

# WAYS OUT OF THE FACTORY: READINGS OF A FILMIC METAPHOR

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Only when the automation of industrial processes and the relocation of companies took the factory model away from our society did we realise how little we knew about it. The fact that this world of strain, noise and tedium is little more than an abstraction for us today owes much, among other factors, to suppression by the cinema, to a certain reluctance that can be traced a long way back because it begins with the very origin of the medium itself: in 1895, when the Lumière brothers decided to stage and film their employees leaving their factory in Lyon, their intention was no doubt to engage in a filmmaking exercise, a *test documentary*, but in doing it as they did they were implicitly sanctioning a silence, a refusal to show the working environment and conditions which they themselves, as employers, had effectively established. Thus, what originated as a mere instrumental take would be the first bearer of a very particular message and would continue being charged semantically until it came to con-

stitute a cultural artefact of enormous density, mainly for two reasons: for its capacity to draw in concepts and reflections related to cinema and to modernity itself, and; for the layers of meaning that filmmakers of all kinds (fiction, documentary, experimental) have added to the original film by referring to it either explicitly or allusively in their own work, thereby retroactively expanding its original dimension.

In a medium-length film made around the time of the centenary of the aforementioned shot, *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (1995), Harun Farocki compiled a significant number of these references, accompanied by a commentary strongly oriented towards highlighting the rhetorical value of the image of coming out of the factory throughout film history, in a film that is in a way evocative of much of the work of the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg, particularly his text *Höhlenausgänge* [Out of the Cave], published in 1989. Considering

that Blumenberg's *metaphorology* could well have been applied to certain genuinely filmic metaphors, such as the Lumières' sequence shot and an analysis of its inner workings, this article tests this possibility by adding to reflections on Farocki's proposal (the worker as *social actor*, symbolic forms of closure, the nature of working time), taking into consideration not only *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* but also other films that are not included in Farocki's compilation, either because they came later or because of their discursive or formal peculiarity. From the instructive efforts of Slatan Dudow to the ethical and formal commitment of Straub and Huillet, along with Tscherkassky's exploitation of the film medium and Torres Leiva's melancholy gaze, the rhetorical pattern established as if by accident in Lyon has continued to undergo modifications, additions and twists, the most recent of these—facilitating the return of the proletariat to a factory converted precisely into a *stupefying cavern*—being the one that would seem to mark an end to the cycle as the old metaphor is confronted with contemporary reality.

## **HUMAN PIECES AND FILMIC FRAGMENTS**

This analysis starts at the beginning of this recurring theme and of cinema itself: the screening of the first known film to a select group of guests at the Paris headquarters of the *Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*. According to the chronicles of the day:

by means of a kinoscope of his own invention, Mr. Louis Lumière projected the most curious of scenes: workers leaving their factory at lunch hour. This lively scene, which shows all these people in full movement rushing out to the street, produced the most startling effect (Chardère, 1995: 301).

A curious scene, we are told, that provoked more shock than surprise and more fear than fascination. This was not a train that looked it was about to burst out of the screen to run down the spectators, but a crowd of humans who, far from

moving in the direction of the axis of the lens and the spectator's gaze, were obediently dispersing towards the sides of the frame. What exactly was there to fear about an action almost identical to that which the spectators themselves would carry out at the end of the screening? Was it perhaps the social status of the people involved? Were the Parisian bourgeois viewers horrified by the sight of these common workers bursting across the screen like an army of ants? Might this have been the world's first horror film, a *proletarian horror film*? All flippancy aside, it seems clear that what the audience felt was the first technological manifestation of a deeply-rooted terror identified by Elias Canetti in *Crowds and Power* (in itself a veritable manual of *metaphorology*):

"The crowd, suddenly there where there was nothing before, is a mysterious and universal phenomenon [...] nothing has been announced, nothing was expected. Suddenly everywhere is black with people" (Canetti, 1973: 16).

