

Eyes Wide Open: The Look of Obstinacy,
the Gaze of the Camera, and the 24/7 Economy in Antja Ehmann
and Harun Farocki's *Labour in a Single Shot* (2011-2015)

Richard Langston
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“the danger we run in losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut” (Calvino 92)¹

“the *human* eye enjoys things in a way different from the crude, non-human eye” (Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” 301)

I. Considering Another Subject under 24/7: A Theoretical Preamble

As its full title makes clear, the polemic *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* by art historian Jonathan Crary queries how neoliberal capitalism has, in his words, fused intrusive round-the-clock technologies and tireless profit-driven rationalities such that pre-existing temporalities of human life—the times of sleep, retreat, rest, and rejuvenation—are now perilously endangered. Of utmost concern for Crary is sleep's inherent status as bulwark. Crucial for this distinction is a qualification laid down by Karl Marx in his second draft of *Capital* from 1861-1863. “There are,” Marx writes,

. . . natural barriers to the duration of daily labour time of a particular individual. Leaving aside the time required for the intake of food, the individual needs sleep, relaxation, needs a break during which labour capacity and its organ can enjoy rest without which they are incapable of continuing the work or starting afresh. (“Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63,” 181)

Echoing Marx, Crary initially frames sleep as a recurring elemental pause in the course of human temporality. It is what makes life inherently “rhythmic and periodic,” “variegated [and] cumulative” (9). It is “an interval of time that cannot be colonized and harnessed” (Crary 10-11). Subjected to capitalism and its drive to expropriate labor power, sleep “frustrates and confounds any strategies to

exploit or reshape it” (Crary 11). Yet the unparalleled demands of 24/7 capitalism have begun to wreck this natural barrier. According to the sleepless *Kapitallogik* ‘logic of capital’ of today’s 24/7 economy, the distinctions between day and night—for Marx the “natural measure of labour’s duration”—and by extension, work and sleep, have become undone (“Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63,” 181). Under this incessant regime of indifference, homogeneity, and total synchronicity, “the planet becomes reimagined as a non-stop work site,” Crary explains, and as a result, sleep is “cut loose from notions of necessity or nature” (17, 13). Once a state of resistance, sleep—now as the divide between night and day blurs—has fallen under the sway of capital like never before.

Crary’s robust account of 24/7’s technological infrastructure and its concomitant imaginary of a harmonious fusion of restless capital and life relies on considerations the author himself does not always fully flesh out. One such factor that gets lost in his rhetoric, the importance of which must not be underestimated, is his implied theory of the subject. What exactly constitutes a subject and to what degree is a subject malleable? Does work facilitate or hinder subject formation? What has the upper hand, the subject’s claim to autonomy or the pressure of external forces? Such fundamental questions should resonate for readers when, for example, Crary claims early on that under the star of 24/7 “our bodies and identities assimilate an ever-expanding surfeit of services, images, procedures, chemicals, to a toxic and often fatal threshold” (10). Careful attention to Crary’s language points, in other words, to a stark notion of subjects virtually powerless against the neoliberal onslaught of 24/7. The theoretical roots of Crary’s account are as decisive for the whole of his argument as they are indistinct. Instead of aligning himself with, say, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s relational anthropology or even mining Marx’s theory of the human being’s essential powers, authors essential for his argument early on, he instead takes an ontological turn. Yet neither Martin Heidegger, whose thought Crary considers obsolete, nor Jacques Lacan, the other dominant strand in the recent ontological turn in political thought, serve here as signposts.² Rather, it is one of Heidegger’s grandchildren, namely Jean-Luc Nancy, who illuminates for Crary how Heidegger’s ontological concept of *Mitsein* (‘being-with’ others)—originally designated as the precursor of any individuated identity—has ostensibly come “unhinged from its relation to communal forms” (21).³ In lieu of spelling out the nature of this theoretical framework and its implication for the subject, Crary enumerates some of the effects of *Mitsein*’s undoing for the individual toiling away in the 24/7 economy. 24/7 has, for example, incapacitated visual experience and disintegrated the “ability to join visual discriminations with social and ethical valuations” (33). Similarly, it has remade “attention into repetitive operations and responses that always overlap with acts of looking and listening” (52). And it has incapacitated the power to daydream along with “any other mode of absent-

mindful introspection” (88). Underlying all these effects, then, is an ontological defect brought about by the regimes of 24/7 that isolates subjects existentially from being with others. On the surface, this defect gives rise to a sensorium in the subject so thoroughly suggestible in the “non-stop life-world” of 24/7 that its only remaining powers of resistance are to be seized during what little sleep is still left at night (Crary 8).

Crary’s chosen notion of the fundamentally compromised subject compounds the dire effects he attributes to 24/7. There is, in other words, little if anything subjects can do against 24/7 other than going to sleep. Sleep is, however, no mere capitulation, he insists. If constant exposure to the pervasive regimes of 24/7 has effectively short-circuited the subject’s existential structure—its *Mitsein*—thereby detaching it from a community, then it is the time asleep when exposure wanes, when being together with others also asleep has a chance to thrive, and when the individual can, in Crary’s words, catch glimpses of “an un-lived life” (127). But what hope, if any, is to be found exactly in glimpses caught in solitary states of slumber?⁴ Even if sleep is indeed predicated on “mutual support and trust” from others, how exactly can “dreams of sleep,” which Crary considers the imaginative beginnings for “a future without capitalism,” translate into individual or even collective action (125-26)? Crary’s implied negative ontology of the subject effectively forecloses any and all diurnal forms of resistance against 24/7 and thus begs the question whether his bleak prognosis is indeed our ineluctable fate or whether other, overlooked ways out of our contemporary predicament—for example, the reinscription of the political—might also be possible. In this spirit, the following essay, far from disputing the veracity of Crary’s account, tracks the subject’s capacity for resistance not in spite of but rather precisely because of 24/7’s effects. To this end, the ensuing pages eschew both ontology and anthropology and instead knowingly wander into what Crary’s theoretical gurus consider forsaken territory, namely the language of Marx’s political economy.⁵ In lieu of enlisting Marxist ontologies like those of Ernst Bloch or Georg Lukács that could conceivably meet Crary on his own terms, this essay holds that resistance is nothing less than work and for this we require the critical vocabulary of a political economy of labor.⁶ Frankfurt School scions Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt achieve just this in their magnum opus *History and Obstinacy*.

“Death, in many guises,” Crary decries, “is one of the by-products of neoliberalism: when people have nothing further that can be taken from them, whether resources or labor power, they are quite simply disposable” (44). For Kluge and Negt, death is never the result of any especially draconian demand on another’s labor power. The expenditure of labor power that any one human body can manage is always a function of both its innate abilities to comply and produce, and its equally innate propensity to withstand extremes that would

otherwise threaten its livelihood. In their account, physical death is the result of severe mistreatment of another body such that its cells and organs are annihilated.⁷ The vital materialist distinction between Cray and Kluge and Negt ultimately goes back to Marx, who explained in the “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” “My essential power exists for itself as a subjective capacity” (301). And later in *Capital* he explains: “The aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities in a human being can never be entirely regulated or wholly expunged by the demands of capital” (177).⁸ These limits, Kluge and Negt point out, are rooted in humankind’s originary nature, its biology, where labor power ultimately emerges: “When measured against the high degree of suggestibility common among the social organs and their characteristics,” they note in *History and Obstinacy*, “[the originary organs] show very little variation, even under the drastic circumstances of advanced societies” (99). In other words, every time capital encroaches on the socially malleable senses of second nature—e.g., “love, knowledge, mourning, memory . . .”—there are protective self-regulatory processes committed to conserving the living substrate—e.g., “cells, the skin, . . . the brain”—on top of which these aforementioned senses are erected (98). Elicited by the demands of capital, this self-regulation, which turns obstinate under extreme duress, is very much a diurnal phenomenon. An additional register of labor operating underneath the labor power yielded to capital, self-regulation either makes work tolerable or, when pushed to the brink, tips the scales and rebuffs capital’s demands entirely. It is, in other words, what prevents the demands of work from literally sucking the life out of workers.

