

Harun Farocki: media operator*

Harun Farocki: operador de mídias

EDNEI DE GENARO**

Universidade Federal Fluminense, Graduate Program in Communication. Niterói – RJ, Brazil

ABSTRACT

The work of Harun Farocki (1944-2014) gives us a respectable contribution to the method of working with images and words. This paper intended to apprehend and systematize the coherence of his contribution, suggesting three fundamental approaches of this method/style: the *horizontal (image/word)*, the *transverse (images of the world)* and the *transindividual (operation)*, thus catching sight of the larger perspective of Farocki: *operating media as a pharmakon inflection point*.

Keywords: Harun Farocki, cinema, montage, operating medias

RESUMO

A obra de Harun Farocki (1944-2014) nos traz importantes contribuições para o método-estilo de trabalho com imagens e palavras. Este artigo procurou apreender e sistematizar a consistência de sua contribuição, propondo três aportes fundamentais desse método-estilo: o *horizontal (imagem/palavra)*, o *transversal (imagens do mundo)* e o *transindividual (operação)*, vislumbrando, assim, a perspectiva maior de Farocki: a de *operar mídias enquanto ponto de inflexão farmacêutico*.

Palavras-chave: Harun Farocki, cinema, montagem, operar mídias

* This article is part of the results of my PhD research of the Graduate Program in Communication at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (orientation: Prof. Dr. Cezar Migliorin). In the thesis, in addition to his method of operating media, other contributions of Farocki were made explicit, notably regarding the film theory, the aesthetic-political transformations of the avant-garde, the process of editing and archival footage, and media studies.

**Between 2011 and 2015 I was a PhD candidate at the University, defending the thesis titled "Harun Farocki – pensador e operador de mídias" [Harun Farocki – thinker and media operator]. E-mail: ednei.genaro@yahoo.com.br
Article translated by Lara Monteiro.



“I’m the boss, a special boss because I’m also the worker”

(*Numéro Deux*, 1975)

INTRODUCTION

THE WORKS OF the German filmmaker Harun Farocki (1944-2014) contributed with a corpus of ideas and practices on *working with images and words*. From a wider conception of cinema, he thought this art as inserted in the general question of what it is to *operate media*. Since his first works, he produced a continuous act: to achieve reflections and political gestures from a tradition that yearn for effective and cinematographic visual speech, as *way of thinking*; or, in his own words, as a “montage of ideas”.

The propositions of the filmmaker’s *montage of ideas* are being better investigated. While performing an apprehension and systematization of the method’s consistency, we expect to elucidate the contribution of this *filmmaker-thinker*, who, during his career, that lasted from the late 1960s to the beginning of 2010, articulated, to *operate media*, different horizons of aesthetic-political thoughts, from Marxism, phenomenology and poststructuralism.

FAROCKI’S PHARMACY

In *Plato’s pharmacy* (2005), the philosopher Jacques Derrida elucidates all the richness of the *mysterious* Greek term “*phármakon*”. In Western tradition, this term was, most of the times, interpreted exclusively in its positive sense, as a *remedy*. Such a translation would be correct, however insufficient. There would be a restricted interpretation of the term, mainly from texts by Plato (*Phaedrus*, especially). “The translation of the *phármakon* as *remedy* – beneficial drug – is not simply incorrect. Not only can *phármakon* really mean *remedy* and thus erase, on a certain surface of its functioning, the ambiguity of its meaning” (Derrida, 2005: 44). For Derrida, in Platonic texts the word is assigned to a *medicinal operate* with the reading supplement (deed); the latter revealing itself as a filter or drug: *remedy and/or poison*¹. What could not be eliminated in the richness of this term’s meanings is the dialectic *game* that exposes the variation, the duality; the correlation of opposites, the ambiguities (without actually wishing the synthesis, the abstract totality, the evolutionism). Thus, for Derrida, the *phármakon*, being the place, the support and the operator of transmutations – the theater of operations – was not understood in its positive and negative meaning, as *remedy* and *poison*.

1. “[In *Phaedrus*], the god of the deed is a god of medicine. The ‘medicine’: science and secret drug at once. From remedy to poison. The god of the deed is the god of the *phármakon*. And it is the deed as *phármakon* that he presents to the King in *Phaedrus*, with a humility unsettling as the challenge” (Derrida, 2005: 38).

Plato's pharmacy is fully constituted to display the various possible places for a term that always oscillates between two extremes. *Phármakon* can be understood only within a context; and this context – the *medium* – is a *game*, *undecidable*, able to encompass opposites, good and evil, body and soul, memory and oblivion, speech and deed; laws and celebrations, life and death etc. (Ibid.: 95).

