Conclusion

My point of departure was to ask whether film, despite its inherent necessity of concretion, could be considered a medium in which theorizing were possible. After analyzing the work of Harun Farocki and Jean-Luc Godard and reconstructing their own evaluations, the ambiguous answer has to be: yes, but. On the one hand, relating different types of images to one another always results in a change of level, which does in fact enable a leap from direct description to analysis and theory: "realistic" film sequences, when linked through montage, are able to become general statements about the medium. On the other hand—and this is the "but"—this form of abstraction can't be separated from its respective subject matter. The images' implicit theory, which articulates itself non-predicatively and independent of language, only becomes productive in examination and translation, and is therefore only conceivable as an act of theorization—working at the editing table, writing and thinking about film, analyzing images in circulation. As autonomous as the image cosmos appears to be since its technologization through photography and more recent techniques, the theory that images potentially offer can only be gained through direct involvement with them. Furthermore, Farocki's theorizations of operational images since the 1990s show particularly clearly that the increasing degree of abstraction in this type of image holds the danger of eliminating the viewer. The images with the greatest effect—those that will most substantially determine our everyday life in future—are also the most invisible, whose "singularity" has entirely retreated into numbers and algorithms.

At first sight, this speculation seems to be far away from cinema as it has developed for over a century. The images to which Harun Farocki has increasingly turned his attention since the late 1990s are produced in the civil or military sectors, apparently nowhere near the entertainment industry or the arts. They have no aesthetic function. Conversely, it can also be concluded that there has always been more at stake for Godard and Farocki than the silver screen. Cinematic images, either from their own films or those of other directors, serve both filmmakers to instruct the eye and as the building blocks of a wide-ranging image critique. Harun Farocki's and Jean-Luc Godard's films are examples of a consistent and unswerving attempt to think *about* images *with* images. Both directors counter the usual procedure of adding the spoken word to the image with a model that proceeds from the power of images themselves and argues from within them. Godard and Farocki have thus ambivalently contributed

to the discourse about visuality, which has attracted increasing attention since the 1960s.

The theory that can be gleaned from Godard's and Farocki's visual practice is by no means unambiguous in its relationship to the image. While the two directors approach media images with great skepticism and resulting distancing strategies, in which Brecht's reservations about the apparently "realistic" photographic image can be recognized, their films should nevertheless be seen as antithetical to the "anti-ocularcentric discourse" analyzed by Martin Jay. Godard's films from his Groupe Dziga Vertov phase have indubitably iconoclastic traits and break with most narrative, compositional, and dramaturgical principles in their search for a different visual language; Farocki's work—particularly during the 1970s—also shows a polemic attempt to realize his films in opposition to the image production and economics of television. But within this recurring, sometimes morally tinged critique of images and image gullibility, a strong belief in the effectiveness and power of the image can also be discerned. This not only pertains to the emotional and aesthetic aspects of film—something that I have largely excluded from this examination—but above all to its analytical and theoretical potential.

Clear differences can be discerned in the two filmmakers' approaches to painting and photography, however. This is easier to see in Godard's work than in Farocki's. The Carabineers exhibits a critical reserve in relation to photography that is particularly noticeable in contrast to Godard's sometimes almost euphoric inclusion of paintings in his films. While painting represents an implicit benchmark for him, and "painterly" aspects—light, visual concentration, expression, stylization—have increasingly featured in his films since the 1980s,[1] photography marks the point of divergence. The photographic image tends toward tautology and operates with deceptive verisimilitude. However, the encounter with a second photograph, through which clarity and unambiguousness are "disturbed" in favor of relationship, can develop into a critical instrument. For this reason, the photograph—along with television images—is located on the side of the visual in Serge Daney's examination of the "image" and the "visual": it is "full," complete in itself, as Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of War particularly shows, and easily included in a logic of fulfillment. The interpretation and theorizing of photography that film can

1 See Sally Shafto, "On Painting and History in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*," *Senses of Cinema*, 40 (July 2006) [special dossier: *The Godard Museum*], http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/the-godard-museum/histoires-du-cinema/ [accessed July 15, 2014].

accomplish is thus possible either through relating images to one another or explicitly through words.