Neither a bona fide ontology nor an anthropology rooted in constants, Kluge and Negt’s theory is rather a political economy of labor power that tenders the missing other half of Marx’s own account of capital. Whereas Marx tracks the historical reorientation of human characteristics necessary for labor power’s servitude to capital—in other words, labor’s exchange and use value—Kluge and Negt map out the interior terrain where natural characteristics, coerced by the victories of history into working in the name of their own preservation, lay the ground work for a collective resistance. The tricky political task entails deploying a supplemental labor, one capable of organizing obstinate self-will into a “confederation and association of producers” (127). Kluge and Negt initially illustrate this with respect to the production of images and therewith underscore the fundamental challenge, namely overcoming the sensory disconnect constitutive of all alienated experience:

A person’s two eyes see something different from what is seen by the collectively unified eyes of a group of people. The collective production of goods develops images of exchange value that cannot be tested by two pairs of eyes. Political images and images of the world unfold their own

laws of motion that cannot be refuted by individuals opposing them using their own visual scrutiny. When the sense of having takes hold of the eyes, they actually see value, instead of concrete objects. (110)

No different than any other form of capital brought forth by dead labor, commodity images assume lives of their own that exceed both the perception and influence of all those who brought them forth. For a liberated vision to emerge, eyes, neither limited to the immediate obligations of labor nor blinded by the ideologies that arise out of the circulation of value, must fulfill their own internal directive to work autonomously while nevertheless acting in concert with other sets of eyes.⁹ Merely an isolated illustration at the level of bodily organs for what would need to occur at the much higher level of the collective subject, which they identify as nothing less than an alternative to Marx's *Gesamtarbeiter* 'collective worker' toiling away under capital, Kluge and Negt's case for both the human capacity for resistance as well as the potential for social emancipation gives us pause to reconsider Crary's account of the perfectly exposed subject languishing under 24/7.¹⁰ What still remains, however, abstract and thus unclear is what sorts of concrete supplementary labor could conceivably create the conditions for the constitution of a confederation of producers. For this we must enter into the fray of 24/7 and consider how technology, instead of serving as the model for the refunctionalization of the human, can in fact mediate, in concert with a few select techniques, the emergence of an alternative collective worker.¹¹ Taking Kluge and Negt's aforementioned illustration of the encumbered eye as its starting point, the following essay considers one exceptional, contemporary instance of the cinematic apparatus in order to make the case for the possibility of a collective resistance in 24/7 not consigned to the time of sleep.

II. Filmmaker as Producer: [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) (2011-2015)

Writing virtually in the same key as Crary, film scholar Thomas Elsaesser explained shortly after the turn of the millennium:

If I ask myself how the technical and, subsequently, the electronic media have transformed civil society, labour and work, politics and the arts in the past half-century, I could find no better chronicler of their histories, and no more intelligent observer of their unexpected connections than Harun Farocki. ("Harun Farock" 55)

With films like [*Prison Images*](#) (2000) and [*War at a Distance*](#) (2003) as well as multiple channel installations like [*Eye/Machine I-III*](#) (2001-2003) and [*Serious Games I-IV*](#) (2009-2010), Farocki established himself in the course of the first

decade of the twenty-first century as a master chronicler of the apparatus's complicity in what Gilles Deleuze called the "society of control" and Crary dubs "24/7."¹² Concurrent to his final installations on [war](#) and [computer animation](#), Farocki and his wife, artist and curator Antje Ehmann, seemed, however, to backtrack into what, at first sight, looks like antiquated territory. With the support from both Farocki's film studio as well as the federally funded Goethe Institut, the duo visited twelve cities around the world—five in Europe, four in the Americas, another four in Asia, and two in Africa—where they held video production workshops for largely novice filmmakers entitled "Open Your Eyes." After learning the basics, participants were then invited to shoot shorts one to two minutes in length that documented various types of labor from their corner of the globe. One third political pedagogy, another third labor ethnography, and a final third film school assignment, Ehmann and Farocki's project framed its aspirations from the outset thusly: "The subject of investigation is 'labour': paid and unpaid, material and immaterial, rich in tradition or altogether new." Of particular concern were the limits of the cinematic apparatus regarding its purchase on labor: "Where can we see which kinds of labour?" Ehmann and Farocki ask. "What is hidden? What happens in the centre of a city, what occurs at the periphery? What is characteristic and what is unusual with regard to each city? What kinds of labour processes set interesting cinematographic challenges?"¹³ Short films that met Ehmann and Farocki's sole criterion—in order to heighten both the cinematographer's and spectator's powers of concentration only shorts devoid of cuts were allowed—would be automatically included as-is in *Labour in a Single Shot*, an online [catalogue](#) that would serve as a cinematic archive of the state of labor at the dawn of the twenty-first century.¹⁴ Exhibitions held in eleven cities—from Bangalore to Berlin, Mexico City to Tel Aviv—quickly followed as well as a string of international conferences.¹⁵

Making sense of *Labour in a Single Shot* is a tall task. For one, the unfinished project includes to date over 400 films shot by some 300 different filmmakers of varying aptitudes using a wide range of tools—from cell phones to professional cameras—as well as digital formats. For this reason, to call the entire assemblage a coherent Farocki film is a stretch at best. In fact, Ehmann and Farocki were equally adamant that their role was neither that of author nor collector: "Wir sind Produzenten" 'We're producers,' they insisted in an interview published only a week after Farocki's sudden death in July 2014, "wir veranstalten Workshops und schlagen Ideen vor . . . manchmal ohne, manchmal mit gegenteiliger Wirkung" 'we organize workshops and suggest ideas . . . sometimes without and sometimes with contrary outcomes' (Reinecke). Similarly, attempting to distill meaning from either the commonalities or disparities between all the individual films would make for difficult work and very likely produce arbitrary results that would invariably fall short of the

project's universalizing aspirations, its efforts to tally the state of labor at the dawn of a new millennium. Still more challenging is reconciling this final collaboration with the primary pillars of Farocki's own filmmaking, in general, and his genealogy of the image, in particular. According to Farocki scholar Elsaesser, it is Bertolt Brecht who did more than anyone to influence Farocki's interest in images ("Political Filmmaking" 140, 143-45). Summing up Farocki's admiration best is Brecht's own famous passage from his 1931 proceedings from the *Threepenny* lawsuit (see figure 1): "A photograph of the Krupp Works or of [AEG](#) yields nearly nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional" (117). Unquestionably drawn throughout his career to Brecht's incriminating theory of the photographic image, Farocki also came to decenter Brecht's implied epistemology—the indexical functional dimension beyond the frame—by returning to the image and interrogating what is represented within it: history, reality, identity, subjectivity.¹⁶ For all Farocki's indebtedness to and critical engagement with Brecht, his utility for unlocking *Labour in a Single Shot* is, however, negligible at best, especially as such a premise would ask theoretically so much of so many films shot by so many different neophytes from so many different places around the globe.