The medium (the *media*) would be, a priori, a theater of forces, spaces, counter correlation and events. Understanding thus media as a synonym of *pharmacy*. Looking to a *medium*, we think in contexts and materiality. If in Plato, a man from Ancient times, the print media was decisively willing to be experienced as a *phármakon*, in Farocki, a modern man, the cinematic media has this connotation. In the same way that writing is Plato's pharmacy, cinema is Farocki's pharmacy. Plato, a *medium* operator, of the writing *game*: the *print media*; Farocki, a media operator. Both involved in a pharmaceutical method – or, as we will see, of transindividuation, altercations and reconciliations.

It is from the perspective of the *method* exposed previously that Farocki's works can be better understood in its inclusion – and transformation, in a way that is free and dedicated to the cinema – in dialectic and materialistic traditions, from which it was often highlighted as an important exponent in the film history. It appeals thus not to lose sight of the *pharmaceutical* method of Farocki, which leads, uninterruptedly, to reflections and media practices, in current and historical contexts, from exhibitions and comparisons, sensitivities, aiming at opposite encounters, of dualities, of different, distant elements. For him, the media itself, would be investigated from a dialectic pharmaceutical game subsumed in a line of metastable *transindividual drift* to operate media, as we shall see, continually embracing technical-manual, civil-military, production-destruction, mechanic-electronic, virtual-current, capital-work, freedom-prison, order-countermand, nomad-sedentary etc.

In our attempt to understand Farocki's method, we will observe the cross of three essential influences: horizontal, transversal and transindividual. The individual exposition and the joint analysis of these influences constitute the biggest opportunities of this article.

HORIZONTAL INFLUENCE – IMAGE/WORD

To achieve an effective *cinematic thinking* means, above all, to treat the materialities – images, films – as an object really significant to the work. In his films, Farocki had a strong problem, which can be understood by the follow-



ing questions: what do the images produced or found mean? What words can be used? And, consequently, what is the relationship between words and images involved in this film? Such questions arise, in the filmmaker, as a reflection internalized, commonplace:

I definitely try to avoid being smarter than the film is. I try to let the film think. Literally, I write a line, then I go to the editing table and try to comment on it with the images. Conversely, I try to find my words on the editing table. I have both my typewriter and my editing table in one room. It is connected to this question of writing and filmmaking, because it is also very evident you cannot make films the same way you can write a text. (Farocki, 2004a: 188)

Whatever is the project or script, fairly prescribed or not, it does not matter. The images must not be something merely illustrative. An image that is *perfect* (an extraordinary, beautiful, impactful, good scene), but that has no relation, in the editing process, with any other – or that clashes with the editing set – is little relevant. The logic here would be: a “perfect” image, alone, matters less than two “reasonable” ones that bind perfectly in the editing process; or even: two “reasonable” images in tune with editing are more valuable than two “perfect” images that have convenient links. The aim is a *composition of images/words* that encourages the spectator to unveil the film, effectively: to activate a flow of attention and thoughts by images; by composition or visual speech. This seems to be the biggest motivation of Farocki. The words or comments of the film, to a large or small extent, will always be in tune with the composition of images. In other words, images and words will be in a horizontal line.

To perform a composition that activates the *unveiling* of images. The idea, with this verb (to unveil: to discover, to express; to care), is especially important because the films based on this idea are, necessarily, *experiments with images*. When designing a horizontal relationship between images and words, Farocki does not want to unlink the parts of the film on the whole of an edition. Above all, he does not want to guarantee the *linearity* of the film from the writing; or, in a broader sense: the cinematic thinking not simple as a subordination to the writer’s thinking. In these two films, *Between two wars* (1978) and *Before your eyes, Vietnam* (1982), there are several images that assist others, images that require parallel, united, in dialogue attention etc., that *force us to think*, as seriously as the *script*. In the documentary, *As you see* (1986) Farocki had collected over the years varied images on topics discussed randomly with friends,

so that the words or narratives of the documentary resulted intensively from a personal cinematic thinking with the images collected.

Farocki would adopt and transform the fundamental aesthetic lessons of Robert Bresson: “Not to shoot a film to illustrate a thesis or to display men and women confined to their external aspect, but to discover the matter they are made of [...]” (Bresson, 1979: 41). To illustrate is to create an *expository* documentary (Nichols, 2010), highlighting a cinema with dimensions, most of the times, ostentatious or denunciative. To illustrate is, mainly, trying to subordinate the movement of *showing the world* to the power of writing or an ideality. However, the movement of the world is “not interrupted so documentary filmmakers can hone their writing system” (Comolli, 2008: 177).