It is different with painting. What Daney identifies as a simultaneous surplus and insufficiency can be seen quite literally in the staged paintings in PASSION. The "translations" in the film offer resistance. They lack something—the right light, the final pose, the decisive moment—while also endeavoring, like the El Greco painting, to escape their frames and project out of the medium of painting and into that of cinematography. For this reason, too, Godard associates Manet's paintings with "thinking forms" ("une forme qui pense") and sees them as a model for the cinema. The photographic image, by contrast—as BEFORE YOUR EYES VIETNAM and IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR show particularly clearly—is one that was born from a concept, and in this calculability it is susceptible to appropriation by operative processes. It paves the way for the operational image, in which the visual is secondary to mathematical and technical processes and ultimately obsolete. The imperative derived from this entails confronting images that have become so "theoretical" and questioning their empty abstraction of the "visual" as a reading and interpreting subject.

Farocki and Godard are equally against having images disappear in technical operations. At this point, the dialectic between objective and subjective, which conceives the image as something made and to be presented as such, takes hold. The explicit recourse to an understanding of theory developed in early Romanticism as a utopia of the simultaneity of object language and meta-language can particularly be seen in Godard (this would be worthy of further examination). The production of images that also contain a theory of image production was always one of his pressing aims and distinguishes him from the other filmmakers of the New Wave—such as François Truffaut, who remained much more attached to the established forms of narrative cinema. When Godard, writing in 1959 at the same time as his own first film, declared that MAN OF THE WEST was an example of "both art and the theory of art [...] of the Western, the most cinematographic genre in the cinema,"[2] it was a provocation in several respects. Anthony Mann's film, and thus the genre of the Western, then barely considered art at all, was not only defined as the essence of cinema[3]

2 Jean-Luc Godard, "Supermann" [1959], *Godard on Godard*, ed. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo 1986), 116–119: 117.

3 It is not by chance that Godard's assertion almost literally repeats a remark he makes about Jean Renoir quoted earlier in the introduction to this book.

but also as a highly self-reflexive art form in the tradition of early Romantic thought. In Godard's own work, this desire to be simultaneously film and film theory can be seen at every moment. The films I have analyzed here all set in motion a theoretical reflection on the status of images—on their possibilities, limitations, dangers, and potentials—in each case through a contrast with other types of images. Whether this is the paintings—either integrated into the narrative or jumping out of it—that are juxtaposed with film in Breathless or Pierrot le fou, or the literal "translation" of original canvases as tableaux vivants in Passion, the break line between original and copy, the difference between source and quotation, literalness and metaphor, is the point at which cinema comes into view as a moving, frameless visual form that tends to encompass the other arts. In this sense, Raymond Bellour describes Godard as the "last Romantic," as the "final incarnation of the Jena School of Romanticism."[4]

This is not to say that cinema is the media "fulfillment" of the early Romantic call for a fusion of art and life; rather that film—primarily through the technique of montage—provides an instrument with which comparison, contrast, and collision become possible as analytical and theoretical operations. The achievement of the Russian theorists and practitioners—above all Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov—lies in having conceptualized and expanded the medium's discursive and theoretical aspect, which today remains marginal beside cinema's entertainment function. Of course, it would be wrong to categorize Godard's films solely under the heading of "intellectual montage"—their backgrounds and points of reference are far too comprehensive, and their allusions to the history of the cinema, art, and literature too eclectic. Godard's recent works also explore the interferences between image and music and often replace editing by superimposition. The most obvious examples of this can be found in Histoire(s) du cinéma, whose excess of visual and aural material would need a study of its own and has only made a peripheral appearance here.[5]

In Farocki's case, the question of theoretical orientation needs to be answered differently, even though his methods often link to Godard's. While he names Brecht's techniques of alienation and Pop Art as important impulses, this primarily refers to a critique of a simple concept of

4 Raymond Bellour, "For Ever Divided," *For Ever Godard*, ed. Michael Temple, James S. Williams, Michael Witt (London: Black Dog Publishing 2004), 11.

5 Most recently, Michael Witt has provided a comprehensive account of Histoire(s) du cinéma from its origins in the 1970s to its various iterations on video, CD, as a museum show, etc. See Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard. Cinema Historian* (Bloomington: Indiana UP 2013).

realism and representation understood as mimesis. Like Godard, Farocki also responds to the challenges of a "functional" society—which can no longer be adequately described by mere depiction but rather through the relationship between images—with a specific form of montage. With Farocki, saying something theoretically informed about processes of image production, despite, against, and at the same time utilizing the concretion of photographic film images, largely goes in the direction of a confrontation with other visual media—and I have given particular attention to this aspect of his work here. The fact that this not only occurs in the classical documentary framework, as in the case of STILL LIFE, but also makes use of various intermediate forms in which the distinction between fictional and documentary work become problematic, once again links Farocki to Godard, whose image research never categorically distinguishes between the modi of cinematic utterance.