Darkness, silence, uncertainty, and then suddenly, with no break in the continuity, dozens of people appear as if by magic. It is a magic that would be an integral part of cinema throughout its existence, but that would soon be turned on the proletariat as a passive target for its tricks rather than the material with which to carry those tricks out, because this departure from the factory and its filming would also constitute an all but definitive *departure from the frame* of filmic narratives. If "profilmic" in film studies jargon designates anything susceptible to being captured on celluloid, anything potentially *spectacular*, on the opposite end of the spectrum we might equally speak of an *antifilmic* component, which could be embodied by that individual who aspires to be nothing more than part of a disciplined crowd—albeit an occasionally rebellious and noisy one—or an abstract force in the films of Griffith, Eisenstein or Gance, but rarely that literary and performative reflection of a person that we have come to call *the character*. To designate such these individuals, each language

would soon find a word, somewhat disparaging and emphasising their residual function: *extra* in English, *figurante* in Spanish, *comparsa* in Italian, *Statist* in German. These figures, denied a personality, are effectively humans without features; thus, Jacqueline Nacache coined the term *piece-of-furniture-man* (2009: 92) to refer to someone who, when not serving as a prop in a static background, can be moved at will from one spot to another, obeying orders and instructions meekly and never claiming a voice of his own because nobody allows him to speak or even attributes the power of language to him. “The extras ‘figure’, and therefore do not act. [...] More often than not they exist only by their number, their mass, and their mute lack of differentiation,” points out Didi-Huberman (2009: 20). They are a collection of *docile bodies* in the exact sense that Foucault gives to the expression: “an element that may be placed, moved, or articulated on others” (1992: 168). They are things rather than beings, entities more than subjects, occupying the bottom rung on the labour scale in the film industry just as they do in industry in the broader sense and in so-called real life, thus demonstrating that for them the cinema means nothing more than a replica of *the state of things* and by no means an alternative reality.

As an extra, the factory worker would rarely be given the chance to play a starring role, which is why the fact that François Doublie became a camera operator for the Lumières not long after appearing in the sequence in question was nothing short of a victory for the working class. The sequence in fact has at least three versions, each one barely distinguishable from the others except for one detail: the clothing. While the first (March 1895) shows the workers as they were (work clothes, dark fabrics, heads uncovered), in the second (March 1896) and the third (August 1896) we see them portraying themselves conveniently dressed in their Sunday best, as if the factory were a church and the activity going on inside it were a sacrament. These takes are charades that

invite the spectator to look for Benjamin’s “tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now” (Benjamin, 2005: 510) or Barthes’ *punctum* contained in them: women without hats and men in shirt-sleeves who refused or forgot to wear costumes; the whimsical pace of an individualistic type or one who misunderstood the instructions, or the dog—that half excited, half bewildered dog—who received no instructions at all. In *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*, Harun Farocki lingers over a young woman who tugs at the dress of a co-worker in work clothes at the moment the two separate and head in opposite directions, seeing in this gesture an incidental, playful and rebellious detail “with which reality” (returning to Benjamin “has seared the subject” (2005: 510), understanding “subject” here as the disciplinary redoubt of *the normal*.

Mary Ann Doane has underlined this value of chance in early cinema because, “although the placement of the camera may be precisely calculated and the recorded activities foreseen or tightly regulated, these films depend on the fascination associated with the ability of the camera to ‘catch’ moments,” offering “the spectator the opportunity of witnessing the ceaseless production of meaning out of contingency” (2002: 180-181). It goes without saying that this spontaneity was not in keeping with the functional aspirations of the film industry, and that the progressive consolidation of narrative models—some original, some taken from theatre and literature—would bring with it the progressive abolition of chance, viewed as the archenemy of instrumental reason. It might be argued that Farocki assembled the footage in *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* when he did to challenge these models and recover the value of contingency, because, as he himself recounts,

for the last twelve years I worked to track down the largest possible number of variations on the theme of this film: employees leaving their workplace. I found examples in documentaries, in films on the industry, in news reports, and in fiction feature films (Farocki, 2013: 193).