The composition of the images does not follow the same technicality of the writing structure. Unlike this, the cinema presents a modern and complex technical dimension, inescapably closer to codes and machinic standards than a grammar. And, therefore, as Antje Ehmman and Kosho Eshun expressed, a short biography of Farocki could surely be replaced by a

short biography of technical standards in terms of formats, digital media devices and editing tools. The list of formats includes: 16 mm reversible, 16 mm negative, 35 mm, video of 2 inches, 1 inch video, Beta-SP, Beta-Digital, Mini-DV. The list of devices includes: U-matic, tape recorder ¼, Beta-SP, VHS/S-VHS and DVD. The list of editing tools includes: a 16 mm moviola, a 35 mm moviola, a 16 mm/35 mm moviola, an editing station VHS/S-VHS, an Avid and a Premiere-Pro. (Ehmann; Eshun, 2010: 190)

With his cinematic devices, Farocki collects and assembles a composition of images associated with the grammatical, syntactic and lexical structure. And, when providing the images and words in a horizontal line, he seeks to distance himself from both the tautological and transcendent dimension of the cinema. With Didi-Huberman (1998), we learnt the reason behind this distance: *the man of tautology*, denying the edition of the image (and the search for words that may go with it), settles for what he sees – with *the beautiful*, ostentatious, holy image etc.: what I see is what I see, and I am content with that. *The man of faith*, in turn, always wanting to find something transcendent, seeks to overcome both what we see and what sees us, creating a fictional model from his *divine* deed.

There is not a mystery to be worshipped, nor an absolute lack of sense with the images. By distancing and criticizing, from an early stage, these dimen-



2. Martin (2008: 25) would restate the importance of this classic work as follows: “The film of 1980 that showed how modern cinema would develop in the following decades is *Sains Soleil* [1983], by Marker: reflective, seductive, a kind of literary and cinematic puzzle (whose life story is it about, exactly?), but also an elliptical panorama of political experience lived and experienced in many places since 1950. In particular, the uncertain and intriguing statute as a new practice – the essay film – redraws the boundaries between documentary and fiction, objective report and imaginative speculation, analysis and fantasy.”

sions, Farocki would turn intensely for a deep value of editing and archaeology: “Images and words are similar: every word contains all that was written or stated earlier” (apud Farocki Pantenburg, 2003), indicating also the purpose of his position: “I want to make films that are not too distant from texts, but still very distinct” (Farocki, 2004a: 180). For the filmmaker, the example of *Sans Soleil* (1983), by Chris Marker, was perfect. The film showed extraordinary structures and connections of words and images; oddly, many people do not observe carefully the accuracy of Marker in the dialogue between images and words².

Perhaps it is really unproductive an understanding disseminated by Thomas Elsaesser – one of the best, and perhaps the first critic to note the relevance of the filmmaker’s in the early 1980s. On three occasions at least (Elsaesser, 1983, 2004, 2014), he repeated an argument in which he tries, somehow, to separate and then unite and tier Farocki’s *work with images* and the one *with words*, stating that the first is more devoted and celebrated in comparison with the second. In 2014, the critic cited the article of 1983, to again restate it:

The paradox is that Farocki is probably more brilliant as a writer than as a filmmaker, and that instead of this being a failing, it actually underlines his importance for the cinema today and his considerable role in the contemporary political avant-garde. Only by turning itself into “writing”, in the largest possible sense can “film” preserve itself as a form of intelligence. (Elsaesser, 2014: 3)

The previous understanding could please if it did not express a bias closely unproductive: it suggests a *noncinematographic* value, subtly and complimentary. In the same way as Marker and Godard (and others), if we can say that Farocki left a mark in the film history was with the horizontal relationship, intensely dialogical, with word and image, text and audiovisual; literature and cinema; linear grammar of writing and nonlinear structure of the image. In that case, what matters, and seems to be valuable, is to assume that the caution in structuring the images enables the encounter with “a reading that has never been written”, as Didi-Huberman (2011: 17) about the project *Atlas Mnemosyne* by the art historian Aby Warburg, author who set up a method in which the history of the images is transported to new aesthetic and knowledge values. In *Farocki’s pharmacy*, is the dialectic game with modern *phármakon* – equivalence between the writing technique and the cinematic technique – that values theater forces, spaces, dualities in a same line. Such a game would help him counter and face the hierarchical and violent orders of the world, from the combination with another influence: transverse ownership of the *images of the world*.

TRANSVERSE INFLUENCE – IMAGES OF THE WORLD

Transversality means, in geometry, when a line intersects a pair or parallel beams, producing different angles. Farocki's method with the images also expressed this perspective of transversality, leading him to encounters and to several and derivative processes of investigation.

