

THE WORK OF THE INVISIBLE, THE INVISIBILISATION OF WORK: THE NEGATION-IMAGE IN HARUN FAROCKI'S FILMOGRAPHY

MIGUEL ALFONSO BOUHABEN

IMAGOMACHY AND REFLECTION-CENTREDNESS

Our “screenified” world is defined by the tension occurring between the hegemonic visibility of the mainstream media and its counter-visual nemesis (Mirzoeff, 2016). The origins of visibility and the regimes of the hegemonic gaze are associated with the authoritarian power of the State and, above all, with visual control systems defined by contemporary capitalism. In this sense, visibility is not always a right, nor does it constitute a free and autonomous act, since there are always state-capitalist codes that determine how we view. This is what complicates viewing in the golden age of the universally “screenified” world of what will be referred to here as imago-capitalism.

However, despite its widespread nature, this hegemonic visibility has not managed to conquer or program all existing screens. There is a whole tradition of resistant and subversive images that

counterbalance the dominant visibility with critical perspectives. Vertov's *Kinopravda*; the militant groups emerging from the May '68 protests in France, such as SLON or the Dziga Vertov Group; the militant groups of the New Latin American Cinema, like Grupo Liberación or Grupo Ukamau; the guerrilla television of the 1970s; *cine piquete-ro* in the 1990s; the video activism of the Arab Spring; the 15-M Movement in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the #Yosoy132 movement in Mexico are some of these counter-visual approaches. In previous studies, I have described this battle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic visibilities using the term *imagomachy*. This notion is useful to describe the confrontation between the oligopolies and institutions that dominate the world of images and the alternative visual communication systems of popular, horizontal, democratic, and critical approaches that seek to deconstruct those visibilities in this extreme battle with/from images (Bouhaben, 2017;

Bouhaben and Polo, 2020). This political battle of images is also marked by the struggle between two visual epistemes: ocularcentrism and reflectionism. Ocularcentrism is the traditionally dominant episteme founded on the representation of reality according to the ancient Greek schema of symmetry and the Renaissance schema of image creation from a single point of view. In opposition to ocularcentrism, José Luis Brea (2010) identifies the emergence of a new reflective episteme that problematises the image. This perspective, heir to the collage and the ready-mades of Dadaism, prioritises the reconstruction of representation. In other words, we seem to have entered an era of reflection on representation: the era of reflection-centredness. Other theorists, like Martin Jay, argue that the critique of ocularcentrism is not a postmodern novelty but can be traced all the way back, for example, to Plato, who expresses his distrust of vision when he “warns us against the illusions of our imperfect eyes” (Jay, 2007: 30).

In any case, these two territories of conflict—one between “political visualities” defined by the concept of *imagomachy*, and the other between “epistemic visualities” characterised by the paradigm shift between ocularcentrism and reflection-centredness—are central to the exploration offered here of the processes of invisibilisation of factory work in cinema. The work of the filmmaker Harun Farocki will be the object of study here for the analysis of two dimensions: the invisibilisation of the factory in the context of *imagomachy*, revealing the victory of capitalist visuality over popular and democratic visuality; and the innovation represented by the visibility of the factory in the context of reflection-centredness, i.e. as invisibility made visible by the reflective practice of the essay film.

A multitude of fiction films and documentaries have been made about the world of the factory. From different perspectives, they have addressed various issues, but it is difficult to find any documentaries at all that include footage showing the

inside of the factories. Such images barely exist; they are removed from our view by the hegemonic visuality. The objective of this study is therefore to evaluate the question of the invisibility of factory work through the film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (Harun Farocki, 1995), a brilliantly executed audiovisual essay by the German filmmaker. This film will be used to explain what is referred to here as the negation-image, a conceptual construct that serves to identify the complex differential relationship between what we see and what we do not see of the factory in the context of *imagomachy*—the political struggle of images—and reflection-centredness—the epistemic struggle of visual paradigms.

METHODOLOGY

According to visual semiotics, the analysis of images can go beyond their aesthetic or pictorial presuppositions, to consider them in terms of the historical, social, cultural, and political structures that configure them. Images are thus not reduced strictly to their visuality, but are understood to embed the views, perspectives, and imaginaries that make up the culture that produces them. They are not merely visual, because they always contain traces of the invisible: traces of what we want, what we know or what we do in/with/between images (Abril, 2012). In Farocki's film, which uses the film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon, Louis Lumière, 1895) as a motif, what we see in the images is politically and epistemically related to what we do not see.

