of visibility. In doing so, it follows the concept's etymological trail. "As the words 'reflection,' 'speculation,' and 'theory' indicate, there is more than a casual relation between visual representation and the practice called theorizing (*theoria* comes from the Greek word 'to see')."41 This is not to claim that this form of theory—as much as it is organized in images—can relinquish language altogether. Theory in the medium of film depends on constant translation. What the film presents as a mixture of forms, sounds, and images can be read as an appeal to unmix and re-relate it in text and image. Godard has described this dialectic of mixing and unmixing, of confusion and clarity, as crucial to his poetics: "To show a mix-up clearly is quite difficult. This is always the kind of cinema I've tried to do and it's a little confusing for people. So I try to be clearer in this confusion by showing, by being interested in mixing things up."⁴²

Methodologically, this book tries to follow the examples of Godard and Farocki, who don't apply theory to their films from the outside but develop it from the image sequences themselves. Instead of mobilizing the conceptual apparatus of film semiotics, psychoanalysis, or other disciplines, the films are understood as contributions to a theoretical discourse whose potential is developed in readings of individual works or thematic complexes. Against this background, it is also possible to understand the striking disagreement between Godard and structuralist theorists at the film festival in Pesaro in 1966, after which Godard was often unjustly accused of a "refusal of theory."⁴³ While semioticians like Pier Paolo Pasolini or Roland Barthes sought scientific precision to analyze the "langage cinématographique," Godard preferred phenomenologically oriented thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and trusted in the theoretical (and less systematic) vigor of cinema itself: "We are the children of the cinematographic language," he wrote after the festival with the characteristic pathos of a "ciné-fils."⁴⁴ "Our parents are Griffith, Hawks, Dreyer, and Bazin, and Langlois, but not you. And apart from that,

41 William J. T. Mitchell, "Metapictures," *ibid.*, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: Chicago UP 1994), 35–82: 82.

42 Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television*, ed., trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose 2014), 319.

43 See also Marc Cerisuelo, "Godard et la théorie: tu n'as rien vu à Pesaro," *CinémAction*, no. 52, 1989 [special edition on "Le cinéma selon Godard"], 192–198: 194.

44 This was how the film critic Serge Daney described himself. Godard wrote an obituary of him following his early death: Jean-Luc Godard, "Le Ciné-Fils" [1992], *Godard par Godard II*, 252–253.

how can you talk about structures without images and without sounds?"⁴⁵ Godard insists on the autonomy of the visual, which is perfectly capable of formulating its own non-predicative theory and of speaking for itself. The image comes before the structure; it adheres to its own laws and brings about theoretical "concepts" in the conjunction of images themselves.

Godard's reservations about the academic and systematic, which are reflected in his confrontation with Barthes, point beyond their immediate cause. They are also a sign of the gap between the cinephile discourse of Farocki's and Godard's texts and films and the language of the university. What was irreconcilably opposed in the 1960s has meanwhile, at least partially, become a smooth transition. Farocki and Godard both stand for the attempt to bring about a dialogue between the two poles: to inform cinephile writing and speaking academically, and to school academic language through film;⁴⁶ to embrace theories, but to think about them in terms of the cinema and its images.⁴⁷

45 Jean-Luc Godard: "Trois mille heures de cinéma" [1966], *Godard par Godard I*, 291–295: 294.

46 Many interesting thinkers who have written and continue to write about the cinema occupy this "intermediate space" somewhere between the cinema and the auditorium: Frieda Grafe, Klaus Theweleit, Gilles Deleuze, Raymond Durgnat, Manny Farber, Serge Daney, Gilberto Perez, Alain Bergala...