An image that intersects two or more images at different points. Here is the value of the most embryonic transverse method requested by the filmmaker. The attention and work with the *images of the world* (*Bilder der Welt*) could be the term that sums up this influence and lives up to the title of the best known work by the filmmaker: *Images of the world and the inscription of war* (1988). The term "images of the world" relieves the reflective and philosophical sensibility that widens the perspective to look at the *reproductions of images* in cinema, from other media and worldwide. Transverse sensitivity adopts the role's perception, the function and layout of the image's materiality, in its crossing and acting with political, economic and cultural universes as a whole.

Transversality, in terms of method, means the integration of axes, themes; comprehensive practices that relate both the formal content as the dimensions and problems in historical contexts as well as present transformations. The transverse method on the *images of the world* fulfils an understanding of different types of knowledge and issues as an *agent* of images. This is not to be confused with an *interdisciplinary* function – which considers the disciplines in their delimited spaces, with the limits of action and interest of the previously noted and controlled subject (filmmaker).

Reflecting on the transverse influence of the images of the world by Farocki, we can perform an approximation with André Bazin and Martin Heidegger, two important thinkers of the image in the modern world. Bazin (1991) examined the invention of photography. For him, "for the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time, an *image of the world* is automatically formed without the creative intervention of man" (Ibid.: 22, our emphasis). Created in the early 19th century and perfected at the end of the same period, with the cinematograph, photography is a new agent in the world, of media intersections, thought in its distinctive crossings on the editing of cinematographic photos. Heidegger, however, focused on an event even more archeological and philosophical, identifying in Descartes the source of a thinking which ensured a new status to the instrumentality of the world and, in a sense, a new priority for the status of the vision. In modernity, vision is mediated by these instrumentalities. That meant, first of all, a new space of rationalization following the model of mathematization (*mathesis universalis*

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Cartesian) and mechanics of the world. *The age of the world picture*, argued the philosopher, is the time when the world is conceived as image (Heidegger, 2002). It seems to be in these lines of thought that Farocki's terms can be better understood: modernity, notably since the 19th century, painted a new age, in which technological devices of mechanical (re)production of images are constituted, producing the conditions of *observation of the world*.

Paradigmatic year to understand the transverse cinematic influence of Farocki's method, 1975 was also the publication year of *Notes on the cinematographer* by Robert Bresson, and release of the film *Numéro Deux* by Jean-Luc Godard. Two films that, over time, Farocki (2013a: 115, 2013b: 257, 2004a: 178) noticed and made explicit the seriousness and originality of their contributions. Bresson (1979: 10) specified, in his book, the potential and the differential of the cinematograph device as a machine to manufacture images from the observation of the world, i.e., from several models found on this, taken transversally from life (and not imagined, fabled etc.). In this perspective, the propositions and aesthetic practices of Bresson were close to those of Godard. *Numéro Deux* is also a "model" of transverse practice. In the video essay, in fixed frames, the filmmaker's monologue lasts eight minutes (from the second to the tenth). The occasion corresponds to a self-portrait and a stance-taking on the *images of the world* ("my, your, his image-sound", as it is emphasized, at the beginning of the film, amidst two images). In the dark room, handling his cinematograph, Godard released his dizzying monologue, which makes us contemplate the myriad of events and elements that are *inside-outside* of the images produced by the cinema: men and women gender (in the semantic French game of Godard: *machin-machine*), capitalism and communism, proletarian and employer, plant and art, repression and freedom, independent and subordinate film industry, among others. In this part (and in the whole film), as in Farocki's *pharmaceutical work* it would be continuously proclaimed from the comparative thinking, counter correlation, duality – going against everything that has been *divided*, separated from the authenticity and power of gestures in the world's composition. We reproduced below part of the dizzying and admirable monologue (in relief) on the *images of the world* that crossed Godard's cinema and forced him to scale the extreme difficulty of *reconciling* and making his cinematic work positive:

When the delegate makes a speech, he reads the words of others. But I think it's the paper that gives orders. And that's the trouble. Do you remember *Machin*? I think he's with the State Department in Washington now. I think he ended up as the consul for Jakarta. The last time I saw him was at a demonstration in Toulouse. [...] The cops came and we didn't see him again. See? Here, though, [...] It's simple,

because there aren't any *Machins*. Just machines. *Machin*, machine, see? *Machin* and I are machines, working. Men, women. *Machin*, machine. You wonder what is this place. It's a library. So, where are the books? There are no books, because it's a printing factory. We print. We don't print paper. "Paper", you know? That's what you call money. Drafts that are passed between banks. We call that "pushing paper." We don't make paper here, but we print. Well, is it a printing factory? No, it's not a printing factory, because we read books. [...] I don't know [...] in biology, you know, this is a factory. You could call it a factory here. The body is a factory too. It is a factory here, you see. I listen to the machines. That machine is going faster. Can you hear it? That machine is going slower. And I'm the boss. A special boss because I'm also the worker. (*Numéro Deux*, 1975)