To reveal the invisible of the image, this article adopts an analytical-interpretive method in three stages. In the first, the audiovisual base text, *Workers Leaving the Factory*, is analyzed with the aim of defining what we see and do not see in the image. The second stage involves the analysis of the creative method of *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik*, an audiovisual text that reconstructs and re-

interprets the audiovisual base text. To do this, I explore the method of variations that the film sets in motion and the practices of thematic reflection on archive footage. The third stage is the identification of the concept that underlies Farocki's filmmaking: the negation-image as a concept that defines the reflection on the relationship between the visible and the invisible.

WHAT WE SEE AND WHAT WE DO NOT

Although it was the first film ever exhibited, *Workers Leaving the Factory* does not really mark the beginning of cinema, as it was preceded by a diverse range of visual experiments in the so-called pre-cinema period. Virgilio Tosi (1993) argues that cinema was really born with the scientific inquiries of Janssen, Muybridge and Marey. Román Gubern (2014) goes even further, suggesting that cinema was already present, albeit unconsciously, in the sketches of bison legs in the caves of Altamira. In any case, *Workers Leaving the Factory* appears in every film history book and has the historical distinction of being the first film screened in public. But for this study, what is interesting about this first film is the gap of meaning it opens between what it shows and what it does not, which has undoubtedly shaped the history of cinematography. Thus, this first movement-image, like any image, is the synthesis of what is seen—the network of shapes and colours—and what is not seen—the desires, beliefs, knowledge, and other social, political, and historical devices that form the visual.

We know that what is seen in the film astonished the viewers of its day, who sometimes reacted to the images as if what they were seeing were real. This is the great power of cinema: the satisfaction of the desire for verisimilitude. André Bazin asserts that one of cinema's achievements is to have freed painting from its quest to resemble reality: "Painting was forced, as it turned out, to offer us illusion and this illusion was reckoned

sufficient unto art. Photography and the cinema on the other hand are inventions that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (Bazin, 1967: 12). This power to capture reality is determined by two visual elements: the quantitative element (the large number of characters appearing on screen, leaving the factory through a door located at the left of the image and through a gateway on the right, walking out hurriedly towards either side of the frame) and the qualitative (the distinction that the details of what we see look more realistic than a painting and, above all, the historical novelty of reproducing movement in images) (Aumont, 1997). However, there are other elements that are not seen: the staging of the workers' actions under the direction of their employer. This departure of workers in the Lumières' film does not hold any charm for the cinema. Jean-Louis Comolli (2010) takes this idea to the extreme to argue that work can only be shown in the cinema in the form of a nightmare. Among the things that we do not see in the image of the workers' departure is the social construction that determines the construction of the images, i.e., a refusal to show working conditions. W. J. T. Mitchell suggests that "the social construction of the visual field has to be continuously replayed as the visual construction of the social field" (Mitchell, 2002: 175). This formula can be applied to the Lumières' film to argue that in its images, the capitalist social construction determines the visual field: the world inside the factory is rendered invisible and only its surface, its façade, is committed to celluloid. However, in the same way, this visual construction configured by the hegemonic power allows the social construction of capitalism itself in a system of mutual visual/social feedback. The images of cinema create clichés that establish the visual hegemony and, in turn, promote the perpetuation of a particular social formation—in this case, capitalism. Louis Althusser alludes to these questions when he writes that "every social formation, at the same

time it produces, and, in order to produce, must reproduce the conditions of its production” (Althusser, 1975: 9). In other words, the social formation configured by the dominant economic-political system shapes what we see and how we see, while the cinema as hegemonic visibility renders any elements that could lead to a critique of the social formation invisible.

What is it that we do not see behind that magic door? What is on the other side of the image behind the backdrop of that gate? What we do not see is inside the factory, its bowels, its essence. This invisibilisation of work and the capitalist system’s alienation of labour—which is an irrefutable sign of imagomachy—is the premise underlying the reflection-centred nature of the essay-film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* expressed in the concept of the negation-image.

THE METHOD OF VARIATIONS AND THE THEMATIC REORGANISATION OF THE ARCHIVE

In *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik*, Harun Farocki returns to the problem of making the factory visible. This interest in the working world has been a constant in his oeuvre, exemplified in audiovisual productions like *Ein Bild* [An Image] (Harun Farocki, 1983), *Die Schulung* [Training] (Harun Farocki, 1987), the *Schnittstelle* [Interface] installation (Harun Farocki, 1995) and the project *Labour in a Single Shot*, created together with Antje Ehmman (Otxoteko, 2017; Blasco, 2015).

