

Kent Academic Repository

Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Guerin, Frances (2012) Dislocations: videograms of a revolution and the search for images.

In: Ginsberg, Terri and Mensch, Andrea, eds. A Companion to German Cinema. CNCZ - The Wiley-Blackwell Companions to National Cinemas . Wiley-Blackwell, New York, pp. 483-506. ISBN 9781405194365.

DOI

Link to record in KAR

<http://kar.kent.ac.uk/1211/>

Document Version

UNSPECIFIED

Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

Dislocations

Videograms of a Revolution *and the Search for Images*

Frances Guerin

Over 40 years, Harun Farocki has produced a body of work – films, new media installations and writings – that probes every level of the status, production, distribution, redistribution, storing, and perception of images. On every level, and from every perspective, the images that comprise Farocki's oeuvre interrogate the multifarious meanings, the realities and ambiguities, uses and misuses of images in the public sphere. He is particularly committed to the exposure of images that are used by the mass media, governments, and institutions set up in their name, science and industry, to perpetuate political, economic, and institutional power. Invariably, he approaches these discourses on the image via exposure, analysis, and usually a critique of its deployment to fuel the machinery of industry, consumer culture, and war. And always, the third party in the destruction that goes hand in hand with the production of such images is the camera of Harun Farocki, the imagemaker. Ultimately, the task of Farocki's films is didactic: his films are conceived and produced for an audience open to learning how see and understand images. They are, so to speak, a form of training the viewer's eye and mind in the lifecycles of images.

The reach of Farocki's work is extensive: he creates, re-presents, dissects, and reflects on myriad images, no matter their form, that clog the visual environment. In over 90 films, Farocki turns the attention of his camera to subjects as apparently diverse as, for example, seventeenth-century Flemish painting (*Stilleben/Still Life*, 1997), images generated in institutions such as prisons (*Gefängnisbilder/Prison Images*, 2000),¹ the phenomenon of the shopping mall (*Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten/The Creators of the Shopping Worlds*, 2001), and, perhaps most disturbingly, the role of the image in military strategies designed to map and destroy "enemy targets," the image as a weapon of wars that bleed uncontrollably into the spaces and events of everyday life (*Erkennen und Verfolgen/War at a Distance*, 2003). Thus,

A Companion to German Cinema, First Edition. Edited by Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch.
© 2012 Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Published 2012 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

in *Prison Images* Farocki's camera is placed in the perspective of the all-seeing eye of the panopticon, and in *The Creators of the Shopping Worlds* the camera follows the way that our behavior in the mall is researched, planned in advance, and ultimately controlled through surveillance videos, body scans, computer generated projections. In films such as *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges/Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988) and *War at a Distance* – perhaps Farocki's best known films – he exposes, for example, how the development of image technologies in wartime such as the video head of a smart bomb in 1953 accelerates the development of televisual technologies in everyday life. The two spheres are thus intimately connected. Whether his camera is interrogating the inextricability of industry, the machinery of war, and the television image (*Zwischen zwei Kriegen/Between Two Wars*, 1978), between the production of Napalm B, the exploitation of human labor, and documentary filmmaking (*Nicht Lösbares Feuer/Inextinguishable Fire*, 1969),² or between the “opinion industry” – porn magazines, advertising, and so on – and fiction filmmaking, it leaves no doubt of its own complicity in the corrosion of human freedom and democracy in the age of industrial capitalism. Despite the diversity of topics and the media in which they are represented, Farocki's films are, at heart, always about training the viewer in how images are produced, appropriated, mobilized by those in power to perpetuate their ideological and political agendas.

Simultaneously, alongside an overwhelming analysis of the contemporary use of images, Farocki's images embrace a belief in, and an interrogation of the revolutionary potential of images. Even as the image – of surveillance for example – entraps and debilitates, it sets the conditions of escape and possibility, it points to that which is outside its frame. Similarly, the image as instrument of measurement, calculation and automation embraces the possibility of indeterminacy, the tendency toward deviation and the potential to function as the ground of political and ideological protestation and contestation. And, while Farocki has made very clear, particularly through drawing attention to their industrial status and their function as visual mediation, even if his own films are complicit in the violence of twentieth-century industry and culture, he holds onto the last shred of belief that they still have the power to educate and effect change. In an obvious example, a film such as *Inextinguishable Fire* evidences the incineration of napalm on its innocent, unsuspecting victims, and traces the chemical back to the factories and workers responsible for its production, Dow Chemical in Michigan. With our eyes open to the film image as pivot in the process of witnessing such violence, Farocki leaves the viewer in no doubt of his teaching: “When napalm is burning, it is too late to extinguish it. You have to fight napalm where it is produced: in the factories.”³

In the film's exposition sequence, Farocki reads the testimony of a Vietnamese victim of napalm burns. Because “you” (the viewer) will “close your eyes” if the film shows the burns of the young man, Farocki demonstrates the violence of napalm through an ersatz violence. He extinguishes a burning cigarette on his bare arm, announcing that a cigarette burns at 400 degrees while napalm burns at 3000

degrees. In this moment, Farocki in the frame, reading, is the image he made, performing an act of self-immolation to evoke (as opposed to representing) the destruction of napalm. This *mise-en-abîme* simultaneously educates the viewer in the destruction of napalm, and self-reflexively destroys Farocki's authority in an act of self-maiming. This oft-cited example is also the moment of *Inextinguishable Fire's* regard for the potential change enabled through images. As we watch it, we recognize the relevance and effect of napalm in our lives, removed in time and place from the Vietnam War as we may be. When we cringe at Farocki's self-harm, so napalm is metonymically brought into our living rooms.

This moment of tension between the image as it is created in words of the burning of Vietnam villages and their people and the literal image of Farocki burning his arm are held together in what Elsaesser (2004a: 30) refers to as the dialectical nature of this filmmaking process. Public historical and private images are placed side by side, editorially manipulated, and as viewers we are able to "see" the consequences. Often in Farocki's films these juxtapositions, the so-called dialectic, comprise images from two different time-spaces: Vietnam in wartime, and the West at a supposedly peaceful historical juncture. Although he rarely uses the word, Elsaesser (2004a: 30) theorizes Farocki's practice as a dialectical process of image production that "brings to the fore a third definition of the two-image idea." If we accept this as Farocki's primary technique of editing, then it is in the conceptual spaces between the ersatz or juxtaposed images that the potential for revolution in images and inspired by images is located. To iterate, Farocki's is not a dialectic in the sense that it was conceived by the Soviet post-Revolutionary filmmakers. It is a dialectic of juxtaposition marked by a substitution that enables the contemporary Western viewer's recognition of how documentary images from an apparently distant time-space indeed contain urgent relevance to contemporary existence.