Twenty years after *Numéro Deux*, in 1995, Farocki would be in front of his camera and film equipment the same way Godard did. The film *Interface composes* the vicissitudes of the crossing or intersection of the *images of the world* that *cross* the cinema. Farocki also led the camera to his own editing room. And now we see televisions, handheld camera, displays, controls, videotapes at the table. From a short auto-filmography, we see properly cinematic acts by the filmmaker, for example, the act of managing images, cutting the film, holding the camera in front of a screen, putting it on the shoulder, shooting the street through the window etc., which recalls the images of the political act of the amateur cameraman Paul Cozighian, exhibited on *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992); at the same time, we see *images of the world*: images of money out of the pocket, images of a revolution, of a factory, a studio, a lab; of books, machines, among others. We are fully immersed in a place where the potential of transverse influence is taken very seriously regarding the *images of the world*, in their uncontrollable contingency that *crosses* the editing room, and where the operator intercepts and is intercepted by them, trying to give *a meaning* to them, even if it is temporary, limited. (Figure 1)



FIGURE 1 – The world crosses the film (and vice versa) in *Numéro Deux* and in *Interface*



TRANSINDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE – OPERATION

The transindividual operation is what decisively unites and renders the two previous influences – horizontality between images and words and transversality of the images of the world – preparing *Farocki's pharmacy*, his operating media.

Here we may disclose, in broad outlines, what is Farocki's *operating media*, starting with the etymological sense of the term "operate." The verb "operate" comes from the Latin word *opus* (work), in a more concrete sense of the word – more physical, visible. The person who *operates* (plural of *opus*), i.e. someone who *works* is someone who consequently performs *operatio*, *operationes* ("operation", "operations"); literally: someone who works through action. *Opera*, according to the Dictionnaire *latin-français* (1934), by Felix Gaffiot, has the meaning of "work", "activity", "occupation" and also the meaning of "care", "attention"; and "effort" (*peine*).

With "effort", Farocki continuously referred to the senses of his *job-occupation* and *care-attention* – which exposes the full meaning of "operate." Numerous works were carried out from operations with images/words and from observations of the *images of the world*. Let us mention a few, for their main features: to operate to observe a photographic studio of a men's magazine (*An image*, 1983) or to analyze the origins of the advertising fetish (*Still life*, 1997); to operate to observe the moderators, audience developers and reports (*Moderators*, 1974; *Trouble with images*, 1973); to think about the war (production of napalm) (*Inextinguishable fire*, 1969), the condition of community/society (production of bricks) (*In comparison*, 2009), or the rites (visit to monuments) (*Transmission*, 2007); to operate to understand the gestures and the policy in the editing station (*Interface*, 1995), or mediatic constitution of television shows (*Deep Play*, 2007), the context of civil-military electronic world – from the missiles (*War at a distance*, 2003), the gestures of the hands – from silent films (*The expression of hands*, 1997), the infographics (*In-formation*, 2005), a report of the Holocaust (*Respite*, 2007) or files of synchronic images or corporate of workers and factories (*Workers leaving the factory*, 2005), prisons (*Prison Images*, 2001), office (*A new product*, 2011). In these operations, Farocki is what you can call *an image collector*, trying – in his case studies, fieldwork, collections research – to understand the meanings, objects, agents, and several gestures that appear with the *images of the world*; then, finally, they are deposited, on his editing table.

Thus, to operate is not – as one might think – analogous to the act of *showing* that it is made in a *making of*. To achieve the meaning of the term "operate"

focus, specifically, on keeping at a distance the idea of work understood in this sense, i.e., understood – most of the times – as a *backstage* filmic construction, adjusted to supplement the original work, as a subgenre typically interested in *fictionalize* the relationship between the *pre-* or *post-*production of audiovisual environments. In these terms, the *making of* does not want to assume the value of *operating media*, intended by Farocki.

Ultimately, the operating of Farocki composes what the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon (2005) called *transindividual*³. Transindividual – or *transindividuation*, as Bernard Stiegler (2009, 2010a, 2010b) improved the term later – designates the occurrence of operation in physical-technical, biological, mental, psychological and/or social areas. The operations follow the principle of individuation, which is characterized by the informational records of “stages of the being” – keeping at a distance the idea of identity or human nature. Transindividual operations, an element in itself, an area or one between areas suffer variation of intensities, from transformations, exchanges, in which media environments are comprised or associated. The horizon is always metastable derivative. And to lift it, the logic of transindividual thinking is the *transduction*³. Thus, transindividuation means the several operations of differentiations, exchanges, translations in movement of balance and imbalance (of entropies and negentropy), receiving procedural flow variations of physical, vital, mental and technical energies/information⁴.