How did the German filmmaker compose this footage which the cinema, in its elusive-allusive zeal, had provided him with? Simply by doing just that: *composing*, trying out combinations of fragments and mixing them together meticulously, even in the knowledge that the final result will be accidental and only one of many possibilities. While in the final stage of his career Farocki pursued a procedure of *soft montage*, placing spectators in front of two or more screens between which they could shift the gaze at will, something that would end up relegating his *expanded cinema* to exhibition spaces rather than traditional theatres,<sup>1</sup> the linear or *hard montage* used in *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* perhaps offers less receptive freedom, but in return possesses a more organic quality that allows for zigzagging, internal rhythms and effects of semantic accumulation (the Lyon factory sequence is inserted and paraphrased as many as four times) all characteristic of the genre of the film essay, which borrows all these things from its literary equivalent (Blümlinger, 2009: 84; Fernández, 2014: 30). In this respect, Theodor Adorno could well have been alluding to the work of Farocki (who was apparently an occasional student of his in the 1960s) when he pointed out that “the essay takes the anti-systematic impulse into its own procedure and introduces concepts directly” (Adorno, 1984: 160) and “co-ordinates elements, rather than subordinating them” (170), assuming that these “are presentable in such a way that they support one another, that each one articulates itself according to the configuration that it forms with the others” thereby

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**THE GERMAN DIRECTOR STUDIES THE TRAUMAS AND WOUNDS THAT THE FACTORY HAS LEFT ON THIS COLLECTIVE TO SUBSTANTIATE AND JUDGE, IN ABSENTIA, THE REGIME OF LIFE ESTABLISHED INSIDE IT**

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creating “a force field” (161). *Force field* should also be understood here in the literal sense, because there would be no better definition of the factory itself, of that mass of brute energy that has been withheld from view (“almost everything that has happened in the factory in the last hundred years, words, looks, gestures, has escaped cinematic representation,” concludes Farocki [2013: 195]), but to which each and every one of the sequences refer indexically.

## URGENCY, DEJECTION AND CLOSURE

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Given that according to the materialist canon “what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production” (Marx and Engels, 1972: 20), the German director studies the traumas and wounds that the factory has left on this collective to substantiate and judge, *in absentia*, the regime of life established inside it. The urgent need to distance themselves from the place, to flee from it, would be the first piece of evidence. “The impression left by this first projection is that of people escaping as if driven by an invisible force,” comments the narrator on the scene filmed by the Lumières. “1977 in Emden, the Volkswagen factory: the workers run as if something drives them away”; “1926 in Detroit: the workers run as if they had already wasted too much time,” the voice continues as the scenes unfold. All this suggests an enormous existential expenditure within the factory walls, a fatal haemorrhage that moves them to flee the moment the working day comes to an end and the real day begins. If the realisation of a working potential in the form of a particular kind of applied effort is expected of the workers, they claim the sensation of pleasure for the energy still remaining, for the life they have not yet spent; as the former *workerist* Paolo Virno points out, under the capitalist scheme “the living body becomes the substratum of the productive capacity” (2003: 171), its sacrificial victim, and thus mere survival takes on a celebratory quality the mo-

ment the torture chamber or slaughterhouse that is the workplace has been left behind.

This is not always the case, however, as evidenced by the dull existence of the women featured in *Obreras saliendo de la fábrica* [Worker Women Leaving the Factory] (2006), a short film by José Luis Torres Leiva which from its initial tribute to *Red Desert* (Il deserto rosso, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964) foreshadows an immersion in a life of alienation. The little group of women portrayed by the Chilean director can only be described as lacking any kind of life or the will necessary to come up with any alternative to the company that consumes their days in such a way that the factory, far from being a reason for joy, serves only to increase their dismay. These women appear to be what the French philosopher Simone Weil (who in 1934 left teaching to work in the Renault factory at Billancourt and experience a life that other intellectuals were satisfied with merely imagining) is referring to when she observes how for the factory worker “nothing paralyses the mind more than the feeling of inferiority necessarily imposed by the daily offences of poverty, subordination, and dependence” (2010: 73). The existence of these *Chilote* women is a grey and harsh one, as the final scene movingly conveys: engrossed on the beach where they recline like boulders that the steady march of progress has left behind, they recall their childhood in silence—not a single word is spoken throughout the film, in fact—while evening falls and the same waves lap the shore. All around them is an atmosphere of chronic despondency to which they surrender quietly, without resistance; the factory has defeated them.