In the 1992 film *Videogramme einer Revolution/Videograms of a Revolution*, a film that documents the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in Bucharest in 1989, this powerful double-entendre of image production and reception is at its most salient. Together with Andrej Ujica, Farocki makes a film that interrogates the use and misuse of images: images that both *enable* the momentous events in Romania and *distract* from the authenticity of their representation. That is, the various images in Farocki and Ujica's film stage an event like any other that defines the revolution, and simultaneously, they are a representation of the same revolution. Moreover, *Videograms of a Revolution* is made entirely of archival footage: footage filmed by the Romanian state television and the many amateur imagemakers who saw events from their own unique perspective, from rooftops, street level, around corners, from car windows, and so on. Together with Ujica, Farocki the filmmaker is here an editor of images; thus he creates meaning through assemblage rather than producing images, just as he did in his earlier films such as *Inextinguishable Fire*. Even when the images are filmed by Farocki, it is nevertheless, in the editing of these and other images that the viewer becomes educated (and agitated) in reading images. Through compilation, various layers of images – the production and airing

of television images, the recording of the revolution, the unearthing of these images from the archive, and their re-presentation in 1992 – come together in *Videograms of a Revolution* to create a trajectory that witnesses the repression, production, and destruction of political democracy, and social liberation. In Farocki's film, all of these phases of the revolution are in some way created by images. In this way, *Videograms of a Revolution* represents the realization of the radical aspiration of the image sought by documentary filmmakers throughout the twentieth century. The film finds images that are able to provide a framework for the possibility of social revolution. Only, it finds these image where we least expect them—in the real world outside of the frame of the moving image, that is, in this case, in the various modes of distribution, exhibition, and appropriation of images. Once again, it is not the single image itself that is bound to effect political and ideological change, but power resides in the way the image is deployed, manipulated, and received. And these aspects of the image are enabled through the juxtaposition of different perspectives, different kinds of images, and then, in the life lived by the image. To be sure, Farocki's process of image production is innovative, and it always gives over to the radicality of an image that educates and elucidates.

These discourses that point to the moment outside the production of the single image come closest to what Nora Alter (Elsaesser, 2004a) has called the "Im/perceptible" of Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*. Alter is interested in Farocki's instantiation of a moment of "im/perceptibility" through the use of images that simultaneously reveal and conceal their political critique. In *Videograms of a Revolution*, however, I am more interested in the agitational and educative potential of what is beyond the moving images that we watch, both the film itself and the fragments Farocki brings together into the film as a whole. The outside, or the moment of dislocation/revolution that I identify in *Videograms of a Revolution* is not found or linked to the image aesthetic, even what the image represents. Rather, it is in that image which is not shown, in that phase of the image's life that we do not physically perceive. And, if Farocki's aspirations seem idealist, even Romantic in their determination to revolutionize, we must remember that the said Romanticism is always negated or compromised by Farocki's critique of own intervention as a filmmaker from the West.

There is one more level of Farocki's filmmaking for which *Videograms of a Revolution* must be held up as an example. Farocki is devoted to rescuing, preserving, and archiving images as a way of articulating and understanding phenomena such as identity, culture, and the dissemination of knowledge. According to Farocki (2004: 264), film, as a modern techne, is one of the most effective forms of archiving and preserving images. In addition, the narrative is an aesthetic site at which to locate or situate the image. To this end, again and again, he prefers to reuse archival and found images, weaving them into film narratives that, as a result, become more than image repositories. Thus, for example, in a film such as *Der Ausdruck der Hände* (*The Expression of Hands*) (1997), Farocki redeploys fragments of classical film narratives in which the hand in close up communicates through expression.

Farocki's film not only reflects on filmic representations of the hand and their history, but it segues into an exploration of the proliferation of uses of the hand in the economy of Western capitalism: as a conduit, a tool, a visual abbreviation. Once again, it is not at the literal level of representation that Farocki's films create meaning. While *Videograms of a Revolution* may seem distant from *The Expression of Hands*, the films are partners in their use of found footage to decipher and interpret both individual film fragments as well as the role of the fragment in larger narratives, here, the Romanian revolution and its retelling. In addition, this insistence on meaning as it is found in the space between, around and outside of the image remains consistent across these otherwise distant films. In both instances, this is achieved through Farocki's preferred method of linking by juxtaposing and substituting one image for another.⁴

Of course, Farocki's method of editing, his film aesthetic which has been characterized in a number of different ways, also reflects his relationship to the filmmaking practices that come before his, and those that were conceived in his environs. Most significantly, within the New German cinema, the work of Alexander Kluge can be seen as ancestor to Farocki. Like Kluge, Farocki no longer believes in the cause and effect relationship of the image to the revolution. However, while Kluge politicized his audience by critiquing the image that persuades and "interpolates," thus making viewers reflect on how their opinions are formed in the first place, Farocki's film witnesses images that overthrow a government. Similarly, for Kluge, for those filmmakers and theorists in his midst, as well as for those who precede him, the political radicality of filmmaking lies in the production of a radical aesthetic. Farocki, however, locates, or dislocates, the radicality to a time-space outside of the image, but still within its force-field.

Videograms of a Revolution further demonstrates the multilayers of Farocki's work. In this film, he openly juxtaposes the formal concern of recycling with the theoretical impetus to politicize the image: every gesture of preservation is simultaneously a gesture of mediation and, subsequently, questioning the status of what is pictured. Another extremely articulate example of this complex form of image preservation and subsequent creativity can be found in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*; particularly with reference to the wartime aerial reconnaissance image and the Nazis' visual documentation of their appalling crimes. The victim is pictured thus, documented, objectified thus trapped by the gaze of the camera and its operator, and ultimately, marked for destruction. The now familiar image of a beautiful young Jewish woman confronting the camera as she motions toward it on the platform at Auschwitz is exemplary of this conundrum of the image as it is archived, made into sense data, and seen through the viewfinder of destruction. Farocki himself discusses *Images of the World* on the voiceover and explains the woman's look as like that she would assume on a boulevard. While the woman's look puts her on a "platform," "the camp, run by the SS, is meant to destroy her and the photographer who captures her beauty for posterity is part of that same SS" (Elsaesser, 2004a: 199). Thus, the photograph, the photographer

who takes it, and Farocki who reuses it, together work to memorialize (her image is forever recorded), incarcerate and destroy the woman at Auschwitz. And this complex process of documentation all the way through asking the viewer to rethink relevance of Nazi manipulation and violence via the image is enabled through the juxtaposition of different perspectives, different discourses that create meaning outside of this image.

Thus, to reiterate, I am arguing that meaning is dislocated to the world outside of the image, enabled through Farocki's particular forms of montage, a dislocation that is the focus of the construction of the image. To achieve its multiple ends in *Videograms of a Revolution*, Farocki and Ujica reuse the wide range of images that documented (or tried to document) the revolution: official and unofficial State television, amateur film, home video, in short, whatever was available. Farocki has always worked in a number of media, a choice and decision that in interview he says has often been motivated by material conditions (Farocki, 2004). He insists that his choices of film, video, television, and more recently, digital images have been determined by conditions beyond the aesthetic: availability, the demands of a given commission, the specificity of the audience and the context that awaits his work. This said, as is so often the case with Farocki's words and images, there is a caveat to this deflection of focus away from the media specificity of a moving image. As Hal Foster (2004: 193) observes, and as so much of Farocki's work attests, however variant the "instruments of seeing and imaging ... he is all but obsessed with the role, indeed the fate of cinema." It must be acknowledged this "obsession" was more prevalent in Farocki's work of the twentieth- than the twenty-first century, and, for its time, *Videograms of a Revolution* is both typical of and a departure from this obsession. It is, on the one hand, a film that is first and foremost about the capacity of the cinema, or moving images, in their many forms to bring life to a revolution. It is no accident that Farocki makes a film in a historical moment when reality is starting to be realized – sometimes literally – through digital production and reproduction or moving images. And yet, the imbrication of images and history in Romania is still firmly grounded in indexical inscriptions of the analog image. This paradoxical, perhaps anachronistic moment in the history of images provides the perfect opportunity for Farocki to "obsess" on the trajectory of cinematic images. On the other hand, the film is also, by necessity, about the life of the image beyond its aesthetic. Perhaps because of the prevalence of historical determining factors in Romania 1989, in keeping with the contingency of the image form and aesthetic, *Videograms of a Revolution* stumbles upon the realization that, while the aesthetic is important to the political efficacy of a radical image, it is the way that images are used and the contexts in which they are put that determine their place in history.⁵