The transindividual operation establishes the chance to look not only to the metastabilities or structures of the areas, but also to emphasize their *modulations*. This could, absolutely, be considered a gain for the political and aesthetic thinking, because it allows the concepts of individual and society not to get under the classical logic of deduction (or the reverse, the induction) – which tends to logically think objects and beings under a hylomorphic and substantialist line⁵. In this sense, individuation corresponds to “the appearance of stages in the being, which are the stages of the being. It is not a mere isolated consequence arising as a by-product of becoming, but this very process itself as it unfolds” (Simondon, 2005: 25). With the transindividuation we can understand that widely known sentence of the main character, Riobaldo, in *The devil to pay in the backlands*:

The Sir look... see: the most important and beautiful, of the world, is this: that the people are not always same, still were not completed – but that they go always shifting. They tune or detune. Truth major. It is what life taught me. This that animates me, a lot. (Rosa, 2006: 23)

3. According to Simondon (2005: 34), such a notion receives the following value: “Transduction is not only one aspect of the spirit; it is also intuition, since it is a structure that appears in a problematic area, therefore, a resolution of the problems. However, unlike deduction, transduction does not seek elsewhere a principle to solve the problem of a domain: it removes the solver structure of tensions in its own domain, as well as the oversaturated solution crystallizes thanks to its potential.”

4. The notion of transindividuation arises from the effective *operation* of psychic and collective composition (of *me* and *us*) that begins on the fertile operation of the individual/society with analogic, digital, literary media (grammatization). These media allow the *compositions* (or decomposition) of public spaces, publicizing mechanisms, authentic discussions – transindividuations (Stiegler, 2010a; 2010b).

5. Two ways of thinking of Greek origin openly questioned by Simondon, since they create idealistic and “closed” definitions in relation to beings: *hylomorphism* defines a fundamental distinction between form and matter in the explanation of the formation of beings; while *substantialism* (or monism) defines being as the *identical* a unit and *founded upon* itself. Both ways of thinking are, therefore, different from the transindividual thinking, which is open to alterities and to internal processes and among beings.

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As noted by the character Riobaldo, individuals/societies “tune or de-tune.” The observation with the transindividual influence can reveal the *compositions* (or *decomposition*) of the *socius*, of *philia*; the presence or absence of positive transindividuation in the relationship with the world. Thus, the idea of “experience loss”, of *deindividuation* may be understood as the movement of *socius* decomposition; as the loss of the ability to identify (lack of uniqueness). In other words, of the lowering of the creation of the populations’ “personal worlds” (thoughts, values, critical skills, artistic, authentic styles of life etc.). The loss of individuation would, therefore, be synonymous of *proletarianization*, which would expand such a concept from Marx (Simondon, 1989; Stiegler, 2009) (An acute example could be the loss of individuation that generated Fascist regimes in the twentieth century).

It is in such transindividual terms that we believe being able to capture states and the ways in which the filmmaker assesses, infers, unfolds, clarifies, enhances etc. He accepts the transductions of the *images of the world* that cross his operating, giving meaning, understanding and uniqueness to them, *enhancing* diverse transindividuations.

It is understandable, therefore, in the transindividual perspective, that the filmmaker does not want to “control” the world from a schedule, a script. He wants to *insert* himself in the world and somehow activate new compositions – materializing gestures and sharing works with ethical-political purposes. Farocki operates from a perspective that puts himself, as an artist, as a person who could be an exemplary figure of transindividuation: an operator of transindividuation; of multiple capacities – technical, social, psychological – that makes the film a point of *pharmacological inflection*.

The transindividual operating medias of Farocki is not similar only to Godard’s. He, also in an embryonic way, is inserted to the German Fluxus art movement. Joseph Beuys, one of the exponents of this movement, would venture to think in an environment of art able to create new forms of thought, materialities, wills, sensitivities; i.e., of transindividuations. Beuys did not cease to activate links to materials that have always been considered “poor” in the field of art (works with felt, sulfur, fat, honey, blood, dead animals, among others). He was interested in an art that was not limited, *stabilized*, in a set of materials considered *classic*. His operation is the search for *reconciliation* with the materialities and beings of the world, starting with a real restitution of the human body: “Ich sowieso denke mit dem Knie” (“I think with my knee, anyway”) was his art-poster-provocation of 1977 (Figure 2). The art of Beuys, as well as Farocki’s, is the expression of the dialogue and processing of ideas, materialities and sharing of their operations. Beuys wanted to take a step beyond

the aesthetics of avant-garde in plastic arts. Farocki, an attempt to execute the proposition “writing-filming” of the *Nouvelle Vague*⁶, as Bellour notes (2015: 65): “A filmmaker who writes and continues to write, as he always did, not only the texts of his films or about his films, but about the films of others and cinema in general, is a very rare thing that must be approached.”