Figure 1: Peter Behren's AEG am Humboldthain, Berlin-Moabit, 1909-1912

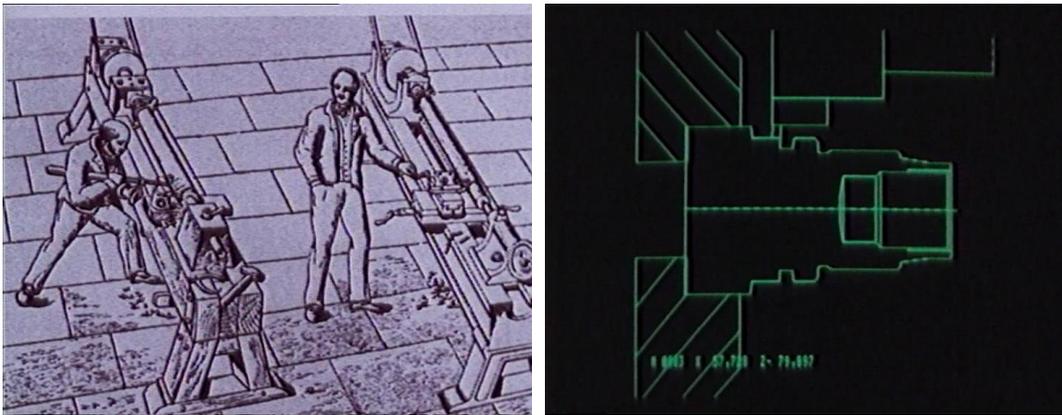
While Brecht's influence may indeed be a poor fit, Walter Benjamin's seminal 1934 essay "The Author as Producer" does forcefully ask us to reconsider the potential in Farocki's very late shift from filmmaker to producer. Politically committed authorship, says Benjamin, must align itself with the conditions of production prevalent in its contemporary moment and, to this end, authorship

must cast off its pretense of specialization; it must avail itself of techniques that constellate literary forms anew; and above all it must place the cognitive burden on the audience such that cultural consumers “reflect on [their] position in the process of production” (Benjamin 779). Only through this reflective moment can an efficacious solidarity between author and proletariat emerge. Employing Benjamin’s idea of the author as producer to approach Ehmann and Farocki’s [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) shall require, however, some translation. Of greatest concern is adjusting for the radical transformation of production itself under the prevailing neoliberal conditions. According to Marxist geographer David Harvey, whose language Crary echoes, the stock market has long surpassed production as the driving economic force (32). Influential for this shift has been the explosion of information technologies since the 1990s that have not only accelerated financial capital but also spawned new high-tech production sectors within staple culture industries like film, television and music (Harvey 157-59). As for cinema, this sea change has not only witnessed film’s emigration from its traditional confines (e.g., from movie theater and living rooms to desktops and mobile screens) but also has delivered moving images and the means of cinematic production into the hands of the countless many far removed from classical cinema’s purview. Cinema has metastasized to such a degree that some critics have gone so far as to propose that consciousness, perception, and subjectivity have fallen entirely under the sway of an emergent “world media-system” (Beller 298). The task at hand, therefore, is to consider how Ehmann and Farocki’s status as producers in [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) reflects not only on cinema’s drastically altered standing but also the very status of (cinematic) production itself in the age of neoliberalism. Furthermore, it shall necessitate consideration of both the centrality of labor in Farocki’s long filmmaking career as well as his eventual reappraisal of auteurist production values that framed so much of his seminal work. In a series of jumps back and forth between Farocki’s own work and his final collaborative project with Ehmann and some 300 other filmmakers—five jumps that will take us from city to city and from the dawn of neoliberalism in the 70s and 80s to its apparent zenith in the first decades of the twenty-first century—we will begin to see how he eventually reappraises what he once thought to be a viable means of counter-production.

III. Munich: [*An Image*](#) (1983)

What has made Brecht’s statement on photography so powerful for so long is his call for a shift away from attempting to glean from a photograph’s surface information about, for example, the places where people work and the remunerated activities they perform there, the nature of their relationships or even their sense of reality. According to Brecht disciples Kluge and Negt, the

functional dimension describes abstract conditions engendered by capitalist production: “To slip into the functional means . . . to deceive all the senses, as well as to render useless a wide range of labor resources necessary for indirect orientational operations” (Kluge and Negt 236, 238). Neither visible nor readily imaginable, the functional is only knowable through a set of complex relations for which the technique of montage is far better suited than any photograph. What gets lost in such an elucidation of the functional is, however, the subject of the actual photograph in question. Of concern for Brecht is not the site of organized labor power, for the modern factory tells us, he says, practically nothing about how the political economy of labor power has reified human relations at large. This is the “reality” of which a photograph knows nothing.



Figures 2a & 2b: Two technical images: Harun Farocki's *As You See* (1986)

If this reality is to be found, says Brecht, outside both the factory and the photograph, it is nevertheless within the latter's frame, says Farocki, where we can begin to perceive the transformation of capital's production process. Practically all of Farocki's films from the 1980s—from the narrative short *Before Your Eyes: Vietnam* (1982) to the magisterial essay film *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988)—wrestle with the evolution of ways of seeing vis-à-vis the historical transformation of labor power as it morphed from handwork to machine work to data work. Far from telling two parallel yet discrete stories, one of images and another of labor, Farocki's films explore the inextricable ways in which ever more technologically sophisticated optical regimes infiltrate and shape how we work. Consider, for example, the sequence from his 1986 film *As You See* from which the twin images in figure 2 were taken. We see the ocular discipline of the machine worker suddenly cut to a scene of automated production guided by what Vilém Flusser has called “technical images,” i.e., computer-generated images of little if any representational value that nevertheless preside over the

operational process (14). Far from stirring up nostalgia for bygone forms of eye-hand coordination or decrying the tyranny of seeing robots that have usurped workers altogether, Farocki's concern throughout the 1980s centered on understanding how this genealogy subtends contemporary power, discipline, control, and even war.



Figure 3: The apparatus behind the apparatus: Harun Farocki's [An Image](#) (1983)

Absolutely crucial in this formative decade in Farocki's career is a transformation whereby his films eschew trying to demystify the image by inserting a camera into the conditions of production. Unlike films from the second half of the decade like [As You See](#) and [Images of the World](#) that largely recycle found images in order to divine a critical knowledge of production from its products, those made at the outset of the decade still heavily rely on camerawork conceived as a form of counter-production. What proves especially tricky for the cinematography in a film like [An Image](#) (1983) is the task of managing the cinematic apparatus such that it refrains from replicating the pleasure and power inscribed in the ocular regime of work it seeks to document and know (see figure 3). Shot onsite at the Munich editorial offices of *Playboy* magazine, [An Image](#) begins as if Farocki's camera belonged to the set on which we see a mock living room with fireplace under construction. As the intended *mise-en-scène* nears completion and a nude female model takes the stage, Farocki's camera retreats behind the pornographer's own apparatus, albeit askew, so as to frame from the wings the labor invested in framing, in this case, a prurient image. It is not insignificant that Farocki's own apparatus never sets its sights on the privileged object from the standpoint of the

pornographer's gaze. Although we do see the model, the scopophilia and its attendant power produced by the work of coupling the object's gaze with that of the pornographer's is undercut not only by the aloof interloping of Farocki's camera at the fringes but also the unsettling modernist soundtrack by Klaus Klingler. As if to suggest, however, that this direct access to the making of power out of images still runs the risk of replicating the labor of the pornographic gaze, Farocki's films resort more and more in the wake of [An Image](#) to stitching together troves of found images already fixed on paper, celluloid, and video.¹⁷ This key shift in Farocki's oeuvre is significant on multiple levels. For one, it suggests that a successful counter-production is not contingent upon turning the means of production against itself as is illustrated by the auteur's attempt to subject the pornographer's work to the camera's gaze. Secondly, it calls into question Brecht's own entreaty to look beyond, or in this case behind the frame, for to enter into the functional is, say Kluge and Negt, to inhabit the realm of "alienated labor, inverted life, false consciousness" (237). Any intended critical purchase on the functional is inevitably undercut by the abstractions and contortions characteristic of that dimension. Thirdly, and for our present purposes most importantly, this shift indicates that preexisting images refrain from looking back at the apparatus, that lost, forgotten, or ignored images made by others refrain from completing the image-making circuit that fuels scopophilic power.

IV. Buenos Aires: [Dry Cleaner](#) (2013)

Let us now visit a dry cleaning facility somewhere in Buenos Aires and therewith turn our attention back to the problem of [Labour in a Single Shot](#). A tightly framed static shot lasting only ninety seconds, Florencia Percia's contribution to Ehmann and Farocki's project shows us a middle-aged man, a mangle operator, enveloped by steam rising up from the laundry he irons. Clues at the margins of the frame establish a concrete sense of place as well as the dimensions of the labor involved. Yet Percia's camera shows us little of the actual work this nameless worker bee performs with his hands. Instead, what we spectators see is a worker peering into the camera, a distracted look ostensibly directed back at us, the consumers of his spectacle of work. Not a fleeting glance, his look lingers on the camera. And even when he looks to the right or back down at the work at hand, his eyes invariably zoom back on the camera. Again and again. Why does he look so intently into the camera? Does he crave distraction? Or does his stern look into the camera silently convey a sense of being intruded upon? What exactly does this worker see as he looks up, if anything?