47 Godard is accordingly one of the directors who is most discussed in universities, and Farocki's films have also received much academic attention since the 1980s. The literature on Godard is now vast: Julia Lesage's bibliography *Jean-Luc Godard. A Guide to References and Resources* appeared as early as 1979 (Boston: Hall 1979). Alongside the early studies by Richard Roud, Jean Collet, and Ian Cameron (Richard Roud, *Jean-Luc Godard* [London: Secker & Warburg 1967]; Jean Collet, *Jean-Luc Godard* [Paris: Seghers 1967]; Ian Cameron [ed.], *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard* [London: Studio Vista 1967]), numerous monographs and anthologies have appeared over the years, of which only a few can be named here: David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard. Seeing the Invisible* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1999), Raymond Bellour, Mary Lea Bandy, eds. *Jean-Luc Godard. Son + Image 1974-1991* (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1992), Michael Temple, James S. Williams, eds. *The Cinema Alone. Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP 2000), and finally the substantial conference proceedings *For Ever Godard*, eds. Michael Temple, James S. Williams, Michael Witt (London: Black Dog Publishing 2004). The first biography of Godard was written by Colin MacCabe: *Godard. A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2003). An immensely useful source book with much hitherto unpublished material was published in conjunction with Godard's exhibition *Voyage(s) en utopie* at the Centre Pompidou in 2006: Nicole Brenez, David Faroult et al., eds. *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents* (Paris: Centre Pompidou 2006). The state of research on Harun Farocki is more easily outlined. Two volumes published in 1998 examined his work for the first time in detail: Rolf Aurich, Ulrich Kriest, eds. *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki* (Konstanz: UVK 1998) and the dissertation by Tilman Baumgärtel, *Harun Farocki. Vom Guerillakino zum Essayfilm. Werkmonografie eines Autorenfilmers* (Berlin: b_books 1998). An English-language anthology on Harun Farocki appeared in the fall of 2004 and contains a number of previously published texts, together

The starting point of this study is the fact that theoretical thinking is generally identified with texts.⁴⁸ Logical thinking seems to be even terminologically bound to the word (to the Logos). The texts and films of Godard and Farocki suggest a different model, in which the practice of image production also implies an image theory. In this way they exemplify the conflation of theory and practice. Writing about painting, Maurice Merleau-Ponty has emphasized the inseparability of (intellectual) theory and (physical) practice: "The painter, any painter, *while he is painting*, practices a magical theory of vision."⁴⁹ For Merleau-Ponty, artistic access to the world is much more than an aesthetic supplement to scientific or philosophical thought: painting is itself a mode of cognition. His proposition can be taken up and generalized. Must theoretical thought take place in words? May not images, and above all the complex combination of images and sounds that cinema has established since the early twentieth century, be an equally or more suitable vehicle? Theoretical thought, according to this hypothesis, need not necessarily adopt a written or oral form of communication but can certainly be articulated in the medium of film. This applies all the more when the theory in question concerns the image, its production, function, distribution, and reception, as is the case in the works of Godard and Farocki.

The theoretical character of these films and texts is challenging for their readers and viewers. The work of both authors has long been considered sophisticated, difficult, and complex. The excursiveness and range of association, the breaking off and restarting, with which one is continually confronted in Godard's films, is also characteristic of his texts. Gilles Deleuze has described this as Godard's "creative stammering,"⁵⁰ in which he sees an effective method of avoiding the precepts and restrictions of

with an introduction by the editor: Thomas Elsaesser, ed. *Harun Farocki. Working on the Sight-Lines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP 2004). Most of the research on Farocki since then has been published in catalogues accompanying numerous exhibitions and retrospectives. See *Harun Farocki, Against What? Against Whom?* eds. Antje Ehmman and Kodwo Eshun (London: Raven Row/Koenig Books 2009).

48 Peter V. Zima's *Was ist Theorie? Theoriebegriff und Dialogische Theorie in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke 2004), which stakes out the conceptual field of "theory," also fails to consider a theoretical dimension of images. See above all the author's foreword (ix-xiv) and introduction (1-23, particularly 8), which formulate the linguistic nature of theoretical thought as a *conditio sine qua non*.

49 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" [1964], in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Galen A. Johnson, (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press 1993), 121-149: 127.