As can be observed, and still with reference to the Lumières, Torres Leiva's film delves little by little into the private world of the working class, relying on a tradition from Renoir or Brault to Loach or the Dardenne brothers that takes them as *dramatis personae*, and Didi-Huberman may need to remind us that the vicissitudes of those-



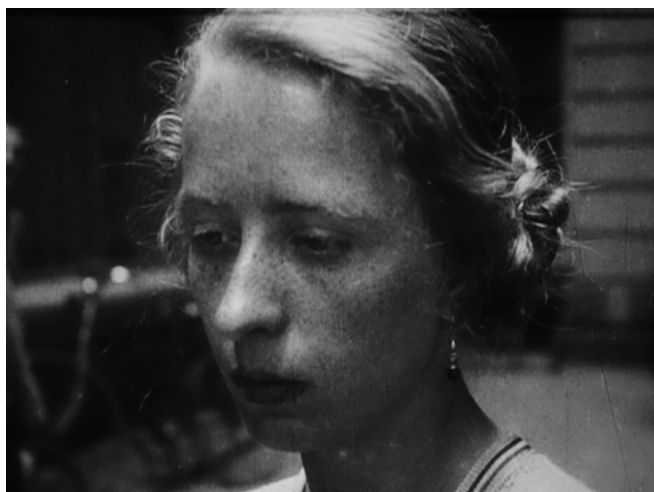
*La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Auguste y Louis Lumière, 1895)

who make up the *working masses* in their immense anonymity are very different:

they have a face, a body, gestures that belong to them, but the setting that calls on them wants them to be faceless, bodiless, and without any personal gestures [...] How should one film the *figurants*, the extras? How should one make them appear as actors in a story; how can one refuse to settle for making them indistinct but living shadows? (Didi-Huberman, 2009: 20).

There would be no shortage of possible answers. Before resorting to the humanisation of the worker by assigning a leading role in a conventional script, such as in *To Whom Does the World Belong?* (Kuhle Wampe, Slatan Dudow, 1932) or *Frauenschicksale* [Destinies of Women] (1952), also included in the footage of *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*, the Bulgarian director Slatan Dudow had offered signs of how the proletariat might be filmed *ethically* in *How the Berlin Worker Lives* (Zeitprobleme: Wie der Arbeiter wohnt, 1930), part of a series of films sponsored by the German communist leader Willi Münzenberg. This twelve-minute documentary begins by invoking the Lyon motif an introducing an important variation, because what we see happens—as we are told by an intertitle—after the company has been shut down; i.e., after the people shown have just





Arriba. Obreras saliendo de la fábrica (José Luis Torres Leiva, 2006).  
Abajo. Zeitprobleme. Wie der Arbeiter wohnt (Slatan Dudow, 1930)

acquired the status of unemployed persons or social castaways. This additional information redirects our reading of the image and places us in a condition to take in what is shown immediately

thereafter: a series of close-ups of downcast faces incapable, except in one case, of looking into the camera. Knowing that “the unity of the manipulated collective consists in the denial of each singular individual” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1994: 68), Dudow reverses this idea by keenly bearing witness, in a work with suggestions of the New Objectivity, to the features of each person and the sorry fate that they express, although it would do them little good in a Weimar Republic in a full state of collapse: while humanising the masses and giving them individualised faces was a strategy diametrically opposed to the movement that would triumph a mere three years later, the absolute value accorded to labour activity would also end up tilting towards the metaphysical, perverse and decidedly cruel extreme of *Arbeit macht frei*.