Figure 4: The look at work: Florencia Percia, “[Dry Cleaner](#),” Buenos Aires 2013

In their written overview of their project, Ehmann and Farocki remark that spectators will see “all kinds of labor every day. Shoe repairers, waiters and cooks, window cleaners, tattoo-artists or garbage workers.”¹⁸ But do we really see all kinds of labor? When subsequently asked in the aforementioned interview about what is missing from their compendium of 400 plus miniatures about labor, they point out, however, what they identified in hindsight to be a dearth of new, ostensibly invisible professions: IT jobs in open-plan offices, contractor jobs, and management positions; in other words, high-tech jobs prevalent in cheap offshore outsourced labor markets like Bangalore, for example, workplaces where cameras are simply not welcome (Reinecke). But is this everything that is missing? Echoing what Farocki himself had expressed in his film [Workers Leaving the Factory](#) from 1995 (see figure 5)—namely the historical fact that already in its natal moments “wann immer möglich, hat sich der Film eilig von den Fabriken entfernt” ‘film swiftly distanced itself from factories whenever possible’—Ehmann and Farocki’s online project does account for the blind spots between film and work: “Often labor is not only invisible but also unimaginable,” they write. “Therefore it is vital to indulge in research,” they go on to say, “to open one’s eyes and to set oneself into motion: where do we see which kind of labor? What happens in the centre of a city, what occurs at the periphery? What is hidden?”¹⁹



Figure 5: The factory's rejection of film: Harun Farocki's *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995)

Percia's film of the dry cleaner in Buenos Aires asks, I believe, a question that ostensibly eluded Ehmann and Farocki as they originally conceptualized their project. Rather than asking what is hidden from view, Percia shows us that there remains something unintelligible about the laboring we do see on camera, especially when a worker like this mangle operator looks back so intently at the apparatus. The "look back," as Wheeler Winston Dixon has dubbed it, has long been an integral component of cinema that can be found virtually everywhere throughout the history of film, not to mention that of photography and painting. Along with its countless appearances, the look back has also assumed myriad functions and meanings in cinema; it can, for example, enact surveillance and control; it can confound the desiring gaze by casting it back at the spectator; and it can invite us into the spectacle as a coequal or superior participant (Dixon 199). The same can be said for all the many looks back in *Labour in a Single Shot*. Not all are equal. In fact, some even articulate defiance and resistance. In "[Rumali Roti](#)," for example, a flat bread maker performs for the camera with bravado the speed and agility required for his menial job. In the film "[Nadia](#)," we see a weather forecaster also working for the camera, but here the crux of her work lies precisely in looking into the camera, (a labor that the contribution "[News](#)" unveils with its behind-the-scenes perspective). But the vast majority of films in *Labour in a Single Shot*, in which workers cast glances at the camera, do just that; they turn their head or cock their eye to their side and acknowledge the presence of a camera for only a fleeting moment and then promptly return to the task at hand. Witness the [harpist](#) in Boston, or the young [corn picker](#) in Mexico City, the Chinese two-string [fiddle player](#) in Hangzhou or the [textile worker](#) in Cairo, the [garbage man](#) in Tel Aviv, or the [woman recycling rebar](#) in Hanoi. Unlike Percia's dry cleaner in Buenos Aires, who appears comfortably capable of inspecting the

apparatus intently while working, these other workers either have little time or interest for the camera. Regardless of the possible rationales for all these many looks back at the apparatus, it should nevertheless strike us as curious that Farocki never insisted that his global army of filmmakers avoid the very dangers he himself happened upon in that Playboy studio in Munich. Indeed, [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) allows room for the gaze of the camera and the look of the worker to meet within the frame, the very confluence Farocki himself struggled to avoid in his early films like [*An Image*](#). A closer consideration of one such struggle will bring us one step closer to resolving this apparent contradiction.

V. Auschwitz: [*Images of the World and the Inscription of War*](#) (1988)

Among Farocki's many filmic engagements with seeing, it is arguably the aforementioned [*Images of the World*](#) in which the "look back" is featured most prominently. In pursuit of an answer to the question "How to face a camera?" Farocki's female voice-over lingers over a photograph taken by Nazis illustrating the economy of labor power in Auschwitz. New arrivals were immediately subjected, she explains, to the draconian selection process that sorted out those fit for work from those whose labor capacities were of limited or no value. Amidst all this deadly administrative work, a Nazi photographer captures a woman looking directly into the camera (figure 6). The male voice-over explains:

the woman understands how to pose her face so as to catch the eye of the photographer, and how to look with a slight sideways glance. On a boulevard she would look in the same way just past a man casting his eye over her at a shop window, and with this sideways glance she seeks to displace herself into a world of boulevards, men and shop windows. (Farocki 85-86)

Whereas in Farocki's own words the emphasis in this sequence lies on the apparatus's contradictory drives to destroy and preserve, some critics have struggled to make sense of how it possibly projects, sentimentally, a self-consciousness onto a subject stripped entirely of any such self-consciousness.²⁰



Figure 6: The look in Auschwitz: Harun Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988)

To object to Farocki's voice-over is, however, in the words of Kaja Silverman, to overlook how his films invite us "to 'see' something which is not 'in' the photograph" (154). Indeed, Farocki's crucial distinction between "just looking" with one's eyes and "really seeing" with one's mind has heavily relied on deploying not just voice and sound but also montage in order to delineate this fundamental distinction. That which we spectators are supposed to see within the frame is the look, the human eye's capacity, says Silverman, to see while resisting the imperatives of the instrumental gaze (156). In the case of the woman photographed in Auschwitz, it is Farocki's voice-over—in other words language itself—that articulates the look with an imagined desire to be somewhere else other than within fascism's gaze and its concomitant economy of labor power. In effect, her look back is, to borrow once again from Kluge and Negt's political economy of labor power, a form of counterproduction, "a counterweight to the unbearable, alienated relations" manifested here in the Nazi gaze and its own lethal mode of production (Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience* 33).

As much as Silverman's reading of *Images of the World* convincingly mounts its own unique brand of apparatus theory to delineate the resistant look from the dominion of the gaze, her insights do not exhaust the potential role of looking in working that we see in the dry cleaners in Buenos Aires. Must the phantasmatic look located in Auschwitz necessarily always resist the working gaze of the camera? Is the look solely a reaction to the interpellative force of this gaze directed onto the laborer? Can the look not also be a form of resistance from within against the imposed labor process? Not even Silverman's attendant notion of "productive looking"—an "opening up of the unconsciousness to otherness"—provides us a useful concept with which to assay the visual field within the labor process (Silverman 184). If labor is tied exclusively to the violent gaze in

Farocki's *Images of the World* and then is later characterized as the *punctum cecum* 'blind spot' of the apparatus in his subsequent *Workers Leaving the Factory*, might not *Labour in a Single Shot* quite simply be an effort to reinsert the resistant nature of labor power into Farocki's own longstanding interrogation of the visual field? To be sure, to assume that the history of the camera and cinematographic techniques have advanced such that they could atone for film's early disavowal of the locus of labor, namely the factory, and therewith gain direct purchase on the authentic nature of labor is a risky undertaking, for such a supposition would infer that the camera-gaze coupling can be undone. Furthermore, it would suggest that there is such a thing as an authentic experience of production to which film could have immediate access, a proposition that could arguably deliver us right back to Brecht's case for querying the functional. It is at this juncture where Farocki's deep admiration for another filmmaker may help bring us yet another step farther in our examination.