This return to the first movement-image in history prompted the German filmmaker to tackle the challenge to make a film about that one motif: leaving the factory. Farocki himself has described his fascination with the investigation of visual motifs as a driving force behind his work methodology: “I had the fantasy that a filmmaker would look at all the existing shots of factory doors in the history of cinema—or at least a representative selection of them—before going out to film that

motif the next day” (Farocki, 2013: 307). In *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik*, he implements this method, collecting as many motifs on the subject as he can and then using them to create variations that facilitate reflection. This method of variations refers to the twelve-tone serial technique in music that starts with base material that is then repeated in an altered way, i.e., changing the melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, etc. Back in the first half of the 20th century, Bertolt Brecht had already hinted at the problem and the method adopted by Farocki: regarding the problem, when he argued that “a photo of the Krupp factories doesn’t reveal very much about those institutions” (Zunzunegui, 2000: 81); and regarding the method, when he pointed to the need “to construct a meaningful artifact that would give a full account of what was really going on in the world you wanted to describe, from the use of music [...] to the use of parallel editing” (Zunzunegui, 2000: 81).

Farocki builds on these methodological foundations hinted at by Brecht and takes the base motif of the Lumières’ images (Figure 1) to create variations by editing with other footage of workers leaving factories: the workers at Siemens in Nazi Germany, at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, and in fiction films such as *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946), *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) or *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916). While putting all

Figure 1. The image-motif. *La Sortie de l’usine Lumière à Lyon* (Louis Lumière, 1895)





Figure 2. The capitalist variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)

this footage together, Farocki had the sensation that cinema had been exploring the same theme throughout its history: “Like a child repeating the first word that he learned to say for 100 years to immortalize the joy of being able to speak” (Farocki, 2013: 201). In this sense, Farocki seems to suggest that the history of cinema—just as Whitehead had said that the history of philosophy was a series of footnotes to Plato—is a series of little visual repetitions, reflections, and babbling about the same originary theme.

Within this system of variations on different ways of leaving the factory, where there is something that is repeated (the departure of the workers) and something that differs (the mode of said departure), the focus of this article is on three variations in particular: the capitalist variation, the Nazi variation, and the fiction variation:

The capitalist variation is characterised by the workers rushing to get home, where they literally run out after their shift (Figure 2). These images make visible the Marxist idea that time spent working is time wasted and a time of death: the idea that work alienates the worker, which is why at the end of the day workers race off to embrace their leisure time, which, being oriented towards consumption—the other side of production—is ultimately a simulation of living.



Figure 3. The Nazi variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)

In the Nazi variation, conversely, the workers do not run away. After work they continue with other controlled activities: “Berlin, 1934: workers and employees of Siemens workshops leave the company grounds in columns to join a Nazi demonstration” (Figure 3). Unlike the departure from the factory in the capitalist regime, there is no rushing off to enjoy free time; instead, we see bodies that are completely programmed, their almost military movements regulated. While in the capitalist variation life after work is under market control, in the Nazi variation social life is under military control.

Finally, in the fiction variation, in the case of *Metropolis*, we see the workers housed under the surface of the city so that those above can maintain their way of life. They are unquestionably alienated, walking in groups and exhibiting an almost inert order and regularity in their movements. The fiction variation shows images of alienated workers as a formless, subordinate mass descending underground to begin their shifts (Figure 4).

This arrangement of variations reveals a variety of thematic levels of reflection on the archive that underscores the shift from the ocularcentrist to the reflection-centred paradigm:

Ontological reflection on the archive. The archive is not a closed essence, nor is it attached

to a defined location. In Farocki's work, once the process of combining archive footage is completed, "the end result is accidental and only one among many" (Luelmo Jareño, 2018: 160). Hal Foster (2004) points out that Farocki's use of archive footage bears similarities to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of rhizome. If there are no defined essences in the rhizome, but multiplicities and changes (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004), then the archive is a rhizome: a multiplicity that enables heterogeneous interconnection with other archives. In this sense, the regulating principle of the ontological reflection on the archive would be that any archive can be connected to any other: the archive is not a representation, but a reflection in progress.