6. For Farocki, the *Nouvelle Vague*, in general, by starting to produce films, left aside what had explicitly stated: the idea of always combining the writing (discussions, analyses, questions etc.) and make films.



FIGURE 2 – Poster (detail) of J. Beuys (1977)

The proposal of the Fluxus Movement was the production of *living art*, in flux. The performance was, therefore, naturally a gesture very cultivated. In 2010, Farocki would perform a homage to Tomas Schmit (1943-2006), one of the German artists of the Fluxus group. *Transfusion. Variations of opus 1 by Tomas Schmit (Umgießen. Variationen zu Opus 1 von Tomas Schmit, 2010)* would be a video installation, composed of seven electronic panels arranged in circuit, reinterpreting the performance of Schmit in *Cycle for water buckets (or bottles)* (1963) (*Zyklus for water-pails [or bottles]*). In Schmit's performance, the interpreter remains in a circle of 10 to 30 buckets or bottles of water (“of different types, if possible”, as endorsed Schmit). One full of water; the other ones empty. The interpreter then dumps the full bottle, emptying it to fill the

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next one to the right. He repeats this process with the bottle recently filled and the next empty bottle on the right – moving in circles, until all the water evaporated or spilled. The performance was a demonstration of the transindividuation operation, which means we are in levels that tend to a metastability from tensions, overflow, inexorable variables in the process (Figure 3). However, in the installation of 2010, Farocki introduced a robotic hand performing; and, in the synopsis of his work, he alludes: “The act prevents the symbolism [...]. It was similar to the simplicity of a play of Beckett, in its simplicity and concreteness. Even in the regularity of the performance, there was an evolution; the anti-action was, by itself, an end” (Farocki, 2010).



FIGURE 3 – Performance of Schmit in Amsterdam (1963) and video installation of Farocki (Transfusion, 2010)

Source: Dorine van der Klei; Osram Art Projects

In *Farocki's pharmacy*, the dimension of a transindividual operation, under the line of the aesthetic avant-garde, found invaluable contributions from the propositions of *redefinition* of Pop art, of Beuys, Schmit, Warhol, but also of denaturalization or detachment of Brecht, as it is well known. These contributions establish direct references of aesthetic experiences that would help Farocki to constitute his style of transindividual operation. In one of the many opportunities that might relate his work to the avant-garde, he stressed the indispensable value of *self-reflection* present in Brecht:

Probably in the early 20th century the intellectual production became self-reflective and writers commented on the methods of writing with accompanying texts. Self-reflection is not a new concept. Only for the cinema – which is an illusion and always hid their technical means and my interest is to do the opposite – naturally, we cannot really show, but we can create a certain media transparency [...]. This is similar, for example, to the principles of Brecht, who tried to show the theater machine and the dramaturgical methods. (Farocki, 2008a: 66)

Reflectivity is presented here with high appreciation. Farocki expressly required it: “I want to be able to view everything from a different perspective, again and again, in the way one rephrases an idea after talking to different people, hoping that the idea might increase in depth and form” (Farocki, 2004b: 301). His main interest could be the appreciation of a political gesture that values the transindividual media operation from a reflexivity and resistance to the automation of deindividuation.

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We can then say that the *media operation* of Farocki, his method, mobilizes the horizontal (*image/word*), transverse (*images of the world*) and transindividual (*operation*) influences, seeking, ultimately, the transindividuation and the composing in the editing and in the works with files – extending the conception of cinema to make it a *pharmaceutical inflection* point.

Operate, as we saw, gave the filmmaker the opportunity to highlight and transform, very freely, the dialectic and materialistic philosophy from which he tried to practice in youth. Thus, the line of historical-critical understanding, present in this tradition, would be, over time, increasingly transformed into his work. *Farocki's pharmacy* gives, to us, a dimension of *deconstruction*, as the deconstructive thinking is always the reflexive understanding, consis-



tent in the transindividual operating, the first one demanded – and not the “structuring” understanding. Here, it distances itself from metaphysics, from dogmatism and from romanticism, which tend to rectify the images or cancel the transverse approaches with the *images of the world*, eliminating the experiences of memorization, repetition and redevelopment with the technical support. A work that it is reflective and practical, at the same time – “a game of knowing and living”, being the general rule to free the hidden experience (Ferraris, 2006). And the deconstruction aims to be, above all, a *style* (Ferraris, 2011), i.e. before an ethical-political arrangement with the materialities, with texts and audiovisuals, a rigid, ontological, epistemological instance. In Farocki, what we call *method* needs to be categorized in the *style* area, i.e., in the area of practical reflection, which definitely becomes political.