VI. Frankfurt: *In Danger and Dire Distress* (1974)

Let us recall once more Ehmann and Farocki's conceptual statement for *Labour in a Single Shot*: "[I]t is vital to indulge in research," they write, "to open one's eyes and to set oneself into motion: where do we see which kind of labor? What happens in the *centre of a city*, what occurs at the *periphery*? What is hidden?" One of Farocki's favorite films—Alexander Kluge's 1974 collaboration with Edgar Reitz, *In Danger and Dire Distress the Middle of the Road Leads to Death*—poses this very question at its outset: What is labor in the city? Where is it? Who performs it? What facets of labor can be seen?²¹ Using a low angle shot looking up at Frankfurt's inner city full of cranes and newly erected skyscrapers, Reitz's camera pans the modern skyline. Following an initial cut, the camera takes a long shot of Frankfurt's neo-Baroque Fürstenhof; a subsequent cut shows an extreme long shot peering up through overhead lines that reveals construction workers in miniature laboring high above on the financial capital's next high-rise, Dresdner Bank's new headquarters. As if to suggest the tremendous heights to which capital has soared in Frankfurt since 1900, the camera returns back to eye level where we see a street crew busy at work patching over an unearthed utility line; the prologue to Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* swells, and a worker, ostensibly a modern-day Norn weaving the destiny of the city with his broom, stops to stare long and hard into the camera (figure 7b). Two final cuts return our gaze to that initial low angle shot to capture not only the modern city's colossal contours, but also its great heights.

A film shot amidst tremendous turmoil over the potentially misogynistic implications of Kluge's aesthetic politics, *In Danger and Dire Distress* is marked, above all, by a shift away from Kluge's previous interest in subjective

experience.²² Here, his film centers instead on the unwieldy objective events constituting social life that otherwise elude the customary conventions of cinema and the human sensorium. In Kluge and Reitz's own words "ein Konzentrat von Verstößen gegen den angeblichen Realismus des Gewohnheitsblicks" (Kluge and Reitz 43n) 'a concentrated set of transgressions against [the codes of ordinary] realism,' their film strives to imagine another mode of perception commensurate with the disparate "Realitätssplitter" (68) 'splinters of reality' that comprise modern everyday life.²³ By freely interchanging documentary footage with fictional shorts, the film's constellation of radical associations, memories, and appeals to the fantasy stands in stark opposition to what they call the "gesellschaftliche[] Organisation" (70) 'social organization' brought about by both the labor process and education.



Figures 7a & 7b: The parodic bird's eye view above versus the worker's look from below: Two stills from Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz's *In Danger and Dire Distress the Middle of the Road Leads to Death* (1974).

An avid architecture enthusiast, Farocki's fondness for *In Danger and Dire Distress* might be explained either in terms of the confusion and contestation the film associates with city life—Kluge himself spoke of a Babylon effect—or perhaps its homage to the city symphony genre that flourished in the Weimar Republic.²⁴ Whether he explicitly acknowledged it or not, Kluge and Reitz's film could also have conceivably won Farocki over on account of its initial insistence on locating labor in city. Rather than thinking in terms of center versus periphery, Kluge and Reitz begin their film by ruminating on the vertical organization of labor using what Kluge himself later formalized as the strategies "from above" and "from below" (Kluge, *Die Patriotin*, 151).²⁵ Originally sociological categories used to describe class stratification, Kluge along with Negt later refracted these terms through Lenin's writings and then transplanted them to their political economy of labor power. Used to describe the asymmetrical relationship

between the biological nature of human labor power and “coercive relations” of human culture and society, below and above operate respectively as shorthand for the obstinacy in human labor capacities and the alienation characteristic of the long history of capital (103). There is no mistaking already at the outset of *In Danger and Dire Distress* that it is the position below, that of obstinate laboring, to which Reitz’s camera swears allegiance. Unlike the bird’s-eye view from above that Kluge satirically disparages on account of its total ignorance of reality on the ground (see figure 7a), the view from below constitutes here not any true authentic realism but rather what Kluge calls an antagonistic anti-realism aligned with both life and labor (cf. Kluge and Reitz 68). And what we see on the ground is not just work but also workers peering directly into the camera.

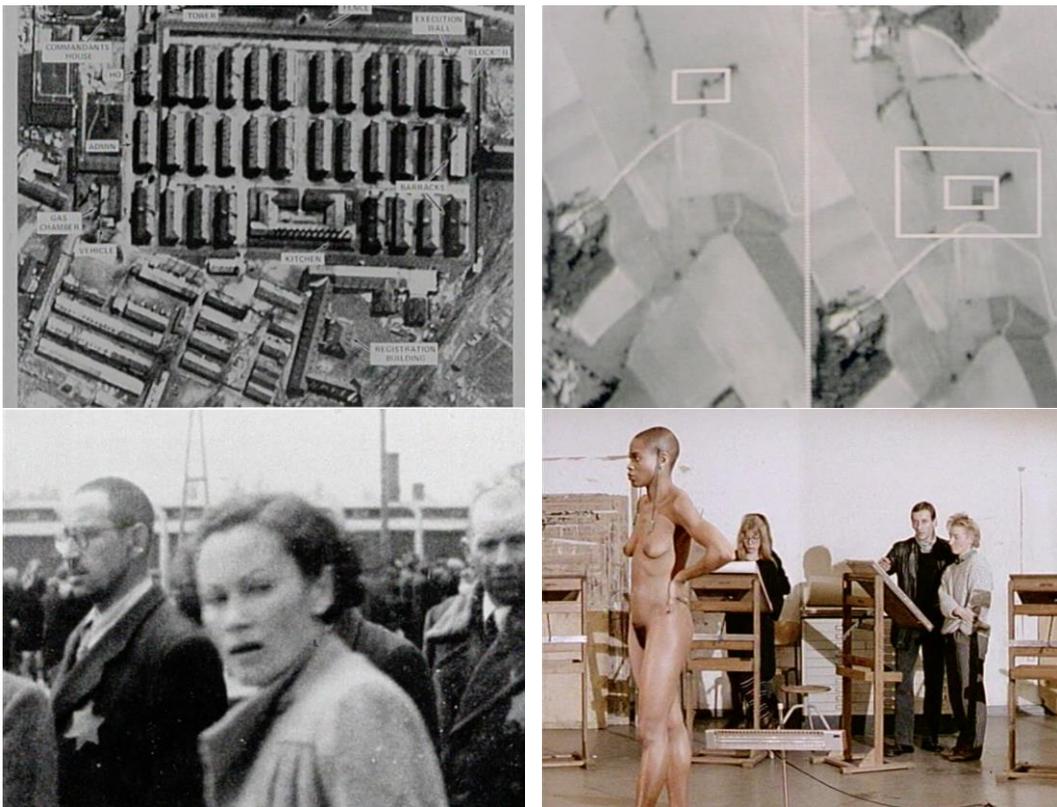
To perceive the relationship between labor and “real life,” Kluge and Negt insist that we focus not on the product of labor, but rather on its process. To do so, we must first realize that for every ounce of labor power extracted in the name of production, the worker expends an additional dose of his or her labor capacity held in reserve in order to endure these demands. One form of this supplemental labor subtending self-regulation processes, so-called “balancing labor,” manifests itself in extraneous bodily movements, the traces of which can be found nowhere in the final product. Referring to German sociologist Marianne Herzog’s 1976 monograph *From Hand to Mouth: Women and Piecework*, Kluge and Negt write of what Herzog’s exceptionally discerning sociological eye sees in the modern workplace. “[A] female pipe welder . . . sweeps her arms backward in a winglike fashion after welding approximately thirty spots in order to proceed with her functional labor that entails welding yet another thirty pieces of pipe or so” (Kluge and Negt 134). Kluge and Negt are quick to note that “this winglike movement,” not unlike other forms of balancing labor common in the workplace like “scratching one’s head, catching the glance of a fellow female worker, [or] exchanging a few words,” all “these things,” they stress, “do not constitute life” (Kluge and Negt 134). What appears from the standpoint of capital as mere interruptions in the flow of labor power is, they say, the subterranean flow of life’s balancing act—vestiges of human protest potential that surface momentarily, thereby rendering the job that much less intolerable.²⁶ Within the context of Kluge and Negt’s theory of labor, *In Danger and Dire Distress* opens then not with any authentic look of alienated labor but rather with its byproduct, namely the look of balancing labor. Kluge and Reitz carefully compose this mise-en-scène as a point of contact where “history” (from above) and “obstinacy” (from below) “confront one another,” where workers toiling with their hands below defiantly look at the camera’s gaze against the backdrop of financial capital’s newest skyscrapers on the rise, for which manual labor will one day no longer be relevant (cf. Kluge and Negt 390, 424). It is at this seam in between below and above where the camera does not so much capture or represent as