50 See Gilles Deleuze: "Three Questions on Six Times Two," *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia UP 1995), 37-45: 44. See also Vraht Öhner "Godards Stottern," *Meteor* 6 (1996), 28-31.

a logocentric discourse organized from the top down. For Deleuze, this can primarily be seen in the combination of images and sounds, which doesn't follow a causal or temporal principle but occurs with Godard by means of a simple AND. The AND, a basically *assembling* conjunction, takes the place of a hierarchical relationship between the individual discursive elements; it unbalances the evenly flowing language and draws attention to the linguistic material itself. Thinking of Godard's AND as an articulating form of montage brings us to a concept that is central both to his work and that of Harun Farocki.

This book considers the theory that arises from montage from five different perspectives. The first chapter—"Le film qui pense"—sets the framework and outlines the relationship between the medium of film and various forms of theorizing. If the initial concern during the early phase of the silent film was to establish cinema as an art form and remove it from the popular-cultural context of the funfair, from the 1920s onwards—particularly in the Soviet Union—many writers, who also understood their own cinematic practice at least as implicit theory, began to describe film theoretically. Sergei Eisenstein's reflections on "intellectual montage" provide a first conceptualization that closely links film to thought and seeks to identify theory and filmic practice with one another. This tradition, barely established, initially broke off with the victory of the sound film. It was superseded as a descriptive model by theories of cinematic realism for which, despite their differences, the names of André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer can stand. The far-reaching separation between discursive and filmic thought was thus permanently accomplished. For even the critics of realistic film theories during the 1960s and 70s generally assumed that every theory approached film from the outside in textual form. Against such claims of the incompatibility of theory and visual practice, I propose an alternative model in which film itself becomes a theorizing subject through the use of montage and other ways of relating images to one another. Such a model is supported by recent approaches in visual studies—William J. T. Mitchell's concept of the "metapicture,"⁵¹ for example—and by the deliberations of Klaus Theweleit or Frieda Grafe, who champion Godard as a representative of genuine "filmic thought."⁵²

Yet what would such a "film theory" look like, and where can it be observed? Chapters two ("The Camera as Brush—Painting and Film") and

51 See Mitchell, "Metapictures," 35–82.

52 See Theweleit, *Deutschlandfilme*, 7–87.

five (“Taking Pictures—Film and Photography”) are devoted to the fault lines inherent in the medium along which theory, as understood in this book, comes about. With the transitions between painting and film on the one hand, and photography and film on the other, two media constellations come into view at which the juxtaposition of different types of images triggers a reflexive potential that gives film itself a perspective on its functioning and possibilities. The question of the self-reflexive possibilities of film is asked here—more explicitly than in classical “film in film” constellations—in an oscillation between two kinds of image. By focusing on a different type of image, film speaks about itself.

Between the discussion of photography and painting, two chapters might seem to lead away from the images themselves in order to take a different perspective on “theory.” Chapter three (“Deviation as Norm—Notes on the Essay Film”) considers various positions on the essay film that pertain to the problems dealt with in this study but discuss them in relation to genre rather than on the level of visual relationships. The term “essay film,” which is frequently used to describe the work of Farocki and Godard, obscures the fact that in these films fundamental questions are asked about images—their possibilities, their ideology, their integration into social and political contexts—that can’t easily be covered by a generic term. In the adaptation of an unclear literary genre, the infelicitous and rather undifferentiated term “film essay” tends to compartmentalize films whose questions transcend the work at hand and address more general questions of image production. The formal determination of the essay undertaken by Theodor W. Adorno during the 1950s can—contrary to his declared dislike of the cinema—be read as an implicit theory of montage and applied to the construction of films: “The essay [...] takes the anti-systematic impulse into its own procedure, and introduces concepts directly, ‘immediately,’ as it receives them. They gain their precision only through their relation to one another.”⁵³ Adorno not only sees a relationship between the essay form and thinking as montage; he also locates the genre as a whole in proximity to the theoretical in his assertion that it has an “affinity to the visual image”⁵⁴ and is “necessarily related to theory.”⁵⁵

The production of film theory, in the sense of this study, is not only found at the fault lines between different types of images; it also occurs at

53 Theodor W. Adorno: “The Essay as Form” [1958], trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, no. 32. (Spring–Summer, 1984), pp. 151–171, 160.