Videograms of a Revolution quickly moves beyond the immediacy of its surface representations. The film's focus on the Romanian revolution and its representation provides access to bigger concerns. For example, it negotiates how images function and are mobilized to "deceive" or "distract" us from the truth, how

historical events are represented usually in the popular press or through mass media. In a familiar Farocki strategy, the film also reflects on the way that history is written and visualized in the spaces that open up through the repetition and duplication of images. In *Videograms of a Revolution* and other of Farocki's films, this concern with repetition and the creative possibilities of proliferation is enabled through the recycling of images, through the revisualizations from another time and in another place. And to reiterate, it is at times through a process of juxtaposition and substitution that the viewer recognizes what the film does not show: her responsibility for what the image does show. For *Videograms of a Revolution*, these issues are secreted in the gaps created by the cut and subsequent montage of recycled film fragments. The gap, or missing link, what lies between film fragments, for Farocki, the successive recyclings, then and now, here and there, creates the spaces in which we the viewers are left to know and to see for ourselves. In this sense Farocki's films are an extension of the concerns of New German Cinema and particularly the work of Kluge: it is our vision or, our relationship to, and our reception of the image that is always at stake in this and other of Farocki's works.

The processes of recycling and revisualization are marshaled as a potent instance of Farocki's dependence on and simultaneous critique of the mass media. While it is standard practice for political documentary to re-present media images as the basis on which to vilify them, *Videograms of a Revolution* adds another layer of complexity.⁶ The film itself embraces these strategies for its formal definition: it is put together through infinite reproduction and instantaneous communication of moving image mimesis, the *sine qua non* of global television. Subsequently, as I illustrate, the film deftly reorients these strategies to effect a searing critique of the particular strategies of ideological persuasion endemic to the mass media in both the socialist and capitalist worlds. *Videograms of a Revolution* not only goes a step further than Farocki's other films, it also expands the vocabulary of the political documentary when it replicates the very formal concerns of the media it confronts. Ultimately, all this is in the name of questioning and reorganizing the way we are conditioned to "see" – to perceive, to understand, to know the world through images – and in turn, this confrontation and reorientation of our vision forms the basis of a new political relationship to the world.

The Struggle of Images, The Struggle for Images

In a sequence close to the beginning of *Videograms of a Revolution*, we are taken to Victory Square for the live telecast of Nicolae Ceaușescu. He delivers his final speech to his people in what the voiceover tells us is an attempt to assert his endangered power at what would become the end of his 25 years of dictatorship. Very quickly, the centered, three-quarter shot of Ceaușescu on the balcony of the

Central Committee Headquarters begins to shake, the image is interrupted by the loss of tracking, and the television goes off the air. Elisabeth Neiman's voiceover in English (the English translation of the original male German voiceover) assures us that recording of the events continues in the station's mobile recording van. Her voice appears to belong to Farocki's film rather than to the culled footage. We believe the discrepancy she points up between what is being recorded and what is being televised. Her voiceover is given a certain authority when visual evidence accompanies it: red to represent the blank Televizua Romana image is inserted in the bottom left-hand corner of the image of the film we watch. The grand façade of the Central Committee fills the remainder of the screen. And when this background too loses clarity and becomes filled with the sky, the female narrator explains that the cameraman had received instructions to pan to the sky if anything unexpected occurred. And so we discover that the supposedly uninterrupted image of the events is itself a fabrication no less authentic than the balanced, three-quarter shots of the official broadcast. However immediate these shaky frames may appear, we are still seeing a highly constructed image. Similarly, at this early stage in the *Videograms of a Revolution* we still believe in the omniscience of its images.

When the television image is restored, the inset in the bottom left-hand corner replicates the full-sized image that fills the remainder of the screen. Gone is the red of the blank insert. Nevertheless, the confusion continues because Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu appear not to realize that they are once again on air. The dictator's incessant cries for calm, and his tapping on the microphone continue as though in an appeal for the technology to be restored. At one moment, he even tells his wife to shut up. Despite these chattering pleas for quiet, the voiceover tells us that the sound is still off the air. What then are we hearing? Are these sounds that were nevertheless not broadcast to viewers in Romania at the time? Or has the sound in fact been restored? Perhaps the voiceover is confused? Or it might even be that the sounds are pre-recorded and belong only to the diegesis of Farocki and Ujica's film. The authority of the film begins to erode. Before *Videograms of a Revolution* answers these questions, sound and image are restored, we hear Ceaușescu and simultaneously see him in long-shot on the balcony as he vocally reinforces the independence and strength of the Romanian people.

However, the scene does not end there, because *Videograms of a Revolution* then sets out to discover the beginning of the disturbance. The same footage is replayed, and with the guidance of the woman's voiceover we watch carefully to see if we can detect the cause of the interruption. Our faith in her knowledge is thus restored when we watch the film appear to distance itself from the images it re-presents through a series of replayed fragments. However, nothing reveals itself. Undeterred, *Videograms of a Revolution* looks for yet another perspective: images from the weekly newsreel were able to record the disruption from a different perspective, so the female voiceover tells us. We see the rally from high above the sky, we look down at acute angles at crowds of people, like the vibrant palette of an impressionist

painter, the mass of people take on the effect of a swarm of heads that color the length of the archival footage. We are given a bird's eye view of the balcony on which Ceaușescu speaks. But still, these images cannot find what caused the disturbance. These are images without insight. *Videograms of a Revolution* leaves the footage running to reveal that the events we have just seen are in fact taking place on a television screen in a living room belonging to what the voiceover tells us is the apartment of an amateur cameraman. Not to be defeated, and still at a loss for an explanation of the unusual events, the amateur camera finds its way to the window and looks down at the street below to continue the search. Again, it sees crowds in long-shot, an image that represents the overwhelming commitment to revolution. Still, neither the amateur cameraman nor *Videograms of a Revolution* can find images to explain the interruption to events at Victory Square or their representation. We are left frustrated by the capacity of the image to objectively and coherently document the revolution.

This early sequence from *Videograms of a Revolution* conveniently lays out the film's four central concerns, concerns which act as a filter through which the broader discourses about the image and its imbrication in history unfold. First, we are introduced to the Romanian revolution as a revolution played out as a struggle for images: the dictatorship begins to topple as its image is interrupted, its performance rendered vulnerable. Later in the film, we will see the Romanian revolutionaries triumph when they occupy the national television station and "own" its broadcasts. By seizing control of the production and exhibition of the television image in Bucharest, the revolutionaries assume the power to govern. However, at this early stage in the film, there is no question that Ceaușescu's position on the balcony of the Central Committee is directly dependent on his control and manipulation of the image that represents him. Even its failures are orchestrated.