facilitate the very articulation of the suppressed flow of obstinate living labor to which the demands for estranged, alienated, dead labor have no access. What's more, the principle of montage—for Kluge a “radical labour of construction” in its own right not unlike building bridges, he says, or even cities—transposes that look the worker gives the camera situated at *Gallusanlage* (Frankfurt's ring-shaped park) into the look we spectators cast at the screen when watching *In Danger and Dire Distress* (Kluge, “The Sharpest Ideology” 195).²⁷ Might then this indexical look situated at this interstitial site in the political economy of labor's urban grid, where the nascent project of neoliberalism is literally materializing before the spectator's eyes—a map that only a camera and a cutting table can plot—not be the very thing that Farocki found so alluring in Kluge and Reitz's film? Might this flow of living labor—obstinacy—be the very thing that brings the worker to look into the camera in the dry cleaner in Buenos Aires?

VII. Hinjawadi: [*In Comparison*](#) (2009)

In Farocki's film [*Images of the World*](#), “below” and “above” assume so many guises and recast again and again the collision of history from above with obstinacy from below: recall, for example, the look of the Jewish woman and the high-altitude reconnaissance photographs taken from high above Auschwitz; or consider a scene from a contemporary drawing class (reminiscent of an Auschwitz survivor's sketches from below of the camps shown earlier in the film) versus the satellite imagery and computer simulations from above (see figures 8a-d). Unlike Farocki's seminal 1988 film, with its historical trajectory of juxtaposed views from below and above—juxtapositions that presumably allow us to perceive the otherwise imperceptible genealogy of images that reach into our high-tech present—[*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) brackets out the vertical dimension of “above” entirely. Single brief shots like the one taken at the dry cleaners in Buenos Aires reveal how the gaze of the cinematic apparatus itself is that alien intrusion that makes possible an interruption in the hegemonic flow of labor power. If there were a single maxim to be gleaned from all the many single shots of labor from around the globe in which people look away from their work and into the camera, then it is perhaps this: If labor power is supposed to flow into the product without interruption according to the demands of capital, then it is the prick of the camera's gaze that interrupts this flow, allowing that other subterranean flow of protest energies deployed to tolerate capital's demands to surface momentarily and become both visible and knowable.²⁸ This articulation of obstinate traces of living labor in the form of the look back elicited by the camera certainly addresses the political implications of the comparative ethnography in [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#), but it still remains unclear how the project—in particular its global aspirations (its assemblage of a global army of filmmakers) and its

political pedagogy (its disclosure of resistance)—situates itself vis-à-vis the contemporary state of production under neoliberalism. Did Ehmann and Farocki have to travel far and wide in order to find evidence of the resistant look? What of all the many other films in [Labour in a Single Shot](#) without any such look? How does neoliberalism, previously associated with the camera's bird's-eye view, figure into the project as a whole, let alone those films like Percia's "[Dry Cleaner](#)" in which the look back plays such a prominent role? Or is the absence of any view from above in [Labour in a Single Shot](#) indicative of industrial capital's disappearing act under neoliberalism?



Figures 8a-d: Two gazes from above and two looks from below: Four stills from Harun Farocki's [Images of the World and the Inscription of War](#) (1988)

A fifth and final jump will allow us to frame once and for all the relationship between the singular look back at the camera as resistance and the current neoliberal conditions of production. To this end, let us turn our attention to Farocki's antepenultimate film [In Comparison](#) from 2009, a film that does away with coupling images from below and above as in [Images of the World](#) and instead ventures out into geographic space much like [Labour in a Single Shot](#). [In Comparison](#) begins with a panning shot of a woman carrying water to a muddy

furrow where the villagers of Gando in Burkina Faso make bricks by hand for a new health clinic. After seven minutes watching community members young and old, male and female pull together to turn dirt into a dwelling, Farocki's camera takes us to Hinjawadi, India, and then Leers, France and then eastward to Germany, Austria, and then finally to Switzerland. With every station, we see a historical jump forward in the technical means of brick production. Compared to the pre- and proto-industrial means of production that predominate in Asia and Africa, Europe is home to both a lingering brickmaking industry reminiscent of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrialized labor relations (France) as well as thoroughly computer-automated production facilities (Germany and Switzerland) in which manual labor is virtually absent. Even though Farocki's comparative project does seek out the subjective factor in all five stations of the film, it is principally in those early sequences in Africa and southern Asia where he allows his camera to do the once unthinkable: to ostensibly prick the flow of labor, if just for a moment, and therewith evoke the look back. We witness this most clearly in Hinjawadi, where a woman making bricks by hand looks back (see figure 9).



Figure 9: The brick maker's look back at the camera: Trailer for Harun Farocki's *In Comparison* (2009)

There are many possible readings of the comparison sought in Farocki's *In Comparison*. An allegorical reckoning could see in the film both cinema's roots in the handmade fabrication of single images (i.e., bricks) as well as its historical path to today's 24/7 economy shaped in large part by computers, digitization, and technical images.²⁹ It could also be inferred both from this historical trajectory of

labor mapped geographically as well as the film's own material conditions—it was shot on 16 mm stock—that *In Comparison* extols good old handwork while decrying Western technology's supersession of more human relations of production in which obstinacy still plays a role. Greater emphasis on the contemporaneity of the film could motion for cinema's own obstinate potential for revealing what philosopher Ernst Bloch once called the synchronicity of contradictory non-synchronous modes of production in our present moment. For Bloch, it is nature that embodies one of the most decisive forces that tethers people to older temporalities far less accelerated than the ones today (30). We see, in fact, two registers of non-synchronicity in Farocki's film; on the one hand, the sliding scale of human labor's boundedness to the land (the dirt underfoot that becomes bricks in Gando versus the inconsequential Alpine landscape that surrounds the robotized Swiss assembly plant) and, on the other, the obstinate nature in human laborers revealed fleetingly in a look back at the apparatus. Each of these three possible readings must invariably reckon with a double bind. Either simple labor comes away looking like drudgery yet communally fulfilling, or, conversely, technology appears as having successfully liberated humans from both taxing labor and the need for obstinacy yet nevertheless remains thoroughly disconnected from the constitution of any and all forms of sociability.³⁰ It is here, however, where *Labour in a Single Shot* re-enters the picture and solves this irreconcilability by incorporating the cinematic apparatus's relations of production made possible by neoliberalism into its very form.

VIII. Eyes Wide Open

Referring to the socializing effects on the evolutionary development of sensory organs like the eyes and ears, the young Marx insisted on designating socialized organs as "human" so as to distinguish them from the crude underdeveloped ones in "non-social man," a man presumably no more evolved than an animal ("Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" 301). When in his closing chapter to *24/7* Crary cites Italo Calvino that human civilization is now on the verge of losing its capacity to "bring visions into focus with our eyes shut," he certainly echoes the young Marx's own concern about private property threatening to estrange all of the human senses, thereby rendering them animal (Crary 107; "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" 300). In effect, the quintessentially human powers of the imagination, heightened when eyes are shut, today stand to wither as *24/7* apparatuses colonize the interior spaces where our fantasies once roamed. All the many shorts in *Labour in a Single Shot* that capture workers looking with eyes wide open back at the peering camera might be said in this respect to merely put on display the single worker's dehumanized crude eye,

that underlying, obstinate remainder of our visual organ that no job can pilfer entirely.