The moment that work acquires this superhuman value, the symbolism of the factory is augmented, as is that of its physical boundary, the wall, which not only isolates it from the outside world but also, like a prison or military institution, establishes and distinguishes the different spheres of the legal. “The wall” suggests Olivier Razac “is the spatial inscription of the law” (2015: 156); both the law that prescribes the working conditions within the factory walls, and the law that governs the world outside them. The factory thus represents a *state of exception* because it operates simultaneously as a means of *exclusive inclusion*, establishing its own regulations and disregarding all others; and *inclusive exclusion*, resulting from the suspension of the rights that were taken for granted in the world outside (Agamben, 2004: 12). *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* itself reveals these two dimensions through an eloquent series of sequences: on the one hand, the right to free expression and peaceful demonstration is restricted to the urban space and the union slogans can only make it beyond the walls by means of megaphones, as occurs in the aforementioned sequence of the Volkswagen factory and in the first sequence of *Red Desert*; on the other, the police

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**RATHER THAN A PLACE THE FACTORY DOOR IS IN FACT A CHANNEL FOR TRANSIT AND COMMUNICATION, THE MEMBRANE WHERE ONE REALITY GIVES WAY TO THE OTHER, OR RATHER, CUNNINGLY DISGUISES ITSELF AS ITS OPPOSITE WITHOUT CEASING TO BE ITSELF**

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respect the factory and their coercion and repression is undertaken exclusively outside its doors, as displayed comically in the Tramp's mistaken arrest in *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin, 1936), and tragically in the indiscriminate gunning down of strikers in *Intolerance* (David W. Griffith, 1916).

Although the wall is a first-order symbolic element, the door possesses an even more obvious metaphorical value thanks to its greater semantic flexibility. "The door" notes Farocki "constitutes the boundary between the protected realm of production and the public space and is the ideal site for transforming the economic struggle into a political struggle" (2013: 198). Meeting, discussing, articulating the worker struggle and, when it gets that far, negotiating and bringing an end to the protest, are actions suited to that strange limbo located between one world and the other, but rather than a place the factory door is in fact a channel for transit and communication, the membrane where one reality gives way to the other, or rather, cunningly disguises itself as its opposite without ceasing to be itself. This idea is expressed in a sequence that cannot be overlooked in *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*: the sequence of the change of shift in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), and although in Siegfried Kracauer's opinion "everything illustrates Lang's tendency towards pompous ornamentation" in this film, positioned as it is somewhere "between Wagner and Krupp", where the masses endorse their own reification by serving solely to "compose set designs" (1961: 179), it is clear that the geomet-



**Zeitprobleme. Wie der Arbeiter wohnt (Slatan Dudow, 1930)**

ric and undifferentiated treatment of the human groups—the group leaving the factory and the other that enters to replace it—reinforces the sensation of indistinctness between the before and the after of the working day that defeated Torres Leiva's worker women, between the *no more* and the *not yet* of a worker who has lost all notion of time.

## **IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME**

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*Trop tôt, trop tard* [Too Early, Too Late] (1981) is the title of a film in which Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet twist the Lumières' motif even further with their extraordinary capacity to hold a gaze on reality. Here the setting is the façade of an Egyptian factory; out of the doors of the building and from the edges of the frame, dozens of workers parade in front of the camera or stop to talk amongst themselves. They are in no hurry to get anywhere because now they are outside, and that "outside" is the place of genuine social interaction, as noted above. The ten long minutes that Straub and Huillet give this break from industrial activity adds to the calm of the scene, but there is something else: the background voice, reading excerpts from the book *Class Conflict in Egypt, 1945-1970*, refers to the

collectivisations carried out during the uprisings in the country in the 1950s, to make the factory the property of the workers—or perhaps the sequence is intended to evoke the moment when it was, and as the traditional regime of exploitation did not prevail within its walls there would be nothing to rush away from. Although the film's title alludes to the old axiom that the working class always acts at the wrong time and as a result never finds its place in history (Hurch, 1982), the individuals we see on the screen appear in a certain way to be *owners of their time* and to have escaped once and for all from the oppressive climate that characterises industrial labour, that fear and pressure that Simone Weil, in the absence of cameras (cameras which, when they decide to enter the factory, do so with the insidious purpose of supervising the work and contributing to the harm), witnessed first-hand in the late 1930s:

I must not be careless: to clock one minute of delay means working an hour without pay. [...] I feel that I will faint from fatigue and dejection. What time is it? Still two more hours until finishing time. How will I make it? [...] One piece. Another piece. Have I done enough yet? Quickly. I've ruined a piece. Careful. Watch out, I'm losing the rhythm. I must go faster. Fast, faster... (Weil, 2010: 116-7).