Epistemic reflection on the archive. The ontological reflection on the archive carries epistemic implications: the concatenation and synergy of the archives in relation to the motif of work reveals a theoretical form of filmmaking. Volker Pantenburg points out that Farocki's filmography is a form of epistemic reflection on the archive: "Farocki's films can be described as theory made in the cinematic medium, film theory in the literal sense" (Pantenburg, 2001: 20). Along the same lines, Fabiola Alcalá affirms that for Farocki "looking at the images of

the other again requires a process of analysis and appropriation that lays its foundations in the cinema of thought" (Alcalá, 2017: 63).

Historical reflection on the archive. The diverse nature of the archive footage used by Farocki—snippets of newsreels, fiction films, documentaries—is suggestive of a kind of refuse which, when reflected on, lays the foundations for the articulation of new stories. Following Walter Benjamin (2005), one of the German filmmaker's intellectual references, it could be argued that Farocki's work bears similarities to the work of the ragpicker, who collects diverse pieces of old, forgotten, and soiled material that is recontextualised, reconsidered, and reflected on to offer a different view of history: to make a flawed but productive interpretation of found footage.

Political reflection on the archive. Farocki reorganises archive footage from a political perspective through the use of critical editing with the aim of exposing and reflecting on injustices and violence in the world. For this reason, "archives do not offer an immediate reflection of the real, but rather, a form of writing mediated by syntax and ideology" (Didi-Huberman, 2007: 3). This reorganisation and political reflection on the syntax of the images reveals certain hidden elements in them that open a door to dissent against the dominant ideas inscribed in them. In our hyper-visual societies, the political artist must develop counter-visual strategies to make the politics of the invisible visible. For example, through relationships where "each image engages in a relationship with the others in a dialogic-critical sense aimed mainly at exposing the dynamics of power" (Montero, 2016a: 192).

Aesthetic reflection on the archive. The transformations of the archive involve a transcendence of the visual material through practices that are not only political but also aesthetic (Foster, 2004). This aesthetic sense of the re-

Figure 4. The fiction variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)



organisation of and reflection on the archive is associated with the aesthetic practice of collage: “Farocki focuses on this scene and creates from it a cinematographic collage of images taken from various sources [...] searching, selecting, and exhibiting various variants of the same theme, to propose a new reading” (Toranzo, 2018: 2).

Semantic reflection on the archive. These ontological, epistemic, historical, political, and aesthetic reflections on the archive allow the emergence of open readings of the image. Farocki’s films facilitate an open interpretation of the image while reinforcing the viewer’s reflection through a “reading between the lines” (Alter, 1996) and a “reading between the images” (Blümlinger 2007). This is similar to the “between method” of his mentor, Jean-Luc Godard (Deleuze, 1987), allowing the archive to reveal its off-centred and open nature to generate re-readings with multiple meanings.

Both the method of variations and the thematic reflections on the archive form the methodological foundation for the transformational rules that deconstruct, recompose, and reformulate the Lumières’ audiovisual base text. These will also serve as the basis for the conceptual definition of the negation-image offered in this study.

THE NEGATION-IMAGE AS THE INVISIBILISATION OF THE FACTORY, THE WORKER, AND THE COMMODITY

Any outline of the concept of the negation-image must necessarily begin with a consideration of the undeniably intimate, two-way relationship established between cinema and capitalism. The Fordist processes of the early twentieth century made possible a definitive industrial development that facilitated the evolution of film production, and cinema in turn became the hegemonic mechanism for the ideological transfer of the dominant values of capitalism. The Lumières’ film marks

the meeting of “two dimensions that have configured the modes of operation of industrial capitalism, namely, the Fordist factory as a sublimation of productive capitalism and the cinema as a key tool in the configuration of the hegemonic visuality established in relation to that same productive capitalism” (Montero, 2016b: 314).