For us, it is in this sense of *remembering, repeating, redeveloping* with the technical support that Farocki can be better understood in the perspective that attempts to operate and show what was *hidden* in the sociotechnical processes of the daily life⁷. Foucault (1995: 275), author who was close to these basic terms of the deconstructive thinking, studied and completed:

It is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices – historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across systems while using them.

Farocki (1992) says: “My path is to go in search of a buried meaning, to clear the debris that clog the images⁸.” In his transindividual thinking, the path would not be limited to explain the “structural situations of social domination” or to specify the set of “productive forces and the relations of production”, in such a way to understand this as a criticism, or to be established within the limits of a complaint. His work would, more than that, effect the constitution of reminiscence exercises and exams, tracing *compositions*, works – his reflections and openings to the visible world – that will lead to a awake viewer, compelled to reflect, to think.

To operate media is a *job-occupation, a care-attention*. That corroborates another declaration of Foucault (1994: 417):

No technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can one learn the art of living, the *technê tou biou*, without an *askêsis* that must be understood as a training of the self by the self.

7. In *The expression of hands* (1997)

Farocki explained the phenomenology of *break* or *interruption* of what is usual (from devices and human actions) as something indispensable to *unveil* the true value of something and its operation.

8. Original: “Mein

Weg ist es, nach verschüttetem Sinn zu suchen und den Schutt, der auf den Bildern liegt, wegzuräumen.”

In the Greco-Roman world, *hypomnemata* (material memory) were constituted by personal notebooks, ledgers, notarial records and correspondence. *Media operating* at the time was a private or shared experience of personal notebooks, which “corresponded to a material memory of things read, heard or thought; thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation” (Foucault, 1994: 418). In turn, modern *hypomnemata* will be constituted, in Farocki, by exercise – operate – in his editing room, especially of horizontal, transverse, transindividual method with images/words from several media. And this elementary exercise of care-attention would find in the filmmaker (Bresson 1979), a “perfect” polish, distant from a classical dialectical perspective⁹.

In the “Introduction” of his important and popular book, *Cinema, video*, Godard, Philippe Dubois (2004: 26) wrote:

In my view, no other filmmaker (except for maybe Chris Marker, in a more isolated and insular path) discussed with so much insistence, depth and diversity the *mutation of the images*. In the field of contemporary creation, in which the cinema lost the certainty of enjoying the monopoly of images in movement, Godard has always taken the lead.

For everything seen, would not it be permissible, and perhaps even necessary, to include the German filmmaker in an assessment such as Dubois'? In this article, we showed some reasons for an affirmative answer – providing discussions in editing and media theory, attempting to reveal Farocki as a *media operator*. ■

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9. “To keep the picture stable [in moviola], we had to lean something against the back roller, which functioned as a brake. Our magazine *Filmkritik* was too light. *The Dialectics of nature by Engels* [1883] was too heavy. *The Notes on the cinematographer* [1975], by Bresson, were perfect” (Farocki apud Eshun; Ehmann, 2010: 190).



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- The expression of hands (Der Ausdruck der Hände, 1997, 30', doc.)*
- As you see (Wie man sieht, 1986, 72', doc.)*
- Deep Play (co-direction Mathias Rajmann, 12 tracks, 2:15', 2007, inst.)*
- Before your eyes, Vietnam (Etwas wird sichtbar, 1982, 114', fiction)*
- In comparison (Zum Vergleich, 2009, 61', doc.)*
- Prison images (Gefängnisbilder, 2000, 60', doc.)*

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Images of the world and the inscription of war (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges, 1988, 75', doc.)

Interface (Schnittstelle, 1995, 23', inst.)

Respite (Aufschub, 2007, 40', doc.)

Moderators (Moderatoren im Fernsehen, 1974, 22', doc.)

Nothing ventured (Nicht ohne Risiko, 2004, 50', doc.)

Still life (Stilleben, 1997, 56', doc.)

Inextinguishable fire (Nicht Löschbares Feuer, 1969, 25', fiction)

The trouble with images (Der Ärger mit den Bildern, 1973, 48', doc.)

War at a distance (co-direction Mathias Rajmann, Erkennen und Verfolgen, 2003, 58', doc.)

Workers leaving the factory (Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik, 1995, 36', doc.)

Transfusion. Variations of opus 1 by Tomas Schmit (Umgießen. Variationen zu Opus 1 von Tomas Schmit, 2010, 21', inst.)

Transmission (Übertragung, 2007, 43', doc.)

An image (Ein Bild, 1983, 25', doc.)

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Article received on May 12, 2015 and approved on January 7, 2016.