Yet [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) does arguably reinvigorate human vision, not necessarily as an end unto itself but rather as a means to re-organizing the very labor power that Crary holds to be wholly discretionary and therefore disposable under 24/7. To grasp [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) in all its fullness requires us to first recognize what looks in the final analysis like an elision. On the surface, the bulk of visual evidence collected in [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) suggests that simple labor and the resistance to its older concomitant economies continue to thrive today in spite of neoliberalism's apparent indifference toward the production sector. On a deeper level, however, the prevalence of shorts about older manual forms of labor, especially from cities with flourishing high-tech industries, points toward a seemingly asymmetrical relation between two synchronous economies—older industrial and even preindustrial economies and neoliberalism's nascent postindustrial one—whereby the technological tools of the latter not only “see” the former at work but also set off self-regulatory looks because of the camera's gaze. This obstinacy is conceivably directed not so much at the neoliberal economy or the momentary intrusion of its technologies as it is at the dictates originating from the older economy for which it grinds away. One should, however, not conclude that this relation between economies is one-way voyeurism. On the contrary, the older economies recorded in [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) along with the work and attendant obstinacy they call forth do have direct bearing on the contemporary state of labor, at the very least as it is mobilized here by producers Ehmman and Farocki.

The fact that myriad forms of manual work performed in older regional economies operate in [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) as the nexus around which newer globalized forms of decentralized production organize themselves—the immaterial labor involved in making movies for a streaming video portal about labor—brings us to the heart of the matter: if the 24/7 life-world is indeed marked by myriad techniques for dispersing “collectivity into an aggregate of discrete individuals who relate to one another only on the basis of hollow or narcissistic identities,” then the open and decentralized participatory ethos, the minimal rules of engagement, and most importantly the global ubiquity of the means of digital production that define [*Labour in a Single Shot*](#) all underscore the potential for a new kind of being together, a collectivity or, in the language of political economy, a collective worker quite different than the one Marx attributed to the total labor force operating under industrial capitalism (Crary 116).³¹ For Marx shorthand for the abstract synthesis of all those specialized workers whose aggregate labor engenders products, surplus value, and therefore capital, the collective worker for Ehmman and Farocki is, as even Crary might agree, practically anyone in the 24/7 economy with, say, a camera-equipped smartphone shooting video not from high

above but rather down below where material work is being done. But instead of just assimilating “an ever-expanding surfeit of services, images, procedures, chemicals, to a toxic and often fatal threshold” as Crary would have it, the constituents of Ehmann and Farocki’s concrete collective worker take on a labor both autonomous and collaborative in nature that reigns sovereign over both its labor power and the products it generates (10). Rather than just waiting for the refuge of sleep, this new kind of collective worker produces not just knowledge about the persistence of production and obstinacy in our neoliberal world order but also about itself, a social form of being together across vast geographic distances that nevertheless participates in the technological web on which 24/7 is so dependent. While certainly not a force capable of overthrowing the political economy of labor under industrial or postindustrial capital, this collective worker is nevertheless another form of obstinacy that refutes the suspension of sociability that Crary insists is so endemic to 24/7.

Notes

1. Calvino 92 as cited in Crary 107.
2. For an overview of this leftist ontological turn in political theory, see Bosteels 42-74.
3. Crary cites only in passing Jean-Luc Nancy’s concept of “exposure” as discussed in *The Inoperative Community* (1991) as well as Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (1958). See Crary 21-22. On the importance of Heidegger’s category of *Mitsein* for Nancy’s ideas on exposure, see Fynsk’s foreword that begins *The Inoperative Community* (x). On Nancy’s place within recent ontological debates, see also Radu-Cucu.
4. I echo here a sentiment iterated in several critical reviews of Crary’s essay. See, for example, Davies 146 and Thiel 22.
5. Along with the recent turn to ontology, contemporary theoretical discourse has also entertained the feasibility of a “political anthropology of resistance.” Arguably the most influential among these calls is to be found in Hardt and Negri 240-44; they are quick to note, however, that any such anthropology must delineate itself from the “pessimistic tradition of political anthropology,” the liberal tradition from Lock to Kant as well as the anthropological conditions created by what they call “biopower” and Crary calls “24/7” (240). How their later case for anthropology (from *Commonwealth*) fits within their initial call for a

political ontology (articulated in *Empire*) is a matter they never fully address. On the vital distinctions between Hardt and Negri's project and the political economy of labor informing this essay, see both my "Palimpsests of '68: Theorizing Labor after Adorno" as well as Martin's discussion on the anthropological turn's tendency to displace political economy (36n5).

6. The culmination of Bloch's ontology of the not-yet can be found in his *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1964-66) and Lukács' very different social ontology can be found in his posthumous fragment *The Ontology of Social Being* (1984-86; trans. 1980).

7. For Negt and Kluge's discussion of death and the limits of extracting living labor power, see *Geschichte und Eigensinn* 48.

8. On the suggestibility and value of this aggregate, Crary writes: "The decline in the long-term value of living labor provides no incentives for rest or health . . ." (15). In effect, he intimates that these capabilities are entirely at the mercy of capital.

9. "Self-regulation," Kluge and Negt explain, "is grounded in cooperation between autonomous activities working according to their own very different laws of motion" (110).

10. For Marx's explication of the collective worker or laborer, see chapter fourteen, "Division of Labour and Manufacture," in *Capital* (354). According to Marx, the collective worker refers to the totality of working subjects independently involved in the collective labor process required for producing capital. Negt and Kluge first establish their thesis for a "new combination of the collective worker" (in opposition to capital's "wrong collective worker") in the sixteenth commentary from *Geschichte und Eigensinn*. See Negt and Kluge 1225-52. See also Kluge and Negt 299, 402-03.

11. Crary's account of 24/7's technological mastery over the human shifts between allusions of technical inevitability to impossibility. While he cites innovations in the military industrial complex early on in search of ever more seamless man-machine unions, he later on backtracks, stating that "[t]here is no possible harmonization between actual living beings and the demands of 24/7 capitalism, but there are countless inducements to delusionally suspend or obscure some of the humiliating limitations of lived experience, whether emotional or biological" (100). For Kluge and Negt, any such delusional suspensions are

merely tricks on the mind. Neither self-regulation nor the obstinacy that arises from it in states of emergency is an effect of conscious will or desire.

12. Crary enlists Deleuze's concept only then to alter it such that his account of 24/7 encapsulates both Deleuze's society of control (as developed in *Negotiations* [1995]) and Michel Foucault's disciplinary society and aligns with "consumer society's proliferating manufacture of individual needs" (Crary 72).

13. See producers Ehmman and Farocki's statement of purpose entitled "[Concept](#)" published in the *Labour in a Single Shot* online catalogue.

14. The single shot originally served as the essential criterion in Ehmman and Farocki's filmmaking workshops. In their online catalogue they qualify this standard as appropriate for the chosen subject matter: "The task as set leads straight to basic questions of cinematographic form and raises essential questions about the filmmaking process itself. Almost every form of labour is repetitive. How can one find a beginning and an end when capturing it? Should the camera be still or moving? How to film the choreography of a workflow in one single shot in the best and most interesting way? Yet the workshop results show that a single shot of 1 or 2 minutes can already create a narrative, suspense or surprise." This cinematographic concern drawn explicitly from the cinema of attraction also serves to sharpen, they later explained in newspaper interviews, both the filmmaker's and the spectator's powers of concentration. See Hoffmans and Reinecke.

15. See, for example, the extensive archived footage from the Berlin conference held in early 2015 ("Eine Einstellung zur Arbeit").

16. For Farocki's unique intermediary position between Brecht's rejection of the photograph and poststructuralism's critical interrogation of the political economy of gazes within the pictorial frame, see Elsaesser "Political Filmmaking after Brecht" 138-45.

17. On the history of Farocki's shift from auteurist camera work to ready-mades, see Alter "The Political Im/perceptible" 85.

18. See Ehmman and Farocki's statement of purpose "[Concept](#)."

19. See Ehmman and Farocki's statement of purpose "[Concept](#)."

20. For one such reading, see Alter, "The Political Im/perceptible" 88-91.

21. Thanks is due to both Farocki's long-time close friend Nora Alter and his spouse Antje Ehmann for sharing and confirming not only Farocki's intense interest in architecture and urban planning but also his fondness for Kluge's film. See also Alter "Two or Three Things."