It is in this context of the creation of the visual hegemony of cinematic capitalism—at the very heart of the birth of cinema in 1895—that Farocki would launch his film, like a counter-visual bomb, in commemoration of the centenary of cinema in 1995. This exercise in counter-visuality reveals a contradiction: “The first camera in the history of cinema focused on a factory, but after a hundred years it can be said that the factory as such has hardly attracted the cinema; on the contrary, the sensation it has produced has been one of rejection” (Farocki, 2013: 195). In fact, rather than rejection, there has been a profound silencing, a concealment, and an invisibilisation as extraordinary as it has been deliberate. It could almost be argued that, for the contemporary capitalist audiovisual world, the factory—like death—provokes not merely rejection, but almost repulsion. There is no desire to show either the oppressive space inside the factory or the controlled, domesticated, and dominated bodies of factory workers. What Farocki demonstrates in *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* is that cinema’s first image is a surface image: an image that hides and negates what happens inside, a reflection, a simulation, a cosmetic device. In this way, Farocki presents a counter-visual reflection with the aim of criticising the visual hegemonic practice of rendering the factory world invisible.

Farocki’s creative praxis bears a relation to Theodor W. Adorno’s negative dialectic. In a sense, the visible/invisible relationship that Farocki works with is “a difference that is experienced as something negative” (Adorno, 2017: 38), and that has nothing to do with the affirmative dialectic where the visible/invisible would be identified to establish

THE DIFFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INVISIBILITY OF FACTORY WORK AND THE VISIBILITY OF ITS SUPERFICIAL PRACTICE IS WHAT IS REFERRED TO HERE AS THE NEGATION-IMAGE

a whole. Its objective is to show the negative dialectic between the forms of the visible (the images of the workers leaving) with the forms of the invisible (capitalist exploitation). Farocki is concerned with showing what the camera does not show: “Never forget to show what the camera cannot film” (Farocki, 2013: 306). This “showing what is not shown” is an inevitably counter-visual and counter-hegemonic act, and therefore an act of resistance in the context of the political battle of images, or *imagomachy*. But at the same time, “the criticism of images through images” (Rodowick, 2015: 191) articulated by Farocki allows him to make the invisible visible through a reflection on this negation of the image, in a reflection-centred shift away from the dominant *ocularcentrism*. Thus, in the political context of *imagomachy*—the war of images between hegemony and counterhegemony—reflection-centredness—as a critical reflection of pre-existing images—becomes an emancipatory praxis.

This is the very definition of the negation-image: the reference to an image denied and concealed by the visual hegemony in the context of *imagomachy*, through a critical and counter-visual reflection on images that correlate to those that can be affirmed and made visible in the dominant visual system. Farocki makes this point clear: “Much good cinema owes its origin to the fact that a person could not show something and so they placed the reproduction of something else in its place, using the strategy of omission to trigger the imagination” (Farocki, 2013: 108). Because he could not obtain images of the exploitation of workers under capitalist conditions of produc-

tion, he underscored this invisibility and negation through images that are the very accomplices of the invisibility. The differential relationship between the invisibility of factory work and the visibility of its superficial practice is what is referred to here as the negation-image, which is the result of the reflection-centred, counter-visual praxis in the context of *imagomachy*.

In this sense, the negation-image is the reflection of the archival footage that is already pre-signified by the ideology (of capitalism, Nazism or fiction) to subvert the classical system of *ocularcentric* representation. The roots of the negation-image can be found in the deconstructive practices of collage and ready-mades that question representation itself and that serve as a foundation for the essay film. In this way, Farocki embraces the shift from the system of representation to the system of reflection on representation. As Philip Lopate (2007) reminds us, one of the essential features of the essay film is precisely this reflection on representation. The negation-image, which is in essence essay-filmic, is thus the reflective unveiling of what is concealed behind the images: the mechanisms of social production that program and encode those images, the official histories and the hegemonic devices, the aesthetic clichés and stereotypes, and capitalist moral values. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* eschews the strategies of concealment of the visual hegemony to show a different story, to tease out the reality and shed light on areas obscured by commercial interests. The exercise of the negation-image involves the exploration of the absent images in order to create other images: to strip bare what is hidden behind the image (Ardila, 2019), to point to the other side of the images (Montero, 2016a), and to recognise the invisible inside the visible (Elsaesser, 2004).

In this way, the negation-image prompts us to question not only why the factory and its Fordist regulations are concealed, but also why the corporeal dimension of the worker and the commodity is rendered invisible.

What happens inside the factories? From a Marxist perspective, it can be described as the site of consolidation of capitalist relations of production: the factory is the space of regulation of the bodies and movements of the workers in the interests of creating surplus value for the owner. This is why the capitalist visual hegemony does not make it visible. Similarly, from a Foucauldian perspective, it could be argued that a factory is no different from a prison. Michel Foucault suggests that from the 16th to the 19th century there was a series of procedures in place to control and shape individuals into docile subjects: “The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary; if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work [...]. The body, according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions” (Foucault, 2012: 11). Undoubtedly, these same devices of confinement used in the prison—the obligations, privations, constraints, controls, and prohibitions—are repeated correlatively in the space of the factory.