Second, here we learn that *Videograms of a Revolution* finds a new way for images to see this revolution, thus to gain new insight into its unfolding. Farocki's and Ujica's film, which is often indistinguishable from those of the "revolutionaries," bystanders, and other imagemakers who have filmed the footage in the first place, sees the different layers of social unrest through the uncertainty of a slowly unfolding, repetitive, sometimes confusing narration that ultimately reveals the same qualities in the events themselves – confusion and repetition. Thus, the films' uneven visual aesthetic is inseparable from those that comprise it: raw, out of focus, handheld, grainy, often interrupted by technical glitches, unable to locate the truth. The multiplicity of perspectives, the harshness of the image, the uncertainty of what it sees and hears are qualities we have come to associate with the truth available to a documentary camera. These are the techniques of the 1960s and 1970s, of direct cinema and cinema vérité, techniques that propose to guarantee the authenticity of the image (Winston, 1988: 517–529). Like these documentary traditions before it, *Videograms of a Revolution* displays a belief in the power and agency of apparently authentic images – film, television, video as

rehearsal for the digital, amateur, professional, official and unofficial. Irrespective, or more likely because of the ambiguity of what the cameras see, the immediacy of the images, apparently shot in real time, guarantees an authentic representation and simultaneous realization of the revolution. This aesthetic is typical of Farocki's oeuvre: even though the footage is shot by others, its reuse reinforces Farocki's didactic demonstration of the limitations and possibilities of the image. The truth, so to speak, of these images as they are recycled in *Videograms of a Revolution* is their representation of the revolution from different, often conflicting, sometimes blind perspectives.

However, the film's *mise-en-abîme* of images also challenges how images are made, the way they are interpreted, how they are used, who uses them, who owns them, who gives them meaning. Thus, *Videograms of a Revolution* illustrates its third concern: the film questions and critiques the valency of images, and in particular, it questions the images that are used in the support of the authoritarian regime. Ultimately, in the fourth important task of the film, *Videograms of a Revolution* moves beyond the events in Bucharest and Timisoara and their representation to embrace the paradox at the heart of twentieth-century iconoclasm. Namely, the film realizes the aspiration for a moving image that will help mobilize the masses to revolution, an aspiration sought by leftist, and particularly, Marxist intellectuals and image-makers throughout the twentieth century.⁷ At the same time, by extension, *Videograms of a Revolution* critiques the problematic role of media images in the official representation of public protest and civil unrest. Thus the film both documents the realized potential for the radical image in the twentieth century and vilifies the irresponsibility of its use by institutions working in the interests of those in power into the twenty-first. As I go on to demonstrate, through this fourth task, *Videograms* steps outside of itself to connect with and depart from its avant-garde documentary predecessors. This it achieves when it opens up to the possibility of visualizations of the present that ultimately lay the groundwork for the potential use of the image in political protest in the future. These four central concerns are achieved in *Videograms of a Revolution* through its "aesthetic of dislocation."

An Aesthetics of Dislocation

In the series of images described above, we see dislocation in abundance. First we see the dislocation of Ceauçescu's power: as it is, as it dissolves and as it and might have become. Second, there is a dislocation between what the people see and what the cameras see, between historical events and their representation. Third, and perhaps the most unexpectedly, there is a discrepancy between what Farocki and Ujica's film shows us and what we actually see. As a non-Romanian speaker, I, for example, am reliant on the narrator to locate the image, to tell me the time, the

place and to whom the image belongs. Too often, I see one thing, for example, a camera looking for an image as it pans to the sky, and then the voiceover tells me I am seeing something different: here, the premeditated distractions of a socialist dictatorship. In other moments of the film, I rely on the narrator to clarify what the image documents. And when the information does not appear on the soundtrack, this layering, or dislocation, results when the narrator claims the absence of sound at a moment when we clearly hear the goings on at the Central Committee. These inconsistencies in the image, the sound and the material dynamics at play in the relationship between them leave the film's audience dislocated by the conundrum of the revolution and its inadequate representation.

Fourth, the televisual image is always dislocated. In this sequence we see the live broadcast interrupted by technical glitches that remind of the mediation involved. As Benjamin Young (2004) points out in one of the few articles in English on the film, the televisual image is always also a temporal dislocation. There is always a lag between the past of the events and the viewer's present, even as they are broadcast "simultaneously." Moreover, as we watch the film now 15 years later, we are further dislocated in time and space from the revolution and its representation. The intervention of Farocki and Ujica's film creates still more dislocations: for example, the dislocation of reality that is forged in the gap between the different perspectives – the official broadcast, the film camera from the weekly newsreel, an amateur cameraman filming from his apartment, Farocki and Ujica's film. As we have seen in this sequence, *Videograms of a Revolution* repeats events from different angles, through the perspectives of different cameras, sometimes with a different soundtrack, the one commenting on and establishing a dialogue with the others. As the film and its collaborative images keep searching we are led to acknowledge that there is no absolute image of this revolution, no such thing as an authentic perspective. This, in turn, eventually prompts us to recognize the dislocation of Farocki and Ujica as author-filmmakers.

We are never certain of whose or what images bear witness to the Revolution. The film we watch in the movie theater has the same status as the images of the amateur filmmaker, the demonstrator with a camera, which are, in turn, at times, on equal footing with the Televiziunea Romana footage and news broadcasts. As if we were not adequately dislocated by all these uncertainties, equally unclear in this footage is the medium we are watching: is it televisual, film, video? Because *Videograms of a Revolution* deflects authority through these various strategies, so in turn, Farocki and Ujica concede their authority as imagemakers, giving way to an image that reproduces the unscripted and democratic negotiation aspired to by revolutionary discourse in Bucharest and Timisoara. Their authority as film authors is dislocated in a gesture that reinforces the history and narrative of *Videograms of a Revolution*.

All of these dislocations amount to the film's conversation with what W.J.T. Mitchell (1986) calls "the iconic turn," a moment predicted, but yet to arrive. At the end of the line of generations who have denigrated the image in Western

philosophy, art history, and visual studies, Farocki and Ujica's film might be understood to take up the call for the search for a way of conceiving the world visually, not through language. For *Videograms of a Revolution*, the details of the image's production is not important, its recognizeability and veracity are beside the point. What matters is the search for images to put in an archive of visual concepts. What matters is that the archive of images – in this case a film – will enable us to “understand,” or at least remember, the historical moment of the Romanian Revolution.⁸ As it turns out, the knowledge that we acquire from the film as image repository emphasizes that knowledge of the tumultuous events of the Romanian revolution is always subject to the positionality, or positionalities, of the representation. The experience is always necessarily a mediation, a mediation which in turn, according to *Videograms of a Revolution*, this is in itself a form of historical knowledge.

The spaces or dislocations between camera perspectives, between images and history, between images and viewers are echoed everywhere throughout the film, both as comments on the problems of making images and of orchestrating this particular revolution. Perhaps most significantly, even the spaces and places at which the revolution is played out, Victory Square, the television station, the Central Committee, are represented as being dislocated from each other due to the camerawork that results from the urgency and simultaneous difficulty of getting close to, and ultimately, recording the events.