54 Ibid., 170

55 Ibid., 165

a specific location within the filmmaking process, to which chapter four (“Cut—Interlude in the Editing Room”) is devoted. As the motif and site of “practical theory,” the editing suite is central to both directors’ investigations of the preconditions of cinematic articulation. Reading images and relating them to one another, as a simultaneous act of reception and production, is a defining element of the work at the editing table, which in this respect most clearly conflates thinking about film with film itself: the cutting room is the place where filmic thinking and practical action come into contact. The filmstrip becomes tactile material that the editing will alter. Hand and eye are productively interconnected. The hand has also been an astonishingly consistent motif of Farocki’s and Godard’s films for more than thirty years and is the subject of chapter six. Its title, “Two or Three Ways of Speaking through the Hands,” evokes the various ways of talking about the relationship between abstract conception and concrete intervention. In Farocki and Godard, the hand becomes a communicative organ (“medium”) that links theory and practice.

In the 1950s, the French film critic and theoretician André Bazin, who may be seen as both inspiration and antagonist to Farocki and Godard, drew a simplifying but helpful distinction between two types of filmmaker: those who believed in the image, and those who believed in reality.⁵⁶ The “realists” (following Leon Battista Alberti’s recommendation to see the painting as a window⁵⁷) attempted to look through and beyond the image on the screen. The believers in the image, however, were sensitive to the mechanisms of filming that produced the “reality effect.”⁵⁸ Bazin himself used this provisional distinction to characterize American cinema between 1920 and 1940. Applying it to Jean-Luc Godard and Harun Farocki also

56 See André Bazin, “L’évolution du langage cinématographique” [1951, 52, 55], *ibid.*, *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma*, vol. I, *Ontologie et langage* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1958), 131–148: 132. For a critical reconstruction of both positions, see Rudolf Kersting, *Wie die Sinne auf Montage gehen. Zur ästhetischen Theorie des Kinos/Films* (Basel/Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld 1989), 268f. Bazin’s main work *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?* [1967–71] is available in English in a translation by Hugh Gray: André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, vols. 1 and 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press 2004). There is also a new translation by Timothy Barnard of selected essays from the book: André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Montreal: caboose 2009).

57 See Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge UP 2011), 39.

58 This is Roland Barthes’s much-quoted phrase. See Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect” [1968], *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell 1986), 141–148.

reveals its limitations, since both filmmakers have always insisted on the inseparability of image and reality. Talking about the image in film means talking about the reality portrayed, and talking about reality also implies the medium through which it is portrayed.⁵⁹ In *LA CHINOISE*, Godard condensed this to a succinct formula: art doesn't have to do with the reflection of reality, but with the reality of reflection. In this sense, the films of Godard and Farocki direct a doubled gaze onto the world. In their attempt to observe the medium as much as what is conveyed "through" it, they are sensitive to the materiality of both reflecting tool and reflected object.

59 Yvonne Spielmann has analyzed Godard's reflexive practice in a similar way: "In the strict sense the self-reflexive film analysis of media-conveyed reality includes two aspects of mediality: the staging of reality and the production or preservation of an *effet de réel* [reality effect, trans.], on the one hand, but also the interruption of and intervention into this staging, on the other (brought about by the fragmentation and destruction of continuous proceedings, familiar contexts, and visual homogeneity). In film terminology these phenomena are known as *mise en scène* and *montage*." Yvonne Spielmann, "Zerstörung der Formen: Bild und Medium bei Jean-Luc Godard," *Theater und Kino in der Zeit der Nouvelle Vague*, eds. Volker Roloff, Scarlett Winter (Tübingen: Stauffenburg 2000), 111–124; 114.