**Trop tôt, trop tard (Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, 1981)**



Just as the increased speed of a spinning mechanism accentuates the optical illusion of its motionlessness, so too the greater a worker's physical speed the greater is that worker's sensation of being caught in a suspended moment, and it is precisely this separation from time that sharpens his awareness of his own alienation. In this sense, it is significant that the Lyon sequence should have employed people who actually lived the experience being portrayed, and even more so that it should have been shot outside working hours, because this means that they were still acting on their employers' orders, that they were forced to repeat the take at least three times, a fact that underscores the repetition of their lives and the lack of distinction between work time and personal time that the *homo faber*, in his condition as a beast of burden, experiences mechanically. It is precisely this mechanism and the abstract nature of *semper idem* that is made visible in one of the most unprecedented works of the Austrian filmmaker Peter Tscherkassky, *Motion Picture (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon)* (1984), an exercise in filmmaking without a camera which at first glance seems to tell no story at all but actually possesses a very specific duration and content, as explained by the filmmaker himself:

I went into the dark room and I pinned up [...] fifty strips of raw footage, on 16mm, onto a wall, completely covering a space of 50 x 80 cm. I then projected onto that surface a still frame from the first film, *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon*, by the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière. The exposed strips were developed, arranged on the light table so that the Lumières' original still frame could be seen, and subsequently edited together, from left to right. The result was a 3-minute, 16mm film that showed the elements of light and darkness of the original image stripped of any figurative content (Tscherkassky, 2005: 133).

Tscherkassky acknowledges the influence of Umberto Eco's semiotic theory and his idea that the particles that constitute photographic emul-



sion resemble phonemes that only find meaning through their mutual association; in this way, these meaningless portions of silver halides are equated with the workers themselves from the moment when only a sudden illumination and a process of revelation makes them visible and gives them a meaning, albeit clouded. The unexpected rhetorical charge of the film goes further still: if the production line described by Weil finds a direct analogy in the conveyor belt of images that is the cinematographic device, with its characteristic cadence and its stupefying effects, *Motion Picture* emphasises this analogy by including the perforated edges of the film strip in the frame, contributing to the cutting up of the image, and turning it into a carousel of abstractions—a recurring tactic in Tscherkassky's ontological aesthetics—that effectively explode any diegetic pattern and provoke a sense of alienation in the spectator.

It is thus demonstrated once again that the categorisation of this type of film as experimental covers over the hermeneutic gaps on the receptive level more than the formal gaps on the expressive level, and that such a classification would not be fitting here if it were not for the fact that it results in a fascinating parable: the marginalisation of this type of cinema to the very same context of the factory. Not a regular factory, of course, but one of those places dedicated to high culture that so many factories have been turned into: foundations, art centres, exhibition spaces, and museums. The Lyon factory itself has recently succumbed to this trend, so that “the workers who came out of the factory in 1895 have today been captured once again on the film screen in the same space,” as Hito Steyerl notes, “coming out of the factory only to emerge again as a spectacle inside it” (2016: 70) and thus celebrate their bourgeois consolidation. It is only in these kinds of spaces that there appears to have been a place for Farocki, as already noted, but also for the likes of Tscherkassky or Torres Leiva, filmmakers who in one way or another have reflected on factories and have ended up in-