Appropriately, the struggle for images through an aesthetics of dislocation uses two symbolic sites of power in Bucharest as its stage: the television station and the Central Committee headquarters. We watch as the revolution unfolds and the revolutionaries take over these two sites, as they physically dislodge the Ceaușescu and the institutions that support him from their balconies and platforms. The revolutionaries command authority of and from these spaces, there struggling to define their own brand of national unity. However, these two symbolic foci are never stable markers – if only because as viewers of *Videograms of a Revolution* we are unsure of where they are in relation to each other. Often the most important moments and decisions in the process of revolution happen unexpectedly, not in or outside the television station, not on the balcony of the Central Committee or the square in front of it, but as the camera travels in trucks and cars along unremarkable streets somewhere between the two. The action is always spreading out beyond the confines of the film frame. The points of view of the many cameras are never fully adequate to capturing all of the action. In the moments of transition between sites, the films record events from ground level and the dislocation of events is mirrored in images seen through a jerky, handheld camera. Usually, these cameras are not sure of what they are watching or hovering around, sometimes it appears that they are expecting something momentous to take place. All the time we hear the firing of arms on the soundtrack as though the real action is taking place just out of eyesight. We are only ever allowed to assume this action thanks to the soundtrack because the camera does not presents it to us. Even

though the image is unsteady and can reveal a discrepancy with the soundtrack, these dislocations are the alert that in the times and spaces of transition, the cameras in Bucharest have ceased to be surveillances of broadcast and surveillance apparatuses, they become participatory in democratic negotiations and street-level rebellions.

When the image is grounded, thus located, in the television station, on the balcony of the Central Committee or watching over one of the two locations, the chaos of demonstration and revolution emerges. This chaos is communicated by the loss of the image and the confusion around the status of the image as in the example detailed above. The disorientation of the image, in turn, reflects the unpredictability of the revolution as it unfolds, and also the multiplicity of revolutionary actions. Alternatively, if the camera, the image and sound-image relations are coherent and comprehensible, there is nothing to see. Thus, when we see the demonstrators in their thousands as they motion along the street beneath an amateur cameraman's apartment, or when we become privy to the gatherings of spokespersons at Televiziunea Romana as they determine the ongoing process of revolution, nothing happens. At these moments, what we see and what we hear reflects another kind of transitory time-space or dislocation. And so, frustrated with its inability to document the key events, the film returns to footage shot from roof terraces a few streets away, watching the demonstrations from high above ground level, behind venetian blinds, at times in the blackness of night. A "better view" can be found that does not return to the surveillance strategies for which such perspectives were conventionally used in pre-1989 Romania. The bird's-eye view is now another option for noting the transformation of image in support of the revolution. When the footage taken by amateurs and professionals manages to record the events it wants to see, or that must be televised to be realized – for example, when the Ceaușescus flee in their helicopter, or when Nicu Ceaușescu (the son) is captured – these visions are interrupted. Thus, a head comes to obscure the image, the camera is distracted by another event, or it just loses sight of what it was watching. Alternatively, Farocki and Ujica interrupt their film with a freeze-frame or, as we saw in the earlier described fragment, footage will show a camera pull back to depict a television in someone's living room, thereby revealing that we are in fact watching a televised version of events. And then a cut to black, or a broadcast interrupted by technical difficulties, the image degraded because it is a re-presentation of a low-quality transmission. It is impossible to find a location, a position from which to film and see the truth of these events. This impossibility comes despite the film's persistent effort to locate through subtitles and intertitles the time, the date and the place of the action. According to *Videograms of a Revolution*, the image is always a particular perspective, dislocated from other images, as well from the events, all attempting to represent the revolution as it takes place on the streets, and in the struggle to use the image to ensure they forward motion of that revolution, to inform, to expose, to mobilize people to take action themselves.

Liberation through Television?

The film continues. It persists with the dual motivation to document the Romanian revolution and interrogate its representation. Consequently, the film follows the revolutionaries in their successful seizure of Televiziunea Romana. But even as the people led by writers and artists assume the position of producers and controllers of the image, this new image is no less reliable, still dislocated through the wont of the producers to exploit it. Like the State functionaries before them, the artists, writers, and dramatists now at the helm of the Romanian television image refuse to allow the camera to record events until they have set the stage, rehearsed their lines, prepared the lighting and other aspects of the technical performance. The revolutionaries' control of the image sees them become wedded to and manipulate the power of its constructions. Their investment in the image produces, to use Farocki's (2004) words, the revolutionaries' "abstraction" from their "basic human condition," where abstraction refers to the process of reification that seduces them once they are in control of the image. The situation reminds us of Godard's insistence (especially in *Tout va Bien* (1972) and other of his *Dziga Vertov*-era films) that manipulation of the image to fulfill an ideological agenda will always alienate one's efforts in the interests of commodification. Thus we see *Videograms of a Revolution* engaged in similar struggles that have characterized the experiments of its politically motivated predecessors. And similar to Godard's pictured "revolutions," Ceaușescu and his regime are successfully toppled via the arrest of the images which enabled him. And, as we saw Godard warn of in *Tout va Bien*, *Videograms of a Revolution* demonstrates that once the image has been arrested, it is necessarily given over to another form of ideological system, in which equally biased decisions set new processes of representation in motion.

And so, Farocki and Ujica pry open the revolutionaries' hold over the image, and proceed to divorce the camera from those in power. Once again, this interrogation of the image as ideological battleground takes place in consciously inserted caesurae between images, between spaces, between events in the revolution. Thus, for example, the camera sits in an elevator filming the numbers of the floors as they pass by, or outside a closed door, visualizing its inability to access events, its blindness to the goings on. The images of *Videograms of a Revolution* are always removed from the "real action." On the soundtrack in these moments we hear the revolutionaries, debating the images on which the forward motion of the revolution will hinge, insisting on a coherent and convincing message for the television viewers. Like Godard, Brecht, Straub-Huillet, and Kluge before them, the filmmakers simultaneously expose and question the use of the cinema through the cinematic manipulations of their own film.⁹ The impotence of the camera, the resultant visual interruptions to the rhythms and patterns of revolutionary developments, thus the images of revolution, are everywhere mimicked by those of *Videograms of a Revolution*. And in another layer

of reflexive critique, when the film finally enters the television studio, we watch the journalists watching television, as if they are watching and censoring their own images.

Toward the end of *Videograms of a Revolution*, the dust apparently begins to settle as Christmas greetings are broadcast on Televiziunea Romana. The revolution shifts to another symbolic location, apparently in the heart of Bucharest. The “enemy” (Ceaușescu loyalists) fire on the people from the empty buildings that surround at Victory Square. The unseen snipers hide in or between unfinished, unoccupied, nondescript high-rise buildings that Ceaușescu had built during his reign. The voiceover reflects on the equation between these characterless buildings, the faceless, intangible causes of fear that breed under a Socialist dictatorship and the incompetence of global media in the face of these dynamics. In all three instances, the invisible enemy pervades the most visible, most symbolic of public spaces and the most “protected” of private spaces – the buildings on the Square, everyday life and the home.