Why is the body of the worker not shown? The main reason is that the exploiter does not want to show the exploitation of the exploited. Farocki himself points out that what is shown in cinema is not direct oppression, but symbols on the body: “The determination with which workers carry out their movements has a symbolic character” (Farocki, 2013: 202). In this way, Farocki assumes the Marxist critique that what is made visible—the worker’s alienated movements—are the symbolic results of the invisible—the social formation of capitalism. For Marx, the human being is his practical action, his own action projected onto the commodities that he produces and that are appropriated from him by the owner of the means of production, thus triggering alienation (Marx, 1984: 26). And this alienation is precisely what renders the dominant visual order of capitalism invisible.

Why is it that what is produced is not shown?

According to Farocki, the commodities themselves created under capitalist conditions of production have the capacity to destroy the world. He thus adopts a paradoxical logic based on the oxymoron “produce to unproduce/destroy”. As early as *Nicht lösches Feuer* (Harun Farocki, 1969), the German filmmaker was extremely interested in the link between productive and destructive forces. In these images of workers leaving factories, we do not see what is produced. For example, we do not see the relationship between the workers and the weapons that they may be producing in the factory: “The military historian Martin van Creveld, who is not a Marxist, considers that the forms of production and organisation of a society correspond to its weapons and its weapon systems. Alvin Foffler, who is neither a Marxist nor a Foucauldian, explains that the maximalist productivity of industry has its destructive correspondence in the atomic bomb” (Farocki, 2013: 113). For Farocki, the goods produced are not visible because they may be destructive.

Why is the place where the workers go after the factory not shown? On this point, it should be noted that *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* is not only a compilation documentary but also a museum installation. This installation led the artist and thinker Hito Steyerl to answer this question. The workers are going “to the artistic space, where the work is installed. Farocki’s work is not only, at the level of content, a wonderful archaeology of the (non-)representation of labour; at the level of form, he points to how the factory overflows into the artistic space. The workers leaving the factory have ended up in another one” (Steyerl, 2014: 68-69). The layout of the work in the museum clearly closes the circle of the critique of the invisibilisation of the factory, not only because the museum and the factory are two spaces where

the prohibition against filming is a constant, but above all because the museum has become the privileged space for the projection of the counter-hegemonic visualities of political cinema. Paradoxically, political cinema never approaches the real battlefield: the factory itself. Counter-hegemonic politics only comes to life as an aesthetic device, as a deactivated mask in the museum space.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have sought to demonstrate the significance of the film *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* for analysing both the contemporary political-visual struggle—the imagomachy between the dominant visuality and the various counter-visualities—and the epistemic shift from the ocularcentric to the reflection-centred paradigm. It is a reflection on hegemonic images through critical editing and a questioning voice that exposes the processes employed to render the factory invisible. This reorganisation of the dominant visualities involves a new perspective that is non-neutral, radical, and subversive, that takes possession of the view, fights for the right to see and creates counter-visuals. This right is questioned by the practice of rendering the factory invisible through the visual control devices of the dominant social formation—essentially, the cinema and the museum.

The capitalist hegemonic visuality's practice of invisibilisation, perpetrated both by capitalist cinema—which renders the factory space, the body of the workers, and the commodities invisible—and of the capitalist museum—which is a machine that renders its visibilities invisible—bears a relation to other devices of invisibilisation. Among these is the invisibilisation of religion (through the invisibility of God), the invisibilisation of sex (through the invisibility of the obscene), and the invisibilisation of death (through the invisibility of its victims). An interesting line of research for

future studies would be to explore whether capitalism—through the invisibilisations of cinema, the museum, religion, sex, and death—imposes a totalitarian scopic regime. This could constitute a new field of research on invisibility where capitalism (the invisibilisation of the factory), religion (the invisibilisation of God), and morality (the invisibilisation of sex) effectively constitutes an invisible eye. ■