22. One year prior to *In Danger and Dire Distress*, Kluge shot *Part-Time Work of a Female Slave*, a film about a mother who moonlights as an illegal abortionist that caused for scathing criticism within the burgeoning West German women's movement. The outcome of Kluge's attempts to reconcile with his critics was the accompanying book to Kluge's abortion film, which appeared shortly after *In Danger and Dire Distress*.

23. This and all subsequent translations from the German are mine.

24. On the Babylon-effect (i.e., "an effect of rather complicated confusion in a city"), see Gregor 170. On place of *In Danger and Dire Distress* in the genre tradition of the city symphony, see, for example, Lewandowski 210.

25. Kluge and Negt first address the distinctions of "above" and "below" with respect to sociology's dichotomous account of working class consciousness in their 1972 collaboration *Public Sphere and Experience* (211), a book that unquestionably shaped Farocki's theoretical background in the seventies.

26. This line of thinking about the expropriation of labor power as flow versus the subterranean stream of balancing labor follows Kluge and Negt's argument in *History and Obstinacy*: "According to the punch clock," they explain, "the intervention of labor is a flow, whereas the pauses that a worker makes constitute interruptions. For the lived time of labor power, the exact opposite is the case: labor is the interruption" (134).

27. A practice Elsaesser attributes to post-Brechtian German film debates from the 80s, this "separation" (characteristic of montage) and "joining" (in the spectator's head) is clearly at work here in Kluge and Reitz's film, too, and invites reconsideration of Elsaesser's dismissal of Kluge as "the most readily identifiable Brechtian" of New German Cinema's practitioners. See Elsaesser "Political Filmmaking after Brecht" 147, 150-52, 134.

28. This account of labor as flow that intrudes upon the flow of protest is borrowed from Kluge and Negt 134-35.

29. This is precisely Elsaesser's own compelling reading of *In Comparison* as developed in his keynote address "The Body and the Senses: Harun Farocki on Work and Play" held at the sole North American *Labour in a Single Shot conference* held at Boston University on November 13-15, 2014.

30. It is arguable that the ambiguities at work in *In Comparison* arise precisely from what Crary, when referring to Jean-Paul Sartre, identifies as the powerlessness in seriality, which naturally operates as the defining structural principle of the film's comparison. See Crary 116-17.

31. Traces of an emancipated collective worker, one not subject to the commands of capital, have emerged, say Kluge and Negt, for as long as the empirical collective worker under industrial capitalism existed. That a new collective worker has emerged under modernity "with other characteristics and with novel social combinations" thanks to the "metabolic transfer of the entire social body" mediated by "science and technology" is precisely what comes into view in Ehmman and Farocki's project (Negt and Kluge 1233, 1229).

Works Cited

- Alter, Nora M. "The Political Im/perceptible: Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*." *Projecting History: German Nonfiction Cinema, 1967-2000*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2002. 77-102. Print.
- . "Two or Three Things I Know about Harun Farocki." *October* 151 (Winter 2015): 151-8. Print. http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00206
- Beller, Jonathan. *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*. Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 2006. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." Trans. Edmund Jephcott, *Selected Writings*. Eds. Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Vol. 2. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1999. 768-82. Print.
- Bloch, Ernst. "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics." Trans. Mark Ritter. *New German Critique* XI (Spring 1977): 22-38. Print. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/487802>
- Bosteels, Bruno. *The Actuality of Communism*. London: Verso, 2011. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. "From the Three Penny Trial: A Sociological Experiment." Trans. Lance W. Garmer. *German Essays on Film*. Ed. Richard W. McCormick and Alison Guenther-Pal. New York: Continuum, 2004. 111-32. Print.
- Calvino, Italo. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.

- Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London: Verso, 2013. Print.
- Davies, William. "Economics of Insomnia." *New Left Review* LXXXV (Jan.-Feb. 2014): 141-46. Web. 1 Nov. 2014.
- Dixon, Wheeler Winston. *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1995. Print.
- Ehmann, Antje and Harun Farocki. "Concept." *Labor in a Single Shot*. Web. <http://www.labour-in-a-single-shot.net/en/project/concept/>
- . *Labor in a Single Shot*. Web. <http://www.labour-in-a-single-shot.net>
- "Eine Einstellung zur Arbeit." *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*. Web. https://www.hkw.de/de/programm/projekte/2015/eine_einstellung_zur_arbeit/eine_einstellung_zur_arbeit_start.php
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Harun Farocki: Filmmaker, Artist, Media Theorist." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* XI (Spring/Summer 2005): 54-63. Print. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/aft.11.20711571>
- . "Political Filmmaking after Brecht: Harun Farocki, for Example." *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2004. 133-53. Print. <http://www.oapen.org/record/340227>
- Farocki, Harun. "Commentary from *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* (Images of the World and Inscription of the War)." *Discourse* VX.III (Spring 1993): 78-92. Print.
- Flusser, Vilém. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. Trans. Anthony Mathews. London: Reaktion Books, 2000. Print.
- Fynsk, Christopher. "Foreword: Experiences of Finitude." Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Conner. Trans. Peter Conner et al. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991. vii-xxxv. Print.
- Gregor, Ulrich. "Interview." *Herzog, Ulrich, Straub*. Ed. Ulrich Gregor et al. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1976. 153-78. Print.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009. Print.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- Hoffmanns, Christiane. "Filme nach Farben: Harun Farocki war ein experimentierfreudiger Künstler. Gerne umarmte er die Welt – wie in seinem letzten großen Werk." *Welt am Sonntag* (17. Aug. 2014): 3. Web. 1 Nov. 2014. <http://www.welt.de/print/wams/nrw/article131297723/Filmen-nach-Farben.html>
- Kluge, Alexander. *Die Patriotin: Texte/Bilder 1-6*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1979. Print.
- . "The Sharpest Ideology: That Reality Appeals to its Realistic Character." Trans. David Roberts. *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the*

- Imagination*. Ed. Tara Forrest. Amsterdam: U of Amsterdam P, 2012. 191-96. Print. <http://www.oapen.org/record/408878>
- Kluge, Alexander and Oskar Negt. *History and Obstinacy*. Ed. Devin Fore. Trans. Richard Langston et al. New York: Zone Books, 2014. Print.
- Kluge, Alexander and Edgar Reitz. "In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod." *Kursbuch XLI* (Sept. 1975): 41-84. Print.
- Langston, Richard. "Palimpsests of '68: Theorizing Labor after Adorno." *The Long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives*. Eds. Daniel J. Sherman et al. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013. 49-72. Print.
- Lewandowski, Rainer. *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge*. Hildesheim: Olms Presse, 1980. Print.
- Martin, Stewart. "Political Economy of Life: Negt and Kluge's *History and Obstinacy*." *Radical Philosophy* 190 (Mar./Apr. 2015): 25-36. Print.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works*. Vol. 35. New York: International Publishers, 1996. Print.
- . "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 3: *Marx and Engels 1843-1844*. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 229-346. Print.
- . "Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Third Chapter, Capital in General." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works*. Vol. 30. New York: International Publishers, 1988. Print.
- Negt, Oskar and Alexander Kluge. *The Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.
- . *Geschichte und Eigensinn*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1981. Print.
- Radu-Cucu, Sorin. "Politics and the Fiction of the Political." *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics*. Ed. Carsten Strathausen. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. 147-69. Print.
- Reinecke, Stefan. "'Es hat etwas von einer Enzyklopädie.'" *die tageszeitung* (8 Aug. 2014): 15. Web. 1 Nov. 2014.
<http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/digitaz/artikel/?ressort=ku&dig=2014%2F08%2F08%2Fa0160&cHash=5e88d7ba1ca6a7c6a88ae901b61a9d93>
- Silverman, Kaja. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Thiel, Thomas. "Rund um die Uhr." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (4 Oct. 2014): L 22. Web. 1 Nov. 2014.
http://www.buecher.de/shop/fachbuecher/247/crary-jonathan/products_products/detail/prod_id/40815755/