When the center of the revolution shifts to Victory Square, the film remains at the scene of the action, thus, together with its revolutionary comrades, it is blind to the location and activities of the enemy.¹⁰ The restless image depicts snippets of action: legs running down stairs, figures racing across the square to safety, the frenetic, almost desperate retaliation of the people’s army, the cement eyesore buildings being the only constant in the background. Somewhere in the vicinity shots continue to be fired. The soundtrack thus alerts us to the presence of fighting, and consequently, we understand the people who run past the camera, often carrying shopping bags or a handbag as though out doing errands, are fleeing the gunfire. However, like those behind the cameras we are unable to determine who exactly they flee, their proximity or distance, the degree of their threat, the accuracy of the shooting. This sequence aptly illustrates the film’s skillful representation that, “[a]s the Ceaușescus’ fate becomes clear, more and more factions emerge whose relationship to Ceaușescu is increasingly unclear” (Privett, 1999: para. 10). The ambiguity of the enemy’s location, the uncertainty of his next move, are accompanied at the level of the film by an absence of establishing shots, the disjunction between sound and image, the repeated loss of the image, and the self-reflexive unreliability of the narrator. Needless to say, all these factors add up to a dislocation of the viewer. Interspersed with these fragments of fighting, a British journalist is depicted to report on the same events we are watching. Technical difficulties in his broadcast abound; the sound doesn’t work, the image is lost, the camera is in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In keeping with the pattern established by the film thus far, the same images are repeated again and again, as though in a continuous loop. We watch no less than four takes of the British news broadcast as the videocam and the reporter endeavor to make sense of the events, and struggle to overcome technical problems. Neiman’s voiceover is also repeated with the visual reiterations, each time attempting to give a different perspective, but in fact, working as a commentator that

demonstrates the manipulation of the media's version of events. Even in the hands of the revolutionaries and their Western sympathizers, the television image fails to locate the nerve center of the revolution. As we have already seen, these repetitive layers of flawed television images are woven into *Videograms of a Revolution* to witness the instability, and as Neiman's voiceover says, the impotence of the media which nevertheless, in its struggle with the revolutionaries for control of the image, enables the forward motion of the revolution.

Thus, together with this skepticism toward television images, *Videograms of a Revolution* witnesses the shift from images that create one kind of political reality and its accompanying version of history, through images that create another historical moment, a moment that is, via the use of the image, articulated as democratic. In one of the most powerful images of the film, we see the corpses of Elena and Nicolai Ceaușescu lay wasted in the gutter on Christmas Day, 1998. These images are also secondhand, thereby underlining the cheapness of the Ceaușescu lives within the narrative logic of revolution. The dead couple is shown at a distance, in a grainy image that would make identification without the voiceover impossible. The film then zooms outwards to reveal that the corpses are shown on a television screen, somewhere in the streets of Bucharest, three times removed from the reality of the viewer of *Videograms of a Revolution*. People are gathered around the television, they applaud, they celebrate while, and most importantly, their video cameras continue to record events in the midst. At this remove, Farocki and Ujica's film is uninvolved and thus, able to be more skeptical than the Romanian viewers of the diegesis, enabling the viewers of *Videograms of a Revolution* to wonder about the future of a unified Romania. Nevertheless, despite the distance and resultant ambiguity of the images of the Ceaușescu corpses, we are, at the very least, confident that radical change has been effected, the dictatorship has fallen. Somehow, somewhere in the gaps between what we have seen and what we now know took place, between the events and their representation, this uneven tapestry of found images has spawned a once unimaginable revolution.

Bigger Pictures

How to interpret this provocative trajectory? It is, on one level, the realization of the aspiration for a radical revolutionary image. Although in a very different guise, in response to a very different set of social and political parameters (Communist dictatorship, as opposed to Capitalist bureaucracy) *Videograms of a Revolution* finds what Eisenstein, Brecht, Godard, and Kluge among others were looking for. *Videograms of a Revolution* locates an image that inspires the masses to revolt against their oppression. Unlike the ancestors I am here attributing to the film, *Videograms of a Revolution* does not find an image that agitates through the force of its visual

construction. While Farocki and Ujica's particular form of montage culls from the history of experimental filmmaking, those televisual, film and video images it discovers are not formally innovative. Together, the content of the re-presented images and their formal arrangement seize the necessity of realist legibility as the key to widespread accessibility. While *Videograms of a Revolution* is aesthetically innovative and at the vanguard of visual discourses of political possibility, it is reliant on images that claim to do no more than document what takes place before the camera. Through its distinction from the footage it appropriates *Videograms of a Revolution* demonstrates that the key to a revolutionary image lies in its production, distribution, exhibition contexts, and the audiences that await it. And, we could add, *Videograms of a Revolution* foregrounds what makes all of Farocki's images "revolutionary" or avant-garde. Namely, through his form of editing, of placing culled images together, Farocki's project is to school us to see and interpret images through revolutionary eyes. As W.J.T. Mitchell (2005) argues, it is not the image itself, but how it is used, the life that it leads which is at the heart of political mobilization. Thus, in their tapestry of second hand images, Farocki and Ujica find an image that not only creates and documents history, but more importantly, it is an image that teaches us how to see and interpret that documentation or representation of history.

Is this why Farocki, the German filmmaker and theorist, whose intellectual formation took place in a post-Vietnam Berlin sieged by anger and radical possibility, is attracted to these events? Because here in Romania, he finds the ultimate imbrication of film and history, as the voiceover of *Videograms of a Revolution* observes, where the image is the condition of history and history is the condition of the image? I think for Farocki it is more than an opportunity to document this double-edged victory of the image, however cautious this documentation might be.

Romania 1989 is the perfect forum in which to confront the concerns of Germany and other European countries in 1992, concerns that also exceed national borders. Postunification Europe has continued to be preoccupied with questions such as how to negotiate political and economic inequality between member states, how to define national identity, belonging, relations between insiders and outsiders. Similarly, questions such as what is and should be the responsibility of one country to the histories of others? As in Romania, these questions have been asked in Germany especially against a background of attempts to reduce national sovereignty. And all the time, left-wing intellectuals have continued to influence and interrogate the parameters of the public sphere through images. Thus, the concerns of the newly unified Europe are also being worked out here in Socialist Romania. This is not to say that events and their aftermath in Romania are allegories of events in East Germany, but that they are relevant and share characteristics.

In his 1994 film *Die führende Rolle* (The Leading Role), Farocki gives us a glimpse of the imbrication of the image and history on the path toward confronting the conundrum created by the events of 1989 in Europe. The film uses all the familiar

Farocki strategies of culling and re-presenting images as it searches for an image that will describe, define, explain, and five years later, teach us how to see and interpret the widespread upheavals of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In keeping with Farocki's iconoclasm, there is no such ideal image, and yet, the search must nevertheless continue. In turn, the cinema and other moving images are the perfect way to represent and interrogate these questions, to continue the search. The cinema's mobility to transcend national borders – not only at the level of the aesthetic, but more recently in Europe, through its production, distribution and exhibition networks – is equal to the task of relocating the concerns of one country into those of another.¹¹ Today, with the advent of new technologies, and especially access to the World Wide Web, other forms of image production perhaps more easily access and generate socially and politically engaged street-level activism. However, in the 1990s, the cinema, video and television were still the available media to represent at all levels the mobility and international identities of a unified, if not coherent, Europe.