REFERENCES

- Abril, G. (2012). Tres dimensiones del texto y de la cultura visual. *IC Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 9, 15-35.
- Adorno, T. W. (2017). *Dialéctica negativa*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal.
- Alcalá, F. (2017). La representación de la vida obrera en las imágenes de Harun Farocki. Una propuesta de contravisualización. *El ojo que piensa. Revista de cine iberoamericano*, 14, 61-69.
- Alter, N. (1996). The Political Im/perceptible in the Essay Film: Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of War. *New German Critique*, 68, 165-192.
- Althusser, L. (1975). *Escritos*. Barcelona: Laia.
- Ardila, O. (2019). Desnudar la imagen, la búsqueda cinematográfica de Harun Farocki. *Revista Universidad de Antioquia*, 336, 70-75.
- Aumont, J. (1997). *El ojo interminable: cine y pintura*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Bazin, A. (1967). *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Benjamin, W. (2005). *Libro de los pasajes*. Madrid: Akal.
- Blasco, S. (2015). Investigación artística y reverberación. A propósito de "Labour in a single shot", un proyecto de Harun Farocki y Antje Ehmann. In *Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Investigación de Artes Visuales* (pp. 32-36). Valencia: Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València.
- Blümlinger, C. (2007). Leer entre las imágenes. In A. Weinrichter (ed.), *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo* (pp. 50-63). Pamplona: Departamento de Cultura y Turismo-Institución Príncipe de Viana.

- Bouhaben, M. A. (2017). Pensar, crear, resistir. Las rupturas del Cine Latinoamericano y sus relecturas contemporáneas. *Fuera de campo*, 3, 11-23.
- Bouhaben, M. A., Polo, J. (2020). Imagocracia e imago-maquia. Una reflexión crítica sobre las relaciones entre comunicación audiovisual y cultura popular en América Latina. *Las Torres de Lucca*, 17, 265-292.
- Brea, J. L. (2010). *Las tres eras de la imagen*. Madrid: Akal.
- Comolli, J.-L. (2010). *Cine contra espectáculo. Seguido de Técnica e ideología*. Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- Deleuze, G. (1987). *La imagen-tiempo*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. (2004). *Mil mesetas*. Valencia: Pre-textos.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2007). *El archivo arde*. Retrieved from <https://filologiaunlp.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/el-archivo-arde1.pdf>
- Elsaesser, T. (2004). *Harun Farocki: Working on the sight-lines*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Farocki, H. (2013). *Desconfiar de las imágenes*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra Editora.
- Foster, H. (2004). The Cinema of Harun Farocki. *Artforum International*, 43(3), 156-161.
- Foucault, M. (2012). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.
- Gubern, R. (2014). *Historia del cine*. Madrid: Anagrama.
- Jay, M. (2007). *Ojos abatidos*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal.
- Lopate, P. (2007). A la búsqueda del centauro: el cine-ensayo. In A. Weinrichter (ed.), *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo* (pp. 66-91). Pamplona: Departamento de Cultura y Turismo-Institución Príncipe de Viana.
- Luelmo Jareño, J. M. (2018). Salidas de fábrica. Lecturas de una metáfora fílmica. *L'Atalante: revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 26, 157-168.
- Marx, K. (1984). *Manuscritos*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Mirzoeff, N. (2016). El derecho a mirar. *IC Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 13, 29-65.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (2002). Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1(2), 165-181.
- Montero, D. (2016a). Commenting upon images with images. Dialogic-visual critique in the films of Harun Farocki. *L'Atalante: revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 21, 191-201.
- Montero, D. (2016b). Imágenes, trabajo y capitalismo. Sobre *Trabajadores saliendo de la fábrica* (Harun Farocki, 1995). *Hermes. Journal of Communication*, 8, 311-324.
- Otxoteko, M. (2017). Harun Farocki. In *Comparison*, sobre el trabajo y su significado. *Artnodes: revista de arte, ciencia y tecnología*, 20, 132-141.
- Pantenburg, V. (2001). Visibilities. Harun Farocki between Image and Text. In H. Farocki (ed.) *Imprint: Writings* (p. 28). New York: Lukas & Sternberg.
- Rodowick, D.N. (2015). Eye Machines: the Art of Harun Farocki. *Artforum International*, 53(6), 190-97.
- Steyerl, H. (2014). *Los condenados de la pantalla*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra.
- Toranzo, M. E. (2018). La problemática del archivo y las representaciones históricas en *Trabajadores saliendo de la fábrica* de Harun Farocki. In *Memorias de las X Jornadas de Sociología*. La Plata: Universidad Nacional de La Plata.
- Tosi, V. (1993). *El cine antes de Lumière*. México D.F.: Dirección General de Actividades Cinematográficas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Zunzunegui, S. (2000). Queridísimos verdugos. Memoria de tanto dolor. *Nosferatu. Revista de cine*, 32, 80-83.