The work begun here could be continued in various directions: For one thing, it would require a more exact analysis than I have been able to undertake of the differences between video, cinema, and television—which are essential to Godard's film NUMÉRO DEUX, for example. The decision to restrict my analytical framework to photography and painting wasn't only determined by the idea that the functioning of inter-media reflection could be most clearly shown in relation to the unmoving single image: it was also taken in view of the films themselves, in which Godard's and Farocki's similarities and differences in their recourse to painting and photography are most sharply recognizable. Furthermore—aside from a systematic and synchronously organized examination of theoretical speaking in film—the continued work should be supplemented by an examination of the respective status of film history in the work of Farocki and Godard. Through diverse forms of quotation and allusion—and not just since HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA—Godard's films have always obtained their dynamics from a "dual" view of the image of reality and the reality of the image, and at least as much from their references to earlier cinematic practice. When Godard casts Fritz Lang as the director of a screen adaptation of the *Odyssey* in LE MÉPRIS, or has Samuel Fuller expound his ideas about cinema in PIERROT LE FOU, or when, in VIVRE SA VIE, Nana S. sees her tears reflected in those of Carl Theodor Dreyer's JEANNE D'ARC, this speaks of a consciousness of the forms that have defined cinema over the decades. It is a gesture of quotation that—like the hands touching in NOUVELLE VAGUE—both takes and gives, that affiliates itself with cinema history, only to distance itself from it in order to create new forms. Farocki's approach to film is no less oriented to

cinema history. Three works from the 1990s, devoted to cinematic topoi,[6] are particularly clear examples of his collecting, montaging, and anatomizing of historical material. Farocki's method, which is oriented towards a "dictionary of cinematic expression,"[7] follows a completely different principle from Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma, which should be understood more as the result of a kind of "wild philology." Nevertheless, both procedures are similar in closely linking history, film, and montage—in Godard's case they are even brazenly identified with one another.[8] On the threshold of the twenty-first century, this is a melancholy view of film history. Particularly with Godard, during the past twenty-five years it has also been a view of things ending, disappearing, passing: the vanishing GDR, which he portrayed in 1990 as an "état de la solitude" in Allemagne Neuf Zéro, confronting it with the now unemployed secret agent Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine); his contribution to the episode film Ten Minutes Older, wistfully and repeatedly showing "final minutes" ("final minutes of silence," "final minutes of cinema"). In his interplay of music, image, and voice, Godard has adopted a cinematic stance that makes what he films look as if it has been exposed to death. These more recent works, and his look back at cinema history, mark a clear difference from Farocki. Since the 1990s, Farocki's interest has increasingly been drawn to images that lie outside the context of cinema and television but that can be assessed and theorized in the light of his long experience of looking at films, paintings, and photographs. Footage from surveillance cameras in American prisons and image-processing software for civilian and military use is now the intensified focus of his work: "It is no longer about an ultimately cinephile view of cultural products [...], but involves gaining access to an image production whose aim is no longer that of making something public."[9] In such a situation, cinema has two functions: It offers a reservoir of images and forms of presentation to which automated operational images are still to some degree oriented. It also stands for a

6 Apart from The Expression of Hands, these are Prison Images (and its installation version I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts) and Workers Leaving the Factory, made for the hundredth anniversary of the medium of film.

7 See Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, "Towards an Archive of Visual Concepts," *Harun Farocki. Working on the Sight-Lines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP 2004), 261–286.

8 See Godard's acceptance speech on receiving the Adorno Prize in 1995: Jean-Luc Godard, "À propos de cinéma et d'histoire" [1996], *Godard par Godard II*, 401–407. See also the extensive discussion with Youssef Ishagpour: Jean-Luc Godard, Youssef Ishagpour, *Cinema: The Archaeology of Film and the Memory of A Century*, trans. John Howe (New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2005).

9 Bert Rebhandl, "Harun Farocki: Nachdruck/Imprint" [review.], *Springerin* 1/02, 40–41: 40.

potentially redundant type of image that belongs primarily to the twentieth century and is currently disappearing in favor of data streams. Before the image liquefies entirely into data, Farocki collects and analyzes its traces.

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Every desk—as Farocki's Interface and Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma show—is also an editing table, a place of montage, at which heterogeneous material is brought together and one's own thinking is confronted with a different mindset that has sedimented into texts and images. And, just as a final image and sound have to be found at the editing table, here, too, the final decision must be for the closing word, which should rather be a closing image.

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