Bucharest and Timisoara, 1989 might thus be understood to present Farocki with the opportunity to continue the search for an image that was begun in Berlin 1989, and later, in *Die führende Rolle* in 1994. In Romania, Farocki and his co-image makers discover that the image of the revolution is elsewhere, dislocated from the still and moving images on which he had previously been looking. I have argued that *Videograms of a Revolution* finds this elsewhere in the way images are made, who makes them, who has access to their production, who consumes them, and how they are interpreted. The film's capacity to see this elsewhere is reflected in the spatiotemporal dislocations repeated at the level of the film's structure, dislocations that are, in turn, enabled by its choice to recycle and re-present the past and its images. As Young points out, the dead past and the possibility of a democratic future become visible in the lag between what happened and what is represented, what the image captures and the aleatory nature, thus the truth-status, of the events being documented. This is transposed to *Videograms of a Revolution* when the events retain the traces of authenticity because they always happen just offscreen, in the enforced pauses or structural spaces. To put it another way, the dislocation or disjuncture between Romania's Communist past and democratic future is echoed in the empty spaces between film fragments to invoke by association a nostalgia for an image of the revolution that was never really found in other European countries, particularly in Germany. Images of revolution, and revolutionary images were perhaps harder to come by in Germany because of a number of structural factors relating to the unfolding of events that led to the eventual opening of the border between East and West. The quiet, peaceful secession of power was opposed to the relatively abrupt violent eruptions that resulted from the overthrow of Ceauçescu's Stalinist-like regime, a dictatorship that refused to loosen its grip on the media to the very end.

Lastly, in spite of my emphasis on *Videograms of a Revolution* as a film attributable to the oeuvre of Harun Farocki, Farocki the radical political documentarist, film

author and essayist is simultaneously, displaced, even dislocated, from the film. Indeed, this level of dislocation is both critical to the film's political edge and to its continuity with Farocki's other films. On the most obvious level, *Videograms of a Revolution* is a collaborative project written and produced with filmmaker Andrej Ujica.¹² Indeed, Ujica's preoccupation with the subject and form of *Videograms of a Revolution* preexists the film. His coedited collection might be considered a textual storyboard that extends from documentation to analysis to theorization of the "television revolution," just like *Videograms of a Revolution* (Amelunxen and Ujica, 1990). In addition, the writer-director-producer team diffuses its stability as a locus of meaning through the equal status given to their film, that of amateur film and video footage, and anonymous television images. Beyond these manifest diffusions of authorship, the film's belief that a revolutionary image is identifiable through appropriation of the contexts of production, dissemination and, most importantly, reception by us, is returned to the authorial distance from a definitive stylistic expression, narrative didacticism and identifiable conceptual maneuvers. Thus, as much as *Videograms of a Revolution* exemplifies the concerns of Farocki's other films, it also stands apart. The film's distinction is marked through its dislocation of the image it is looking for. And significant to the displacement of Farocki and Ujica as auteurs is the location of this image in a place where it was least expected—a television image produced by and for the people.

Farocki does not believe he can achieve what other image makers cannot. He may persist in the search for a revolutionary image, for images that revolutionize. However, *Videograms of a Revolution* also testifies to the impossibility of finding those images through the camera lens of the well-known filmmaker from the West. To be sure, his images are only a part of a process of continuing production and reproduction of images. Farocki's practice and politics are wedded to archives and repositories of used, discarded, forgotten images. This is perhaps why he has no problem with the reproduction of his own images.¹³ The images which bring about the fall of the Ceauçescu regime have nothing to do with Harun Farocki's film. And neither are they stylistically vanguard, they do not break new aesthetic ground. On the contrary, the image that is used to challenge, and ultimately to set in motion the toppling of this dictatorship, the image of political agitation and revolution is produced by a realist, often handheld camera that portends a mimetic reflection of profilmic events. Quite simply, this revolution is enabled through the availability and accessibility of certain image making technologies. Television, home video, handheld 16mm cameras are technologies that in 1989 Romania enabled the production and distribution of the image to be put in the hands of the people. It is this potential for the image to be appropriated by the people at every level, from production through spectatorship, which momentarily holds the promise of political agitation. For *Videograms of a Revolution* this promise is apparently only ever momentary because, in its anticipation of the Romanian revolution's eventual co-optation, as well as that of its images, the film takes on a nostalgia for that revolution that is always located outside the frame.

In conclusion, I want to suggest that *Videograms of a Revolution's* belief in the power of images does not stop here, for it is visibly uncomfortable with, and distant from the results of the revolutionary action: the grotesque sight of the Ceauçescus lying dead by a wall as it was broadcast on television. The film thus goes one step further in a gesture that can be read as its stake to transgress national borders. The film implicitly critiques the instantaneity, superficiality, and sensationalism of global television reportage of this and similar events. On every level – aesthetic, production, distribution, and exhibition – this film is all that global television is not. *Videograms* compiles fragments of amateur and professional footage that invite us to witness the events unfold a day at a time over the course of ten days, sometimes an hour at a time, a minute at a time – always being careful to indicate the timing of the events through intertitles. The temporality of the slow-moving narrative, the accumulation of ideas and information enables a gradual revelation of the momentous nature of events. This monumentality is distinct from the spectacularization of historical events in the media. For the magnitude of the revolution is here depicted in all its complexity, with all of its contradictions and impossibilities exposed. It is of a different genre from the revolution shown on Western television in which the victory of democracy over dictatorship is an unqualified cause for celebration.

But, of course, *Videograms* also replicates the structure of cable television. As Farocki points out in a recent interview: cable television has several images on screen at once, “the stock information here and the weather information there, one correspondent in real time here and a tiny image with archival footage there ... we’re looking at several images, creating interrelations among images and texts. [...] It’s like having an editing table in front of us” (Griffin, 2004: 163). Farocki here connects the form of cable news and his use of multiple screens to create interrelations between frames, between images and texts, between fragments of used footage, within and between the three parts of his *Eye/Machine* trilogy (2001–2003). However, this conscious shift away from a linear, deductive narrative is already in place in *Videograms of a Revolution*. Similar to the viewer of cable television, or even of Farocki’s multiscreen gallery installations, that of *Videograms* also finds history and its images in the gaps between different images, different locations, different cameras, between text and image. As in his later digital *Eye/Machine* works, the images that comprise *Videograms of a Revolution* are edited to create concepts, not as pieces of a larger story: Farocki leans on Benjamin’s notion of the *Gedankenbild* here to articulate the innovation of his late twentieth century “idea-image.”

Following the thread of the moebius strip, the gaps of *Videograms of a Revolution* are in stark contrast to the information sound bites of global television in its coverage of events “as they happen,” between commercials, in a format that prohibits both understanding and memory of the events.” Because, as *Videograms of a Revolution* itself exposes, the mainstream media images may be multiple, complex, and fractured, but they are empty and amount to a singular perspective,

a biased communication to a privileged Western audience. These commercial images feign to communicate truth, not the interface of history and representation. For *Videograms of a Revolution*, history emerges from the confusion and dislocation of the cameras, the back streets of Bucharest, on the road between locations, in all of those spaces where cameras, be they official, amateur, television, film have difficulty going.

It must be conceded that, in spite of its relevance to a crosscultural, international audience, *Videograms of a Revolution* was released at select film festivals and is unlikely to be widely screened in the future. It has recently been released on DVD, but nevertheless, the film is unlikely to attract attention beyond a specialized audience of students and critics. And, unlike most of his other films, the film has never been reappropriated by Farocki for his gallery installations. Perhaps if it were to have a lot of attention, *Videograms of a Revolution* would lose its critical edge? For its success as an iconoclastic homage to the power of the image, its critique of the production, circulation, reception of what we might call the global television document, and by extension of its own aesthetic and function, is dependent on its distance from the aesthetic, exhibition, and reception of these images it appropriates with skepticism. While the film is international and reaches far beyond the specificity of that which it documents, it has to remain outside of the structures that enable it, in order for the critique of the same structures to carry credence.