THE WORK OF THE INVISIBLE, THE INVISIBILISATION OF WORK: THE NEGATION-IMAGE IN HARUN FAROCKI'S FILMOGRAPHY

Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyse the phenomenon of the invisibilisation of factory work through the film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (Farocki, 1995). To this end, it examines the operations of what is referred to here as the negation-image, which determines the complex differential relationship between what we see and what we do not see in the factory images used by the German filmmaker, in the context of *imagomachy*—the political battle between images—and reflection-centredness—the epistemic battle between visual paradigms. The concept of the negation-image is explained here in three dimensions. The first involves the analysis of an essential structural feature of the first film in the history of cinema, *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Louis Lumière, 1895); namely, that in every image there is something we see (in this case, the mirror image of cinema) and something we do not (the factory under capitalist conditions of production). The second dimension is the analysis of Farocki's strategies for conceiving of this film based on the method of variations and the practices of reorganisation of the archives into categories. Finally, the third dimension defines the concept of the negation-image as a reflection on the political-epistemic nexus between the visible and the invisible.

Key words

Film-essay; Archive; Factory Work; Invisibility; Image-Negation; Harun Farocki.

Author

Miguel Alfonso Bouhaben holds a PhD in Audiovisual Communication from UCM. He teaches Audiovisual Research at Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral-ESPOL (Guayaquil, Ecuador), and is editor of the scientific journal *Nawi: arte diseño comunicación*. He is also the Principal Investigator (PI) on the research project *Estéticas subalternas y activismos contrahegemónicos*. He has published more than 40 research articles in indexed scientific journals, and is also a curator and documentary filmmaker. Contact: mabouhaben@gmail.com.

Article reference

Bouhaben, M. A. (2021). The work of the invisible, the invisibilisation of work: The negation-image in Harun Farocki's filmography. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 32, 151-162.

EL TRABAJO DE LO INVISIBLE, LA INVISIBILIZACIÓN DEL TRABAJO. LA IMAGEN-NEGACIÓN EN EL CINE DE HARUN FAROCKI

Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación es evaluar la problemática de la invisibilización del trabajo fabril a través del film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Los trabajadores salen de la fábrica] (Harun Farocki, 1995). Para ello, develaremos cómo funciona lo que hemos denominado imagen-negación, que determina la compleja relación diferencial entre lo que vemos y lo que no vemos en las imágenes fabriles con las que trabaja el cineasta alemán, dentro del contexto de la *imagomachia* —lucha política de las imágenes— y del reflexiocentrismo —lucha epistémica de los paradigmas visuales. Para dar cuenta del concepto de imagen-negación, vamos a trazar tres ejes. En el primer eje, se analiza una característica estructural esencial en el primer film de la Historia del cine, *La salida de la fábrica* (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon, Louis Lumière, 1895), a saber, que en toda imagen hay algo que vemos —en este caso la imagen especular del cine— y algo que no vemos —la fábrica en condiciones capitalistas de producción—. En el segundo eje, se analizan las estrategias de Farocki para pensar dicho film según el método de variaciones y las prácticas de reorganización disciplinar de los archivos. Por último, en el tercer eje, se define el concepto de la imagen-negación como reflexión del nexo político-epistémico entre lo visible y lo invisible.

Palabras clave

Cine-ensayo; Archivo; Trabajo fabril; Invisibilidad; Imagen-negación; Harun Farocki.

Autor

Miguel Alfonso Bouhaben (Madrid, 1974). Doctor en Comunicación Audiovisual (UCM). Docente en *Investigación Audiovisual* (Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral-ESPOL, Guayaquil, Ecuador). Director de la revista científica *Nawi: arte diseño comunicación*. Investigador principal (IP) del proyecto de investigación *Estéticas subalternas y activismos contrahegemónicos*. Ha publicado más de 40 artículos de investigación en revistas científicas indexadas. Es comisario y documentalista. Contacto: mabouhaben@gmail.com.

Referencia de este artículo

Bouhaben, M. A. (2021). El trabajo de lo invisible, la invisibilización del trabajo. La imagen-negación en el cine de Harun Farocki. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 32, 151-162.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com