*Motion Picture (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon)*  
(Peter Tscherkassky, 1984)

side them thanks to their inclusion in exhibits of contemporary art or in the film cycles dedicated to them in such venues. This entry into the factory has been of little use in any case, because the average spectator dislikes the settings for such screenings (inhospitable theatres with monastic pews, cyclical reproduction and intrusive sound, or batteries of monitors with headphones arranged in a phone-booth style) and the intellectual subtleties of the films themselves, and continues to be as resistant as ever to the work to be viewed; or even more resistant, if possible, given the new models, media and habits of visual consumption. In any case, watching the people leaving these factories of induced leisure one gets the impression that they have little intention of returning and that, as they leave, the doors, the Lumières' parable—and with it, cinema as we once understood it—closes in on itself.

## CONCLUSIONS

If, in the words of Hans Blumenberg, the point of all *metaphorology* is to investigate the “logical ‘lack’ for which the metaphor serves as a substi-

tute" (2004: 44), the difficulty that it is intended to resolve, the could be little more useful for the case of an incidental figure that crystallised in its day and has adopted multiple forms over time, evidently to allude to a thorny reality in *absentia*. Although in recent times there has been no shortage of attempts to represent the context of the factory once elided and to give it visual form, it is undeniable that cinema has revelled in fluttering around this forbidden territory and its flight has led it to try out ways of naming the void and reflecting on it with the resources that characterise the medium. The search for and assembly of evidence (Farocki and his influences), the induced silencing (Dudow, Torres Leiva), the hyperbolic dilation of suspended time (Straub and Huillet), or the exploitation of filmic machinery (Tscherkassky) number among the most provocative rhetorical procedures that the cinema has produced in response to the original motif: it remains to be seen what resources it will mobilise from this point on, now that the disappearance of the factory building itself is added to the evasion of what it once contained. ■

## NOTES

- 1 *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* was presented in a multi-channel version for the exhibition *Cinema Like Never Before*, held in 2006 at the Generali Foundation in Vienna, and it has been exhibited in this same format at a few subsequent events. In that original version, the installation *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* presented the recurrence of the motif in film history through twelve sequences displayed cyclically on twelve monitors, leaving the spectator free to identify their possible constants and variations (Rebhandl, 2009).

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## WAYS OUT OF THE FACTORY: READINGS OF A FILMIC METAPHOR

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### Abstract

Given its simplicity and its purely demonstrative intention, it is surprising that the first film ever shown in public, *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), has given rise to a recurring motif in cinema that runs parallel to a certain reluctance on the part of the medium to represent factory life. In addition to the samples of this particular *endogène* compiled and assembled by the German director Harun Farocki in 1995, this article presents others that were left out of Farocki's compilation or that appeared later and which, through their extension of the semantic range of the motif, allow a better understanding of the reasons for its recurrent use. The filming of the working masses, the exceptional nature of the work space and the qualities of industrial time are some of the questions that this study draws from this corpus and develops from a perspective related to *metaphorology*.

### Key words

Lumière; Farocki; Torres Leiva; Dudow; Straub-Huillet; Tscherkassky; Factory; Work; Time.

### Author

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## SALIDAS DE FÁBRICA. LECTURAS DE UNA METÁFORA FÍLMICA

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### Resumen

Dada su sencillez y su intención puramente demostrativa, no puede dejar de sorprender que la primera película mostrada en público, *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), haya dado pie a una recurrencia fílmica que corre paralela a cierta renuencia del cine con respecto a la vida fabril. A las muestras de ese peculiar *endógeno* que el realizador alemán Harun Farocki recopilase y articulase en 1995, el artículo añade otras que quedaron al margen o aparecieron más tarde y que al ampliar el rango semántico del motivo permiten entender mejor las causas de esa recurrencia. La filmación de la masa laboral, la excepcionalidad del espacio de trabajo o la calidad del tiempo industrial son algunas de las cuestiones que este estudio extrae de todo ese corpus y desarrolla desde una perspectiva afín a la *metaforología*.

### Palabras clave

Lumière; Farocki; Torres Leiva; Dudow; Straub-Huillet; Tscherkassky; fábrica; trabajo; tiempo.

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