Despite the differences between the work of Kluge, and other contemporaries such as Straub and Huillet, *Videograms of a Revolution* reintroduces the iconic possibilities of moving images into a politically and ideologically charged landscape. And in this tumultuous arena, the film locates the potential revolutionary power for the image. However, this potency will not be discovered in the places and spaces where revolutionary filmmakers such as Vertov, Godard, Kluge carried out their explorations. According to *Videograms of a Revolution*, the search for a politically productive image has been dislocated from the radical aesthetic, in particular, the aesthetic of montage. It is, so Farocki and Ujica would have it, in the availability and accessibility of all stages of moving images – their production, distribution, exhibition and reception – to the people who make them, use them, comment on and believe them.

This research was supported by a Marie Curie Intra European Fellowship within the 7th European Community Framework Programme.

Author's note

Frances Guerin teaches in Film Studies at the University of Kent, UK. She is the author of *A Culture of Light: Cinema and Technology in 1920s German* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005) and *Through Amateur Eyes: Film and Photography in Nazi*

Germany (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming). She is coeditor of *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (Wallflower Press, 2007). Her articles have appeared in international journals, including *Cinema Journal*, *Screening the Past*, *Film and History*, and *Cinema e Cie*.

Notes

- 1 See also *Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen/I thought I was Seeing Convicts* (2000). For a comprehensive filmography, see <http://www.farocki-film.de> (accessed February 14, 2011).
- 2 See Jill Godmilow's film, *What Farocki Taught* (1998).
- 3 This is taken from the film.
- 4 See Ernst and Farocki (2004). There is a growing literature on the found footage and compilation films, both of which can be thought of as antecedent to *Videograms of a Revolution*. Rather than reading Farocki's film within this context, I point the reader toward this literature. See, for example, Wees (1993); Bruzzi (2000).
- 5 This emphasis on the life of the image beyond the nevertheless experimental frame also places Farocki's work squarely within the tradition of radical political documentary. Filmmakers such as John Grierson and D.A. Pennebaker, Jean Rouch and Chris Marker become his predecessors. To follow Farocki's work along these lines, particularly as it relates to this tradition of filmmaking in Europe, see Guerin (2008).
- 6 Films such as Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig* (1968) and *Millhouse. A White Comedy* (1988) come to mind here as leading examples of this genre of found footage and compilation film.
- 7 Again, this is a conceptualization of film and mode of filmmaking that I discuss in "Radical Aspirations Historicized" (2008). It is perhaps most strongly associated with the work of Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein in Germany, and Theodor Adorno and his student Alexander Kluge in Germany.
- 8 Farocki articulately explores this idea in his other films such as *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik/ Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995) and *Der Ausdruck der Hände/The Expression of Hands* (1997). In both films, Farocki turns to the archives of film history in search of iconic images and gestures for a "visual archive of cinematic topoi" that might function like a dictionary of images for the future. See Ernst and Farocki (2004).
- 9 On the notion of Farocki as continuing Brecht's pursuit of film as a model for action and film as a didactic tool for the assumption of power and knowledge, see Elsaesser (2004b).
- 10 On this movement of the revolution between Timisoara and Bucharest, and again between different spaces and places that held immense symbolism, see Ujica (1990).
- 11 I am thinking here of the dramatic changes that have taken place in the structure of the European film industry. In particular, European Commission incentives at the level of funding, distribution, and exhibition policies have been developed to nurture a creative and economically successful industry. See, for example, Finney (1996).

- 12 Even though Ujica is Romanian born, during the conception of the film and its making he was living in Germany where he was a lecturer in literature and media at the University of Mannheim, 1985–1992.
- 13 Godmilow's *What Farocki Taught* (1998) is in fact a remake of Farocki's 1969 film, *Inextinguishable Fire*, which is about napalm B, the jellied gasoline manufactured by Dow Chemical and used during the Vietnam War.

References

- Amelunxen, H.v. and Ujica, A. (eds) (1990) *Television/Revolution. Das Ultimatum des Bildes*, Jonas Verlag, Marburg.
- Bruzzi, S. (2000) The event: archive and newsreel in *The New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge, London, New York, pp. 11–39.
- Elsaesser, T. (ed.) (2004a) *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.
- Elsaesser, T. (2004b) Political filmmaking after Brecht: Harun Farocki, for example, in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines* (ed. T. Elsaesser), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 133–153.
- Ernst, W. and Farocki, H. (2004) Towards an archive for visual concepts, in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines* (ed. T. Elsaesser), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 261–286.
- Farocki, H. (2004) “Viewfinder”: a conversation with Harun Farocki, *Artforum*, 43 (3), 162–163.
- Finney, A. (1996) *The State of European Cinema. A New Dose of Reality*, Cassell, London.
- Foster, H. (2004) Vision quest. *Artforum*, 43 (3), 156–161, 250.
- Griffin, T. (2004) *Artforum*, 43 (3), 162–163.
- Guerin, F. (2008) Radical aspirations historicized: the European commitment to political documentary, in *The Oxford Handbook of Film and Media Studies* (ed. R. Kolker), Oxford University Press, New York.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1986) *Iconology: Image, Text Ideology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (2005) *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London.
- Privett, R. (1999) The revolution was televised. *Central European Review*, 1, 17, http://www.ce-review.org/99/17/kinoeye17_privett.html (accessed February 14, 2011).
- Ujica, A. (1990) im Gespräch mit Livius Ciocârlie, Serban Foarta, Andrei Plesu and Mihai Sora, “Zeit und Bildplätze,” in *Television/Revolution. Das Ultimatum des Bildes* (eds H.v. Amelunxen and A. Ujica), Jonas Verlag, Marburg, pp. 27–75.
- Wees, W. (1993) *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*, Anthology Film Archives, New York City.
- Winston, B. (1988) Direct cinema: the third decade, in *New Challenges for Documentary* (ed. A. Rosenthal), University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, pp. 517–529.
- Young, B. (2004) On media and democratic politics: videograms of a revolution, in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines* (ed. T. Elsaesser), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 245–260.

Filmography

- Between Two Wars* [Zwischen zwei Kriegen] (Harun Farocki, West Germany, 1978).
Creators of the Shopping Worlds, The [Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 2001).
Die führende Rolle [The Leading Role] (Harun Farocki, Germany 1994).
The Expression of Hands [Der Ausdruck der Hände] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 1997).
Images of the World and the Inscription of War [Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges] (Harun Farocki, West Germany, West Germany, 1988).
Inextinguishable Fire [Nicht Lösbares Feuer] (Harun Farocki, West Germany, 1969).
In the Year of the Pig (Emile de Antonio, USA, 1968).
I Thought I was Seeing Convicts [Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 2000).
Millhouse: A White Comedy (Emile de Antonio, USA, 1988).
Prison Images [Gefängnisbilder] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 2000).
Still Life [Stilleben] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 1997).
Tout va Bien [Everything's All Right] (Jean-Luc Godard, France/Italy, 1972).
Videograms of a Revolution [Videogramme einer Revolution] (Harun Farocki/Andrej Ujica, Germany, 1992).
War at a Distance [Erkennen und Verfolgen] (Harun Farock, Germany, 2003).
What Farocki Taught (Jill Godmilow, USA, 1998).
Workers Leaving the Factory [Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik] (Harun Farocki, Germany, 1995).